



**TECHNIUM**  
SOCIAL SCIENCES JOURNAL

[www.techniumscience.com](http://www.techniumscience.com)



**Vol. 68/2025**  
**A New Decade for Social Changes**

**PLUS**  
**COMMUNICATION P**



**International**  
Communication & PR

## **The manifestation of Cadre deployment in selected SOWETO public schools: Voices of teachers in despair**

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**Abstract.** Cadre deployment in South African Public Schools is steadily becoming a norm than an exception and breeds protracted intergroup conflicts as promotional posts are reserved for politically aligned teacher union members. These conflicts affect the quality of teaching and learning, as the focus of the teachers move from the primary purpose of teaching to contestation for senior posts. This paper uses Intergroup Conflict Theory and Dynamic Conflict Theory as lenses to explore and explain the intergroup conflicts as manifested in South African Public Schools because of sustained application of cadre deployment. The interpretivism paradigm was employed in this study. Qualitative research approach was used to collect data from 6 teachers, in 3 selected SOWETO schools. The findings of this study revealed that, despite the SADTU's denial of involvement in pursuing cadre deployment, this practice is a norm in the selected schools and experienced and qualified teachers who are non-SADTU members are overlooked for promotional posts. This paper, therefore, recommends for the review of minimum promotional requirements in public schools, considering experience and qualifications in the selection and recruitment of teachers to senior posts.

**Keywords.** intergroup conflict, cadre deployment, promotional posts, in-group, out-group

### **Introduction**

Poor Service delivery in South Africa in the public sector has worsened in the past two decades. This is evident with sporadic and often sustained water shortage, uncollected refuse, and electricity load shedding. South African communities particularly the poor, often respond to this lack of and poor services with violent protests which result in destruction of property. Central to poor service delivery in the public sector, is the deployment of underqualified and inexperienced individuals in key management positions. Schools are no exception to this trajectory as in the recent years, they have seen an increase of violent and deadly contestation of senior school management posts. Often non-South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) teachers applying for senior posts are side-lined as their interests are not taken care of despite being better qualified and experienced candidates and posts are reserved for certain candidates. Such conditions of job reservation are breeding grounds for conflicts results in what Anstey (2006) asserts as conflict that results from attempted change from the status quo in favour of a powerful in-group within organisations. In her study of the appointment of education managers, Dehaloo (2008:4) found that such conditions demoralise, demotivate, and make

teachers despondent resulting in a “decline in educator performance and service delivery”. The cadre deployment policy (CDP), is the African National Congress (ANC), adopted after the dawn of democracy to ready itself to govern. With the Tripartite Alliance- Congress of South African Trade Union (COSATU) and South African Communist Party (SACP), the ANC, deliberately envisaged to have all levels of government to be in the hands of party loyalists. This was done through the establishment of deployment committees in all levels of government (Twala, 2014). When Cadre Deployment Policy (CDP) was publicly challenged, the then ANC Secretary Gwede Mantashe justified it as “...not a flawed conceptual system...it would not be a sin to give black people operational exposure” (Mantashe defends ANC cadre deployment: Mail & Guardian 14 Sep 2011). Despite this justification by Mantashe, Franks (2015) argues that some of deployees are incompetent cadres who affect service delivery adversely. Therefore, this paper seeks to explore the manifestation of cadre deployment in South African Public Schools. As experience, qualifications and skills possessed by non-politically aligned SADTU are often overlooked for promotional posts.

### **Problem Statement**

South African public schools offer educational knowledge to the South African children and teaching profession was once viewed as a noble and selfless calling. However, in the recent times, teaching career is viewed as means of personal enrichment through accessing senior positions through teacher-union connections. As Zengele (2009:165) argues that teachers have a strong perception that “people are no longer employed ... but are deployed” into senior positions and that SADTU aligned teachers pin their hopes on those in senior positions to “uplift them”. Thus, deployment and upliftment into senior positions have become a contestation as qualifications and experience are disregarded criteria for promotional posts and what counts is membership to politically aligned SADTU. It is in this context that this paper pens the narratives and experiences of teachers in selected SOWETO schools who have been overlooked for promotional posts on grounds of non-membership to SADTU.

### **Objective of the study**

This paper seeks to capture the experiences of teachers in selected SOWETO who are overlooked for promotional posts because they are not members of politically aligned teacher union, SADTU.

### **Research Question**

The main research question of the study is, how cadre deployment manifest itself in the appointment of teachers into senior posts in schools.

