Factors Confronting Transformational Leadership: A Curriculum Management Perspective

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ABSTRACT The purpose of the present research is to investigate the challenges faced by primary school principals in curriculum management. A qualitative research design was employed to answer the research questions. Data was generated by means of open-ended interview questions and non-participative observation to provide a rich description and explanation of the challenges that principals face when managing the curriculum in their respective contexts. The research findings revealed that the school principals face a number of challenges during curriculum management, such as a lack of knowledge, resources, unmotivated educators and a large workload, among others. Research findings, discussions and recommendations are made. There is a need for a strong training intervention in school leadership and governance to enhance the capacity of principals. The department should form partnerships with higher institutions of learning and experts in different fields to improve the quality of workshops and training offered to school principals.

INTRODUCTION

The role of school principals in South Africa has changed since the introduction of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS). In addition to their roles as school managers, school principals are expected to play the role of instructional leaders which is essential for the successful implementation of the new curriculum. With the new role definitions, school principals are primarily expected to have an in-depth knowledge of the new curriculum so that they can guide the teachers through the implementation thereof and create an environment that facilitates the establishment of the constructivist paradigm underlying the new curriculum. Bright (2014: 88) is of the opinion that school principals have to divide their time between issues of curriculum and instruction and they must also take other matters into consideration such as labour relations, financial management and empowering governing bodies. It is evident that meeting these responsibilities will make extraordinary demands on the principals both personally and professionally (Stevenson 2014: 18).

When dealing with the issues of school leadership and curriculum management in the South African context, one has to consider an important historical dimension. Marianne et al. (2010: 9) reminded us that in the apartheid education system, curriculum management was a centralised, authoritarian and top-down exercise. The curriculum was described as racially offensive, and sexist with outdated content. In schools, curriculum management was mainly concerned with technical tasks. School principals were just a link in the chain of curriculum flow downwards into the classroom. This resulted in principals and teachers not participating in decision-making on curriculum matters and denied them to display qualities such as imagination, insight, creativity and to exercise professional judgment.

Post-1994, South Africa adopted a new education system that would break away from the practices of the apartheid education system. The curriculum was to serve a new purpose of uniting all citizens as equals in a democratic and prosperous nation (Motshekga 2014). A strong emphasis was placed on effective management and leadership of curriculum in schools; school principals had to take centre stage in the process and they had to operate within the paradigms of management and leadership of the new curriculum.

Theoretical Framework of Curriculum Management

Murphy (1991) and Whitaker (2010) noted that the practices of principals indicate mixed understandings of curriculum management practices which raises the question whether curriculum management theory is understood by school

principals. In fact, curriculum management theories assist principals in determining how they can help the learners to learn the different aspects in the curriculum. The authors looked at two theories that dominantly guide on curriculum management practices, namely Decker Walker's naturalistic approach and Tyler's model.

Decker Walker's Naturalistic Approach

Decker Walker's naturalistic model on curriculum management emphasized the need to understand the complexity of tasks and roles. Marsh (2010: 130) argued that this model articulates the actual tasks of curriculum leaders rather than giving advice on how they should go about the tasks. Walker used the team platform; at the platform stage, roles in curriculum management are specified and problematic attitudes are identified. The second stage is deliberation which involves solving problems through learning, and actions, discussions which lead to gaining an in-depth knowledge of tasks to be executed. The last stage in the model is decisions for taking actions. It involves the selection of teaching materials, the complexity of learning activities, and the control and evaluation of learners (Marsh 2010: 129).

Ralph Tyler's Model

Ralph Tyler's model on curriculum management emphasized student behaviours and the learning experiences of learners as per curriculum stipulations (Marsh 2010: 132). This model suggests four questions that should guide curriculum leaders in planning the curriculum. These four basic questions have dominated the present study of curriculum and curriculum management. They are:
- What educational purpose should the school seek to attain?
- How can learning experiences be selected that are likely to be useful in attaining such objectives?
- How can learning experiences be organised for effective instruction?
- How can the effectiveness of learning experiences be evaluated?

In practice, they are articulated in the school vision and mission in addition to the aims and objectives. The aims and objectives articulate curriculum implementation and the academic achievements of learners are developed collaboratively (Slattery 2011: 19).

Ralph Tyler's theory encourages collaborative approaches whereby curriculum leaders involve teachers in facilitating debates and discussions, an understanding of the roles and expectations of others in a team.

