

Exploring The Perceptions Of Displaced School Principals: A Case Of Principals From King Cetshwayo And Umkhanyakude Districts

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Article Info	Abstract
<p>Article History</p> <p>Received: May 05, 2021</p> <p>Accepted: August 10, 2021</p> <hr/> <p>Keywords : Displacement; Principals; Democracy; Conflicts; Policies, Perceptions</p> <p>DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.5177234</p>	<p><i>Principals are moved or displaced from one school to another from time to time in South African schools, especially if there are disputes among them and the staff members, or between them and the school communities. This study explores lived experiences and perceptions of the displaced school principals within two districts of KwaZulu-Natal province (King Cetshwayo and uMkhanyakude), South Africa. A qualitative methodology was adopted in a case study approach. The data collection instrument for this qualitative study was a semi-structured individual interview conducted with 6 displaced principals in the districts. The interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' permission and were transcribed. Interpretivist paradigm was employed for thematic analysis of the data to generate themes for discussion of findings. Findings revealed that corruption and leadership succession battles are mostly responsible for the displacement of some principals from some schools. The participants also indicated power play from the political unions as another interference responsible for the principals' displacement in South Africa. Though, some frictions between the principals and teachers, or between the principals and the community members may also prompt principals' displacement from schools. The study, therefore, recommends that the Department of Basic Education should take full responsibility for the displacements, and should design correctional measures to address the problem, for the sake of the learners and smooth education system. The political unions should be educated not to politicise education system, for the education system to be smoothly run.</i></p>

Introduction

Principals are appointed as instructional and administrative leaders for smooth administration of teaching and learning, assessments, social and other activities (Mampane, 2020). Principals can be moved from one school to another if the need arises. This article is a brief synopsis of the perceptions of the displaced principals. Ferris and Winthrop (2010) describe displacement as a time-tested coping strategy for escaping the effects of conflict. The displacement of principals, in this context, refers to how principals are removed from their schools to other schools, or withdrawn from their places of employment as a result of work-related conflict, violence or intimidations. The principals may decide to abandon their schools to escape violence or death if their lives are threatened. Displacement of principals requires that due processes should be followed, and this may leave the schools without the heads for a long time.

The dawn of a new democratic era in 1994 in South Africa (SA) brought about many transformations and changes to correct the anomalies during the apartheid era. The changes promoted black South Africans to embrace democracy with the hope for transformation in all spheres of life, including education. The new democratic dispensation significantly promotes enormous changes (Breetzke & Hedding, 2016). However, not without several challenges. For instance, the majority of the citizens focused more on exercising their rights while ignoring their responsibilities. Lowrey (2014) affirms that to lead schools is a complex work, especially in a constant changing South Africa during the transformative process. Breetzke and Hedding (2016) posit that most South African citizens became excited about their rights and forgot their responsibilities.

Most black South Africans became principals in most schools within their localities to foster necessary cooperation between the schools and the communities (Netshitangani, 2018). Career progression of teachers, make them be appointed and elevated to the positions of school leaders. Mestry (2017) opines that a principal is appointed to oversee a school administration. This implies that a school principal has the responsibilities of managing the human, material and financial resources of a school, to attain the learning outcomes of the education system. However, one of the most difficult to manage in the school system is the human resources,

which include: the learners, the teachers and other members of the school staff, and the community members, who are parents, community leaders and other stakeholders. The complexity of leadership management of schools leads to conflicts between the principals and other stakeholders of the school system or simply political power play that aims at displacing the school principals from their schools (Bush, 2018; Botha, 2019). The fortunate displaced principals get redeployed to other schools, while the unfortunate ones are withdrawn to stay at homes (Mestry, 2017b; 2019; Dube & Tsotetsi, 2020). When this happens, despite financial constraints ravaging the economy of SA, these principals who stay at home, receive their salaries sitting at home. Some of these principals may have abandoned their offices due to work-related violence and maybe homes for a prolonged period. Baruth (2009) affirms in his longitudinal study that over 300 teachers were estimated to have been at home receiving salaries in 2003 due to school-related violence.

