

Deputy Headteachers' Experiences of their Functions for National Curriculum Implementation: A Case Study of Eswatini

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ABSTRACT The paper investigated the primary school deputy headteachers' experiences of their functions in the implementation of the National Curriculum. The researcher used a qualitative research approach. A case study research design was employed. The instruments used to collect data were semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation and document analysis. The population consisted of only deputy headteachers. Ten participants were purposively sampled from ten (10) schools. All participants were selected on the basis of being deputy headteachers. By guaranteeing anonymity, voluntary involvement, informed consent, and confidentiality, ethical principles were upheld. The acquired data were analysed using a thematic approach. The study found that the assumed roles of Deputy Headteachers were far less demanding than when they were junior teachers. The research also revealed that Deputy Headteachers had comprehensive and divert functions, which included supporting and empowering stakeholders, working with different groups at different levels and supervising daily functions within the school.

INTRODUCTION

The importance of education in the growth of any country has been acknowledged on a global scale. Government has therefore invested large sums of funds in the development of school curricula and set up systems that ensure the effective implementation of those curricula. There is general agreement that school management plays a vital role in ensuring that the national curriculum is implemented and observed, in addition to other criteria (such as finances, educational resources, and teacher student ratio). In this regard, the deputy headteachers' role is crucial in the realisation of educational curriculum objectives.

In the Eswatini education system, every primary school that has an enrolment that is significantly above 400 learners qualifies for a deputy headteacher (DHT). Primary schools that have above 700 learners qualify for a second deputy headteacher (Swaziland Ministry of Education 1988: 30). Since the government implemented its Free Primary Education (FPE) policy in 2009, there has been a rise in the need for deputy headteachers because, regardless of their family's financial position, practically all children of school age attend primary school.

Anderson (2006: 4) has listed the roles of the deputy principal as outlined by the Department of Education and Training in Western Australia as establishing and promoting a shared vision for the school, using change management techniques to create better educational services, helping to organise staff professional development, contributing to the design of policy and educational growth, creating and overseeing administrative processes to enable effective school administration, and supporting education and learning.

Some of the functions appropriate for the deputy headteacher include to advise the head of the school on matters requiring top-level decisions, to deputise for the head of the school when the head of school is unable to perform their normal duties, to deal with discipline problems, in the first instance, which teachers cannot handle, to supervise staff attendance, punctuality, and conduct, to supervise the general administration of the school concerning grounds, library, classrooms, school stock, duty rosters, assembly, daily routines, school attendance, and regulations, to prepare a timetable within the framework laid down by the school, and to supervise student welfare (Swaziland Ministry of Education 1988: 11).

Objectives

The paper required to achieve the following research objectives:

- ♦ To determine the functions of deputy headteachers in the schools.
- ♦ To identify the challenges faced by deputy headteachers as they carry out their functions in implementing the curriculum.

Literature Review

The review permitted the authors to align the research objectives closely to the research problem. The authors consulted previous research to familiarise themselves with the current previous theories about the problem. Consulted research included school leadership, drivers to seeking headship and barriers to headship, and challenges faced by deputy headteachers. It must be noted that DHTs need to be taught about their roles in their positions so that they see themselves as administrators with teaching assignments.

School Leadership

Multiple leaders are seen to have numerous advantages within a school organisation (Maxwell 2015; Hybels 2016). In the context of schools, which are frequently logistically too big and complex to be run by the headteacher alone, this makes a lot of sense. Instead, to operate schools efficiently, leadership responsibilities must be outsourced. Hybels (2016) and Maxwell (2015) make the case that one advantage of scattered leadership is more employee engagement in leadership, which may lead to more sensible decisions. This is because it is more likely that the decisions taken will consider the requirements and viewpoints of many stakeholders. Furthermore, multiple front-runners within schools may result in more widespread acceptance and ownership of organisational goals and a greater sense of empowerment by those involved.

