

Chapter 6: Implications, Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

It is intended in this chapter to provide an overview of the thesis, including the origins, the purpose, the problem, the conceptual framework and the methodology adopted to find answers to the questions. The methodology is then reviewed in detail, outlining the peculiarities of data collection in the research site. The weaknesses and strengths of the methodology are identified. The major findings of the study are reiterated. The value of the thesis is outlined in terms of the implications for theory and the implications for practice. The concept of shared instructional leadership and mentoring are briefly examined. Recommendations emerging from this study, together with implications for further research have been included. Finally, the conclusion of the study is presented. This Chapter presents the final stage (Stage 4) of the Research Plan (Refer Figure 4.2, p.90).

Overview of the Research

This study emerged from the researcher's interest and involvement with principals in high schools in Papua New Guinea. Studies conducted in PNG have indicated that principals are promoted to the headship position on the basis of 'who they know' as well as on their inspection reports as classroom teachers rather than their ability to lead. This situation has created a great deal of resentment, and in some cases has affected the working relationships between teachers and the principal within the school. With the introduction of reforms in the education system in Papua New Guinea since 1992, PNG now needs effective school principals with a vision for academic excellence and the possession of leadership knowledge and skills including a knowledge of change and innovation, the ability to initiate, invent and adapt, a sense of direction as well as the skill to motivate and provide appropriate leadership styles to meet the challenges and demands of the changing society.

In addition, the PNG NDOE's Handbook for Headmasters in Provincial high schools call upon principals to attend to a variety of duties. Among the many duties, the principals are directed to provide professional leadership in their

schools. However, no research has been carried out in PNG to investigate whether principals actually engage in these tasks. The paucity of research in this area means that the contribution of the instructional leadership role of principals to school effectiveness still remains uncertain in PNG.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to redress the inadequacy in relation to research into the instructional leadership behaviour of principals by investigating whether high school principals in New Ireland Province in PNG engage in tasks which are consistent with instructional leadership.

Problem

The research problem was presented in the form of questions:

- (i) Do principals in the New Ireland Provincial high schools in PNG engage in actions consistent with instructional leadership?
- (ii) If actions consistent with instructional leadership are engaged in, what are they and why are they undertaken?
- (iii) If actions consistent with instructional leadership are not engaged in, why are they not?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the study was drawn from a literature review in which five main functions of the instructional leadership role (i.e., defining and communicating school academic goals; managing the curriculum and instruction; promoting a positive learning climate; observing and giving feedback to teachers; and assessing the instructional programs) were identified, adopted and adapted to PNG context. This study contends that the principals can and do make a difference both to the students and to teachers, through their skills as instructional leaders. The framework illustrated that a principal's instructional leadership behaviour affects two fundamental aspects of the school's social organisation – climate and instructional organisation. These are the contexts which shape teachers' behaviour and students' learning experiences. At the same time, the principal's own leadership actions are shaped by factors external to the school – personal, community, provincial and national influences.

Methodology

This study was primarily a qualitative one aimed to identify whether New Ireland Provincial high school principals engaged in actions consistent with instructional leadership. In executing a qualitative method of research, the case study approach was selected over other methods because it was seen to be the most convenient and practical means of investigating the instructional leadership behaviours of the principals studied. It was essential to the study and consistent with the conceptual framework drawn from the literature review, to develop an understanding of these principals as individuals and at the same time observe them in their natural settings in the schools. This was executed to avoid making biased judgements as well as to establish how these principals understood their roles in their own settings. Whilst the research method was qualitative, it was imperative that certain aspects of quantitative methodology utilising descriptive survey questionnaires were used to enhance, validate and add depth to the data collected.

This study was restricted to the five high schools in the New Ireland Province. There was a total of 36 respondents covering all levels of the school system. It comprised five principals, six deputy heads, six senior subject heads, eight subject heads or teachers-in-charge, and ten base level teachers. Full cooperation was obtained from the respondents as well as the Advisor-Education in the New Ireland Provincial Government and the National Department of Education's Research and Evaluation Unit. However, at the initial stages of the study, the researcher experienced some resistance from the Provincial Secondary School Inspector which was sorted out after consultation with the Advisor-Education and the Superintendent-Inspections.

Data were gathered in three main forms. The first form of data collection was through the use of two descriptive survey questionnaires, one for the principals and the other for the teachers. The responses received from the questionnaires were then followed-up with the use of a semi-structured interview with each of the 36 respondents. This second form of data collection enabled the researcher to validate responses and to seek reasons why each principal behaved in the way described in the questionnaires. The third form of data collection consisted of a day or two of non-participant observations mainly focussing on the principal. These observations were conducted with the aim of re-affirming the validity of the responses received from the

questionnaires and the interviews and to pick up any 'taken-for-granted' features of situations that were not mentioned previously.

