

Junior Secondary Educators' Views on the Strategies for Implementing Continuing Professional Development Programs in One Rural Education District

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ABSTRACT This study assessed the effectiveness of the current strategies for implementing continuing professional teacher development (CPTD) programs in rural junior secondary schools in one Eastern Cape Education District in South Africa. An interpretive paradigm that allowed the use of a qualitative research design was adopted. Eighteen participants took part in the study. Qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews and the data was analyzed qualitatively. Findings suggest that strategies for implementing CPTD programs did not impact the teachers' classroom practices. Results also indicate that teachers were not motivated to attend out-of-school CPTD programs as they felt not rewarded by such programs. Teachers preferred professional development that was within the school. Moreover, findings indicate that teachers had already started engaging in communities of practice in their schools on their own. Lastly, findings equally show that district officials were not visiting schools. This study concludes that CPTD programs must continue to exist with the intentions to finding lasting solutions to implement effective strategies. Some recommendations have been made.

INTRODUCTION

The area of Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) is currently receiving great attention locally and internationally (Boaduo 2010; Banks and Smyth 2010; Doige and Grooves 2011; Adu and Okeke 2014; Glover et al. 2014; Koziol et al. 2015). Literature attributes this recognition to the wider policy agenda of a lifelong learning provision and to the view of a CPD strategy as designed to ensure that teachers are given more opportunities for relevant, focused and effective professional development being placed at the heart of the schooling system (DoE 2008; Davids 2009; Singh 2011; Smith and Harrison 2013; Steyn 2013; Selemani-Meke and Rembe 2014; Taylor 2015; Taylor and Mayet 2015). Numerous studies, for instance, Dadds (2006), DoE (2010), Adedeji and Olaniyam (2011), Hlalele (2012) and Lazarus et al. (2014) suggest that teachers require continuing support in the form of professional development activities that will enhance their beliefs in their power to make a difference to their pupils' learning. More research supports the above argument by highlighting that highly skilled teachers can make a difference to the quality of teaching in order to sustain the schooling system (Barter 2008; Epp-

ley 2009; Burton and Johnson 2010; Gulston 2010; Edwards and Li 2010; Steyn 2011; Ebersohn and Ferreira 2012; Koziol et al. 2015).

The response to the above understanding was that the National Ministry of Education considered CPTD as an essential component of a comprehensive teacher education of high quality (DoE 2008, 2010; DBE 2011). Such an innovation on teacher professional development activities is aimed at improving learner achievements, particularly in poorer and disadvantaged rural communities. Du Perez and Roux (2008) and Abrahams (2015) note that the CPTD bears the need for more attention to be given to the professional development needs of teachers in rural South Africa imperative.

Problem Statement

Evidences abound to suggest that the Government of South Africa is well aware of the role and value of CPTD in the overall improvement of the quality of teachers as well as that of learning (Maistry 2008; DBE 2012; Steyn 2013; Ngcoza and Southwood 2015). Various approaches and models of CPTD are also in place in most of the schools in the country (DoE 2010; DBE 2012; Taylor 2011). Although CPTD programs are in place in the Education District where the present study was conducted, it is regrettable that the implementation of such programs has to deal

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with the major task of attitudes of the people. Despite numerous interventions, research studies indicate that teachers have not improved (Burton and Johnson 2010; DoE 2010; Ridley 2011; Pillay and Saloojee 2012; Pitsoe and Maila 2012; Steyn 2013; Adu and Okeke 2014). Against this background, the current study was conducted to assess the effectiveness of the strategies for implementing Continuing Professional Teacher Development for rural junior secondary school teachers in one Education District in the Eastern Cape Province.

Main and Sub-research Questions

The main research question that guided this study was:

How effective are the strategies for implementing continuing professional teacher development programs for rural junior secondary school teachers?

Two sub-research questions were developed to ensure that the objectives of the study were accomplished as follows:

1. How do teachers assess the effectiveness of the strategies for implementing continuing professional development programs in the Butterworth Education District?
2. What are the strategies preferred by teachers to make the implementation of continuing professional development programs effective in order to meet their needs?

Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPTD)

CPTD is an ongoing education for practicing teachers, with a view to assist them in keeping up to date with the rapid and numerous changes taking place in the school environment (Engelbrecht et al. 2006; Ofojebe and Chukwuma 2015). CPTD is driven by the need to both extend and renew teacher practice, skills and beliefs (Doige and Grooves 2011). In general, teachers require continuing support in the form of professional development activities in order to implement and maintain reform-oriented practices that promote learner performances in the school. In line with this understanding, teachers are attracted to professional development activities because of the belief that such activities and programs will expand their knowledge and skills, contribute to their growth, and en-

hance their effectiveness with students (Guthrie and Shackleton 2006; Hayes 2009; Hlalele 2012; Adu and Okeke 2014; Ngcoza and Southwood 2015). As a tool for change, CPTD carries an aspect that change knowledge can be very powerful in informing education strategies and in turn, getting results (Fullan 2006; Azano and Stewart 2015).

This appears to be the reason why Doige and Grooves (2011) state that CPTD should be school-based and organized by teachers themselves, with teachers researching their own practice in school-based communities of enquiry. This is the reason why Wenger's (2007) social theory of learning postulates the idea of adult learning as involving participation in a community of practice. Earlier, in analyzing the community of practice, Lave and Wenger (1991) referred to it as groups of people who share a concern or passion for something they do and learn how to do better as they interact regularly. Such a view articulates that the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers and that the only way to improve outcomes is to improve instruction (Barber and Mourshed 2007). Hence, Reeves (2010) notes that irrespective of the existence of the various models of professional development, educational professional development should be used to enhance the teaching and learning process. Similarly, Lee (2011) also calls for CPTD on the basis that it needs to change the mindset of teachers. He stressed that the context in which teachers are working must be considered and let teachers not be deskilled, overregulated and overmanaged.

Despite the general acceptance of professional development as essential in education, reviews of professional development consistently point out the ineffectiveness of most programs (Loxley et al. 2007; Msila 2010; Msila and Mtshali 2011; Ncube 2013). It is understood that many programs fail because they do not specifically take into account the factors that motivate teachers to engage in professional development, and the process by which change in teachers typically occurs (Guskey 2002a). Bearing these factors in mind, policy developers should understand that what teachers hope to gain through professional development is specific, concrete, and practical ideas that directly relate to the day-to-day operation of their classroom (Kirsten and Clive 2012; Lind and Stjernstrom

2015). These arguments imply that across all levels of the education system, planners and implementers of professional development must learn how to critically assess and evaluate the effectiveness of what they do. Discussions about specific goals of professional development must be achievable goals irrespective of the hiccups on the way. CPTD is one major crucial element of education reform policies in South Africa and as such, policies are implemented to attempt to make schools function effectively (DBE 2008).

Continuing Professional Teacher Development in Rural Areas

Continuing professional teacher development has been viewed by many countries as central to education reform with particular reference to the sustainability of rural schooling (Kriek and Grayson 2009; Loucks and Matsumoto 2010; Kirsten and Clive 2012). Most importantly, countries such as Ireland, Scotland and China view professional development of teachers as a part of teacher management and is increasingly linked to the requirements of the knowledge-based society and lifelong learning (Zafeirakou 2007). Based on these sentiments, studies such as DoE (2004a; 2008) and Wallin (2008) unilaterally agree that practical training, based on the realities of the classroom and ongoing on-the-job support is the critical factor for any successful teacher education. Similarly, Harmon et al. (2007) argue that improving the professional practice of teachers requires actions that address the unique context and conditions in rural schools. These views seemingly reveal that improving teacher practices is little more than rhetoric, unless realities surrounding these challenges are addressed.

One other critical challenge is the changing of teachers' attitudes and community leaders. Teachers had to be assisted to refrain from the accepted norm that seldom rewards high achievement for their classroom practices. What is noticeable in this regard is that after several years of experience in the classroom, teachers get set in their ways of thinking about teaching and learning. To avoid such a situation, it is imperative that retraining takes place over time, and that it is both theoretical and practical. School reform is therefore challenging as it underpins a change in thinking, a paradigm shift. In this instance, the teachers' professional

development needs to focus on giving them appropriate attitudes, knowledge, skills and values to perform their tasks well and resourcefully. As for Boyer (2006) reflecting on professional development, education reform cannot succeed if it arrives pre-packaged from the outside. He insists that teacher communities, local educational leaders, parents and business leaders, must locally lead these reform efforts. These ideas are supported by Steyn (2013) who adds that more meaningful teacher development occurs when teachers collaborate in on-going and intensive interactions with their colleagues.

