Micro-Political Leadership Strategies Used by Curriculum Leaders in One Queensland School in Implementing the National Curriculum

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ABSTRACT: Despite several countries having introduced a national curriculum, the literature on how school leaders implement such curriculum is surprisingly scant. This article reports on one aspect of a larger study that investigated how members of a school curriculum leadership team implemented Australia's first national curriculum. The aspect reported in this article is concerned with leadership strategies used by these members in the implementation of this curriculum. The findings draw on semi-structured in-depth interviews of 29 participants, comprising 17 members of this team and 11 teachers in the case school, and one school sector curriculum officer. Blase and Anderson's (1995) micro-political leadership matrix was used to analyse the research findings, which shed light on the micro-political leadership practices regarding how school leaders implement large-scale mandated curriculum change. This analysis highlighted the need for those with curriculum leadership to understand micro-politics in leading such change.

Introduction

Education systems in many countries have undergone considerable reform as education policies have been framed to respond to the processes and forces of globalisation. The education system in Australia is no exception, as evidenced by the implementation of its first national curriculum (Australian Curriculum), which officially commenced in 2012. Currently, there is a lack of research on how school leaders are implementing the Australian Curriculum. While the limited literature on national curricula of other countries provides some clues into the area of interest, this literature does not account for the idiosyncrasies of the Australian context.

A study was conducted into how members of a school curriculum leadership team (SCLT) in one Preparatory Year to Year 12 (P-12) independent Queensland school led the implementation of Phase One learning areas of the Australian Curriculum (i.e. Preparatory to Year 10 Mathematics, English, Science and History). A key focus of this study was to identify and understand the leadership strategies employed by members of this team in leading the implementation of this curriculum. The findings are reported in this article.

Background and Context

To date, the literature on the Australian Curriculum has predominantly focused on its development and associated curriculum documents, such as shaping papers and syllabi rather than any in-depth investigation of its implementation by school leaders (e.g. Donnelly, 2015; Kindler, 2016; Reid, 2015). Thus, no study seems to currently exist that provides insights into how the implementation of this curriculum is being led by school leaders.

The literature on national curricula of other countries

Other countries that have implemented a national curriculum include New Zealand, England, Wales, Northern Ireland, China, Sweden and Norway. However, there remains a dearth of research around how school leaders have implemented such large-scale curriculum reform. One study in Greece (Sofou & Tsafos, 2010) examined pre-school teachers' views of the new early childhood curriculum (part of its national curriculum framework) and its implementation, as well as its impact on teachers' practices. The findings of this study highlighted that almost all 11 teachers interviewed from the metropolitan area of Athens experienced a lack of appropriate guidance and professional development to work with the new framework. This raises the question of whether school leaders are providing adequate support and guidance to teachers in the implementation of large-scale education reform.

A second study by Germeten (2011) empirically investigated the principal's role in implementing a national curriculum reform in Norway. The study drew on quantitative data from a survey of all 53 primary school principals in the region of Finnmark, supplemented with qualitative data from interviews with five of these principals, classroom observations and interviews with teachers. This study found that while the principals understood their responsibility in providing direction for teachers in implementing the new reform, they did not see it as their responsibility to implement the intentions of this reform (Germeten, 2011). This raises the question of how principals are providing this direction.

While both these studies raise questions about the role of school leadership in the implementation of national curricula reform, they do not provide significant insights into the 'nature' of this leadership. A useful lens to examine such changes is micro-political leadership theory, an approach examined in the next section.

Micro-political leadership

While theories of transactional, transformational and distributed leadership offer some insights into school leadership practices, they can be somewhat limited as they pay little attention to the political realities (micro-politics) of school life that might impact on such practices (Flessa, 2009). Here, micro-politics is defined as,

> the use of formal and informal power by individuals and groups to achieve their goals in organisations. In large part, political actions result from perceived differences between individuals and groups, coupled with motivation to use power to influence and/or protect. (Blase, 1991, p. 11)

A number of authors have argued that micro-political leadership theory provides a more comprehensive view of leadership from which to understand the leadership practices of school leaders and others who work within a school setting (e.g. Blase & Anderson, 1995; Burns, 1961; Flessa, 2009). Thus, the 'study of school level educational leadership through the lens of micropolitics has the potential to generate interesting and potentially useful analyses of the different experiences and expectations of those closest to educational policy implementation' (Flessa, 2009, p. 332).

