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The perspectives of beginner principals on their new roles in school leadership and management: A South African case study

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In the study reported on here we aimed to explore how beginner principals perceived their roles as new appointees. School principals are expected to demonstrate proficiency when performing leadership and management roles in schools. Based on the fact that no certificate for principalship exists, newly appointed principals rely on their teaching experience to fulfil the responsibilities of the position. Gronn's theory advocating leadership as a career was used as a lens to analyse the data. In this qualitative study we used interviews and document verification to understand how new appointees perceived their new roles as school leaders and managers. The findings imply that beginner principals regard themselves as ill-prepared to lead and manage schools in their early years of appointment. Their perceptions were that they lacked leadership and management experience in the areas of curriculum, human resources, school finance, stakeholder relations and interpretation of legislation. Beginner principals viewed these as challenges for their leadership and management expertise. From the study we concluded that teachers needed to be exposed to leadership and management responsibilities and that newly appointed principals needed to be trained before they assumed their new positions.

Keywords: aspiring principal; beginner principal; principal; principalship; school leadership; school management

Introduction and Background

The responsibilities of principals in schools have changed drastically in recent years as their roles and functions have become more complex and multifaceted. In addition, a myriad of educational reforms have added to the difficulties of contemporary leadership as well as the management of schools (Bartoletti & Connelly, 2013; Mestry, 2017; Northfield, 2013). These complexities have contributed to the work of the school principal becoming more challenging and demanding. Although Christie, Thompson and Whiteley (2009) indicate that it is extremely important to select the right person for principalship, it is equally important to equip school leaders with the required skills to ensure that they are effective. However, studies by Bush and Oduro (2006) and Heystek (2016) point out that most of the practising principals in South Africa lack basic leadership and management training in principalship despite the fact that many teachers believe that after having completed their bachelor's degrees, they were ready to perform principalship responsibilities, as they were not aware of the challenges accompanying the role of a principal. Bobar (2009) refers to the complexities associated with principalship because it requires skills and competencies not included in principals' initial training as teachers.

This untenable situation is brought about by the fact that in Africa no formal training is required for a principalship, and teachers are appointed as principals based on their teaching experience only. This experience does not prepare them for the challenges awaiting them in their jobs as principals, resulting in uncertainty, frustration and feelings of insecurity and not being able to cope (Bush, Kiggundu & Moorosi, 2011). Accordingly, we explored the perceptions of beginner principals in their new roles as leaders and managers of schools.

Significantly, the Wallace Foundation (2013a) contends that capable and effective leadership and management in schools is a pre-requisite for changing low-performing schools into schools that achieve good results. In this regard, Mathibe (2007) emphasises that teaching experience is not enough to provide the appropriate skills and training necessary for principalship. Moreover, departments of education increasingly recognise that school reforms depend on having principals who are well-prepared to manage change in schools (Mitgang, 2012). The need to train principals in school leadership and management has been a global concern for many years (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe & Meyerson, 2005; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004; Onguko, Abdalla & Webber, 2008; Orr, 2007). However, it appears that not much has been done to improve the status quo.

In 2007, the South African Department of Education introduced a school leadership programme to support school management teams (SMTs) and inexperienced principals. The Advanced Certificate in Education: School Leadership (ACE), was introduced as a strategy to improve leadership and management in schools. The programme ran from 2007 to 2009 (Bush, Kiggundu, et al., 2011). Unfortunately, the programme was discontinued, and in the absence of prescribed formal training for principalship, teachers who have the minimum teaching qualifications are currently appointed to principalships (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2014; Education Labour Relations Council Limpopo Chamber, 2008). In contrast, countries like the United Kingdom (UK) have introduced support programmes to enhance the qualifications of principals. The National College for School Leadership (NCSL) in the UK was formed in 2000 to develop current and future school leaders for principalship. This initiative prepares aspirant principals through the National Professional Qualification for

Headship (NPQH) programme (Rhodes, Brundrett & Nevill, 2009) and introduces them to Early Headship Programmes (EHP) as they progress to principalship positions.

In many states in the United States of America (USA) it is mandatory for aspirant principals to attain a master's degree before they are selected to a principalship. For example, in 2003, Michigan City passed legislation for the establishment of a principalship leadership academy to provide training for school principals (Best, 2006). In Canada, aspirant school leaders are compelled to complete the Principals' Qualification Programme (PQP) before they may be appointed as principals or vice-principals (Bush & Jackson, 2002).