What is significantly understandable from these views is that the South African schooling model, developed in an urban context, is not so relevant to the rural setting. It is important to understand the distinctive characteristics of rural settings, to which schools must be responsive, and to support interventions that enhance rural schools and their grounding in a rural environment (Gardiner 2008). Such an understanding goes with how rural communities experience education. These views may perhaps help overcome the problem facing rural education, which is its lack of definition because "defining rural is a critical task for rural education researchers, as it has implications for all phases of a study" (Koziol et al. 2015: 1).

Sustaining Professional Development

Darling-Hammond (2006b) argues that the key to sustaining teacher effectiveness and promoting continuous growth is through high quality in-service professional development. Timperly (2008) mentions that sustainability of such CPTD programs depends both on what happens during the professional learning experience and on the school conditions that are in place when external support is withdrawn. It appears that sustained improvement depends on teachers developing strong theoretical frameworks that provide them with a basis for making principled changes to practice in response to student needs. Basically, these changes must be about developing teachers' knowledge and skills, building teacher professionalism and improving the teaching and learning environments in which they work (American Foundation of Teachers 2010).

Sustainability therefore exposes a culture of learning that is different than that of traditional

schools as there is a culture of continuing learning among all staff members. Such innovations of the continuity of changes had to be pursued through staff development becoming routine, school culture supporting innovation, collaboration focusing on achieving goals, consistent leadership, district structures and political context supporting reform ideals. All these attempts significantly remove the traditional understanding that teaching is an isolated profession. In effect, Hlalele (2012) concedes that the best learning occurs through collaboration with others, which must be a new model of school culture and organization that actively supports educational change and improvement.

It has now become imperative to comment on the importance of the notion of community of practice to the sustainability of CPTD. The usefulness of the communities of practice mostly refers to the fact that teachers are grounded in the concrete, empirical realities of their communities (Gray 2004; Barter 2008). With most teachers drawn primarily from the local population, they often have strong attachments to their communities. These views led Smith and Gillespie (2007) as well as Kirsten and Clive (2012) to believe that strong local attachments can sustain the teachers' and principals' dedication to fostering an education that will contribute to the quality of local life. Thus, CPTD embedded in the communities of practice serves as a platform where teachers can share their experiences and contribute to one another's understanding of the meaningfulness of their work as teachers.

Sargent and Hannum (2009) argue that the effectiveness of CPD can be sustained through connections between professional learning and the immediate needs of teachers. This notion relates to the understanding that participation in professional learning communities has an impact on school professional culture. This means that participation leads to increased involvement, ownership, innovation, and leadership among teachers. A vital point is that teachers must regularly interact about teaching and learning, mostly through activities of joint study and discussion about teaching or through activities of peer observation. This collaboration is what led to Hord (2004) bringing teacher workforce factors into discussion of teaching quality, maintaining that teachers who felt supported in their own ongoing learning and classroom practice were more committed and effective than those who

did not. Similarly, Sargent and Hannum (2009) also contend that professional learning communities are able to play an important role in the integration of formal knowledge of teaching, on the one hand, and practical knowledge, on the other.

In the understanding of the present researchers, all these collaborative efforts are new CPTD initiatives, which are aimed at moving away from the traditional learning of the top-down viewpoint. This position also appears to be supported by Pitsoe and Maila (2012). These are in-service education and training programs offered in the form of one-short approaches, which are inappropriate in the context of the current education reform efforts where teachers have little or no input in their organization. To this reason, Msila and Mtshali (2011) postulate that professional development cannot be limited to single workshops; professional development should be a well-planned process. A career-long professional development therefore empowers teachers who have been developed to develop others, as they would know what it is that is required for effective teaching.

