

LACK OF SERVICE DELIVERY IN THE FORM OF QUALITY TEACHING AND THE SECONDARY SCHOOL LEARNER MIGRATION

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ABSTRACT

The paper critiques how persistent under-delivery of some secondary schools, orchestrate and trigger learner migration to better performing schools. The paper is both conceptual and empirical in nature. Document study and interviewing techniques were used to collect data from three selected secondary schools in one of the Districts of Limpopo Province. Research participants from whom data were generated included the school governors, members of the Representative Council of Learners and the School Management Team members. Research findings reveal that firstly, continuous excellent learner results, market a school. Secondly, that no single learner ever resists any good lesson in a school. Thirdly, that in any school, its learners serve as its own fundamental and dependable ambassadors in the wider community. Fourthly, that every school holds a key for its own greatness. As part of the conclusion, the researcher recommends that current public secondary school managers need to be instructional leaders par excellence, to continue to make their educational institutions schools of choices. Such a shift of focus and operation, is likely to enable schools to have a sustainable edge over their educational competitors.

Keywords: Context, Hurdle, Principles, Priority, Structure.

1. INTRODUCTION

Learners populating schools are normally not born and bred in schools. They are sourced from a society. The circle is completed when upon graduation, such learners get back to their societies to render a service. Thus, the connectivity between schools and a society is undisputable. No talk of a school to the total exclusion of a society and vice versa (Arden, 2013:16). When learners conduct themselves when at schools, they would largely be mirroring their

own society. The opposite applies. On the basis of the preceding argument, it makes absolute sense to expect the society to play an irreplaceable role in the affairs of a school. In case a school under-delivers in its mandate of dispensing knowledge, a society has every right of knowing why and how best to mediate. The relationship between a school and a society dates back to time immemorial. A society has a capability of perennially and perpetually keeping a school functional and as a high performing institution. That occurs when classroom teachers are revolutionaries' par excellence (Allen, 2014:33). This will be conspicuous when with lessons delivered to learners inside classrooms, teachers' instructional proficiency is being coupled with managerial acumen to assist in creating a memorable and a theatrical classroom interaction between all the stakeholders. Where the society has an indispensable partnership with schools, there will be a little space for schools to underachieve. The active involvement of a society in the affairs of a school ascertains that not a single learner inside a classroom experiences a lethargic teaching in an uninspiring learning environment (Olivier, 2012:56). A scenario where there are learners who do not value schooling or who have been conditioned to failure other than to success, will not be there. This explicitly suggests that the active involvement of a society in a school is even likely to rehabilitate all teachers there to be averse to institutional underperformance (Horowitz, 2014:10). In addition, the active participation of a society in the affairs of a school, keeps teachers awake to never ignoring learner heterogeneity in class. Societal participation emphasises that every learner ultimately mirrors her own teacher. For instance, where teachers have made a transition from educational mediocrity to educational excellence, learners will reciprocate (Mentz & van Zyl, 2016:79). Furthermore, societal involvement reminds that nothing replaces the quality teacher-learner relations as one of the bedrocks of institutional performance. Schools sow a culture and tradition of refusing to

settle for less than the best for the sake of learners entrusted to them. It will not be a mountain to climb for schools in turning a new leaf from institutional under-delivery to a high delivering school, with the support of a society to schools.

The critical role of a society in the affairs of a school becomes even more explicit where a school is helped to develop a bounce-back philosophy as a result of the support received from a society. This is a philosophy that enables a school to set its own operational structures, systems and processes that are sustainable enough to facilitate self-recovery in an event where in one year a school under-performed. Societal partnership could be summed up through noting that it is a society that can make the commodity called schooling to sell as best as in the past with the crop of learners populating schools. With the society alongside learning institutions, schools could resurrect their stuttering performance (Templar, 2015:94). A genuine and goal-directed partnership of a school and society enables collaboration in creating a harmonious atmosphere that could turn a school into a great institution. The partnership enlightens an educational institution to the reality that no school, is created for under-delivery and failing of learners. The connectivity emphasises that schooling challenges faced, however herculean they could be, would be surmounted. That would enable a society and a school to represent progress and no longer educational decadence (Nyangia & Orodho, 2014:77).

