



ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF EDUCATIONAL RATIONALISATION AND REDEPLOYMENT POLICY: INSIGHTS FROM PRINCIPALS

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Abstract

This paper explores the ramifications of rationalisation and redeployment policy as principals implement it in public schools. The research involved interviewing nine principals as managers of the rationalisation and redeployment process. Data for this study was collected using semi-structured interviews and document reviews. Data analysis and synthesis generated several themes that were presented thematically through content analysis. The findings indicate that, on occasion, teachers who lack the necessary skills to meet the expectations of their profession are often assigned unqualified educators through rationalisation. The presence of ineffectual educators can have an adverse impact on educational outcomes, particularly disadvantaging underprivileged learners who are left without an educator because of educators' reluctance to relocate.

Keywords: *personnel administrative measures, rationalisation, redeployment*

1. INTRODUCTION

There is a primary concern about rationalisation and redeployment of teachers in South Africa, as they cause substantial disruptions and become a major source of frustration for school principals. The purpose of the rationalisation and redeployment policy is to achieve equity in public schools by redistributing resources and educators from areas where there is an oversupply (Mestry & Ndhlovu, 2014). This policy aims to address disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes by ensuring that resources and teaching staff are allocated more fairly across different schools or regions. The underlying idea is to provide all learners, regardless of their location, with access to a high-quality education, and to reduce inequalities that may result from resource imbalances. Such policies are often implemented to promote a more equitable and just education system. It is crucial to promptly tackle the issue that arises each year as a result of fluctuations in learners' enrolment when implementing the policy. Another trend in redeployment could be an increase in learner enrolment and a decrease in the number of educators due to attrition.

This paper explores the ramifications of rationalisation and redeployment policy in South African schools as principals implement it in public schools. At the beginning of every year, schools receive a post-establishment from the Head of the Department (HOD) which informs schools of the number of educators that should be appointed for that year. The rationalisation and redeployment of educators in schools has been extensive and varied. The redeployment of teachers from the school is a result of a decreased number of students and the lack of teachers with the same skill sets at other schools. Teachers are recruited and retained in schools based on the educator-learner ratio (Muremela et al., 2023). Redeployment can have various ramifications, and the emotional struggles that come with working in an unfamiliar environment can create fear among educators. Overcrowding in the classroom and shortage of educators, the number of subjects taught per grade, and departmental accountability are other causes of redeployment (Mashaba & Maile, 2018; Thaba-Nkadimene, & Mmakola, 2020). Considering the significant role that teacher attrition plays in school staffing, it is crucial to address the issue of redeployment in order to mitigate its impact (García et al, 2022). However, it seems that school principals employ this policy to fulfil their individual requirements. Principals and learners are negatively impacted when educators relocate in the middle of the school year, disrupting teaching and learning. Principals are expected to drive these changes at schools despite resistance from educators and unions (Grobler et al., 2017). The study's main objective is to analyse the impact of rationalisation and redeployment policy in South African Schools. In particular, the study intends to:

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- Evaluate the destabilisation caused by rationalisation and redeployment.
- Review the manner in which principals implement the policy.
- Determine if the policy is susceptible to manipulation.

Theoretical Framework

The study was framed by the social justice theory, which promotes the ideals of fairness and equity for all. According to Lee (2023), social justice encompasses various concepts, such as fairness, equality, equal opportunities, proactive measures, and, in contemporary contexts, diversity. Social justice involves taking action to restore, uphold and promote equity, equality and fairness as fundamental human rights within educational practices (Mafora, 2013). Theoharis (2007) advocates for a social justice approach characterised by respect, care, recognition and empathy. It is crucial that when carrying out rationalisation and redeployment in schools, the innate dignity of educators as individuals should be upheld and protected. Furman (2012) proposes that leadership for social justice entails the elimination of oppressive and unjust practices and their replacement with culturally appropriate, equitable ones. In this study, social justice leadership is defined according to the framework put forth by Gewirtz (1998) and Goldfarb and Grinberg (2002), who collectively emphasise that social justice concerns issues of marginalisation. Educators often find themselves marginalised and facing significant challenges during periods of rationalisation and redeployment within educational institutions. This article defines social justice leadership as the manner in which school principals use concepts like equity, equality, inequality, equal opportunity, affirmative action and fairness to marginalise other stakeholders in order to advance their own agenda through rationalisation and redeployment. As highlighted by Le Roux (2014), the South African education system still grapples with racial disparities in teacher education.

2. IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

Locale and Time of Study

Rationalisation and redeployment study was conducted from June to August in Mopani district, Limpopo province public schools. The Mopani District is divided into two, namely, Mopani East and Mopani West, serving most of the rural schools situated in the northeast of Limpopo province. Each district has 13 circuits serving approximately 33 schools. All public schools, whether primary or secondary, participate in the rationalisation and redeployment processes. Principals of schools, in their capacity as managers, are responsible for redeployment under the watchdog of unions and school governing bodies (SGBs).

Data Gathering

Data for this study was collected using interviews and document reviews. This research was conducted in the Mopani District, Limpopo. Out of the population of thirty-three public secondary schools in Mamaila and Sekgosese circuits (Masekgo cluster), nine principals were purposively sampled. Face-to-face interviews were conducted using semi-structured questions. The paper was qualitative in nature since the researcher wanted to analyse the impact of rationalisation and redeployment policy in South African schools.

Participants in the Study

The participants in the study comprised school principals from the Mopani East District. Nine principals whose schools had additional educators and vacant posts were recruited. The selection of participants was carried out through purposive sampling. Where there is a surplus of educators, they should be redeployed to schools with a greater need to achieve a balanced educator-learner ratio. Similarly, principals in schools with a higher demand for educators should expect to receive additional staff to address their specific needs.



Table 1: The Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Participants	Position	Gender	Highest Qualifications obtained	Years of experience as Principal	Redeployment status
P1	Principal	Male	Honours Degree	8 years	Released
P2	Principal	Male	Honours Degree	7 years	Released
P3	Principal	Female	Master's Degree	6 years	Received
P4	Principal	Male	Degree	9 years	Released
P5	Principal	Male	Honours Degree	7 years	Released
P6	Principal	Female	Honours Degree	8 years	Released
P7	Principal	Female	Honours Degree	9 years	Released
P8	Principal	Male	Degree	10 years	Received
P9	Principal	Male	Master's Degree	8 years	Received

Research Design

The study used a qualitative approach by using in-depth interviews and content analysis. The methodological underpinning of the qualitative part of this study was a case study research design, which aims to investigate a phenomenon from multiple perspectives on the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, programme or system in a 'real life' context (Demetriou, 2013; Thomas, 2016). Moreover, the implementation of a case study design allowed the researcher to conduct a comprehensive and thorough investigation of the redeployment of educators. This design facilitated in-depth exploration, allowing the researcher to delve deeply into the nuances and intricacies of the phenomenon through extended and immersive engagement with the case (Ashley, 2012).

Instrumentation

In this study, the researcher used face-to-face semi-structured interviews and document analysis to gather data from nine principals. The semi-structured interview provided the opportunity to delve into participants' perspectives and thoughts, seek clarification, and ensure that they comprehended the questions posed (Wallace & Atkins, 2012; Gray, 2014). According to Shayi (2015), an interview can be described as a reciprocal exchange in which the researcher poses questions to the participant in order to gather information about the individual's thoughts, perspectives, viewpoints and actions within a specific context. Before the interviews, each principal signed a consent form. The interviews took place in schools on the scheduled day, at a time that suited the participants. The researcher also employed document analysis to acquire valuable and pertinent information. Documents are a convenient and cost-effective resource that can be gathered more quickly than information obtained through interviews or surveys, often at little to no expense (Harber, 2010). The researcher requested the following documents related to rationalisation and redeployment in schools: minutes, management plans, post-establishment data, collective agreements, Acts and policies from the schools.