Looking at the underperformance in most schools in the rural areas (Nelson Mandela Foundation 2005), the strategies used in delivering CPTD among teachers are doubtful in their usefulness in bringing the desired outcomes. It is in this instance that Kilbane Jr. (2010) portrays communities of practice as sustaining teacher development in order to overcome the challenges in their teaching practices. The major significance about these learning communities is enhancement of ongoing teacher development in the workplace. Such a situation benefits the rural schools as teachers in the far away outskirts of the rural areas had to be developed on on-site basis. To support these notions, Msila and Mtshali (2011), Pitsoe and Maila (2012) posit that communities of practice, as they are a bottom-up approach, provide space for teachers to organize themselves in their development according to their needs and the needs of their working fields. In effect, this is a constructivist approach, which is diverse in nature as it caters for all the practices of the teachers in their real world.

Guskey and Professional Development of Teachers

This study was conceptualized in terms of Guskey's (2002a) theory of teacher change. Gus-

key (2002b) notes that professional development programs entail systemic efforts to bring about change in the classroom practices of teachers, their attitudes, beliefs, and in the learning outcomes of students. This theory implies that teachers should approach their work with a change orientation: an orientation that suggests that constant reflection, evaluation, and experimentation are integral elements of teaching role. Teachers are expected to implement or review particular curriculum on the basis of new knowledge and ways of knowing, to change styles of teacher-student interaction depending on needs of the student population. Notably, Guskey (2002a) and Guskey and Yoon (2009) suggest that high-quality professional development is central to improving education and bears the acceptance that professional development is central to improvement in education. However, enhancing student-learning outcomes is a result of becoming a better teacher, which comes through professional development.

According to Guskey (2002b), teachers tend to be pragmatic in that, through professional development, they hope to gain specific, concrete, and practical ideas that directly relate to the day-to-day operation of their classrooms. This is the reason why Warren (2008) posits that for teacher change to occur, teachers need to implement new ideas presented at staff development in their own classrooms and evaluate student learning. Thus, the most significant changes in teacher attitudes and beliefs occur after teachers begin implementing a new practice successfully and can see changes in the students' learning outcomes. A major element from Guskey's (2002a) model of teacher change is that teachers must have a positive reaction to a professional development experience before policymakers, facilitators, developers and implementers can expect them to learn anything from it. In this regard, teachers must form the planning stage where they will be made to view professional development as a purposeful and intentional endeavor that should be designed with specific goals in mind. Teachers should have an input in the planning and development of new programs according to Guskey (2002a).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

An interpretive paradigm was adopted because of its assumption that reality is socially constructed by every unique individual from within his or her own unique contextual inter-

pretation (Kumar 2010; Marshall and Rossman 2011). The study was then conceptualized in terms of the qualitative research. Qualitative research uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomenon in context-specific settings (McLeod 2008). The study then followed a qualitative case study design. By adopting this approach, the researchers encountered and understood the social interaction expressed in the daily lives of teachers in the context of CPD and the meaning that the participants themselves attributed to their interactions (Blaikie 2010; Marshall and Rossman 2011).

Eighteen participants participated in the study comprising 9 post level one teachers, 3 heads of department (HODs), 3 principals, 2 of office-based subject advisors and one head of curriculum (Chief Education Specialist) were purposively selected for the study. It is important to note that purposive sampling involves selecting individuals known to meet certain clear criteria. This is what Punch (2005) regards as sampling in a deliberate way, with some purpose or focus in mind. Data was obtained through the semi-structured interview technique. According to Gray (2004), semi-structured interviews are non-standardized, and are often used in obtaining qualitative data. Being semi-structured, the researchers developed four separate interview guides to cater for the different four categories of participants in the study. To ensure data trustworthiness, various interview guides used during the interview sections with participants, were face-validated by a panel of experts.

Data collected was analyzed in a step-by-step process, which began with an intensive and repeated reading of the material in order to reflect on the data records. As the reading progressed, the researchers attempted to see across the data, and above the individual documents, in an attempt to establish the general themes and ideas in the various data obtained. By so doing, a general sense of the information obtained was reached, while it accorded the opportunity to reflect on its overall meaning such as the impression of the overall depth, credibility and use of the information (Creswell 2014). Reading data also enabled the researchers to discover topics and individual aspects, which were then used to formulate various analytical categories as would be seen in the section on findings. The process involved assembling of all the data on a topic, thinking and rethinking about all the data. In this process, various analytical categories were then assembled into a

guide of analysis and coding. In almost all cases, qualitative research involves coding in order to reduce what otherwise would be voluminous qualitative data into a more meaningful and manageable piece (Richards 2009; Creswell 2014).

