

Evaluating the Promotion Requirements for the Appointment of Office-Based Educators in the Department of Basic Education in South Africa

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Abstract

Various promotion requirements are adopted in the appointment of classroom or subject educators as office-based educators or subject advisors (education specialists) in the Department of Basic Education. This qualitative adopted interpretive paradigm study sought to explore educators' lived experiences on the promotion requirements espoused by the Department for the appointment of qualified educators as office-based educators. Ten educator-participants were purposively selected for a semi-structured, face-to-face interview to collect in-depth data for the study. Collected data were thematically analysed to generate themes for the presentation and discussion of findings. The promotion requirements for office-based educators are inadequately utilised in the selection of suitable candidates for the posts. The study established an unfair promotion process in the appointment of office-based educators, and thus, many qualified educators are disadvantaged. The study recommends that promotion requirements should be adhered to in the selection process, to ensure fairness and social justice for all qualified candidates.

Keywords: promotion, office-based educator, education specialist, perception, department, appointment

1. Introduction

The appointment of educators from schools to office-based positions at any Department of Basic Education's office in South Africa is based on promotion, using some standard requirements. Promotion is the process that facilitates the upward mobility of employees from the present position to another higher one with increased responsibilities, pay status, and prestige (Njagi, 2005; Asim, 2013). Seemingly, Sadiq, Barnes, Price, Gumede, and Morrell (2019) opine that promotion is the process where an individual employee in an organisation apply for career progression, usually in response to institutional calls for applications and is distinctly different from an application for vacant posts, which are open to external applicants. The vacant posts are usually advertised on the departmental website, national newspapers, and vacancy lists that are distributed to school circuits and the district offices. The advertisements state or provide minimum requirements that required employees for each post must possess, before applying for such posts. However, with the advent of the democratic era in 1994, the promotion of educators to senior positions in the department became influenced and lacked transparency (Gaynor, 1998).

Educators are promoted by senior departmental officials without adhering to the stipulated requirements and even when the positions are not advertised or not appropriately contested. The majority of those appointed to senior positions were minority white employees (Hammett & Staeheli, 2013). Franks (2014) posits that Black African employees are mostly found in the lower positions of public service, with few of them in the middle and senior-level positions in the government offices. Wong and Wong (2005) state that educators' promotion has become a critical and complicated issue in the education system, and thus calls for appropriate attention. This is prompted by the despairing and daunting process of promoting school educators into office-based education officials, as the process is characterised by vigorous contestations as well as dispute oriented (Setlhare, 2019). Despite the involvement of educators' unions in the promotion process; the exercise is highly exacerbated, full of nepotism and influenced by various individuals lobbying for the appointment of their chosen candidates.

The post-apartheid era (post-1994) highlights the various challenges of all the Departments in public service, including education, ranging from inequality, nepotism, weak policy formulation and inadequate implementation (DoE, 2001; Hammett & Staeheli, 2013). This implies why the majority of Black African educators were trained in state-controlled teacher training colleges of education in Homelands compared to their White counterparts (Schafer & Wilmot, 2012), who graduated with a three-year qualification (M+3) in education, either a primary or a secondary teacher's diploma had edge over some of the Black educators who graduated with teacher's certificates which was a two-year qualification (M+2); such as a Junior Secondary Teacher's Certificate (JSTC), or Primary Teachers' Certificate (PTC) (Reeves & Robinson, 2010).

Furthermore, many White minority teachers received a four-year university education, known as a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree compared to few African teachers after the post-apartheid (Reeves & Robinson, 2010; Schafer & Wilmot, 2012). Thus, implying why many African teachers could not obtain B.Ed. degree due to marginalisation in the education system. Therefore, White teachers were more qualified compared to African teachers since most of them had the economic resources to enrol in universities and graduated with a four-year qualification (M+4), Bachelor of Pedagogics in Education (BPed), Honours and even more. After due consideration of the above-illustrated scenarios, the minimum promotion requirements were sought at a three-year qualification (M+3).

Various extant studies (Lahtero & Kuusilehto, 2015; Mampane, 2015; Ahiaku, 2019) have been carried out on the appointment procedures for school-based educators (i.e. principals and departmental heads) but very little has been said done on the procedures for the appointment of office-based educators. This present study explored the use of promotion requirements for the appointment of office-based educators. Thus, the credibility and efficiency of a three-year qualification (M+3) as a promotion requirement for the education specialists in the Department within three decades of implementation was investigated.