Similarly, the former KwaZulu-Natal, MEC Mchunu, confirmed that 900 teachers who were displaced and home, received salaries in 2012 without discharging their duties (Manyathi, 2014). The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Basic Education endeavours to extenuate the hiking numbers of displaced principals as worrisome. The displaced principals become financial liabilities to the department. Furthermore, it was established that 180 million rands were spent in 2018, for the remuneration of the displaced teachers, who sit at homes (Murambadoro, 2020). This figure of displaced teachers includes a greater number of displaced teachers are school principals who play a pivotal role in managing the schools. According to Mestry (2017b), the management of schools is crucial and demands considerable knowledge and expertise. Branch, Hanushek and Rivkin, (2012) assert that school principals are critically significant to the academic performance of learners and the smooth running of the system. Hence, displacement and forceful principal leadership succession may create instability in school environments (Loeb, Kalogrides, & Bêteille, 2012). Hence, the study explores the perceptions of the displaced principals and how the problem can be addressed.

Literature review

For any school to function properly, the principal as the leader of the school is expected to work in collaboration with teachers and school stakeholders. Principals have to lead schools within a framework of collaboration with other teachers and school stakeholders (Bartoletti & Connelly, 2013; Botha, 2019). All staff members and other school stakeholders have responsibilities to carry out. Their responsibilities include cooperation with the principals to attain the stated goals of the education system. The stakeholders also have expectations and demands which the principals need to meet, however, some of their expectations may be contrary to the school policies and ethical values of the principals. Therefore, the principals are tasked with huge responsibilities and challenges of managing these stakeholders, managing curriculum delivery and implementation, physical and financial aspects of the schools. Furthermore, Lassilaa, Timonenb, Uittob and Estola, (2017) and Mahlangu (2018) aver that the principals need to organise schedules, make strategic pedagogical decisions, and represent schools in correspondence with the education department, SGBs, trade unions, and the parent community. This implies the need for principals to strike a balance in all the tasks, delegating responsibilities and also being in full control of schools (McGhee & Anderson, 2019; Botha, 2019; Mampane, 2020). In a nutshell, the principals' responsibilities are strongly symbolic, embodying the traditions and character of the schools (Manyathi, 2014; McGhee & Anderson, 2019). In the course of executing these responsibilities, conflict may arise between the school principals and the teachers or community members, which may eventually lead to their displacement.

Displacement of school principals is a consequence of a conflict within the school system as an organisation, where conflicts can arise among stakeholders due to administrative orders, directives or instructions and individual perceptions of issues. Kiitam, Mclay and Pilli (2016) concur that organisational conflicts occur as a disagreement between two or more individuals, groups or organisations. Furthermore, Kota, Hendricks, Matambo and Naidoo, (2017), stress that the source of conflict may be linked to contestation over the filling of posts, which is prone to patronage pressures as indicted in some media reportage. Conflicts in schools involving school principals have led to the brutal murder of some unlucky principals because some teachers want to take over as principals of schools. For instance, the principal of Villa Marie School was brutally murder due to conflicts (Breaking News, 10 September 2015). Similarly, the Breaking News, (10 September 2015) reports how another principal narrowly escaped murder, a week before the killing of Villa Marie principal. This indicates that principals of schools due to conflicts and other issues are faced with the threat of displacement.

The displacement of principals has brought about many systematic challenges which include the practicalities of moving them to other schools (where vacant posts exist due to certain factors such as distance and refusal to take the offer by some appointees), the refusal of the school governing body (SGB) and teachers of the new school to accept the displaced principal (Department of Basic Education, 2014/2015). Seemingly, teachers of the new schools who may be interested in the post may influence the decision of the SGB to recommend the