Successful principalship is characterised by the principal's ability to give direction, develop other people and redesign the organisation for improving student learning (Leithwood et al., 2004). Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom and Anderson (2010) argue that effective principalship can improve school systems, especially teaching and learning. There is an increasing indication that the quality of leadership provided to the school is dependent on the quality of the leaders' preparation (Bush, Duku, Glover, Kiggundu, Moorosi & Msila, 2011; Greenfield, 1985; Orr & Barber, 2006). Bush, Duku, et al. (2011) recognise that school leaders who are prepared for principalship could contribute to the significant improvement of learner outcomes.

From my experience as a teacher, a principal's leadership and management style greatly influences teachers aspiring for principalship. Teachers aspire to be principals and believe that principalship is an easy job – especially when they are led by a successful principal. However, my observation was that working under a competent principal does not imply that one will become a good principal. Young, Sheets and Knight (2005) aver that, as the learning curve for beginner principals is steep, they require effective mentorship to guide and nurture them towards becoming effective principals. Mitgang (2012) points out that during their first year on the job, beginner principals require contextualised mentoring and professional development. This study was motivated by my own experiences as a school principal. Hence, we were interested in the perceptions of newly appointed principals in the Capricorn district in the Limpopo province of South Africa.

A Perspective on South African Principalship

School education in South Africa is managed by the Minister and the DBE at national level. At provincial level, educational institutions and systems are managed by the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) and the Head of Department (HOD) in the provincial departments of education (South African Schools Act, No. 84 of 1996 (hereafter SASA) (Republic of South Africa, 1996a). According to N Clarke (2013), effective school leadership and management do not simply happen, but are developed by

the careful selection of good principals. SASA (Republic of South Africa, 1996a) states that the HOD in the province appoints principals. The principal, therefore, becomes the leader and manager with delegated responsibilities to run the school (DBE, Republic of South Africa, 2016).

The Employment of Educators Act (Act No. 76 of 1998) (Republic of South Africa, 1998), (hereafter EEA), Personnel Administrative Measures ([PAM] DBE, Republic of South Africa, 2016) and Resolution 1 of 2008 of the Education Labour Relations Council (Education Labour Relations Council Limpopo Chamber, 2008) state that the minimum qualification requirements for the position of principal are a three-year teachers' diploma and seven years' teaching experience. The HOD has delegated the authority to run the processes of shortlisting, interviewing, and recommendation for principalship to the school governing body (SGB) (Education Labour Relations Council Limpopo Chamber, 2008). Commenting on the post requirements for a principalship, the Wallace Foundation (2013b) points out that leadership in schools operates in an ever-changing milieu that compels newly appointed principals to be developed into prolific leaders and managers. In comparison with other countries such as the USA, the UK, Finland and Scotland, the qualification requirements for a principalship set by South Africa are extremely low.

Methodology

In this study we used a qualitative approach to understand the behaviour of beginner principals in their new roles in school leadership and management. This behaviour was related to how beginner principals perceive their new roles as leaders and managers at the initial stages after promotion. Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2011) indicate that a qualitative research approach allows the researcher to study the participants in their ordinary settings, and to describe their experiences and behaviour and how their lives are influenced by their own contexts. Together, these experiences, understanding and influences can develop into perceptions that need to be explored. Based on the fact that beginner principals began as teachers who aspired to become and had certain perceptions of being a principal, we wanted to investigate their perceptions after having been promoted. According to the qualitative approach, one seeks to embrace and understand the contextual influence on the research phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). This approach also allows flexibility for participants to narrate their experiences (Hennink et al., 2011) based on their settings and backgrounds without the researcher imposing his/her own context and assumptions.

In this research we used interviews, field notes and document verification as data collection methods. Document verification included the policies for internal control developed by the school, departmental regulations, and directives. These are the

fundamental documents in the running of a school, and their availability can be an essential measure with regard to progressive leadership and management. Creswell (2014) indicates that qualitative researchers collect data themselves by interviewing participants. We visited beginner principals and conducted semi-structured interviews that allowed face-to-face interaction. This approach afforded us an opportunity to probe further and ask follow-up questions.

We considered ethical matters at every step of the research study (Wagner, Kawulich & Garner, 2012). As this study involved adults who were already employed and had relationships with their workplaces, we had to ensure that participants' and schools' names remained confidential. Creswell (2014) advises that before one can embark on research, permission should be sought from the participants, the school and the governing authority, while approval and permission should be granted by the ethics board of the researching institution. We obtained permission and approval from the participants, the Department of Education in the Limpopo province and we obtained an ethical clearance certificate from the University of Pretoria.