2. Literature Review

According to the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM, 2016), minimum promotion requirements for educators at any level are classified into educational qualifications, statutory requirements, and experience. The minimum educational qualification required is a recognised three-year qualification (M+3, REQV 13) which includes professional teacher education for all office-based posts and registration with the South African Council of Educators (SACE) as a professional educator (ELRC, 2010). Teaching experience is a pivotal requirement for teacher promotion. However, it varies according to the seniority of the post. For example, Education Specialist (ES) is an entry position to the office-based educator post, and it requires a minimum of three (3) years teaching experience in the educational field; while Senior Education Specialist (SES) requires an educator with a five (5) teaching year experience in the field of education and the Deputy Chief Education Specialist (DCES) requires eight (8) year experience in the field of education. The position of the DCES is equivalent to the position of the Circuit Manager. The position of Chief Education Specialist (CES) is the highest in the education department at the district level, which requires a nine (9) year teaching experience as the minimum requirement for the post (ELRC, 2010).

The Collective Agreement 1 (2010) posits that the actual educator's experience is an appropriate experience relevant to the office-based posts, and should be taken into account for the appointments into post levels 2 and higher. The promotion requirements as stipulated in the document (The Collective Agreement, 2010) emphasises teaching experience than the teaching qualifications, which improves the knowledge and expertise acquired through the courses undertaken. In a longitudinal study of teacher promotion in Hong Kong by Wong and Wong (2005), it is found to be a similar system with South Africa. The promotion requirements emphasise teaching experience and administrative competencies, whereas Mugweru (2013) in his study conducted in Kenya, recorded that educators' teaching qualifications, their knowledge and skills, competency, and extra-curricular activities including community involvement are taken into account during teacher promotion exercise. Promotion procedures in an organisation aim to enable employers to get the best available candidates in an organization to occupy appropriate senior positions (Ekabu, Nyagah, & Kalai, 2018). Seemingly, teacher promotion leads to increased salaries, high status, and high self-esteem of the candidates.

Norms and standards of teachers envisage that teachers are life-long learners and researchers (Ajani, 2020). These roles spell out that educators will achieve ongoing personal, academic, occupational, and professional growth through pursuing reflective study and research in their learning area, in broader professional and educational matters, as well as other related fields (Norms & Standard, 2000; Ajani, 2019). The office-based positions are designated as "Specialist" such as Senior Education Specialist, Deputy Chief Education specialist, and so forth. The question then is how does an entry qualification (M+3) qualifies an educator to be a "Specialist" in the field without higher

qualifications for in-depth knowledge and skills in their fields of specialization? Oxford Dictionary defines 'specialist' as a person highly skilled and involving many years of education and training in a specific field or area of specialisation. An education specialist is someone who is an expert or possesses highly specialised knowledge and advanced proficiency in his specialised field (Herman, 2019).

Seemingly, Setlhare (2019) reports that in developed countries like Finland, Denmark, and the United States of America, an education specialist is required to possess a Master of Education degree or doctoral degree (Lahtero & Kuusilehto, 2015). Furthermore, Lahtero and Kuusilehto (2015) acknowledge that Finland has successfully adopted a master degree as an entry-level for educators in the profession. The initiative by the South African Public Service and Administration on the Occupation Specific Dispensation (OSD) in 2007 was designed to address such discrepancies, improve quality education, and improve the government's ability to attract and retain skilled employees, through increased remuneration (OSD, 2007). This is to set a standard in teacher quality education, thus, the minimum entry requirements for the post level one educator were raised to M+4, consequently raising promotion requirements in the career path of educators. For example, Senior Education Specialist and Deputy Chief Education Specialist would be required to hold a four-year qualification (M+4) and honours degree in education. Whereas Chief Education Specialist will be expected to hold M+4 and Master degree in the appropriate field. OSD was accepted in part and therefore this deliberation /dispensation was rejected.