The procedures for data analysis were primarily descriptive in nature. Descriptive statistical procedures were used to analyse the survey questionnaires. For the semi-structured interviews and field notes from the non-participant observations, content analysis techniques were employed. The data were analysed for themes and patterns, which were described and illustrated with examples, using graphs, tables and quotations from the interviews and excerpts from the questionnaires and other documents when possible.

Methodology revisited

Gathering of data was interesting, intriguing as well as rewarding. The full cooperation and willingness of respondents to participate in the study was most interesting and rewarding to the researcher. The researcher's entry into the schools was made easier by being accepted by all the principals and teachers he came to meet during his visits to the schools. There were only two cases where respondents showed some signs of hesitancy in cooperating fully with the study because of their own uncertainty and fear of the repercussions the study might have had on their opportunities for promotions. This fear and uncertainty was well understood by the researcher because in PNG if a subordinate exposes weaknesses to a superior, it is believed that this might have detrimental effects on the subordinate if the information gets back to the superior. To eliminate the fear and uncertainty in these two cases, the researcher highlighted to all respondents the ethical considerations of the right to confidentiality, privacy and anonymity, observed by the researcher in conducting this study.

The researcher also received some resistance from the Provincial Secondary School Inspector despite the researcher's efforts to inform the School Inspector about the study months before the study actually took place. It seemed that the School Inspector felt threatened by the purpose of the study. He expressed that the researcher was investigating what he was supposed to be doing. However, after much consultation with the School Inspector and with the assistance of the Advisor-Education and the Superintendent of Inspections in Port Moresby, the problem was sorted out. Unfortunately, two days after this problem was sorted out, the School Inspector then approached the researcher and directed him to adjust his research schedule for the next schools so that

the School Inspector's visits did not clash with the researcher's visits. This attitude to the researcher was a demonstration of the lack of respect and cooperation from the School Inspector to the researcher. Consequently, during the period of data collection, it was impossible for the researcher to gather first hand observation data in relation to how much influence the School Inspector had on the principals surveyed. It was only through an analysis of the first term school reports written by the School Inspector that made it possible for the researcher to determine the influence of the School Inspector and the emphasis placed on the principals in each of the schools.

An impression that the researcher developed over the data collection period in the New Ireland Province in relation to school inspections was that most high school personnel the researcher came into contact with showed a particular attitude towards the inspection system. Their attitude towards teaching and learning was obviously commendable when the School Inspector was present in the school, however once the School Inspector left, the normal working habits and patterns tended to reappear. This attitude raised questions of the role of the inspection system and the role the principals are expected to perform after the School Inspector's visits.

In regard to the completion of the survey questionnaires, the researcher felt that it was impossible to just allow one day for most respondents to complete the questionnaire. Some respondents took two days to complete the questionnaire thereby affecting the timing of scheduled interviews. The researcher had to adjust his interview time schedule to cater for the slow return of the questionnaires from each of the respondents. This meant that some interviews were conducted in the evenings after school hours. This is understandable because of the heavy teaching loads some of the respondents had in a week.

A weakness of the use of a survey questionnaire in research was demonstrated when two questionnaires were received from respondents with ratings of 'always' in all tasks identified in the questionnaire. However, the reality of the situation was discovered during the interviews when the respondents were asked to justify their ratings of 'always' with descriptions of what actually happened in the schools. The responses in the interviews were contrary to the ratings in the questionnaires. This attitude demonstrated the reality of the situation in PNG when it comes to assessing a superior. Some subordinates feel that it is their obligation not to present the reality by providing a good

image of the 'boss' through their ratings. It is the belief that the 'boss' represents the entire school organisation so therefore if he is assessed critically and negatively, that particular assessment of the 'boss' then reflects the impression created of the entire school organisation.

With regard to conducting non-participant observations in schools, these observations were scheduled at the middle of the week, either to take place on a Tuesday or Wednesday, but due to some pre-planned school activities that coincided with the researcher's visits, it was sometimes impossible to adhere to the original research schedule. The researcher therefore was forced to reschedule some of the observations to Thursdays or Fridays.

Identified Problems

The problems associated with the methodology chosen centred mainly on the relatively high costs of travel, the scheduling of research activities in one week in each school and the resistance of the Provincial Secondary School Inspector with respect to the researcher's non-participant observations of the handling of school matters between the principals and the School Inspector.

