**What is Instructional Leadership?**

The principal remains the designated leader of the school, but today, leadership is distributed across different people and situations – it’s more like patterns of influence across many players. Leadership effectiveness depends on how this influence promotes leader and teacher learning (and sometimes parent learning), in ways that improves the engagement, learning and well-being of all students.

Distributing leadership does not mean the principal delegates responsibility to others and remains aloof from what is happening in students’ learning environments. It involves interacting with teachers and developing relevant materials, routines and structures to promote learning (Timperley, 2011).  The principal sets the tone for the entire school – studies

school principal’s effects on classroom instruction operate more through the school’s culture and by modeling rather than through the direct supervision and evaluation of teaching (Reeves, 2008).

An instructional leadership mindset includes an intense moral purpose focused on promoting deep student learning, professional inquiry, trusting relationships and seeking evidence in action (Timperley, 2011). Great leadership requires attention to daily management tasks involved in running an organization; Creating a safe and secure learning environment and effective interventions for students in need, catching great teachers doing things right, and supporting them with genuine appreciation and emotional intelligence.

Educational leadership is more than a spot on a hierarchical organization chart. The quality and practice of leadership at every level has a demonstrable impact on organizational health in general and on student achievement in particular.

Vivian Robinson (2011) conducted a meta-analysis and identified five leadership practices that make a significant difference to student learning.

1. Establishing goals and expectations
2. Resourcing strategically
3. Ensuring quality teaching
4. Leading teacher learning and development
5. Ensuring an orderly and safe environment

Robinson contends that there are three capabilities that are needed to engage in these five practices:

* The capability to apply relevant knowledge within a leader’s practice
* The capability to solve complex problems.
* The capability to the type of trust needed for doing the hard work of improving and strengthening teaching and teacher learning.

These five leadership practices or dimensions “tell leaders what to focus on to have an impact on student learning; however they say very little about the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to make the practices or dimensions work”.

If principals are going to lead teacher learning and development they must know their class of teachers. They need to know what teachers already know and do well and when teachers need to learn. They also need to learn and do what makes a difference to teacher learning and student learning. Principals learn to lead teacher learning and development when they, themselves, undertake a process of cycles of inquiry for leadership learning (Timperley, 2011).