Methods of Data Analysis

The researcher employed qualitative content analysis to examine data gathered from individual interviews and documents. This method allowed the researcher to uncover both explicit and underlying themes and patterns within the text, as described by Candey (2020). The researcher systematically conducted open, axial and selective coding during this content analysis process. Subsequently, the researcher presented the results of content analysis, illustrating the emergence of codes, categories and themes. The researcher used participants' verbatim responses to the interview questions as units of meaning, which were then condensed to provide a concise summary of responses. The researcher identified codes and assigned specific meanings, followed by the development of categories based on these groupings. Ultimately, themes arose from these

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categories. Employing this rigorous and scientific approach to content analysis enhanced the trustworthiness of the study's interpretations, findings and conclusions.

Presentation and Discussion of Findings

The purpose of this study was to analyse the impact of rationalisation and redeployment policy in South African Schools from the insights of principals. Data analysis and synthesis generated several themes that were presented thematically through content analysis. As much as possible, the researcher was unbiased and did not allow positionality to influence the study. All views expressed by participants were captured verbatim.

Redeployment destabilises the schools

One of the initial challenges associated with rationalisation and redeployment, as observed by school principals, is the destabilisation of schools. When educators are transferred from one school to another, it can significantly disrupt the school's operations. This destabilisation, as noted by Tshinnane et al. (2017), can lead to disruptions in the school's day-to-day functioning, impacting aspects such as annual planning, curriculum delivery and the teaching and learning processes.

Principal 4 expressed worry regarding the timing of redeployment in the following manner: The experiences that I got in rationalisation and redeployment is that it sometimes causes destabilisation at school. The process does not come as early as January or late December. It may sometimes be done during March-April. In addition, as it causes movement, it destabilises the process in the school.

Principals expressed their apprehension about the disruption caused by mid-year redeployment on the school's operations. Schools typically start the year by carefully planning and organising responsibilities, but when teachers are initially assigned specific roles and then moved to other schools during the academic year, it disrupts the stability of the school. The primary issue revolves around the timing of redeployment, as it occurs during the school year, disrupting the planning and organisation that had been put in place.

Principal 1 emphasised that the departure of an educator has a ripple effect on teaching and learning, necessitating the revision or rescheduling of plans.

My experience has been that, quite often, the issue of rationalisation and redeployment destabilises the school in many ways. Sometimes it is the most experienced educator who is affected. Once that person leaves, you have to start afresh. At least to the destabilisations of teaching and learning as far as I am concerned

Kafu-Quvane and Magagula (2021) argue that the constant reshuffling of educators disrupts the stability of the school. When educators are redeployed, it necessitates a fresh start in terms of assigning class duties and creating a new overall schedule. Mafora and Phorabatho (2013) affirm that a yearly programme, including student admission, subject assignments and the allocation of teaching and learning resources, should ideally be completed by the end of each year to ensure a smooth start to teaching and learning on the first school day of the following year. Considering this, rationalisation and redeployment of educators can disrupt the school's organisation, particularly its programme and general timetable, especially when it occurs during the middle of the academic year. Schools are compelled to adjust their timetables when they receive new educators or lose existing ones, making long-term planning a challenging task. Furthermore, the research findings indicate that, on occasion, redeployment can negatively impact the most experienced educators, as they may be selected for redeployment, leaving students without a dedicated educator to continue their learning process.

Redeployment lowers educators' morale. Educators experience feelings of discouragement and stress when they are required to leave a school where they have devoted many years of service. Consequently, this leads to other educators feeling disheartened and hesitant to fulfil their professional responsibilities. Educators perform at their best when they are in a supportive and motivating work environment. Principals observed that relocating educators has a negative impact on their morale, further contributing to their demoralisation when they contemplate leaving an



institution where they have dedicated years of their careers. Principals made the following comments regarding the low morale of educators:

“Most of the educators feel demoralised. Even their teaching morale is so low.”

He added:

“Once educators are declared additional, they no longer take their work seriously because they know that at any time they will be leaving”.

In support of the aforementioned principal's statement, Principal 1 mentioned that educators are unhappy after being designated as additional staff members.

