

Effectiveness of the Induction Programme for School Principals in the North West Province

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ABSTRACT The purpose of this study was to examine effectiveness of the induction programme for primary school principals in the North West province in South Africa. The study focused on the profiles of principals, the strategies, challenges and the effectiveness when inducting primary school principals. The review of the literature focused on the models for induction and the challenges of managing induction processes within a school. 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 are trained upon assumption of duty. However, data revealed that quality assurance mechanisms are lacking and that there is no variety in the strategies that are being followed in the induction of school principals.

INTRODUCTION

Human Resource Management plays a key role in ensuring that the educational officials that are employed match the job profiles from the Department of Basic Education. It also ensures that employees are properly orientated and inducted to embrace the work ethos and service delivery culture and practices. The Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) published a circular in 2008 entitled, "Massified Induction Programme for New Entrants in the Public Service". Since then a lot of interest has been aroused in this particular field. In terms of this circular, all public or government departments should come up with an induction programme that seeks to smoothly integrate new employees into their new workplaces.

Literature Review

According to Lashway (2003) and Castetter (1992), school principals are confronted by insurmountable problems of administration. For example, they have to come to terms with the stress of trying to adjust their textbook understanding of leadership to the real world. They are also expected to: master technical skills; handle a variety of constituencies; deal with issues of personal inadequacy; and fit into a new culture and environment. According to Hacker (2004)

and Kirkpatrick (2000), "the school environment is fast-paced and it leaves little time for reflection and thoughtfulness".

According to Elsberry and Bishop (1996), most novice principals undergo "trial and error" introductory experience, which often leads to increased anxieties in respect of the fulfilment of their obligations. Many novice principals are subjected to what is commonly termed "sink or swim" situations and a lot is expected from them on their first day of school in their new position. Some other challenges novice principals need to grapple with, include the following:

- ♦ a big student population
- ♦ a staff complement of approximately 40 teachers that he/she must manage, and
- ♦ many other obligations and responsibilities.

No proper guidance or necessary support structure is made available to the new incumbent yet he/she is expected to be accountable on the first day (Elsbury and Bishop 1996; Bush et al. 2011).

Conceptual Framework

The Trait Theory of Leadership believes that people are either born or are made with certain qualities that will help them excel in leadership roles. That is, certain key qualities such as in-

telligence, sense of responsibility, creativity and other values are attributes of a good leader. Gordon Allport, an American psychologist, "...identified almost 18,000 English personality-relevant terms" (Matthews et al. 2007). The Trait Theory of Leadership focused on analysing mental, physical and social characteristic in order to gain more understanding of what the characteristic or the combination of characteristics that are common among leaders. There were many shortfalls with the Trait Theory of Leadership, however, from a psychology of personalities approach, Gordon Allport's studies were among the first ones and have brought – for the study of leadership – the behavioural approach.

Some of the shortfalls of the Trait Theory of Leadership included the following:

- ♦ In the 1930s the field of Psychometrics was in its early years.
- ♦ Personality traits measurement was not reliable across studies.
- ♦ Study samples included only low level managers.
- ♦ Explanations were not offered to explain the relationship between each characteristic and its impact on leadership.
- ♦ The context of the leader was not considered.

Many studies have analysed the traits among existing leaders in the hope of uncovering those responsible for one's leadership abilities. But, the only characteristics that were identified among these individuals were that some were slightly taller and some slightly more intelligent (Mponguse (2010).

This study considered three models of the induction process, namely: Castetter (1992) Model of Induction; Legotlo (1994) Model of Induction; and Feldman Model of Induction (Carrell et al. 1998). It implies that a particular approach or model needs to be pursued in terms of its various components to design an induction process that can acclimatise a novice principal, or even an experienced principal to the school environment. The researchers investigated the effectiveness of the induction system for primary school principals.