Mahlalela (2018) demonstrates that some distribution patterns of leadership have a greater potential than others, and educators should be skeptical of assuming that distributed leadership is always beneficial and relevant for all organisations. One potential element that may help organisations achieve positive transformation and results is distributed leadership. He adds that there is growing

proof that a distributed leadership approach might result in increased potential for organisational change and development.

Schools are no exception to the long-held rule that strong leadership is a critical component of organisational effectiveness and development (Maxwell 2015). Similar evidence shows that leaders have an indirect but significant impact on a school's effectiveness and students' academic success (Mahlalela 2018; MoET 2015b). It is sometimes maintained that the quality of leadership materials determine the motivation of instructors and the quality of teaching in the classroom, even though the quality of teaching has a significant impact on levels of learner motivation and achievement. One of the most important school elements influencing student progress is the DHT's participation.

The Deputy Headteacher can collaborate closely with teachers on teaching and lesson planning because they are instructional leaders, according to the European Commission (2018). Changing people's attitudes, and ultimately, behaviours, according to Hybels (2016), is one of the most efficient ways to alter an organisation's culture. When a professional learning community (PLC) is implemented, there is a shift in emphasis from a focus on teaching to one on learning. If the organisation is to sustain this transformation, it must be founded in its values, assumptions, and beliefs. It cannot be only structural and cosmetic.

Drivers to Seeking Headship and Barriers to Headship

The DHT suggests that serving as a deputy serves as training for and an access point towards the position of headteacher. While all deputy or assistant headteachers aspire to the position of headteacher, many of them do desire advancement to the position of headteacher (MoET 2015a). One fundamental presumption regarding deputy headteachers is that they aspire to the position of headteacher and that their current position represents a significant phase in their evolution as future leaders.

The absence of leadership impact they believed they had inside the school was a major source of frustration or disappointment for many headteachers, according to research, who regarded their experiences as deputy headteachers to be particularly frustrating or disappointing (MoET 2015b). As

departmental heads rather than DHTs, several people even felt that they had more leadership impact. Their perception of their time as a head teacher, which is typically considerably more favourable due to their obvious leadership role within the school, often stands in stark contrast to this negative opinion of their period as a deputy.

Research undertaken by the European Commission (2018) indicates that DHTs who were asked why they wanted to go for headship cited, among others, positive role modelling of the headteacher as playing a major role. Common traits of the modelling mentioned include that the HT possessed honesty, reliability, commitment, a positive attitude, and generosity. Another driver that they mentioned is the ambition to succeed, each stage of their career is planned and each DHT is where they are because of their ambition.

Possessing the ability to affect change or the potential to make a difference is another motivator. DHTs seem to be extremely skilled and self-assured in their work at the school. Their professional lives are typically much simpler daily. There is a strong sense that they are ready to go forward and begin considering what it would be like to establish their own school. Despite wanting to reform, they are limited by DHT's subordinate position.

Barriers to Leadership

According to research conducted by the MoET (2015a), when DHTs were asked what obstacles or concerns they had with headship, what came up included family commitments and work life balance, the type of school and location, and worries about age, money remuneration, accountability and confidence.

Dlamini (2019) expresses the opinion that many people, including middle-level leaders, are constrained by self-deprecation and self-doubt, which is primarily caused by a fear of failing and the inability to free oneself to reach greater heights and to venture beyond one's past and present contexts and stations in life and/or professions. As a result, they suppress any desire to work at the senior leadership level.

It goes without saying that there are a variety of reasons why intermediate leaders choose not to seek out senior leadership roles. Some of the causes are that senior leadership positions call for an unfavourable rise in responsibility or workload,

are more focused on administrative tasks, or will force them to stop teaching certain subject matter (Sibanda 2014).