3. Benefits of Promotion

Steven (2010) opines that promotion opportunities in an organization promote personal development among educators to enhance their interest and job satisfaction in the department. Similarly, Asim (2013) and Ekabu et al. (2018) concur that promotion opportunities increase educators' pay, stimulate job satisfaction, and promote employee retention. In a study conducted by Benjamin and Ahmad (2012) on motivational factors and employee retention in an organisation, they established that financial rewards, teacher promotional opportunities, career development opportunities as well as recognition are pivotal factors that influence employee retention. Furthermore, employers can create a promotion post to increase job quality and performance. Therefore, employers must promote suitable, qualified, well-experienced, knowledgeable, and skilful personnel to achieve the purpose of the job.

4. Advertisement of Positions for Promotion

Heathfield (2018) avers that the promotion of any employee in an organisation is an advancement or a career progression of the employee, usually from one position to another higher one on different levels and scales within the organisation. This is known as changes in status, rank or position which Prasad (2003) postulates that the promotion process is an internal human resource mobility. Office-based promotion posts are advertised in Human Resource Circular and it is distributed to all schools and educational institutions in the province. They are also advertised on the provincial website as well as local newspapers.

5. Promotion Procedures

Procedural fairness of promotion exercise is governed by several principles and prescripts such as Constitution of the RSA, Labour Relation Act No 66 of 1995 (LRA), Employment Equity Act (EEA) of 1998 and the Employment of Educators Act (EEA) No 76 of 1998 as amended (ELRC, Collective Agreement 1 of 2010). These prescripts provide guidelines on how appointments and promotions should be handled in a fair and harmonious procedure. LRA No 66, section 186 (2) (a) (1995) defines unfair labour practice as an act or omission that occurs between the employer and the employee concerning unfair conduct by the employer's decision regarding the promotion process. Unfair promotional practices lead to demotivation, low output, indiscipline and absenteeism among staff members to punish the employer (Heinrich, 2019).

6. Theoretical Framework

The study adopts McClelland's Needs Theory, also known as Three Needs Theory as the theoretical framework to underpin the phenomenon. The theory, developed by David McClelland, an American Psychologist was proposed as a motivational model in 1960. The theory provides an understanding of how the needs for achievement, power and affiliation influence the actions of an individual. McClelland argues that regardless of age, sex, race, or culture, everyone's needs are being driven by the Three Needs Theory. McClelland posits that the specific needs of an individual are acquired and shaped over time through experiences in life. Individuals apply for senior positions because they need achievement, power and affiliation. The rationale for this theory in the study is the position of McClelland, that the need for achievement, power and affiliation significantly influence the actions of an individual from a managerial perspective (Osemeke & Adegboyega, 2017). These are:

(i) Need Achievement

Osemeke and Adegboyega (2017) argue that the need for achievement is the drive to excel, to achieve, with a set of standards to strive to succeed. They further state that achievement is the act of performing, obtaining, or accomplishing. An individual with a need for achievement prefers to work on a task with moderate difficulty and their results are based on their efforts rather than luck. McClelland affirms that individuals with a high need for achievement, perform better than those with a moderate or low need for achievement, and noted regional, national differences in achievement motivation (Osemeke & Adegboyega, 2017). This implies that the educators are motivated by accomplishment in the workplace and employment hierarchy with promotional positions

(ii) Need for Affiliation

The need for affiliation for each individual is driven by motivation from his life experiences and the opinion of his culture that influences the workplace. McClelland also submits that those in top management positions should have a high need for power and a low need for affiliation. They enjoy being part of the group and have a strong desire to feel loved and accepted. Education leaders need to possess this kind of motivation since they need to gain acceptance, attention and support from their subordinates and also provide the same. These people favour collaboration over competition and do not prefer high risk and high uncertainty situations.

(iii) Need for Power

Daft (2010) in his study asserts that the need for power is the desire to influence or control others, being responsible to others, and having authority over them. Teachers who are strongly power-motivated are driven by the desire to influence, teach, or encourage others. They work hard and place a high value on discipline. Thus, a person motivated by this need enjoys status recognition, winning arguments, competition, and influencing others. Teachers apply for office-based positions because they want status recognition and high salaries. They are concerned with making an impact on others, the desire to influence others, the urge to change people, and the desire to make a difference in life (Sinha, 2015). According to McClelland (1965), a person's need for power can be one of two types, namely; personal and institutional. Those who need personal power want to direct others, whereas those who need institutional power want to organize the efforts of others to achieve the goals of an institution (Acquah, 2017).