METHODOLOGY

The researchers employed a mixed method using qualitative and quantitative research design to explore the purpose of the present study to research out the following objectives;
- What are the challenges confronting school principals in curriculum management?
- How can principals address such challenges?

The strength of qualitative research is its ability to provide complex textual descriptions of how principals experience curriculum management in their respective schools. It provides information about the behaviours, beliefs, opinions, emotions, and relationships that are often contradictory (Miles and Huberman 2011: 92).

In the present research study, purposeful sampling was used to select participants by placing them in groups relevant to the criteria fitting to the research to achieve the research objectives. The researcher selected six primary schools and their principals out of fourteen in region C of Johannesburg West. The selection of participants was based on obtaining inputs from the principals who manage the curriculum and put efforts to protect the schools from the deteriorating standards. Through purposeful sampling, the research attempted to understand the challenges these principals face when managing the curriculum. A combination of interviews and observation was used to collect data. The interviews comprised opened-ended questions. Non-participant observation was also employed to create a better understanding of the environment in which the principals manage the curriculum and relationships between principals and educators.

Ethical Considerations

The researchers obtained permission from the provincial Department of Education and school principals to conduct research. Issues of confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed to participants through a letter of consent de-

claring that even though participation in the research project would be appreciated, they could withdraw from participating if they wished to do so. The participants were made to understand that the purpose of the study was to gain an understanding of the challenges as being faced by principals in curriculum management and not to evaluate them and their work.

Biographical Data of Respondents

From the biographical data collected it was found that the majority of the respondents were male and have English as their first language. Their ages ranged 40–55 years and their experience as principals of their schools ranged 4–16 years. They all met the requirements of having a minimum qualification of a diploma in education and more than five years of teaching experience to be appointed as school principals. Based on their experience and the context in which they functioned, the participants provided data that made valuable contribution regarding the research questions.

The School Context

The schools are situated in region C (Roodepoort) Gauteng Province and they are school fee paying schools. Their fee is approximately R9000 ± R2000 per learner per annum. These schools also receive a small amount of funds from the Department of Education (DoE). The Department of Education appoints educators for the schools, but the school governing bodies employ additional educators, paid from school funds, to ease the workload. Table 1 shows the location of the schools, the number of learners and educators per school.

Table 1: Biographical data of respondents

School	Number of learners	Educators per school
A	1220	44
B	1124	41
C	41220	46
D	1128	41
E	950	38
F	1114	40

Table 1 exhibits the location of the schools, the number of learners and educators per school. All the schools are located in Johannesburg,

Gauteng province of South Africa. There are 1210 learners and 44 educators in school A; 1124 learners and 41 educators in school B; 1220 learners and 46 educators in school C; 1128 learners and 41 educators in school D; 950 learners and 38 educators in school E and 1114 learners and 40 educators at school F.

RESULTS

The interview questions were divided into the following four categories: (1) school leadership (2) curriculum management (3) resource management (4) empowerment and support of educators. The observation mainly focused on environment and relationships between principals and educators.

School Leadership

How Do You Keep Staff Motivated and Focused on Teaching and Learning?

According to the principal 1, keeping staff motivated and focused on teaching and learning is not easy. Overcrowded classrooms, undisciplined learners and the negative attitude of certain parents are some of the concerns that contribute to the low motivation of educators. Principal 2 stated that "It's the most difficult thing to experience as the principal." Teachers are increasingly becoming demoralised by the demands of the job and the fact that learners are not listening to them. Principal 3 voiced that "teaching is their job but sometimes it looks like it's just one of those things they have to do to survive." Further, principal 4 added that, "It is very difficult to keep them motivated." The respondent mentioned that educators have all sorts of complaints that one can hardly understand. Besides, principal 5 mentioned that it is challenging, but recognises the fact that most of the educators try to do their best. Principal 6 argued that motivating and keeping educators focused is becoming more challenging, because the educators feel that society has lost confidence and trust in them.

Analysis

Out of the responses collected, it is evident that the participants find it difficult to keep educators motivated and focused on teaching and

learning, with the exception of principal 5 who, in a way, seems to be lucky as he has dedicated educators. School principals require leadership skills of inspiring, motivating and supporting teachers to achieve the desired curriculum vision. Yukl (2011: 86) argues that educators will usually show some self-motivation if they know what is expected of them, think the effort is worthwhile and feel they will benefit from it. Such kind of feeling comes from the willingness of principals to engage in meaningful conversations with educators.

