Exploring the Impact of Ineffective Communication on Educators' Teaching Performance at Primary Schools

J.G. Kheswa

Department of Psychology, University of Fort Hare, Private Bag X1314, Alice, 5700, South Africa
E-mail: jkheswa@ufh.ac.za

ABSTRACT This paper reports on an investigation of ineffective communication among educators' teaching performance in Fezile-Dabi District, Free State Province, South Africa. The study utilized a qualitative paradigm. Open-ended questionnaires were used as a research instrument to collect data from six purposively selected educators in one primary school. The findings revealed that working with authoritarian principals is a major debilitating factor because there is no effective communication. As a result, there is low morale, conflicts and job dissatisfaction, which contribute to a deterioration of the culture of learning and teaching (COLT) because educators are deprived opportunities to participate in school restructuring processes. Furthermore, research participants stated that owing to a toxic environment and the unhealthy relations they have with the principal, their psychological well-being has been adversely affected. In conclusion, when there exists ineffective communication among educators, stress, depression and insomnia are most likely to occur. Given that authoritarian leadership styles could be destructive in any organization, the recommendations are that professional development and support for the principal from the district is a necessity in the democratic dispensation.

INTRODUCTION

In terms of the South African School Act, 1996 (Section 16), management in schools is the responsibility of the principals. Within the school, through effective communication, human relations can be improved and the objectives can be achieved because of dialogues, which are aimed at developing responsible and accountable citizens (Arlestig 2008). To establish a plan for continuous improvement at schools and to evaluate the impact of new strategies, educators and principals must be capable of engaging in positive and constructive communication (Bernhardt 2014; Zepeda 2013). However, majority of the principals in previously Black schools find it hard to adapt to change, which requires democratization, effective communication and sharing of responsibilities with the educators (Mncube and Madikizela-Madiya 2014). When there is a no effective communication among educators and principals, the organizational goals aimed at producing excellence in teaching and learning, sustaining human development do not succeed (Keil and McConnahan 2006). Also, when the formal channels of communication (upwards, downwards and horizontally or laterally) are not created within the organization, conflicts are inevitable (Haines 2007; Flemming 2013).

Communication is defined as the process through which the information that is elicited creates a response between the sender and receiver. Such communication may be facts, ideas or images that relate an event, describing behavior, or asking a question (Rebore 2014). In almost all school activities, communication plays an important role, and the manner in which the principal interacts with the educators can determine the organizational culture and organizational expectations. According to Arlestig (2008), the amount of time the principals invests in motivating educators and reinforcing communal activities tends to yield positive results within the organization and cooperation among the staff members because there exists positive communication. However, Naicker and Mestry (2013) found that in a research conducted in Soweto primary schools, educators reported that their non-involvement in the leadership environment was exacerbated by ineffective communication as the power remains in the domain of the SMT. These participants cited that the principals' attitudes contributed immensely to the ineffectiveness and inefficiency of the schools.

Principals who support their educators by using positive reinforcement have been found to be instrumental in generating a healthy working environment and improving the self-esteem

and self-efficacy of educators (Rebore 2014; Steyn 2011). Owing to a high level of cohesion and a positive atmosphere at school, educators become productive, assertive and display positive attitudes (Niemann 2008). Various scholars assert that self-esteem has been shown to buffer against physical and mental health problems. Educators who have high self-esteem demonstrate optimism, enthusiasm and continually strive for the best pertaining to their learners' academic performance (Louw and Louw 2007; Mc Devitt and Ormrod 2010; Minnaert et al. 2011). According to Kheswa (2006), self-esteem shares the same characteristics of self-worth, which improves self-acceptance, invigorates renewal and self-actualization.

Effective Communication and Transformational Leadership

Effective communication is tied to transformational leadership. In transformational leadership, principals involve the educators in the exchange of ideas for the betterment of the school. Such principals in improving the organization apply the open-door policy, which encourages innovative ways, collaboration and accountability for all. As opposed to being the sole custodian of information and confrontational, the transformational principals display interaction, empowerment, vision and passion in what they do. In any activity, they seek clarity and opinions of their educators (Rowland 2008; Steyn 2011). For example, Power and Thomas (2007) found that principals who communicate with their colleagues and trust those who are experienced, tend to be helpful to educators who begin to use new instructional technology, such as graphical calculators and/or computers, when feeling lost and unsure about what to do owing to inadequacy of skills.

Transformational leadership correlates with the teachers' morale. Rowland (2008) found that principals who are transformational tend to:
- Have good communication skills,
- Have good human relations, both within the school and between school and community,
- Spend quality time for collegial interaction, planning, decision-making and problem-solving,
- Devote attention to professional needs such as in-service training of educators, and

- Create opportunities for meaningful and professional growth.

