



Collaborating towards teacher professionalisation

The role of SADTU





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Acronyms and abbreviations

CHE	Council for Higher Education
CPD	continuous professional development
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
ETDP SETA	Education and Training Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
ISPFTED	Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa 2011–2025
ITE	initial teacher education
MRTEQ	Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications
PDEs	Provincial Departments of Education
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers' Union
SNPDI	Curtis Nkondo Professional Development Institute



A research study on teacher professionalisation was commissioned by the Curtis Nkondo Professional Development Institute (SCNPDl) of the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU), in order to inform SADTU's understanding of and approach to improving teacher professionalism in South Africa. The overall aim was to inform the development of a teacher professionalisation programme that SADTU could implement in collaboration with the government and other education stakeholders.

Literature review

Starting from the consensual view that 'a profession is an occupation with a crucial social function, requiring a high degree of skill and drawing on a systemic body of knowledge' (Socket, 1985:2), the process of professionalisation is likened to a journey undertaken by teachers driven by ethical commitment and passion for their profession. In pursuit of professionalism, teachers immerse themselves in a process of continuous professional development (CPD) that takes them from the 'craft' culture of their own autonomous, everyday classroom activities and experience to a professional culture involving the exercise of professional judgement, based on both experience and theory, and developed through professional collaboration. The extended notion of professionalism includes broad engagement with networks, communities of practice and the professional literature as well as undertaking training leading to specialised knowledge that provides grounds to make sound judgements, while adhering to professional standards and a code of conduct to which teachers feel accountable.

Autonomy versus accountability

The autonomy/accountability paradox finds teachers caught between on the one hand being held accountable for learner achievement, with concomitant autonomy, being trusted and valued and finding professional fulfilment and, on the other, their own sense of diminished agency and self-efficacy in a context of prescribed or inflexible curricula and policy overload.

Arguments are made that the collective autonomy of professional associations replaces individual autonomy as a key element of professionalism (Kerchner and Cauffman, 1995, in Gamble, 2010), with the authority to enforce collectively established ethical and technical standards and rules of good service in the workplace. Professional bodies are thus able to exercise discretion over admission to practice, professional conduct in the workplace and removal of professionals from a profession's register for inappropriate conduct.

The teaching profession, more than any other, is noted to be characterised by 'a vicious circle of low status, lack of competitive resources, inability to control their own selection, training and qualification, and a degree of state interference leading to low bargaining power, low remuneration and low status' (Perkin, 1985). Professional teaching is thus influenced

by two interacting strands, one of exogenous factors in the form of policies and external pressures that shape what is done, and the other of endogenous factors internal to the teacher.

Even though the post-apartheid policy framework is favourable for the professionalisation of teaching, it contains contradictory elements and is out of alignment with the realities of teachers on the ground, with the result that both professionalising and de-professionalising factors are at play simultaneously. In considering the improvement of school quality in South Africa, Christie (1991) proposes that a way forward may be to build forms of teacher professionalism which go beyond conditions of work and which open debate on what teacher professionalism might mean.

The classroom context in South African schools

Given this theoretical context, there is wide agreement that teachers all over the world feel that a heavy workload, a lack of time and financial constraints are barriers to their pursuit of professional development. The South African classroom context was illuminated by the study conducted by Chisholm et al in 2005, which found that in practice the school week was shorter than it was supposed to be, the school day shorter than it was supposed to be and that the actual length of lesson periods varied throughout the day, with little teaching happening on Fridays. Teachers were found to spend 6–56% of timetabled time teaching, with this affected by class size, number of different subjects and grade levels taught, lesson transitions and administrative factors at school and classroom level. Teacher activities found to be especially detrimental to teaching time were administration and assessment, extra-mural activities, fundraising and breaks. Staff activities of preparation and planning, professional development, guidance and counselling, pastoral care, and management and supervision received insufficient time. Although subsequently developed Department of Basic Education (DBE) policy related to the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement has resulted in reductions in administrative and assessment requirements, among other things, time for teaching and learning obviously needs to be prioritised and safeguarded.

Role of teacher unions

In her review of the literature, Watson observes the inherently problematic nature of the essentially dichotomous roles of



teacher unions, with worker representation weighed against the 'emancipatory and transformative imperatives of education', all in the context of equity and redress issues (Watson, 2013:8). But while there is an apparent tension between working conditions and learning and teaching (Bangs & Frost, 2011, in Watson, 2013), vociferous teacher unions need not conflict with attaining high standards of learner achievement. Watson calls up a 'broad vision of the role of the teacher as an agent of change, within the interrelating transformative systems of union activity and education' (ibid:8).