Fifteen beginner principals participated in the study and were selected from public rural, township and city schools. Purposive sampling was used to identify suitable participants (Maree, 2012; Silverman, 2000). The participants in this study had to be permanently appointed principals who had been in the position for five years or less. Such appointees are referred to as beginner principals. The participants were beginner principals working in the Capricorn district in the Limpopo province. Data were analysed thematically in terms of an interpretivist research paradigm.

Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. To maintain consistency the same protocol was used in all interviews. Research participants' responses were categorised into codes and categories guided by the research questions, from which themes for analysis emerged. The trustworthiness of the data and analysis was maintained through the use of the tape recorder and triangulating of data.

In this article we foreground Gronn's theory of leadership (1999) that posits that leaders in any institution are formed or influenced by the natural features of the organisation. Gronn (1999) explains that educational leaders are prepared in four stages: formation, accession, incumbency and divestiture. The first three stages of leadership development postulated by Gronn (1999) are related to Petrie's (2014) vertical leadership development. Petrie (2014) explains that vertical leadership is earned through physical involvement in the work instead of waiting for training by an expert.

Gronn (1999) argues that leadership is contextually bound and career based. This means that in the process of working, employees are able to develop their leadership and management skills and sharpen their competencies related to their work. Formation

entails activities and stages in the teaching career, where the teacher gains leadership and managerial experiences (as an active participant) during the career that later makes him/her aspire for principalship. Principals delegate responsibilities to some teachers who gain valuable knowledge, skills and competencies in the process. Such teachers eventually become socially and psychologically prepared/ready to assume a position of responsibility and authority. Accession refers to a stage of grooming or anticipation in which the candidate for leadership rehearses or tests his/her potential capacity to lead. Incumbency refers to the stage where aspirant leaders have developed and perfected their personal characters and have learned to exercise their authority. During the incumbency stage, the candidate seeks to give further expression to his/her quest for mastery and self-realisation by gaining experience through circulating among various elite postings and leadership roles.

In order to understand beginner principals' perspectives with regard to their new roles as leaders and managers, we used the interpretivist approach. This was based on the fact that interpretivists do not seek answers for their studies in a rigid way (Thanh & Thanh, 2015), but seek to understand the world of participants as they, themselves, experience it (Wagner et al., 2012). We were, therefore, convinced that an interpretivist approach was relevant for this study.

Data Analysis

The thematic analysis of data was done by analysing the data from the interviews; while triangulation of the information from the field notes was carried out. The available policy documents were extremely important and helpful in understanding school leadership and management. In the analysis, we followed the six steps of thematic analysis suggested by V Clarke and Braun (2006). Firstly, we familiarised ourselves with the data by reading and re-reading the transcriptions and field notes, listening to the audio recordings and noting important ideas. In the second step we coded the selected data using coding schemes in order to simplify correlations in the data. In the third step we searched for patterns to identify themes across the selected data sets. After the themes had been identified, we had to revise them in the fourth step. In this step we ensured that the themes identified matched the codes already identified. In the fifth step we defined and named each theme, which led to the sixth step of reporting the findings.

Results

Data from the 15 beginner principals revealed five main issues perceived as challenges in their new roles. What they experienced in the new roles was different from the theoretical understanding they had developed during their careers. The interviews revealed that beginner principals thought that they would be trained for principalship and would receive

support from departmental officials. While they were aspirants, beginner principals thought that leading and managing a school would not be a complex matter as they had perceived the function to be from their experiences as teachers. Their perceptions were based on the fact that the principals' work was only to supervise what teachers were doing. Beginner principals indicated that teaching experience was important for advancing to principalship, but that it was not sufficient preparation for leadership and management. Their perceptions of their new roles as leaders and managers were embedded in the following.

Curriculum Management

The findings reveal that beginner principals perceived themselves to be unprepared to lead and manage matters related to the school curriculum. Many of them echoed the need for training and explained that they were struggling as a result of their lack of knowledge about curriculum management. Some beginner principals remarked as follows:

"The department must first take me for a workshop for four weeks and introduce me to all the policies on curriculum and how they work."

"I had thought before I started working that I would be taken through to understand my work, but there was no one, and I had to hit the ground running on my own."

When teachers are trained at tertiary institutions, they either specialise in general education and training (GET), further education and training (FET), or special needs education and in specific subjects within a particular band.