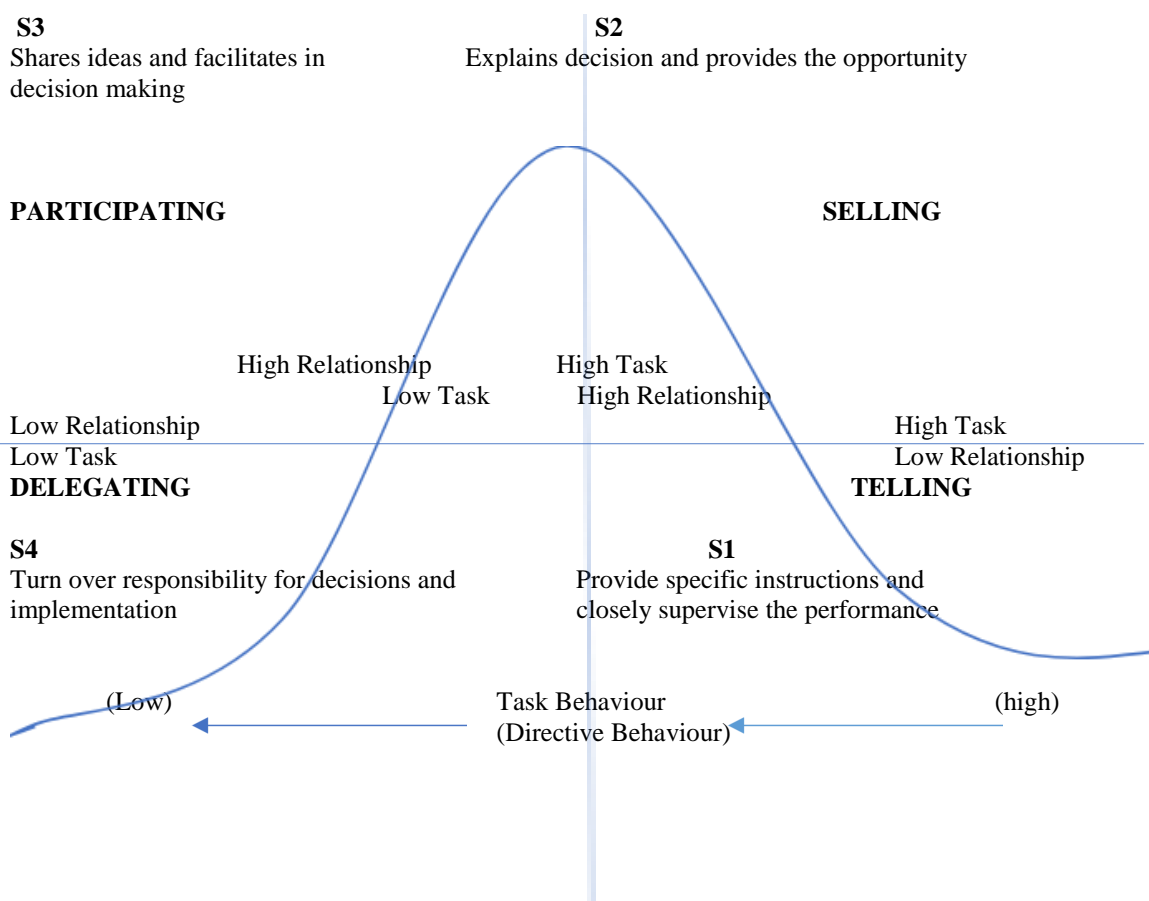
appointment of the displaced principals. These increasing cases are becoming worrisome for the instability in schools. The problem may deteriorate into such schools being closed due to crisis. Netshitangani (2018) posits that principals' conflicts with community members have led to hostility against some schools, which eventually led to school closures. When crises are unabated in the school system, and it becomes life-threatening, damaging of school properties or physical assaults on principals, learners and teachers due to conflicts between the principals and other stakeholders; the principals are displaced (Bush, 2018; Botha, 2019; Mestry, 2019).

The Education Labour Relation Council (ELRC, 2008), states that educators, including principals, who allege displacement from their place of work owing to work-related violence and intimidation, must first report such violence or intimidation to the South African Police Service. The Education Labour Relation Council (ELRC, 2008) further stipulates that the principal must immediately apply to the district manager for the matter to be investigated. While the investigation is in progress, the principal shall, as of the date of alleged displacement, report for duty at the local District Office. Pending the outcome of the investigation, the District Manager in consultation with the trade union and Circuit Manager, temporarily transfer the principal to a school within the District or another District. If the outcome of the investigation is that the claim of displacement has no basis, he or she is advised accordingly that he or she must, on the first working day, after receipt of the letter, report to the original place of work. If the investigation reveals that the claim of displacement by the principal is justifiable, he or she shall be transferred to any school within the district, or another district for a stated period (ELRC, 2011). This will obviate wasteful expenditure by effectively utilising the services of displaced educators to where there are shortages.