In contradiction to accusations of neglecting issues of professionalisation in favour of their members' interests, unions have shifted focus from their traditional dual concerns to a role in teacher development and support, motivated by interest in helping to equip teachers to cope better with their specific diverse contexts and the belief that teachers must be more informed and involved in influencing professional practice (Bascia, 2001, in Watson, 2013:17). In this way, unions are found to have contributed to the broad educational infrastructure in regions through intense focus on teachers' professional and skills development (Bascia, 1998a, 2000, 2003, 2004, 2005, in Watson 2013:17). In this process, unions have also been able to influence education reforms by initiating and trialling professional development innovations that might not otherwise have been explored.

The notion of 'joint stewardship' is raised, which 'calls on teachers' unions to exchange "adversarial for cooperative practices" (Bascia, 2005:604) and to work with educational leaders to support local school reform, thus making an overall contribution to the professionalisation of teaching and the ultimate goal of improving student achievement' (Watson, 2013:20).

The emerging conclusion is that in their role as contributors to the professionalisation of teaching in South Africa, unions need to (i) clarify the duality of their roles and their priorities, relative to their present and historical relationship(s) with government; (ii) research the contexts in which they operate, the people they represent and, ultimately, the schools in which their members work; and (iii) reflect on and clarify their vision of the relationship between teacher quality, learner achievement and union activity. Collaboration with other stakeholders is central to this enterprise in which unions can help teachers' voices to be heard.

Strategies for teacher professionalisation

While it is widely asserted that teachers are not solely responsible for learner achievement, it must be acknowledged that they are uniquely well-positioned to make a profound impression. As such, while teachers as individuals must determine the aims, scope and strategies of their own, context-specific, job-embedded, ongoing professional development, that professional development must be a collaborative, evidence-based enterprise that de-privatises teaching and recruits the capacities and expertise of all stakeholders in the education system.

Although it can be argued that teacher development should 'be informed by a sound theoretical valuing of the resources

that novice teachers (and experienced teachers) already possess' (Samuels, 2009:756), studies in South African schools have identified that teachers' knowledge and teaching practices are in urgent need of improvement (Taylor, 2008). With the authority of knowledge viewed as central to professionalism (Freidson, 1994), the quest for teacher professionalism in South Africa must include ensuring that all teachers are capable of exercising their authority on the basis of systematic knowledge of their teaching subjects and their rationale for teaching and of translating this into effective teaching practices.

The importance to teacher professionalisation of the two aspects of (i) initial teacher education (ITE) and (ii) continuous professional development are unquestioned in the literature. Common features found by Darling-Hammond (2012) in outstanding ITE programmes are organised into three pedagogically grounded strategies (Watson, 2013:32–3):

- **Coherence and integration:** entailing proper sequencing; grounded in a strong theory of pedagogy; purposeful selection of schools and classrooms that model best practice; integration of roles between university faculty, teacher trainees and schools.
- **Clinical experience that bridges the theory/practice divide:** both intensive and extensive; closely supervised; modelled by expert teachers in instances of real teaching in classrooms characterised by diversity; incorporates new pedagogies for teaching; uses case studies as learning support.
- **Transforming school-university partnerships:** establishment of professional development schools, **lab** schools and school reform networks has been shown not only to provide highly effective learning environments for beginner teachers, but also to exert a transformational influence on the institutions.

Models for CPD are much debated, but key themes include that:

- The role of school principals in leading CPD is crucial (Moore et al, 2011);
- CPD is least effective when conducted sporadically as workshops or seminars (Broad & Evans, 2006; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; MacBeath, 2012; Scott & Rarieya, 2011; Steyn, 2009);
- CPD programmes must be grounded in valid and rigorous research that can account for the specificity of local contexts (Steyn, 2009);
- 'One size fits all' approaches are profoundly ineffective (Watson, 2013).

Professional standards for teachers

The theme of professional standards for teachers runs through the literature reviewed, both implicitly and explicitly. An ideal of teacher professionalism that includes specialised knowledge is embodied in professional standards and codes of conduct to which teachers feel accountable. The case for introducing explicit professional standards is observed in the research, arguing that standards 'can be used to guide practice and engagement of teachers', while at the same time 'can create

trust and enhance the image and standing of the profession'. Standards 'make explicit what counts as quality education and provide a common language for the discourse around quality education among all stakeholders' (SCNPDI, 2014: 41).

The collaborative nature of the process of construction of professional standards for teachers is necessary to resolve issues of contestation if the standards are to be owned by the teaching profession and key stakeholders. Standards based on professional knowledge, practice and engagement can be applied in the interests of learners, the profession and the public.