Ethical Issues

For criteria of ethics, Marshall and Rossman (2011) assert that reasoning must move beyond the procedural to focus on matters of relationships with participants, with peers and with the larger community of discourse. According to Marshall and Rossman (2011), ethics exist in the researchers' actions and in the ways of doing and practicing research. The researchers were mindful, and observed all ethical issues relating to gaining entry to the research sites, participants' rights, informed consent, confidentiality, protection from harm, anonymity, and maintaining professionalism during the course of the study as well as when disseminating any information from the study.

In keeping with these ethical commitments, the researchers identified participants with the following conventions:

- ♦ **CES:** Head of Curriculum Section
- ♦ **SA1:** Subject Advisor 1
- ♦ **SA2:** Subject Advisor 2
- ♦ **SP1:** School Principal 1
- ♦ **SP2:** School Principal 2
- ♦ **SP3:** School Principal 3
- ♦ **HoD1:** Head of Department 1
- ♦ **HoD2:** Head of Department 2
- ♦ **HoD3:** Head of Department 3
- ♦ **ST1 to ST3:** School Teachers from School A
- ♦ **ST4 to ST6:** School Teachers from School B
- ♦ **ST7 to ST9:** School Teachers from School C

The above convention reflects ethical convenience that enabled the researchers to observe all ethical issues and ensured that the researchers refrained from using the participants' real names when reporting on the data.

FINDINGS

The following briefly represent the main findings of the study partly reported in this paper. Findings of the study indicate that the strategies for CPTD implementation in junior secondary schools in the Education District that participated in the study were challenged by teachers,

as they yielded no positive results for teacher classroom practices.

Secondly, teachers were not motivated to attend off-site CPTD programs. The reason that participants gave for their lack of motivation was that they considered attending such programs to bear no changes in their classroom practices.

Findings also indicate that district officials did not envisage any other strategy for implementing CPTD programs that could consider the context of rural schools even though there was no improvement in the learner results.

There were no consultations from the district officials in the design and planning of CPTD programs. As such, teachers were just instructed to attend one-day or three-day workshops. Such a situation did not allow any opportunity for CPTD programs to cater to the needs and experiences of rural teachers.

Fifth, participant teachers noted that short-term workshops needed to be done away with in the context of the current reform changes, as they were not committed to the career of a life-long learner. Teacher preferences in this context were that teacher professional development must be job-embedded.

The capacity of district officials as facilitators of CPTD programs was noted to be far below standard as facilitators were unable to deliver to the expectations of the teachers. Teachers found it unacceptable to work with unprepared subject advisors whose roles were also taken up by untrained teachers.

Findings also showed that teachers were already engaged in communities of practice in their schools but received no support from the district officials. This attested to the fact that subject advisors were not visiting schools.

Finally, the absence of school visits by district officials placed rural teachers in isolation, as they did not receive the expected support and monitoring as required by the education system. The themes that emerged from the data analysis have been followed through in the discussions in the subsequent section.

DISCUSSION

Strategies for Implementing CPTD Programmes

An Off-site CPTD Programme

Teachers interviewed found out-of-school CPTD strategy ineffective as it took them away

from their schools to a neutral venue in town and/or district office halls. Information at these workshops was cascaded down from the top to the bottom, a situation reflecting that the needs and experiences of rural teachers were not considered. Engelbrecht et al. (2006), Steyn (2013) and Ngcoza and Southwood (2015) regard the cascade model as a training program in which large numbers of teachers from different schools were involved and trained during centralized CPTD program. However, teachers who participated in the study regarded moving them away from their schools as the rejection of an inner resource, which was a supportive resource in the development of informed and sensitive inner judgment among them.

Teacher Involvement in CPTD Programs

Teachers found themselves left in the wilderness by not being involved in the design, planning and organization of CPTD programs. The teachers believed that the introduction of CPTD programs was meant to address the need for suitable qualified teachers in South Africa with the aim of improving classroom practices (Steyn 2008). Such an initiative goes with the potential to inform and influence the policy and its implementation wherein teachers become key agents for such a scenario. There is no way therefore, that teachers can be left behind in the planning, design and implementation of CPTD programs as its implementation has the ultimate aim of improving teacher classroom practices and thereby improving learner performance. To emphasize this understanding, Steyn (2008: 16) concedes, “teachers have the most direct, sustained contact with students, as well as considerable control over what is taught and the climate of learning”.