Because effective communication prevails within the school as an organization, Niemann (2008) found that educators may subscribe themselves to a collectivistic culture which may result in preference of group decisions when dealing with a challenge, which could hamper the smooth running of the school, all staff-members getting involved to attain organizational objectives, and development of respect for one another rather than divisions amongst educators.

Effective Communication and Strategic Planning

Undoubtedly, in many Black South African schools, educators are faced with too much paperwork (Chisholm et al. 2001), are understaffed, and affected and infected by HIV/AIDS (Mosoge 2008). Therefore, principals should communicate immediately with the staff to avoid unnecessary conflicts as research indicates that the success of any organization lies in effective communication of its strategic management and planning (Crowther et al. 2009; Flemming 2013). To be strategic, principals should be aligned to the principle of priority for scarce resources and the principle of colleagueship. As strategic planners and effective communicators, principals must address the staff members or circulate a notification addressing how the resignation or leave of educators will be approached, without any delay (Crowther et al. 2009; Keil and McConnahan 2005). In doing so, there might be no need for overloaded educators who belong to the Teachers' Union to report their principals. Contingency plans should be in place to replace educators who may be terminally ill or taking care of their loved ones due to HIV/AIDS while on leave. Although the recruitment of state paid educators to public schools may be time-consuming and complex, effective principals communicate with the staff members, parents and district to ensure that remaining educators are not overloaded or experience stress, and learners are not neglected or deprived of their constitutional rights (Clark 2007). Education stress could be described as the personal reaction of educators to extreme demands or other types of pressure placed on them, resulting in unpleasant and negative emotions, such as anger, frustration, anxiety and depression (Younger and

George 2013). For example, in a study carried out in Mpumalanga, South Africa, Thakathi and Lemmer (2002) found that a female principal in one primary school organized the School Governing Body (SGB) to approach the department's offices to deliberate on how to resolve the scarcity of resources encountered at their school. However, it is important to note that at some schools, there is no collegiality between the SGB and principals and such unpleasant relationships may result in the principals' performance being perceived as inefficient by educators and create tension (Msila 2011). Clark (2007) posits that reliance on situational analysis to address the present challenges faced by the school and to procure future goals may bear benefits such as ensuring that there is careful control over funds, basic school benefits are in good condition and all stakeholders are involved in governance of the school.

Principals as Agents of Positive Change

According to Rowland (2008), competent principals communicate effectively and fulfill the role of working with educators to strengthen skills, imparting knowledge of academic content and pedagogy and possess leadership skills. Consistent with the South African School Act, Section 8 (2) principals as the agents of change are expected to maintain law and order, and teach educators that illegal objects are not allowed in schools and not to contravene or fail to comply with any law relating to education (Clark 2007). Drawing from the *Trait Theory of Leadership,* such principals possess emotional stability, self-confidence, and communication skills, and are knowledgeable about conflict management. In dealing with inexperienced educators, they apply achievement oriented communication styles to show confidence in the follower to perform well, rather than being sarcastic and egoistic. Avidov-Ungar et al. (2014) found that effective principals adopt a management style that motivates educators to further their studies (that is, professional development), supports educators with appropriate career development and provides a program of continuing professional development. In the same vein, such principals employ servant leadership, which demonstrates qualities of altruism, hope, humility, integrity and interpersonal acceptance (Madsen and Mabokela 2013; Staeheli and Hammett 2013).

From Brofenbrenner's ecological theory, it becomes easier for the district to intervene when there is cooperation between the principals, educators, learners and parents. According to Forget and Lebel (2001), the ecological theory states that interconnectedness of families, schools and community agencies can influence the development and behavior of children. For example, in cases where AIDS orphaned learners live in fear and discrimination from other learners or educators, Mayimele (2009) mentions that principals with effective communication skills and a conscientious personality may refer educators to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Bill of Rights, which advocates that under no circumstances should a learner be discriminated against on the basis of health status, gender, culture and race.

Delegation and Collaboration

Because the principal's role is embedded in shared ideals and goals (Steyn 2011) when allowing experienced educators to mentor the young ones, in this way the self-esteem and self-worth of all educators become enhanced (Niemann 2008). Educators develop intrinsic motivation, become competent, confident and display commitment to teaching and learning. In schools where there are younger members of the teaching staff, who are perceived to be amenable to change and less constrained in comparison to senior educators, Ngcobo and Tikly (2010) propose that through allocating new staff members to lead timetable committees, extramural activities and to be in charge of task teams to deal with learners experiencing learning barriers, it contributes towards the success of the school. Clarke (2007) assumes that because positive communication prevails among staff members, in the process they learn to be democratic citizens. By democracy, the belief is that both the principals and educators should work together towards devotion to tolerance to diversity and mutual assistance, friendship, honesty, trust and enhancement of self-respect. Crowther et al. (2009) further go on to describe democracy at school as a process which involves respect for work and dignity of individuals and their cultural traditions, recognition of interdependence in working for the common goal and the reverence for and proactive facilitation of free and open inquiry and critique. Crowther et al.

