

The church's pastoral role concerning challenges faced by teachers in South-African public schools: Some practical theological perspectives



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Teaching used to be a well-respected profession, which many people used to love in the past. Many children, when asked what they wanted to be when growing up, indicated that they wanted to be teachers. This is why – even when children were play-acting – most of them liked to play the role of a teacher. It is disturbing to learn that this profession has grown to be hated by many people today. This is evidenced by the mass resignations of teachers from many public schools over the past few years in South Africa. This exodus had been researched by different scholars from different disciplines who have also made their recommendations as to how the situation can be reversed. The fact that teachers, who are disappointed and demotivated to continue with the career, are the creation of God and are teaching the creation of God, calls for the church through its pastoral theological services to play its role in trying to compose guidelines for the elimination of the problem. The purpose of this article is to search for possible ways in which the church can theologically play its role in addressing the problem of the teachers' dissatisfaction as well as giving some guidelines on how this challenge can be eliminated.

Introduction

The resignation of teachers, particularly black teachers from government schools, has reached an alarming rate in South Africa. Wide reporting of this phenomenon in the media has brought a great deal of uncertainty to parents of scholars as well as to the National Department of Basic Education. Research into the possible causes has been undertaken from the viewpoints of a number of different disciplines. However, until now the churches and theology had been silent on the matter. The South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU), quoted by eNCA (2015), confirms the unfolding disaster being caused by the high numbers of teachers resigning in these words:

The situation is dire because what is happening is that in 2014 we have lost about 14 000 teachers. At the beginning of 2015 we are seeing again many of our teachers resigning. In some of the schools that we have visited at the beginning of the year the principals were complaining that they have lost about 17 in one school and 14 in another school.

There is a fast-growing concern that South African teachers are resigning from the teaching profession at an ever-increasing and, indeed, alarming rate. A spokesperson for the South African Council of Educators is quoted: 'We are very much aware that teachers in the prime of their careers are leaving' (Mkhize 2015:1). According to Nkosi's report (2015:1), 4600 teachers resigned from teaching in November 2014 alone. This exodus is confirmed by Gauteng MEC for Education, Panyaza Lesufi in Serrao's report (2014:1).

As this damaging resignation rate compares unfavourably with the resignation rates in any other department or private company in South Africa, we must therefore accept that we are facing problems that affect both the system and our teachers. Researchers such as Nesane (2008), Lester (2005) and others have tried to identify the challenges that are forcing teachers out of their profession. Without taking away the responsibility from the government to tackle this challenge, it must be stated that the church, as an institution, cannot afford to turn a blind eye to this challenge which is engulfing the education fraternity of this country. This, then, is the motivation for this article: that the way may be paved for practical theologians to contextualise their training of pastors who should take on a role in the education of the South African children. From my perspective as the researcher, it would be unfair to expect that only the government and organisations in the private sector should address the situation, while excluding the voice of theology.

Research problem

The recent exodus of teachers who are resigning from the profession is a concern for all South African, churches and theological intellectuals. Masombuka (2015) creates an awareness that there is indeed a high number of teachers leaving the profession. While the health status of teachers is generally poorer than that of the general population, the most frequently reported illnesses were stress-related such as high blood pressure and stomach ulcers. Ncontsa and Shumba (2013:1) testified that, while violence had become a part of daily life in some schools, schools have become highly volatile and unpredictable places.

The concerns about the inefficiency of education in South Africa are argued by Ramphele (2012) who says:

Although education in our country is the recipient of the largest slice of the government's budget, the key to underperformance of our educational system is the quality and motivation of teachers, for no system of education can function well with largely under-qualified, demoralised and ill-disciplined teachers. (p. 162)

Besides that, the contested shortage and demand of teachers, as researched by Diko and Letseka (2009:228), is supported by the fact that many temporary teachers are hired in many South African schools. Koopman, head of the theological department of the University of Stellenbosch, claimed the following in 'Die Burger' (2013):