Teacher involvement at any stage of CPTD programs leads to the professional growth of teachers when such programs acknowledge a teacher’s personal and professional needs (Lee 2011; Steyn 2013; Ngcoza and Southwood 2015). Teacher involvement in the planned stages of CPTD programs is therefore very crucial, while lack of teacher involvement will result in demotivation amongst such categories of teachers, as was the case with the participants in the present study. As such, Steyn (2011) believes that selecting suitable CPTD programs that align with the teachers’ beliefs and experiences so that

teachers have the desired attitudes both before and after PD programs is an important challenge for District officials.

On-site CPTD Programs

Teachers interviewed pointed out that their professional development should primarily be on school site and be part of the daily school operations. In support of this view, Steyn (2013) argues that teacher learning is a dynamic process and cannot be understood by separating the professional development from the environment in which teachers undertake their learning. From this stance, there emanates three principles that must be followed when undergoing professional development. These include the fact that learning must be situated, requires open and sustained dialog among members of the organization, and depends upon the propensity to reflect on data about organizational performance (Howley and Howley 2004; Abrahams 2015).

Without any hindrances, such actions promote the individual professional growth of teachers, and ongoing support for teachers and the school. The teachers believed that it was at school where they were able to practically demonstrate to the learners if possible, using available resources. As changes continually take place in educational policy and curriculum, CPTD is therefore essential to addressing the gaps in the training that arise through time and change (Singh 2011; Taylor 2015). Also, Kennedy (2005) advances a transitional and transformative model of CPTD implementation that locates teacher development within the school program. Having these two models well planned, they will undoubtedly replace the ineffectiveness of transmissive models, which appeared to form the strategies of CPTD implementation in the participating Education District in this study.

Communities of Practice

Wenger’s (1998) social learning theory and adult learning commands that communities of practice are formed by people engaged in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavor. In this state, teachers will engage in conversations about their teaching practices (Steyn 2013). Hence, DoE (2008) espoused communities of practice that provide the setting

and necessary support for groups of classroom teachers to collectively participate in determining their own developmental trajectories, and to set up activities which will drive their development. According to Sargent and Hannum (2009) and Koziol et al. (2015), teachers must regularly interact about teaching and learning as is the case with teacher collaboration in lesson planning or through activities of peer observation. This is the very same concern shared by the teachers who were interviewed during the present study.

Participants voiced that the more preferred strategy for implementing CPTD programs was that of communities of practice within their schools and/or surrounding schools of the very same circuit. Such a stance emanates from the fact that the teachers considered themselves not being capacitated through participation in out-of-school CPTD programs. This was because the teachers were unable to implement the information and knowledge they received from an off-site CPTD programs. Thus, organization of the programs did not cater for the needs and experiences of rural teachers. Steyn (2013) asserts that the implementation of CPTD can be enhanced through teacher professional learning communities. Hirsh (2012) therefore considers that successful professional learning communities enhance the sharing of effective practices between teachers and are more likely to lead to improved student performance. This is why communities of practice are regarded as an ongoing teacher-directed learning, which removes teacher isolation as a barrier to effective professional development and quality teaching (Chappuis et al. 2009).

Duration of the CPTD Programs

Participants were not contented with the time allocated to conducting CPTD programs. Teachers generally felt that the duration for implementing CPTD programs should be more than the usual one or three day workshops. The limited time, as workshops mostly started late because of differing reasons such as teachers arriving late from faraway places or subject advisors coming late; all contributed to make programs ineffective. In this regard, the DoE (2008) and Maistry (2008) considered that the teacher professional development is a continuous practice that lasts for the duration of the career of a committed teacher.