The researchers differ from the sentiment of principal 4 who mentioned that, "I feel it's not my duty to keep educators motivated." Although, principals cannot teach educators to be self-motivated, they can encourage and promote this highly desirable personal trait. They must understand that educators are motivated through a wide variety of needs. Some educators are self-motivated; others are motivated by money, power, challenging work, and praise. Since, the principals are not usually in a position to offer educators money or power, the focus should be on praise and challenging work depending on their individual needs. Fundamentally, the process of motivation stems from stimulation which, in turn, is followed by emotional reactions that lead to a specific behavioural response. Any successful principal should bear in mind the dire consequences of demotivated and unfocused educators.

Curriculum Management

What Would You Consider as Challenges in Curriculum Management?

According to principal 1, the biggest challenge is coping with ongoing curriculum amendments, because every change means that the school has to make adjustments accordingly. Less effective training and workshops for principals and educators, lack of support from the department, demotivated educators that are often poorly trained; and limited resources to meet the needs of the school are just some of the challenges. Principal 2 mentioned that the biggest challenge is ensuring that all educators are motivated to implement the curriculum. Some educators are unhappy with the many changes taking place in the curriculum. There are issues such as the lack of resources and information,

too much administrative work and educators that are poorly trained. Principal 3 stated that there is still a high workload even though efforts have been made to reduce it. The respondent also pointed out other challenges such as a lack of resources, a lack of motivation among educators and a lack of proper training which creates uncertainty and confusion. Principal 4 argues that there is still a lot of paperwork to do even though the department has reduced it. The respondents mentioned that educators are tired of continuous curriculum improvements that require changes in their work all the time. In addition, other challenges are poor training, insufficient resources, and language barriers, because some learners do not understand English (the medium of instruction). According to principal 5, educators are not on the same page; some are committed and others are not, some understand the content and others do not. This creates imbalances in teaching and affects academic work. Language is another problem for most of the learners because English is their third language. The respondent added that poor training and limited resources thwarts the effort to deliver effectively on the given mandate. Principal 6 said that whereas improvements are being made in the curriculum, the resources remain constant: "Information is lacking on how best to make changes. Teachers are demotivated; the poor training we get does not empower us to do a better job. In addition to teaching, there is too much administration work."

Analysis

The findings revealed a number of challenges principals face when doing curriculum management. The main challenges mentioned are poor training, hence, a lack of knowledge and resources, a heavy workload, a lack of motivation, and language barriers. The challenges facing school principals when doing curriculum management may be easily stated, but they may not be easily eradicated. Today's schools have to depend on creative individuals to thrive. Besides, while there are still many challenges and loopholes in the education system, one thing is certain; learners need to get a good education and the schools must provide it. The resources like human and financial resources are important but also scarce in the majority of South African schools.

The respondents noted that the administrative workload is still too much. It is understandable that this may put school principals under pressure, hence affecting their performance, but curriculum management involves juggling many key tasks. Even though the ideal situation may be to reduce the workload for principals, it may take time to see that happen. Principals have to know that the future of their school could just depend on how well they navigate curriculum management challenges to keep up with national requirements.

The researcher is concerned about the educators' low levels of motivation, because without the passion for teaching, performance in schools will be affected and learners will suffer. No matter how good the other areas of the school may function, without the willingness of educators to teach, the goals and objectives of the school will not be accomplished. The other pressing issue is language barriers; when learners do not understand what is being taught, it contributes to poor performance.

Resource Management

Where Does Your School Source Its Funding for Curriculum Support and in Your Opinion is the Funding Adequate?

According to principal 1, funds are derived from school fees; the parents pay fees, however, the schools are experiencing a problem with parents who do not commit to their pledge. The department also allocates money to the school, but only a small amount. It is the principal's wish that the department could do more to meet the needs of the school. Principal 2 stated that his school is a fee paying school; parents are expected to pay school fees and the department allocates some money to the school: "All in all the funds we get are not adequate at all. There are some parents who don't keep their commitment to pay in time and some don't pay at all. It is difficult to deal with defaulters." Principal 3 mentioned that there are financial struggles, especially with the department which allocates a very small amount of money to the school: "We rely on our parents to pay school fees, most of them are trying to pay in time but some of them are failing." According to principal 4, most of the funds come from school fees paid by par-

ents. The department also apportions a small amount. The budget has to be within the limits otherwise it is not sufficient: "Some parents take long to pay which affects our budget. It would be appropriate if the department could increase on the amount they allocate the school." Principal 5 stated that parents pay school fees and they get some funds from the department, however, more funds are needed to meet all the needs of the school. What the department is providing at the moment is very little. The parents are trying to pay and the School Governing Body (SGB) tries hard not to raise fees all the time, because many parents cannot afford it. According to principal 6, the funds come from school fees and the department allocates some. They hold fundraising campaigns once a year: "Generally the money received is not enough; we try as much as possible to keep our budget low. It is hoped that the department will look into this matter."

