

Policy Analysis for School Leaders' Development during the Covid-19 Pandemic – An Adaptive Leadership Practice Framework

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Abstract

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has confirmed how co-dependent and adaptable to change nations are. Similarly, school leaders' behaviour and their interactions with educators require resilience and the application of innovative approaches to address change. The purpose of this conceptual paper is to support school leaders with adaptive leadership skills to think outside the shadow of the pandemic while tackling such hard-hitting encounters with flexibility and fervour. Having applied adaptive leadership theory, this paper engages in an analysis of the *Policy on the South African Standard for Principalship* (2015). The policy urges for a humanistic, needs-driven execution of leadership, significant to the attainment of its transformative objectives for education. So, the paper proposes an Alternative Adaptive Leadership Practice Framework (AALPF) which specifies that adaptive change interventions reshape past leadership practices, rather than jettison it. To search for alternative ways to re-imagine school leadership at a time of a health threatening crisis, this paper seeks to answer the question: 'how may an adaptive leadership practice framework contribute to reshaping leadership for transformative change during an international

crisis and beyond?' The development of the AALPF supports the notion that adaptive leadership has the potential to significantly displace, reregulate and rearrange deep-rooted structures of leadership and recognises that it, if intentionally and carefully introduced, could help spark transformative change.

Keywords: adaptive leadership, alternative adaptive leadership practice framework (AALPF), coronavirus pandemic, Policy on the South African Standard for Principals, transformative change

Introduction

Since the beginning of 2020, the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), the cause of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has created irrefutable chaos (Hargreaves & Fullan 2020) and has been compared with a powerful luminous explosion and enormous loss (Azorín 2020), requiring innovations for inspiration, idealised influence and intellectual stimulation (Fernandez & Shaw 2020). Apart from having negatively impacted almost every aspect of human life, COVID-19 forced schools to close their doors, redefining the way in which teaching and learning has been conducted and necessitating shifts from face-to-face interactions to screen-based online activities (Harris & Jones 2020). During such disrupting periods, school leaders cannot perform leadership practices comparable to when schools experienced periods of steadiness and stability. Certainly, school leaders have been caught in unenviable positions and are dependent on the guidance from health departments about COVID-19 protocols and regulations in order to take their schools to the next level of achievement (Harris & Jones 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic undeniably transformed conceptions of school leaders' insights and roles while they gear themselves to mitigate the challenge of the pandemic. Leading from a distance is a daunting task while having little alternative but to use digital technology to communicate with parents and stakeholders. While this kind of leadership may be conceived of as peculiar, demanding and even excruciating, leaders must adapt to the prevailing circumstances (Leithwood *et al.* 2020; Zhao 2020).

Problem Statement

The COVID-19 pandemic is unlikely to be the final catastrophe humankind will ever experience and it is definitely not the first time that school leaders have been required to lead through times of uncertainty. The expectation is that during times like these, school leaders should provide direction and, instil hope and build resilience whilst remaining attentive to the best possible outcomes for their colleagues, learners and school communities. However, leading through times of ambiguity can be intimidating – there are no easy answers, and often no perfect pathways to follow. Ambiguity requires leaders to adapt swiftly to a fast-changing condition, whilst drawing on various leadership styles and skills (Kerrissey & Edmonson 2020). When challenged with uncertainties such as the COVID-19 pandemic, school leaders need to respond instantaneously, while they have to remain focused on the future to attain the best imaginable learning and teaching environment.

The problem, however, is that leadership during times of a crisis is difficult and errors will unquestionably arise. It is thus not strange that voices are rising, calling for a re-imagination and re-alignment of school leadership where leaders adapt to changing circumstances. Netolicky (2020, as cited in Harris & Jones 2020: 244) contends: ‘In a time of crisis, leaders must act swiftly and with foresight but also with careful consideration of options, consequences and side effects of actions taken’. Although Netolicky’s (2020) words are significant, the literature revealing strategies to empower school leaders to transform their learning environments is scant (Fetters & Molina-Azorin 2020). Therefore, our intention is to showcase how school leaders, through an application of an Alternative Adaptive Leadership Practice Framework (AALPF), can use education policy to adapt swiftly to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In an attempt to search for strategies to empower school leaders, a literature review is first conducted regarding the following key aspects: a culture of transformative innovation; adaptive leadership; challenges and opportunities; adaptive leadership and transformative change as well as the significance of education policy for adaptive leadership.