(2009) view this type of relationship as the power of parallel leadership and it refers to the collective efforts of the principals and educators in building school capacity and embodies mutual trust, shared purpose and allowance for individual expression.

In contrast, when the principals are authoritarian in their leadership and management style, it could hamper the organizational culture because they may domineer, determine policies and procedures with no group participation or consultation, resulting in little or no effective communication flow among staff members. In such a climate, there is no sense of belonging and the educators tend to lack the zeal to perform up to the expectation (Ogunyika and Adedoyin 2013). Authoritarian leadership style is characterized by detachment, strict expectation for behavior and conservative rules that educators are expected to obey without asking questions or expressing their views (McDevitt and Ormrod 2010). Owing to the schizothyme personality (cold, aloof and detached) (Schultz and Schultz 2013) majority of authoritarian principals may withhold important information, threaten followers, display inconsistency and communicate poorly with the followers (Mahlangu 2014; Moloi and Bush 2007). They do not trust their educators and have the tendency of isolating and attempting to power or control their subordinates. A distinction must be made that female principals are perceived to be less hierarchical, more democratic and sensitive, foster cohesiveness and value openness in comparison to their male counterparts who display aggression and dominance (Thakathi and Lemmer 2002).

In designing and implementing school-specific pedagogical principles, the principals and educators should engage in shared learning, focused reflection and in-depth problem solving. In other words, both the principals and educators should refrain from using language of hierarchy, which emphasizes superiority and inferiority complex (for example, *"I'm just an educator"*, *"My subordinates"*, *"My superior"*, *"Let's see what the boss wants"*) (Crowther et al. 2009). Instead, the principals should be friendly, radiate positive energy and be conscientious (Ryckman 2007). For example, in a qualitative research study carried out in Lejweleputswa district in Free State, to investigate the nature and extent of the educators' knowledge about psychological, physical and social difficulties that

AIDS orphaned learners experience, Mayimele (2009) found that schools which comprised educators in intervention programs to support affected learners, had a positive communication with principals, who are also involved in the program. An explanation for the collaboration and selflessness of the staff members could stem from Bandura's social learning theory because modeling has a powerful and long-lasting effect (Ryckman 2007; Schultz and Schultz 2013).

Engagement with Parents and Community

In the *"Tirisano"* document released by the late former Minister of Education, Professor K. Asmal, a call for mobilization of parents, NGOs and community leaders was made to ensure that schools are better equipped for the realization of better academic performance of learners (Ngcobo and Tikly 2010). The community-based approach draws on the principles and values of building social capital, which includes building communication, norms and trust among parents and the school (Zepeda 2013). From public administration discourse, this approach is viewed as true public participation because parents and the school collaboratively embark on decisions, which promote unity and harmony. From Epstein's model of parental involvement, Mncube (2009) asserts that co-equal partnership between families and schools increases achievements in reading, participation in extracurricular and lowers dropout rates. To show that effective communication from the side of the school management could have an impact on educators and learners, in a study carried out in South African villages, Ngcobo and Tikly (2010) found that principals who adopted innovative strategies by visiting villagers than to wait for parents meetings, which are held once or twice in a year, encouraged parents to provide basic nutrition at home for learners and be involved in the education of their children.

In managing diversity at school, Mayimele (2009) found that principals who are unprejudiced, unbiased and non-stereotypic nurture a culture of communication and participation because it is the fundamental block of transparency and building consensus. In contrast, Botha (2012) found that principals who exercised their authority over SGB members since majority of parents in such committees are illiterate and in such schools educators were embroiled in con-

flicts. In a study conducted in Gauteng among SGB members from four secondary schools because principals are arrogant and bossy in their approach, Botha (2012) found that the relevant information, which affects the well-being of educators and learners, was not being disseminated to the school and that left the educators clueless of what was going on. Against this background this research attempted to answer the following questions:

- ⬥ What are the educators' views regarding effective communication in their school?
- ⬥ How has ineffective communication contributed towards the educators' teaching performance?
- ⬥ Which strategies could be used for educators to improve effective communication?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The method of research employed in this study was qualitative because it is interpretive (Creswell 2009). This approach allows for personal interaction, perspective and the experiences of the participants to emerge (Nicholas et al. 2010). Leedy and Ormrod (2005) also advanced the view that a qualitative research design is a phenomenological study as the purpose of the researchers is to understand the experiences from the point of view of the participants.

By utilizing open-ended questionnaires, a qualitative research allows flexibility and the attainment of a deeper and trustworthy understanding of the research subject since it is holistic in nature and the participants express their own lived experiences and beliefs. In addition, qualitative research seeks a better understanding of complex situations. Because participants are in their natural setting, they can express their opinions at length, in detail and in a way that may be personal and unique.