Other research studies (Lauder 2000; Painter 2001; Fink and Resnick 2001) suggest that a very effective strategy of induction is mentoring. The mentoring system is not synonymous with induction; but rather an induction strategy or method. Through the mentoring programme, a more

experienced principal is twinned with the novice principal for a determined period of time. During this mentoring period, skills and knowledge in terms of critical administrative duties at the school, is transferred (Daresh and Playko 1992; Garza and Wurzbach 2002; Holloway 2004). The novice or the rookie principal could face an uphill battle in terms of getting to grips with the school community and the school system. There could also be problems with the mentor-protégé relationship. These could include unsuccessful pairing where the pair fails to connect because of certain barriers that can either be real or artificial (Wong 2005; Wong and Premkumar 2007). The mentor is responsible to assist the novice principal on all matters pertaining to the operation of basic equipment such as photocopiers, telephones and fax machines and the general handling of correspondence. The novice principal is paired with the experienced one until the end of the prescribed period, and thereafter the mentor (experienced principal) leaves the school to pursue his/her other official duties (Nel et al. 2008).

Induction Strategies in the North West Province Workshops

The focus of the principals' workshops is on individual, team, and organisational development. Sessions should be designed to provide the information novice principals need to equip themselves with important information, tools and strategies to successfully run a school. Through the workshops, participants form a network for sharing resources and ideas. Principal Induction Programme follow-up sessions during the induction year should provide a forum for exchanging ideas and sharing effective leadership practices and strategies that impact their success as new leaders. Experienced principals share tips and techniques that novice principals can use to survive and thrive in their new positions. Participants are provided with a wealth of materials and resources that will serve the novice principal with relevant, practical resources for managing a variety of school situations (Erlandson and Witters-Churchill 1990).

Training of Principals

Maer (1991) argues that the training of school principals creates a school culture, which leads

to high-quality outcomes. Although principals do not see management training as a panacea, they need a job-related induction programme. It is axiomatic in education nowadays that successful schools require competent principals. The principals' induction training programme assists schools in providing support and professional development for first year principals.

Mentoring

Mentoring principals who are new to the profession is frequently mentioned as an effective strategy for improving new principals' skills and the likelihood that they will stay in the profession (Spillane et al. 2001). Principal induction programme participation is required for all newly appointed principals. All newly appointed principals are required to attend the principal induction orientation and follow-up sessions. Information about the induction orientation is provided upon enrolling in the induction programme. Newly appointed principals were mentored by experienced principals in the province.

Challenges Faced with Induction

Principals' Turnover

The rate of attrition for school principals in the North West Province is generally high. Such turnover means that relationships between teachers and students and between teachers and principals, based on competence and confidence in doing the job well, has too little time to ripen into mutual trust. Attrition in schools corrodes the quality of teaching and principaling over time by stripping away the value of learning from experience. The loss of principals is costly to the Department of Education. When new principals are appointed, they should go through the induction programmes. The Department of Education should have some mechanisms in place of retaining principals. Holding onto principals – retention – by creating better working conditions, incentives, and sustained professional development is costly, but the return-on-investment in having experienced principals whose leadership expertise stretches over a number of years is far greater than constantly throwing farewell parties for those exiting schools before they can realise their dreams (Whitaker 2002).

Strikes

Teachers' strikes have a negative impact on the school curriculum. Learners fail to cover the syllabus when teachers are on strike. Newly appointed principals fail to curb the situation and do not organise catch up programmes to salvage the situation. Principals reported that some of the induction programmes were held despite the union's call to cancel them. Those who attended the induction programmes were then victimised and it was reported that the houses of some principals who refused to heed the call of unions to strike were burnt down to ashes.

Curriculum Changes

Managing a curriculum change is a daunting task requiring expertise from the principal. Curriculum change is an ongoing process, not a short-term event; requires ongoing support and resources; and it takes time. It is important to have realistic expectations about the time needed to see significant progress as change occurs in individuals first, then in organisations. Curriculum change cannot succeed unless people are ready and willing to implement it. Individual change is difficult if the organisation is not supportive of the change

When a new curriculum is introduced, it has to be followed by an induction process. Some question that needs to be asked include the following: How effective is the induction process is?; To what extent does it benefit principals? Once motivation and the conditions necessary for change have been established, two frameworks support the process. The first is a learning framework centred on how learning takes place; the second is a conceptual framework enabling the detailed design of learning activities, which implies a change in attitudes towards teaching. That is, curriculum change based on the delivery system.

It is also important for school principals to stay familiar with the latest technological developments in their field. The impact that computers have on the educational system cannot be taken lightly. Information to and from learners can be processed and stored in ways that no one could have imagined years ago. The challenge for some principals is that although they have computers at their schools, they are used ineffectively. Principals are concerned about this

issue yet they do not receive attention in induction programmes (Murphy 2000).