### **Research methodology**

The assumptions of this study are those of interpretive research which studies beliefs and feelings about social situations in the world, interpreting these situations from within a particular social context (Rosenthal, 2018). Thus, the experiences, beliefs, and feelings of the participants of this study are being explored within their social setting. The study is undertaken in a social context in which the SADTU teachers have to conform to the union expectations of activism and loyalty. In return, these teachers expect a favourable consideration when senior posts become available while the non-SADTU teachers complain of unfair labour practice as they are overlooked for senior posts. The qualitative research approach was suitable for this study as it was conducted in a natural real world setting which allows for the studying of

phenomena in all their complexity and multifaceted forms (Tuffour, 2017). Alase (2017) is of the view that the qualitative research approach is particularly suitable for exploring the strength of the relationships in a social setting and refer to this approach as a laboratory of community life. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) compare the qualitative researcher to a quilt maker who pieces together sets of perceptions and impressions of respondents into a new representation. The study adopted purposeful sampling and conducted semi-structured interviews with 16 teachers from 4 selected schools in SOWETO.

### **Data collection and analysis**

The study employed semi-structured interviews as primary data collection method, to understand participants experiences regarding cadre deployment in selected SOWETO schools. Ngulube (2015) defined interviews as the process of gathering insights by probing participants by using of open-ended questions. Similarly, Denzin and Lincoln (2011) define an interview as an individual one-on-one and face-to-face verbal exchange. The interviewer solicited information from the participants' lived experiences regarding cadre deployment. Knott, et al (2022) asserts that interviews can yield rich insights into people's biographies, experiences opinions, values aspirations, attitudes and feelings. For these reasons, the interviews for this study were conducted in a way that allowed participants to air their views, feelings, experiences and understanding of the issues raised by the researcher. Thematic analysis was used for the qualitative data of this study. The data was transcribed verbatim, and each excerpt was date referenced. According to Belotto (2018), the stages for data analysis are data preparation, data analysis, and data presentation.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This paper is underpinned Intergroup Conflict Theory as well as Dynamic Conflict Theory to explore and explain the intergroup conflicts as manifested in selected SOWETO schools because of sustained application of cadre deployment.

#### ***Intergroup Conflict Theory***

Tillet and French (2006:10) define intergroup conflict as conflict that occurs between "two or more groups as opposed to a single group splitting into factions" and explain that there are different types of intergroup conflict, such as industrial, public, ethnic, class and international disputes. (Böhm, et al., 2020 & De Jager, 2008) states that, although intergroup conflict can be either positive or negative, most intergroup conflict has more negative consequences than positive ones. Intergroup conflict often results in dysfunctional intergroup conflict, which may lead to heightened anxiety, mistrust and hostility, feelings of incompetence and powerlessness especially within the out-group (Halevy, et al., 2012).

In terms of the dynamic conflict theory, conflict has two competing groups, the out-group and the in-group, with the out-group engaging in competitive mobilisation (De Sio, & Lachat, 2021; Oberschall, 2007) with an agenda for change, resulting in escalation of intergroup conflict. For this paper, the out-group refers to the teachers who are not members of politically aligned SADTU, who are overlooked for promotional posts through application of cadre deployment policy of SADTU. Therefore, as Oberschall (2007) explains, out-group members are likely to experience an enhanced need to increase their sense of power; in-group members are likely to experience an enhanced need for acceptance. Brown (2015) and Dovidio et al., (2009), argue that once members of a dominant group feel a threat to their group's power, they will be motivated to defend their status and remove the threat. Members of disadvantaged

groups, conversely, will be motivated to change the status quo to improve their group's position. Often unsatisfied human needs for security, identity, recognition, participation and autonomy of either group will cause the relations to be unstable and create mutual negative perceptions. Specifically, within a school environment, such as that of the selected SOWETO schools, members of an out-group typically experience feelings of powerlessness, lack of control, and loss of their dignity if they are consistently overlooked for promotional posts.

On the other hand, the in-group works tirelessly to promote cadre deployment in schools as per SADTU Vision 2030 and the out-group's challenge of this policy is perceived as a threat to be eliminated. There are various types of threats a group can experience in a conflict situation: realistic (tangible) or symbolic (intangible) harm to the in-group's welfare, such as territorial threats, threats to political power, economic threats, and threats of physical harm. Symbolic threats include threats to the in-group's identity, values, beliefs, and norms (Greenaway, & Cruwys, 2019; Stephan & Mealy, 2010). These threats can evoke strong negative emotions, such as fear, rage, resentment, frustration, contempt or feelings of insecurity. In addition, perceptions of threat reduce emotional empathy for members of the out-group (Greenaway, & Cruwys, 2019).