Theoretical Framework

Situational leadership theory

This paper is underpinned by the Situational Leadership Theory (SLT). This theory is one of the contingency approaches in the study of leadership and management. Robbins, Judge, Odendaal and Roodt (2013) opine that the situational leadership theory is a theory that focuses on followers' readiness to be held accountable for their actions. Thus, the rationale for this theory in the study is its appropriateness to understand leadership in different spaces. The study views the need for school principals to develop and possess an expected level of maturity to relate with other staff members, and also to in making a rational decision as leaders. Figure 1 below shows the situational leadership model:



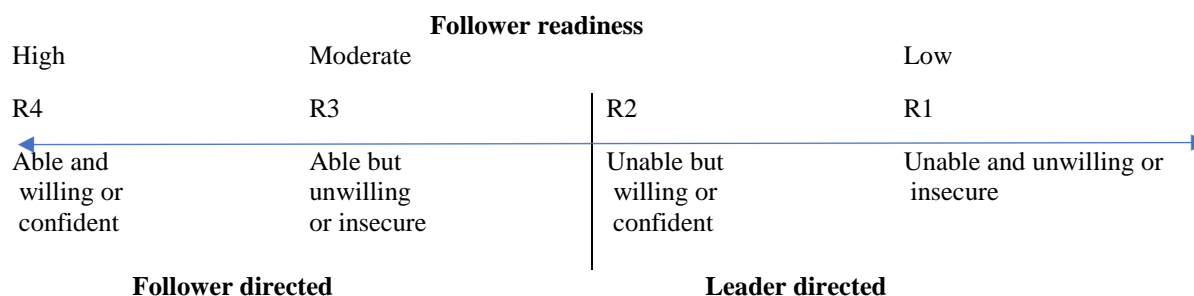


Fig 1: The situational leadership model (Adapted from Robbins, *et al.*, 2013:299)

In this study, task behaviour refers to a school principals' attempt to understand and define roles in goal setting, organising, establishing timelines, directing and controlling. School principals perform various tasks in the running of schools. Thus, task behaviour is similar to directive behaviour. On the other hand, relationship behaviour is regarded as the extent to which school principals engage in two-way communication with the members of staff, how they can listen and give socio-emotional support to their staff members. The school principals are expected to give feedback to their staff members, as a way of keeping them informed about organisational issues.

The situational leadership theory is characterised by four management styles which are also found in school principals. These are: telling, selling, participating and delegating:

- Telling (S1): The school principal defines the roles needed for every task, tells, guides directs and establishes what, when, where, and how to perform the tasks among the staff members and other stakeholders. This process of job execution tends to become a thorny issue in schools, which sometimes may generate work-related conflict. McGhee and Anderson (2019) posit that investigation revealed that some of the displaced principals have been perceived as being “too strict” in administration, directives and achieving quality results in schools.
- Selling (S2): Selling refers to their abilities to sell their ideas to other stakeholders in the school system. The school principals strive to sell, explain, clarify and persuade staff with structured instructions. Despite the prevailing workplace environment, this is not perceived by staff as prevailing, and thus, leads to conflicts in schools. No matter how principals strive to sell their ideas, clarify issues, persuade staff, they are regarded as an intruder or too strict by other employees. Seemingly, Dube and Tsotetsi (2020) assert that the demand for career promotions at school levels contributes to some unhealthy practices, where responsibilities are delegated and expected to be delivered effectively, which might be life-threatening to the principals.
- Participating (S3): A school is a social system, where all stakeholders are expected to participate for the effective and smooth running of the system. The school principals and staff participate, encourage and collaborate to carry out different tasks, to attain learning outcomes. Their participation should be with dedication and commitment to attain educational goals (Mestry, 2019). Furthermore, Netshitangani (2018) asserts that collaborative measures must be forged between a trade union and school-community to ensure school functionality, and to put principals at ease.
- Delegating (S4): In a bid to run a school as a functioning system, the school principals delegate, observe and monitor the performance. This enables every member of the system to contribute and also gives them a sense of belongingness (Dube & Tsotetsi, 2020). Seemingly, Bush (20218) avers that this practice provides a self-fulfilling motivation that can enhance job satisfaction, self-esteem and recognition at the workplace. Mestry (2017) posits that when some teachers are delegated with some responsibilities, they become enemies of other teachers. This concurs with Mampane's (2020) assertion that delegation of certain responsibilities to other stakeholders within the school system may position the school principals as enemies to other staff, learners and parents.

Conversely, there is a close relationship between S3 and S4. However, a distinction lies in the level of maturity being displayed by staff members in the course of performing their tasks on their own. Similarly, Colquitt, Lepine and Wesson (2009) opine that in S4 the school principals and other school management team members turn responsibilities for key behaviours, over to the employees because of their willingness to perform the

identified tasks. Delegation does not mean the abdication of authority (Sepuru & Mohlakwana, 2020). Botha (2019) avers that there is still a great need for accountability on the part of the school principals for any delegated task. Though, S4 is characterized by low relationship behaviour and low task behaviour. Amos, Ristow, Ristow and Pearse, (2008) state that the delegation offers staff members opportunities to develop skills and confidence, demonstrate competence and accept more responsibilities within the school system, to create less conflict system. Thus, the delegation of responsibilities is with the authority and responsibility to complete a delegated task. Thus, the rational application of this theory can address school instability and displacement of principals, to ensure effective education system with less conflict.