Blase and Anderson's micro-political leadership matrix

This matrix incorporates both transformative and transactional leadership concepts from Burns (1978) and assembles these concepts together with the central notions of 'power with', 'power through' and 'power over'. The matrix identifies four types of approaches in which power is utilised to achieve certain outcomes or ends by leaders: authoritarian; adversarial; facilitative; and democratic, empowering.

Authoritarian leadership
Authoritarian leadership involves the leader in taking a closed transactional approach to exercising power that promotes maintenance of the status quo. This power is said to be associated with domination and control, referred to as 'power over' (Blase & Anderson, 1995). Such an approach views leaders as isolating teachers from decision-making processes, in which they 'avoid, disable or ignore teachers, suppress dialogue, and exercise control through formal structures and the enforcement of policies and rules' (Blase & Anderson, 1995, p. 17).

Adversarial leadership
Drawing on the work of Ball (1987), Blase and Anderson (1995) refer to the closed transformative approach as adversarial leadership. This approach views the leader as essentially authoritarian, and as adversarial because he or she does not share power often, and is confrontational and aggressive in achieving their goals (Blase & Anderson, 1995). Hence, the strategies that these leaders use are considered as closed, and the dominant form of power relied on is viewed as 'power over'. Critical to this leadership is a moral agenda whereby the goals of the adversarial leader tend to be the promotion of his or her moral vision. In this sense, they are transformational (Blase & Anderson, 1995). Additionally, adversarial leaders are characterised as highly motivational. They 'exercise power through the mobilization of efforts by teachers and other stakeholders' (Blase & Anderson, 1995, p. 20).

Facilitative leadership
According to Blase and Anderson (1995), facilitative leadership equates to an open transactional approach being taken. The dominant use of power is said to be 'power through', as leaders strive towards their goals through the motivation of others, thus using power indirectly. Such goals are predetermined and they tend to promote a more humane organisational climate and individual empowerment (Blase & Anderson, 1995). Blase and Anderson (1995) argue that this leadership 'often appropriates a discourse of change and participation while engaging in bureaucratic manipulation towards pre-established goals' (p. 20). While this manipulation over subordinates relies on subtle and covert use of power, the notion of 'power over' is evident here. Nonetheless, facilitative leadership is seen to be more inclusive than the closed leadership approaches discussed earlier, as it provides opportunities for participation by subordinates (Blase & Anderson, 1995).

Democratic, empowering leadership
An open transformative approach in utilising power by the leader to achieve his or her goals is considered as democratic, empowering leadership. The notion of 'power with' is evident with this leadership as the leader attempts to achieve his or her goals of democracy and social empowerment through more democratic processes of decision making where genuine exchange of opinions is permitted without fear (Blase & Anderson, 1995). Thus, this style of leadership engages teachers 'in a larger mission of student and community empowerment' (p. 21).

Research Focus and Design

This article reports on one aspect of a larger study (Dao, 2017) that sought to obtain deeper insights into a major change process from the perspectives of individuals occupying various curriculum leadership roles at the different professional levels within one school setting. The findings presented in this article address the following question: *What strategies are used by the school curriculum leadership team to lead the implementation of a national curriculum?*

The study employed a qualitative research methodology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008), in which a single case study design (Yin, 2009) was used. Semi-structured in-depth interviews (Minichiello, Aroni & Hays, 2008) were the main data collection method, with document analysis (Bowen, 2009) and an online questionnaire (Babbie, 2008) providing valuable additional data including critical insights into the context of the school.

A case study design allowed for an in-depth investigation of the areas of interest and enabled the use of several different data collection methods to obtain rich accounts of what is happening in the school site, which contributed to critical insights into the perceptions of the participants about the phenomenon being investigated (Babbie, 2008; Salkind, 2000; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003a, 2003b). The use of multiple methods also allowed data triangulation to occur, which provided an opportunity to achieve a 'more accurate and valid estimate of qualitative results' (Oliver-Hoyo & Allen, 2006, p. 42).