A Culture of Transformative Innovation

Leaders in a global crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic undoubtedly face challenges and may feel uncertain about how to adapt and innovatively

transform the social panorama of their schools to create equal learning opportunities for all learners. Like Sutch *et al.* (2008: 5), we regard transformative innovation as, ‘the successful exploitation of ideas, generated at the intersection of invention and insight, leading to the creation of social value’. Significantly, three criteria in support of transformative innovation can be regarded as essential. For instance, innovation utilises ideas (not only mentioning the idea); which are created by establishing trusting relationships and creativity; and in applying an innovative idea, the new practice should be valuable and beneficial to all (Tejeiro-Koller *et al.* 2017). Enacting such a culture of transformative innovation in schools may permit their leaders to study and adapt inventively to a varying situation (Tejeiro-Koller 2016; Tejeiro-Koller *et al.* 2017). In fact, if the challenges and opportunities presented during disruptive times are to be met, substance should be given for mechanisms to support leaders with adaptive leadership skills for a transformative learning space to emerge (Gillespie 2017; Naranjo-Valencia & Calderon-Hernández 2018). Arguably, for transformative innovation to be successful, it must acknowledge and address leadership practice (Daniels 2020), requiring insight from school leaders to adapt and transform learning environments, to increase their capacity as leaders to willingly shape and improve their instructional practice.

Adaptive Leadership: Challenges and Opportunities

Adaptive leadership focuses on encouraging transformation by promoting interaction, considering emotions and reasoning amongst individuals, and motivating them to work together to do adaptive work. Leaders do not innovate on their own, but motivate colleagues to find answers to adaptive challenges (Heifetz & Laurie 1997; Arthur-Menza & Zimmerman 2017). School leaders would thus not only focus on their own leadership competencies, but have to translate practices into a shared vision focusing on strengthening the relationship between the leader and follower to confront challenges and to innovate and explore varying kinds of leadership practices (Yukl & Mahsud 2010).

Adaptive leadership starts by recognising adaptive challenges that bring about transformative change. For instance, school leaders are challenged to resist uniformity which allows for established routines and behaviour patterns in curriculum delivery (Palmer 2004; Cawsey *et al.* 2016). The

barrier of recognising quality curriculum material reflects a practical encounter in terms of curriculum delivery and alignment (Polikoff 2015). The COVID-19 pandemic requires a transformation in the way teaching and learning are done by shifting class-based interaction to more online academic collaboration (Harris & Jones 2020). An adaptive challenge would, for instance, include teacher competencies in the use of digital technology to unlock the learning potential for all learners while prioritising effective teaching practices. Inevitably, this requires that school leaders be cognisant of how to collaboratively investigate innovative actions, standards, opinions and unfamiliar solutions to speak to educational challenges and practices (Hargreaves & Fullan 2020).

If school leaders open-mindedly engage with others while building critical relationships to promote action and leverage technology, they may be positioned to determine the best options for action and address how changes in the learning environment will prompt changes in action. Heifetz *et al.* (2009) propose four main principles which provide guidance in thinking about opportunities for adaptive leadership. *Firstly*, distributed leadership guides school leaders to delegate roles to teams. *Secondly*, optimal talent mix entails using individuals' competencies rather than merely implementing the ideas of top management. *Thirdly*, a clear charter implies school leaders along with all relevant stakeholders follow ground rules and well-defined goals. *Lastly*, building trust may assist in fostering strong relationships and elicit collective innovative approaches to addressing learning problems and curriculum delivery.

