

**Is the Whole More than the Sum of Its Parts?
A Community of Practice Approach to Leadership
Development of School Principals**

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ABSTRACT There is growing scholarship around the positive correlation between successful schools and effective leadership. Studies indicate that sound leadership is only second to effective classroom teaching in influencing learner outcomes. Whilst this is known about leadership, what remains contested is how good leaders are produced. In other words, what form and types of learning produce effective leaders? It is within this context that this paper explores the possibilities offered by a community of practice for leadership learning of school principals. In this qualitative study located within the interpretive paradigm, one community of practice was purposively selected for study. In order to produce data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with six purposively selected school principals. The data produced were subjected to qualitative content analysis which entailed the generation of grounded themes from the interview transcripts. The findings indicate that a range of leadership learning opportunities present themselves within leadership practice communities and these learning's have been used by school principals to improve their leadership practice. While this is a positive and encouraging feature of a community of practice, the leadership provided by the community co-ordinator is key to the successful leadership development of school principals.