Research methodology

The study adopted a qualitative research design. The design employed interpretive paradigm to gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of the participants on the factors responsible for the displacement of school principals from their respective schools. Creswell (2014) asserts that the qualitative research design uses a methodology aimed at providing a richer, and more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon as it occurs in a natural setting.

The population for the study are the displaced principals in KwaZulu-Natal province. Since the study's goal was to elicit lived experiences of principals who have been displaced for one reason or the other, the study adopted a purposive sampling technique (Kumar, 2018). Purposive sampling was employed to select 3 displaced principals each from the two districts. A total of 6 displaced principals who were willing to share their lived experiences, from King Cetshwayo and uMkhanyakude Education Districts provided rich and in-depth experiences. The use of open-ended interview guide enables the researcher to use follow-up questions to probe further (Creswell, 2014). Thus, a semi-structured interview guide was used as the data collection instrument. The participants were engaged in face-to-face individual interviews that lasted between 30-45 minutes per participant. An interview is a research instrument that allows the participants to be engaged in a discussion where they freely provide the research with in-depth information that provides answers to the research questions (Kumar, 2018). The interviews were audio-recorded with the permission of the participants.

The researchers adopted a scientific process of thematic analysis for the data analysis. The scientific process of transcribing the audio-recorded, coding of transcripts to generate themes for presentation and discussion of findings were systematically done (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The transcripts were given to the participants to confirm their responses.

All ethical considerations which include voluntary participation, informed consent, approvals to conduct research and confidentiality of the participants were strictly adhered to. The trustworthiness of the study was validated with the assistance of senior researchers in the field.

Findings

A total of eight themes emerged from the experiences and perceptions of the participants. Pseudonyms have been used to ensure the privacy of the participants in the excerpts.

Leadership successions

The participants agreed that leadership successions are the major cause of principals' displacement. Some of the responses are the following:

“One of the local teachers wanted to be the principal of the school because the school was well-performing and had high enrolment” (DP3).

Another participant also had this to say:

“When a deputy principal is ambitious to succeed as a principal in a school, and such deputy principal has political associates who can influence his ambition, he/she can create problems for the principal. The school is then put into crises to facilitate displacement of the principal” (DP6).

The ambition of some deputy principals to succeed school principals is mentioned as one of the reasons for displacement of school principals in South African schools.

“The deputy principal wanted to take over the reins of the school because he perceived himself as ready to lead as he had been commanding under his auspices” (DP1).

Another displaced principal lamented:

“In my case, my deputy principal who has political influence with the ruling party, and is interested in becoming the principal of the school, because he is from that community; facilitated my

displacement from my former school. Since then, I have been waiting for the Department to place me in another school” (DP5).

Poverty

Findings revealed that some of the school stakeholders want positions for their benefit. This is one of the responses:

“I can say poverty is one of the causes of principals, displacement. For instance, the chairperson of the governing body (SVB) wanted to get tenders from the school. He influenced the community to get rid of me since I was insisting on policy adherence” (DP4).

Further explanation was expressed by another participant:

“In the case of rural schools, most members of the governing board are poor, they expect principals to be assisting them with some financial favour. For example, they expect to be granted tenders for some supply or services in the schools without due process. So, if you don't compromise, they find a way of creating a problem in the school for you to be displaced” (DP5).

Policy dealing with displacement

The findings show that not all principals are aware of the policy dealing with displacement. Those who know it blame the circuit manager for not doing justice in implementing it. For instance, the following responses affirm the above assertion:

“I have never come across it if it exists. I am yet to see the policy that addresses displacement of school principals in South Africa” (DP2).

Another participant declared:

“I don't think there is any policy that protects the principals from being displaced from their schools. My Circuit manager intervened to settle the crises in my school. Yes, the Circuit manager tried to negotiate with teachers however, he failed and I was threatened even in his presence” (DP6).

While another participant said:

“I had a problem with the community members who wanted to have things in their own ways. I refused to agree to their terms because their expectations will affect school discipline. There was no policy to protect my staying despite being on the right. So, what policy are we talking about? If there was any, I shouldn't have been displaced!” (DP3).

