The role of staff development in the professional development of teachers: Implications for in-service training

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Abstract
The school environment is a very dynamic sphere. Changes continually take place in educational policy, curriculum and in a school’s physical and social environment. A teacher who wants to be effective in such an environment has to adapt to these changes. Continuous professional development of teachers is essential to addressing the gaps in training that arise through time and change. This article addresses the professional development of teachers at school level by examining the types of staff development practices that are implemented in thirty randomly selected schools. It also examines the staff development programmes of two schools in particular. The implementation process of these programmes, feedback from the staff members during the review of the programmes, and the personal development of the teachers is also examined. The results indicate that staff development in the 30 schools takes place sporadically and in an unstructured manner. The topics addressed during staff development do not focus adequately on the professional needs of the teachers. In the two structured programmes, teachers benefitted tremendously and were eager to continue. Finally, this article proposes a model for staff development in schools and discusses the implications this has for in-service training of teachers.

INTRODUCTION
This article examines the professional development (PD) of teachers in South Africa. The professional development of teachers is an ongoing process which addresses the needs of teachers in specific contexts (Samuel 2008; Maistry 2008). These contexts may be influenced by global developments, national priorities, local challenges and the personal needs of teachers. Predetermined criteria for professional development are a virtual impossibility due to contextual factors. On a larger scale however, predetermined criteria are able to address priorities for professional development. Other factors like the learning style of educators, educator commitment, transformational leadership and external conditions (such as policies and programmes of authorities, resources, funding and control) also affect professional development (Steyn 2004). Resources and funding play a crucial role in the implementation of PD programmes. Steyn (2009) calls these the ‘logistics’ of
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PD programmes. The professional development of South African teachers has been sporadic; although a formal structure exists, implementation has been the problem. Thus the quality of teachers has diminished. This in turn has had an effect on the training of teachers. The lack of policy implementation in PD can be attributed to mainly the constant review and adjustment of the school curriculum (Lessing and De Witt 2007). In addition, the current policy ‘does not provide for measuring the impact of PD on teachers’ classroom practice nor on the development of schools’ (Steyn 2008, 27). After an examination of the different contexts in which PD of teachers is located and the various models of PD, this article concludes with a generic model for staff development which can be applied in any school.

SOCIAL PRACTICE THEORY (WENGER)

This article is modelled on Wenger’s (1998) Social Practice Theory. The elements of Wenger’s social theory of learning are: meaning practice, community and identity (where learning is seen as experience), doing, belonging and becoming (Wenger 1998, 5). The importance of learning as part of the lived experience of the individual is emphasised. This model adopts the notion of learning as a social experience wherein a learner participates in a community and is shaped through this learning (finds identity). The importance of a theory of learning in professional development is emphasised by Knight: ‘much that is now incorporated into continuing professional development policy misses things of importance, principally because continuing professional development policy appears to be short of a sound theory of learning’ (2002, 229). Samuel’s Force Field Model of Teacher Development (2008) also examines the role and identity of a particular sector of people within a community, namely teachers; he examines role and identity from the perspective of teachers’ professional development. His model identifies biography, context, institutional setting and programmatic impact as the key forces which impact on teacher identity and role (Samuel 2008, 11–12). The generic model for the PD of teachers that this article proposes incorporates the work of Wenger (1998) and Samuel (2008). In addition, factors such as global developments and national priorities are taken into consideration.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional development can be defined in many ways depending on the context in which it takes place. Effective PD is embedded in the day-to-day reality of teachers’ work and considers teacher input in its design. It allows for critical reflection, is internally coherent and vigorous, and is sustained over a long period of time (Little 1993; Renyi 1996; Sparks and Hirsch 1997). The principles of staff development, according to West (1989), include the following: staff must view themselves as owners of the programme; the programme must suit all staff; it must have the support of higher authorities; it must be rooted in the organisations’ culture; and it should
be based on an assessment of the needs of the teachers. In a country like South Africa, where there is ‘no single culture’ (Ruth 2001, 203), the organisations’ culture can be termed ‘multi-cultural’. Green (2008, 2) warns that ‘continuing professional development programmes should not become slaves to political demand, but should reflect the pedagogical and professional needs of teachers and the changing learning needs of pupils’. Green (2008) encourages teachers to be critically reflective of their classroom practices. Cook (1997) compares the needs of teachers and learners to a business and its response to its changing needs. To do so, it must implement employee training. She further argues that not all teachers, administrators, parents, or community members agree that teachers need more time for PD. In fact, many people argue that teachers should possess the adequate skills before entering the profession and if they require any further training, they should do so in their own time. Their argument would be that education departments/districts are ‘in the business of educating students, not teachers’ (Cook 1997, 5). Samuel (2008, 14) concurs with this view and adds that teachers ‘should be allowed latitude of commentary and critique’.