Analysis

In response to the question, all the respondents indicated that their main source of funding comes from school fees and a small allocation from the department. Schools cannot function well without financial support. Respondents in this study strongly feel that the allocation of school funds from the department is simply not sufficient. They are also experiencing problems with parents who, for some or other reason default on payment. Even though there are forms of punishment used by schools for learners who do not pay fees – for instance by preventing learners from writing exams, threatening them with expulsion, refusing to providing them textbooks, taking legal action and singling them out in class – such punishments are both illegal and cause severe strain to learners and parents. It is illegal to deny children educational rights such as admission or receipt of their report cards, because of their inability to pay fees. What is happening on the ground is worrying and should be rectified as soon as possible. What used to be good standards and quality at these schools are now deteriorating.

The respondents also mentioned that the increase in defaulting parents is made worse by incorrect messages pronounced by the media and politicians that, "education is free", hence contributing to the already poor fee paying behaviour in these schools. The researchers are

concerned that the situation in these schools is potentially devastating and unsustainable. Even though, the underlying assumption of the Amended National Norms and Standards for School Funding 2006 (ANNSSF) was that quintile 3–5 schools will be able to subsidise their norms and standards funding with income from school fees and fundraising. In fact, this does not appear to be the case. According to the participants, fee paying behaviour in these schools has declined significantly.

Empowerment and Support to Educators

What Formal/Informal Actions Do You Take Regarding the Personal and Professional Development of Educators?

Principal 1 encourages the educators to keep reading and to attend outside workshops so that they can improve on their knowledge. He also mentioned that it is expensive to organise in-service training as the school has no budget for training staff; outside support is relied on. Principal 2 mentioned that educators do attend workshops organised by the department. They are also involved in planning and decision-making activities; especially those relating to classroom matters. According to principal 3, there is a budget for staff development: "In-service training for our staff is usually organised. The focus of in-service training is normally on an identified area of concern. When Heads of Departments (HoDs) identify a need or when teachers raise a concern, we bring a facilitator or we do it our self to help the teachers depending on the need." Principal 4 affirms that when educators want to go for a workshop or training, they are allowed to do so. The department arranges for all educators to attend workshops and all educators in the school have to attend. Principal 5 did one-on-one support after class visits and encourages educators to find new information to improve themselves: "In staff meetings we discuss issues related to concerns raised by staff and ideas are exchanged on the best way to deal with them." Principal 6 keeps a lookout for any opportunities outside school in which the staff can get involved and passes the information on to them. He also encourages educators to do short courses with different universities, especially the University of South Africa.

Analysis

From the responses given, most of the principals relied on workshops and training offered by the department of education for the personal and professional development of their educators; which is formal in nature. Professional development should be standards-based, results-driven, and job-embedded. It should extend beyond traditional workshops. It is good that principals are encouraging educators to participate in these programs. It is important to create a school culture that is conducive to learning for educators, because the knowledge enquired is of great help for both the educator and the learner. However, professional development programs that are imposed by the department have little regard for the individual needs and goals of the schools; they also lack consistent follow-ups and coaching.

School principals should embark on site-based personal and professional development to help their staff. Workplace learning is possible if principals are proactive; they should start their workday by spending time with teachers, inside and outside the classrooms (West-Bumham 2012: 56). Principals should encourage educators to do things such as reading professional literature, mentoring, peer observation and coaching, networking with teachers from other schools, participation in individual or collaborative research, and shared analysis of student work and lesson study.

Observation Data Collection

Introduction

To better understand what challenges the principals face in curriculum management, a non-participant observation data collection was employed to capture how the school principal's day starts, the time he/she arrives at school in the morning and what he/she does when arriving at school. Observation started at 7.00 am and ended at 8.00 pm and the researchers also inspected the environment; mainly the administration block and the relationship between the principal and the educators. The information contributed to the general understanding of the principal's challenges in curriculum management.