We have a prophetic responsibility to our schools. We can prophetically criticise and protest about what is wrong in our education system, schools and society. We have to stand together and people have to see it. We have to take part in open conversations about our education situation and through that, make an impact on how people think and what they want to do. We have to search for solutions in a prophetic way and take hopeful action. (p. 15)

These alarming challenges to teachers do not only deserve the attention of the government, but the society and the church cannot continue to turn a blind eye while the education system of the country is crumbling like this. Berg (1994) confirms that:

if a teacher reaches a stage of burn-out because of constantly functioning in stressful situations, it involves a subtle but progressive erosion of behaviour, attitude, health and spirit that eventually inhibits an individual's ability to function effectively at work. (p. 185)

The aim, method and relevance of the study to practical theology

It is the aim of this article to unveil the plight of teachers who show their frustrations by resigning from their posts, which is a challenge to our schools, to our children and to the entire education system of this country. This research will try to find some ways through which the church, by means of its pastoral theological services, can play a role in eliminating the current resignation of teachers in our public schools. One cannot deny that the exodus of teachers from the profession,

which cause a shortage of skilful professionals for particular subjects, is a painful experience – not only for the Department of Education, but for school children, parents and the entire community. It can be argued that pain and suffering should be the point of departure for practical theology. Both resigning teachers as well as the deserted school children are in pain in this regard; that pain invites the church and its pastoral services, which comes from practical theology. It is within this context where the point of departure for practical theology is to prioritise the socio-political and economic situation (Cochrane, De Gruchy & Pietersen 1991:10). The pastoral practical theology is the best focus from where the study will be executed. Baloyi (2014:2) argues that pastoral caregivers (who are trained in practical theology) are faced with the challenges of praxis regarding the existential and active aspects of Christian life. These aspects include the charity of giving yourself to others, spirituality, anthropological aspects, social life of the church and signs of the time. Practical theology is a theology that must always address the challenges and plight of people in their immediate situations. The theoretical method of reading recent publications, newspapers and other media sources explaining the problem will be utilised. It is also important to remind the reader that pastoral care and counselling is a sub-discipline that operates within the broader scope of practical theology and therefore, although the church's pastoral services are the main focus, practical theology will often be touched upon, because it is the discipline through which pastoral caregivers are trained. It is through practical theology and its theologians that the church's pastoral services can be active in schools.

There is an element of truth in the view that if theology does not address the special circumstances of the modern context, it will suffer the two grave problems of idolatry and irrelevance (Bulkeley 1994:139). I am in full agreement with Morekwa (2015:7) who argues that theology should start its analysis from the experience of people and their physical organic environment. This clearly talks to the point that theology, which avoids addressing the plight of people in context, does not have any reason to exist. Browning (1985:16) also sees people's actual problems and concerns as the basis of practical theological methodologies. Teachers and educators are facing difficulties that force them to resign, and this is a crisis situation. It is for this reason that the church and practical theology cannot continue to fold their arms while the education system is in crisis. Klassen (2005:1) puts it well by saying that one of the ways in which theology could speak in a relevant manner to the pressing issues would be to develop new understanding of the relationships between God and the world. Resignation of teachers is undeniably one of the pressing issues in South Africa at the moment hence it will be fair to allow practical theology, through its pastoral component among other disciplines, to play its role. The mere fact that teachers are stressed because of work-related issues qualifies the relationship between the problems and their resignation. According to Hyunchul (2004:40), three approaches emerge as directions for practical theology, namely the praxis-theory, empirical orientation and interdisciplinary integration. I agree with Steyn and Masango

(2011:6) as well as Gerkins (1986:26) who claim that if practical theology is to become more than just praxis, pastors and pastoral caregivers must meet people at the level of their own experience and problems. Lastly, the experience and immediate situation of the contemporary people should be the starting point for this kind of theology.