In our study, we found that during the recruitment of principals, applications are invited from across all the educational bands. The appointment of principals allows for teachers to be appointed as principals from all types of schools and phases without consideration of their training specialisation. The following quotes highlight the importance of being prepared to handle curriculum-related matters:

I am coming from a special school, and I have little knowledge about the new curriculum called CAPS [Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement]. In a special school, I did not do this curriculum. I was the HOD in a special school, and the school is doing vocational skills.

Another beginner principal said: *"When I saw that as a principal, I was not doing things right, I decided to enrol for [a] leadership and management degree."*

Furthermore, advertisements for principal positions do not require subject specialisation (Education Labour Relations Council Limpopo Chamber, 2008). We, therefore, found that it was reasonable for beginner principals to expect to be trained after their appointment. This expectation by beginner principals confirmed their lack of readiness to manage specific school curricula. Beginner principals with secondary school teaching experience were appointed as principals in primary schools and vice

versa. This approach made it difficult for them to manage the curricula in the respective schools.

Leading and managing curricula in the different bands requires of principals to apply relevant knowledge and policies. The lack of relevant curriculum knowledge was found to be a serious challenge to beginner principals. The lack of knowledge regarding the management of the curriculum was worse for beginner principals who had been promoted from special schools to head ordinary public schools, as special and ordinary public schools follow two different curricula (vocational and academic respectively). It requires specialised curriculum knowledge and training for a beginner principal who has been working in an ordinary public school to manage a special school and vice versa.

Human Resource Management

We found that beginner principals have little knowledge about the management of human resources. Beginner principals expected that once they had been appointed, they would attend a hand-over meeting where they would be inducted on matters relating to human resources. Some beginner principals did not know how to process and deal with different types of leave applications, preside over meetings, engage in workload allocations, facilitate the drawing up of a general timetable, and promote staff development. The interviews revealed that some beginner principals struggled to produce a final copy of a general timetable well into the first quarter of the academic year. Most beginner principals admitted that when they were still teachers, they thought that a principal's job was less challenging compared to the work performed by teachers:

"The deputy principal told me about the school journal and submission register which I did not know about."

"... I expected to receive orientation before I started with my work, but I was on my own using common sense."

Beginner principals perceived that principalship entailed a reduced workload compared to that of a teacher – being more of an overseer. Beginner principals were surprised to realise that principals were faced with a demanding job with considerable responsibilities. During the interviews, beginner principals admitted that their experience of the management of human resources while in post level (PL) 1, 2 and 3 positions was not enough to prepare them for school leadership and management.

Human resource management can be confusing if one looks at the job descriptions of teachers provided by the Department of Education (DBE, Republic of South Africa, 2016). Accordingly, one might have the wrong impression about the roles of a principal until one is appointed in the position (see Table 1). According to the DBE, Republic of South Africa (2016), the core functions and responsibilities of teachers at PLs 1, 2, 3, and 4 are similar and may make one believe that it is possible for teachers

to perform the responsibilities of a principal at PL 4.

Table 1 illustrates the responsibilities of teachers at different PLs at a school.

The table below summarises the obligatory functions of teachers (PL 1), heads of department (PL 2), deputy principals (PL 3) and principals (PL 4). Their roles look similar. A clearer description of their roles is given in the performance standards (Education Labour Relations Council, 2003), which indicate a significant difference in the work performed by a PL 1 teacher and the work performed by a principal on PL 4. For example, all post levels

are expected to perform the communication function. However, in practice, the level of communication with learners or teachers differs in PLs 1, 2, 3 and 4. Communication at the level of principal is performed with a different authority. In fact, the principal takes over communication regarding certain matters only once all other teachers have failed. One can agree with Gromm (1999) and Petrie (2014) that teachers in positions at lower levels can help prepare them for higher positions. Unfortunately, that does not guarantee that they will be ready to perform the responsibilities required of principals.

Table 1 Core duties and responsibilities of teachers according to DBE, Republic of South Africa (2016)

Teacher – PL 1	HOD – PL 2	Deputy Principal – PL 3	Principal – PL 4
Core duties and responsibilities for the job			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching • Extra- and co-curricular 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching • Extra- and co-curricular 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative • Teaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative personnel • Academic performance of the school
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative • Interaction with stakeholders • Communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personnel • Administrative • Communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extra- and co-curricular • Personnel • Communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching • Interaction with stakeholders • Extra-and co-curricular • Communication

During the study we noted that most rural schools had fewer learners, which resulted in fewer teachers at such schools. As a result, some schools resorted to multi-grade teaching, which was not understood by beginner principals who struggled to manage such situations. One interviewee expressed his frustration with regard to the management of human resources in a multi-grade school: *“I was never exposed to multi-grade teaching in my life ... it was frustrating when I came to this school as a principal because we had eight classes but few teachers.”*

The findings in a study by Northfield (2013) are confirmed by the comments of a newly appointed principal: *“I thought my work would be reduced when I am a principal, but I find myself overwhelmed by a lot of paper work, answering telephone calls and had no time to visit teachers in the staff room.”*

Although human resource management is only one part of a principal’s responsibility, the findings in this study confirm that beginner principals are not ready to take up the responsibilities of school leadership and management.