To complement and give support to the weaknesses of the three needs theory, the expectancy theory is integrated to strengthen it (Vroom, 1964). Fudge and Schlacter (1999) view expectancy theory as a process theory of motivation, in which motivation is a function of individuals' perceptions of their environment and the expectations they hope for, based on these perceptions. This means that the individual will act in a particular way because he is motivated to choose such action, over others due to what he expects the result of his chosen behaviour to be. To contextualise the theory to the study, some educators chose to further their studies because they believe the high qualifications will accelerate their promotion or mar their chances of promotion. Expectancy theory identifies three components namely, effort-performance expectancy (EP), performance-outcome expectancy (PE), and valences (V).

The effort performance expectancy (E1) is the perceived probability that an effort will lead to performance (or E- P). For instance, an educator believes that when he acquires higher qualifications, he improves his knowledge and skills necessary for the job, he will be promoted to higher ranks (Louw, 2020). The performance outcome expectancy (instrumentality) is the belief that an employee will be rewarded if the performance expectation is met. This explains why, when an educator receives his higher degree, he expects to be rewarded with a form of a promotion. Valence is the degree to which an individual values a particular reward (Fudge et al., 1999). In this case, it means the educator values the promotion he receives based on his additional higher qualifications. Thus, the rank and reward associated with the promotion must be cherished by an educator.

7. Methodology

The study is situated in the interpretive paradigm to understand the context of office-based educators' appointments in South Africa, with in-depth lived experiences of the participants (Cohen, Manion & Morisson, 2007). The qualitative study engaged the purposively selected participants in a semi-structured face-to-face interview to collect data on the promotion requirements for office-based appointments. The use of the interview guide enables the researchers to explore answers to the research questions from the participants (Doody & Noonan, 2013). Purposive sampling was used to select 10 educator-participants from 10 different schools, whose qualities or experiences were appropriate for the study among the study population of KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa (Bradshaw, Atkinson, & Doody, 2017). Therefore, only experienced, postgraduate educators who on several attempts have applied for office-based educator positions were selected. The rationale for the adoption of purposive sampling was its ability for better matching of the sample to the aims and objectives of the study, which improves the rigour and trustworthiness

of the data and results (Campbell, Greenwood, Prior, Shearer, Walkem, Young, Bywaters & Walker, 2020). Data collected were audio-recorded with the permission of the participants, coded to generate themes for presentation and discussion of findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Pseudonyms were used in the presentation of excerpts from the participants to protect their identity and ensuring confidentiality and anonymity. Hence, the data analysis method was thematic data analysis.

8. Results

The results obtained from the data were presented as following in a discourse analysis based on the generated key themes from the transcripts.

Shortlisting, interviews and recommendation

Findings from the participants revealed that many of the participants had applied for an Office-based position in the past, some were shortlisted, interviewed, and only a few were recommended for the appointments as indicated in the following excerpts:

"I applied for a Deputy Chief Education Specialist more than ten times, only shortlisted six times and I was never considered for appointment." (P3).

"Yes, I have applied for several times, shortlisted, interviewed but have not been appointed. I have applied for several positions, some of which include: Deputy Chief Education Specialist, Chief Education Specialist, and Circuit Manager Position." (P7).

Some other participants also corroborated by explaining that they applied for office-based educators' positions but were not shortlisted as follows:

"Yes, I applied for being a subject advisor for Mathematics, GET. I was not shortlisted. (P2).

"Yes, I applied for the Deputy Education Specialist Posts. I was not shortlisted in any and I do not know the reasons why I was not shortlisted." (P6).

Findings from these participants established that communication is only limited to shortlisted applicants as well as the placed applicants. This makes it difficult for the applicants to speculate the reasons for not being shortlisted.

Suitability of candidates for the position

The participants highlighted their suitability for the advertised positions which they applied for, but could not understand why they were deemed not suitable by the Department of Education. In their view, they met the requirements for the positions they applied for. The participants had these to say:

"I met all the requirements for the post. On top of that, I had a Master's degree in English" (P4).

"I met all the requirements of all posts, I hold a PhD degree in Education- the highest qualification in the world. I have 29 years of teaching experience. I have gone through all management positions in schools and I am currently the principal of the school for more than 14 years." (P7).