Sample and Population

The target population of this research study consisted of both male and female educators from a primary school in the Free State Province. Participants were purposively selected. According to Creswell (2005), the population is composed of participants selected by the researcher based on the needs of the study and it refers to a group of subjects from which a sample will be drawn (Leedy and Ormrod 2005). This means that it can be people, events or social actions, which form a designated set of criteria (Miller 2007). The researcher targeted six educators (three females and three males) representing the population from one primary school who were eligible to answer the questionnaires in English.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical measures were necessary to be adhered to in this research because they create a trusting relationship between the researcher and the participants. According to Creswell (2009), any research that involves human participation should be governed by ethics to ensure that the participants are not subjected to undue discomfort, exploitation and physical harm. Ethics are principles by which the researchers should abide to protect the integrity of the participants during the study. In other words, ethics concern issues such as personal disclosure, authenticity and the credibility of the research report. In this research study, the school principal granted the permission for the participation of educators. In order to facilitate the participants to give their full informed consent, both the advantages and disadvantages of the research were explained before the research took place as well as the procedure to alert the participants should they wish to cease participation in the study at any time without penalty. According to Creswell (2009), informed consent should first include the signing of the informed consent form to agree that the participation is voluntary. In this regard, the purposively selected educators understood the purpose of the study and never withdrew from voluntary participation. The research participants' rights to privacy were respected and under no circumstances were their names identified or revealed as suggested by Creswell (2009). During data collection, the researcher preferred to conduct the qualitative study in one classroom after school hours because it was quiet and participants felt relaxed as there no variables to distract them from completing the open-ended questionnaires. Furthermore, as suggested by Creswell (2009), the research participants were not exposed to undue physical or psychological harm. Of importance, the research findings were reported in a complete and honest fashion without fabricated data to support a

particular conclusion as full acknowledgement of all material belonging to other researchers was considered to avoid plagiarism and documentary theft as commended by Leedy and Ormrod (2005).

Data Collection

According to Neuman (2002), since the qualitative research is inductive, the researcher gathered the information to build the theory by means of open-ended questionnaires because they afforded the participants an opportunity to express themselves in detail although it was time-consuming as compared to filling closed-ended questionnaires. The participants wrote their experiences using their own words without being interrupted, as there were no wrong answers.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

In analyzing data for this study, the researcher used interpretive analysis. The key to doing good interpretive analysis was to stay close to the data, to interpret it from a position of understanding as it provided thick descriptions of characteristics, processes and context that constituted the phenomenon being studied as suggested by Durrheim et al. (2006). The following steps were applied:
- **Organization of details about the case**: The specific facts about the case were arranged in a logical order.
- **Categorization of data**: Categories were identified to help cluster the data into meaningful groups.
- **Interpretation of single instance**: Specific occurrences and other bits of data were examined for the specific meanings.
- **Identification of patterns**: The data was categorized into themes after being interpreted.

Research Neutrality

In ensuring researcher neutrality to avoid bias, the researcher interpreted the whole discussion based on the accounts provided by the participants. Neutrality refers to the degree to which the findings are a function solely of the participants and conditions of the research and not of other biases, motivation and perspectives (Krefting 1991).

Trustworthiness

In ensuring the rigor of this research study, transferability was followed as a guideline as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) in addition to neutrality, which is aforementioned. Transferability is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be relevant to other situations (Shenton 2004). Creswell (2005) postulates that transferability is achieved when the findings of the study fit into contexts outside the study situation and when its audience views its findings as meaningful and applicable in terms of their own experiences.

RESULTS

The analysis resulted in the development of eight key themes, namely, *lack of delegation, authoritarian leadership style, interpersonal conflicts, low teacher morale, stress and depression, intervention of teacher union, consulting the media and redeployment of the principal.*

Lack of Delegation

Most of the participants expressed that their principals lack in delegating responsibilities to the educators when asked what could be the reason for ineffective communication. Some of the participants' responses are as follows:
"Our principal does not assign certain professional duties such as being represented at the meetings, which address even human relations among staff members."
"He is always busy and does not feel comfortable in appointing us to act as senior educators in a foundation phase to ease his burden. The bad thing about it is that we are left clueless when the district officials come to evaluate us."
"Ineffective communication is caused by lack of involvement. We are excluded from many activities whose aims are to improve the culture of learning and teaching because our principal undermines our capabilities."
"Where on earth have you ever seen a school principal who does not want to delegate duties such sharing staff meetings and expect growth and development?"