Financial Management

Most beginner principals perceived the management of school finances as a major challenge. The participants expected training on financial management because, while teachers, they had never worked with school monies. According to the SASA (Republic of South Africa, 1996a), the management of school funds rests with the SGB. This act excludes many teachers who do not have an opportunity to participate in the SGB to know how school finances are managed. Remarks by beginner principals on the management of finances were as follows:

When I was HOD I was never exposed to matters of finance ..., even now my challenge is finance ..., I

actually told myself that from now on I am going straight to the circuit office to sit with the finance official to explain every step on finance.

Some participants indicated that they even went back to their former schools requesting help with the management of finance from their former principals. An Australian study by Sayce and Lavery (2013) points to financial management as a challenge for beginner principals. The Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) (Act No 1. of 1999) (Republic of South Africa, 1999) indicates that all public institutions must develop a budget showing their income and expenditure before public funds are spent. In a school situation, principals are expected to be knowledgeable on financial matters and, to lead in matters related to budgeting (DBE, Republic of South Africa, 2016).

A Clarke (2007) indicates that the management of school finances can be one of the most daunting and challenging responsibilities of a principal because for many it is an area in which they have little or no training or expertise. According to section 16A of the SASA (Republic of South Africa, 1996a), the principal must assist members of the SGB with the management of finances and must take all reasonable steps to prevent any financial maladministration or mismanagement.

Stakeholder Relations

Education is a societal matter and beginner principals perceived that they would receive support and have good relations with stakeholders. Beginner principals are also expected to be ready to respond appropriately to the needs of stakeholders. Beginner principals from township and rural schools indicated that they did not receive support from parents, while parents did not attend meetings either. Parents’ poor attendance of the annual general meetings (AGMs)

at which the school budget is normally approved, affected the management of the school, especially with regard to finances. Members of the SGB alone cannot approve the school budget; they need parental ratification as stated in section 20 of the SASA (Republic of South Africa, 1996a).

Beginner principals also expected to be supported by the unions in their new roles, which was not realised. Instead, it seems as though the unions regarded the newly appointed principal as an employer to be confronted and not supported. The beginner principals were not ready to deal with the arrogant attitudes of union officials during professional-stakeholder meetings. One respondent commented as follows: *“My biggest challenge was unions protecting teachers for not doing their work ... the union was disruptive and disrespectful to my job ... they can just barge into my office without an appointment.”*

In fact, most beginner principals expected continuous support from the unions. Unfortunately, this was not the case. This posed a challenge and frustration to beginner principals. Beginner principals struggled to understand their authority on governance matters and their limitations in working with the SGBs. Section 16 of the SASA (Republic of South Africa, 1996a) clearly distinguishes the governance functions and responsibilities of the SGB and the professional management functions and responsibilities performed by the school principal. The lack of support from the parent components of the SGB left some beginner principals with no option but to perform both professional and governance functions: *“Parents do not attend school meetings and often times it delays the school programmes because they are supposed to ratify some decisions from the SGB, in particular, the budget.”*

Legislative Framework

Beginner principals also showed a lack of knowledge and understanding of the appropriate application of educational laws and policies. School principals are expected to apply the law when dealing with day-to-day challenges. During the interviews, the beginner principals indicated that they participated in sub-committees that empowered them with regard to their leadership skills, but that they had never anticipated that some schools did not have policies in place. The legislative context in South Africa is linked to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996b), the Basic Conditions of Employment Act as amended (Act No. 11 of 2002) (The Presidency, Republic of South Africa, 2002), The Employment Equity Act (Act No. 55 of 1998) (Department of Labour, Republic of South Africa, 1998), the Public Finance Management Act (Act No. 1 of 1999) (Republic of South Africa, 1999) and many others. This requires schools to develop their own policies that regulate operations in the school. Such policies must function within the framework of the South African legislation.

