Bursary scheme as a tool for teacher development in Limpopo Department of Basic Education

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Abstract

This study sought to explore factors that contribute to the LDBE bursary scheme not be fully used as a teachers' development tool. The disturbing shortfall visible was teachers-bursars' failure to persist furthering their studies and decided to drop out of their studies. The study was conducted at one district of Mogalakwena. The district comprised of nine Circuits which are further subdivided into three clusters. The study adopted the qualitative methodology and a phenomenological design in exploring their furthering studies lived experience. The study population consisted of 25 teacher-bursars from nine Circuit in Mogalakwena District. Purposive sampling was used to select three teachers in each of three clustered Circuits to make a total sample of nine participants. Data was collected through semi-structured individual interviews. Thematic data analysis approach was employed from identified emergence of similar themes during interviews. The study revealed that besides the current bursars some have dropped. The study further revealed that those who quitted studies were not self-motivated from the onset. They decided to further their studies because of the access to financial support. The study concluded that the LDBE bursary do provide financial assistance to the needy students however usage of it as tool for teacher development need to improve its management. The study recommends that there should be full-fledged workshop specifically emphasizing the bursary policy contract on the bursary by LDBE bursary scheme managers. The study also recommends that enough funds be disbursed for scheme operations.

Keywords: Bursary scheme policy, bursary scheme manager, bursary holder and dropouts.

Introduction and Background of the study.

According to the Bill of Rights in the South African Constitution, everyone has the right to education including adult basic education and further education (The South African Constitution-RSA, 1996a). The state ensured these are progressively available and accessible through reasonable measures. Therefore, it was not a surprise that the Department of Basic Education in South Africa came up with the vision that all South Africans should have access to lifelong learning as well as education and training. Furthermore, that improved quality of life and build a peaceful, prosperous and democratic South Africa (The South African Constitution-RSA, 1996a). It was from the above background the Limpopo Department of Basic Education (LDBE) provided teachers with bursaries to access higher education to develop them. It was not only teachers who benefited; even the employees interested in furthering studies were liable for bursary scheme assistance. The scheme granting also ensured that students from low-income family backgrounds interested in following the teaching

profession get LDBE bursary financial assistance. These were done to improve the overall matric results because teacher and education-supporting staff collaboratively contributed to reaching that goal.

As one of the nine provinces of South Africa in its Provincial Education Department (PED) Limpopo Province provided financial support and encouraged its school and office-based employees to improve their education level (DBE, 2020). This was done after the realisation that lack of school fees was a perennial problem amongst the LDBE employees. Employees' individual needs were identified by completing personal growth plans during their appraisals and performance development. The appraisal system was used as per Department of Basic Education (DBE) mandate for the school-based teacher, it was used to be Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) which currently being migrated to Quality Management System (QMS). QMS was signed as amended Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) Collective Agreement 2 of 2020.

Contrarily the office-based educators were appraised and developed through Educational Management Service – Performance Management and Development System (EMS-PMDS) signed as ELRC Collective Agreement 3 of 2017. Then the PED's Human Resource Utilisation and Capacity Development (HRU-CD) thus group the employees' needs, prioritise them in terms of urgency. HRU-CD furthermore planned programmes for teacher or professional development, which would warrant training rather than mentoring.

Researches like Mukhwama et al (2010) found out that the bursary had little impact on the beneficiaries. Lack of monitoring was evident after the bursary was awarded during the bursar's study journey. Other researchers such as Naidoo and McMakay (2018:158) found out that funding the needy student was a complex and challenging function, taking into account the relationship between academic performance and the student bursary funding. Some of the bursary holders failed to complete studies as they decided to quit from studies. Whereas some researchers argued that 50% of those who drop out do so for financial reasons (Styan, 2014:10). This proved that it was not the case. The same observation was also made from the South African government introduced National Students Financial Aid Scheme (NSFA) to assist disadvantaged students for public tertiary education dropping out rate (Mabuza, 2020).

Reseachers such as Foster (2008:74) and Dewey, (2009: 533) indicated that simply assisting the bursary holder with funding problem does not necessarily result in improved academic results. Thus despite the extensive funding, there was significant gaps in the literature on student funding and the bursary's general management in South Africa. There were related studies in USA, United Kingdom and Asia which translate that funding alone cannot serve as supporting mechanism for teachers who further their studies (Curties & Kiapper 2005:121; Harrison & Hatt 2012: 695; Kerkviet & Nowell 2014:652; Harrison et al 2015: 62; Panigrahi, 2015:41). They also revealed that students holding bursaries drop out of their studies before completing their qualifications.