Effectiveness of Induction

Proper Management

Proper management guides the development, scope, alignment and evaluation of the school curriculum. It also ensures quality control of the designed and delivered curriculum. This systematic plan links the budgetary process to the review and revision of the curriculum. Principals complained about the induction programmes that were conducted haphazardly. This simply means that management was improper (Leithwood and Jantzi 2000).

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring has to do with supervising activities in progress to ensure they are on-course and on-schedule in meeting the objectives and performance targets. Monitoring is about systematically collecting information that will help the North West Province's principals answer questions about their schools. They can use this information to report on their schools and to help them evaluate the induction process. Monitoring provides the raw data to answer questions, but in and of itself, is a useless and expensive exercise. Evaluation is about using monitoring and other information collected to make judgments about schools in the entire province (Business Dictionary 2012). It is also about using the information to make changes and improvements. Evaluation is putting those data to use and thus giving them value. Evaluation is where the learning occurs, for example, if learners cannot read and write, who is to blame? This question should be answered, recommendations made, and improvements suggested. Yet without monitoring, evaluation and we have no foundation, have no raw material to work with, and be limited to the realm of speculation. Principals need to understand that the design, development, and maintenance of monitoring and evaluation programmes require commitment and long term vision. In the short term, monitoring and evaluation often represents an additional cost and is particularly difficult to maintain when budgets are tight and where personnel are temporary. Do I need to change our objectives? Does my decision need

modification; and does my monitoring process need change? When should change take place? Using this approach, departures from expected conditions or other qualities are not treated as failures, but rather as new information. The new information leads to changes in curriculum management (Glickman et al. 2001).

Quality Assurance

According to Razik and Swanson (2001), quality assurance is a process-centred approach to ensuring that a school is providing the best possible products. It is related to quality control, which focuses on the end result, such as testing a sample of items from a batch after production. Although these terms are sometimes used interchangeably, quality assurance focuses on enhancing and improving the process that is used to create the end result, rather than focusing on the result itself. Among the parts of the process that are considered in Quality Assurance are planning, design, development, production and service. In the analysis of data, it became evident that quality assurance mechanisms in the North West Province are lacking and that there is no variety in the strategies that are being followed in the induction of school principals. Departmental officials who were involved in the induction of principals were not even qualified.

Role players in the North West Education Department induction process include: the Department of Education, the School Governing Body, and the mentor. The legislation (South African Schools Act 1996; Employment of Educators Act 1998) places a huge mandate on the Department of Education for the recruitment of all school personnel including the principals (Nel et al. 2008). The School Governing Body is primarily responsible for the school governance in terms of policy formulation and the monitoring of its implementation in terms of the South African Schools Act 1996. This implies that the School Governing Body has a role to play in the induction of the principals by ensuring that incumbents to vacant posts are properly inducted on those policies and regulations (Nel et al. 2008). The third role player in the induction of primary school principals is the mentor.

RESEARCH METHODS

For the purposes of this study, a descriptive research design has been used. The purpose of

the descriptive study is to provide the opinions of the respondents regarding the phenomenon studied. It provides 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 researcher 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 is complementary to the research questions as set out in the study. This scale was adopted because of its extensive use over many years in measuring opinions, beliefs and attitudes and it made data analysis exercise simpler and faster. To validate the instrument, the questionnaire was piloted to 10 primary school principals. The participants were selected through stratified random sampling. The instrument was refined on the basis of responses that were received from the pilot study.

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 (4) districts. The study focused on the primary schools because this is a category of schooling system that represents the majority of schools and learners in the province. The districts include Ngaka Modiri Molema, Bojanala, Dr. Kenneth Kaunda and Dr. RS Mompoti. In the study, four strata were made depicting the four districts in the North West Province. A data collection instrument, the questionnaire was constructed specifically for this purpose. The questionnaire comprised close-ended questions based on a five (5) point structured pre-coded Likert interval scale. The questionnaire contained 44 items and was distributed to 200 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 recruit-

ment process in human resource management with particular reference to the induction of primary school principals after appointment. What is clear an key to this problem is that new principals, upon arrival at the school, should be afforded and effective 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 strategies that the Department of Education might employ in the induction process, to investigate the challenges in the induction programme as well as to establish the effectiveness of the induction programme in the North West province of South Africa.