Authoritarian Leadership Style

To work in a hostile environment with leaders who disregard other people's views is what

the six participants expressed. Female partici-
pants, in particular, indicated that even when
there are learners who reported to have been
sexually abused or victimized, they do not feel
the need to raise this with the principal because
he is aloof and inconsiderate. Regarding the
question: How has the principal's leadership
style contributed towards effective communica-
tion? Their responses were as follows:

*"Our principal is not friendly, approach-
able and warm. His personality is of someone
who is self-centered. Because there is no posi-
tive communication, we don't even approach
him regarding the cases of learners who are
being sexually abused and this is totally wrong
as it is against the constitution of the country."*

*"He turns down and shouts at us when we
bring suggestions to help learners who reach
puberty. In my opinion, it is like we will take
his post."*

One male participant indicated that because
the principal is anti-social, he sees no point of
reporting to him the developments as far as ex-
tramural activities are concerned. He responded
as follows:

*"When our boys have played soccer and
won, we do not even bother to inform the staff
during staff meetings because our principal
does not see the good in us that we do for the
school."*

Another male participant in his response
perceived the principal as putting unrealistic
demands on them without considering that the
school lacks resources. For example, he said:

*"Our principal still operates the tradition-
al way. Every time we request him to ask the
chairperson of SGB to employ two temporary
teachers to fill the gap of those who resigned
since the posts have not been advertised and
we are overloaded, the principal passes un-
pleasant remarks that he will report us to the
district because we seem to be knowing much."*

Interpersonal Conflicts

This group of participants raised that because
the principal threatens them every time when he
is approached for being an ineffective commu-
nicator that created conflicts between the SGB
and educators. For example, they responded as
follows to the question: How effective is the
SGB in promoting human relations between the
principal, educators and parents?

*"SGB members who represent parents are
not assertive. They are afraid of him as most of
them are old and not learned."*

*"There is no way there could be peace and
a friendly environment in our school because
parents believe everything that comes from the
principal."*

*"The last time when the principal disclosed
that one of our female colleagues was going
through a divorce, our SGB saw nothing wrong
when we expressed our dissatisfaction to it."*

*"Our SGB has not united us at all because
our principal manipulates it. There are groups
amongst us and it is disappointing to learn
that even parents gossip about us with other
colleagues."*

*"As the new educator in the school, my ex-
pectations were that the SGB members would
be true leaders in the community, people who
have knowledge about school governance. But,
there is nothing as such since they create ten-
sion and are unable to be neutral and fair in
dealing with matters affecting teaching and
learning of their children."*

Low Teacher Morale

Both male and female educators indicated
that it is depressing to go to a school that nega-
tively affects their personalities. They expressed
that they lack zeal and motivation to teach with
excitement because the environment operates
like a closed system. With regard to the ques-
tion to investigate how educators feel to work in
an environment, which lacked effective commu-
nication, this is what the participants wrote:

*"My attitude towards teaching has grossly
changed since the environment I work in is tox-
ic. Even when I am absent or I have arrived late
to school, I do not care. "*

*"For the fact that our principal perceives
himself as the boss, with the right to hire and
fire, to some degree, he has contributed to my
low self-esteem, low morale and lack of motiva-
tion to follow the Batho-Pele principles. You
will never see him happy and as a leader, father
and church going person, I was expecting to
work with a leader from whom I would get ex-
trinsic motivation and advice."*

*"Even when learners perform better and
parents come to school to appreciate the roles
that we play to guide their children, still our
coach (that is, the principal) is not impressed."*

"I try to remain motivated and ignore the derogatory remarks that our principal utters during staff meetings and about girls who fall pregnant, but I sometimes wish that I had not been employed at this school"

"I once had a confrontation with the principal and after that I lost the motivation to give my all to the learners. Whether I am present or absent, I do not lose anything, my children attend school in town. What I hate most is that his SGB members believe in him."

Stress and Depression

This theme emerged from the question, which investigated how educators feel to work in an environment, which lacked effective communication. Participants expressed lack of sleep and concentration when they think of their school. Furthermore, some indicated that even at home they are unable to interact positively with their family members. Their responses are as follows:

"I become stressed when there is a circular that we must meet urgently in the staffroom because the principal would be telling us that Mrs. X and Mr. Y, you must attend the workshop."

"Four months ago, my medical doctor diagnosed me with depression. Upon asking me about my relationship with colleagues, he picked up quickly that at my school, there is no joy. He booked me off for a whole week and advised me to see a counseling psychologist if my condition did not improve."

"I can't tolerate children who make noise in my class. I become easily irritable. I happen to suffer from headaches and struggle to sleep at night."

"To avoid stress and the principal who is aggressive, I drink alcohol. I feel that I am not adding any value to the teaching profession because our principal is a stressor."

Teacher Union Representative

To deal with a principal who is not democratic, these group of educators felt that the intervention of the teachers' union could be the solution in bringing harmony and respect for human dignity of the educators. In response to the question: *"Which strategies could be used for educators to improve effective communication?"* The participants mentioned the following uncompromisingly:

"We belong to SADTU and our rights cannot be abused. We have reported him as we speak and expect the organization to deal with him accordingly. We live in a country where the rights of educators are protected by the constitution and SACE."