Department of Higher Education and Training (HET) suggested that teacher development should be built into the teacher's workload in schools (DBE, 2010). It further reiterated that effective teaching and learning practices gaps be identified and modelled performance

accountability to strengthen teachers. Internationally teacher development practices emphasised professional development wherein students' achievement was boosted. There was engagement of teachers' in-depth learning opportunities for a long-term addressing relevant curriculum content taught in class (Villegas-Reimer, 2003).

Teacher development was used in this study referring to change and growth of teachers in terms of professionalism during his/her profession. It was an-going process whereby the teacher kept on learning, adventuring his/her career to avoid getting rut. As such teacher's knowledge, skills, behaviour and attitude increased. Furthermore, it maintained certain professional level thus teachers' beliefs and practices were positively impacted to be innovative. Therefore, teacher development is a process of making a teacher the best of its kind as from when he/she entered teaching field up to retirement (Taylor & Franscis, 2021).

Conversely professional development was the extent to which the teacher acquired further new skills and expertise in his/her learning area. This was particularly in educational thinking, management, administration, vocational and technical areas (Policy Framework for Quality Assurance in the education and Training System in South Africa, 2001). It was therefore for the LDBE teachers to use all the opportunities to become familiar with the current educational areas. Through that they acquired new knowledge and skills for success of the LDBE policies. Employees were thus encouraged to plan their professional growth and to willingly take part in the organised trainings sponsored by the LDBE in the form of bursaries. Guskey (2000:14) explained professional development as an on-going comprehensive and intensive approach to improve teachers' effectiveness. It contributed in the school and classroom instruction improvement whilst supporting implementation of new initiatives. Professional development built and maintained the morale for both school and office-based teachers.

In the LDBE professional development for teachers took place on several different levels: district levels for office-based teachers, among teachers in a given school or even on a classroom or individual basis (Kampen, 2019). While teacher development was viewed as improving teachers; daily practices in line with their educational career improvement. Professional development equipped the employees with the necessary skills to improve performance productivity and achieve goals. Therefore, teacher development and professional development were used interchangeably because they focused on employees' professional growth. The existed thin boundary between them was the development for teachers was very specific towards the teacher learning new skills, exploring new ideas and building knowledge for the benefit of their students, while on the other side the teacher was upgraded career-wise. According to Timperly et al (2007) teacher development worked best when teachers' engagement in professional development visibly impacted students' achievement. Professional development was geared towards improving an area that needs improvement from the previous evaluation. Moreover, it related to an employee's new responsibilities or future career goals and improved job performance.

Problem statement.

Developed teachers enhanced the education system in the LDBE. There was a financial commitment for teacher development in the form of bursary scheme. According to 2015

Professional Development Activities the teacher was expected to seek out opportunities to grow professionally. He/she should identify areas of need for improvement so that he/she be engaged in the activities or studies that developed expand knowledge and skills through training. These enabled the LDBE to develop and plan teacher-training programmes in line with their needs. Therefore, it was imperative to use appropriate need assessment strategies and tools to improve educational success. The needs assessment followed the heumanitic-dialectic methodology as advocated by (Rakoma, 2000:65) to be viable to be used for needs assessment because it does not dichotomise qualitative and quantitative data. However for this study qualitative methods were preferred.

In the LDBE teachers were provided with a bursary to develop to develop themselves by furthering their studies. After issuing and distributing the bursary scheme teachers should be supported throughout their studies. However due to lack of support, teachers experienced many challenges which resulted in high dropouts. Therefore the LDBE spent a lot of money on study programmes that teachers do not complete. This study looked at the LDBE bursary schemes as a tool for teacher development. Therefore, the study looked at the challenges teachers experience as bursary holders throughout their studies. The challenges were identified with the hope that they would be addressed and result in a high success rate of teachers qualified to use the bursary scheme as a tool for teacher development. In the light of these, the research question of how the LDBE bursary scheme can be used as a tool for teacher development was addressed.

Research Question

- How can LDBE bursary scheme be used for teacher development?