To explain the significance of adaptive leadership in terms of challenges and opportunities, Raei (2018) observes that, 'If you stay moving on the dance floor, all you will see will be the people dancing with you and around you. Swept up in the music, it may be a great party! But when you get on the balcony, you may see a very different picture' (Heifetz *et al.* 2009: 7, as cited in Raei 2018: 21).

This reflection signifies that school leaders may at first not recognise that challenging circumstances require action to improve current situations (Heifetz & Linsky 2009). Significantly though, if school leaders would open themselves to action and reflection, that is, moving on the dance floor and then going to the balcony, their responsiveness may be regarded as a way of navigating adaptive leadership practices for transformative change (Heifetz & Laurie 1997, as cited in Raei 2018).

Adaptive Leadership and Transformative Change

Adaptive leadership can provide school leaders with skills on how to encourage and involve individuals to react confidently during challenging contexts, to effect transformative change when already known change models seem not to be efficient and often leads to failed change processes (Heifetz & Laurie 1997; Arthur-Menza & Zimmerman 2020). Transformative change requires spaces which will, 'allow and enable dialogue, reflection and reflexive learning, while reframing issues in ways that allow solutions – or at the very least, attempts to experiment and transform' (Pereira *et al.* 2020: 162). Opportunities to transform are critical given situations where people have unequal access to information, are not listened to and where opinions are profoundly weighted in relation to others (Dyer 2018: 8). The implication is that transformative change should not be signifying change for the sake of change only, but rather embody a directional shift when individuals want to adapt in terms of the way in which things will be done (Few *et al.* 2017).

For change to be regarded as transformative, school leaders may consider exemplifying three levels of change, namely structural, process and attitudinal (Klempin & Mechur Karp 2015) in which structural changes echo modifications to educational plans and leadership practices; process changes typify modifications in interpersonal interactions; and attitudinal changes characterise modifications in fundamental beliefs, attitudes and values. In lieu of the afore-mentioned levels of change, the implementation of adaptive leadership suggests that school leaders enact adaptive processes. School leaders should establish collaboration (Cowen 2020), build networks with individuals (Fernandez & Shaw 2020); and apply resourceful guidance in times of change in various educational spaces (Holcombe & Kezar 2017).

In a study on school leaders across the United States of America, Fernandez and Shaw (2020: 39) advise that leaders should address adaptive challenges through a combination of servant leadership, distributed leadership and clear communication. A servant leader needs others to foster positive organisational outcomes (Liu 2019; Newman *et al.* 2017). Distributed leadership, as a shared leadership, implies that all individuals are regarded as leaders and are afforded leadership opportunities (Dampson *et al.* 2018). A necessary imperative is that school leaders invite and engage colleagues to collectively construct new meaning, focusing on the continuous development of constructed meanings (Van Ruler 2018).

Nelson and Squires's (2017) study on addressing multifaceted issues through adaptive leadership points out that transformative change is possible because 'the adaptive demands of our time require leaders who take responsibility without waiting for revelation or request' (Heifetz & Laurie 2011: 78). Leaders should connect with challenging circumstances, whilst keeping challenges at a level that will encourage change without overpowering others (Heifetz *et al.* 2004).

Contemporary research on adaptive leadership (Ramalingam *et al.* 2020) as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic emphasises the importance of policy imperatives to reflect different interpretations in different contexts. The afore-mentioned research aligns with previous views in the academic literature which elect school leaders to initiate actions of adaptive leadership with learning and listening (Heifetz & Linsky 2009) and not only envision possibilities as a new way of doing things, but they should act on implementing policies to effect change (Bowles & Hattie 2013).

