



EXPERIENCES OF NEWLY EMPLOYED HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS IN THE HHOHHO REGION OF ESWATINI

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ABSTRACT

Teachers are very important in the teaching and learning process as they are the ones who ensure that learners get to understand the content of the syllabus. They also play fundamental roles in the lives of learners so that they become successful in their careers. This study investigated the experiences of newly employed teachers in high schools in the Hhohho region of Eswatini. The objectives of the study were to find out views of newly employed teachers regarding classroom management, issues posed by workload, the relationship of newly employed teachers and learners, the relationship of newly employed teachers and colleagues and lastly availability of teaching resources in high schools in the Hhohho region. The study embraced a qualitative research approach method and phenomenological research design. Purposive sampling was used to select ten teachers who were in the first, second, third year of their teaching profession from Mbabane and Piggs Peak. The ten newly employed teachers in the different high schools were interviewed through a semi-structured interview guide. Content analysis was used to analyze the data in which the respondents' sentiments were categorized into five themes. It was established that newly employed teachers regarded classroom management and workload as an issue and their relationship with both their learners and their colleagues was poor, and that teaching resources were inadequate. It was concluded that newly employed teachers endured daily stress due to these experiences.

KEYWORDS: Newly employed teacher, workload, classroom management and resources.

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INTRODUCTION

The newly employed teacher is a qualified teacher who has just commenced teaching with an experience of 1-3 years. According to Frazier (2016), before the 21st century began, teacher retention or attrition was problematic. He further observed that teachers, especially newly employed teachers, continue to contribute to a trend of leaving the teaching profession at alarming rates within the first five years resulting in excessive costs to school systems and diminished instructional quality. Newly employed teachers most often are expected to teach like experienced teachers, (Melnick & Meister 2008). This is even so despite the fact that the newly employed teachers do not possess the same qualities and the know-how of an experienced teacher. The same requirements apply for both new and experienced teachers; however, the requirements are sometimes more for the newly employed teacher. This is because newly employed teachers frequently receive the most difficult teaching assignments and more teaching periods (Havnes, 2009). Accordingly, it seems the experiences of newly employed teachers are flooded with many challenges, which adversely affect their longevity in the teaching profession. As Koca (2016), stated half of the newly employed teachers leave their jobs in the first five years of their carrier around the world.

The challenges faced by newly employed vary from school related to finance related challenges. But what appears to be common globally, is that newly employed teachers face school related challenges. According to Fantilli and McDougall, (2005) in the USA, first-year teachers were stressed, lacked appropriate support, and were unprepared to handle behavioural and academic issues among learners. In Lithuania, Habil, (2017) observed that some of the daily stress for newly employed teachers were posed by the lack of support directly from administrators. In Maldives, Ali (2013) established that classroom management was the biggest issue facing newly employed teachers. The concerns of newly employed teachers in Turkey, were: survival, worrying about controlling classes, impressing administrators, and building working relationships with school personnel (Salameh, Al-Omari & Jumia'an 2011).

Studies on newly employed teachers in Eswatini are scanty, with a rare exception to the study by Dlamini (2017) that was based on challenges faced by agriculture teachers. Her findings appear to be similar to challenges faced by newly employed teachers universally. She concluded that agricultural teachers struggled with teaching resources, lesson preparation and support from the administration. However, Dlamini (2017) was not concentrating on newly employed teachers. Instead, her study intended to explore challenges faced by agriculture teachers irrespective of the number of years in the teaching profession. As such, there is a need for a study in Eswatini that is designed only for the experiences of newly employed teachers. And this study sets to investigate the experiences of newly employed teachers in high schools in the Hhohho region of Eswatini and determine if their experiences are similar to experiences of newly employed teachers globally.

Statement of the problem

It was observed that some newly employed teachers are leaving the teaching profession yearly in Piggs Peak and it is unclear as to why they are leaving this profession. This problem of newly employed teachers having



to leave the teaching profession is common in other countries. Corbell, Osborne, and Reiman, (2010) established that 20% of newly employed teachers are leaving the teaching profession within their first three years. According to Mee and Haverback (2014) newly employed teachers were leaving the teaching profession due to the lack of administrative support, and lack of mentoring. The attrition of newly employed teachers adversely affects the teaching profession. It diminishes the number of teachers gaining experience, thus causing incompetence in the teaching profession.