Furthermore, intergroup conflict is influenced by the dynamics of the conflict itself. observes that the goals of any group can be achieved through the dynamic factors of intergroup conflict, namely, power and group cohesion. Power refers to the influence the group has in pursuing the goals and interests of its members, and cohesion refers to the level of togetherness and commitment of the group to achieving its goals (Brown & Pehrson, 2019; Mayer, 2000). Considerations of group cohesion are also significant for this paper. Böhm, et al., (2020) and De Jager (2008) describe group cohesiveness as a process whereby a sense of "we-ness emerges" over and above individual differences and motives and maintains that cohesion can also be visualised as "attraction to collective". In terms of the intergroup conflict in this paper, new socio-political group identity is evident in SADTU 2030 Vision, which seeks to "establish a cadre of education specialists within the SADTU thinking community" (SADTU 2010:5). Furthermore, in this regard, the 2030 Vision seeks to influence and align the established instruments of the state with SADTU's strategic objectives (ibid). Thus, through a "competitive reward system" (De Jager 2008:46), SADTU seeks to reward loyalty and allegiance by excluding the out-group and distributing the limited available resources, in this instance promotional posts, among the in-group members. Zengele (2009:163) notes that deployment of active and loyal teachers to the politically- aligned SADTU is done to avoid "disruption of schooling by bitter and disruptive teachers". When there is group cohesion, group members are responsible to each other and complete tasks effectively together. In the case of the selected SOWETO schools under study, politically aligned union members are a cohesive group who often look after each other's interests. Consequently, group cohesion for the politically aligned teachers is perceived as a solidarity activity, for example, when an individual member conflicts with the law; support is sometimes expressed by court appearances of group members.

## **Literature Review**

### **Conceptualisation of Cadre Deployment**

The 1985 African National Congress (ANC) Kabwe Consultative Conference gave birth to the Cadre Deployment Policy (CDP) and subsequently formally adopted in 1997 in Mafikeng Conference (Nevondwe 2011). The adoption of CDP was underpinned by the ANC's "lack of a deliberate human resource development programme, which encourages and creates opportunities for training and gaining experience" (Nevondwe 2011:47). In the post 1994

election victory, the ANC was faced with the challenge of governing country as well the various state departments previously run by the National Party with its apartheid policies. The ANC then unleashed the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) policy document which was a vehicle to overcome South Africa's legacy of inequality and oppression of the black majority. Shava and Chamisa (2018) argue that the ANC desire to consolidate power and control in the public sector, dependent on consistent application of cadre deployment policy by placing loyal individuals in key public service strategic positions.

According to Hoffman (2010:1), "cadre deployment is the process by which cadres or loyal members are brought into effective action." Similarly, Lodge (2004:193) defines cadre deployment as the ANC's "own strikingly militaristic term for the procedure through which it fills important positions in government, public administration and parastatals corporations." He maintains that the practice was initially a careful strategic response to limit opportunities for "careerism, opportunism and corruption" (ibid) as it was hoped that the deployment of cadres would discourage infighting and create a culture of selfless service to the public (ibid: 214). It is evident that the initial intentions of cadre deployment nearly two decades ago were noble.

Kane- Berman (2012), postulates that deployment was premised on the grounds that the public service had to be purged of apartheid bureaucrats in the post-apartheid democratic South Africa, whose loyalty was with the apartheid regime. Hartley (2011) further argues that the ANC intention with cadre deployment policy was to safeguard the new government from any possible sabotage by the opposition parties. To achieve this objective, the ANC wanted to neutralise the sabotage threat by installing loyal and politically trusted party members in key government positions. Mlambo, et al., (2022), argue that the ANC hoped best, and suitable cadres would be deployed, however, it was overshadowed by unintended consequence of poor performance of the cadres. Sebake and Sebola (2014) and Magomane (2012) cited inadequate performance, nepotism, and bad service delivery as the result of cadre deployment.

Public schools were not immune from the ANC cadre deployment policy. However, Areff (2012) explains that the practice gradually began to overlook incompetence and under qualification in favour of loyalty to the party because the deployed cadres often had insufficient skills to perform their designated tasks. Kanyane (2014) indicated that the ANC's cadre deployment is premised on party loyalty and overlooks merit and competence. Justifying cadre deployment Qobo (2019) argues that the ANC was aware of skill shortage among its ranks and had to implement the cadre deployment policy, none the less. The cadres are normally drawn from the Tripartite Alliance – the ANC, the Confederation of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the South African Communist Party (SACP). Hoffman (2010) maintains that this practice is carried out by ANC cadre deployment committees at national, provincial and local level covertly attend to the business of cadre deployment and makes the point that these committees do not confine their activities to party structures but also extend them to public administration. For this reason, cadre deployment can be perceived as "political interference in the recruitment process of civil servants by party officials" (Boyle 2012:1).