If an educator is affected by rationalisation and redeployment teaching matric, once that educator is declared additional, his morale goes down. Even if such an educator has to go to class, you can see that the educator is no longer active or happy because he knows he will be going at any time.

These findings suggest that once educators are declared additional, they lose hope, and their morale declines. When educators lose confidence in their sense of belonging, they often become unproductive in the classroom. There are moments when one may question the correctness of their actions and suspect that it is the reason for their marginalisation and redeployment. Only motivated educators are genuinely content and eager to provide their services efficiently and effectively. The role of an educator primarily engages the mind rather than the physical body. Therefore, if the mind is troubled, the preparation and presentation of the subject matter become challenging. Consequently, the teaching of learners is adversely affected, resulting in poor academic performance at the end of the year. Morale is seen as an emotion, a mental state and an emotional mindset, as described by Lumsden (1998). The quality of a school environment relies on the positive morale and job satisfaction of its educators, and this is most likely to occur in a supportive work setting. Energetic and dedicated educators are valuable to a school, not only because they yield favourable outcomes but also because they are loved by their learners. The process of rationalisation and redeployment in schools is viewed as something that lowers the morale of educators.

Studies have shown that the education system often prioritises the well-being of learners while overlooking the morale of the educators who provide the service (Maphalala, 2014). While this approach may seem reasonable, it is crucial to recognise that the enhancement of school performance relies heavily on the job satisfaction of educators (Shah & Jumani, 2015). Lumadi (2014) further supports this idea, indicating that contented and motivated educators are more willing to offer their services and are more productive. Principals who monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning have noticed a negative impact on additional educators. However, educators labelled as "additional" often struggle to understand why they were selected over others. Mashau and Mutshaeni (2015) confirm this, suggesting that redeployment leads to decreased morale, particularly for educators who have been at the institution for a long time. A potential interpretation of this finding is that once educators are classified as "additional," they feel marginalised, lose their sense of belonging, and become less productive in the classroom. Numerous studies have supported the conclusion that educators facing redeployment experience various negative emotions, including job insecurity, mistrust, low morale, frustration, disillusionment, demotivation, uncertainty, depression and work-related stress (De Villiers, 2016; García et al, 2022; Mafukata, 2016). It is crucial that additional educators receive therapy before being relocated to a different school.

The social justice perspective promotes the values of respect, compassion, acknowledgement, and understanding, as emphasised by Theoharis (2007). It is crucial to provide additional educators with the support and understanding they need to enhance their motivation. It is imperative that educators identified as "additional" receive comprehensive counselling, which would serve as both therapeutic and supportive assistance from the moment they are identified as such until they transition to a new school. The principals as transformational leaders have the capability to inspire and motivate additional educators. Educators declared additional are reluctant to teach. Educators who have been declared additional in post-establishment often experience prolonged delays before they can be relocated to a different school. The logistical process involves

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matching them with suitable vacant positions, which is initiated at the local level within the circuit and extends to the district and even the entire province. While awaiting their transfer, these additional educators are expected to continue teaching at their current schools until relocation. However, during this waiting period, it is suggested that they may be less inclined to teach at their present locations. This reluctance stems from the feeling that they do not truly belong there and should be elsewhere. Principal 3 suggested that educators often became restless once the schools received their post-establishment.

“The educators so affected, even before the actual declaration can be made, as long as educators know that a certain number of educators are going to leave, then they begin to jostle around to the extent that even the interpersonal relationships between educators become strenuous. Some in anticipation begin to feel that they are going to leave. In addition, when they begin to feel that way then they lose focus and concentrate on this human feeling of wanting to be safe to the extent that they compromise or even sacrifice their professionalism. If it becomes sacrificed, it becomes compromised that even some of them you have to occasionally trot them to go to class.”