Participants

A purposeful sample was deemed most appropriate as it is a sample from 'which the most could be learned' (Merriam, 1998, p. 61) about the phenomenon under study. A total of 29 people participated in interviews, comprising 28 participants from one P-12 independent Queensland school, and one participant from the independent school sector association. Of the 28 participants from the case school, 17 were members of the SCLT (i.e. those with formal curriculum responsibility), while 11 were teachers who were involved with implementing the new curriculum. The SCLT comprised the school principal, and eight senior and eight middle level curriculum leaders. For this study, senior level curriculum leaders were considered as those with whole-school or sub-school curriculum oversight. Middle level curriculum leaders were those with curriculum oversight for a particular learning area or year level/s.

The teachers involved were those who would be expected to work with members of the SCLT in planning and implementing the new curriculum at the classroom level. Their perceptions of how these members led the implementation were considered vital in developing a comprehensive understanding of the leadership involved. Additionally, a curriculum officer from the school sector association also formed part of the total sample, due to her work in supporting independent schools with the implementation of this curriculum.

Participation in the research was voluntary, and potential participants were not required to provide a reason for their non-participation. Two members of the SCLT, namely the executive leader for teaching and learning and one middle level curriculum leader (Years 3 – 6), decided not to participate in the research. Findings around strategies employed by these members drew on the account of several interviewees.

Each participant engaged in one semi-structured in-depth interview, which ranged from 30 to 90 minutes. Participants were asked a series of open-ended questions about what actions they took, and their perceptions of what actions were taken by members of the SCLT, as well as the challenges and enabling factors they encountered in implementing the new curriculum. Analysis of responses to these questions is described next.

Data analysis

The framework developed by Miles and Huberman (1994) guided data analysis. They define analysis as 'consisting of three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification' (p. 10). As part of data reduction, descriptive codes derived from the research questions (Marshall & Rossman, 2006) were used to code data that required little interpretation (e.g. 'strategies – principal'; 'strategies – middle leaders'; etc.). Inferential codes were created to label data that inferred some meaning, while pattern codes were created to label emerging themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994) around specific micro-political leadership strategies (e.g. 'use of formal authority'; 'negotiation'; etc.) employed by members of the SCLT that fitted within Blase's (1991) clarification of micro-politics outlined earlier. The constant comparative analysis technique (Merriam, 1998) was used to triangulate coded data across and within different sets of data gathered. Matrices, such as Table 1, were used as part of data display to summarise rich description of data that assisted with conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 1994). A number of key findings can be discerned from Table 1, which are presented in the following section.

Strategies employed by members of the SCLT were then further analysed against Blase and Anderson's (1995) micro-political leadership matrix. The key findings of this analysis are presented in the discussion section.

With regards to verification of meaning, findings and conclusions drawn, four criteria were used: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010). Credibility was established through: member checks in which participants were provided with the opportunity to review the transcript of their interview for accuracy and meaning; and triangulation of data across the three different sets of data and within each data set. Debriefing with two senior researchers in the field of education assisted with the process of reviewing and refining interpretations and explanations to accurately represent findings, hence their credibility. Transferability, the extent to which findings can be applied or generalised to other contexts, was established by provision of detailed contextual information about the phenomenon. Dependability, which is concerned with whether findings are consistent with data collected, was established by provision of information about the study design and how the study was conducted. Confirmability is concerned with the extent to which the research is free from bias, and this criterion was met through reflexivity and negative case sampling to minimise any potential researcher bias (Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010).

Findings

Members of the SCLT referred to several micro-political leadership strategies in implementing the Australian Curriculum. These strategies, summarised in Table 1, were: use of formal authority; negotiation; support; building relationship; collaboration; protection; demonstrating trust; and challenging the status quo.

