

Nature and Characteristics of the Induction Programme for Primary School Principals in the North West Province, South Africa

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ABSTRACT Newly appointed principals encounter many challenges in the professional socialisation process. This paper examines the nature and characteristics of the induction process for primary school principals in the North West Province of South Africa. A questionnaire served as the data collection instrument, using a Likert 5-point scale. The sample population of 23% was randomly selected from the 871 primary school principals employed in the North West Province. The data revealed that new principals have the required knowledge and experience as teachers at the point of appointment and that they received some training upon assumption of duty. The researchers also found that there were still areas that need attention in labour relations, school administration and school governance. The study established that high quality leadership makes a significant difference to school performance and learning outcomes and that a well-planned and comprehensive induction process affords primary school principals the opportunity to overcome the challenges they face with the professional socialisation process. The significance of this study is that the findings support the basis for government spending on training principals in Advance Certificate in Education (ACE) School Leadership Programmes currently running in selected universities.

INTRODUCTION

The development of the School Leadership programme for South African school principals as well as the results from the systemic evaluation in 2004 and 2007 identified the Foundation Phase as an area for growth and development by the National Department of Education in terms of capacity building for principals, educators and other support systems (DoBE and DoHET 2011). The systemic report among other things also encounter in their bid to improve learner performance (DoE 2005). One source of these challenges could also perhaps be attributed to the gap in the recruitment process of school principals. Induction, if effectively implemented for principals, can go a long way to resolve the many challenges that confront primary school principals, including the common practice of throwing principals in at the deep end (swim or sink). An effective induction programme produces a high return on investment (ROI) by improving the conditions of service of beginner principal with

the view to retaining them within the school system.

Literature Review

This section examines and analyses issues relating to recruitment and induction process of principals.

Recruitment of Principals

Induction constitutes the last step in the recruitment process in human resource management. According to Nel et al.(2008), the induction process ensures that the right people are placed in the right positions with the view to ensuring that above-average performers can perform at their optimum level and enhance their learning and growth. According to Elsberry and Bishop (1996), absence of any structured induction programme would result in most new principals adopting a "trial and error" introductory approach and this often leads to increased anxi-

ety in respect of the fulfilment of their obligations. The majority of these new principals would be subjected to what is commonly termed a “swim or sink” situation whereby a lot is expected from them on their first day of school in their new position. Human resource management seeks to ensure that an organisation such as the Department of Education has the following:

- ♦ The right people in the right places
- ♦ The right and appropriate mix of skills
- ♦ Employees display the right attitudes and behavioural patterns
- ♦ Employees are adequately developed and trained in the right way (Nankervis et al. 2008).

According to Castetter (1992) and Lashway (2003), school principals are confronted by insurmountable problems of administration. For example, they have to grapple with the intense, unrelenting stress of trying to adjust their textbook understanding of leadership to the world of reality. They are expected to master the technical skills, learn to handle a variety of constituencies and at the same time deal with issues of personal inadequacy. Many primary school principals are faced with the challenges of bringing about order and administrative stability in the school premises. When school principals are adequately inducted on various aspects of school management and governance, the process most likely results in reducing labour turnovers, translating the school environment into a centre of excellence through an effective and efficient teaching and learning process, and reducing the exodus of both teachers and learners to more effectively run schools. In the context of teacher training and development, induction is defined as “... one stage within the continuum of teacher professional learning. This continuum begins with pre-service and continues throughout the professional life of a teacher, responding to the different learning needs at each of the stages in a teacher’s life” (DET 2006).

Induction Process for Principals

Induction goes beyond just addressing the anxieties and uncertainties, which are an inherent feature of a new employee. Doidge et al. (1998) have identified the following as critical aspects constituting the importance of induction programme:

- ♦ Induction helps as the first phase of a career long professional development.
- ♦ Induction reduces time taken for a new employee to become effective.
- ♦ It improves motivation and hence the individual’s contribution to the institution and it is also likely to reduce the attrition rate.
- ♦ It provides an opportune moment to explain the organisation’s mission and aims so that eventually the new employee could have a sense of where the job fits in the organisation.
- ♦ Lastly, it develops working relationships with colleagues.