Kota et al., (2017), argue that CDP is not an exclusive to the ANC as provision of state employment opportunities to party loyalists is a global phenomenon administered by various ruling political parties. However, it was noted that this phenomenon in Africa is believed to induce an inferior institutional quality or to cause poor execution of policies by the state. Magubane (2021), maintains that despite the failures and the looting of state resources by cadres, cadre deployment was designed with noble.

### **SADTU and SADTU VISION 2030**

The South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) as a member of the Tripartite Alliance worked tirelessly during the 1994 elections to ensure victory for the ANC at the polls. After winning the elections in 1994, the ANC government had to recompense the SADTU executives with key positions within government, as the ANC's Secretary General Gwede Mantashe (2011) once admitted in a media conference in 2011. Letseka, Bantwini and King-McKenzie (2012), confirm that SADTU was a prominent association within the governing party, which had significant implications for nominations to major strategic posts in other departments, such as Education. Letseka et al. (2012), further state that the jostling for positions, as described by Manuel (2011), manifested in behind the scenes canvassing by union leaders for their preferred candidates. Similarly, the 'behind the scenes canvassing', according to Franks (2014) and Maimane (2017) have inevitably led to crisis in South African Public Service (PS) sector this observation is echoed by Rust (2017), who describes Public Service as in tatters and South African Public Schools were not spared from the crisis. SADTU as part of Tripartite Alliance partner, adopted and incorporated the spirit of NDR and invariably, cadre deployment through SADTU 2030 Vision in 2010. In terms of this policy document, the politically aligned teacher-union strives to assist the NDR of the ANC to bring about educational transformation (SADTU 2010). This policy document embraces of cadre deployment by resolving to:

- establish a cadre of education specialists within the SADTU thinking community
- ensure that SADTU's voice is clearly heard in relation to education and public issues to promote educational transformation, social equity and the interests of members; and
- through cadre deployment influence and align the established instruments of the State with the strategic objectives of SADTU

The Vision 2030 also took cognisance of the critical and strategic role that parents play as partners in ensuring education transformation. In addition, because the same document sees teachers as the 'parents of society', an alliance was to be forged with the parent constituency to influence "distribution opportunities that can be beneficial to the broader transformation imperatives of SADTU". Pattillo (2012:59) asserts that CDP was embraced by SADTU to unionise the schools and reward loyalty through "patronage based on political appointments provide incentives for leaders (school principals) to prioritize unionism over improving their schools'. Thus, when non-politically aligned teachers are disadvantaged when applying for senior posts. In addition, schools managed by non-politically-aligned principals are often targeted for ultimate takeover by deploying loyal cadres to promote the interests of the politically-aligned union and its members in such schools. Such exclusion of non-politically aligned teachers for promotional posts is part of SADTU's strategy to honour its commitment that:

The interest of members should therefore reign supreme in the activities and operations of SADTU... through cadre deployment and influence, the established instruments of the state need to be in line with the strategic objectives of SADTU (2030 Vision:8 & 14).

### **Findings**

#### **Participants' definition of cadre deployment**

When asked to define cadre deployment, most participants referred, directly or indirectly, to the practice of job reservation. These definitions included.

*job reservation and tailor-made posts” (Teacher 3)*  
*positions for their friends, even though ... those particular people do not qualify for the position” (Teacher 6);*

*a practice mostly in the political field to be loyal to a certain political party so that you can get a certain or a better position in the workplace ..., is the way of employment in school (Teacher 1)*

Some participants defined cadre deployment as a practise based on *inefficiency and incompetency* (Teacher 2). On the other hand, Teacher 3 labelled cadre deployment as the; *appointment of favourites of union members in schools for senior posts*. According to the Teacher 4, *unions do not deploy people on merit, but on “broerskap or comradeship”*. There was general agreement that through cadre deployment positions are reserved for the loyal members of SADTU. Teacher 5 commented that cadre deployment in her school is used as payback for loyalty to SADTU. Furthermore, Teacher 3 commented that:

*You don't need much qualification or experience. All you need is to be a loyal member, to attend meetings and to be known. So, the advantage is you can get where you want quickly (Teacher 3).*

As indicated above, most participants described cadre deployment as a process linked to the employment of teachers to senior posts. Central to their definition, is the connection of the candidate to a union to secure a post. In the conflicts under study, the out-group's challenge of cadre deployment is often regarded as a betrayal of the struggle for emancipation of the black majority in South Africa. This is especially true in the selected SOWETO schools, where the SADTU members are in the majority and a culture of the majority reigns supreme: whatever is done by in-group, even if is wrong, is accepted as right and is not easily challenged. Many SADTU members do not seem to regard cadre deployment as problematic but as acceptable practice and wait to be deployed as the union sees fit. Members of in-groups often lose their individuality through de-individuation and are seen as a collective of the group (Anstey 1999:40) and, for this reason, the mutual negative perceptions between the SADTU in-group and the out-group have increased, leading to what Anstey calls “zero-sum thinking”, in which there is only one survivor: the dominant group with the power to influence and control the scarce resource of, in this case, senior posts (ibid).