Challenges Faced by Deputy Headteachers

As middle managers, deputy headteachers perform most of the duties of the headteachers, including discipline and welfare of both staff and learners. Yet, as stated earlier, deputies are an invisible, silent minority. In fact, they are the forgotten troops in the education army, and suffer the most casualties. Despite slaving and providing support to both staff and learners, deputy headteachers bear the brunt when things go wrong. Despite the well-documented concern about these other groups, the overall effect of their challenging duty is that more deputies burn out than either heads or classroom teachers (MoET 2015a).

It is also important to consider the DHT's job role if the deputy headteacher's position is to be seen as a precursor to the headship. Outside of the 'real' versus 'ideal' competency issues that are explored in-depth here, research suggests that the function of the DHT is fraught with difficulties. The headship is frequently the first official leadership role that educators take on at their institution. They now have responsibilities and challenges in their new roles that they did not have as educators. DHTs frequently struggle to balance their personal and work lives due to the many and demanding responsibilities (Dewan 2019).

Conflicts might arise when a DHT transitions from a teaching post to an assistant headship job since they now must supervise staff who, up until recently, were their peers. The new assistant headteacher worked mostly with students in their previous roles as teachers. However, they must frequently interact with adults, including school administrators, in their capacity as administrators. New assistant headteachers consequently shift their focus from the classroom to the overall school. This transition is frequently described as taking place from the closed-off setting of the classroom to the more welcoming and cooperative environment of the administrative office (MoET 2015a). Finally, discipline and staff management can be difficult for new DHTs due to their frequently unpleasant nature. The work of new DHTs might be a demanding and uncomfortable change from their previous employment for a variety of reasons.

Some of the difficulties that new HTs and DHTs face are comparable in kind (European Commission 2018). First, they encounter resistance while working with ineffective, demoralised, or child-centred teachers. Second, there is pressure on incoming administrators to replicate the accomplishments, and probably more crucially, the manner of their predecessors because they are frequently compared to them. The new HT and DHT may experience self-doubt and efficacy concerns because of the pressure to uphold the legacy of their predecessors (Dlamini 2019). Third, the demands of their workload, particularly in the areas of time management and paperwork, overwhelm many newly appointed headteachers and deputy headteachers. Ineffective management of these responsibilities can lead to anxiety and stress, especially for school administrators who also have personal commitments. Head instructors should continually raise student achievement. Finally, pressure from a variety of stakeholders pushes the headteacher and deputy headteachers to constantly improve student performance.

METHODOLOGY

A plan to answer research questions in a more systematic manner is a research design (Choongwa 2018). In order to conduct this investigation, a case study was adopted. This is because the research dealt solely with experiences of deputy headteachers in their roles. The case study proved to be the ideal design. According to Choongwa (2018), a case study is a process of enquiry that involves a series of well-planned and carefully executed activities to find solutions to research problems from the perspective of in-depth enquiries. This method was selected for use because the researchers wanted to explore a bounded system over time by collecting detailed and in-depth data involving multiple sources of information by using observations, interviews, notice boards and the office “walls” of the deputy headteachers.

The study pursued a qualitative methodology. Lambert and Lambert (2012) state that interpretive and qualitative studies frequently borrow from naturalistic inquiry, which asserts a dedication to researching something in its natural state to the extent that it is feasible within the framework of the research arena. This fits in with the interpretation of this research as a positivistic paradigm, the in-

attention being to appreciate the world in which the participants live and work.

Qualitative research, according to Choongwa (2018), is a situated activity that sets the observer in the context of the world. It is made up of many interpretive material activities that put the outside world in the spotlight. These techniques affect global change. They change the world into a collection of representations, which could include notes made to oneself, observations made while out in the field, conversations, interviews, and pictures. The qualitative technique was adopted because it allows for the research of behaviour in its natural setting. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014), there is no manipulation, control, or externally imposed restraint of behaviour.

Additionally, a qualitative technique was taken because it was the most appropriate methodology given that the researchers intended to comprehend deputy headteachers’ experiences in their daily or routine professional tasks. The objective was to get in-depth information about the deputy headteachers’ experiences whilst executing their duties. Data collection was through observations and in-depth interviews, and they were presented in a narrative form. The researchers also personally collected data from the context in which the participants live, hence the use of the qualitative research design (Creswell 2014).