Research sub-questions

- What role does LDBE bursary scheme play on teacher development?
- How is the LDBE bursary scheme awarded to teachers for development?
- What challenges do both the LDBE bursary scheme managers and the bursars experience about the bursary scheme?

Theoretical framework

Brief explanation of Brookfield Critical Reflective model

The study adopted Brookfield (2015)'s Critical Reflective model to use its four theoretical lenses in the study. Brookfield (2015) assumption was that teaching practice should be seen as critical reflection in education. Critical reflection has advantages on inspiring self-confidence, SMART educational goal achievement and motivated critically reflective students (Malatji & Wadesango, 2014). The critically reflective teacher's goal gained higher awareness of his/her teachings from all possible perspective. In his formative evaluation for critical reflection, Brookfield acknowledged the four complementary lenses through which teachers can critically view their teaching practice (autobiography lens; students' eyes lens; peer review lens and theoretical or literature review)

Reflection was a systematic assessment that all teachers could use. It was Brookfield's model fundamental element. It was clear that this model encouraged the teachers to work with other colleagues (collaboration) since well it relied on their feedback (Malatji, Mavuso & Malatji, 2018). Eventually the teacher's reflection would boost the students' learning process.

Application of the theory to the study

In this study the goal for reflecting upon Brookfield's theory of evaluation was to gain increased awareness about the bursary scheme as a tool for teacher development. Its effectiveness would be understood from as many viewpoints as possible. Noticing how people think and work through four lenses as postulated by Brookfield, served as a cornerstone of reflective practices specifically for the LDBE HRU-CD officials.

Autobiography lens

The HRU-CD officials should focus on examining their experiences as the managers of the bursary scheme. This would reveal to them the aspects of the way they manage the bursary scheme. They would realise the need for adjustment, strengthen it and unconsciously shape their choices during the bursary scheme management. They would reflect upon their planning, programmes identification, recruitment and selection of the bursary holders, funding and duration for the bursary assistance.

Students' lens

Engaging with the bursary holders' view by the HRU-CD on the bursary scheme as tool for development would improve their management skills. The impact of their actions, assumptions and disposition of the bursary scheme would have more responsive improvement. Engagement can be through activities wherein each could provide cues on how their way of managing the bursary scheme could be improved. Activities should include interviews, focus groups, formal evaluations and critical incidents questionnaires. This could also include bursary holders who obtained their qualifications through the bursary scheme assistance.

Peer lens

For this lens, the HRU-CD need to verify with colleagues in the bursary sections from sister departments in the Limpopo Province. Comparing themselves with colleagues' handling of their bursary schemes would help improve their bursary scheme management. This could highlight the hidden habits and provide innovative solutions to the problems and challenges they usually encounter. Sister departments' colleagues could be inspirational and provide support and solidarity through peer coaching, awareness and responsibility (Van Niewerburg (2012); Whitmore (2009); learning circle; collaborative problem solving and structured critical conversation.

Research Methodology

This study adopted the qualitative research approach characterised with phenomenological element. Qualitative research is an approach to inquiry that stands on own and best allows the researcher to attain a glimpse of the world (Ospina, 2004:9). Phenomenology allowed the

researcher to revisit the world as it was lived, experienced and described by participant (Mouton, 2011:14; Creswell & Creswell, 2010:13). The purpose was to understand dropout teacher-bursars lived experience from the individual perspective rather than explanation (Mouton, 2011: 13). The researcher established the meaning of the phenomenon from the particpants' view (Creswell & Creswell, 2010:18).

On the other hand the study explored challenges the LDBE faced in managing and distributing the bursary scheme. The research was described through capturing of information of informants perspective. Qualitative data was collected in a naturalistic inquiry approach and that collected data was rich in description of the processes unfolded (Taylor et al., 2015:4). The final results of the phenomenon was described as seen through dropout teacher-bursars eyes after experiencing it (Leedy and Omrod, 2010: 14). The researcher remained independent and was not affected by the research subject (Flick, 2009:36). To gain in-depth information, a balance was kept between time and researched issues to avoid undue influence during the interviews. Data was gathered through investigation from six participants.