Most of the participants claimed they all had postgraduate degrees ranging from honours to doctoral degrees and 15-29 years' experience far above the benchmark of a three-year qualification (REQV 13) and three to nine years of teaching experience at the time of their application.

Adequacy of promotion requirements as it applies to Qualifications and experience

Most of the participants viewed that promotion requirements regarding the qualification requirements of the minimum requirement of a three-year qualification including a teaching profession, M+3 or REQV13 are inadequate. In unison, participant P1 agreed that a higher qualification is necessary for appointment to any specialist position:

"Not at all. Teaching is a mother profession, it requires highly educated people. An office-based position is a leadership position; therefore, a leader must also lead in all spheres of life. He/she must be far above the people whom he/she leads. These requirements are not relevant even for the first-time employment." (P1)

Participant P1 asserted that there is a discrepancy and inadequacy in the promotion requirements or criteria in both provincial and national education departments. According to him, the senior Education Specialist post is a support and advisory post. The incumbent who holds a diploma in education cannot be a specialist and cannot support and advise an academic or postgraduate. One well-experienced participant who is a school principal responded as follows:

“The number of years assigned to each post level is not enough, for example, in three years one is still trying to acclimatise himself to teaching content, methods, assessments as well as the teaching and learning environment. Advising and managing people requires accumulation of knowledge and skills over some time.” (P5).

Participant P5 agreed that three years of teaching experience is inadequate for the promotion of an education specialist. They advised that the candidate has not yet accumulated adequate knowledge, skills, and expertise in such a very short period.

The rationale for keeping low qualifications

The participants were not satisfied with what the promotion requirements for teachers are as they are today. Participant P7 had these to say:

“These requirements were a compromise reached between the government and the teacher unions. The unions felt that therefore mentioned requirements were not fair to their members, particularly blacks who were historically disadvantaged from possessing degrees. (P7).

Some of the participants agreed with the use of the lowest qualification so that many educators would be given a chance to apply to these posts. According to Participant P6:

“It is because the unions want them to be like this. The DBE came out with OSD in 2007 to address this issue. However, unions partially accepted OSD and drifted some issues like this one. The unions, especially SADTU which is the largest union in the Bargaining Council, deliberately denied the issue of raising the promotion requirements because it had evaluated the qualifications of its membership and most of their office barriers were below the required levels. That would mean that their office barriers would not get senior positions in the department.” (P6).

The findings revealed that unions pushed for the lowest qualification because they felt their members would be disadvantaged, especially blacks who had the lowest qualifications because of apartheid policies. Therefore, a three-year diploma was regarded as adequate. Furthermore, the findings revealed that the Department of Basic Education wanted to address the issue of promotion criteria through the implementation of Occupation Specific Dispensation (OSD) in 2007. However, the unions refused and partly accepted OSD with some sections excluded. Participants felt that promotion requirements are as they are today because the unions wanted to accommodate their office bearers, most of whom were found to be in this category (M+3).

Reform or maintain the status quo

Most of the participants unanimously agreed that promotion requirements need to change to ensure fairness, equity, and quality education. Participants tabled their responses as follows:

“These promotion requirements should now be changed because the promotion of teachers without relevant skills and qualifications creates a dysfunctionality in education and hinders the efficiency and speed improvement of the education system in South Africa.” (P8).

“I recommend a change because an office-based educator post is a specialist position and requires specialised knowledge. A specialist is expected to hold not the lowest but the highest qualification.” (P4).

“They need to change, for our profession to be respected, we need to raise the standard. For an educator to be in the office, she needs to have acquired vast knowledge and expertise and has quite enough experience in the subject/field in question.” (P2).

“The requirements have to change because the responsibilities of the office-based educators are to undertake research, interpret and implement departmental policies and this could be studied at the postgraduate level.” (P1)

The findings revealed that office-based positions such as Senior Education Specialist, Deputy Chief Education Specialist, or Chief Education Specialist positions require specialised knowledge, skill, and expertise to advance the departmental programmes as per post level. The findings further revealed that the diploma holder lacks the necessary capacity, knowledge, and skills (especially research skills).