Some problems faced by teachers

It has been said on many occasions that teaching is one of the most severely underpaid industries in South Africa. Nkosi (2015:1) reiterates this by arguing that the same teachers who resign, go back to work within a few months of resigning. The only reason for their resignations is to get their pension money paid into their bank accounts. In a report entitled 'Indebted teachers resign to raid pensions', Mkhize (2015:1) articulates that thousands of qualified teachers are so deeply in debt that they opt to resign in order to cash in their pensions. This practice has also been fuelled by fears among public servants that they will in future no longer be entitled to a lump sum upon retirement (Nkosi 2015:1). This sentiment is shared by a Rhodes Business School professor who argues that teachers are tempted to quit, cash in their pensions and come back to start again (Lester 2005:1). This assumption is confirmed by the Head of Human Resources of the KwaZulu-Natal Education Department who has vowed that the Department is trying to improve working conditions as well as remuneration in order to keep teachers within their profession instead of having them seek greener pastures elsewhere (Mkhize 2015:1). The financial challenges facing teachers have also been confirmed by the National Teachers Union (NATU) in Durban, which indicated that it had sent out a petition to force the government to consider amending the relevant provisions of civil servants' pension funds in order to allow workers to meet their monthly expenses. NATU representative Allen Thompson is quoted as saying: 'You find that a teacher has a child at the University of Cape Town and is expected to pay about R100 000 (for fees) and they cannot go to the bank' (News24 2014:1).

In 2016 there had been a rumour circulating that members of the Government Employee Pension Fund (GEPF) were no longer going to be entitled to a lump sum retirement pay-out. On the other hand, the Congress of South African Trade Unions had been demanding a more comprehensive retirement policy in SA. This is one of the reasons why some police officers, teachers and other members of GEPF had been resigning from fear of being disadvantaged by the supposed changes (Gernetzky 2015:1). Morar, the agency's chief operating officer, tried to persuade teachers not to resign by saying:

I can confirm that the National Treasury has decided to suspend the introduction of these pension reforms pending further discussions at the National Economic Development and Labour Council; the pension reforms will be introduced on 1 March 2017. (Masombuka 2015:1)

According to eNCA (2015:1) Morar went on to indicate that the majority of resignations that cited this as a reason, had

taken place in KwaZulu-Natal – mostly of which are teachers from the previously disadvantaged categories of people.

Our society has, among other things, been typified by learner's aggression towards other learners, educators and even school property. Squelch and Lemmer (in Naong 2007) said:

A report stating that teachers constantly have to deal with learners engaging in disruptive behaviour confirms the unavoidable conditions that make the teaching profession so stressful, resulting in low morale and high dropout rate among teachers. (p. 284)

By emphasising this, Kubeka (2004:52) reiterated that many teachers argued that, without corporal punishment, discipline could not be maintained. Donga's research (1998) indicates that the unemployment crisis in our country is accompanied by other factors such as adolescence, lack of respect, attitudes and learner aggression – all of which play a significant role in the ill-discipline of learners in schools. This is evidenced by the escalation of crime, lack of respect, poor results and early pregnancies that are observed in schools. Maphosa and Shumba (2010:395) undertook a useful study that indicates that educators generally feel disempowered to maintain discipline in schools in the absence of corporal punishment. It has been widely cited that children's rights and the banning of corporal punishment, ushered in an era of learner freedom in which there has been a failure to maintain discipline, has ended up to frustrate educators and making them fearful. Another discipline-related report indicates that parents are still awaiting the outcome of investigations into the rape of their 7-year-old son at a school in Vosloorus (Mnguni 2015:4). There was also an incident reported in which a Sasolburg High School teacher was shot by a 15-year-old schoolchild (eNCA 2013:1). Makhubu's report (2014:1) further testifies that schools across the country are under the attack of pupils who threaten the education of others, because of lack of discipline.