"Because our SGB is afraid of him and not interested in building unity, the only solution will be a teachers' union."

"The intervention of SADTU in a school where the principal treats us like animals or puppets, would be ideal because there is no open door policy in place, which the principal must have endorsed and we feel free to approach him on how to share the vision of the school."

Consulting the Media

The participants also revealed that consulting the media such as newspaper reporters or television could be the solution as they participants highlighted the following:

"The television would expose him so much though we may be charged with insubordination by the district."

"Because the district does not offer courses on conflict management for the principals to become instrumental in ensuring that the school operates towards maintain stability, to invite Daily Sun newspaper reporters can be good in the sense that the Minister of Education would know the type of principals we work with."

Redeployment of the Principal

The participants revealed that the principal should be redeployed to another school because though the educators are not vocal about the harsh treatment they receive from the principal. In response to the question: *What strategies can be employed for educators to improve effective communication?* The participants expressed the following:

"We are tired of a principal who does not care about our emotions and feelings. With the help of our union, he must be redeployed to another school and be given a principal who has morals and who would be able to communicate with us."

"Effective communication is the by-product of effective leaders. So in case of principals who frustrate educators, the best solution is that the

district places him elsewhere because if not the morale of the educators become low."

DISCUSSION

Drawing from the Five- Factor Model of school effectiveness, Pretorius (2014) asserts that principals should demonstrate democratic leadership and management, maintain an orderly school climate and be instructionally focused as well as consistent in ensuring that quality learner academic performance is achieved. In contrast, the empirical findings of this research reveal that the staff members experience conflicts, low teacher morale and depression as a result of authoritarian leadership style of the principals and lack of effective communication. According to Mncube and Madikizela-Madiya (2014), such a school environment may be perceived as dysfunctional because educators expressed potential communication barriers as crippling the teachers' performance and attainment of organizational goals. Research on the whole school renewal indicates that educators need emotionally safe environments for teaching and personal growth (Lee and Yin 2011; Zepeda 2013). However, when authoritarian principals display anger and defiance, tension and aggressive behavior is likely to occur among the subordinates (Louw and Louw 2007; Kalat 2011). Because female educators in particular, lack assertiveness, they may be victims of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and remain submissive despite being overloaded with lot of paperwork and classes (Comer 2013). Depression is one of the emotional problems, which when not properly managed, could lead to a state of hopelessness, increased level of aggression, loss of sex drive and hypersomnia (prolonged sleep) (Coon and Mitterer 2010). More specifically, findings indicate that educators experienced deprivation to some degree. Collective action for promoting common purposes is very limited. Also, when they continue to work in an environment that is toxic, the chances of learners being left unattended or not guided by caring and prepared educators are minimal since the educators would be stressed. Consistent with these findings, Peasron and Moomaw (2005) found that American educators who were deprived autonomy by their principals reported job dissatisfaction, which led to stress, physical exhaustion, anxiety, frustration and sense of powerlessness.

Teacher empowerment has been linked to collaborative decision-making pertaining to curriculum, instructions and leading (Avidov-Ungar et al. 2014; Peasron and Moomaw 2005). This study found that when the principals do not acknowledge that educators can bring innovation, counsel learners who come from dysfunctional families and act as advisors among themselves. Consequently, educators may feel demotivated and uncooperative.

It also emerged from this study that the need of highly effective principals and the support of other senior and middle managers is required, as the education landscape has dramatically changed over the past twenty years of democracy in South Africa. The principal does not collaborate with the teachers and SGB. During meetings, the principal does not delegate duties nor plan with the educators. Furthermore, educators expressed that the principal delays to provide immediate feedback when he had attended the principals' meetings. Very often, the principal displays aggressive behavior and treats them with contempt. An expression of unhappiness and frustration was evident when educators wished it would be better should the principal be redeployed because his authoritarian leadership style had affected the culture of learning and teaching. In this regard, principals ought to be actively involved in bonding their staff to avoid being exposed to media and from being protested against. Supporting this is Domitrovich et al. (2010) who found that in schools where principals are democratic, educators become innovative, agreeable and respect the code of ethics because their principals' attitudes make them feel wanted and regarded as valuable. Heystek (2004) posits that lack of colleagueship may create hatred and lead to poor performance of learners since educators experience conflicts. From this implication, district officials should intervene and ensure that *Batho-Pele* principles are practiced. Bush (2007) argues that it is a constitutional right of educators to belong to a teachers' union for protection against anti-social and disrespectful principals. Finally, since policies change rapidly, principals must be lifelong learners in order to gain confidence in dealing with various issues affecting the school and accommodate the existence of a teachers' union without feeling insecure (Msila 2011).