Development of teachers' standards must be firmly grounded in an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the nature of teachers' work and must cover the broad range of that work, including standards for CPD and for the provision of support for teachers.

Conclusions

The literature leads to conclusions that South Africa's institutional system for delivery of ITE and CPD should, among other considerations, ensure that teacher education and development is a continuum serviced through one integrated, multi-component institutional system, accessible to communities at local levels through appropriate institutional structures. CPD must be incorporated as a funded and organised component of the overall system, provided on an institutional basis allowing for delivery by a variety of role players and addressing national priorities as well as those of province, district, school and teacher. Delivery of ITE and CPD should lead to the development of a network of teacher development and research centres, operating as the hub around which partnerships between the state, formal institutions and private providers can be established.

Roles of education stakeholders

Among the key stakeholders involved in the professionalisation of teachers in South Africa are the Department of Basic Education (DBE), the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), the South African Council for Educators (SACE) and teacher unions. A tabulation of legislation and policy documentation relating to these parties between 1998 and 2015 is attached in Annexure A.

Teacher Development Summit

A transformative milestone in the South African education system was the Teacher Development Summit of 2009, which gathered together a wide range of stakeholders to discuss the many challenges relating to teacher development. Discussions were grouped into: (i) The South African context of teaching; (ii) What is teacher development? (iii) Creating a supportive policy environment; (iv) Resourcing and supporting teacher development; (v) Professional growth – from recruitment to retirement. Background readings and elaboration of the

discussions provide insight into the difficulties to be addressed and the plans that were developed for this purpose (Report – Teacher Development Summit 29 June–2 July 2009: ELRC; Resource Document – Teacher Development Summit 29 June–2 July 2009: ELRC).

Integrated Strategic Planning Framework 2011–2025

The Summit culminated in a resolution that a new strengthened, integrated national plan for teacher development should be developed, addressing appraisal and evaluation, support, resourcing and provisioning. In consequence, the Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa 2011–2025 (ISPFTED) was developed in collaboration between all the stakeholders represented at the Summit (DBE & DHET, 2011). The Plan spells out four main outputs, each with activities, to be led by the DBE, the Provincial Departments of Education (PDEs) and the DHET. Four requirements identified as essential to the successful implementation of the Plan are: enhanced collaboration among role players; a coordinated national system for teacher education and development; adequate time for quality teacher development; and sufficient funding. The Plan includes a diagrammatic representation of the relationships between the different role players as well as a planning map of the outputs, their activities and key tasks, lead agencies and delivery partners for each, and time frames.

All national role players were included in the National Teacher Education and Development Committee established to ensure collaboration and a coherent approach. This includes the relevant departments, as well as SACE and the unions, among others.

Department of Higher Education and Training

All ITE programmes are the responsibility of the DHET, with the qualifications structure for teacher education subject to the Minister's policy in terms of the Higher Education Act. The Council for Higher Education (CHE), through the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC), is responsible for quality assuring all education qualifications offered by universities. In 2007, the HEQC review of teacher education programmes found that many of these should be re-curriculated to meet minimum standards. The HEQC review also resulted in the introduction by the DHET of the policy on Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ), which replaced the Norms and Standards for Educators (Department of Education, 2000) and required that all teacher education qualifications be revised to comply with MRTEQ requirements by July 2014 (DHET, 2011). While the MRTEQ retained and reinterpreted the seven educator roles described in the Norms and Standards for Educators, it also listed a minimum set of competences required of newly qualified teachers. The MRTEQ deals with both ITE and CPD qualifications.

South African Council for Educators

Once students graduate with their teacher education qualifications, and before they may practise as educators, they must be registered with SACE. SACE is a professional council

established in terms of the South African Council for Educators Act No. 31 (2000) and is accountable to the Minister of the DBE for its mandate to register educators, to manage an educator CPD system and to ensure educators' adherence to the Code of Professional Ethics.

While SACE has the overall responsibility for implementation, management and quality assurance of the CPD system for educators, the DBE, the Education and Training Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority (ETDP SETA) and unions are strategic partners in the professionalisation of teachers and identification of teachers' systemic developmental needs.

Department of Basic Education

In its role in the professionalisation of teachers, the DBE is responsible for ensuring that teacher needs are identified and met with quality development programmes; that time is made available for teachers to participate in such programmes which are coordinated, monitored and reported on; and that the necessary funding is made available.

In accordance with the ISPFTED, the DBE is responsible for a number of key projects, including (i) Setting professional teaching standards for initial teacher education (ITE) programmes, in collaboration with SACE and DHET; (ii) Marketing and branding teaching as a career of choice; (iii) Induction, coaching and mentorship programmes for new and incumbent teachers; (iv) Promoting the code of ethics for teachers, in collaboration with SACE; (v) Assisting teachers in effective classroom management and administration; and (vi) Developing standards and guidelines for promotion of teachers.