The intervention of the stakeholders

The findings revealed that although the Department of Basic Education investigated several crises in schools, especially the one that could lead to the displacement of the school principals, the results were not communicated to all participants. The districts placed them temporarily in schools to serve as post level one while they were still seeking permanent absorption. Another finding was that the School Governing Body (SGB) was part of the conflict, therefore, could not support the principals. Here are some of the participants' responses:

“It is true that when there are school crises, the Department always investigate sometimes. While the outcomes of the investigations were never communicated to us. We don't usually get the reports” (DP5).

While another participant declared that despite investigation, he was still displaced:

“I had a crisis with some teachers who have failed to effectively discharge their duties, an investigation was conducted and the displacement was declared a just cause, however, the DBE failed to place me” (DP6).

Another participant indicated inadequate or lack of intervention from the stakeholders on the issue:

“The SGB did not support and protect the principals. In my case, the SGB failed to support me” (DP1).

Another participant complained of inadequate support from the stakeholders in addressing school crises when they arise:

“A school is made up of different people. As a principal, we need to enforce some directives to achieve goals. In an attempt to do this, crises may erupt. Principals always need adequate support of stakeholders to amicably resolve issues, but the stakeholders may take another stand, which is to displace the principals at all cost” (DP4).

Impact of displacement of principals in DBE

ECE, Circular 1 of (2017) states that the displacement of educators and principals from schools has a negative impact on teaching and learning. This assertion is affirmed by the participants:

“In one month of my departure, the school had developed a new culture of high absenteeism and late coming. Teachers and learners became rebellious; the acting principal failed to give direction to the school. Enrolment dropped because parents transferred their children to the well-managed schools” (DP4).

Another interviewee responded like this:

“Displacement of principals will always affect the school system. Teaching and learning became relaxed and the school community is deceived to be enjoying some freedom” (DP1).

While another participant explicitly explained:

“There is no doubt that displacement of principals in schools will always affect the system, either negatively or positively. In some schools, where the principals have been defective before displacement, there is a tendency for effective leadership skills to be noticed as a change, while in some schools, it's the other way round” (DP2).

Impact of displacement in displaced principals

Most of them explained that they felt angry and disappointed because they worked hard to put their schools on the map and only to find that their reputation is tarnished. Here are some of their responses:

“I felt that my leadership, administrative and management expertise became blunt as I was serving as post level one under the supervision of another principal. However, what consoled me though, was that I was receiving my salary as the principal” (DP6).

“At first I felt angry. Finally, I stopped bothering myself and I embarked on studying because I was under-utilised where I was placed” (DP4).

“This is my eighth year sitting at home after I was displaced from my last school as a principal. Though I still earn my salary as a principal and I am enjoying it now. I wake up at my convenience, even though, it makes me idle” (DP1).

Others indicated that teachers were not at ease to serve under the leadership of highly qualified principals and were asking questions as to why the district office was not absorbing him and why he was still a principal.

“I was placed in one of the schools in the district where I was rejected by one powerful school governing body member, who was also treasurer of the SGB and Local Government Councillor as well as teachers of the school. I ended up not going to that school because of the threats that I was getting from that member of the governing body” (DP3).

A chance to return to the same school

The participants unanimously denied any chance of returning to the same schools where they were displaced from.

“I can't go back to that school because the members of staff I worked with are hostile. A relationship of trust was broken and will never be mended” (DP1).

Another had this to say:

“A school where I served with all my resources and the goal of improving the school achievement, but yet they never liked me. I can never consider it since my life was at stake after receiving threats” (DP2).

While another participant expressed how he was almost murdered:

“Over my dead body. I escaped death. I was notified by one of the teachers that some teachers had a meeting in one of the week-ends with some learners and some community members discussing how they were going to chase me out of the school when I come” (DP6).

Strategies to curb displacement of principals

Participants came up with different strategies to curb the displacement of principals. A majority of participants suggested among others that, each circumstance which led to the displacement of them should be viewed on its merit; policies should be followed without fear or favour; the harsh discipline of teachers who halt the functionality of the school must be implemented with immediate effect and the DBE should revisit the policy dealing with the displacement of teachers since it is difficult to enact and it is an after-action and not a preventative measure.

One participant who responded like this:

“The displaced principals should not undergo any interviews instead they must be placed in the schools of their choice” (DP4).