Wong (2005) defines induction process as “a comprehensive process of sustained training and support for new teachers, a comprehensive, coherent, and sustained professional development process that is organized by a school district to train, support, and retain new teachers, which then seamlessly progresses them into a lifelong learning program” Induction activities are designed to replace the historical “sink or swim” induction experience of new teachers with one that is focused on promoting their professional growth and integrating them more effectively into the school community (Bush and Oduro 2006). An effective induction programme therefore produces a high return on investment (ROI) by improving the conditions of service of beginner teachers with the view to retaining them within the school system. The literature study has revealed that beginner principals experience a great amount of frustration, anxiety, confusion, and a sense of being inadequately prepared for what they actually encounter on the job. New principals also normally feel unsure of the behavioural expectations from their districts. Waldron (2002) indicates the sources of stress for new principals as including role demands, task overload, communicating negative performance evaluation, external community and district politics and parental behaviour. As part of the process of socialisation, the induction period for new principals must be considered an important area of consideration (Waldron 2002). The provisioning role that the Department of Education has to play encapsulates the provision of resources such as learning and teaching material, funding of school projects, recruitment and induction of principals and staff members (Nel et al. 2008). Villani (2005) defines induction as “a multidimensional process that orients new prin-

cipals to a school and school system while strengthening their knowledge, skills and dispositions to be an educational leader.” The above definition implies that a principalship position is a leadership position. The newly appointed principal in the North West Province is expected to participate fully in the induction programme and to ensure that he/she completes the evaluation forms at the end of the programme (Eller 2010; Nel et al. 2008). Nel et al. (2008) further argue that any effective induction programme should integrate the organisation’s systems, functions and processes. There have been several reports about the effectiveness of principals as managers of schools and this research was an attempt to investigate the sources of such reports by investigating an aspect of the human resource process of the appointment of principals that was the nature and characteristics of induction for primary school principals in the North West Province.

Research Objective

According to Mpungose (2010), many principals who are appointed to their positions encounter many challenges in the professional socialisation process. Research into the area of the recruitment process of school principals is not common, particularly in the North West Province and this report is intended to fill in the gap by focusing on a particular area of the recruitment process in human resource management with particular reference to the induction of primary school principals after appointment. What is clear and key to this problem is that new principals, upon arrival at the school, should be afforded the induction and orientation period that is adequate for them to develop productive working relationships with all stakeholders (students, teachers, parents, school governing bodies, unions, etc.). The main objectives of the study therefore, were to establish the profile of primary school principals and also to investigate the nature and characteristics of the induction programme in the North West province of South Africa.

Research Problem

Primary schools were chosen for this study because they represent the largest sector in terms of schooling in the North West Province. These schools were also chosen because the founda-

tion of learning takes place there. According to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), the primary schools are categorised as the General Education and Training (GET) band, which extends from Grade R up to Grade 9. The North West Province Department of Education (NWDE) has an induction programme in place which is intended to provide for the professional socialisation of newly appointed principals. In order to achieve the objectives, the following research questions formed the basis of the study:

- ♦ What is the profile of primary school principals in the North West Province?
- ♦ Do primary school administration, school governance and labour relations constitute elements of the induction process for principals?
- ♦ Does the induction process for principals cover instructional leadership and school finances?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study population comprised 200 primary school principals selected from among the 871 in the North West Province. There are 871 primary schools in the North West Province spread over the four districts. The study focused on primary schools because this is the part of the schooling system that represents the most schools and learners in the province. The districts include Ngaka Modiri Molema, Bojanala, Dr. Kenneth Kaunda and Dr. Ruth Mompati. In the study, four strata were made depicting the four districts. The participants were selected through stratified random sampling.