The Significance of Education Policy for Adaptive Leadership

Ball (1994) asserts that, to understand the meaning of education policy it is necessary to understand the dual conceptualisation of policy as text and policy as discourse. Policy as text is considered 'representations which are encoded in complex ways (via struggles, compromises, authoritative public interpretations and reinterpretations) and decoded in complex ways via actors, interpretations and meanings in relation to their history, experiences, skills, resources and context' (Ball 1994: 16). Significantly, text relies on matters such as capability, understanding, co-operation and commitment, and it carries meaning when decoded (Ball 1993). On the other hand, policy as discourse is understood to be 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault 2002: 49), suggesting that 'we do not speak discourse, it speaks us' (Ball 1994: 22). Suggestively, discourse is about what can be said, whilst possibilities for thought are constructed (Foucault 1977, as cited in Ball 2015). Interpreting both Foucault (2002) and Ball (2015), it is evident that education policy discourse communicates texts which encompass space, and in this instance, thought and invention for the articulation of views regarding adaptive leadership practices for school leaders. Our intention is to analyse discourses in the *Policy on the South*

African Standard for Principalship (2015) to articulate adaptive leadership practices for school leaders' development during times of crises and beyond.

The South African Department of Basic Education (Department of Basic Education (DBE), 2015) developed the *Policy on the South African Standard for Principalship* (hereafter, this Policy) to delineate the functions of school principals and the fundamental features of competencies, appearance and professionalism. This Policy explicitly indicates that development is geared at effective school leadership and that a needs-driven improvement of leadership is fundamental to the accomplishment of transformative change in schools. An analysis of stipulations in this Policy is relevant because it shapes the direction of school leadership in terms of 'adaptability and responsiveness to change' (DBE 2015: 4), whilst it anticipates that school leaders, 'create a school as an organisation that is adaptable to change' (DBE 2015: 9). According to the DBE (2015), change in South African schools is influenced by health, economic, political and social factors – aspects indicative of requiring a nurturing and supportive school environment. For instance, this Policy highlights 'the devastating impact of HIV and AIDS' (DBE 2015: 3) and how school leaders should be equipped with skills to improve changing situations which affect schools (DBE 2015). Likewise, COVID-19 brought changes in the way leadership has been conducted, whilst it also requires that school leaders should adapt to lead effectively during demanding and chaotic circumstances (Harris & Jones 2020).

Adaptive Leadership Theory

Leadership is not merely a neutral certainty or motionless feature of a person. While House *et al.* (1999: 184) define leadership as 'the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others', Schein (1992: 2) describes leadership as an 'individual ability to step outside the culture...to start evolutionary change processes that are more adaptive'. However, the latter definitions provide an individualistic perspective of leadership and do not entirely explain the active and social practices in terms of leadership development over time (DeRue 2011), especially during adaptive times such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The problem is that several leaders are unsuccessful to lead when they misguidedly treat adaptive challenges as if they were technical complications. Though adaptive challenges require an

adaption of habits, attitudes, roles and procedures, individualistic leaders usually attempt to solve technical problems as individuals who solely have solutions to challenges and the decision-making power to apply such solutions (Thomas 2010). To assist leaders to lead during adaptive times, the adaptive leadership theory was developed by Heifetz (1994).

Adaptive leadership theory underscores the fact that there are no dysfunctional schools because they all operate at the level of adaptation in which they are prepared to participate (Heifetz 1994). Therefore, leadership development occurs typically when leaders ascertain numerous opportunities to apply adaptive leadership in various areas of their lives. Understanding personal development may assist school leaders to make relevant decisions to lead schools through adaptive challenges. The idea would yield sequential minor changes so that schools can adapt to transforming circumstances (Heifetz 1994).

School leaders should, therefore, be willing to change in terms of the three tenets tied to adaptive leadership. School leaders should:

- increase their emotional intelligence to monitor their own feelings and those of others, to evaluate reactions and to apply acquired knowledge to guide their thinking and action (Salovey & Mayer 1990);
- be open to development by encouraging the improvement of critical, systematic and holistic perspectives regarding the situation at hand (Parks 2005); and
- have a deep sense of transparency and creativity (DeRue 2011); and be willing to learn and discover new strategies to solve adaptive challenges (Arthur-Menza & Zimmerman 2017).

