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Approaches to In-servicing Training of Teachers in Primary Schools in South Africa

Abstract

This paper focuses on the approaches used by school heads in helping their growth and their teachers in primary schools in Limpopo and Mpumalanga Provinces of South Africa. The Department of Basic Education expects school heads and teachers to bring change in their school performances. The problem is that in these primary schools heads and teachers' specialised knowledge is a problem. Interviews were conducted with school heads and some teachers completed a questionnaire. In the studied primary schools in-service training of teachers is done by teacher unions, School Management Teams, universities, through an Integrated Quality Management System and through donor assistance.

Keywords: school head/principal, teacher, pre-service, in-service, professional development, approach, instructional leader, strategic leadership

Introduction

Today's teachers' roles and accountabilities have changed, because of the way that students understand teachers, and the qualifications of the teaching-learning process itself have changed. Traditional teachers were always considered to be the source of knowledge and were expected to transfer that knowledge to their students (Gokalp, 2016). Preparing pre-service teachers to acquire classroom teaching competencies is one of the fundamental functions of education faculties. Teachers' professional development is a vital aspect to successful integration of novice teachers into classroom teaching. Dearth of professional development may possibly delay the smooth integration of the Internet into the curriculum. Some schools do not provide full access of computers to teachers (Ncube & Tshabalala, 2014). This paper seeks to understand how school heads and teachers are developed in the primary schools.

In the past teacher preparation programs have historically focused on management skills (e.g., scheduling, strategic leadership, and financing; which are necessary but insufficient for meeting the adaptive challenges leaders of all kinds face in today's world. Instead, programs need a more holistic focus, one that also comprises relational learning that is, a focus on building relationships), collaborative leadership, and reflective practice, and leaders must understand the nature of teachers, and their social-emotional dimension of leadership (Drago-Severson, Maslin-Ostrowski & Hoffman, 2012). Professional development in this context denotes to the principal when they update individual knowledge, skills, and application of new approaches and changes as well as improving their teachers' skills.

There is now strong evidence that teachers' views are formed during their previous education as students, and that these employ a powerful influence throughout their careers. Pre-service teachers' teaching experience is assumed to be scant. Factors influencing pre-service teachers' views about learning and teaching

differ, but the theoretical input received in the earlier years is the most influential factor of all (Debreli, 2016). Studies of pre-service teachers and teachers have highlighted the importance of teacher education program delivery and design and agree that university and school partners should work together and collaborate to improve learning for all including teachers, pre-service teachers (Livy, Vale & Herbert, 2016).

Method

A qualitative approach was used in exploring the in-service training approaches in primary schools. Data were collected by means of interviews and a questionnaire which comprised largely of close-ended questions and few open ended question. The researcher also collected the questionnaires in personally in order to maximize the rate of return of the instrument. Interviews were conducted with the heads of the primary schools.

In-service role of the head of the school

According to Redford (2015) competencies are classified as knowledge, skills and attitudes and they can be developed in the context of education and training. In brief the competencies are as follows:
- Specific knowledge (e.g. knowledge of the workings of the economy);
- Skills (e.g. planning, organization, analysis, communication, negotiation, working individually and in teams, risk assessment, capacity to identify opportunities for personal and professional/business activities); and
- Attitudes (e.g. sense of initiative, proactive, independence, motivation and a determination to meet objectives).

It is believed that for a school to achieve effectiveness and improvement in academic achievement, school leadership should no longer reside in a single person or certain administrators; it needs to be distributed among the major educational players across all levels. As instructional leader, the head is the critical point within the school to influence the quality of individual teacher instruction, and the height of students' achievement (Minadzi & Kankam, 2016). Insufficient resources and lack of a good relationship between the heads and their teachers are some of the problems impeding effectiveness of a school (Mzee, 2016). Irrespective of the type of the school and location, all teachers in the present time are expected to have knowledge, skills and attitude related to their profession and responsibility. For example, teachers must know different styles of learning including language, community and the cultural context of learning (Islam, 2016).

Collaborating with other teaching colleagues presents significant values for the professional development of primary teachers. These are the values of sharing knowledge, teaching skills, pedagogical methods and new techniques of assessment and solving problems with the help of experts, mentors, veteran teachers, educationists and professionals of inter discipline/profession and intra-discipline/professionals in other places rather than only in a school (Jumani, 2016). In the supervision of curriculum implementation due to lack of time to undertake supervisory duties head teachers can use the Management By Walking Around (MBWA) method to supervise their teachers. The idea of this practice is to listen

and respond to ideas and problems voiced and take effective action about them (Awiti, Onderi & Raburu, 2016). Approaches to teaching pre-service and in-service teachers must provide a contextualised experience, mediating the process with flexible guidelines to accommodate evolving issues (Alvarez, Kilbourn & Olson, 2016).