Research design

The researcher use the exploratory and descriptive qualitative research design. According to Cooper and Schindler (2006:15), the research design is the strategy or plan by which that strategy could be carried out especially specific methods and procedures to be followed during data collection. It is the actual means for achieving the research goals (Flick, 2014:133). It was employed to address the research question (Hakim, 2012:1). The case study was used to plan the investigation of exploring and describing the phenomenon in its naturalistic nature. Yin (2018: 25) further emphasised that the case study focused on the current existing life case because the research question's answers were at that time with the participants, therefore data cannot be lost by time. The research design together with methodology directed the researcher's planning and implementation of the study for the achievement of intended goal (Maxwell, 2008).

Exploratory

The exploratory action used enabled the researcher to get the truth on the study quitting reasons. Burns and Grove (2011:38) define the exploratory research as the research that is being conducted to gain in-depth knowledge useful to discover new ideas. It was used to understand participants' perceptions, perspectives and particular situation in their daily lived experiences (MacMillan & Schumacher 2010: 24). Mouton (2011: 13) also reiterated that the researcher's understanding was more important than just to participants' narrations. Those new ideas increased the researcher's knowledge of the phenomenon.

Descriptive

Qualitative phenomenological research employed is essentially to describe rather than explain how it was done (Paley, 2016). The descriptive phenomenological approach was used with an attempt to put aside participants' preconceived ideas about phenomenon being researched but to get direct information. The extent of the effectiveness of the bursary was described by the participants was detailed (Bell, 2010: 118). The researcher recorded and even made notes of

the provided data. The descriptive research design helped the researcher in obtaining extensive information rather than just getting explanations, starting from a perspective free from a hypothesis or preconception (De Vos et al, 2011:316).

Understanding of the implications brought by the bursary to an extent that participants decided to dropout was the main purpose of this study. In the accomplishment of this, the researcher extracted reasons from the participants experience in their committed studies. The design enabled followed strategies and methods to bring sense of the provided data (Cooper and Schindler, 2006: 5). Thus sensitive information provided forced the researcher to distance herself, reserve her preconception and judgement about the essence and nature of participants study experience (Flick, 2014: 36).

Population and Sampling

Population

The study population consisted of current teacher-bursars and also who quitted their studies after their 2019 registration to date. This was the last in-take cohort of the LDBE bursary scheme financial assistance. The total population size was 20.

Sampling Procedures

Purposive sampling was employed to select participants to be interviewed for the study. The participants were six current teacher-bursars and three who dropped out from their studies in nine Circuit of the Mogalakwena District office. The sample size was nine teacher-bursars.

Data Collection

The collected data from participants was done as per the research questions guideline and the study scope. The researcher remained natural during data collection though Oving (2002:72) stated that "a naturalistic researcher is not a detached scientist but a participant observer who acknowledges their role in what they discover". Meaning that the research had its own dynamics which the researcher recognised when conducting data collection. Different data methods were considered but in this study the semi-structured interviews was used which provided the researcher with detailed insight (Creswell, 2012). However Olabuenaga (2012) pointed out that data do not and cannot speak for themselves, thus people should be made to talk, draw inferences and meanings. Thus participants were interviewed through individual semi-structured interviews. Captured notes taken during interviews responses were transcribed into meaningful data while segments were marked with descriptive words, symbols and broken down and conceptualised into new meaning. Common data were then grouped into themes and consolidated (Flick, 2014: 143).

Data Analysis

Data analysis was employed summarise how information was turned into data and used for researcher's decision making (Lancaster 2005:155). Both data collection and analysis were interactive and occurred in overlapping cycles (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2010: 411). Much qualitative data analysis stemmed from the subjectivity and individual interpretation of the

phenomenon (Lancaster, 2005: 162). Collected data was inspected, cleaned, transformed and modelled and then transcribed (Goetz & Lelompte, 2000: 51). It was thus organised and analysed by being classified, codified and built into significant categories. The main purpose was to make sense of the accumulated information and develop themes and coding (Creswell & Clark, 2011:14). Thematic analysis was used for this study due to its flexibility for getting participants' views, opinions knowledge and values from a set of qualitative data analysis. Thus it enabled the researcher to determine precisely the concepts relations and compare them with replicated data. Thematic analysis's appropriateness in this study came from the participants' experiences and perceptions of the LDBE bursary assistance programme.