The researchers also chose qualitative research because of its elasticity. Qualitative research has its own special approach to the collection and analysis of data. In this approach, the researcher plays a significant role in the production and interpretation of qualitative data. McMillan (2014) views qualitative research as interactive, face-to-face research, which requires ample time to conduct interviews, observe, and record research processes as they occur naturally. In effect, the qualitative researcher is the major data-gathering instrument. Additionally, qualitative research was appropriate for this research because its focus is not in the measurement of interactive characteristics of participants (Okeke and Van Wyk 2015).

Population and Sampling

Choongwa (2018) describes a research populace as a group of people who appeal to the interest of the researchers in generalising the outcomes of the research. Choongwa (2018) adds that a re-

search population is an aggregate or totality of all the objects, subjects or members that conform to a set of specifications that a researcher wishes to sample from. The population for the study was from schools in the Kwaluseni Zone in the Manzini region of Eswatini. The study relied on deputy headteachers in the zone as participants. The deputy headteachers were asked about their experiences of their roles in the implementation of the national curriculum and challenges they faced during the process because, in this research, the researchers were interested in considerate lived experiences. Each interview lasted for approximately thirty minutes. Sampling is defined as an act, process, or technique for selecting a sample for the study (Singh and Masuku 2014). Strydom (2013) states that a researcher usually chooses a sample of the population for data collection because the population is quite large, and it would not be practical to collect data from all the members of the population. In the same way, Choongwa (2018) states that sampling is done to minimise the cost of the study, to get superior speed of data collection, to obtain greater accuracy of outcomes, and it permits the researcher to collect smaller quantities of data that represent the overall population.

Participants of the research were selected through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is ideal when specific individuals or groups are considered relevant in providing information. This type of sample is usually based on the discretion and judgement of the researcher. This sampling strategy was chosen because the participants were probably well informed and educated about the phenomenon in question (McMillan and Schumacher 2014). The sample consisted of ten deputy headteachers who were chosen from ten different primary schools in the Kwaluseni Zone. The deputy headteachers received the researchers' explanation of the research's purpose at these selected schools.

Data Collection Tools, Procedures and Analysis

The researchers made three visits to the schools where data was collected. The first visit was to obtain permission to conduct the study from the school authorities and to meet the prospective participants face-to-face, for purposes of acquainting them with the research, and to solicit their participation in the research. During the first visit, the researchers also

decided with the participants on a day that was suitable or convenient for them to be interviewed, observed, and to analyse documents. A second visit was made to interview the participants along with observations and document analysis. The interviews were audio recorded. During observation sessions, the researchers wrote down their observations and these formed their field notes. Documents that were analysed included week plans, term plans, year plans and minutes of previous meetings. These documents helped the researchers grasp the case being studied by providing important information. The last visit was to confirm if what the researchers had written was what the participants had said. This gave the researchers an opportunity to add information where necessary.

During the data analysis process, a semi-structured interviewing technique was used to enable the comparison and categorisation of interview replies (Jacob and Ferguson 2015). Semi-structured interviews are advantageous because responses to predetermined questions can be elicited while yet leaving some room for relevance in the breadth of the answers. Based on the research questions, interview schedules for the deputy headteachers were created. With the participants' consent, each interview was taped to guarantee its completeness and accuracy as well as to provide the opportunity for a subsequent explanation.

A tape recorder enables a considerably more thorough record than notes taken during the interviews, according to Brennen (2017). The researchers were able to get more information on the subject under study from the interviewees by asking probing questions of them during face-to-face interactions with them (Creswell 2014). Face-to-face interactions with the participants also gave them the opportunity to ask the researchers for clarification on any issues that were murky or confusing.

Data from the documents were analysed thematically using emerging themes and categories. Coding of all data was done. Data is organised by coding, which involves bracketing sections of text or images and adding a term that represents a category in the margins (Creswell 2014). The codes that were used in the interview transcripts were applied to the content of the documents. Permission to use these documents was granted from the office of the headteacher of the school.