Identified Strengths

The major strengths of the chosen methodology were the ability of the researcher to become informed and knowledgeable about the research site, the opportunity to become acquainted with, and gain appreciation of, the respondents' roles and responsibilities in the natural settings, the ethical nature of the study, the acceptance of the researcher by the respondents and their full cooperation. The interpretation and analysis of the data would not have occurred without the assistance and the convenience of the personal interviews, observations and questionnaires from those involved in this study.

Major Findings of the Study

In response to the three research questions, the study found that the principals in the New Ireland Provincial High schools did engage in actions consistent with instructional leadership but the results obtained from the three part analyses indicate that their involvement in performing the five major functions (i.e. defining and communicating school academic goals; managing the curriculum and instruction; promoting a positive learning climate;

observing and giving feedback to teachers; and assessing the instructional programs) were to a lesser degree than was deemed desirable and expected by the principals and teachers surveyed.

The study also found that there was evidence of shared instructional leadership in all schools. Principals did not assume instructional leadership responsibilities alone, but shared the responsibility with other staff at all levels of the school organisation. However, there was evidence to support the view that although responsibilities were delegated to staff, the monitoring of these delegated responsibilities was not performed satisfactorily by the principals to meet the expectations of the teachers. In schools it is generally considered that the question of ultimate responsibility is always with the principal. If he or she delegates responsibility for something to another staff member, he or she is still responsible for seeing that it is done properly.

It was also found that principals gave their administrative tasks higher priority than their instructional leadership tasks due to the demands placed on principals by the Provincial Secondary School Inspector, and the fact that principals felt more comfortable with completing administrative tasks rather than completing their instructional leadership role for which they have been inadequately trained. Out of the five main functions of the instructional leadership role, four functions (i.e. defining and communicating school academic goals; managing the curriculum and instruction; observing and giving feedback to teachers; and assessing the instructional programs) produced negative results which were most significant.

With regard to defining and communicating school academic goals, the study found that the academic goals developed in all schools were mainly aimed at improving the academic performances of students in Grades 8 and 10 and were not aimed at all students in all grades in the schools. This setting of academic goals supported the notion that in PNG schools, coaching students to pass a national examination was emphasised more than the significance of the entire student body gaining a well-balanced, good quality education for the future.

The study also found that, with the other three functions, managing the curriculum and instruction, observing and giving feedback to teachers and assessing the instructional programs, principals were perceived to be least involved, as these functions, according to the principals, were delegated to

senior teachers in-charge of subject areas to perform. However, it was found that although responsibilities were delegated to others to perform, support from the principal was not given nor was there evidence of monitoring the delegation.

The final major finding was in relation to the lack of appropriate training and staff development opportunities provided for principals to carry out their instructional leadership role. This study found that the lack of appropriate training, direction and guidance in the functions consistent with instructional leadership given to principals before they occupy headship positions, have resulted in principals delegating tasks to teachers to perform without providing the necessary support and leadership follow-up expected of them. Principals felt unprepared in terms of experience, skills and training and the lack of previous good role models.

Implications for Theory

This study attempted to redress the inadequacy in relation to research into the instructional leadership behaviour of principals by investigating whether high school principals in New Ireland Province in Papua New Guinea engaged in actions consistent with instructional leadership. In this way it is a contribution to the knowledge and understanding of the school leadership role of the principal. Principals in high schools in Papua New Guinea are expected to perform multiple roles from being an administrator, an instructional leader as well as a community, provincial and national school liaison officer providing a bridge between the school and the different authorities that he/she has to liaise with on behalf of the school. Under pressure from all these expectations, principals have opted to delegate essential responsibilities to teachers to perform without effectively and adequately providing the technical and personal support, professional direction and guidance expected by those to whom these responsibilities are delegated. This study enabled an indepth investigation of the instructional leadership role that principals are expected to perform.

Two main contributions to the knowledge and understanding of the instructional leadership role of principals emerged from this study. These included:

- the changing role of the school principal. It is expanding and becoming more demanding due to the emergence of a new educational environment.
- Instructional leadership is shared by all in a school organisation.

These contributions will now be discussed in detail.

Role Changes

The role of the principal has changed in Papua New Guinea over the decades because of the emergence of a new educational environment created by the introduction of the reformed educational system. Principals are being called on to accept new responsibilities, especially when considering the emphasis placed on increased community participation in the running of the schools which has also increased the time spent on community liaison. Importantly, he/she is also expected to manage the implementation of the reform in the schools. Currently in the Papua New Guinea education system, drastic changes have occurred in schools without the appropriate training and preparation of personnel who are expected to implement these changes.