For the purposes of this study, a descriptive research design had been used. The purpose of the descriptive study was to provide the opinions of the respondents regarding the phenomenon studied. It provided an accurate account of characteristics of a particular individual, event or group in real life situations. The design was quantitative in the sense that the researchers employed an approach that sought to collect data in a numerical form for example the Likert scale ranked the responses in the following way: 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Uncertain, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree. The quantitative research method complements the research questions as set out in the study. This scale was adopted because of its appropriateness and relevance for this kind of study in measuring opin-

ions, beliefs and attitudes of the respondents and also provided the tool for simpler and faster data management. The questionnaire comprised close-ended questions based on a five (5) point structured pre-coded Likert interval scale. To ensure the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire items were constructed on the basis of “induction” only and this instrument was administered only to the primary school principals who were selected by stratified sampling. To further enhance the validity of the instrument, a pilot questionnaire was sent to 10 primary school principals. The participants were selected through stratified random sampling. The instrument was refined slightly on the basis of verbal inputs that were received from this small group. The idea was to verify the time it would take to complete all the questionnaire items.

The first part of the results consists of the biographic data of the respondents which provides background information on the nature and characteristics of the respondents and how they moved into the positions they hold as principals. The second part relates to findings of the nature and characteristics of the respondents. The purpose of this biographic data was to establish the profile of staff who are normally appointed as principals as this constitutes an aspect of the nature and characteristics of primary school principals in the induction programme.

RESULTS

Figure 1 shows that most (35%) of the respondents have teaching experience between 16 to 20 years.

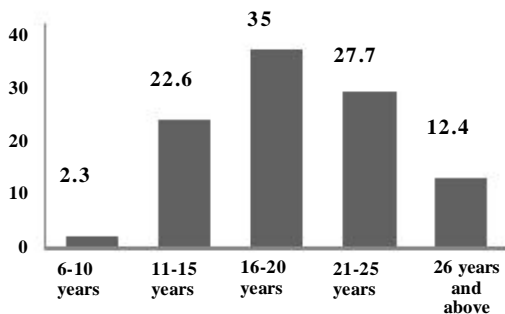


Fig. 1. Years of teaching experience

Figure 2 shows that most (33.3%) of the respondents were principals who have been in that position for 6 to 10 years. This indicates that most principals have acquired the necessary experience as primary school principals to be able to deal with the day-to-day school administrative procedures. According to Mpungose (2010), experience in the job does not necessary mean that principals are effective leaders without the necessary professional support.

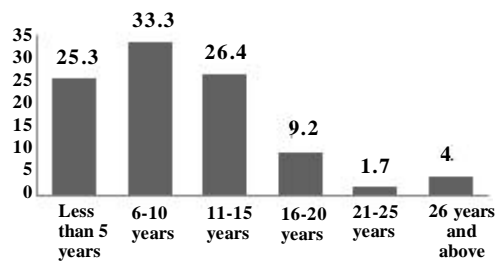


Fig. 2. Principals' experience in terms of years in that position

The majority (57%) of respondents (refer to Fig. 3) were male and the remaining 43% were female. This is an indication that males dominate the field of management.

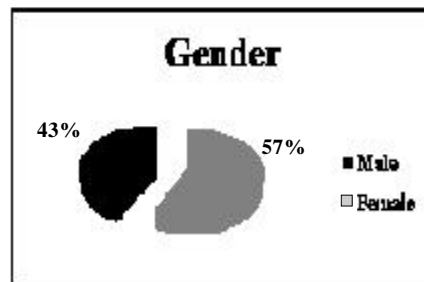


Fig. 3. Gender of principals

Figure 4 shows that most (28.4%) of the respondents' age range between 41 and 45 years. This is indicative of the maturity of the majority of the respondents. According to Mponguse (2010), most principals appointed in South Africa have matured in terms of age and assumed to have a sound knowledge, values, interests, beliefs, professional expectations and social influence. It is therefore important that any induction programme should have considered these factors.