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF MICRO-POLITICAL LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM LEADERSHIP TEAM

Strategies:	Use of formal authority	Negotiation	Support	Building relationship	Collaboration	Protection	Demonstrating trust in staff	Challenging the status quo
School principal	✓	✓					✓ ♠	
Senior level curriculum leaders:								
Executive leader for teaching and learning ♦	✓		✓					
Pedagogical leader for future thinking (maths)			✓	✓	✓			✓
Pedagogical leader for human endeavour (history)			✓	✓	✓			✓
Head of sub-school 1	✓		✓			✓		✓
Head of sub-school 3	✓						✓ ♣	
Sub-school 1 curriculum coordinator	✓		✓					✓
Sub-school 2 curriculum coordinator	✓		✓					✓
Sub-school 3 curriculum coordinator	✓		✓				✓ ♣	
Middle level curriculum leaders:								
Prep – Year 2 curriculum leader	✓		✓		✓			
Years 3 to 6 curriculum leader ♦			✓					
Year 7 curriculum leader					✓			
Year 8 curriculum leader			✓		✓			✓
Year 9 curriculum leader					✓			✓
Maths curriculum leader	✓		✓					✓
English curriculum leader	✓		✓		✓		✓ ▼	
Science curriculum leader			✓				✓ ▼	
History curriculum leader	✓		✓		✓			

♦ Individuals in these roles did not participate in the research. Strategies employed by these leaders are according to the accounts of other interviewees.
♠ Demonstrating trust in the executive leader for teaching and learning, senior and middle level curriculum leaders, and teachers
♣ Demonstrating trust in middle level curriculum leaders
▼ Demonstrating trust in teachers

The key findings regarding the strategies used across the different roles at the senior level, different sub-schools, and curriculum leadership levels are presented next.

Key findings across the different roles at the senior curriculum leadership level

The majority of senior level curriculum leaders reported that they used different types of strategies to facilitate the implementation of the Australian Curriculum. These included relying on their own formal authority and hierarchical position in ensuring others would carry out the much-needed work through delegation of work, as well as providing different types of support such as time release, guidance through various forms, and circulation of information pertinent to the implementation of the new curriculum.

Some differences in strategies employed were evident across the different types of roles or similar roles across the different sub-schools. The executive leader for teaching and learning relied mainly on her formal authority to achieve her goals, but also was said to use supportive strategies, such as the provision of a planning pro forma and providing guidance and advice on where to locate relevant information. Neither pedagogical leader interviewed provided any comments that indicated they used their formal authority. This was not surprising as there was a lack of clarity around the broad nature of the pedagogical role, which was introduced as part of the new learning management model in the school at the time. Consequently, these pedagogical leaders perceived their role as one of supporting others. For instance, one of these leaders said:

> I don't have any direct reports to me, so I have to work with staff. And so essentially, I'm a support person for staff and can ... offer advice and things like that. So, it's more like you coach ideas and you mentor ideas than an actual, 'this is what we're going to do' type approach.

Building relationships and collaboration (i.e. working jointly with others) were also reported by the pedagogical leaders as important in their role to work with teachers in implementing the new curriculum. In contrast, these strategies were not referred to by other senior level curriculum leaders.

Protection was a strategy referred to by only the head of sub-school 1. This strategy could be said to be idiosyncratic to the context of sub-school 1. Most teachers in this sub-school taught all four Phase One learning areas, and they were expected to plan for the implementation of these learning areas simultaneously, as well as respond to other whole-school changes. This was reported as adversely impacting on their well-being. Hence, the head of sub-school 1 instructed school personnel from other parts of the school to cease their change efforts, so that teachers in this sub-school could work in a less stressed and more conducive environment, as illustrated by her comments:

> So, there was a lot going on. So, my role ... was then to actually say to other parts of the school, 'Stop, this is enough for us at the moment. We need to support these people'. You know, there were [performance] appraisals. There were all sorts of things going on. So, it was crazy probably to have done so much at once.

In sub-school 3, both senior level curriculum leaders demonstrated trust in middle level curriculum leaders to plan for the implementation of the new curriculum by allowing them autonomy in this planning. This strategy could be said to be idiosyncratic to the context of sub-school 3, since the middle level curriculum leaders in this sub-school were seen to possess discipline-specific knowledge and curriculum experience in the learning area for which they had responsibility.

Key findings across the different sub-schools

Strategies of collaboration and support were referred to by the majority of middle level curriculum leaders across the three sub-schools in their leadership of the implementation of the new curriculum. Formal authority was referred to by four out of nine middle level curriculum leaders, mainly through communication of expectations to teachers. It was noted that no middle level curriculum leader from sub-school 2 referred to their formal authority in their efforts to plan for the implementation of the new curriculum.