### **Hallmarks of Cadre Deployment**

#### ***Incompetence and inefficiency***

This study found that there was agreement among the participants that deployed cadres into senior positions in schools most of them are incompetent in executing their duties. Competencies refer to skills or knowledge that leads to superior performance and are critical for effectiveness at a workplace (Oberländer, et al., 2020; Smit & de Cronje 2004). These are formed through an individual or organisations knowledge, skills and abilities and provide a framework for distinguishing between poor performance and exceptional performance. Competencies can also apply at organisational, individual, team and occupational and functional levels. A manager is competent if he or she can apply the acquired skills in performing his or her duties in a workplace. The participants in this study raised concerns about the general competence of the school principals, especially regarding curriculum development and financial management of schools. The Teacher 5 was of the view that the deployed principal in her school is incompetent as he failed to market his previous school and increase learner enrolment. She commented on her principal by saying:

*He is from a school that had 240 students, and, in our school, we had like over a thousand students. The way he does things, is not challenging.... if you are from a school that had 240 students and could not market the school to make it a better place, so that parents could want their children to be in that school. Then he decided to come to a school with over a thousand students, when he is incompetent.*

The cadre-deployed principal incompetence was echoed by the Teacher 4 who asserted that,

*Teachers are at loggerheads because they are not happy about SMT (School Management Team) because some of those members are not qualified for their positions. So that [it] makes the school to be dysfunctional... Teachers are supposed to leave their classrooms and go and do the HODs work because they [HODs] are inefficient, so sometimes when the district officials come to our school, they will call HODs and only to find that they hardly answer some of the questions because of their inefficiency.*

Teacher 1 indicated that deployed cadres are;

*inefficient and tend to use aggression to hide their inefficiency and cadre deployment limits promotional prospects of highly qualified teachers in the system.*

It is clear from the findings of this study that the deployed cadres do not have the necessary skills to carry out their mandatory function- leading the schools and they engage in aggressive behaviour to intimidate their subordinates for their limitations.

### **Power**

Another characteristic of the deployed cadres in schools was a need to access power and control of schools. Participants indicated that deployed cadres use their positions to promote their political interests, often to the detriment of schools and the teaching staff in their respective schools. Teacher 2 declared that the desire for power rather than service to the community, has changed teaching from being a calling as teachers have become:

*... .. power mongers ... people become power-hungry. People no longer go to school to empower our children but go to school to fatten their bank accounts (Teacher 3).*

This observation was echoed Teacher 3, that the deployed cadres do not occupy their positions of power in order to improve the lives of the learners and the schools;

*Cadres do not take the schools forward; [it] is about occupying higher positions, and not make a difference in people's lives and working for the community (Teacher 3).*

This exclusion of qualified and experienced teachers based on being non-SADTU members, inevitably forms the starting point of the intergroup conflict in these schools and creates what is perceived as unfair working conditions for the out-group. According to De Jager (2008:70), group cohesion and power are the driving forces in maintaining groups. In a politically aligned union, group cohesion is necessary to maintain group order and conformity to the union goals. This is achieved by promoting the interests of the in-group, not only by deployment but also through representation in disciplinary hearings. Furthermore, the practice of job reservation can manifest in a process whereby a sense of 'we-ness' emerges over and above individual differences and motives (De Jager 2008:70). Such practices used by SADTU in the SOWEO schools emphasise how this sense of 'we-ness' can cloud ethical judgement.

### **Conclusion**

This study found that, common to the experiences of the teachers was the perceived lack of competency or effective leadership of school principals, together with abuse of power through favouritism and nepotism. The study also found that these factors contributed directly to the intergroup conflicts in these schools. On investigation whether cadre deployment plays a

role in this conflict, the study found evidence suggesting that this practice gives an unfair advantage to the SADTU teachers by overlooking non-SADTU teachers who are often better qualified. Based on these findings, this study therefore recommends for the mandatory minimum promotional requirements, such as experience of having served in different school leadership positions and post graduate teaching qualification. These recommendations are made with a view to increasing the overall competence of school principals and discouraging cadre deployment.

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