As such, ‘school leadership requires a learning strategy, an adaptive approach to leadership because the adaptive demands of our time require leaders who take responsibility without waiting for revelation or request’ (Heifetz & Laurie 2011: 78). To assist school leaders in terms of Heifetz and Laurie’s (2011) observation, interpretive policy analysis will be applied to analyse stipulations in this Policy to develop an adaptive leadership framework to empower leaders in times of crisis and beyond.

Rationale for Interpretive Policy Analysis

When researchers attempt to interpret policy discourse, ‘they offer a new set of tools to begin to try to explain things’ (Ball 1990: 18). Interpretive policy analysis was applied to analyse discourses in the Policy to interpret the meanings that are communicated regarding adaptive leadership. Interpretive policy analysis aims at deciphering meanings contained in policy discourse to share knowledge, information and skills to speak to challenges experienced by individuals (Yanow 2007). Interpreting education policy discourse is not an easy activity, it is not only about considering its instructive contexts nor reading it as the declarations of policymakers, but also understanding that the conversational formations they comprise, await interpretation (Olssen *et al.* 2004). Rather, interpretive policy analysis requires researchers to interpret stipulations in education policies (Yanow 2000) by: identifying discourses in the policy which have particular reference to transformation and change (aspects applicable to adaptive leadership); analyse and interpret relevant discourses; and describe meaning that is relevant to adaptive leadership.

An interpretive policy analysis is informed by a concern to appreciate the world as it is and to comprehend the essential nature of the social world at the level of individual knowledge (O’Connor 2005). We argue that the preceding opinion implies an understanding of the choices which are expected to be founded on the basis of influence. The influence that is mentioned is geared at what is supposed to be acceptable while evading what is unacceptable because policy choices are made with clarity and reason, whilst the variety of acceptable solutions is required to address real life challenges (De Klerk 2014).

Interpreting Discourses in the *South African Standard for Principals*

This Policy suggests developmental needs for principals as school leaders, aiming at enhancing their competencies to adapt and respond to changing situations which may have an influence on schools (DBE 2015: 3 - 4). Although this Policy contains numerous stipulations, discourses which speak the strongest about adaptive leaders, were analysed. It advises that school leaders should ‘create an environment that is trusting and conducive to teaching and learning and that addresses the challenges of transformational

change’ (DBE 2015: 9).

School leaders should regard trust as ‘the extent to which one engages a relationship and is willing to be vulnerable (willingness to risk) to another based on communication and confidence’ (Daly & Chrispeels 2008: 33) because an absence of trust in schools may strengthen feelings of negative anxiety, estrangement and isolation. Building trust is significant because a pandemic outbreak, like COVID-19, increases individuals’ levels of concern, influences their capacity to make balanced choices and influences their behaviour (Li *et al.* 2020). For school leaders to realise the transformation envisioned during adaptive times, attention must be paid to trust because it creates fertile ground to adapt when schools must adjust to changing situations (Bryk & Schneider 2002). Consequently, this Policy directs school leaders to nurture trust because it may create a school environment where they may be able to effectively execute ‘adaptive leadership methods and drive change within their organisation with successful results during challenging times’ (Casiello 2019: 115). The policy further advises that school leaders should ‘ask everyone involved in the school for suggestions about how to change and improve process situations at the school to get those persons to help in applying alternative strategies’ (DBE 2015: 8); and ‘initiate strategies for inspiring, challenging, motivating and empowering people to ... carry them forward in planned action’ (DBE 2015: 13).

Since school leaders can provide multiple opportunities for the development of operational managing abilities that are important building blocks for optimal capable performance in the face of significant hardship, fostering supportive relationships should be regarded as fundamental (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2015). Inevitably, school leaders should, through repeated interaction, ensure that leader – follower identities are established because adaptive leadership focuses on interaction with followers to motivate them to adapt to change (Heifetz & Laurie 1997, as cited in Arthur-Menza & Zimmerman 2017) and to circulate and scale innovation (Uhl-Bien & Arena 2018, as cited in Schulze & Pinkow 2020). Thus, fostering relationships is critically important because the implementation of adaptive initiatives usually requires the involvement of all stakeholders in the schools (Heifetz 2011). Whilst fostering relationships, school leaders should ‘ensure that the strategic planning process takes account of the values, diversity and particular context of the school’ (DBE 2015:13); and ‘ensure diversity of resources which are available’ (DBE 2015:19).