Hofstee (2010:107) advises that a research topic is not synonymous to a research problem. Noting that, the problem of this paper is critiquing how learner migration is ascribed to the absence of quality teaching and learning in some schools. A plethora of literature reviewed, confirms that a school that persistently underachieves is likely to lose learners to another school that continuously performs. This therefore, implies that underperformance by a school constitutes a disservice to its stakeholders (Shamase, 2016:33). The research questions addressed in this paper are anchored on the Complexity Leadership Theory (de Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delpont 2011:313). Those research questions are as follow: What prevent teachers from offering quality teaching to learners despite their adequate years of teaching experience and impressive teacher qualifications they possess? What are the ideas, concerns and aspirations of school governors and school management team members regarding the migration of learners from their school to other schools?

2. THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Complexity Leadership Theory (CLT) undergirds this paper. Since this paper is conceptual, empirical and qualitative in nature, the Complexity Leadership Theory was partnered with the qualitative research approach. A research question such as "in what way could under-delivery of secondary schools be opposed and defeated irrespective of the stakeholder orchestrating that under-delivery", could at best be researched through the guidance of the Complexity Leadership Theory (de Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Deiport, 2011:313). The theory reminds that Education Departments across the globe are faced with rapidly changing interactions, policies, regulations, technologies and effects of globalisations in the realm of educational practices. As such, Departments of Education find themselves having to lead in the development of strategies and other interventions that are complexity-driven within the complexity-generative scenarios. The fact that Departments of Education throughout the world were not established solely to curb and combat institutional ineffectiveness in the form of under-delivery by secondary schools, makes the application of the Complexity Leadership Theory the most appropriate theory for current school dynamics and ecologies. This theory is not grounded on bureaucratic structures like other theories. Of peculiar nature about this theory, is that it is grounded on sophistication and complexity (Mouton, 1996 & Coveney, 2003).

The issue of some secondary schools under-delivering is not as simple as it appears. Given the type and nature of teachers and learners operating in classrooms, it requires a complex theory that resonates with the current schooling sophistication. The theory enables schools to contend with constant complexities due to the rapidly changing realm of educational practices. Issues of teaching and learning are complex in the sense that they involve who teaches? Who is being taught? What is being taught? What is the manner of delivering the subject matter and how is the teacher received by learners inside and outside a classroom? As things stand, today's schools require a certain level of complexity to oppose and defeat challenges experienced in schools in their mandate of dispensing knowledge. Current school ecologies, are knowledge-based (Uhl-Bien, Marion & Mckelvey, 2007). Such knowledge has to be dispensed to learners by teachers being generated within and outside schools. Through innovative means, knowledge has to be adapted to each school's classroom ecology and its

own learners. As such, knowledge is fast becoming the main commodity and the swift-paced generation of that knowledge and novelty becomes fundamental to the survival of schools. Complexity Leadership Theory enables schools in their process of delivering knowledge, to adapt their level of complexity so that it is commensurate to the ecologies in which those schools operate. Despite myriad challenges which schools face in their process of rolling out curriculum, they demand proportionate changes to ensure they stay afloat.

It takes complexity to defeat complexity. Complexity Leadership Theory ascertains that schools possess complexity equivalent to that of its environment in order to function effectively (McKelvey & Boisot, 2003). The Complexity Leadership Theory enabled the researcher to frame the paper as well as making meaning from the whole assertion of fallacious notions of under-delivery of secondary schools being ascribed either to teachers or to learners. The theory emphasises the importance of understanding and validating interpretations in their own contextual terms instead of stressing the need to verify interpretations against an "objective" world. The Complexity Leadership Theory allowed the researcher to learn the purpose of individual actors and social meanings that they share with each other in the process of teaching and learning. Much of the scholastic under-delivery by public secondary schools, is wrongfully attributable to either teachers or pupils. The Complexity Leadership Theory stresses that the traditional pattern that teachers teach, learners learn and administrators manage, is completely altered, to reflect the 21st century, where all stakeholders in a school, become lifelong learners.

Khanare (2008:37) cautions that these days teaching is about touching the souls of learners. This signifies that whoever teaches without reaching out at the souls of learners under her tutelage, could face antagonisms. Every teacher has to value the individuality of every learner as a precondition for quality teaching and learning that touches a learner's soul. Khumalo (2011:8) disputes the fallacious notion that it is learners in secondary schools who create institutional under-delivery and then learner migration. This is visible with his remarks to the effect that "do not try to fix learners, fix teachers". He proceeds to disclose that a good teacher makes a poor learner good and a good learner superior.