A single basket for all

The participants were asked whether the promotion requirements for the office-based educator posts could be the same or different from that of school-based educator posts. The findings depict that the promotion requirements for the office-based educator should be different from school-based educators. Some of the participants had these to say:

“The candidate who was preferred over me had a Secondary Teacher Diploma and I had a Master’s degree in English. He became a Senior Education Specialist in English without further training in the subject and my English advisor for that matter.” (P9)

“They must be different; the promotion requirements of an office-based educator must be higher than those of a school-based educator.” (P10).

“They must differ; office-based educators have a much broader responsibility. Educators based in the office are dealing with professionals, curriculum, and training of teachers. Therefore, they need relevant skills to effectively and efficiently support and manage professionals.” (P1).

From the above expressions, some participants felt that the two categories are operating at different levels and should be treated separately with different promotion criteria. School-based educators are mainly concerned with teaching learners according to CAPS and educational objectives of the school system (Ajani, 2021), whereas office-based educators are supporting and supervising educators. The findings highlighted the need for office-based educators to be more qualified than their subordinate school-based educators.

Aspirations of participants

The question wanted to ascertain whether participants would be still interested in applying for office-based positions, should they be advertised in future. The findings revealed that the majority of participants were exhausted, disinterested, and reluctant to apply in the future. They had these to say:

“No, I am really tired. Even if I apply, I would not be recommended. Our recruitment system is characterised by politics, corruption, and nepotism. For someone to be recommended as an office-based educator, the post needs to be a SADTU office-bearer or a relative of “Adults” or politicians. As a ‘common’ member of SADTU I will not be recommended for appointment, only office bearers and active politicians are considered.” (P4)

“No. I have tried enough. I will not be recommended because all animals are equal but some are more equal than others.” (P7).

Although most of the participants depicted dissatisfaction and exhaustion about the promotion processes, especially the well-experienced and well-qualified ones, some were still interested and would embrace the chance of applying for office-based positions. Here are some of their responses:

“Yes, I would apply because I am still willing to apply my knowledge and skills acquired over a long period as an academic.” (P2).

Academic performances

Some participants posited that the academic performance of an applicant needs to be taken into consideration when appointing educators in higher positions. Participant P10 had this to say:

“Academic performance is important, I would suggest that the department should also include it as one of the criteria. Two of my colleagues’ principals were promoted to Circuit Management positions, while they were principals, and their school had been underperforming below a 20% margin for several years and my school achieved 100%. They had to come back to supervise and support our school. What kind of supervision and support would you expect to be provided by such poor Circuit Managers?” (P10)

Thus, the criteria for promotion in terms of academic performance and behaviour are disregarded in promoting teachers in South Africa, as a result, the department promotes people who cannot deliver.

Procedural Fairness

Some participants had mixed feelings about the promotion process being regarded as procedural fair and just. The finding showed that the promotion process is not fair and just. Some of the participants revealed that the process is infiltrated by political and union influence, nepotism, and bribery, as they expressed:

“Politics play a major role in the promotion of teachers. Some office-based educators were recommended for appointment by politicians, including unions in alliance with the ruling party.” (P3)

“Politics play an important role in deploying their members for appointments, which also negatively impact on education service delivery because people in positions are incompetent and will not recommend more competent people than themselves in the future.” (P4).

"There is no fairness here, you are promoted because you are a politician, a friend, a relative, a unionist or you have paid a price." (P2)

9. Discussion

The Employment of Educators' Act No.76 of 1998, defines 'adequately qualified' for the appointment of teachers in public schools, as a three-year post-school qualification (Matric+3 years training) which included appropriate training as a teacher (DoE, 1998). However, it has been amended to a four-year post-school qualification (M+4) as set out in the National Policy Framework for Teacher Education (DoE, 2006). Whereas a three-year post-school qualification (M+3) is still regarded as the appropriate requirement for promotion to any higher position in the department. The requirements for promotion were deliberately set very low to cater for historically disadvantaged educators who were trained in colleges of education in the homelands. These educators would be disadvantaged by setting high promotion requirements in the past so a compromise was reached.