Results

The researcher investigated the bursary scheme as a tool for teacher development the LDBE. After understanding the LDBE bursary scheme, then it was probed further on its implementation and how that impacted upon participants. From participants responses common data were consolidated were grouped into themes that addressed the researched questions of the study as follows:

The role played by the scheme on teacher development

The researcher's focus was upon the impact made by the bursary scheme on the participants. Participants reported the significant role played by the LDBE bursary scheme financial assistance in their lives considering their inability to afford study fees payment. Several issues were raised when interviewed by indicating how useful the bursary scheme was. Some participants mentioned that:

"I think it is a good initiative from the LDBE to empower colleagues who are able to further their studies. For my side I had a dream of always wanted to get a Red Graduation Gown before my retirement. I grabbed the opportunity for furthering my studies through the bursary scheme financial assistance without looking back, here I am completed my PhD. I am about to graduate, the scheme came to me as a lifetime golden opportunity. I can say many positive things about it you know, principals' leadership and management skills would definitely improve for those who studied that through the scheme. I take it that teachers who benefited from the scheme in furthering their studies, their content knowledge have increased. All these contribute towards the LDBE matric results improvement".

Even the bursary scheme dropout expressed their feelings positively about the usefulness of the scheme. One of them mention that:

"Even if I was disappointed by my relations with my Supervisor, the bursary scheme has an impact upon assisting bursars financially. I can recommend colleagues to consider furthering their studies through the LDBE scheme financial aid".

Reflecting on the above quotations the role played by the LDBE bursary scheme to teachers for development was sterling. Both current bursars and the ones dropouts narrated about its usefulness to teachers. An ongoing comprehensive and intense approach to improve teacher's effectiveness in students' performance was necessary.

Bursary scheme awarding and distribution

Emerged sub-themes like administration of the bursary scheme, current year programs for teacher development, selection of bursary holders and bursary holders file management answered the research question.

The administration of the LDBE bursary was in the jurisdiction of the HRU-CD district coordinators. Its implantation was informed by the bursary scheme management policy. District coordinators work along with structure representatives in the district When interviewed about being trained the district coordinator mentioned that:

"We undergo refresher training one at the beginning of the year. The Provincial HRU- CD directorate organises this training. There they remind of us about our roles in the management and distribution of the bursary scheme for teacher development. We would also be referred to the Education, Training and Development (ETD) policy for Pre-Service and In-Service Employees of the LDBE. At the end we would be urged to go and establish the Districts Skills Development Committee (DSDC) in line with the policy before any activity regarding the bursary scheme could kick off. After establishing the committee their names are sent to the province".

The current year programs for teacher development were informed by the Personal Growth Plans for both the school-based and office-based teachers. The common ones were grouped together. The majority were evaluated, assessed and prioritised in line of department performance improvement needs and sent to the HRU-cd directorate. The district coordinator mention that:

"This process is being performed by the DSDC after briefed about their roles and responsibilities in the bursary scheme. The same happens in all 10 districts of the LDBE as per bursary scheme management plan".

The selection of the qualified bursars was also done by the same DSDC. The district coordinator mention that:

"After a while, then the Provincial Skills Development Committee (PSDC) would sent the advertisement for recruitment of teachers to further studies in a specified programs. The detailed applicant requirements, number of recruits, closing dates and application form would be enclosed. I will then send these to school. After receiving applicants' responses, I invite the DSDC again to come and do the sifting and selection process. The selected ones' list would then be send to the province and wait for approval. Approval would come accompanied by the Contract Form to be signed by the bursar after accepting the offer. The bursar would then be encouraged to register with university offering the identified program".

The district coordinator opened the file for bursar after getting the proof of registration. Files were kept as records of referral evidence for bursary scheme implementation. The HRU-CD Deputy Director when interviewed mentioned that:

"The districts are the ones that implement the bursary scheme, it is within their mandate to open and close files of the bursary holders. The file should contain following documents: 1.

Award letter signed by the DDG; 2. Acceptance letter signed by the bursary holder; 3. Contract stipulating conditions of the financial assistance also signed by the bursary holder; and 4. Proof of Registration form the university. After a semester, trimester or a year the bursar's progress report should be an additional document in the file. Once the bursar has completed his/her certificate or an endorsement letter proving that he/she qualified for that study would also be the last document enclosed in the file. Thereafter the coordinator will close the file and these mark the end of the bursary financial assistance to the bursary holder".

In addition the coordinator mentioned that:

"The file helps us to track the bursary holder whenever there is a need".