Like the pedagogical role, there was a lack of clarity around the nature of the middle level curriculum leader role in sub-school 2, which was also introduced as part of the new learning management model. This made it difficult for individuals in this role to refer to their formal authority in leading the implementation of this curriculum. One middle level curriculum leader said, 'I guess that part of the new [learning] management model is working out exactly

where we [as sub-school 2 middle level curriculum leaders] fit ...' in terms of planning this implementation. Thus, these leaders mainly implemented the curriculum in their role as classroom teachers rather than as middle level curriculum leaders.

It was also noted that two middle level curriculum leaders in sub-school 3 demonstrated trust in teachers that they considered as the experts and the most suitable individuals to undertake the work. One of these leaders said:

> I don't think it is my job to … implement this by myself when I don't teach all the units because I'm a [Biology] specialist. I don't think it's right for me to be writing the Physics units. I want the Physics teachers to write them.

Key findings across the different levels of curriculum leadership

Several key findings can be distilled from the different levels of curriculum leadership pertaining to the implementation of the new curriculum. First, the school principal mainly relied on his formal authority by delegating to others to carry out the implementation of the curriculum. He reported that staff did not have a choice but to implement the new curriculum because it had been externally imposed. Moreover, he held a strong view that responsibility for such implementation belonged to staff who he trusted to carry out the work, and that his role was essentially one of overseeing:

> My role is a like a CEO [chief executive officer] of a company or an organisation … So, my role is managing human resources, risk management, marketing, enrolments, HR, curriculum development and pedagogy, student discipline etcetera … So, it's a fairly large role and then obviously, I have staff working with me who have been delegated various aspects of the operation of the school.

Reliance on one's positional authority to direct others to do the work was a strategy observed less at the lower levels of curriculum leadership. For instance, six out of eight senior level curriculum leaders in comparison to four out of nine middle level curriculum leaders employed practices that supported a reliance on their formal authority in leading the implementation of this new curriculum. The executive leader for teaching and learning was also described by her colleagues as relying heavily upon her formal authority in directing others to undertake this work in comparison to other senior level curriculum leaders who referred to their formal authority less in the implementation of this curriculum.

A second key finding here was that a number of supportive strategies were referred to by the majority of senior and middle level curriculum leaders. Further, some strategies that were referred to by one or two senior or middle level curriculum leaders could be described as idiosyncratic to their role or sub-school context. Building relationships was only referred to by the two pedagogical leaders at the senior level of curriculum leadership, who saw this strategy as being important given that their role was of a support nature. The head of sub-school 1 was identified as the only participant who referred to protection as a strategy in her efforts to protect teachers in sub-school 1 from the additional stress of responding to a number of changes occurring in the school at this time.

Furthermore, in sub-school 3, both senior level curriculum leaders and two out of four middle level curriculum leaders demonstrated trust in middle level curriculum leaders and teachers respectively to carry out the changes needed. This is not surprising as the middle level curriculum leader role in sub-school 3 is framed traditionally and individuals in these roles are said to possess specialist knowledge and curriculum experience, as do teachers in this sub-school.

Interestingly, a number of the senior and middle level curriculum leaders (8 out of 18) employed strategies that challenged some aspect of the status quo. The senior level curriculum leader and middle level curriculum leaders of sub-school 2 redefined established role and

responsibilities of the middle level curriculum leader position, so that the position can be as effective as possible in the implementation of this curriculum. One of these middle level curriculum leaders and two other senior level curriculum leaders also employed strategies that challenged the sub-school silo culture in implementing this curriculum, namely enhancing collaboration and building relationship respectively. Furthermore, the two senior level curriculum leaders of sub-school 1 challenged the school's existing processes by utilising their membership of an association to organise relevant professional development to support their staff in planning for the implementation of the new curriculum. The findings here seem to suggest that these leaders have adopted a catalyst role in the implementation of this curriculum, whereby they looked for a better way of doing things in the face of the status quo that existed in the school which presented challenges for them in the change process.

Discussion

The findings presented in the previous section around micro-political leadership strategies employed by the school principal, and eight senior and nine middle level curriculum leaders are now considered in light of the leadership approaches (authoritarian, adversarial, facilitative, and democratic, empowering) identified in the Blase and Anderson's (1995) micro-political leadership model.