Davidoff & Lazarus (1997:16) articulate that in the 21st century, with the type of pupils populating

schools, it cannot be business as usual for teachers. This suggest that being guided by the Complexity Leadership Theory, the present day teachers have to lead with their hearts and excel with their souls when with current pupils. Apart from advising schools to always consider the complexity of their ecologies of operation, this theory warns schools to be involved in a renewal process. A school that operates along the Complexity Leadership Theory, is likely to take the concept of renewal very seriously such that learners there could as well be inspired and stimulated to remain teachable. The manner in which a school is structured, with systems and processes followed there, could emit an impression that pupils there are nuisance to the proper functioning of an institution and the production of brilliant learner results. That is no different from when a school succeeds and survives in projecting all its learners and teachers to be star performers of note. This suggests that some notions either correct or fallacious which members of the public have of schools; it is on the basis of how those schools project themselves to the wider public.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Out of the population of twelve public secondary schools in a Circuit, three were purposively sampled. In each institution, a School Principal, an SGB Chairperson and an RCL Chairperson were interviewed. The total number of research participants amounted to nine because every school contributed three. The three schools critiqued regarding the contribution of poor quality teaching to learner migration, are being referred to as Schools A, B and C. to protect their actual identities. That the three public secondary schools were still experiencing the challenge of learner migration, was a cause for concern that triggered this in-depth study. This paper is qualitative in nature because the problem addressed is critiquing why some public secondary schools are not offering quality teaching which could be a solution to learner migration. The nature of the problem was found to be researchable along the qualitative school of thought as against the quantitative line of thinking (Dawson, 2006 & Levin, 2005). The choice of the qualitative methodology, was triggered by the utilisation of the Complexity Leadership Theory. The researcher found a need to create a synergy between that theoretical framework and the qualitative approach as the overarching research methodology (Hofstee, 2010:115). Msina (2015:24) notes that with the Complexity Leadership Theory, issues of learner migration as experienced in some public secondary schools and being ascribed

to lack of quality teaching in schools, could be better critiqued.

The theory was applied to establish why some schools allowed learner migration to occur despite being aware of its dire consequences. Amalgamating the Complexity Leadership Theory and the qualitative research approach was based on the complexity of the problem under study. The combination enabled the researcher to make an in-depth understanding of how despite many years of teaching experience accompanied by impressive teaching credentials was quality teaching not occurring. In this paper, interviewing techniques and document study were utilised to construct relevant data. All the primary and secondary documents which contained information about poor quality teaching and learner migration were studied. To corroborate and triangulate the gleaned data, interviewing was conducted with three participants in each school. Responses were audio-taped for transcription later-on. The data collection tools were helpful in terms of accessing information pertaining to how the absence of quality teaching in some public secondary schools, is behind learner migration to better performing schools (Glattham & Joyner, 2005). Content analysis and the constant comparative methods were utilised to analyse the collected data. Analysis commenced when data collection started and was concluded immediately there were indications that all the collected data was making sense and talking to the aim of the paper. Again, data analysis was done in relation to the problem which the paper is attempting to address (Maykut & Morehouse, 1999, Hlogwane, 2016:36).

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The basis of these findings is the literature studied pertaining to quality of teaching in schools and how that inhibits learner migration away from schools (Knott-Craig & Rivett, 2015:53). In addition, the basis of these findings are the analysed data which were generated through the interviewing technique and the document study (Mouton, 1996). Focusing only on the sampled schools, ought not to create an impression that they are the worse off as regards lack of quality teaching which leads to learner migration. Suffice to disclose that the choice of those schools was on the basis of the researcher having familiarised himself with issues of learner migration and lack of quality teaching there. Some of the documents containing valuable data that emerged helpful as regards quality teaching in those schools included their School Improvement Plan (SIP) and Annual

Performance Plan (APP). Reports and minutes of the meetings held that related to the status of teaching and ways to improve it, were also perused. The Complexity Leadership Theory was instrumental in the analysis of the data to ultimately emerge with the findings which are the following: Excellent learner results market a school, learners do not resist a good lesson, learners are ambassadors in the wider community, and every learner holds a key for his own greatness. The discussion of the findings would confirm that quality teaching is one of the solutions for learner migration away from one school to the other (Olivier, 2012 89). A detailed discussion of each finding follows.

