THE INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOUR OF HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS : A NEW IRELAND CASE STUDY

BY

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DECLARATION

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree.

I certify that, to the best of my knowledge, any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged.

ABSTRACT

As schools and school systems undergo reform or restructuring in Papua New Guinea, school leadership – especially associated with the principals – is changing. What Papua New Guinea high schools need now are effective principals with a vision, who are equipped 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.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the instructional leadership behaviour of five high school principals in the New Ireland Province, Papua New Guinea. The main aim was to investigate whether these principals engage in actions consistent with instructional leadership.

The conceptual framework for the study was drawn from a literature review in which five main functions of the instructional leadership role (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 identified, adopted and adapted to the Papua New Guinea context. This study contends that the principals can and do make a difference both to students and to teachers, through their skills as instructional leaders.

The methodology used was qualitative in nature, however, to enhance, validate and add richness and depth to the data collected, it was imperative that certain aspects of quantitative methodology utilising descriptive survey questionnaires were used. Data were gathered through the use of descriptive survey questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and non-participant observations.

The major findings of the study was 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 indicated that their involvement in performing the five major functions 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. However, there was also evidence to support the view that although responsibilities were delegated to staff, the monitoring of these delegated responsibilities were not performed satisfactorily by the principals to meet the expectations of the teachers to whom these tasks were delegated.

Analysis of the data revealed that the main problems associated with the unsatisfactory performance of tasks consistent with instructional leadership were mainly due to principals giving their administrative tasks a higher priority over their instructional leadership tasks. Data revealed that this was due to the inconsistencies arising from the demands placed on principals by the Provincial Secondary School Inspector and the lack of appropriate training and staff development opportunities provided for principals.

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