In South Africa, staff development in schools is based on quality assurance practices for education in the form of an Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS). This system has many flaws which are exploited by teachers. The Department of Education (2011, 4) has recognised that this system has failed: ‘IQMS does not evaluate competence sufficiently deeply to assist teachers to identify their needs ... IQMS makes it even more difficult to identify teacher development needs transparently and accurately’. De Clerq’s response is that ‘Education departments should fund and implement a professional development plan, which involves educators and is supported by a high quality professional development staff’ (2008, 7). In South Africa, the National Department of Education is funding an Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) for school principals as part of their professional development. The principals of the randomly selected schools in this study are enrolled in this programme. Mestry and Singh’s (2007, 487) study of the impact of such a programme concludes that there is a great need for continuing professional development of school principals so that schools are effectively managed.

On the other hand, teachers have had to endure a de-professionalisation of teaching as a career (Samuel 2008, 3). This process has led to staff developers re-thinking how staff development should take place. Some have responded with Teaching Development units (Roy 2007, 907) and others with programmes for collaborative staff development for quality teaching and learning; these involve action research, teamwork and review systems (Hudson, Radloff and Weir 2000, 163). Gravett and Petersen’s (2000, 31) focus falls on staff development from a transformational learning perspective.

Whilst researchers and teachers develop strategies and programmes for staff development, there are also very practical issues involved in developing staff. Finding time for professional development is an important issue. The role of the teacher is a very complex one which requires an individual who has multiple skills. Therefore,
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‘professional development can no longer be viewed as an event that occurs on a particular day of the school year, rather, it must become part of the daily work life of the educator’ (Cook 1997, 1). In addition, the contexts of schools also need to be considered. Staff development programmes have to be adapted to suit rural schools (Helge 1985, 1) and culturally diverse schools (Clair and Adger 1999, 1).

The New Jersey Department of Education (2006, 1) in the US holds the view that is a lifelong process of refining skills and developing new methods of teaching. It becomes imperative therefore that a staff development model is an encompassing one which promotes sustained development. The New Jersey Department of Education (2006) determined standards for the PD of teachers. They view PD as an ongoing process in which effective educators are lifelong learners. PD must engage each educator in a collegial and collaborative dialogue with other educators and education partners so that knowledge and expertise is broadened (New Jersey Department of Education 2006). Kennedy’s examination of the Scottish PD of teachers concluded that there still needs to be a more rigorous interrogation of the PD policy by all stakeholders in order for ‘the underlying conceptions of professionalism’ to be made more explicit (2007, 95). A study of PD of teachers in England and Wales (Gray 2005, 28–30) recommends that funding for PD should be more equitable and consistent, should have more quality assurance in the monitoring of PD provision, should develop a national planning framework for PD and should develop diverse PD activities.