Reflecting on the above quotations one can argue the bursary scheme is well managed though the monitoring part of it is ignored. Management goes about following certain processes. All managers engage in certain interrelated activities to achieve their desired goals: through planning, organising, leading and controlling. Unfortunately the LDBE bursary scheme suffered a bit in its controlling because bursary managers did not constantly ensure that the scheme operation was on the right course. Constant monitoring provide signal for the crucial gaps in controlling and identify weakness of the plan (Smit & de Cronje, 2004: 390).

Challenges experienced by both the bursary managers and bursary holders

When the bursary the bursary scheme managers were interviewed about challenges they came across in the management of the scheme, they raised several experiences. One mentioned that:

"Sometimes we advertise programs that are to be funded by the bursary scheme, teachers apply, then qualify, get the offer but fail to register. Another point is that our budget is very minimal so few bursars are sponsored and minimal study programs. Again our directorate is lean structurally and we fail to monitor the bursary when it is in full operation".

Whereas the district coordinator mentioned that:

"Some bursars no longer available in the contacts listed; others are not willing to register out of their pockets. Another problem when we think we are relaxing and settled everything there surface an issue of dropouts"

While the bursars also raised several issues. One mentioned that:

"The funds do not cover all my study costs. The bursary scheme should provide 100% financial assistance. Again the scope of study programs is minimal."

Another one mentioned that:

"I dropped out due to poor communication with the supervisor"

Reflecting on the above quotations one can argue that the HRU-CD experienced a lot of problems in the management of the scheme. Nowadays trend of larger organisation is to remove several management layers and remain flatter by employing few people, hence the insufficient LDBE HRU-CD staff. Managers just cope with the complexity of bursary scheme practices

and procedures to sustain it .While bursar complained about little study funds allocation, for the smooth running of the organisation's activities there should be enough capital. In terms of student relations it is being encouraged that the students should take ownership of their learning and remain independent, whereas on the other side good relations with supervisors serve as a motivation and counselling tool for students as they pursue studies. Motivation increase teacher-bursar involvement in studies and high amount of work would be added and yield good results.

Discussion and analysis of findings

The study revealed that all the officials in the LDBE were legible to further studies through the bursary scheme and they participated. Therefore the bursary scheme managers applied their management principles carefully in relation to the department's needs (Poperwi, 2018). That meant the department's interest preceded the bursary holder. The HRU-CD both provincial and districts received training in as far as bursary scheme management was concerned. Training function as a sub-system of employee management function improved and transformed employees' performance (Erasmus & Van Dyk, 2001). Through it employees with gained new expertise turn to be productive and make informed contributions to overall LDBE objectives (Mason, 2019). That was done so that all officials should have common approach in the management of the bursary scheme. Thornhill (2013) emphasized that the on-job training may not satisfy all the needs of the workers therefore HRU-CD training was expected to be formalised. After training, employees' skills and knowledge improved commensurately while work performance improved. From this understanding, it became clear that there was a relationship between training and development (Meyer, 2002).

The HRU-CD planned for the bursary scheme on the allocated budget awarding and distribution. That was done for the smooth run of the grant. The LDBE Head of Department appointed the skills development committee to facilitate the smooth execution of the scheme while the HRU-CD oversee the bursary management. The HOD was directly responsible for ensuring employees' effective utilization and training (Public Service Act of 1994: section 7(3). There was a clear coordination of roles between the managers (Bucud, 2020). The Provincial and Districts Skills Development Committees were to handle education, training and development issues in line with the Skills Development Act (Skills Development Act, 97 of 1998). After being informed about the departmental priorities developed the Work Skills Plan for the year. That Work Skills Plan was cascaded and implemented by all 10 districts of the LDBE.

The researched questions about the role played by the scheme's responses directed the discussions towards the impact made by the bursary scheme on the bursars. It was revealed that the LDBE bursary scheme made a significant positive impact upon the bursars' lives: upward career movement and even in the families living status through better of their salaries. According to Timperley et al (2007), teacher development works best when teachers' engagement in professional development had a visible impact on students' achievement. The bursary scheme financial assistance was used a measure to ensure the effectiveness and efficient performance of employees. Ultimately the bursars should be observed of being more

competent than before the development process and could even compete nationally (Skills Development Act, 97 of 1998).