School A

The principal arrived at 7.05 am and went straight to his office. The educators and learners turned up one by one and the last ones arrived at 7.45 am. The principal came out of his office and started moving around. As the educators arrived, they greeted one another and signed the register at reception and then proceeded to the staff room. The principal joined and greeted them, and they had a conversation about the registration of new learners and the parents' reaction to the fact that the places were full for 2013. The principal shared jokes with the teachers and they laughed. After prayer, the principal went back to his office and the educators went to their classrooms one by one. Ten minutes after the bell had rung for classes to begin, some educators and learners were still arriving. The office block was well maintained and security was tight for anybody coming in. On display in the reception area of the administration block were the school's vision and mission, the national anthem and the national flag as well as medals won by the school during previous years. The principal's office was clean with the timetable, certificates and school calendar hanging on the walls.

School B

The principal arrived at 8.00 am when most of the learners and educators had already arrived. He went to his office and did not come out. Every educator registered at the security office and then moved to the staffroom as they greeted and some of them hugged each other. They then left to their respective classes; some of them had even left before the bell rang. The environment around the office was clean and quiet. The vision and mission, as well as photos of top achieving learners were displayed on the wall. I was reading through the mission statement when a parent made the following comment: "They can write all these good missions, but it's not what our children are getting". Eight to ten minutes after classes had started, the learners were still arriving; they were late and had to register in the office. At 8.30 am I was called to the principal's office to do the observation and proceed with the interview as was arranged. The office was large and clean, with a timetable, calendar and certificates displayed on the walls.

School C

On the arrival of the researchers, the secretary opened the office and started getting ready for the day. The vision and mission, artwork, photos of learners and medals were displayed on the walls. The school environment generally appeared to be well maintained. The principal arrived at 7.05 am at the same time as the teachers who arrived one by one. They were talking to one another and the principal started moving around, greeting and talking to everyone; including me. The principal and educators went to the staffroom and the researchers were invited to join them for tea. They went on talking, cracking jokes and discussing the activities of the day while having tea which lasted for about 15 minutes. After a short prayer, the principal went to his office which was clean and well organised. There were family pictures, certificates, a timetable, a clock and artwork displayed on the walls.

School D

The school opened at 6.45 am, because some parents drop off their children to go to work. On the arrival of the researchers, the learners and the administration staff were already present. The school environment was quiet and well maintained. The mission and vision, photos of learners, medals, certificates and a section of the constitution were displayed on the walls. The principal arrived at 7.10 am, greeted everyone and stopped at the security office to ask a few questions before going to his office. After 10 minutes he came out of his office and started moving around. He attended to a parent, who wanted an exemption form for the school fees. The principal joined the educators in the staffroom and they greeted one another; the receptionist took the register to the staffroom and passed it around for the teachers to sign. They left for their classrooms, but here were still learners who turned up after the classes had already started. The principal's office looked comfortable and spacious and there were maps, pictures and a calendar displayed on the wall.

School E

The school gates opened at 7.00 am, the school bell rang at 7.45 am; the lessons started

at 8.00 am and the school principal arrived at 8.10 am. The researchers noticed that some learners and educators were still arriving after 7:45 am when the class bell had rung. As the principal arrived, she greeted us and some parents in the reception area were waiting for her. She asked them to follow her into her office. Just like the other schools, the vision and mission and some medals were displayed on the walls in the reception area. The meeting with the parents took about 30 minutes and we were called in shortly thereafter. The office was spacious with comfortable furniture and there were certificates, a calendar, a clock, pictures and artwork displayed on the walls. During my stay in the office, the phones were ringing and the principal appeared to be quite busy. After the office observation we left the classroom and returned for the interview after 30 minutes.

School F

According to the secretary, the principal arrives around 6.30 am to avoid the traffic, because he lives far away. When we arrived at 6.45 am he was already in his office. The school was very well maintained and was surrounded by flower gardens; and there were also pots with flowers inside his office. We moved around in the reception area. There was also a display on the walls similar to those of the other schools. In addition to what we saw at the other schools, the students' work was also displayed. The previous week the students had a reading week and summaries of the interesting parts of stories in the books they had read were displayed with the titles and authors of the books. As the learners and educators turned up at the school, the principal came out of the office, moved around talking and asking questions on different things. He attended to a parent who came to ask about the registration and he had brief conversations with the educators as they moved in and out of their classrooms. He interacted with almost everyone including the learners.