Shared Instructional Leadership

The school effectiveness research indicates that schools make a difference to student achievement, and the principal, as the instructional leader, can make a significant difference to student outcomes. This study found that in the five high schools surveyed, principals did not perceive that they bear sole or major responsibility for instructional leadership tasks, but shared the responsibility with other staff at all levels of the school organisation. This finding supported the notion that not all instructional leadership functions need to be carried out by the principal, but rather that they can be shared (Gersten et al., 1982; Weber, 1989; Wildy and Dimmock, 1993; Weber, 1997). Weber (1997: 255), however, argues that:

Shared leadership does not mean an absence of leadership. What research has been showing conclusively, it should be noted, is that where teachers are brought into more leadership roles, only a fully collaborative effort between principal and teachers will produce effective instruction. Where principals give teachers full administrative responsibilities in a school, without the benefit of information, active participation, or cooperation, mistakes will be made and wheels reinvented.

The principal is still the leader of the school and must be held responsible for seeing that support, direction and guidance is given to teachers. Gurr (1996: 229) supports Weber's point by stating that:

The principal is responsible for the standard of instruction and relies heavily on delegation of tasks and responsibilities to others to supervise the instructional process. Here the principals' leadership is one of monitoring what is happening and participating in setting directions for the delegated roles.

It is critical that the principal devote resources to nurture teachers, communicate expectations, give technical and personal support, and supervise, recognise and reward high quality teaching and leadership performance. In Papua New Guinea it appears that teachers are rarely publicly recognised by the principals for their outstanding efforts or performance in teaching.

The main contribution of this study to the concept of sharing instructional leadership has been highlighted in the literature review. If principals acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to execute these main functions of the instructional leadership role, these activities may improve or maintain conditions that will encourage student learning and achievement as well as promote growth in staff in the schools.

Implications for Practice

With the implementation of the new educational reform in Papua New Guinea, the nature of school leadership is undergoing significant change. Principals, in particular, need new kinds of knowledge, attitudes and skills to perform their work effectively. The change in emphasis through the reform justifies the need to re-examine the appropriateness, relevancy and applicability of the training and preparation provided for intending and practising principals. The administrative preparation of school leaders needs to be reassessed by the different authorities in Papua New Guinea, including the University of Papua New Guinea-Goroka Campus, the National Department of Education, together with the Divisions of Education in Provinces and the Inspectorial Division. It is critical that intending as well as practising principals are well prepared with appropriate and relevant administrative and leadership knowledge, skills and attitudes to face the demands and challenges of the role that they have to perform in reality in the

schools. This study revealed that the principals surveyed, unsatisfactorily performed the functions of the instructional leadership role. Although there was evidence of shared instructional leadership, the expected leadership follow-up through providing technical and personal support, professional direction and the monitoring of the responsibilities delegated was inadequately performed.

This study also revealed that the selection and promotion procedures for principals in high schools need to be re-examined as two of the principals surveyed were in their first year as principals in two large schools and there was evidence that they were not coping with the heavy responsibilities entrusted to them. There is a need for more qualified and experienced personnel to be promoted to occupy headship positions when they become vacant. Promotion or selection of principals based on an assessment of classroom competency alone is inadequate. Competencies in leadership and organisational knowledge and skills among other appropriate qualities should also be included in the criteria for selection and promotion.

The implications are that when intending principals are made known, the system of mentoring should be mandatory for the purpose of providing a proper induction into the responsibilities that they are expected to perform. Mentoring as defined by Lashway and Anderson (1997: 92) refers to the pairing of a veteran principal with an intending principal in a sort of 'buddy system'. According to Parks (1991) (cited in Lashway and Anderson (1997: 92)), the possible roles of the mentor is:

teaching leadership and management skills, nurturing the development of educational values, guiding the acquisition of political savvy, counseling in times of trouble, nourishing creativity, assisting with securing the first job, and advising on career, job, and personal decisions. All this is done in an atmosphere of genuine caring for the learner.

However, Anderson (1991) (cited in Lashway and Anderson, 1997: 93) cautions that schools have to be very careful in the selecting and training of mentor principals. Mentoring requires a delicate balance between giving advice and encouraging initiative:

Untrained mentors may simply pass on ineffective practices to new principals, perpetuating traditional processes and norms that may need to change. Effective mentors, therefore, must not tell beginning principals what they should do, but instead guide newcomers so that they are able to make their own decisions, based on a thorough understanding of the potential consequences of their choices.