Studies across the world have been carried out to explore the experiences of newly employed teachers in the teaching profession, in order to address their concerns. The conducted studies such as that of Ali (2013), illustrate that there are challenges faced by newly employed teachers in schools such as nominal access to teaching resources and time available for planning their lesson. Yet, studies on the experiences of newly employed teachers are so limited in Eswatini. The reluctance in investigating the experiences of newly employed teachers might have far-reaching consequences not only on the Swazi education system but might as well pose a barrier to the economic development of the country. This is because one of the ways to destroy a country is to kill its education. Certainly, the abdication of teaching by newly employed teachers will gradually kill the Swazi education system. It was under this dilemma therefore, that an investigation of the experiences of newly employed teachers in high schools in the Hhohho region of Eswatini had to be undertaken.

Objectives of the study

To explore this problem, five objectives were established which were to:

1. Find out the views of newly employed teachers regarding classroom management in high schools in the Hhohho region.
2. Examine issues facing newly employed teachers as a result of workload in high schools in the Hhohho region.
3. Investigate the relationship of newly employed teachers and their learners in high schools in the Hhohho region.
4. Investigate the relationship between newly employed teachers and colleagues in high schools in the Hhohho region.
5. Explore the availability of teaching resources in high schools in the Hhohho region.

Research questions

The study was also guided by the following questions:

1. What are the views of newly employed teachers regarding classroom management in high schools in the Hhohho region?
2. What are the issues facing newly employed teachers regarding workload in the high schools in the Hhohho region?
3. How is the relationship between learners and newly employed teachers in high schools in the Hhohho region?

4. How is the relationship between newly employed teachers and their colleagues in high schools in the Hhohho region?
5. What is the state of teaching resources in high schools in the Hhohho region?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Theoretical framework

The researchers adopted Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory as a theoretical framework for this study. During the second half of the 20th century, Bandura advanced our understanding of social cognitive theory by identifying the importance of self-efficacy. Bandura's self-efficacy theory is the belief that an individual can succeed when doing different new tasks. Bumann and Younkin, (2012) indicated that Bandura argued that people with self-efficacy strongly believe in their ability to flourish in their goals. Bandura (1977) in his theory also identified sources of influence that can affect the success of learning a new task as part of this theory. The sources are vicarious experience and social persuasion. According to Bumann and Younkin (2012), vicarious experience transpires after a learner has observed a task that was done. While social persuasion occurs after trusted peers gave encouraging feedback when one tries to learn something new (Bumann & Younkin 2012). These sources are important for newly employed teachers in their interactions, with their colleagues who are expected to assist them in their first teaching experiences such that they realize their self-efficacy. As Bummann and Younkin (2012), indicated Bandura's theory strengthens the need for newly employed teachers to successfully achieve self-efficacy to gain the self-confidence needed to ensure the successes of the first years and continue in the teaching profession.

Bumann and Younkin (2012), further pointed out that newly employed teachers' self-efficacy can be affected by a diversity of factors. The factors include support given to newly employed teachers, availability of teaching, and opportunities to partake in professional development and other training experiences (Bumann & Younkin, 2012). The sources of self-efficacy and factors that affect self-efficacy are what encompass the experiences of newly employed teachers. Bandura's self-efficacy theory was therefore relevant to this study in that it was used to explore how the experiences of newly employed teachers affected their self-efficacy, which determine their longevity in the teaching profession.

Factors related to classroom management

Balkar and Şahin (2015) identified classroom management as the biggest issue for newly employed teachers. Ali (2013) pointed out that the 'time' element was a major concern because they struggled to carry out the planned lessons, to cater individual needs of the learners and meet up to the parents' expectations. Cakmak, Gunduz and Emstad (2018) considered classroom management as the single most difficult challenge. Similarly, Melnick and Meister (2008), noted that classroom management problems initially overshadowed newly employed teachers' attention to instructing and nurturing children. While Koca (2016) highlighted that newly employed teachers were worried about controlling classes.