Trustworthiness

Choongwa (2018) suggests that trustworthiness of a study involves credibility, dependability, transferability, and conformability in qualitative research. The study employed different methods of getting information that ensured data crystallisation. The accuracy of the findings and analysis of the study was of central concern during data generation and analysis.

Credibility

Chowdhury (2015) defines credibility in qualitative research as a criterion used to determine the “accuracy of research findings”. To ensure credibility, in-depth information was gathered from the in-depth interviews with the deputy headteachers about their experiences in their roles. It was hoped that from the relevant information collected from deputy headteachers, credibility of the findings would be achieved. The researchers avoided compromising the accuracy of the overall findings by considering all possible options that were available during the follow-up phase. Credibility of findings was also ensured by treating the responses as anonymous and confidential. This gave the participants the opportunity to provide very honest answers.

Dependability

Dependability is the reliability of the research findings, that is, whether they yield the same outcomes when the same people or circumstances are used as in a second round of research. Relevant sources of data were included to increase data dependability. The researcher retained a combination of handwritten notes and audio recordings while gathering data.

Transferability

Chowdhury (2015) suggests that transferability can be used for evaluating the applicability of a research in the place of “external validity”. To support transferability in the research, the researchers collected sufficient information about the experiences of deputy headteachers on their roles. As the data was collected from only a small number of people, the results cannot therefore be generalised

to all deputy headteachers’ experiences in all schools. Transferability will justify the appropriateness of research results to be applied to similar contexts.

Conformability

The impact of nonverbal cues, sentiments, emotions, and body language were taken into consideration to ensure conformability of the research results and to reduce any preconceptions and prejudice towards the findings.

Ethical Considerations

Compared to quantitative research, qualitative research is more likely to be personally intrusive. Because of this, it is necessary to abide by certain ethical rules, such as those relating to deceit, informed permission, secrecy, anonymity, privacy, and caring. Measures were taken in order to comply with the ethical considerations. Ethical clearance was sought from the University of South Africa to seek permission and approval to conduct research. Permission was obtained from the Director of Education to conduct research in the schools. Letters were written to headteachers asking for permission to conduct research in their schools. Participants gave written approval to be included in the study by signing consent forms. Participants agreed to have their interviews recorded by the researcher. It was made clear to participants that they might stop taking part in the study whenever they wanted to. The confidentiality and privacy of the data gathered during the interviews were guaranteed to the participants. Participants were made aware that the interview would be recorded on audio and kept confidential for a period of five years. Participants received a guarantee that they would be informed of the study’s findings after it was completed.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Experiences in the Role of DHT in the School

The participants were asked about their experiences in their role as DHTs in the schools. Responses were almost the same. It must be noted that almost all of them stated that what they thought to be the role of the DHT was far less than the actual experiences in the job.

The responses given by the participants mentioned that the roles for the DHT include checking preparation books and other official documents, compiling a composite timetable, checking that the school grounds/yard are kept clean, advising the headteacher when it comes to important decisions, compiling school routines such as assembly duty rosters and cleaning duty roster, checking class timetables, attending to parents' and learners' concerns relating to academic and social issues, keeping food records in the school kitchen, checking test exercise books, assessing teaching in classrooms, being a stand-in for the headteacher in their absence, advising all stakeholders when the need arises like learners, teachers, parents and the headteacher, interviewing learners for admission and making a list of those who are accepted, fetching and recording advice slips (payslips), being a member of the disciplinary committee (DC), holding meetings with different panels in the school like Maths/Science, Languages, Social Sciences, Practical subjects, teaching some subjects/classes, being a mediator between the headteacher and parents/teachers, and performing any other duties as assigned by the headteacher. These results are consistent with the findings of Jansen and du Plessis (2023) who found that large schools cannot be managed without the leadership input of deputy principals and other teachers and that deputy head teachers who adopt a distributed leadership approach are considered successful leaders.