Research Problem

Many primary school principals face the challenges of bringing about order and administrative stability in the school environment. When school principals are adequately inducted in various aspects of school management and governance, it would yield positive results in terms of the following: reducing labour turnovers; translating the school environment into a centre of excellence through effective and efficient teaching and learning processes; and reducing the exodus of both teachers and learners to more effectively run schools. The North West Department of Education (NWDE) has an induction programme in place; so the primary objective of this research was to investigate the effectiveness of the induction in the primary schools of the province.

This study focused on the following questions:

- ♦ What are the induction strategies that the Department of Education employs in this exercise?
- ♦ What are the challenges of induction in the North West Province?
- ♦ How effective are the induction programmes in the North West Province?

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This analysis covers areas which include elements of strategies, challenges and effectiveness.

Research Question 1: Induction Strategies by the Department of Education

This analysis covers areas which include workshops, formal training, seminars, on-the-job training and mentoring as strategies of induction.

Table 1 presents the responses to the questions relating to induction strategies employed in the North West Department of Education. Accordingly, 83.5% agreed that workshops were used as a strategy to conduct induction for principals, 63.8% disagreed that formal training was used as a strategy of induction of principals, 70.5% disagreed that induction exercises was run in the form of seminars, 70% disagreed that induction was run in the form of a conference, 67.6% disagreed that on-the-job training was used as a strategy of induction, and 65.5% disagreed that mentoring was the most preferred strategy of induction of principals. According to HDAA (2011), strategies are used to communicate core rules and expectations of the organisations and a well formulated strategies are success key factors for effective induction. Hersey et al. (2008) believe that effective strategies generate positive attitude resulting in motivation which influence higher levels of productivity in the organisation. Where strategies of induction are not aligned as revealed by the above results, then the whole induction programme will not be effective.

Research Question 2: Challenges of Induction in the North West Province

The analysis (Table 2) covers areas of challenges which include the theoretical approach,

the turn-over rate of principals, public service strikes, and the changing curriculum landscape.

Table 2 presents the responses to the questions relating to induction challenges. Accordingly, 53.7% agreed that the theoretical approach to induction poses a challenge in its implementation, 87.1% agreed that the turnover (resignation) rate of principals is having a negative impact on the induction process, 87% agreed that the public service strikes had an impact on the successful implementation of induction process, and 92.1% agreed that the changing curriculum landscape brings about many challenges in the induction process. According to Table 2, the majority of respondents agreed that there are serious challenges that beset the implementation of induction of primary school principals in the North West Province. These ranged from the theoretical approach of induction, resignation rate of principals, public service strikes, and changing curriculum landscapes. These challenges facing the department had a negative impact on the successful implementation of the induction process.

The literature study has revealed that novice principals experience a great amount of frustration, anxiety, confusion, and a sense of being inadequately prepared for what they actually encounter on the job. Waldron (2002) has cited the following as serious challenges: role clarification, organisational socialisation, isolation and technical problems.

Research Question 3: Effectiveness of Induction Programme in the North West Province

This analysis covers areas which include proper time management, monitoring and evalua-

Table 1: Induction strategies

Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
Workshops are used as strategy for induction	6 (3.4%)	14 (9%)	10 (5.6)	67 (37.9%)	80 (5.6%)	117 (100%)
Formal training is used as strategy for induction	68 (38.4%)	45 (5.4%)	16 (9%)	39 (22%)	9 (5.1%)	177 (100%)
Induction exercise is run as seminars	71 (41%)	51 (29.5%)	21 (2.1%)	28 (16.2%)	2 (1.2%)	173 (100%)
Induction is run in the form of conference	74 (41.8%)	50 (28.2%)	21 (12.1%)	28 (16.2%)	2 (1.2%)	176 (100%)
On-the-job training is used as strategy of induction	68 (38.6%)	51 (29%)	11 (6.3%)	43 (24.4%)	3 (1.7%)	176 (100%)
Mentoring is mostly preferred in induction	66 (37.3%)	50 (28.2%)	22 (12.4%)	34 (19.2%)	5 (2.8%)	177 (100%)