Workload

The literature indicates that workload is part of the challenges faced by newly employed teachers in high schools in other countries. Rahimi (2018) and Melnick and Meister (2008) concluded that workload was the top challenge met by newly employed teachers. The findings by Dickson, Riddlebarger, Stringer, Tennant and Kennetz, (2014) also concluded that newly employed teachers found workload as stressful in their first year of teaching.

Relationship between learners and newly employed teachers

The relation between newly employed teachers and learners has been studied by different scholars and they illustrate that it has issues. Kuca (2016) established that newly employed teachers regularly were not sure where to draw the line in their relationship with the learners. They were scared to become too close to the learners, because the learners would disrespect the newly employed teachers, at the same they were scared to distance themselves from learners because the learners would be demotivated to learn. Cakmak Gunduz and Emstad (2019) also recognized that some of the challenges arising in relationships with learners were the difficulties in helping the ones with behavioural problems and disrespect from the learners. While Achinstein and Barret (2004) established that communications and interactions between newly employed teachers and learners posed a challenge to newly employed teachers.

Relationship between newly employed teachers and colleagues

The experiences of newly employed teachers have been explored by different scholars globally. The scholarship on newly employed teachers demonstrated that administrators are not supportive of employed teachers, instead they demand too much from the newly employed teachers as a result of the poor relationship that exists between the newly employed teachers and colleagues. The findings by Dickson et al., (2014) established that support was lacking for newly employed teachers such that they openly wished that they had someone to help and guide them with certain administrative tasks, such as the learner's grading system which they considered a major challenge (Dickson, et al., 2014). Lack of support from the veteran teachers was also observed by Habil (2017), he stated that some of the daily stress for newly employed teachers are posed by the lack of support directly from their colleagues who are not ready to associate with them. Similarly, Shoffner (2011)'s work illustrated that communication problems within departments and the newly employed teachers sometimes tended to confuse and demotivate newly employed teachers. This gives the assumption that newly employed teachers encounter serious challenges emanating directly from colleagues and the Head of Departments. It is thus, amazing if not devastating that colleagues in particular the Head of Departments who should ensure that newly employed teachers adapt with ease, ironically the ones who make the experiences of newly employed teachers complicated.

Inadequate resources

Conducted studies demonstrate that newly employed teachers' experiences are bad when it comes to teaching resources. They are facing challenges due to inadequate resources in their schools. Romano (2008) pointed out that the lack of necessary resources is a concern for many newly employed teachers especially when it comes to motivating the learners. Ali (2013) concluded that newly employed teachers were having



nominal access to teaching resources which made them unprepared to deal with the reality of the classroom. In their introduction, Samantha and Lacy (2017) mentioned the limited teaching resources as one of the reasons newly employed teachers were leaving the teaching profession.

METHODOLOGY

The study embraced a qualitative research approach which was used with a phenomenological research design. This allowed the provision of different views on the experiences of newly employed teachers. The phenomenological design was adopted for this study because it focuses on answering the how, what, when, rather than the why questions (Creswell, 2003). It was therefore a pivotal vehicle in understanding the experiences of newly employed teachers. This design paved a way for the researchers to appreciate newly employed teachers' experiences on their daily duties in different schools. Purposive sampling was used to select ten (10) teachers who were in the first, second, third year of their teaching profession in the Hhohho region. Five (5) were from Mbabane and the other five (5) from Piggs Peak. The ten newly employed teachers from different high schools were interviewed through a semi-structured interview guide. Content analysis was used to analyze the data in which the respondents' experiences gave five themes, which were: issues of classroom management, issues of workload, poor relationship between the newly employed teachers and learners, unhealthy relationship between newly employed teachers and colleagues, and inadequate of teaching resources.