Discussion

The findings in this study show that a gap exists between the teaching responsibilities of teachers and leadership and management responsibilities performed by a school principal. The findings further show a mismatch between the perceptions of beginner principals about their roles and what is required of a principal. Beginner principals were shocked by the amount of work that they were expected to do as school principals. The findings also reveal that the DBE, the Limpopo Provincial Department, in particular, does not have formal programmes to train or prepare beginner principals for the leadership and management of schools. Currently, the district and provincial offices depend on teaching experience as a form of school leadership and management preparation for principalship.

The participants believed that before teachers are appointed as principals it was necessary for those teachers to acquire knowledge about leadership and management roles of a school principal. They reasoned that they had acquired enough experience about principalship during their time as teachers. It was only after they had been appointed that they realised the huge difference between the work of a teacher and that of a principal. During the interviews the beginner principals indicated that they needed to be prepared and trained for leadership and management before and after appointment.

In this study we found that a need existed for aspirant and beginner principals to be trained for the responsibilities of principalship, while they were still teachers/HODs/deputy principals, and even after they had been appointed as principals. It is clear that principalship positions require incumbents with the necessary capacity and skills to lead and manage a school. Copland, Darling-Hammond, Knapp, McLaughlin and Talbert (2002) and Ibara (2014) argue that teaching experience alone will not develop beginner principals into competent school leaders and managers. We propose that the development/training of principals should be incorporated into teachers' career paths, commonly known as on-the-job training or in-service training. This was found to be in line with Gronn's (1999) leadership theory and Petrie's (2014) vertical development system. Training of this kind does not need teachers to be taken away from the school to attend leadership training programmes. Instead, the Department of Education can integrate the leadership and management training programmes into teachers' careers as support systems. While teachers gain teaching experience, they are also on a systematic journey of preparation for school leadership and management. Those who demonstrate leadership and management potential are identified and are then mentored and supported.

To support aspiring and beginner principals, we recommend a six-stage school-based integrated model for leadership and management, which is discussed below and presented graphically in Figure 1