4.1 Excellent Learner Results Market a School

Brilliant learner performance helps to market a school. This is being confirmed by the fact that in schools, there are difficult-to-describe-factors which normally remain uncontrollable. From time immemorial, schooling has always been a complex process. As such, it is problematic to attempt to explain and interpret performance experienced in a school to a single cause. That way of doing things demonstrates a myopic and skewed view of schooling. On the above finding, Principal 1 of School A reasons that "it cannot be true to reduce poor performance produced by some secondary schools to the door-step of lack of quality teaching alone" SGB Chairperson 1 of School C proclaims that "it does not matter how much difficult or uncontrollable secondary school pupils could be, but arguing that when there are unpleasant results, teachers alone are the cause, is not convincing". RCL Chairperson 1 of School B intimates that "as secondary school pupils, the amount of power we could be enjoying cannot justify that underachievement of a school be chargeable to our beloved teachers alone to the total exclusion of other institutional factors". What stands out from the responses of the various research participants is that learner migration of public secondary scholars, as ascribed to poor quality teaching, is more complex than many notice. The intricacy and sophistication of schooling especially in the 21st century is such that any institutional under-delivery has to be comprehended in terms of all the variables and ecologies within which that school operates and functions (Badroodien, 2015:53). Excellent learner results market a school in the form of keeping learners in one school and even attracting others to come and school in their own institution other than migrating to other schools.

4.2 Learners as Not Resisting a Good Lesson

Current teachers and learners, require a different form of engagement and interaction given their evolution (Horwitz, 2014:35). No learner resists a good lesson (Tolsi, 2016:32). Principal 1 of School B contends that "being an institutional head of the 21st century requires one to place sufficient attention to quality lesson delivery inside the classroom to avoid disasters". SGB Chairperson 1 of School C notes that "by failing to service learners well in terms of preparing and presenting inspiring lessons, teachers would head for the learner defiance". RCL Chairperson 1 of School C remarks that "anything that borders on being wishy-washy and uninspiring to learners, will instantly be resisted against". Christie, Butler & Potter (2007) advise that in order to cope with the type of learners populating schools, teachers ought not to be found wanting.

4.3 Learners as Ambassador in the Wider Community

The survival and flourishing of schools and a society is impossible when de-linked to each other (Adam, 2005:68 & Sebola, 2015). The collaboration of schools and a society could turn every school into a real societal centre of excellence (Badroodien, 2015:41). Learners remain the reliable ambassadors of their own schools in the wider community. Principal 1 of School C advises that "members of a society benefit and gain more than they lose, by involving themselves in the affairs of their own schools". SGB Chairperson 1 of School A declares that "although at times we receive an implicit resistance when involving ourselves in the business of schooling, we know that this strengthens schools to provide quality schooling". RCL Chairperson 1 of School A consents that "without the societal participation in the business of teaching and learning, learners would remain burdensome to teachers and the image of a school could ground in the society". These findings emphasises how much schools and a society belong together (Union of South Africa, 1945:156).

4.4 Every School Holds a Key for its Own Greatness

Success and failure of every school resides in that school's teaching and learning classrooms (Xaba, 2004:314 & Tsheola, 2002). On the expressed point Principal 1 of School A asserts that "upon ensuring

that every minute of schooling is put to good use by school members, results produced will be a source of marvel and jubilation". SGB Chairperson 1 of School A concedes that "every school could surprise itself with the nature of results it produces, by learning to do things differently in line with conditions in its own school". RCL Chairperson 2 of School C emphasises that "each school that sticks to its plan of yielding magnificent learner results, will achieve wonders to the amazement of critics". All the responses remind that every school possesses a capability to perform beyond its measure (Hean & Tin, 2008:75 & Samier, 2008:7).

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Some circuits in Capricorn District of Limpopo Province have secondary schools suffering from learner migration owing to lack of quality teaching. This is untenable and could make it difficult for the affected secondary schools to overturn their experienced perennial underperformance. This is a threat to overcome to salvage the future of learners. Considering that this paper only focused on one Education Circuit of Capricorn District, in Limpopo Province, it is vital that similar studies be carried out in other Circuits of this District or beyond, to establish the spread or severity of learner migration as ascribed to lack of quality teaching in schools. This could assist immensely in terms of determining how best to respond to it. Furthermore, the researcher recommends that learner migration need not be allowed to flourish because of its unpleasant consequences such as teacher rationalisation and redeployment. There is a need to determine from other Circuits how they deal with this problem of learner migration. This could enable the researched Circuit to be up to date on the progress and success made in containing learner migration. Finally, the researcher recommends that further studies be undertaken on this problem of lack of quality teaching and learner migration.

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