Table 2: Challenges faced with induction

<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>	
The theoretical approach to induction is a challenge	12(6.8%)	26 (14.7%)	44 (24.9%)	84 (47.5%)	11 (6.2%)	117(100)
The turnover (resignation) rate of principals is having a negative impact on induction process	1 (.6%)	10 (5.6%)	12 (6.8%)	107 (60.5%)	47 (26.7%)	177(100)
Public service strike has an impact on the successful implementation of induction process	3 (1.7%)	13 (7.3%)	7 (4%)	82 (46.3%)	72 (40.7%)	173(100)
The changing political landscape bring about many challenges in the induction process	1 (.6%)	3 (1.7%)	10 (5.6%)	83 (46.9%)	80 (45.2%)	176(100)

ation, and the aspects relating to quality assurance of the induction process.

Table 3 presents the responses to the questions relating to the effectiveness of induction. The respondents were requested to respond to five statements. Most respondents, 85.3% strongly agreed with the statement that proper time management of the process of induction reinforces the effectiveness of the induction, 63.8% disagreed with the statement that the department conducts monitoring and evaluation exercise before the induction, 65.5% disagreed that the department conducts monitoring and evaluation exercise during the induction, 64.2% disagreed that the department conducts monitoring and evaluation exercise after the induc-

tion, 64.2% agreed that the department conducts monitoring and evaluation exercise after the induction, while 36.7% disagreed that quality assurance mechanism is built into the induction process to ensure its effectiveness. The majority of the respondents, 83.5% only agreed to one statement, that is that the department uses workshops as a strategy for induction. All other statements were not agreed to. These included mentoring, seminars, conferences and formal training. The practice is in contrast with what the literature study (Lauder 2000; Painter 2001; Resnick, 2001) indicated, that is seminars, formal training and mentoring are common strategies. According to the literature study (Lauder 2000; Fink and Resnick 2001; Painter 2001), mentoring

Table 3: The effectiveness of induction

<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>	
Proper time management of the process reinforces the effectiveness of the induction	3(1.7%)	9 (5.1%)	14 (7.9%)	110(62.1%)	41(23.2%)	117 (100)
The department conducts monitoring and evaluation exercise before the induction	62(35%)	51(28.8%)	24 (13.6)	33 (18.6)	7 (4%)	177 (100)
The department conduct monitoring and evaluation exercise after the induction	18(10.2)	22 (12.4)	23(13.1%)	90 (51.1%)	23(13.1%)	173 (100)
Quality assurance mechanism is built into the induction process to ensure its effectiveness	4(2.3%)	44(24.9%)	64(36.2%)	59 (33.3%)	6 (3.4%)	176 (100)

seems to be the strategy that is very commonly followed in the induction of principals. The findings (Table 3) revealed that no sufficient efforts are made on the part of the Department of Education to come up with quality assurance mechanisms to strengthen the effectiveness of the induction process. There were no checklists, no regular visits by the departmental officials to monitor and support the schools with induction programmes, and no incentives provided to those principals who displayed commitment in the induction process. Both the models proposed by Castetter (1992) mention follow up visits and regular evaluation of the induction process to avert turn-overs. These measures further bring in an element of continuous quality assurance and the reinforcement of what the novice principals need to know and practice.

CONCLUSION

This study has found that novice principals need a structured, systematic process for learning to work effectively in the midst of the many and varied school-specific problems that they may encounter. It has also found that new and aspiring principals have a vague understanding of what the position really entails: the loneliness, the conflicts with colleagues, the dull routines, the paperwork, the anguish involved in attempting to solve complex educational and organisational problems and challenges, and using extremely scanty resources, if there are any at his/her disposal. This study has set out to prove that novice 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.).

In conclusion, the research conducted found that strategies for induction need to be tested and reviewed regularly; and be monitored and evaluated on a regular basis. Furthermore, challenges need to be addressed urgently in order to deal with the myriad of administrative and management challenges that confront principals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings the researcher recommends that the induction process must be considered as an all inclusive process. The depart-

ment needs to embark on a robust and radical effort to strengthen the current mode of induction offered to principals. Strategies for induction need to be tested and reviewed regularly, and be monitored and evaluated on a regular basis. Induction has its own challenges that need to be addressed urgently in order to deal with the myriad of administrative and management challenges that confront principals.

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