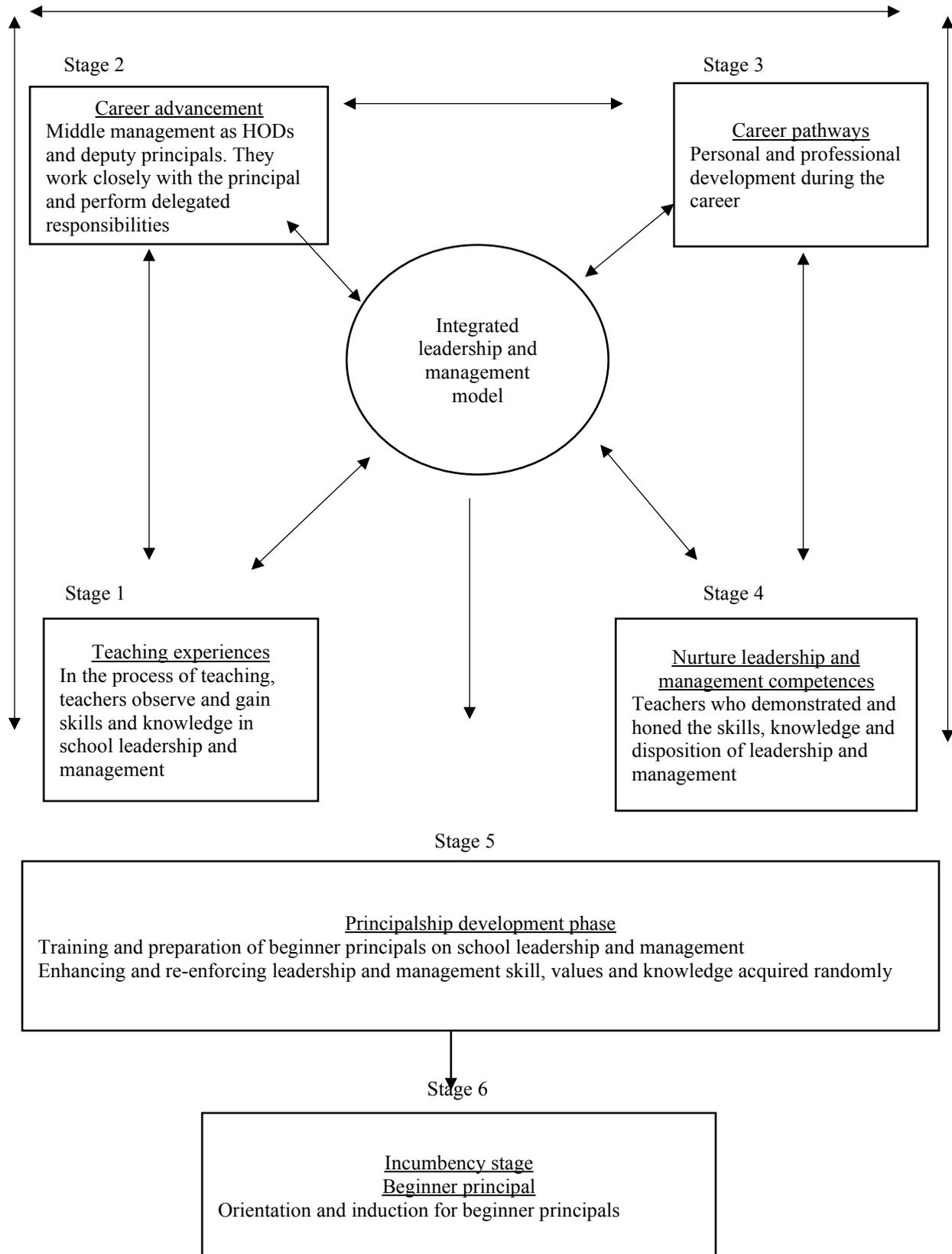


Figure 1 School-based integrated leadership and management model

Stage One: Teaching Experience
 It is said that “*experience is the best teacher,*” meaning that when people do the same thing often

enough, they eventually become masters at it. Teachers on PL 1 mostly perform teaching activities and also engage in leadership activities when they

enforce learner discipline and facilitate sports training, but unfortunately, these tasks are not well coordinated. Based on the post provisioning model (DBE, Republic of South Africa, 2016), small schools with five posts do not qualify for HOD and deputy principal positions. Thus, teachers at these schools are given an opportunity to perform leadership and management roles, as opposed to teachers at large schools. In the process they acquire skills and knowledge about leadership and management activities.

According to Gronn's (1999) theory of leadership as a career, such teachers have already passed the formation stage by virtue of their experience and have entered the accession stage. Even though they are on PL 1, they are motivated to apply for principalship posts with the perception that they can perform the leadership and management roles in a school. While we might agree with Gronn about leadership as a career, the findings indicate that beginner principals still expect to be trained in leadership and management. The integrated leadership and management model highlights that although PL 1 teachers (aspirant principals) may feel they are ready to become school principals because of sufficient experience in teaching, they still require support before they are appointed. All the participants indicated that they expected to be trained for their responsibilities with regard to leading and managing schools. In the model, the contribution of teaching experience is recognised, but it is advisable that only aspirant teachers in stage five may be appointed as beginner principals.

Stage Two: Career Advancement

The second stage in the model is career advancement, which pertains to teachers who are promoted to the positions of HODs and deputy principals. According to the Personnel Administrative Measures (DBE, Republic of South Africa, 2016), members of the SMTs are delegated leadership and management responsibilities by the principals and are accountable for such responsibilities. According to the model, teachers in this cohort are deliberately prepared to become future principals. Their delegated responsibilities must be planned and monitored by their immediate seniors for focused support.

Stage Three: Career Pathway

The third stage recognises and builds on the contributions of professional bodies in teacher's careers. Although these teachers may not have been promoted, they have gained a wealth of experience through their participation in professional bodies. Teachers who participate in academic, professional bodies, such as the Association of Mathematics Education of South Africa (AMESA) and teacher unions, may be considered for leadership development.

Stage Four: Nurture Leadership and Management Competencies

The fourth stage recognises those teachers who have

been in the profession for a long time and have traversed the first three stages but feel that they are not yet ready to take up school leadership. Teachers in this group do not usually apply for promotional posts unless they are encouraged to do so. Unlike the other three stages, in the fourth stage, school principals are expected to identify teachers who demonstrate the requisite leadership and management competencies and nurture such competencies with the aim of developing future principals. The model encourages the recognition of potential principals among teachers and assists them to become principals.

Stage Five: Principalship Development Programme

The Education and Training Inspectorate (2013) argues that beginner principals in a reforming education system need to be trained for them to acquire the necessary skills to manage schools. The fifth stage of the model suggests that after appointment, successful candidates must undergo rigorous training in school leadership and management prior to assumption of duty as principals.