Stein, McRobbie and Ginns (1999, 16) propose a model for technology education in Australia which has, at its core, reflection and development implemented through various kinds of experiences in technology education. In Australia, reference is continually made in their research to professional learning communities (PLCs). Richmond and Manokore (2010) find that facilitation and leadership plays a key role in establishing and maintaining PLCs in an urban setting, while Scott, Clarkson and McDonough (2011) examine the successful elements of PLCs and the collegial relationships in mathematics teaching. Williams (2008) examines professional development in the field of engineering in Western Australia using the DEPTH model where the school, pedagogical and subject knowledge of teachers was surveyed as a means of assisting them to develop professionally. A general model, however, would need to be more holistic.

COMMUNITY AND TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

A community of practice is described by Lave and Wenger as ‘a set of relationships between persons, activity and their world, over time and in relation to other tangential and overlapping communities of practice’ (1991, 98). Teachers, in essence, can be viewed as practitioners who belong to a community of practice because they share a joint enterprise, function as a community, and develop a common repertoire. Furthermore, resources are found within teachers, their teaching contexts or the programmes in which they teach. If professional development is to be successful,
Cook argues that ‘community support is essential for creating the professional development opportunities teachers require to help their students reach higher levels of learning’ (1997, 3). EduTech Wiki (2008) also contends that teacher development is improved when teachers as learners constitute a community of practice in which they form a group that jointly develops better practices and views professional identity construction as participation. Vygostky’s Social Development Theory (Watson 2001) promotes learning wherein the participation of learners is active and the teacher is viewed as one who helps to facilitate and improve the understanding of learners. By creating communities of practice, teachers are better able to cope with learning in a social setting.

**SOME MODELS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS**

Engelbrecht, Ankiewicz and De Swardt (2007, 579) examine the continuing professional teacher development (CPTD) model which entails the sponsorship, from trade and industry, of learning and teacher support materials (LTSM) for technology education in under-resourced schools. The Department of Education in South Africa uses CPTD in order to address the challenges of PD. They stipulate that CPTD must focus on a subject with few practitioners, such as technology. According to Brand (1997, 1–5), well-structured educational technology staff development programmes must focus on the following: time, varying needs, flexibility, technological support, collaborative development, remuneration and teacher recognition, sustained staff development, the link between technology and educational objectives, and providing intellectual and professional stimulation.

Stein, McRobbie and Ginns (1999, 11) describe Banks’ (1996) model for the professional development of teachers in *Design and Technology*. The first part of the model describes the teachers’ experience while the second part examines subject matter knowledge (in technology). Besides describing how the content of professional development in technology is constituted, this model also presents a plan of action for PD. Young (2006, 159) examines a model for PD of Further Education and Training (FET) college teachers in South Africa. By looking at practices in the UK and South Africa, he proposes two approaches. Firstly, he advocates the university-based model which forms a partnership with education departments. The second approach that is, the college-based model, seeks that partnerships be formed between groups of colleges and universities of Technology in a variety of vocational fields (Banks and Gouda 2006, 101).

The Egyptian model of teachers’ professional development is based on direct (face-to-face) training programmes; they train teachers abroad through overseas exchange programmes and via distance training. This distance training network is used to train large numbers of teachers and is the backbone of PD in Egypt (Banks and Gouda 2006, 98). This model seeks to develop teachers’ knowledge in order to improve their teaching. The Egyptian teaching and learning culture is also seen to influence teachers’ confidence and value toward their practice. Freeman’s (1989,
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37) model states that while teacher training addresses knowledge and skills, teacher development is concerned with change in the more complex aspects of teaching, awareness and attitude.

Boice (1992, 12) identifies four key elements in professional development activities. They are: involvement, task management, self-management and social networking. Hudson, Radloff and Weir (2000, 162–163) used these elements in a project they undertook. In their mechanisms for collaborative staff development for quality teaching and learning in the project, they identify five pillars: action research; teamwork; involvement and social networking; the establishment of internal and external review systems; and the principles of total quality management. They used this model to show how collaboration can be used to enhance the quality of teaching and learning.