Diversity relates to dissimilarities in how we think about the world, how we see the world, how we try to solve problems, the tools we acquire and the life experiences we encounter (Page & Harris 2015, as cited in Swartz *et al.* 2019). The advantages of engaging people with a comprehensive band of viewpoints have countless potential to develop our ability to transform. For instance, teams that comprise various kinds of thinkers outclass identical groups on multifaceted tasks, including enhanced problem-solving, improved invention, and more precise expectations – all of which lead to improved enactment and outcomes when an assorted group is tasked to deal with a particular challenge (Page *et al.* 2017). Whilst adaptive leaders would thus mobilise a diverse group of people to tackle threatening encounters and flourish (Heifetz *et al.* 2009), they also facilitate changing behaviour in appropriate diverse way to keep pace as circumstances in schools improve (Yukl & Mahsud 2010). The policy emphatically states that improvement can only be effective if school leaders are ‘demonstrating resourcefulness, initiative and determination in seeking solutions to problems’ (DBE 2015: 4); and ‘monitor, evaluate and review the impact of school plans, and initiate appropriate action where applicable’ (DBE 2015: 13).

By taking action to create adaptive space, school leaders are required to engage in the tautness between consideration and utilisation, enabling them to initiate an adaptive process within schools (Schulze & Pinkow 2020). This implies that school leaders should plan a collection of interventions to prevent unnecessary discomfort and to keep the attention on the adaptive challenge (Raei 2018). Adaptive leadership thus emphasises ‘adaptive, creative, and learning actions’ (Uhl-Bien *et al.* 2008: 212), implying that it leads to adaptive action (Raei 2018: 68).

The policy therefore supports an adaptive implementation of leadership to achieve transformative change and equality in schools in a creative way. As such, this paper henceforth proposes an Alternative Adaptive Leadership Practice Framework (AALPF) which specifies how adaptive change interventions may restructure the way in which school leaders perform their duties during a pandemic like COVID-19.

The Alternative Adaptive Leadership Practice Framework for School Leaders

Whilst existing educational leadership preparation programmes may not be

as effective as those in place prior to COVID-19, such programmes already necessitate a significant modification to ensure that school leaders stay abreast of the fundamental changes the world is facing (Harris & Jones 2020). Although previous research has been done on adaptive leadership, this paper offers an AALPF, through education policy analysis, to empower school leaders to lead during challenging times. Having analysed stipulations from the Policy, adaptive leadership practices are proposed which school leaders may apply to contribute to transformative change in schools during COVID-19 and beyond.

From the analysed stipulations from the Policy, the following adaptive leadership practices will be discussed next: *address challenges of transformative change* and *empower people for the planned adaptive action*.

Address Challenges of Transformative Change

To fully understand the transformative challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, school leaders should be cognisant about transformative capabilities such as social awareness, responsible decision-making, self-management, relationship skills, and self-awareness. In addressing transformative challenges, school leaders should create trusting environments (DBE 2015) which would allow individuals to become change champions. Congruent with the stipulations of the DBE (2015), we suggest that, whilst building change champions, school leaders should take the lead in decision-making, provide a sense of control, be willing to receive feedback, establishing new task-oriented leadership teams consisting of staff, community members, businesses and officials of the education department. In so doing, school leaders may ensure that teachers at schools have access to useful information, use their autonomy to communicate their ideas, whilst driving their individual agendas in a self-directed and self-organised manner. We hold the view that when school leaders address transformative change, they may open doors for adaptive innovation because ‘innovation requires new practices, new business models, new ways of development of these creative abilities (both individual and collective), new ways to manage talent as well as sharing of new experiences’ (Cohendet *et al.* 2013: 5). Thus, when taking an adaptive stance, school leaders may be positioned to learn their way through these challenges and motivate teachers and learners to adopt alternative teaching and learning strategies than previously necessary.