There is evidence that some school principals are still caught up in the old-fashioned leadership, which Looyen (in Van Wyk 2004:53) identified as the principal who largely controlled the South African schools with little or no teacher-parent participation. It is within this trend that some parents opted to only have a part to play insofar the paying of school fees is concerned, while the rest of the day-to-day running of their children's education is left to the principal and teachers and therefore the principal has the upper hand to subordinate and even abuse his subordinates. A home is the foundation for every basic educational need and if parents are not doing their part, teachers are faced with difficulties among the children. Pierce (2015:1) argues: 'Developing effective partnership with families requires that everyone associated with this school helps create a school environment that is welcoming to the parents and students'. This statement is an indication that some parents just send their children to school and pay the school fees, but do not get practically involved with the day-to-day running of the school. I have experienced this within a school where I am a school-governing board (SGB) member for the third year running. Parents come to the

school only to pay school fees and to collect reports, but they do not come to the meetings concerning planning and the approval of the school budget, or where teaching and learning-related matters are discussed.

One disgruntled educator was quoted saying: 'She [*the school principal*] dominates the SGB – she is the key player. She wants things done her own way; she does not take the school interest into consideration'. This directly correspond to what Hoadley (in Bush *et al.* 2010:163) argues in saying that South African School principals have little experience of instructional leadership. It is henceforth important that the principals and potential principals should be trained to appreciate the value of an SGB (representing the parents) and educators (Creese & Earley 1999:12).

Makhanya's (2015) gives details of a protest at the Sekhaleni Senkosi High School sparked by suspicions that the principal of the school was involved in witchcraft. According to Makhanya, the principal was suspended after he was found with a bucket of *muti*, which he was spraying around the school yard at night. The principal was also accused of unacceptable behaviour that had taken place at the school as well as the sexual harassment of female teachers. Some of the teachers did not return to school in 2015 (Makhanya 2015:1). Over and above the fact that these kinds of allegations are escalating, the frustrations of these practices do not apply only to parents. Principals also unsettle and traumatise the educators who work in such schools. This is also a sign that, in addition to the financial challenges that teachers are facing, they also have management-related problems. The local ward councillor of the school mentioned above also confirmed that the principal ruled 'his' school with an iron fist.

The claim that the principal was corrupt was one of the main reasons that the parents of pupils at Tumelo Primary School in Meadowlands blocked entry to classes in the first week of October 2015. One of the parents was quoted saying: 'In March (2015) we nominated an SGB but the principal left our people out and chose members she wanted. The SGB signs for money on behalf of the school but parents do not know where the funds go' (Mdluli 2015:4). Maladministration as well as the abuse of power led to this principal being placed under investigation. This means that she was suspended from the school and had to report only for her normal duties at the district office. These kinds of allegations have been a problem for many schools – in Gauteng in particular. This signifies that principals are sometimes part of the problems experienced by schools, and that this could force out those teachers who vocally protest against corruption and the abuse of power. The author's opinion is that every problem that arises in a school environment will obviously cause discomfort to some of the teachers. Those who are given authority to head schools are often tempted to oppress and abuse their subordinates. There are cases of teachers who have to deal with bad behaviour, favouritism, disparaging comments delivered by email, bullying and questionable practices on the part of their principals for as long as 3 years (Traylor 2015:1).

Bullying and victimisation of teachers by their principals are at the order of the day in some schools. De Wet (2010) did extensive research, which unveils how some teachers are dominated and abused by their principals and line managers. One teacher was quoted as saying the following about the principal: 'When he was appointed as deputy head, he was not welcomed with open arms and it seems as if he is still holding it against us' (De Wet 2010:1452). The unfortunate part is that abusive principals often use official avenues to bully their teachers. While some bullied teachers are depressed and resort to absenteeism and distancing themselves from their colleagues, the decline of the quality of the work often leads them to resignation (De Wet 2010:1456).

The story of the principal who was suspended after directing racist statements towards black children cannot be ruled out when the issue of teacher's frustrations are addressed. There are still white teachers who believe that they are superior to black teachers. This is a worrying factor – not only as it concerns children, but also as it affects black teachers whose students are also victimised. In a 2015 Times Live blog article entitled 'Racist principal rejected' (Child 2015:1), it is alleged that the parents and the SGB of Elandspoor High School in Danville, Pretoria closed the gates so as to prevent the school principal from coming onto the property. This was because the principal was alleged to have told black children that they were 'black bastards' who would go to hell and not to heaven. It was alleged that he also said the black pupils should leave this Afrikaans school and 'return to the township'.