Contrary to these was the non-support nor monitoring from the scheme managers as per bursary management policy's expectations. Beneficiaries of the bursary scheme felt honoured and loved by the employer by being offered with the financial assistance to further their studies. The bursars were aware of the bursary scheme contract but not clear about its policy. The findings exposed that there was no contract management, consequences management and impact management policy.

Another researched question was on how the bursary scheme was awarded and distributed. Reflecting upon the participants responses it was clear that these activities were planned in stages that were followed until the bursar complete his/her studies. Planning is the management function that determined LDBE bursary scheme's goals (Smit & de Cronje, 2004:10). The districts took the lead in the implementation of the bursary scheme. Therefor all four management components (planning, organisation, leading and controlling) were on track as they were performed collaboratively. There was also working togetherness between the bursary holders, district coordinators and the HRU-CD and research question got satisfaction.

In exploring the challenges experienced by both the bursary scheme managers and the bursary holders, the researched question was impregnated with mixed feelings responses. The HRU-CD Deputy Director mentioned how stressful it was to work with shortage staff and minimal budget. But even if working conditions were like that, they were performing well in terms of audit. Their records were improving on daily basis, and they carried the pride on that. While bursars mentioned a lot of challenges during their study journey. They also mentioned the issue of insufficient funds for their studies, to an extent that they complained that there was no transparency in their funding. They suggested that the directorate should be clear that the bursary was just a supplement so that they understand their position whenever they sign the contract. One can argue that during their orientation the issue of the bursary scheme was not discussed in detail. Lack of monitoring was also a major complain. The study further revealed that if there was monitoring then the rate of dropouts would have minimal (Malatji, 2021). Some complained about their relations with their supervisor. Even if that was the case but they were persisting because they understood the importance of the bursary contract policy they signed. Others dropped out due to their sour relations with their supervisors.

Conclusion

The bursary scheme's role to develop teachers proved to be very much important to both the LDBE and its teachers. It was evident that teachers were aware of the bursary scheme for teacher development. The study sought information on how the bursary scheme got to be known by the participants. This was done to determine the level at which public sensitization on the scheme was done. They were also knowledgeable about the bursary scheme application procedures. It was also evident that besides teachers also the needy students who qualified were benefiting from the scheme.

Despite several challenging like inadequacy of funds, bursary scheme was a good initiative for funding in order to promote better performance in Limpopo Province. Again it increased access to the universities by the deserving needy students while reducing the cost burden on the side of teachers also. While on the other side increased trustworthiness of the LDBE as an employer to its employees. Thus motivated employees to work with confidence. They even explored further knowledge on themselves to improve their work performance.

It is therefore, arguable that the bursary scheme was targeting operationalisation problems rather than the inadequacy of funds. Consequently it had helped financing teachers and full-time students. Though it was prudent to conclude that for the teacher it was just a supplement thus should not fully rely on it entirely for study fees.

The main purpose for this study was to establish the existing gaps during the implementation of the LDBE bursary scheme as tool for teacher development. The intension was that through the findings suggestion be made on how to close those gap so the scheme management could be improved. One of the findings was that there were so many beneficiaries of the scheme irrespective the inadequate budget challenge.

Recommendations

Funding without putting measures in place to build bursars' capacity for their studies was unproductive. As such the LDBE bursary managers should not view teacher-bursars financial assistance as a simple action. The LDBE should make efforts to disburse enough funds for scheme operations.

Secondly the study recommends that the LDBE bursary scheme managers should conduct full-fledged workshops on the bursary scheme policy contract. This could be done at least every semester which is twice a year. In that way there would be a collaboration between teacher-bursars and the bursary managers. While sensitizing teacher-bursars that the bursary is just a supplement. Thus it may happen that at some point some of their costs would warrant to be paid out of their pockets

Thirdly the study recommends that both the LDBE and the universities should consider employing intervention strategies to curb teacher-bursars quitting problem from their studies. Communication amongst the teacher-bursar, the bursary managers and the universities would be improved, while the collaboration improve the usage of the bursary scheme as a tool for teacher development. Development and construction of learning networks would help in ensuring students persistence and encourage their commitment (Richiteanu et al, 2018: 6).

Fourthly, there should be collaboration amongst the bursary scheme managers, district coordinators, schools and the bursars. The bursary scheme should be student centred.

Lastly online monitoring be introduced as soon as possible in order to solve HRU-CD directorate shortage of staff problems.

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