Facilitators of the CPTD Programs

District officials interviewed revealed that they did not have any qualifications as SAQA accredited professional development facilitators. In such an instance, as District officials were not delivering any quality information or not delivering at all, teachers lacked confidence and preferred to pursue their own development in their respective schools. The fact that subject advisors have no qualifications for facilitating CPTD programs needs a serious consideration. The National Policy Framework (DoE 2008) suggested the establishment of a dedicated CPTD project that will try to ensure that the substantial resources currently devoted to the professional development of teachers are effectively utilized in contributing to the lasting improvement of the quality of teaching. For such reasons, it is unacceptable that District officials are being groomed by their colleagues who also had no qualifications on how to facilitate CPTD programs. This raises a question if the employment requirements had been followed in order to employ suitable candidates that are meant to develop and capacitate teachers during such a crucial transition period.

Feedback and Monitoring of CPTD Programs

Guskey (2002a) posits that teacher education has been designed to initiate change in the classroom practices, change in teacher attitudes and beliefs, and change in learner performance outcomes. But to get positive results from those objectives, teachers need feedback and monitoring. The most important finding pertaining to these issues was that subject advisors were not visiting schools. Moreover, schools did not receive support even from the Education Development Officers (EDOs) as they only dealt with management and governance issues when they visited the schools. According to Smith and Gillespie (2007), professional development is more effective when it includes opportunities for follow-up activities that make a strong connection between what is learned and how to apply it in the teachers' own context.

CONCLUSION

As the efforts to transform rural education take place through CPTD programs, this study

finds that teacher preferences pertaining to their development had to be considered by the education authorities. Teacher change must be sustained through organizational processes. This entails that short-term programs of teacher professional development must be done away with. Instead, sustained and intensive professional development is more likely to make impact as evidenced through various data obtained from the teachers who took part in the study. To this end and following various sentiments as extrapolated through sources reviewed in the course of this study, the researchers conclude that rural teachers can and do develop alternative identities to sustain them in unique challenges associated with teaching in rural schools.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study suggest that discussions and debates around the context of teaching should not exclude the participation of teachers. Findings also indicate that systems placed to transform education require well-coordinated CPTD programs that must involve the participation of teachers in rural schools without which much progress may not be recorded. The involvement of teachers is imperative given that evidence from the participants in the study suggests that most of the facilitators of the programs were not qualified to perform the given task. Rural schools will continue to be marginalized as long as the District officials are not aware of the value of the communities of practice. The same situation will also prevail leading to the fact that CPTD programs that are not job-embedded may not yield the expected changes of teacher practices and learner performance. School visits by District officials are not taking place and as such teachers do not receive the required monitoring and support to improve their practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended for CPTD program designers and officials in the Department of Basic Education to take into account the spatial allocation of rural schools as against the urban and sub-urban schools that are less constrained by the challenging factors for implementing the program.

School-based CPTD models must be encouraged, as they tend to drive professional development of teachers better. Such programs are

also built on collaboration, collegial interactions and the fostering of relationships.

It is a fact that teachers complained about traveling expenses as central venues were far away from their schools. This emanates from the fact that there was no policy for funding travelling expenses to the out-of-school teacher development programs in South Africa. This should be taken into consideration by the education authorities as a way of correcting its systems for CPTD implementation.

CPTD facilitators have no qualifications to facilitate CPTD programs. As subject advisors had been trained through the cascade model, it required a skill for them to train the cluster leaders who would then pass the third-hand information to the teachers who had to produce the required outcomes of CPTD programs. Such strategy needed to be changed, as there were no positive outcomes coming out of it.

Teachers prefer on-site CPTD programs in the form of communities of practice. The teachers have already undertaken such an account. Communities of practices must therefore be entrenched in schools as a regulated strategy for implementing CPTD. This recommendation comes as teachers claim to be demoralized by the out-of-school CPTD implementation through short-term workshops.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Amongst the limitations, the researchers had to conduct this study after the official working hours in order to avoid interrupting programs of the official working hours. This meant that the researchers had to negotiate the available time with the participants. In most cases, the researchers had to visit the participants in their different living places. Such situations placed some delays in the investigation as some appointments had to be postponed at the request of individual participants.

Some of the teacher participants expressed fears about the consequences of their involvement in the study as they felt the outcome might compromise their job security. It was therefore probable that such categories of participants were not as open as the researchers would have expected.

Finally, there were also financial costs associated with traveling to the participants' convenient places for the investigation.

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