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, this research study concludes that educators experience depression, insomnia and job dissatisfaction as a result of

the harsh treatment from the principal. The implication of the findings could mean that prolonged unhealthy human relations among staff members could contribute towards low self-esteem, absenteeism and poor quality teaching. Furthermore, when the educators have lost confidence and trust in their school leadership due to ineffective communication, they tend to violate educational norms and values and display incompetence regarding standard operating procedures, which provides emotional and psychological implications for both educators and learners.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made. To improve effective communication in the school environment, principals should respect and give attention to the diverse and individual perspectives of all staff members drawing from the post-modern model. Relations of respect must be mutual and reciprocal as a harsh environment disempowers educators. Since communication may be distorted by differences in cultural values, languages and viewpoints, which may prevail during meetings, it is imperative that the principals accommodate every staff member by acknowledging their beliefs and opinions so that educators may not develop negative attitude towards teaching and learning. To improve effective communication, the principals ought to prepare and disseminate the information such as memorandum and circulars issued by the district on time to avoid unnecessary conflicts. Finally, adequate in-service training for educators and SMT in acquisition of skills and positive attitudes should be periodically available for better management of diversified school environment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

REFERENCES

Arlestig H 2008. *Communication between Principals and Teachers in Successful School.* PhD Thesis. Sweden: Urmea Universitet.
Avidov-Ungar O, Friedman I, Olshtain E 2014. Empowerment amongst teachers holding leadership positions. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 20(6): 704-720.
Bernhardt VL 2014. *The School Portfolio: A Comprehensive Framework for School Improvement.* Routledge: New York.
Blaikie N 2001. *Designing Social Research.* New York: Blackwell.
Botha RJN 2012. The role of the school principal in the South African school governing body: A case study of various members' perceptions. *J Soc Sci*, 30(3): 263-271.
Bush T 2007. Educational leadership and management: Theory, policy and practice. *South African Journal of Education,* 27(3): 391-406.
Chisholm L, Volmink J, Ndhlovu T, Potenza E, Mahomed H, Muller J, Mphahlele L 2001. A South African Curriculum for the Twenty-First Century. Report of the Review Committee on Curriculum. From <http://www.info.gov.za/otherdocs/2000/21cen_curriculum.pdf.> South Africa: Government Printer.
Clarke A 2007. *The Handbook of School Management.* Cape Town: Kate Mc Callum.
Comer RJ 2009. *Abnormal Psychology.* 8th Edition. New York: Worth Publishers.
Coon D, Mitterer JO 2010. *Introduction to Psychology: Gateways to Mind and Behaviour.* 12th Edition. Belmont: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.
Creswell JW 2005. *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research.* 2nd Edition. Upper Saddle River, NewJersey: Pearson Prentice Hall.
Creswell JW 2009. *Research Design, Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches.* 3rd Edition. London: Sage Publications Inc:
Crowther F, Ferguson M, Hann L 2009. *Developing Teacher Leaders: How Teacher Leadership Enhances School Success.* 2nd Edition. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press.
Domitrovich CE, Bradshaw CP, Greenberg MT, Embry D, Poduska JM, Ialongo NS 2010. Integrated models of school based prevention: Logic and theory. *Psychology in the Schools*, 47(1): 71-88.
Durrheim K, Painter D, Terre Blanche M 2006. *Research in Practice: Applied Methods for the Social Science.* 2nd Edition. Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press.
Fleming P 2013. *The Art of Middle Management in Secondary Schools: A Guide to Effective Subject and Team Leadership.* New York: Routledge.
Forget G, Lebel J 2001. An ecosystem approach to human health. *International Journal of Occupational and Environmental Health*, 7(2): 3-27.
Gruber J S 2010. Key principles of community-based natural resource management: A synthesis and interpretation of identified effective approaches for managing the commons. *Environmental Management*, 45(1): 52-66.
Haines FL 2007. *An Investigation into the Principal's Role in Facilitating the Effective Participation of the School Governing Body in Promoting Quality Education in Public Schools*. MEd Dissertation. Pietermaritzburg: University of Zululand.
Kalat JW 2011. *Introduction to Psychology.* 9th Edition. Australia: Cengage Learning.

Keil VL, McConnahan WR 2005. Meaningful written communication by administrators. *Connections*, 7: 20-26.

Kheswa JG 2006. *Descriptive Analyses of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Among Adolescents in Soweto*. MEd Dissertation. Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg.

Krefting L 1991. Rigor in qualitative research: The assessment of trustworthiness. *TheAmerican Journal of Occupation Therapy,* 45(3): 214-221.

Lee, J C-K, Yin H-B. 2011. Teachers' emotions and professional identity in curriculum reform: A Chinese perspective. *Journal of Educational Change,* 12: 25-46.

Leedy PD, Ormrod JE 2005. *Practical Research: Planning and Design*. 8th Edition. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Lincoln YS, Guba EG 1985. *Naturalistic Inquiry.* Beverly Hills, USA: SAGE.