Stage Six: Incumbency

At this stage, beginner principals are received at the school and are introduced to the SGB and the staff by the departmental official (the circuit manager). During the introduction, the departmental official should invite all stakeholders, which include the teacher unions, to support the leadership of the beginner principal. The unions, the SMT and the SGB, should be guided on how to support the new principal. During this period, the department should formalise the handing-over process and provide a checklist of documents that are required by the new principal.

Recommendations

Support by the provincial Department of Education

The Department of Education should develop a support programme and incorporate it into the day-to-day professional responsibilities performed by school principals. The programme should guide principals on how to support teachers in becoming principals in the future. The day-to-day work of teachers is to teach the curriculum in the classroom. Their activities need to be integrated into the leadership and management of the school. The processing of mark schedules and the preparation of progress reports should be regarded as preparation for their positions of future principal managers. Drawing from the integrated leadership and management model, the school principal can develop and implement the support programme at each stage. Successful teachers can then be recommended for further support as aspirant principals who are ready to apply for principalship posts when advertised.

Support by the school governing body

The provincial Department of Education should capacitate SGB members on how to support beginner

principals when they assume their new responsibilities. According to section 20 of SASA, Act 98 of 1996, the SGB must support the principal. Members of the SGB should assist the principal by encouraging parents to participate actively in matters of the school. The SGB could also perform voluntary work and involve local stakeholders to become partners in educational matters of their community. This kind of partnership could be enforced by departmental officials during the induction. The DBE (2014) points out that when there is a good working relationship between the SGB and the school principal, a collaborative relationship with the internal and external school communities is created. It is the responsibility of the department to empower SGBs to initiate such collaborations.

The support by the district office

The district should profile teachers who are performing delegated roles or participate in professional bodies for further support. The district should use the services of those teachers who are union leaders and those who hold positions in subject committees. Their leadership and management experiences are more educational and can be harnessed and directed towards principalship. In unions for instance, teachers deal with financial management according to PFMA, Act No. 1 of 1999 (Republic of South Africa, 1999) and they are taught how to resolve labour disputes, which form part of the function of a principal. The district should also use the governance skills gained by teachers who participated in the SGB. Their responsibilities should be coordinated and aligned with the profession. Such teachers can then be targeted for formal training in leadership as they shall have entered the accession stage in their career.

Support by the circuit managers and school principals

According to the Education Labour Relations Council, Collective Agreement No. 4 of 2017 (Education Labour Relations Council, 2017), the job of a circuit manager includes management of the selection processes in the appointment of principals and the support of principals with regard to curriculum delivery and administration of the school. The circuit manager works closely with schools and has the opportunity to know teachers who are actively involved in educational matters. Accordingly, the circuit manager can recommend potential school leaders for development/preparation. This responsibility can be linked to stage six of the integrated leadership and management model for effective and deliberate development of school leadership.

Conclusion

In this article we reported on the perceptions of beginner principals on their new roles as leaders and managers of schools. According to Gronn's (1999) theory of leadership as a career, the teaching profession helps to prepare educational leaders. According

to this theory, the teaching environment/career is capable of forming leaders in the same field. Beginner principals agreed that before they were appointed as school principals, they felt that they were ready and prepared to lead and manage schools. However, the findings of this study show that newly appointed principals had a different perspective regarding their new roles as principals. The leadership and managerial responsibilities that they had perceived to be simple, turned out to be more challenging once they had been appointed in the position. Many of the beginner principals reported a different perspective – especially with regard to the management of the curriculum, finances, human resources, legislation and stakeholder relations. As teachers their understanding of these roles was limited compared to what was expected of principals in performing their duties.

The results of the study show that teachers are appointed randomly in school leadership and management positions, irrespective of their seniority. During the interviews, beginner principals reported that they were appointed by virtue of their teaching experience and that their appointment was not based on their leadership competencies. This was confirmed by the departmental procedures, although it was not confirmed by the findings. Compared to international standards, beginner principals in SA are inadequately prepared when they are appointed as school principals.

We found that a leadership and management gap existed between teaching responsibilities and principalships. Currently, the educational system in the country does not have any programme to address this gap. Accordingly, we proposed an internal (school-based) leadership and management support programme. This programme comprises six stages and is implemented at school level. The purpose of the programme is to develop teachers' leadership capacity, built on both experiential learning and contributions by professional bodies. Using the programme, the department (through schools and circuit offices) will be able to identify and prepare aspirant principals who have leadership potential and prepare them for principalship.

Authors' Contribution

Malesela Gilbert Sepuru wrote the manuscript, conducted the interviews with beginner principals, conducted the study analysis and provided data for Table 1 and Figure 1. Both authors reviewed the final manuscript.

Notes

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