Another participant advised:

“Crises will always arise in schools, but they need to be well managed. When there is a problem between a principal and the teachers or learners or even the community members. The Department should always constitute a reconciling committee who can influence the concerned in crises, to amicably settle their differences” (DP1).

While another displaced principal encouraged the use of all means in resolving school crises rather than displacement of principals:

“I will suggest that the Department in conjunction with the school governing board, should explore several approaches to resolve, manage and settle conflicts in schools. Meetings should be convened to hear the grievances, and allow the concerned to reach resolutions, without displacing the principals. Displacement of principals should not be the only quick way of resolving crises. Do they displace community members who are the problem to the school from the community?” (DP5).

Discussion

Findings from the participants indicated that many factors are responsible for the displacement of school principals in South Africa. It was clearly expressed that the displacement impacted the school system and the displaced principals as well. A vast body of literature asserts that leadership stability in schools is capable of enhancing learning outcomes in the educational system (Mestry, 2017; Netshitangani, 2018; Botha, 2019; Dube & Tsotetsi, 2020; Mampane, 2020; Sepuru & Mohlakwana, 2020). Seemingly, Bush (2018) affirms that the position of a principal is crucial, demanding considerable knowledge and expertise in managing the school. Furthermore, Mestry (2017b) avows that the success of a school depends on the leadership skills of a principal. While school principals are pivotal for school effectiveness and learners' achievements based on the management of resources (Branch, Hanushek & Rivkin, 2012). Similarly, Abdulrasheed, Hussin and Kasa (2016) stress that a principal's position is a high-pressured job in the context of instructional supervision. However, some of the principals encounter many challenges in their schools which lead them to their displacement. It seems as if some of the staff members are not aware that leadership succession is not just a temporary episodic problem in individual schools, but a pervasive crisis in the system (Hargreaves, 2005). Findings also revealed that high performing schools attract many learners, resulting in high norms and standard and high salaries for the principals of schools. It also denotes that successful principals of large schools are targeted and are either intimidated or forcefully removed from their positions prematurely. It is also evident that the succession battle leads to "ladder-climbing" (Bush, 2018). This implies that ladder-climbing becomes an impetus to gaining support. These disgruntling teachers make the schools ungovernable. Wills (2016), contends that leadership succession battle becomes disruptive as it alters lines of communication, realigns relationships of power within the school and generally disturbs the equilibrium of normal activities within the school. It is noted that a "son of the soil" teacher is always preferred to an outsider who does not know the dynamics of the area. Once the previously dysfunctional school, has revived its functionality and has improved its academic

performance, it attracts more learners. Subsequently, local teachers and prominent leaders start questioning the origin of the principal.

Poverty is one of the contributory cause of school principals' removal. For instance, most SGB members are unemployed and their service to the school is not remunerated, as a result, they are easily persuaded to collude with anyone who promises to offer something. They view that as a way of remunerating themselves. Rangongo, Mohlakwana and Beckmann (2016) affirm that some of the SGB members are perpetrators of various financial mismanagement activities because they regard schools as cash cows. These corrupted SGB members collaborate with some of the teachers to force the principals to relinquish their positions. This is normally accomplished at a price. For instance, false accusations such as misappropriation of school funds, disrespect, intimate relationships with school children, staff and infringement of individual's rights were levelled against some principals. Even though none of these accusations is proven, the principals are forcefully removed from the school, since it is one voice against many.

It also evident that educational policies are not fully implemented. Despite that the Education Labour Relations Council for resolutions has stipulated the procedure to be followed when dealing with institution-based educators who are involved in disputes, involving promotion/appointment and dismissals (ELRC, 2008). For instance, sometimes the DBE negotiates with the SGBs', teachers and parents, however, none of these participants returns to their place of work. It is clear that some School Governing Body members are also found to be in the centre of these conflicts and are not supportive of the principals. In most cases, those who support the principals are powerless but have a heart for the school. One of the collective agreement stated by the secretary-general, Foca of the ELRC, in the ELRC (2020/2021-2024/2025) is for the schools to be managed by skilled and dedicated principals who foster a vibrant but disciplined environment that is conducive to learning (ELRC, 2011). The document also projects that, by 2030, the schooling system should be characterised by learners and teachers who are highly motivated, as principals are effective managers who provide administrative and curriculum leadership (ELRC, 2011). The schools are accountable to parents; committed and professional teachers have good knowledge of the subjects they teach; schools and teachers are supported by knowledgeable district officials (Eastern Cape DBE, 2017; Bush, 2018). The multi-functional responsibilities of a school principal request regular professional development for the management of the school system (Ajani, 2020; Ajani & Govender, 2019).