Identified problems and suggested actions

A number of problems were identified as central to the successful implementation of the instructional leadership role in high schools by principals. The data identified the need for the training and staff development of principals in educational administration, selection and promotion procedures of principals to be re-examined with the possible introduction of a mentoring system to properly induct new principals into their job.

The implications for practice are that action needs to be taken in order to attempt to overcome the problems. Table 6.1 summarises some possible actions and resultant benefits.

Identified Problems	Suggested Actions	Foreseeable Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate preparation of intending or practising principals and the limited staff development opportunities on site or elsewhere in PNG 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills, attitudes and administrative and leadership knowledge development programs to enhance performance of principals on the job or before taking up headship positions • Increase technical and personnel support from NLEOE, the Provincial Education Division, the Inspectorial Division and the UPNG-Goroka Campus • Principals in schools to become non-teaching staff members • An extra teaching position to be created in each school to replace the vacant teaching position left by the principal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better understanding of the roles that principals are expected to perform • Greater readiness to accept educational changes as they come about • Increased productivity and effective working attitudes and relationships among teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inconsistencies in selecting and promoting personnel to headship positions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NLEOE, Provincial Education Division, the Inspectorial Division and the UPNG-Goroka Campus to re-examine the selection and promotion procedures for the appointment of principals in high schools • Intending principals should be promoted based on qualifications, experience and inspection reports with emphasis on an assessment of leadership and organisational competencies • Introduction of a mentoring system to help induct intending principals to the roles expected of them before being promoted to head a school by themselves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of schools will improve if the right persons with the right qualities that meet the selection criteria are promoted to headship positions • Increased credibility of the personnel taking up the headship position thereby limiting opposition and resistance by teachers • Teachers become more responsive and respectful towards the personnel occupying the headship position in the school • Reduce isolation of new principals by providing regular contact with experienced peers • Principals reflect on their job – what is happening and why • Provides systematic orientation of policies and procedures (official and unofficial) • Provide regular feedback on the new principal's performance

Table 6.1: Identified Problems, Suggested Actions and Foreseeable Benefits

Implications for Further Research

In gathering data for this project it became evident that research into the role of the school principal had been largely neglected in Papua New Guinea. There is a need to conduct further research on this intriguing and important area to improve the understanding and appreciation of the demands and challenges principals nowadays are expected to perform as well as to address and equip the principals for the emerging educational environment.

Since Papua New Guinea is divided into four main regions – New Guinea Islands, Momase, Highlands and Papua, it is advisable that further case studies be conducted in selected Provinces in these four regions to find out if similar results would be replicated. This could then be expanded to a national study to investigate the whole situation in Papua New Guinea in regard to how the reform has affected the role of the principal.

In addition, the role and responsibilities of the Secondary School Inspector needs to be addressed. A change in the role and responsibilities of inspectors in schools from a traditional inspectorial emphasis to a more facilitative and supportive role could be investigated. Research into the suggested change may provide practical implications for improvement in the performances of principals in the schools.

Another area that could be further researched is the idea of introducing the mentoring system for the induction of new principals into the job.

Conclusion

The environment in which education is taking place in Papua New Guinea in the 1990s is different from that which existed in previous decades. Papua New Guinea now needs effective school principals with a vision and with leadership and organisational knowledge and skills, including a knowledge of change and innovation, the ability to initiate, invent and adapt and a sense of direction, as well as the skill to motivate and provide appropriate leadership styles to meet the challenges and demands of the changing educational environment.

This study into the instructional leadership behaviour of high school principals in the New Ireland Province found conclusively that the principals' involvement in performing the five major functions of instructional leadership (defining and communicating school goals; managing the curriculum and instruction; promoting a positive learning climate; observing and giving feedback to teachers and assessing the instructional programs) were to a lesser degree than was deemed desirable and expected by the principals and the teachers surveyed. There was evidence of shared leadership in all schools, however the monitoring; and the support given in setting directions for the delegated roles were unsatisfactorily performed by the principals to meet the expectations of the teachers who were delegated the responsibilities. It is critical that the principals devote resources to nurture teachers, communicate expectations, give technical and personal support, and supervise, recognise and reward high quality teaching and leadership performance.

It may be concluded that in order to understand and appreciate the changing and demanding role of the principal, there needs to be an understanding and knowledge of the changing educational environment. This study challenged the National Department of Education, Provincial Education Division, the Inspectorial Division and the University of Papua New Guinea-Goroka Campus to re-examine the selection, promotion, training and staff development opportunities through the possible introduction of the mentoring system to enhance or improve the efficiency and effectiveness of principals in their struggle to meet the expectations entrusted to them.