FINDINGS

Issues of classroom management

Classroom management proved to be a challenge for newly employed teachers within their first three years of teaching experience. Most respondent teachers regarded classroom management as one of the issues they have encountered in high schools in the Hhohho region. The newly employed teachers had serious problems with classroom management, and they cited positive discipline as the cause of it. The participants felt that learners deliberately engaged in misconduct because they knew they were no longer beaten. One of the participant teachers expressed his concerns regarding classroom management as follows:

*...I have big classes, for example, two Forms 1 that have 55 learners in each just to mention a few, and the periods in my school have a maximum of 35 minutes, but usually, I have a double anyway. But then the time is not enough to teach and particularly to deal with the forever misbehaving learners, since they know I will not beat them since corporal punishment was abolished. So classroom management is amongst my daily challenges.
(Teacher J)*

In spite that most respondents viewed classroom management as an issue. The respondents believed it had nothing to do with beating or not beating learners. Instead, they were of the view that classroom management was an issue as a result of overcrowded classes and which hindered teachers' movement in classes. One



participant articulated the following sentiments when asked about her views on classroom management as a newly employed teacher:

What I have noted in my past two years, learners misbehave too much. And I have found it hard to manage all of them seriously since I teach a large group of classes which are congested and which limits my movement within the classroom. (Teacher F)

A more similar sentiment was raised by another participant. He stated as follows:

Teaching large groups or congested classes. (Teacher B)

Another participant teacher labelled class congestion and her age behind of classroom management as an issue:

I really have the inability to control my large and congested classrooms and since I am young, learners find it hard to respect me. (Teacher H)

Issues of workload

The amount of work given to newly employed teachers was a constraint for all of the newly employed teachers who partook in the study. They pointed out that huge classes with many learners made learning ineffective. One participant felt that the workload was burdensome, such that she was compelled to work extra hours. She stated that:

The workload is quite a lot because firstly, you have to prepare for every lesson, daily. Secondly, you have to give your learners work, and mark it on time. To be able to do these for all your classes, it is sometimes necessary to even work after hours, or take some work home. The learners need to get the feedback possible, in the next lesson. It is more difficult in the languages department because these subjects are compulsory, and classes consist of a large number of learners per class. Having a huge class is ineffective. (Teacher I)

Participant teacher D voiced out that the amount of work frustrated him daily:

It has been a challenge too; I have five classes to teach which made the load even more. This frustrates me because now I have to prepare for all five classes and I have to manage five classes and the senior classes are even worse when it comes to management, not to mention the marking, that one is even harder because you have to mark classwork, tests and even homework for all classes. (Teacher D)

Newly employed teachers were disillusioned with the task they are expected to perform, they found it difficult to mark all the work of learners. Another participant teacher H had a much elaborative and opening response



on workload:

The workload is too much, I am teaching two Form 1 classes each consisting of 65 learners and the other consisting of 63 learners. In Form 2, I have about 60 – 65 learners in two classes in Geography. And the average number of learners in my other teaching subject is 50, so you can imagine, this is not mentally healthy. This makes it hard for me to effectively prepare for my learners and it deteriorates teaching because in most cases if not at all, I do not mark class works and home works, instead, I tell them to exchange their exercise books so that they are marked at the end of the day and this does not only frustrate me but it troubles my inner thoughts as well because I know that I am way out of line. But I have to do it for the sake of pleasing the learners and their parents so that their work is marked. (Teacher H)

On the other hand, one participant teacher was of the view that it appeared that the burden of work was as a result of the extracurricular activities that he had to attend to:

The workload is huge, with long syllabuses and extracurricular activities demanding the attention of the teacher. The official books take most of the time while the teacher could be marking or doing other school work. (Teacher C)

Poor relationship between the newly employed teachers and learners

The experiences of newly employed teachers were flooded with a poor relationship between them and their learners as shown by scrutiny of the responses given by the participants. More than half of the participants were concerned about their relationship with the learners. Newly employed teachers felt being disrespected by their learners due to their young age. One participant teacher remarked that:

There was so much disrespect from learners and this might be because I am young, so they think I am their peer. So the relationship was very poor between us. (Teacher H)