DISCUSSION

Valentine (2014: 67) is of the opinion that principals, as curricular leaders, must provide direction and support to teachers. Glickman (2014: 66) argues that the most important role the principal plays in curriculum leadership is facilitat-

ing teachers in its implementation, because even the best official curriculum is worthless unless it can be successfully put into operation by the teachers. The observations made by the researcher regarding the arrival of the principals at the respective schools varied. Four of the six principals arrived earlier than the educators and most of the learners. A principal who reported on time sets a good example for educators and learners to observe time, because it is a finite resource. Schools want educators to work as efficiently as possible to improve the performance of the learners. The observations made in school B and E were quite different; the principals arrived late at schools. The researchers want to believe that it was not common practice at the school, because it is nothing to be commended; especially in a school where everything works on time and every minute counts. If nobody confronts the principal about tardiness, it does not mean that no one is watching the clock and forming an opinion about him/her and his/her work ethic. In the same schools the learners and educators also turned up late, and one could sense some tension. Time management appeared to be poor in these schools and it can have an unfavourable effect on the learning process.

The general environment of these schools seemed to be pleasant; the offices of the principles were adequately furnished, well located and clean which comfort and good working conditions for the principals. It is important to have a timetable, calendar and clock displayed in the principal's office to keep him/her aware of what is happening at the school. It is just as important to have a the vision and mission statement of the school displayed; it recognises a common direction of growth, something that inspires people to do better and announces to parents and learners where the school aims to be in the future. The mission provides an overview of the steps planned to be achieve the future objectives. Without a vision, the school may get deviated the right direction. However, displaying the vision and mission does not guarantee good academic performance of the school, as commented by the parent at school B: "They can write all these good missions but it's not what our children are getting." There is a danger in having displays at schools that are not reflected in the learners' achievements.

The researcher is also interested in interactions or relationships among the principal, edu-

cators and learners. They noticed that four of the principals were interacting, greeting, cracking jokes with educators and learners who were moving around. This gave the impression that the relationship between the principal and educators is good, helpful, and cooperative. Consciously or unconsciously, these qualities have a greater influence on the character and quality of the school, because they disseminate throughout the school community, hence improving professional practice and learners' performance.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, by giving voice to new school managers, the researcher was able to determine what aspects of leadership preparation ring true and what aspects prove to be of futile exercise. Unlike leadership texts that have focused on conceptual considerations and personal narratives from the field, the present article focused on a collection of empirical efforts centred on the challenges besetting leadership during their initial and crucial years of induction. It is evidential through research results that there are major challenges besetting the principals of the respective schools as far as curriculum management is concerned. However, the attitude that they projected towards curriculum management will determine how they deal with it. As the leaders of the schools, principals must act as agents for good curriculum management practices and they should be empowered with the necessary skills, knowledge and values to improve their understanding of curriculum management practices. If not, the standard of the schools will deteriorate and there will be no direction or vision to follow. As curriculum managers at these schools, the principals have tremendous responsibilities. They experience the nature and extent of their curriculum duties as very complex and demanding. The researcher is optimistic that, despite the negativity and inadequacies surrounding the curriculum, there is hope that with time and effort, and given the total commitment of all stakeholders to implement the curriculum, success can be attained.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Leadership qualities and expertise need to be developed to include education management.

There is a need for a strong training intervention in school leadership and governance to enhance the capacity of principals. The department should form partnerships with higher institutions of learning and experts in different fields to improve the quality of workshops and training offered to school principals. The research participants described training workshops as poor and facilitators lack the capacity to facilitate effectively. More effort is needed from the department to reduce the workload and provide more resources to enable principals to perform their roles and perform their duties well. The study indicated that, while the department has made some progress in attending to these concerns, more effort should be dedicated to deal with this shortfall.

The allocation of funds by the Department of Education should be reviewed. The study shows that these schools are struggling financially. There is also a need for clear intervention from the top to tackle the issue of defaulting parents. In the absence of a clear message and intervention by government, the standard in these schools will continue to decline. Public education on fee paying and non-fee paying schools is needed. Schools reported that premature or inaccurate announcements by government officials about 'free education' created enormous challenges for them and confusion among parents. These confusing public messages contribute to the lack of commitment to pay school fees among some parents.

The principals need to focus on the strengths of the educators and help them manage their weaknesses through site-based personal and professional development. The schools must be inspected regularly; it is important for a qualified and appointed school inspector to know what is happening in these schools. The principals should also be observed how they conduct various school activities and of course, it can be done by not leaving the schools free to their will to run the show as they wish; this will also help to keep the principals on the alert. A more comprehensive study in curriculum management and leadership in primary schools should be done.

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