There have been reports and revelations published suggesting that school teaching posts and promotion posts, such as those of principals, are sold through bribes at schools. City Press (2014:1) has revealed how SADTU sells its posts. It has been reported that the posts of principal and deputy principal are sold for up to R30 000 each in KwaZulu-Natal schools. Another report alleges that one of the reasons a school in Roodepoort was in the news was that parents had refused to accept the principal (who went by the name of Molefe) as she had paid for her post. One parent was quoted claiming that they wanted a principal of any colour – but not Molefe – because she had paid for the job (Molosankwe 2015:1). The Minister of Basic Education, Mrs Angie Motshekga, confirmed the existence of the rumour of 'jobs for sale' by stating that a task team to investigate this kind of corruption was still at work in more than one province (Mhlanga 2015:1). With rumours of corruption in the public domain of this kind, it is argued that some teachers who do not want to be compromised will definitely leave the profession and this is the cause of the growing numbers of resignations. In other words, this corruption is directly related to the exodus of teachers from the profession, because, besides the fact that some teachers hate bribery, there are capable teachers who do not have the means to buy the positions they want and who will therefore develop discomfort with and hatred of the industry. One case study is that of a teacher who resigned after he was not happy with losing a post due to bribing and he looked for another position at another department. Zengele (2015:11) agrees that some teachers are disturbed

and disgruntled as a result of the selling of posts, even to the extent of resigning.

Possible recommendations and the way forward

The church should have a role in schools

No one can deny that public schools are part of the community, which is trying to build a peaceful country. It is important to note that the church has parents as its members who are part of schools' SGBs. Through this body, parents can be vocal about the school and its activities. A number of school teachers per school are also local Christians in particular denominations. This makes the church's influence in the school a greater possibility. The church, as the custodian of moral regeneration, is the vehicle that can regenerate the morality of children and teachers who are terrorised by different factors. It is within this context that churches and religious groups must be mobilised to promote values needed to strengthen the common good (Du Toit 1999:31). I agree with Coetzee (2004:344) that building a new South Africa needs churches, and our schools and their problems are just part of that building. Encouragement to do good can be done in various ways including church members getting involved in school life. Some teachers as well as some SGB members are Christians. This paves the way for them to influence teachers and children to create a positive and peaceful climate for teaching and learning.

Stressed teachers need pastoral counselling in the first place. It is for this reason I agree with Oliver and Venter (2003:192) that teacher stress must be reduced and the negative implications of this stress must be addressed. Confidence in the teaching profession will then be restored. From 1996 to 2003, according to Van der Walt (2011), the issue of religion in public education (schools) was heavily debated in South Africa. The evidence of this is the fear expressed by many Christians about practising their Christian faith while at school, because they are told that this will undermine the South African Constitution with its Bill of Rights (Republic of South Africa 1996). Siphon Maga (2013) also supports this view. His argument is that the separation between church and state is not materialising, because Christian rituals are dominating schools. He also suggests that teachers personally ask learners if they are willing to participate in these 'hegemonic Christian faith rituals that dominate Christian schools' (Maga 2013:1). I am of the opinion that this kind of criticism is a result of misunderstanding the real intent of the Constitution where it addresses freedom of religion. The Constitution states: 'Everyone has the right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion' (Republic of South Africa 1996:8). This clause needs to be understood in collaboration with Article 31(1) that declares: 'Persons belonging to a cultural, religious or linguistic community may not be denied the right, with other members of that community' (Republic of South Africa 1996:16). Although this is not the main focus of this article, it is important to note that the Bill of Rights should not be read out of context. It is argued

that the rights that protect those who do not want to participate in certain rituals do not override the rights of those who want to participate in the same rituals. That is why the better option for many schools would be to ensure that children enrolling declare upon registration the religion to which they subscribe. Those who would like to practise their Christianity should be able to do so without forcing those who do not want to. It is not good to become a spokesperson for people who have not been consulted. De Vos's research statistics (2015) indicate that 95% of primary school children are perfectly happy when Christian prayer is conducted during assembly and other public events. De Vos (2015) quotes:

The Federation of Governing Bodies of South African Schools (Fedsas) contends in court papers that it was perfectly acceptable for schools to embody a Christian ethos and to promote 'Christian values' (whatever this may mean) in public schools as long as the vast majority of parents desire it. (p. 1)

The Christian church has been one of the pillars of moral regeneration and it is suggested in this article that schools (in consultation with their respective SGBs and parents) should accommodate Christian pastoral services as well as religious education. It is my contention that every local school may agree to make use of their local pastors to do devotions and being allowed to give Christian-based counselling to learners and teachers. This would help in building the morals of the children. It is argued in this regard that, as much as the courts and every stakeholder in the country have a role to play in promoting equity and redress in schools, Christians in schools must also be afforded safe spaces. Hence, if the majority of parents in the vicinity are Christians and they want their children to have Christian values, they must not be stopped from bringing this about.

The role of pastoral care and counselling

Both children and teachers need, among other things, practical theologians to train pastors to do relevant pastoral care and counselling to them. This training does not necessarily demand practical theologians to practise, but they can teach and train local pastors to do this. Any form of stress and psychological brokenness affect the health of the individual and therefore pastoral care is important in dealing with that. According to Mushaandja *et al.* (2013:82) some schools have teacher counsellors, but many schools in South Africa do not have that. The situations in our schools demand that each school should have at least a counsellor (trained by practical theologians) and a social worker. Even though it might seem to be expensive for the government to employ at least one counsellor per school, the government and schools may enter into agreement with churches to ask the services of the pastoral counsellors at least once a week at the local school. The seriousness of the need for pastoral counselling is expressed by Lyall (in Pretorius & Van As 2003:283) who attributed: 'Christian counselling, based on the Word of God, can stand on its own feet and has a place and role to play in the society'. Some problems that teachers face with regard to students are a result of negligence of pastoral care and counselling.

Mushaandja *et al.* (2013:82) gives a relevant example of a child who comes from burying his or her parent, but on Monday he or she is expected to continue with normal schooling and performance as if nothing has happened in his or her life. This is one example that causes rebellion and chaos from the side of the students and therefore sometimes teachers are victimised. Community-based care is also another form of help that the church and the local community may use in their schools. The late Dr Phaswana wrote an excellent thesis (2008) on how local communities can use the 'communally gifted pastoral care'. He makes a statement that communal care allows other people in the community without 'official pastoral training' to do the work of the pastor. It is in this context where the *khoro* or *huvo* [the village meeting of elders] can stand firm to help their troubled village or school (Phaswana 2008:210). There are influential men and women in our villages and towns who, in collaboration with local pastors, can intervene and take over the spiritual matters of the school by counselling both educators and students. The link with practical theology is that the pastoral caregivers who should train laypeople to do this are the products of practical theology, meaning that if practical theology did not take into consideration the context within which these pastoral caregivers are serving, then even the laypeople would not be influenced to do the work. It is this collaboration that can ensure that parents, instead of relegating teaching and learning to teachers, are also involved in the education of their children. They will be able to know what is taking place at school and playing their parental role. This can work very well even for the discipline of the children who trouble their teachers at school. Luckily, some of those parents are already members of SGBs, which gives them the edge on helping troubled teachers. As goes the saying '*Rintiho rin'we ari nusi hove*' (Tsonga) or '*Munwe mutihi a u tusi muthuthu*' [One finger cannot take out samp from the dish] (Phaswana 2008:212), the battle can be won. It is time that the communities should be working hand in hand with their local pastoral caregivers to ensure that the teachers' as well as the students' plight is attended to for the sake of educational progress. This can be aligned with what Tan (1991) states in his book *Laycounselling, equipping Christians for a helping ministry* when emphasising the use of local laypeople in counselling. Collins (1995:viii) sings the same tune in articulating that Christian laymen and women (trained by local pastors, fruits of practical theology) must take greater responsibility for meeting the needs of those who seek solace, friendship or counselling. Bible verses like 1 Peter 2:5, Romans 15:14, Colossians 3:16 and 1 Thessalonians 5:14 direct believers into caring for one another.