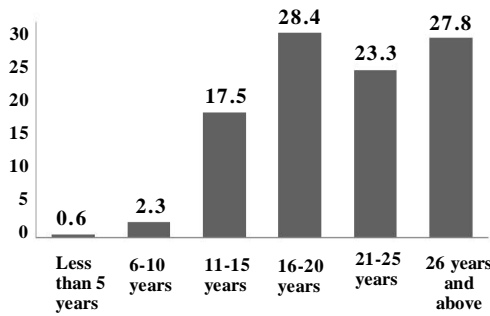


Fig. 4. Age of Principals

Figure 5 shows that 35% of the respondents have attained the educational qualification of a Bachelor’s degree or an equivalent qualification. Bush et al. (2011) are of the opinion that academic qualifications alone are not necessary an indication of a good leadership, but instead effective preparation and development make a difference; principals become effective leaders if they are provided with the specific and relevant training.

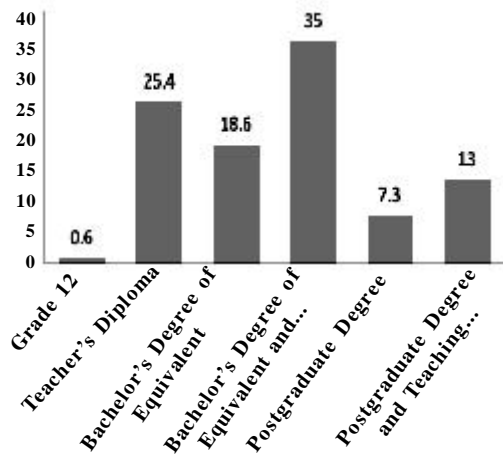


Fig. 5. Highest educational qualification

Nature and Characteristics of Induction Programme

This section relates to the analysis of data on the nature and characteristics of the induction process. This analysis covers areas which include school administration, instructional leadership, school finances, school governance and labour relations.

School Administration

Table 1 presents the responses to the questions relating to the nature and characteristics of induction with a focus on school administration. Accordingly, 82.5% of the respondents agreed that they had the general control of the usage of official resources, 88.7% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that they had been trained on recording of all daily incidents in the official log book, while 83.6% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that they had been trained to monitor and control the daily work of educators. Wong (2005) is of the opinion that an effective induction programme should comprise “a comprehensive process of sustained training and support for new teachers, a comprehensive, coherent, and sustained professional development process that is organized by a school district to train, support, and retain new teachers, which then seamlessly progresses them into a lifelong learning program.” Failure to train principals on all aspects of the school administration renders the induction programme incomplete.

Induction on Instructional Leadership

Table 2 presents the responses to the questions relating to induction on instructional leadership. The respondents were requested to respond to five statements under this sub-head-

Table 1: Induction on school administration

Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
General control of the usage of official resources	5(2.8%)	17(9.6%)	9(5.1%)	95(28.8%)	51(28%)	177 (100)
Recording of all daily incidents within the official log book	3(1.7%)	12(6.8%)	5(2.8%)	102(57.6%)	55(31%)	177 (100)
To monitor and control the daily work of educator	2(1.1%)	14(7.9%)	13(7.3%)	95(53.7%)	53(29.9%)	177 (100)

Table 2: Induction on instructional leadership

<i>Statements</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Unsure</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Total</i>
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	
To monitor compliance with all assessment policies	3(1.7%)	13(7.3%)	10(5.6%)	101(57.1%)	50(28%)	177 (100)
To monitor and control the notional time allocated to learning and teaching at my school	3(1.7%)	8(4.5%)	7(4%)	107(60.5%)	52(29.4%)	177 (100)
To guide educators in the implementation of outcome-based education	5(2.8%)	22(12.4%)	14(7.9%)	91(51.4%)	45(25.4%)	177 (100)
To guide educators in the compilation of the learner and master portfolios of evidence	4(2.3%)	11(6.2%)	10(5.6%)	105(59.3%)	47(26.6%)	177 (100)
To provide leadership in the interpretation of the progression requirements for learners in all grades	3(1.7%)	15(8.5%)	11(6.2%)	98(55.4%)	50(28.2%)	177 (100)