Another interesting teacher development model was posited by Samuel (2008, 11–12). He identified the key forces that impact the identity and role of teachers as: the forces of one’s biography (personal experience); the forces of one’s context (macro-social, political, historical context); the forces of one’s institutional setting (micro-contextual forces); and the forces of programmatic impact (conceptions of curricula). He encourages teachers to look for new forms that revitalise the fields of force that may come from other sources (internally and externally).

The Japanese Lesson Study model has long been in practice (since the 19th century) (Ono and Ferreira 2010, 63). Essentially, this model investigates teaching and learning in a single lesson. According to Ono and Ferreira, ‘The most salient feature of lesson study is that teachers are collaboratively engaged in action research in order to improve quality of instruction’ (2010, 63). The value of lesson study in South Africa is that it can bridge the gap between national education policies and local classroom practice (Coe, Carl and Frick 2010, 214).

The Department of Education (2011) has, through a consultative process, published an Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa for 2011 to 2025. To address teacher education and development, this plan takes a holistic approach and focuses on the careers of the teachers through a number of phases: recruitment of potential teachers, preparation of new teachers, induction into the world of work, and career-long (continuing) professional learning and development. Output 1, which is to be led by the Department of Basic Education involves identifying and addressing the individual and systemic teacher development needs. The activities that relate to professional development are summarised as follows:

- Establish the National Institute for Curriculum and Professional Development (NICPD) who will develop the system for teachers to identify and address their developmental needs through the following:
  - Developing content frameworks to describe the content (theory and practice) related to the school curriculum.
  - Developing diagnostic self-assessments to determine core functions of teachers.

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Developing continuing professional development courses that are pedagogically sound, content-rich and of a high quality.

- Maintaining and develop an ICT platform to support the system.
- The new system must be aligned with the South African Council for Education (SACE) Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) Management System. (Department of Education 2011, 5)

The implications for teacher training can be found in The Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications document, which was gazetted in 2011. The document outlines the 11 basic competencies required of a beginner teacher (Government Gazette No. 34467 2011, 53) and also redefines the pathways for obtaining teacher qualifications. While change is good and necessary for any education system, alarm bells start ringing when the practices of other countries start making a repeated appearance in future plans. For example, outcomes-based education was imported from Australia and failed in South Africa. The current proposal of establishing professional learning communities (PLCs) to strengthen teacher professionalism (Department of Education 2011, 14) is yet another Australian import. A better import is the NATE 550 curriculum that was used in the early 1990s which is now revised and packaged as the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement.

THE RESEARCH

This research employs qualitative methodology and was conducted in two different contexts. The data collection instrument used for both samples was a questionnaire. The first sample was selected from two schools who had implemented a structured staff development programme. From the 25 staff at each of the schools, a random sample of five was chosen. The second sample was randomly chosen from 30 schools in the Capricorn District of Limpopo Province. The principals of the schools that were visited during teaching practice were requested to complete the questionnaire on staff development. This sample did not contain a structured staff development programme. The experiences of these teachers are used as a starting point for creating a model for staff development of teachers. The implications for in-service training are also discussed.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

In the structured staff development programmes, individual teachers were involved in presenting workshops based on issues that the staff of each school had identified. They were also involved in a review of programmes at the end of the year and recorded their experiences (which they found were very rewarding and enriching). Every educator involved in the structured programme benefited professionally and personally. The teachers were enthusiastic about being involved in the review process
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in which they were able to identify and prescribe a programme for the following year. They felt that this programme was ‘tailor-made’ for them and their school environment. The teachers also stated that they felt part of a team because all of the staff were involved and they were able to socialise with one another. They also want the programme to be repeated annually so that more aspects of PD can be covered.