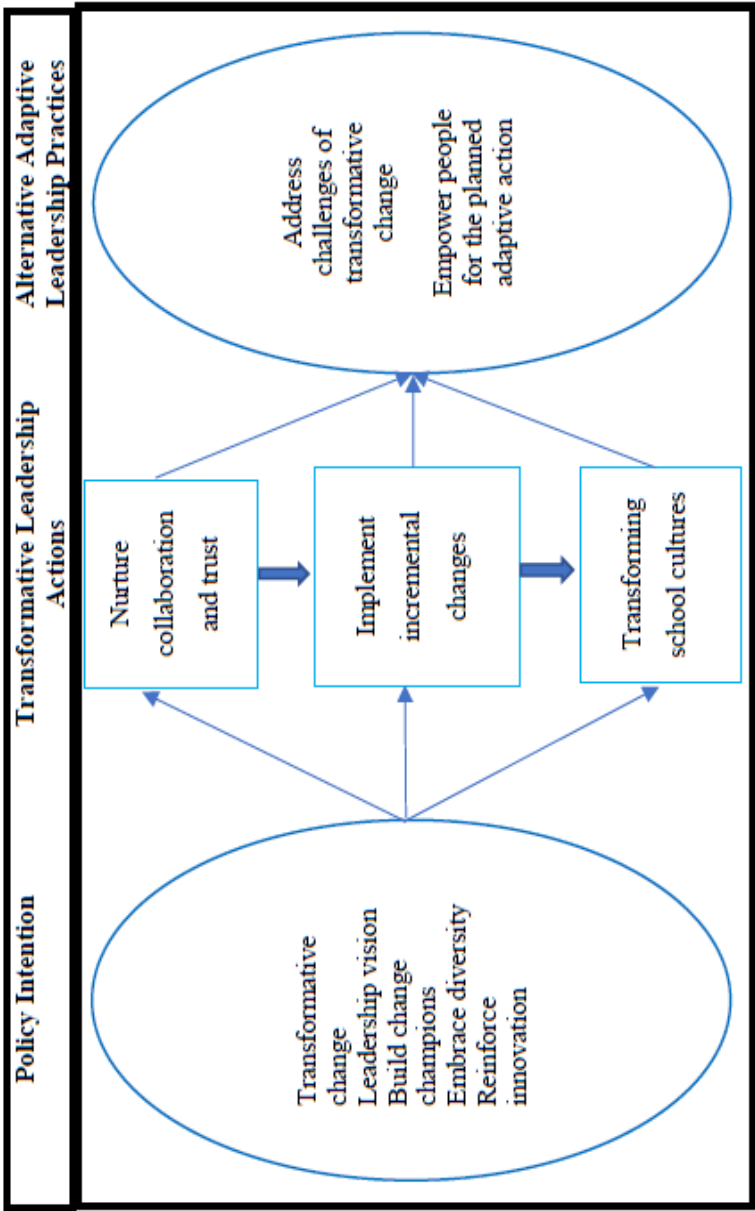


Figure 1: Alternative Adaptive Leadership Practice Framework for school leaders (own construction as derived from our analysis of the Policy on the South African Standard for Principalship (2015)).

Previous leadership studies reveal that adaptive leadership is noteworthy for devising alternative leadership practices resulting in improved leadership practice while assisting school leaders to implement transformative innovation (Potchana *et al.* 2020). Drawing on the academic literature, an attempt to increase adaptive transformative leadership, school leaders should use of individuals' abilities and experience in supporting adaptation; ability to tolerate indistinctness and autonomy to act through empowerment (Gillespie 2017; Heifetz *et al.* 2018).