I agree with Laws and Fielder (2012:798) that the more teachers' pain is healed, and they are encouraged and motivated, the better they provide emotional support to students. Healing, pastoral care and counselling, which are sub-disciplines of practical theology, need to play its role through the church's pastoral caregivers.

Reviewing the abuse by headmasters

The church must be able to use its pastoral and preaching services to object against any form of power abuse. The injustices and wrong use of power need, among others, the voice of the church, which must accept engaging in a battle for justice. SGB and other school-related meetings can be used by Christian parents to mobilise against any abuse of power. The Bible has in many instances indicated how God punishes those who use their power, influence and positions to subject and oppress others. The issue, for instance, of the liberation of Israelites from Egypt where Egyptians were punished, is one example. Sometimes teachers who are under siege cannot speak against their oppressors, but parents and communities can.

Steyn (2002) conducted thorough research in important elements of leadership that can help school principals to ensure that teaching and learning in the school environment is administered. These elements can serve as the basis for quality production. Among the eight points that Steyn (2002:256) listed as a way forward in improving the principal's management skills at school, the following have been selected:

- Principals should lead rather than instruct. This is about motivating and getting support from the other staff members, which can only happen if the leader becomes a team leader rather than a boss. Principals need to create an ethos that can generate motivated and successful educators (Mathibe 2007:526).
- Leadership must empower participants. Over and above controlling people's lives, principals should be eager to empower their colleagues and subordinates. Teachers and principals must create an environment of mutual engagement and professional conversation.

Creating a culture of learning rather than of controlling behaviour

Secondly, on the issue of the abuse of funds by school principals, the Department of Basic Education should eliminate this by investigating schools and by bringing those who misuse funds to book. Roane's report (2013:1) entitled 'Principals are the main culprits of corruption in schools, with embezzlement of school funds the most common illegal practice', claims that there is a degree of truth in these allegations. Although the list of schools and principals that have been investigated is endless, according to this report, my opinion is that the Department needs the commitment of as many Corruption Watch spokespersons as possible. It has been suggested that contracts are granted to family members or friends of public officials. Furthermore, fraudulent travel claims are put in by principals (Roane 2013:1). The members of the community must be educated to use hotlines or toll-free numbers and emails to report mismanagement in their schools. It has been revealed by the Gauteng MEC for Education, Panyaza Lesufi, that millions of rands have been squandered at Glenvista High School in Johannesburg. Some of the revelations made in this regard indicate that airline

tickets have been purchased and that holidays have been paid for along with other, similar expenditure (SAPA 2015:1). The South African Standard for Principalship, issued by the Department of Basic Education, contains very important information that can serve as a helpful tool to school principals and teachers. It clearly outlines how the principal can be a good manager and team leader for both the school and the community in which he or she serves. The professionalism, competencies, managerial excellence and commitment to the values of the school and its surrounding environment can bring out good leadership in a principal (SAPA 2015).

On the issue of abusive relationships between the headmasters and teachers the SGB and the department should collaborate in ensuring that the principals are called to account. It is my opinion that the SGB should be changed regularly as stipulated in the school policies. It is unfortunate that some SGB members are kept even after the expiry of their period, because they can support the principal's corrupt behaviour. In the meantime the Department is not keeping a close eye on why some SGB members overstayed their welcome.