Similarly, another participant teacher stated that his relationship with learners was deteriorated by the fact that, his learners found it difficult to accept him as their teacher because of his age. The utterances of the respondent were as follows:

Since I am a young teacher, it is not easy for the learners to accept me as a teacher instead they take me as a friend which sometimes if you are not mature enough it can compromise your profession because some of the learner's flirt with you, they disrespect you... (Teacher E)

Whereas, one respondent felt learners were maladaptive to a new teacher and therefore found it difficult to accept a new teacher:



No, learners were still used to their previous facilitator and had no trust in me and this annoyed me because they wanted me to teach like my predecessor. (Teacher G)

Nonetheless, one teacher felt that her relationship with her learners was just sundry or neutral. The participant teacher pointed out that there were those learners who struggled and she found it hard to assist them to get the lessons and they were those who understood her lessons and she enjoyed teaching them. The teacher's sentiments were as follows:

Relationships with learners were mixed. Some made teaching difficult, being teenagers and all. Others were struggling to get the lesson, and I did not know how to help them to the fullest. Others had bad handwriting and could not read their work. Others were just good learners, they enjoyed the lessons and I enjoyed working with them. (Teacher I)

Unhealthy relationship between newly employed teachers and colleagues

The analysis of the collected data revealed that newly employed teachers had an unfortunate relationship with their colleagues. Colleagues of newly employed teachers in schools were reluctant to assist newly employed teachers because of competition in academic certificates. One of the participant teachers, who said she had an unhealthy relationship with her colleagues expressed the following remarks:

The Head of Department was not welcoming because he had an attitude that novice teachers get bad results and that the University produced teachers that undermine their colleagues and refuse to ask while they mislead learners because of their inexperience. (Teacher C)

Another participant's views were as follows:

The relationship was certainly not healthy, some colleagues would not want to help as there is a battle in academic certificates, I have a degree and most of them have diplomas. (Teacher B)

This was also noted from a different respondent:

The relationship was poor with my colleagues since most of them have lower qualifications as compared to mine, so maybe they felt undermined by my degree. (Teacher J)

One of the participated teachers felt her Head of Department wanted her to deliver at whatsoever cost overlooking her well-being:

My relationship with the Head of Department was very poor, the Head of Department was more concerned about whether I am doing the work as it is, not how I was coping in doing



the work, which was huge for me as a new teacher. (Teacher G)

Inadequate of teaching resources

When the participant teachers were asked about the experiences they had during the teaching process in their profession, almost all of the participants regarded the insufficient of teaching resources to be stressful. One participant teacher was of the view that the insufficient teaching resource was a serious concern because he was teaching a practical subject, while the available teaching resources were outdated. He remarked as follows:

There is a shortage of equipment since I am teaching a practical subject. So we are sharing the equipment and when borrowing them which I use as teaching aids. I find that the school has irrelevant equipment which is used by new teachers. Meaning that technology is not embraced yet as new teachers we are attached to it. (Teacher E)

A different participant showed a more comparable concern on the scarcity of books within her school. Newly employed teachers were frustrated by the lack of teaching resources, which for instance forced learners to share books. This eventually hindered the process of teaching and learning. According to one of the participants:

Another challenge is the lack of teaching materials like books. And this is really annoying because I have a large number of classes and each has about 60 learners so each class is allocated 25 books. So I have certain learners who are sharing one book as a group. I would say as a group because they are three in one book and you can imagine how impractical it is for learning to take place. Because one of the things that are crucial in motivating learners is a book. (Teacher F)

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study have shown that the experiences of employed teachers had were full of diverse challenges which included classroom management in high schools in the Hhohho region. Newly employed teachers were unable to manage their classes because of class congestion which limits their movement in class. These findings are in line with the findings of Cakmak, Gunduz and Emstad (2018) who observed classroom management as the single most difficult challenge for newly employed teachers. In their research, Balkar and Sahin (2015) identified classroom management as the biggest issue for newly employed teachers. While Rahimi (2018) considered classroom management as teachers' a nightmare for newly employed teachers. Similarly, Koca (2016) observed that classroom management problems initially overshadowed newly employed teachers' attention to instructing and nurturing learners.