The second sample involved unstructured staff development. The findings indicate that staff development is carried out sporadically and is not aimed at addressing the needs of the teachers. Only 30 per cent of the schools have a staff development policy and 65 per cent of the respondents felt that their school principals should be responsible for staff development. According to the findings, the main areas that staff development should focus on are: managing and implementing the curriculum, developing ‘team-spirit’, policy development, drawing a staff development plan and, implementing quality assurance policies. According to the findings, staff development can improving the attitude, performance and skills of educators by encouraging them to: study for higher qualifications; enrolling in in-service training by getting teachers to become personally involved, by inculcating responsibility in teachers; becoming involved in workshops, seminars, discussions; and enhancing their self-esteem. The identification of these areas indicates that teachers recognise the need and importance of PD, even though they are not necessarily all engaged in it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendation, based on this and existing research, is that schools should use a model for staff development that is tailored to suit the individual needs of their teachers and school and that staff development should be an ongoing process that is dynamic. The following principles of professional development form part of the proposed model:

• The teachers’ needs: improve qualifications, in-service training, curriculum specialisation (subject matter knowledge).
• The school’s orientation: location, history, organisational structure, scarce skills.
• Community needs: culture of the school’s community, national priorities, local challenges and personal needs.
• The wider context: global developments, national priorities, local challenges, personal needs.
• Development issues: evaluation, review, critical reflection, teacher input, teamwork, action research, policy, context.
The model above is a generic model, which can be used in any context. This means that any teacher or school can use this model when designing staff development programmes. It is acknowledged that the key element of PD is the context within which it takes place. Nevertheless, other influences like the school environment, the global, national and local impact, and the role of individual teachers all come together to create a PD scenario that can be best described as one that takes place at
different levels. These levels are interconnected to such an extent that it makes PD both a macro and micro issue.

The generic model that is proposed focuses on the teacher as the first agent in the professional development process. This means that the teacher exerts the greatest influence on his/her own professional development. The influence of other factors like global developments and the priorities of the school, community, and nation, all diminish in importance as the circle of influence widens. Depending where PD takes place, the influence of some factors can be greater. PD is a dynamic concept, which is often dependent on factors outside of a teacher’s sphere of influence. For example, a global economic ‘melt-down’ can impact on teacher development. In some cases, a change of government, new laws and policies, or the effect of HIV/AIDS can influence PD of teachers.

The geographical location of the school, especially in developing countries, has a serious impact on the time available for PD activities. The commute into rural areas on poor roads and the lack of reliable transport results in less time being available for teachers to spend on PD activities. The history of the school in relation to its teaching and learning culture may determine the nature of the PD. National priorities, for example, the language of tuition, or the amount of local content in the curriculum also create niches for PD.

IMPLICATIONS FOR IN-SERVICE TRAINING

It is impossible for in-service training to be planned and implemented if the needs of the teachers are not understood. In addition, teachers must be involved in their own learning during their in-service training. There are however, dangers associated with this. Firstly, teachers must be fully involved and must understand what they are engaging in. Secondly, leadership is crucially important to this process. In schools, the principal and management team must be thoroughly trained before implementing such a programme; if they are not, the entire process is undermined. Finally, the teachers must acknowledge their accountability and responsibility to their schools and students; if this is not the case, they are likely to default.

A culture of teaching and learning takes a long time to build in any environment, yet it can be destroyed in a matter of days. The sense of pride in teaching children is an honour and should be treated as such. The culture of teaching and learning is cyclical. It starts in the home, then moves to the school and is finally taken into the workplace. Therefore, professionalism needs to constitute a core attribute of in-service training. Morality and integrity are equally important factors that need to permeate in-service training initiatives.

CONCLUSION

This article argues, through the research presented, that structured PD is beneficial to teachers because it addresses their individual professional needs. Unstructured PD,
on the other hand, tends to be sporadic and not all schools and teachers implement it. A crucial factor to this process is time. Therefore, some researchers (Brand 1997; Cook 1997) have argued that PD should be intertwined with the daily practices of teachers. Various models of PD are also examined and a generic model is proposed. The final point is that teachers and schools need to be trained in order to implement staff development policies. This training has to be very practical and relevant in order for PD to be successful.

REFERENCES


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