Authoritarian leadership

Strategies that demonstrated authoritarian leadership
Many members of the SCLT (11 out of 18) relied on strategies that fitted within the notion of authoritarian leadership. These members, which included the school principal, and six senior and four middle level curriculum leaders, referred to their formal authority (i.e. direct use of power) that excluded teachers from the process of decision making and/or where there was limited negotiation (Blase & Anderson, 1995). The reliance on formal authority by these 11 members could also be described as control-oriented in so far as their actions directed the behaviours of their subordinates (e.g. delegation of work by senior level curriculum leaders and communication of expectations by middle level curriculum leaders). Yet, these leaders did not exceed the boundaries of their role or position responsibilities; they were drawing from their legitimate positional power which was derived from their appointed position in the school (Bacharach & Lawler, 1980; French & Raven, 1959).

Factors that influenced enactment of authoritarian leadership
It is apparent that the school principal's reliance on his formal authority to lead the implementation of the new curriculum was influenced by the national curriculum being externally imposed, and his view of his role as that of Chief Executive Officer and one of 'overseeing'. While the school principal reported that he trusted other school personnel to carry out the work of implementing the new curriculum, his strong view of such implementation belonging to other school personnel demonstrated transactional leadership on his part (Burns, 1978).

Another factor that potentially influenced the leadership of the school principal and the executive leader for teaching and learning to be authoritarian in implementing the new curriculum was the structure of the school, which seemed to be framed around bureaucratic managerial notions. Specifically, the leadership approach of the principal noted above is consistent with what Ball (1987) refers to as 'managerial leadership' whereby a bureaucratic managerial structure is created by the school principal, which can be a form of domination. This is also consistent with what Caruso (2013) refers to as bureaucratic leadership, in which

leaders rely on bureaucratic and hierarchical structures to exert influence. The use of formal authority by the executive leader for teaching and learning, and five senior and four middle level curriculum leaders further point to the existence of a bureaucratic managerial structure in the case school. Authority was exercised in the form of formal delegation of duties and communications of expectations by these leaders.

Adversarial leadership

Strategies that demonstrated an adversarial leadership approach
There was little evidence of adversarial leadership as the driver for the implementation of the new curriculum, apart from one senior level curriculum leader at the sub-school level. This leader employed protection as a strategy, which fitted within the adversarial leadership quadrant of Blase and Anderson's (1995) micro-political leadership matrix. As previously explained, she protected staff in her sub-school by instructing school personnel from other parts of the school to cease their change efforts, so that teachers in this sub-school could cope better with the work of planning for the implementation of this curriculum. This action was control-oriented, which illustrated a 'power over' approach (Blase & Anderson, 1995; Burns, 1961). It also showed that this senior leader was driven by her desire to be responsive to staff in her sub-school as their well-being was adversely affected from significant pressure to commence implementation of all Phase One learning areas, as well as engage in other whole-school changes. This also indicated her moral agenda, which is critical to adversarial leadership (Blase & Anderson, 1995). Moreover, in protecting her staff from additional stress of adopting more changes, she demonstrated a paternalistic side to her leadership. Blase and Anderson (1995) note that adversarial leaders are usually paternalistic.

Factors that influenced enactment of adversarial leadership
The context of sub-school 1 was a significant factor that impacted on the senior level curriculum leader's referral to an adversarial leadership approach. The influence of contextual or situational factors on leadership practices is commonly noted in the existing literature in the fields of leadership, management, and educational leadership (e.g. Daft, 2015; Marion & Gonzales, 2014; Scheerens, 2015). The findings of this study are consistent with this literature in a situation of implementing a national curriculum reform within the Australian context.

Facilitative leadership

Strategies that demonstrated a facilitative leadership approach
Several strategies referred to by many members of the SCLT (14 out of 18) were consistent with a facilitative leadership approach, such as support, building relationships that encompassed visibility, and demonstrating trust.

Support was provided in a variety of forms (e.g. provision of time release, guidance and relevant information to support staff in their planning for the implementation of the new curriculum) by the majority of members of the SCLT (14 out of 18) in their efforts to help staff plan for the implementation of the new curriculum. These strategies accentuated a 'power through' approach, as these leaders fostered a supportive environment for staff to work towards achieving the pre-determined goal of implementing the new curriculum (Blase & Anderson, 1995). Such strategies could also be described as non-conflictive, which is typical of a facilitative leadership approach (Blase & Blase, 1997).