Ensuring that the best people become principals can assist in enhancing the happiness of teachers in their workplace. This means that district officials should monitor the situation and ensure that the people allocated for principalship are deserving the post and that they are also trained continuously in their fields (Van der Berg *et al.* 2011:11).

Dealing with corruption and racial issues at school

Practical theology in this country has played a pivotal role in the fight against apartheid and this is not an exceptional battle. Through theologians like Desmond Tutu, Allan Boesak, Frank Chikane and many others the church had been vocal against any form of racism. This battle is not finished. With a crop of even newer and younger theologians it is important to be involved in our schools against these inequalities. The truth is that racial attitudes continue to undermine the democracy of this country and threaten to destroy hopes and dreams of a future united country, particularly when they come to light in schools where everyone is hopeful that transformation will happen. Dalamba and Vally's report (1999) suggests methods that can be used to engage with issues of racism encountered in integrating races in former white, coloured and Indian schools. They argue that anti-racist education should be employed to equip both educators and learners with analytical tools to critically engage with the origins of racist ideas. Besides the many suggestions they make in their report Dalamba and Vally (1999:63) recommend that schools need to develop codes of conduct and admission policies as well as mission statements – all of which are anti-discriminatory. Workshops and conferences in which principals and staff members can engage with racial issues need to be organised by the Department of Basic Education. The responsibilities of the SGBs include promoting the best interests of their respective schools. Determining the access policy and the

adoption of a mission statement that will reflect the values and norms of the school in a particular area will form a substantial part of this. This means that issues of racism, whether they originated with the management of the school or with the learners and teaching staff, must also be attended to by the SGB, and the SGB must ensure that the school is managed in accordance with the values (Meier & Hartell 2009:183). It is my opinion that teachers and children who are threatened by racial attitudes from their schools must voice their concerns to the Department who will then investigate such issues and bring the culprits to book. An example of this is the case of the Dr Viljoen Combined School in Bloemfontein where the South African Human Rights Commission was asked to investigate an incident of derogatory and dehumanising racial treatment from both teachers and other staff members (SAPA 2014:1).

The issue of corruption in the allocation of promotional posts in schools can be sorted only when the government through the Department of Education takes a firm stand against all forms of corruption that are taking place in the country. The investigations of the government on related issues should be something all citizens must be ashamed of. Still on that, I am of the opinion that the power that has also been given to SGBs in the hiring of the staff can play a significant role, depending on the kind of SGB the particular school has. Christian parents should be involved in SGBs and learn to voice their discontent on unfair appointments through their SGBs, because it is the education of their children that is compromised by such corruption. If practical theology fails or avoids to concern itself with social ills like corruption, among others, it not only becomes irrelevant to contemporary people, but it should also cease to exist. Coetzer and Snell (2013) address the fact that practical theology has a role to play towards any form of corruption, including school-based corruption. Newberg and Weldman (2010:214–249) make a good suggestion for the so-called 'compassionate communication workshops' that may be conducted at schools, religious institutions and community groups to deepen spiritual and ethical values of life. These workshops can be initiated by practical theology and theologians as a community engagement encounter. Religious cognitive-behavioural therapy can be used as a therapeutic approach towards teachers and principals who are experiencing a crisis. It is a strategy to minimise the problems faced by educators (Coetzer & Snell 2013:32). Lastly, one of the responsibilities of the church is to be prophetic in its teachings – teachings that denounce any form of inequality by the churches. It is still expected that the church should continue using its influence in the community to denounce and critically preach against racism in schools and society.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that education in South Africa is faced with a challenge in respect of an exodus of teachers who have decided to leave the profession. It is also important and relevant that this research has tried to find some of the reasons why teachers are resigning. There are clear and investigated reasons for these resignations. Without detailing

each and every cause, it is imperative to indicate that, on the whole, teachers who resign are not happy with their profession. The government, the church and other relevant stakeholders have a role to play in helping teachers to stay employed in this very important field. There is no doubt that the majority of the population in South Africa are Christians. Hence, they should stand up and make their presence and their influence felt in every sphere of life, including in schools.

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