Empower People for the Planned Adaptive Action

The COVID-19 pandemic brought adaptive opportunities for school leaders who are goal-oriented, willing to take risks and acting as long-term strategic thinkers – individuals who empower others, dare to share leadership and create collective intelligence by bringing people and technology together (McLeod & Dulsky 2021). This is in line with the DBE (2015: 8, 13) which suggests that school leaders should 'get those people' and 'empower people' so that they can be ready to adapt to the educational requirements posed by the current pandemic. Consequently, we suggest that school leaders act as servants and delegate leadership responsibilities as means to empower teachers for planned adaptive action.

Firstly, by acting as servants, school leaders should emphasise involvement and collaboration to ensure that the diverse needs of staff members are catered for. School leaders may, for instance, establish a diversity and inclusion committee to encourage transparency about adaptive efforts and to take on board learning from both successful and failed efforts, which is critical to maximise adaptive outcomes. We argue that servantship may be supportive of collective capabilities that accentuates schools' resilience during challenging times. As such, when making use of diverse capabilities, adaptive leaders would draw on a variety of viewpoints that may confidently influence decision-making and problem-solving. In so doing, school leaders learn how to expand leadership by increasing informal power, finding supporters, protecting voices of conflict, and keeping allied with antagonists. School leaders will thus foster transformative change to ensure that others are ready for planned adaptive action.

Secondly, by delegating leadership responsibilities, school leaders may ensure that the quality of decisions improve because multiple perspec-

tives regarding challenges may be obtained, whilst teachers are afforded opportunities to work autonomously and in a self-managed way (Berjaoui & Karami-Akkary 2019). Importantly, acts of distributed leadership may not only increase teachers' self-efficacy levels and affect them in a positive manner, but they may also provide a significant contribution to school improvement and school effectiveness. Thus, to take effective distributive action in times of crisis, adaptive leaders certainly recognise the reasons for the challenges, act decisively in responding to the challenge and confidently lead others and allow them to lead in a collective way during a crisis.

Evident from the above adaptive leadership practices amid times of crisis is that school leaders should step back from the situation at hand to determine the adaptive challenge and create an environment to facilitate adaptive change.

Conclusion

This paper attempted to answer the question: '*how may an adaptive leadership practice framework contribute to interventions to reshape school leadership during an international crisis?*' Current challenges brought about by COVID-19 necessitated a rethinking of school leadership. With limited information and having to confront many uncertainties, school leaders, like leaders in other domains (economy, society, religion, among others) worldwide, had to respond to the devastating effects of COVID-19. The paper argued that adaptive leadership may be regarded as one of the best possible solutions to assist school leaders to change challenging situations during and beyond COVID-19. Adaptive leadership enables school leaders to deal with complex, unpredictable and challenging circumstances that require a swift response to rapidly changing opportunities as they occur.

Findings from the analysis suggest that school leaders should be willing to take risks to confront challenging circumstances on which they may find themselves. Three important aspects are derived from the analysis of the Policy, indicating that school leaders should: initiate adaptive practices, empower individuals regarding adaptive practices, create an environment of trust and implement adaptive strategies in response to adaptive challenges.

Through an analysis of discourses in the Policy, this paper theoretically contributes to the knowledge corpus by proposing an AALPF for school

leaders which may assist them in bringing about transformative change in schools. The framework suggests that adaptive school leaders nurture trust, embrace diversity and take action to lead innovation, expansion and reorientation as ways to facilitate transformative change in schools. Significantly, an adaptive leader understands that to start is significant, as by taking that first step they then realise what the most suitable next step could be.

A possible implication is that this study fell short of eliciting the voices of school leaders regarding their leadership practices as well as how they brought about possible transformative change in schools in challenging times. Whilst this study proposed policy perspectives for adaptive leadership, the dynamics of cultivating adaptive teams were not a focus point of this study. We recommend that school leaders be trained on how to become adaptive leaders during times of crises. A further recommendation is that action research be conducted where the experiences of school leaders and adaptive leadership practices are coined to share best practices with school principals around the globe.

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