Louw D, Louw A 2007. *Child and Adolescent Development.* Bloemfontein: University of Free State.

Madsen J, Mabokela R 2013. Leadership Challenges in Addressing Changing Demographics in Schools. *NASSP Bulletin*, 0192636513514110.

Mahlangu VP 2014. Strategies in managing township schools in South Africa: Management through partnerships. *J Soc Sci*, 38(2): 175-183.

Mayimele RR 2009. *A Communitarian Programme for Supporting AIDS Orphaned Learners*. MEd Dissertation. Vanderbijlpark: North -West University, Vaal –Triangle Campus.

McDevitt TM, Ormrod JE 2010. *Child Development and Education.* 4th Edition. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc.

Miller SA 2007. *Development Research Methods.* 3rd Edition. London: SAGE.

Minnaert A, Boekaerts M, de Brabander C, Opdenakker MC 2011. Students' experiences of autonomy, competence, social relatedness and interest within a CSCL environment in vocational education: The case of commerce and business administration. *Vocations and Learning*, 4(3): 175-190.

Mitchell P, Wynia M, Golden R, McNellis B, Okun S, Webb CE, Von Kohorn I 2012. *Core Principles and Values of Effective Team-based Health Care.* Washington, DC: Institute of Medicine.

Mncube V 2009. The perceptions of parents of their role in the democratic governance of schools in South Africa: Are they on board? *South African Journal of Education,* 29: 83-103.

Mncube V, Madikizela- Madiya N 2014. Gangsterism as a cause of violence in South African schools: The case of six provinces. *J Sociology Soc Anth*, 5(1): 43-50.

Moloi K, Bush T 2007. An overview of education management in South Africa. *Management in Education*, 20(5): 15-22.

Mosoge J 2008. Talent development. In: J Heystek, R Niemann, J van Rooyen, J Mosoge, K Bipat (Eds.): *People in Education.* Sandton: Heinemann Publishers, pp.160-193.

Msila V 2011. School management and the struggle for effective schools. *Africa Education Review,* 8(3): 434-449.

Naicker SR, Mestry R 2013. Teachers' reflections on distributive leadership in public primary schools in Soweto. *South African Journal of Education*, 33(2): 1-15.

Nakpodia ED 2011. Principals and teachers' perceptions of communication and human resources management and their compliance with culture in Nigerian educational system. *Journal of Language and Culture*, 2(5): 82-90.

Neuman WL 2002 . *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. 5th Edition. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Ngcobo T, Tikly LP 2010. Key dimensions of effective leadership for change: A focus on township and rural schools in South Africa. *Educational Management and Leadership*, 38(2): 202- 228.

Niemann R 2008. Contemporary South African people leadership issues and development. In: J Heystek, R Niemann, J van Rooyen, J Mosoge, K Bipath (Eds.): *People in Education.* Sandton: Heinemann Publishers, pp. 21-54.

Ogunyinka EK, Adedoyin RC 2013. Leadership styles and work effectiveness of school principals in Ekiti State: Case study of Ado- Ekiti Local Government Area. *Development Country Studies,* 3 (3): 64-74.

Pearson LC, Moomaw W 2005. The relationship between teacher autonomy and stress, work satisfaction, empowerment and professionalism. *Educational Research Quarterly,* 29(1): 38-54.

Power T, Thomas R 2007. The classroom in your pocket? *Curriculum Journal,* 18(3): 373-388.

Pretorius SG 2014. An Education System's Perspective on Turning Around South Africa's Dysfunctional Schools. *Paper presented at the 34th Seminar of the International Society for Teacher Education,* April 22-25, 2014, Antalya, Turkey.

Rebore RW 2014. *The Ethics of Educational Leadership*. 2nd Edition. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Rowland KA 2008. *The Relationship of Principal Leadership and Teacher Morale.* Doctoral Thesis. Liberty University. Ann Arbor: ProQuest.

Ryckman R 2007. *Theories of Personality.* Belmont: Cengage Learning.

Schultz DP, Schultz SE 2013. *Theories of Personality.* 10th Edition. Australia: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Shenton AK 2004. Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information,* 22: 63-75.

Staeheli LA, Hammett D 2013. 'For the future of the nation': Citizenship, nation, and education in South Africa. *Political Geography*, 32: 32-41.

Steyn GM 2011. Continuing professional development in South African Schools: Staff perceptions and the role of principals. *Journal of Social Science,* 28(1): 43-53.

Thakathi T, Lemmer EM 2006. Community strategies of women in educational management. *South African Journal of Education*, 22(3): 193-197.

Younger M, George P 2013 . Developing communities of practice in practice: Overcoming suspicion and establishing dialogue amongst primary school teachers in Antigua and Barbuda. *Professional Development in Education*, 39(3): 312-329.

Zepeda SJ 2013. *Instructional Leadership for School Improvement*. New York: Routledge.