The findings suggest that educators who have been declared additional and are waiting to be relocated to another school no longer perform effectively in the school where they are no longer needed. They become apprehensive about the impending move and believe they are no longer valued, leading to a negative impact on their emotions and overall attitude. This redeployment process not only contributes to educators' diminished morale but also demoralises them to such an extent that they cease to take their work seriously. This, in turn, can have significant implications for teaching and learning, particularly at the Grade 12 level where learners are preparing for their final exams. Educators declared additional become disheartened, stressed and frustrated, which ultimately affects their enthusiasm and approach to teaching. It is challenging for educators who are demoralised and demotivated to achieve good results, especially when they are aware that they might be relocated to another school at any given time.

Existing literature supports the notion that redeployment is a significant contributor to educator stress (Shumba et al, 2016). The educator's role and responsibilities involve actively participating in classroom instruction to promote meaningful learning progress that aligns with the subject and grade-level curriculum, as specified by the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) (DBE, 2022). The educator is required to teach learners for the duration of their valid contract. The process of rationalisation and redeployment aims to fill vacant teaching positions with existing additional educators. According to the redeployment policy, once an educator is classified as "additional", they must relocate to a school where their services are most urgently needed. Educators who unreasonably decline redeployment are not eligible for severance pay and are considered to have resigned, with the effective date determined by the Head of Department, as per the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) (1998).

Principal 2 described his experiences in this way:

“It affects teaching and learning. Once educators are declared additional, they no longer take their work seriously, because they know that at any time they will be leaving.”

Educators who are declared additional experience a sense of insecurity, leading them to feel disconnected from their school. This detachment often results in their growing disapproval of the school's current environment, causing them to resist providing their services. Modisaotsile (2012) supports this notion, suggesting that educators lack the commitment to continue teaching their learners in such circumstances. Tshinnane et al. (2017) further highlight that additional educators can become depressed and may even refuse to teach their learners. During the process of redeployment, these additional educators often display reluctance to work and may neglect their teaching duties while awaiting transfer. This sense of isolation and abandonment experienced by the affected educators ultimately results in a loss of motivation to continue their teaching responsibilities. As a consequence, learners suffer as classes remain untaught, and participation in extracurricular activities dwindles. The school principal ideally wishes for these educators to continue teaching, as actions indicating a lack of professionalism and dedication can adversely



affect the school's year-end results. However, in some cases, principals may hesitate to approach additional educators due to the development of hostility between the two parties. Indeed, the delay in the transfer process can be traumatising for educators waiting to be moved to another school, with some enduring months to years before being placed in a new school. Incompetent and troublesome educators are redeployed. Educators are hired based on their competence and subject matter knowledge. They are also expected to collaborate with colleagues of all levels to maintain high teaching standards, promote student progress, and improve administrative efficiency in the school (ELRC, 2016). Some individuals believe that teachers labelled as "additional" are seen as lazy, inept and bothersome, which is why they are declared additional in their schools. It is uncommon for schools to relocate their most diligent educators. This study discovered that the redeployment primarily targets educators who lack the necessary skills to meet the expectations of their profession. This sentiment summarises what he said.

“The experience that one has gathered over the years is that it is doubtful that you will receive an educator who will add value to the school regarding curriculum delivery. In most cases, educators shared off or declared additional, is an educator whom that school can survive without. And you always find that this educator wants in any respect. It might be regarding conduct; it might be regarding subject content and the ability to offer the subject matter in a manner that learners would benefit maximally from those educators. So, the kind of experience that we had over time regarding receiving educators from other schools is not a good one.”

The findings indicate that schools in need of educators are often assigned unqualified educators through redeployment. Maringe et al (2015) share this same conclusion, asserting that disadvantaged schools are unfortunately burdened with unskilled and low-quality educators, confirming the findings of this study. However, school principals bear the responsibility for their school's performance. When a school receives a redeployed educator, certain measures must be taken, including ongoing mentoring and even close supervision. This ensures that the educator understands the expected behaviour and professionalism and is familiar with the school's culture. It is essential that every learner is provided with a caring, skilled, and certified educator (Adedeji & Olaniyan, 2011).