Continuing professional development

The system that SACE has put in place for managing CPD for teachers allows CPD points to be allocated to endorsed activities and programmes offered by approved providers and credits each school-based teacher's CPD account with the points they have earned. Activities may be initiated by either the teacher or the school, or externally initiated. Implementation of the SACE CPD management system was planned to start in 2014 with a cohort of principals and deputy principals, a second cohort of Heads of Department in 2015 and in 2016 a third cohort of Post Level 1 teachers.

The DBE has established over 130 Provincial Teacher Development Institutes and District Teacher Development Centres that would provide in-service programmes and would be sites where professional learning communities can be established.

Recommendations

Focus group discussions conducted in six provinces with selected experienced representatives of the education environment raised the following key themes:

- There are insufficient support structures for teachers. Policies seem not to acknowledge the realities of the teaching environment and are experienced more as prescriptions for controlling teachers' behaviour than provisions supporting increased effectiveness in creating and maintaining an educationally sound environment where teaching can occur.
- Teachers' low levels of commitment to their profession are partly due to: administrative overload; having to teach subjects for which they are not trained; poor working conditions, physical infrastructure and overcrowded classes; undue delays in filling vacant teaching posts; being in the profession as a result of the economic imperative of following the availability of bursaries rather than a calling; and lack of being valued by society.

Discussion of the steps necessary to build a teacher professionalisation programme indicated that while CPD is a core requirement, initiatives that are supported by mentorship programmes aimed at improving performance in specific areas and in particular teachers are more likely to succeed than 'one-size-fits-all' training programmes. This should further be underpinned by the establishment of professional learning centres where educators willingly open themselves and their classrooms to peers for the purpose of guidance and development in their subject area and/or classroom management skills.

South Africa's education system has been described as a 'dynamic complexity' of 'historically driven, rapid and continuously evolving pursuit of learner achievement' (Watson, 2013:3). A further observation (ibid:6) is that 'What makes education work in a country is not the sum of a series of unrelated initiatives, but rather the coordination, feedback and integration of a broad range of diverse policies in a coherent and strategically planned system.' While the ISPFTED was South Africa's effort to bring all aspects of teacher development into a coherent and strategically planned system, care should be taken that further initiatives are coordinated, fed back and integrated into this system.

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ANNEXURE A

Teacher development roles of stakeholders between 1998 and 2017

Time frame	Department of Basic Education (DBE)	Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET)	South African Council for Educators (SACE)	Teacher union	
				Social activism	Traditional
1998	Employment of Educators Act (EEA)	Formal and Informal Programmes for Teacher Training and Development		Professional Development activities – ongoing	
1999	Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM)				
2000	Norms & Standards for Teachers – Roles National Teaching Award (NTA)	South African Council for Educators ACT			
2001	Whole School Evaluation (WSE)				
2003	Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS)				
2005	Report of the Ministerial Committee on Teacher Education (MCTE)				
2007	National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development (NPFTED)				
2008	National Report on the Development of Education				
2009	Occupational Specific Dispensation (OSD)/Teacher Summit/National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU) Report				
2010	Dept of Basic Education (DBE) Action Plan 2010/ National Development Plan (NDP)–2030				
2011	Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in SA (ISPFTED) National Institute for Curriculum and Professional Development (NICPD) 2011–2015 Provincial Teacher Development Institute (PTDI) & District Teacher Development Centre (DTDC) National Teacher Education and Development Committee (NTEDC) & Provincial Teacher Education Committee (PTEC) Focus – Foundation Phase (FP)/Teaching Schools (TSs)/Professional Practice Schools (PPSs) PLCs	Policy on Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ)	Basic Education Laws Amendment Act BELA Act		
2012	Programme Agreement with teacher unions	All universities revising their teacher education programmes, in order to align with MRTEQ, which was gazetted in July 2011		Programme Agreement with teacher unions	
2013	Roles & Responsibilities of Districts	Implementing MRTEQ Undergrad	Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) Cohort 1	Establish Professional Development Institutes (PDI)	
2014	Workshop for Teacher Centres Draft Norms & Standards for Teacher Centres (TC) Draft Standards for Principalship Current initiatives – setting standards for teacher training/teaching as career of choice/induction and mentoring/ethics/effective classroom management/ setting standards for teacher promotion	Implementing MRTEQ Postgrad	Cohort 2	Conducting Research	
2015			Cohort 3		
2016–2017	Collaborative process to develop Teaching Professional Standards, led by SACE and managed by JET				

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