However, the study revealed that these low requirements are outdated and they have been in existence for almost three decades. Any educator who wanted to improve his qualifications could have done so in the past three decades. Participants in this study are a living testimony, their qualifications range from a Bachelor of Education Honours Degree to Doctoral Degree as the highest qualification. Felstead, Bishop, Fuller, Jewson, Unwin and Kakavelakis, (2007) and Gamble, (2009) are of the idea that career-minded individuals from the outset actively seek out workplace development. Furthermore, they claim that those who do not buy into the ideology of meritocratic career advancement through continual investment in lifelong learning are characterised by management as on the lower end of a three-way categorisation of workers as 'self-starters, unaware or disinterested (Gamble, 2009). Office-based educator posts are supervisory and supportive positions, therefore educator's wishing to pursue leadership are supposed to have invested in lifelong learning.

The current promotion process revolves around the minimum qualification level and experience. The actual qualifications the candidate possesses are less important and is seen in passing, what matters is whether the candidate has Matric and a three-year post-matric qualification (M+3). Equally, the same experience does not count much what count is whether you have the required number of years, the actual years in the department are seen in passing.

Higher qualifications and longer service in the department do not put one in a better position for appointment as one expert. When individuals pursue higher degrees, they do so with aspirations for self-development, increased promotion possibilities, and high earnings. This statement is aligned with expectancy theory which says people join organisations with certain expectations (Kanwetuu, Brenyah & Obeng, 2020). They hoped that through acquiring the highest qualifications their promotion expectations would be met, thereby satisfying their personal needs as postulated in the needs theory. The study revealed that this is not the case with the education department, as result educators are reluctant to improve their qualifications because higher qualifications neither qualify them for promotion nor earn high salaries. They are doing it just for their personal development. Everyone is solely concerned with meeting the mediocre minimums. Davis and Moore (1945) argued that for society to function there had to be a system of unequal rewards. It is the ability to access a higher reward that encourages individuals to put in the extra effort. They believe in social stratification, which is a system of unequal rewards that promote or facilitate excellence, productivity, and efficiency, thus giving people something to strive for.

According to Davis and Moore (1945), rewarding more important work with higher levels of income, prestige, and power encourages people to work harder and longer. One of the problems highlighted by participants regarding the promotion process is the unfairness in the promotion process. They complained about preferential hiring practices based upon friendship, relatives, union or political affiliation and selling and buying of posts. The current authors concur with Sitati, Were and Waititu (2016) and Kanwetuu, Brenyah, and Obeng (2020) who in their studies found that when the promotion is not done on a fair and equitable basis, it is likely that employees will quit and sought green pastures While a fair and equitable distribution of promotion, results in employee retention and excellent performance. In cases where they remain in the system, they become demotivated which results in poor performance and dysfunctional schools. Emerged from the discussion was the additional criteria, that is, academic performance (merit) participants deemed necessary. It was evident that poor-performing individuals are continually being promoted to senior positions resulting in staggering service delivery and poor performance of circuits and districts, as a result, hard-working teachers are demotivated by such unfair practices and exit the system or even remain in the system unproductive.

10. Conclusion

The current research aimed to explore the perceptions of educators regarding the adequacy of promotion requirements for the appointment of office-based educators in the basic education department. The findings showed that the promotion requirements for the appointment of office-based educators are inadequate and were deliberately set low to address the inequalities of the past. However, it cannot remain like that forever, the department needs to take charge and address it. Therefore, the study recommends that the qualification requirements be raised and aligned to the seniority of the position in question. Office-based educators as education management must possess high levels of education and experience to ensure the provision of quality education. Furthermore, academic performances (merits) must be included as one of the criteria for promotion to the office-based position and this will enhance service delivery in the department. People who were successful in their previous positions can positively influence their subordinates and are successful in their new workplace.

11. Recommendations

The study highlighted some dysfunctional issues as raised by the participants in the appointment of office-based educators. Hence, the researchers recommend the following:

- All qualified candidates should be given fair treatment in the selection and appointment of office-based educators by the Department of Education.
- Feedback should be communicated to the candidates who could not be promoted or appointed to any advertised position. This will enable them to know where they need to improve on for the next application.
- The Department of Basic Education should endeavour to be fair in the selection of qualified candidates based on merit and not politically influenced by union members or politicians.
- The educators should also ensure they attain all the minimum requirements that can enhance their selection for the appointments.

12. Limitations

This study was limited to only ten educators who were qualified and applied for the office-based educator appointments. Hence, the findings cannot be generalised for the whole province or country. The researchers recommend further large scale studies to obtain in-depth and comprehensive results from a province or the country at large.

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