The views of newly employed teachers regarding workload was a challenge for all newly employed teachers in their first three years of employment in the teaching profession. The workload in high schools in Hhohho



experienced by newly employed teachers proved to be mentally and physically draining for them, due to a large number of classes that had many learners. Newly employed teachers spend most of their time at school marking and their weekends preparing lesson plans for their overcrowded classes. The issues of workload were also raised in the studies conducted by Melnick and Meister (2008); Shoffner (2011). The scholars noted that newly employed teachers were given more responsibilities than experienced teachers. From these findings, it can be concluded that the main challenge facing newly employed teachers within their first three years, in high school is a high workload. However, these findings differ from the findings by Salameh, Al-Omari and Jumia'an (2011), who established that at the beginning the main concerns for newly employed teachers are survival, impressing administrators, building working relationships with school personnel and more importantly worrying.

Going by the gathered data, it was established that the relationship of newly employed teachers with learners was bad. Newly employed teachers were disrespected by learners because of their young ages. Some learners would even want to flirt with newly employed teachers which scared the newly employed teachers. Koca (2016) made a similar observation in his findings. He established that newly employed teachers were commonly worried and questioned where to draw the line in their relationship with the learners. They were scared that if they become closer to the learners, the learners would disrespect the newly employed teachers. At the same, the newly employed teachers were afraid that if they distance themselves from the learners, the learners would be demotivated in the learning process. Cakmak, Gunduz and Emstad (2019) also established that some of the challenges arising from the relationship with learners were the difficulties in helping the ones with behavioural problems and disrespect from the learners.

Newly employed teachers had an unhealthy relationship with their colleagues in high schools in Hhohho, as shown by the scrutiny of the data collected. The relationship was weakened by a battle emanating from academic qualifications. It was observed that veteran teachers felt being undermined by the qualifications of newly employed teachers which were degrees. This experience by newly employed teachers seemed to be uncommon in the literature. Instead, Koca (2016), established newly employed teachers' relationship with their colleagues was ruined by the multiplicity of roles like being a teacher and a researcher. Moreover, from the analysed data, it was observed that newly employed teachers' relationship with colleagues was also strained by the excess demands from the Head of Department. Some Head of Departments wanted newly employed teachers to deliver irrespective of any situation, which did not sit well with newly employed teachers in high schools in Hhohho. An almost similar issue was noted by Havnes (2009), who observed that what dented the relationship between teachers and newly employed teachers, was that they were expected to meet similar requirements as soon as they enter the field, and sometimes, this unfairness went further such that they commonly received the most difficult teaching assignments from their heads.

The analysis of the collected data indicated that the state of teaching resources was very poor. There were inadequate teaching resources which posed a challenge for newly employed teachers, in their first three years of employment in high schools in Hhohho. The shortage of teaching resources in high schools in Hhohho points to the generalization that due to the shortage of teaching resources, learning did not take

place effectively in high schools in the Hhohho region. Clearly, the purpose of education in Eswatini is nothing other than to keep learners away from the streets! This observation seemed to confirm some scholars' findings globally. Ali (2013) and Rahimi (2018), found that insufficient teaching resources are a concern for many newly employed teachers especially when it comes to motivating the learners. Romano (2008) also stated that since the newly employed teacher had limited classroom experience, they depended on a variety of teaching strategies that required different resources to maintain the learners' attention during the lesson, however, few of the newly employed teachers were fortunate enough to get all the resources they needed for their lessons.

CONCLUSION

The data collected through the semi-structured interviews in this study corroborated a number of issues experienced by newly employed teachers within their first three years around the world. It was concluded that newly employed teachers endured daily stress due to classroom management, high workload, poor relationships with their learners and colleagues, and inadequate teaching resources. It was also established that newly employed teachers in high schools in Hhohho experienced a unique challenge which was the battle in academic qualifications between their colleagues. The issues encountered by newly employed teachers are believed by many scholars cited in this research to be amongst the central constraints contributing to teaching hardship and ultimately relinquishment from the teaching profession.

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