Building relationships with staff was an illustration of facilitative leadership reported by two senior level curriculum leaders, who were in the pedagogical leadership role. For instance, one of these leaders sought to build relationships by being visible to staff in sub-school 1 (i.e.

visited sub-school 1 on a semi-regular basis to have lunch with staff), which she reported as having the effect of teachers in this sub-school approaching her more for guidance. This senior leader's effort in being visible to staff could be described as 'indirect, subtle and covert' (Blase & Anderson, 1995, p. 20), indicating the use of a 'power through' approach (Blase & Anderson, 1995).

Demonstrating trust in staff was another facilitative strategy referred to by the school principal, and two senior and two middle level curriculum leaders in sub-school 3. These leaders viewed their staff as possessing the relevant expert knowledge and skills to carry out the work of planning for the implementation of the new curriculum, and hence trusted them to do just that. This strategy had the effect of increasing 'opportunit[ies] for participation' (Blase & Anderson, 1995, p. 20), whereby these staff have more autonomy to make decisions concerning their work, accentuating a 'power through' approach (Blase & Anderson, 1995).

Factors that influenced enactment of facilitative leadership
The majority of the senior and middle level leaders' referral to facilitative strategies was found to be largely influenced by the idiosyncrasies of the sub-school context in which they belonged. While there is limited literature around the micro-politics of how members of a SCLT implement a large-scale curriculum change, there is considerable research pertaining to the leadership of change and the impact of contextual or situational factors on strategies employed by school leaders (e.g. Ball & Bowe, 1992; Hallinger, 2003). Ball and Bowe (1992) point out that 'in most schools change will take place against a backdrop of unforeseen, unforeseeable and unavoidable difficulties' (p. 105). However, the findings of the current study provide valuable insights into how contextual factors impinge on leaders' decisions to employ strategies that demonstrated a facilitative leadership approach.

The findings also revealed how two senior level curriculum leaders' (i.e. pedagogical leaders) perception of their role impacted on the type of strategies they employed in implementing the new curriculum. These leaders did not refer to strategies that illustrated authoritarian or adversarial approaches whereby 'power over' is enacted. On the contrary, they drew upon strategies consistent with a facilitative approach. It is possible that they chose a facilitative rather than a purely top-down approach as they deemed the former more appropriate due to the lack of clarity surrounding their role within the new learning management structure being introduced at the same time.

Democratic, empowering leadership

Strategies that demonstrated a democratic, empowering leadership approach
Five out of eight senior and seven out of nine middle level curriculum leaders were found to refer to at least one strategy that can be considered a democratic, empowering leadership approach. Collaboration was a key strategy referred to by two senior level curriculum leaders (pedagogical leaders) and the majority of middle level curriculum leaders (six out of nine) across the three sub-schools. These leaders indicated that they worked jointly with other school personnel in some aspects of planning the implementation of the new curriculum, in which there were opportunities for 'genuine exchange of opinions' (Blase & Anderson, 1995, p. 129). This is typical of a democratic, empowering leadership approach.

Five out of eight senior and three out of nine middle level curriculum leaders challenged some aspect of the status quo that existed in the school site in their efforts to plan for and/or to support staff in planning for this implementation. These three middle leaders and two of the five senior level curriculum leaders also referred to collaboration as noted above. Challenging the status quo is consistent with a democratic, empowering leadership approach in so far as it was not a strategy dictated by any hierarchical processes (Blase & Anderson, 1995). These leaders were merely driven by a desire to plan effectively and/or support staff in their work to

develop effective teaching and learning programs for the new curriculum. This hinted at a sense of equity and justice (Blase & Anderson, 1995) being pursued by these leaders (i.e. maximise students' outcomes), which is characteristic of a democratic, empowering leadership approach. These findings are of interest and add to the limited literature (Hannay, Erb & Ross, 2001; Tam, 2010) on middle level curriculum leaders in leading educational change.