The participants mentioned skills they thought DHTs needed in order to be effective. The participant from school A stated that DHTs should be fair and firm to both teachers and learners. They added that DHTs must know that the school has someone who runs it and must know that taking a final decision is not theirs but is for the headteacher. This is an indication that some of the deputy head teachers gained some experience as they were involved with managerial duties.

The participant from school B cited communication skills, speaking skills, decision-making skills, thinking skills, interpersonal skills and problem-solving skills as important qualities of a DHT. The same skills were observed in participants from schools C, E, F, G, H and I. Thus the participants had common understanding of their duties.

From school C, the participant emphasised that stress management skill was effective. They said, *"I think communication skills, problem solving*

skills, speaking skills and decision-making skills are important for the work of DHT. The work is also very stressful, we need to be taught stress management skills. Interpersonal skills and thinking skills are also a must for a DHT."

The participant from school D had the following to say, *"I think the DHT should have a big heart. They must be very fair, especially when making judgements. Being accommodative to everyone will make the working environment smooth. People want to be accommodated in the hearts of their administrators."*

The participants from school J noted, *"I think leadership skills are very important for a DHT. Also, good interaction/communication with people and listening skills will be a great advantage. I must also emphasise that respecting all stakeholders will help the DHT greatly."*

From the answers given by the participants, it can be determined that skills needed by a DHT to be effective include good communication skills, speaking skills, problem-solving skills, decision-making skills, thinking skills, interpersonal skills, and stress management skills. Through social interaction, they developed a sense of becoming stronger as a unit towards the teachers and the principals in sharing experiences and reflecting upon challenges they faced in their everyday practices (Abrahamsen 2018). According to Mnikathi (2022), through collaboration, principals enable their deputy principals to collaborate in their work because they want them to learn, know, and comprehend all the aspects of management in the school which is vital for the principalship position.

Challenges of the Job of a DHT

The participants were asked about the challenges they faced as they carried out their functions. The participants shared challenges that included misbehaving of learners, disrespecting deadlines by teachers, communication to the headteacher by parents in case the DHTs have done something wrong/not accepted by the parent(s), having to talk to a teacher discussing their unreported absence at work, having to talk to a teacher about not doing work like preparation for work, testing in class, etc. when the headteacher seeks for reports about the school from teachers during their absence, and having staff members who cannot talk to each other. This is supported by Brown

and Rutherford (1998), who assert that lack of communication between deputy head teachers and senior management teams has a negative impact for them to perform their duties appropriately. Creating the conditions in which people work together and learn together, construct and align meaning together, leads to a shared purpose or set of goals (Muijs and Harris 2003).

Professional Development Training into the Position of DHT

The participants were asked if they were offered professional development courses/training for the position of DHT. Responses from all participants showed that DHTs were not offered any training when they were promoted. A participant from school F said, *“I was never offered any professional development course, but I got verbal advice from the Regional Education Officer (REO) when I was signing my resumption of duty forms.”* From the responses given by participants, it can be concluded that there are no professional developmental courses offered to newly appointed deputy headteachers.

Participants were asked if there had been aspects to the position of DHT that they did not expect.

The participant from school A stated, *“Taking decisions on behalf of the headteacher and leading a project such as developmental projects with Non-Development Organisations [NGOs].”*

The participant from school B stated, *“I never expected to fill in absent from duty forms for an absent teacher although the teacher had been warned several times.”*

The participant from school C admitted, *“I was really shocked to learn that my headteacher talks bad about me in a school committee meeting, I didn't expect that.”*

The participant from school D revealed that they never expected acting for a headteacher for a long time. Also they never expected a teacher to be in a love relationship with a pupil and expect the DHT to hide the relationship.