ing and they responded as follows (85.3%) of the respondents agreed that they had been inducted to monitor compliance with all assessment policies, 89.9% of the respondents agreed that they had been inducted to monitor and control the notional time allocated for teaching and learning at their schools, 76.8% of the respondents agreed that they had been inducted to guide educators in the implementation of outcomes based education, 85.9% of the respondents agreed they had been inducted to guide their educators on the compilation of the learner and master portfolios of evidence and 83.6% of the respondents agreed that they had been inducted to provide leadership in the interpreta-

tion of the progression requirements for learners in all grades. According to Carrell et al. (1999) and Rebore (2001), an induction programme should include the provision of information about the community, school systems, school building, faculty and students. It also includes the creation of a sense of belonging among the employees by showing them how their jobs fit into the broader organisational objectives.

Induction on Finances

Table 3 presents the responses to the questions relating to induction on finances. The respondents were requested to respond to five

Table 3: Induction on finances

<i>Statements</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Unsure</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Total</i>
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	
Trained on financial management from the department	7(4%)	19(10.7%)	6(3.4%)	115(65%)	30(16.9%)	177 (100)
To draw the balance sheet and cash flow statement from my school	25(14.3%)	42(24%)	11(6.3%)	80(45.7%)	17(9.7%)	177 (100)
Financial reports to all stakeholders	9(5.1%)	32(18.1%)	7(4%)	94(53.4%)	34(19.3%)	177 (100)
Submission of books for audit purposes	4(2.3%)	16(9.1%)	9(5.1%)	110(62.5)	37(21%)	177 (100)
To comply with all accounting processes	21(11.9%)	27(15.3%)	15(8.5%)	94(53.4%)	19(10.8%)	177 (100)

Table 4: Induction on school governance

<i>Statements</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Unsure</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Total</i>
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	
Trained on the admission policy of the department	1(0.6%)	7(4%)	16(9.1%)	118(67%)	34(19.3%)	177 (100)
Trained on the fund-raising strategies for public schools	27(15.3%)	44(25%)	14(8%)	78(44.3%)	13(7.4%)	177 (100)
Trained on the norms and standards for school funding	14(8%)	28(15.9)	9(5.1%)	94(53.4%)	31(7.4%)	177 (100)
Trained on the recruitment and selection procedures for the school	28(16.1%)	39(22.4%)	10(5.7%)	79(45.4%)	18(10.3%)	177 (100)
Trained on the roles and responsibilities of the SGB	3(1.7%)	7(4%)	9(5.1%)	114(65.1%)	42(24%)	177 (100)

statements. Most respondents 81.9% agreed that they had received training on financial management from the department, 55.4% of the respondents agreed that they had been inducted to draw up the balance sheet and cash flow statement for their schools, 72.7% of the respondents agreed that they had been inducted to draw up financial reports and present those to the stakeholders (parents, educators, learners), 83.5% of the respondents agreed that they had been inducted to submit financial books to an independent organisation for audit purposes and 64.2% of the respondents agreed that they had been inducted to comply with all accounting processes and procedures. The result showed that induction on finance was an example of the nature of induction of primary school principals in the North West Province. Sound financial management is one of the four strategic goals of the National Department of Education (National Treasury and Department of Education 2006) and to achieve this principals have to be aware of the principles and practices of school finances. .

Induction on School Governance

Table 4 presents the responses to the questions relating to the induction of principals on the governance of the school. Most respondents, 86.3% agreed that they had been trained on the admission policy of the department, 51.7% agreed that they had been trained on the fund-raising strategies for the public service, 55.7% agreed that they had been trained on the norms and standards for school funding, 55.7% agreed that they had been trained on the recruitment and selection procedures for the school and

89.1% agreed that they had been trained on the roles and responsibilities of the School Governing Body (SGB). Even though the results of this study show that principals are aware of the roles and responsibilities of SGBs, Lewis and Naidoo (2004) maintain that in practice SGB participation in school governance is structured and institutionalised through the actions of principals outside the regulations. This means that induction on school governance still has to be redefined.