Factors that influenced enactment of democratic, empowering leadership
The school's structure and culture (Schein, 2004) seemed to have impinged on some leaders' decision to employ strategies that demonstrate a democratic, empowering leadership approach. Specifically, the two pedagogical leaders' perception of their role as not having sub-ordinates who directly report to them seemed to have impacted on their choice of strategies that demonstrated this approach. The use of collaboration by the majority of middle level curriculum leaders also seemed to suggest that the structure of teaching teams at the departmental level enabled a collaborative approach to planning for the implementation of the new curriculum.

Organisational structure and culture have been well documented in the literature as potentially presenting challenges for school leaders in leading change (e.g. Baum, 2002; Bishop & Mulford, 1999; Fullan, 2000), yet little research has investigated what impact they may have on the actual leadership practices of school leaders in leading change. The findings here provide some insights in this regard, specifically about certain aspects of the organisational structure and culture that influence school leaders' decision to refer to strategies that demonstrate a democratic, empowering leadership style.

Despite the national curriculum being mandated, which seemed to have impacted on the school principal's preference for an authoritarian leadership style, the findings did not reveal this factor as having influenced the strategies employed by the senior and middle level curriculum leaders referred to above, who preferred strategies that demonstrated a democratic, empowering leadership approach. Another possible factor that may have influenced these leaders' preference for this approach was that they, being much closer to the point of actual implementation, may have perceived their role as one in which they did what they could to ensure their staff understood and were able to cope with the change.

Relationship between power and position level

Considering the above findings, those located higher in the school hierarchy (i.e. school principal, executive leader for teaching and learning) tended to refer to direct forms of power (i.e. 'power over'), whilst those located lower in school hierarchy (i.e. the majority of senior and middle level curriculum leaders) tended to refer to indirect forms of power (i.e. 'power through' and 'power with'). This points to an inverse relationship between the use of direct forms of power and individuals who are located lower in the school hierarchy, and an inverse relationship between the use of indirect forms of power and those located higher in the school hierarchy. Figure 1 illustrates these relationships.

FIGURE 1: INVERSE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE USE OF DIRECT/ INDIRECT FORMS OF POWER AND LEADERSHIP LEVELS

Leadership Approach (form of power):	*Leadership Level (referred to mainly by):*
Authoritarian *(Power over)*	Principal; executive leader for teaching and learning
Adversarial *(*Power over and power through)*	One senior level curriculum leader (i.e. Head of sub-school 1)
Facilitative *(*Power through and power over)*	Senior level curriculum leaders
Democratic, empowering *(Power with)*	Middle level curriculum leaders

*dominant form of power

Conclusion

The findings of this study add to the literature in the field of school leadership and curriculum change, and more specifically national curriculum reforms where research is currently scant. These findings may prove useful in reviewing and refining theoretical frameworks regarding how school leaders implement large-scale mandated curriculum change. For example, it is clear that the notion of micro-politics has much to add to our understanding of change leadership in schools.

At a practical level, the findings should be helpful for school leaders in reflecting on their leadership practices and role in relation to implementing such curriculum. The findings raise critical issues around the importance of having clearly defined and articulated curriculum leadership roles that are conducive to leading change. These findings also question the criticality and function of the principal's leadership in curriculum implementation, and their ability to enact an effective learning management model that facilitates such implementation.

The findings also raise suggestions for education authorities in designing professional development to support school leaders in leading large-scale change. Such findings have shown that leaders positioned higher in the school hierarchy tended to refer to an authoritarian leadership approach, while the meta-analytical review conducted by Blase and Björk (2010) of studies concerned with micro-politics in implementing educational change found that school principals have more success in such implementation when they refer to a facilitative leadership approach. Thus, leaders across the different professional levels of a school could benefit from an understanding of micro-politics, and the merits of employing a facilitative leadership as a micro-political approach for implementation of change.

Several countries have introduced a national curriculum, however, there remains a dearth of empirical studies that provide in-depth insights into how school leaders implement such a curriculum in their school. Drawing on Blase and Anderson's (1995) micro-political leadership model, this study found that 'power' is implicit in curriculum leadership at the different professional levels within a school setting, taking several forms in response to the contextual realities faced by individuals with responsibility for implementing curriculum change. The findings raise some critical issues around curriculum leadership and point to the need for professional development that focuses on developing in curriculum leaders an understanding of micro-politics as a valuable lens for better understanding the dynamics of leading large-scale mandated curriculum change.

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