However, some school stakeholders like the union representatives do ignore this collective agreement. They always want to push their agendas of supporting their members even if they do not have appropriate qualities of leadership. Regardless of what the Labour Relations Council says, the main drawback is the unavailability of the policy dealing with displaced school principals. The available policy dealing with the displacement of educators is a general policy which is on its own, outdated and ambiguous from 2008. As a result, displaced principals remain without schools for a long time with full pay. The department has dismally failed to permanently place them in schools with vacant posts or to absorb them (Mestry, 2017). The department's attempts to place them at schools with vacant principals' post collapsed since that did not settle well with other educators who wanted to lead the school (Botha, 2019). It is a common knowledge that when the displaced principal is placed in the school with a vacant principal-ship post, he is rejected either by educators, parents and or learners. The school community may have its interests and preferences concerning the leadership of the school in their area. The principal from one school is seen as an intruder who is coming to take over their position since the hierarchical ladder has already been established, and many promises to fill the posts have been established. It is argued that when the post is internally filled, especially by the deputy principal, more posts are created in the school, for example, a deputy principal post will be filled by the departmental head, and the departmental head post by the educator, post level one and new post level one educator post is created. A post filled externally, by the placement of a displaced principal occludes ladder climbing. This rejection and refusal of displaced principal are caused by a lack of proper policy and the ambiguity of the current general policy for dealing with the displacement of teachers. The failure by the department to place or absorb affected principals is tantamount to wasteful expenditure and needs to be dealt with according to the public finance management act (PFMA) and Treasury regulations (PFMA, Act No.1 of 1919).

On the issue of the impact of displacement of principals on the functionality of the school, it is noted that the displacement of the principal leaves the school in shambles (Mestry, 2019). As a result of that, teaching and learning become seriously affected. The dropping of enrolment affects the Post Provisioning Norm (PPN) of the school, which results in some educators being declared surplus to the post establishment of the school. Another finding was that there was contestation of acting position between the deputy principals in the school. Therefore, the school was hijacked by post level one teacher who became a decision-maker of the school. The factionalized contestation turned the school upside down since the displacement of the principal and selection of

the acting principal by the SGB and the Circuit Manager was against the wishes of some teachers (Levy & Shumane, 2018). The circuit manager initially struggled to stabilize the school. Some educators deliberately stayed away from staff meetings because they refuse to accept their principal as constituted authority (Mampane, 2020). The Department of Basic Education was also affected because it had to pay salaries to displaced principals. Most principals were displaced for more than five years and have been paid for doing nothing (Botha, 2019).

There is a great consensus that displacement of principals has a serious negative impact on the education system (Dube & Tsotetsi, 2020). Therefore, all school stakeholders need to work collaboratively to fight against this immoral action. Bourne1, Clarke-Christian, Sharpe-Pryce, Hudson-Davis and Francis (2015) explain that a collaborative approach favours the interest of all parties. They further state that it must be used positively in confronting conflicts in schools. The participants concur with Bourne1, et al., (2015) because they stress transparency to satisfy all stakeholders and to curb unnecessary displacement of principals.

Conclusion

The lived experiences of the displaced principals revealed some many factors responsible for their displacement. These include power-hungry teachers whose ambitions for principalship positions draw political influences from dishonest SGB members who want to use school resources for their benefits. Furthermore, it was noted that there are some Department of Basic Education's authorities, like District Directors and Circuit Managers who do not do justice when resolving the issue of the displacement of principals. Though the Labour Relations Council has a policy that focuses on the displacement of teachers, the main drawback is the unavailability of the policy dealing precisely with displaced school principals as they are in control of schools.

Recommendations

The displacement of school principals does not affect the principals alone but the whole school system. Hence, this study recommends among others that, the DBE has to exhaust all approaches for amicable resolution and settlement of school crises. The Department should also take full responsibility for the displacement of principals and come up with the policy dealing with their displacement, the DBE should consider offering incentives to high performing teachers, to curb power-hungry teachers from seeking high positions or promotions. Also, other research has to be undertaken to investigate the welfare of the principals after being displaced. Likewise, another research that is both empirical and non-empirical is needed to investigate the situation regarding the functionality and performance of the schools of the displaced principals.

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