Induction on Labour Relations

Table 5 presents the responses to the questions relating to induction on labour relations. Accordingly, 52.6% agreed that they had been trained on the handling of grievance and disciplinary problems at their schools, 46% disagreed that they had been trained on presiding over disciplinary hearings involving educators at their schools, 58.5% agreed that they had been trained on how to interact with teacher unions and union representatives at their schools, 58.8% disagreed that they had been trained on the general policies governing labour relations in education, 48.3% agreed that they had been trained on strike management procedures and the contingency plans during industrial action, and 90.8% of the respondents agreed that they had been trained on the implementation of the integrated quality management System (IQMS) at their schools. This finding relates to the literature with regard to the nature and characteristics of the induction process which dictates that novice principals need to be inducted in all management and adminis-

Table 5: Induction on labour relations

<i>Statements</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Unsure</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Total</i>
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	
Trained on the handling of grievance and disciplinary problems	27(15.3%)	44(25%)	12(6.8%)	76(42.9%)	17(19.7%)	177 (100)
Trained on presiding over disciplinary hearings involving my educators	29(16.5%)	52(29.5)	78(44.3%)	25(14.2%)		177 (100)
Trained on how to interact with teacher unions and union representatives	19(10.8%)	41(23.3%)	13(7.4%)	78(44.3%)	25(14.2%)	177 (100)
Trained on the general policies governing labour relations in education	13(7.4%)	43(24.6%)	16(9.1%)	80(45.7%)	23(13.1%)	177 (100)
Trained on strike management procedures and the contingency plans during industrial action	34(19.3%)	41(23.3%)	16(9.1%)	74(42%)	11(6.3%)	177 (100)
Trained on the implementation of (IQMS) at my school	4(2.3%)	4(2.3%)	7(4%)	114(64.8%)	47(26%)	177 (100)

tration matters (Nel et al. 2008) for example, ensuring that there is a harmonious labour relations environment within the school precincts. According to the literature (Legotlo 1994; Department of Education 2002; Nel et al. 2008) principals should be trained in all areas pertaining to the day-to-day management of the school and this includes attending to labour relations issues.

CONCLUSION

Though there is evidence from the analysis of data that there is induction in the primary schools in the North West Province, most principals expressed a lack of adequate training in the area of school administration. It is very clear that induction on instructional leadership was carried out effectively. The majority of respondents agreed with all the statements ranging from how to monitor compliance with all assessment polices up to how to provide leadership in the interpretation of the progression requirements for learners in all grades. Instructional leadership as a very key feature of any institution of learning seems to have received a lot of attention from the Department of Education in the North West Province. The majority of respondents, (81.9%) agreed that they had received training on financial management from the department. The Department of Education offers

training to their administrators on finance management. They also agreed that they had an understanding of the basic accounting principles, like the processes of balance sheets and cash flows, the preparation of financial reports and the presentation of those to the stakeholders, the submission of financial books to an independent organisation for audit purposes, and the compliance with accounting processes and procedures. The majority of respondents, 89.1% (65.1% and 24%) agreed that they have received induction/training on school governance from the department. The Department of Education offers training to administrators on school governance. They had the understanding of the basic admission policy, fund-raising strategies, norms and standards for school funding, recruitment and selection procedures, and roles and responsibilities of the school governing body (SGB). The majority of respondents indicated that they have received induction/training on labour relations matters from the department. The Department of Education offers training to the administrators and principals on how to handle grievances and disciplinary problems, on how to interact with teachers unions and union representatives, on the general policies governing labour relations in education, on the strike management procedures and contingency plans during industrial action, and finally on the imple-

mentation of Integrated Quality Management Systems (IQMS) at schools. The only one area not covered according to the respondents was that they felt that they were not trained on presiding over disciplinary hearings involving their educators.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study sought to look at the nature and characteristics of induction. Even though the department needs to be commended for being steadfast in the implementation of induction, there are still many areas that need a lot of improvement, for example labour relations, school administration and school governance. Based on the findings the department is advised to embark on a robust and radical effort to strengthen the current mode of induction as offered to principals. We also recommend that the induction process must be considered an all-inclusive process.

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