Educators who are earmarked for redeployment are individuals whom the school deems dispensable. Empirical evidence demonstrates that inadequately skilled educators are often candidates for redeployment. Furthermore, additional educators may be earmarked for various reasons, including subpar behaviour, lack of professionalism, deficient subject knowledge and an inability to deliver effective pedagogy. The presence of ineffectual educators can have an adverse impact on educational outcomes. Incompetence refers to inability or the deliberate or unintentional failure to perform teaching duties satisfactorily, which can lead to dismissal following the proper legal procedures. During rationalisation and redeployment, schools pinpoint educators lacking competence but whose absence would not jeopardise the school's functioning. Educators who produce subpar results and exhibit a pattern of absenteeism are considered additional candidates for redeployment, as noted by Zengele & Pitsoe (2014).

Educators feel victimised when redeployed. Principals used a strategy of rationalisation and redeployment to advance their objectives. Moreover, when declaring certain educators in excess, principals used policies as a shield to dismiss those they deem ineffective and troublesome. As the rationalisation and redeployment process is initiated, educators who had strained relationships with the principals felt uneasy and apprehensive, recognising that they were vulnerable. Principal 5 agrees that redeployment is the principals' mechanism to eliminate their enemies hinting at this concern below:

In many cases, I want to tell facts. The majority of principals use emotions. If I don't want you, this is automatically a possibility, I got a chance to let you go. We have to be sober-minded and look at the curricular needs of the school, analyse the skills make sure we plan for fifteen years to come. In my view, it is not a question of skill but is a question of

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emotions and heart because we are losing it. You need to be sober; you need to be rational, and you need to be calm.

The results pertaining to this aspect indicate that principals tend to use rationalisation and redeployment as means of eliminating individuals they perceive as adversaries. Such victimisation is unlawful and considered unjust discrimination. Soudien (2001) found that as the redeployment process commences, educators develop distrust toward one another, create small groups and swiftly experience a sense of discouragement. The policy of redeployment emphasises fairness and transparency, making it subject to scrutiny by unions and oversight by the Department. Victimising educators due to personal conflicts with the principal could potentially harm even the most dedicated educators. Many educators believe that principals tend to show favouritism towards individuals affiliated with their union, ethnic background, social network, or those who unquestionably support them (Mafora, 2013). To ensure the well-being of the learners, it is crucial to retain the most effective educators in the school. The unions bear the responsibility of intervening and lodging complaints if educators face victimisation through redeployment.

4. CONCLUSION

Rationalisation and redeployment affect public schools negatively, especially the poor learners who remain without a teacher due to transfer reluctance. Likewise, a school year programme may be interrupted when the available teachers must fill the void left by those who have been redeployed. Nepotism, on the other hand, creates mistrust between the principal and the teachers. The morale of teachers deteriorates to such an extent that it even affects their outcomes at the end of the year. Rationalisation and redeployment have a detrimental impact on public schools, particularly disadvantaging underprivileged learners who may be left without an educator because of educators' reluctance to relocate. Additionally, a school year programme can be disrupted when the existing educators are compelled to step in to cover the gaps left by their departed colleagues.

Recommendations

The researcher suggests that the DBE should permit schools to establish a redeployment committee, which would include the SGB, with the aim of addressing nepotism among principals. The SGB, which currently plays a role in recommending educators for appointment, should also be involved in decisions regarding educator release due to redeployment. The DBE should consider valid reasons for exempting educators from redeployment, ensuring that educators are treated fairly and without discrimination. Factors such as advanced age, poor health and disabilities are legitimate reasons for excusing educators from redeployment. Moreover, it is recommended that additional educators receive counselling before being redeployed to another school. This measure would help reduce the stigma associated with being labelled as "additional" and, in turn, decrease resignations and reluctance to provide services.

Finally, the researcher suggests that further research should be conducted to explore the impact of educator redeployment on learners since post-establishment is done annually.

Limitations

This study has potential limitations. The research involved interviewing nine principals situated in the Mopani district of the Limpopo province. It was a case study conducted within two circuits, namely Mamaila and Sekgosese, which means that generalising the results to a broader population is not feasible. The qualitative methodology employed in this research solely reflects the perspectives of the individuals who were interviewed. A larger, quantitative study could address these limitations.

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