To sum up, the responses given by participants included fighting of teachers, the head of school having a group they talk to, not the whole staff, the REOs office/inspectors forcing the admission of learners even those who did not apply or attend the interview into the school, acting for a HT for a

very long time, a teacher deciding not to talk to DHT at all, a teacher in a love relationship with a learner expecting to be cushioned, the headteacher talking badly about the DHT in a school committee meeting, having to fill-in absent from duty forms for absent teachers, leading a project, for example, developmental projects with NGOs, and taking giant decisions on behalf of the headteacher. School leaders prefer a more decentralised and practical way of training (Michaelidou and Pashiardis 2009). According to Ibara (2014). Unfortunately, in many African countries the process of selecting teachers to become managers is not systematic and has not been based on professional criteria.

Functions of DHTs in the Schools

The study revealed that assumed roles by DHTs were far less than the actual experiences in the job. It was also discovered that the functions of DHTs were different from school to school. There is no written ‘manual’ to be followed by the DHTs. Their functions solely depend on their headteachers who disperse the duties. The study found that to function very well, most DHTs were promoted into new schools. DHTs promoted into the new schools shared that they were welcomed with mixed reactions. Some were received enthusiastically, whilst others were resented by both the headteacher and the teachers. The study also revealed what was liked by DHTs. These included that DHTs preferred a good and smooth working relationship whilst at duty stations. They preferred solving problems and bringing order during their functions. In conclusion, the duties of the DHTs are very valuable in the implementation of the national curriculum in primary school. Deputy principals are expected to demonstrate leadership abilities and take full accountability for a wide variety of duties assigned to them (Jansen and du Plessis 2023). Corona and Slater (2017), also emphasise that the main function of the deputy head teacher is to control and assure of service delivery. The deputy head has an absolutely crucial role in the communicating of objectives and also in the wider issues of communication (Stone 1986)

Challenges Faced by DHTs as They Carry Out Their Functions

The position of a DHT is very important as the school embarks on its daily tasks. If the DHT carries out their functions very well then, the imple-

mentation of the curriculum in the classes becomes easier. However, this turns out to be impossible because of challenges faced by DHTs. The research discovered that all stakeholders in a school posed challenges to the effective work of the DHT, that is, learners misbehaved, teachers did not meet deadlines, and parents talked badly about the DHT or behind the DHT's back. The study found that DHTs were not offered any professional developmental training when they were promoted. The study revealed that DHTs had a way of merging their teaching functions with other duties. According to the study, there were aspects to the position of the DHT that were not expected. These were challenges such as taking decisions on behalf of the headteacher and leading a project such as developmental projects with NGOs, and learning that headteachers talked badly about DHTs in school committee meetings. In conclusion, there are so many challenges faced by DHTs as they carry out their functions in implementing the curriculum that need to be addressed thoroughly and immediately. The research findings from the study by Mpezeni (2022), indicate that deputy head teachers in primary schools face challenges which include social and culture challenges, organisation challenges, psychological challenges, and role conflicts.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the research revealed that the functions of DHTs differed from one school to the other and that there is no written 'manual' provided for DHTs to use in schools. However, the leadership style of the headteachers played an important role in grooming DHTs. The mentorship they provided produced leadership after their own kind. DHTs were faced with challenges, which emanated from learners, parents, teachers and their headteachers. Nevertheless, open, and honest communication with all stakeholders is suggested as important.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The DHT should be promoted after having at least seven years of teaching experience and should have experience in teaching most classes. A proper qualification into the position of DHT should also be investigated. A further recommendation is that a DHT should have acquired at least a degree

in a course related to education. DHTs should be promoted into new schools. This can help in the working relationship of teachers and the DHT, as well as the relationship of the DHT and that of the headteacher in the new schools. The researchers also recommend that the list of roles for DHTs should be the same in all the primary schools and that doing everything as assigned by the headteacher must be included. DHTs should be supported by their headteachers in all activities they do in the schools. DHTs should be provided with offices so that they are able to keep documents collectively and in order. Other items that can be kept in good order would include files, medicine boxes, and cleaning materials.

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