Leadership role of the head of the school

Head teachers can rely on applied transformational leadership in empowering teachers to fulfill their contractual duties, meet the needs of the school, and go beyond the 'call of duty' for the betterment of their schools (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2012). They must be able to inspire, motivate, and appeal to teachers through a range of skills and behaviors, which communicate their value to their schools. The benefits of this leadership style are that the leaders improve the bottom line, which occurs as employees regularly surpass expectations; morale is increased through leaders' efforts to fully integrate followers into the core functions of the institution. Transformational leadership has a moral imperative wherein leaders aim to destroy old ways of life to make way for new ways of life, while articulating vision and values to keep empowered followers on a unified path (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2012). These leaders redistribute power to their followers regardless of their philosophy.

Findings

This part will be looking at the role of the heads in their own development; their role in the development of teachers; and how they help struggling teachers.

Each of the school's findings will be presented verbatim and separately. The names of the primary schools used in this paper are fictitious to protect the identity of the participants. All the schools from Limpopo Province will begin with an **L** in the fictitious name and those from Mpumalanga province will begin with an **M**. I will start with the question then the responses from the heads of the schools.

Which workshops, courses or program did you participate in while you are a principal?

Lala Primary School: 'The leadership workshop. At University of Pretoria there was a module called "Lead and Manage People". I learnt that when you lead people you do not leave them behind you lead with them you do not leave them at a distance'.

Lonely Primary School: 'I involve donors'.

Loving Primary School: 'I got permission to download a book from the internet. Some teachers that are appointed permanently have weakness in teaching and this is where we come in to help them develop'.

Leading Primary School: 'After I attended the workshop on monitoring and assessing. This was for the department of education. We were taught to monitor the teachers and assess them'.

Livingstone Primary School: 'Every second year we have… in Limpopo, all the school management teams get together – also the SAOU gives a workshop – it's a

two day workshop… So the SMT members who are members of the SAOU get to go… All of them get together, yes… and it's usually a two-day workshop'.

Longlive Primary School: 'I must say that the SAOU (formerly an Afrikaans teachers association, lately an organisation with aims and functions more closely aligned with a teachers' union) – they do create a lot… they do create opportunities'.

Mahlangumgwezane Primary School: 'I involve the people in the teaching of learning of a learner and I also attended workshops'.

Mahamba Primary School: 'Quite a number of workshops. Courses that I think made an impact on me were courses on school leadership which I did through the University of South Africa'.

Mgwezane Primary School: 'I attended workshops, different workshops err for managers and leaders arranged by the Department of Education'.

Merry-go-round Primary School: 'I think it's still the same because I attended workshops on subjects that I am teaching'.

Motherland Primary School: 'Hmm I attended the management workshops, the curriculum workshops mostly also, the SGB Workshops, the school safety programmes, the school feeding programmes'.

Maphepha Primary School: 'While I was a principal I was trained as a trainer for SGB elections'.

Mjindini Primary School: 'Presently, there is a programme we are doing it with the University of the Free State called an ACE in School Management and Leadership'.

Mighty Primary School: 'Mmm, it was induction by the Department of Education, the district'.

What is your role in the development of teachers in your school?

Lala Primary School: 'Usually, the way I do things should set example for the teachers'.

Lonely Primary School: 'In terms of educator development we start from SMTs to teachers, I delegated duties to staff members in written form. I capacitated my teachers in not using corporal punishment. The SACE code of conduct must be adhered to'.

Loving Primary School: 'What we are doing now is that I do my own personal class visits I do not leave it to HODs only anymore because there was a time that I did it and I got complaints from the parents asking me to move their children from one class to the next'.

Leading Primary School: 'We sometimes call meetings with all teachers and we look at the performance of the learners according to subject performance'.

Livingstone Primary School: 'We are only 3; we develop and help each other'.

Longlive Primary School: 'I assist them by going into to their classes and see how they handle a class situation'.

Lalaphansi Primary School: 'I must make sure that I know them in the sense of their strong and their weak points… if I… I can't develop them and I can't be part of their development if I am not aware of areas in which they must be developed, so that for me is very important, and I am not doing that alone… the system of the school… the structure… the deputy principal, the heads of departments are all working together with that'.

Mahlangumgwezane Primary School: 'As a manager I have to see to it that my teachers are developed in so many areas like in teaching by inviting motivational speakers'.

Mahamba Primary School: 'I facilitate regarding issues that I detect to be a weaknesses. I requested officials to come and conduct a workshop on leave matters in 2012'.

Mgwezane Primary School: 'I help them using the IQMS'.

Merry-go-round Primary School: 'I make sure they attend workshops and training all the time. I always delegate them to do some of the office duties'.

Motherland Primary School: 'My role is to ensure that my teachers are developed, we have a programme here IQMS'.

Maphepha Primary School: 'I think it's very key because I... working with the SMT on managing the curriculum, when we review the performance review, we identify the challenges that teachers have. Then we organise in-service training for them'.

Mjindini Primary School: 'We encourage them to register (external intervention)'.

Mehlomadala Primary School: 'My role here is to mentor and to do coaching and motivation. I also do the delegation thing to develop them. I also invite the CIs to help the teachers'.

How do you help struggling teachers?

Lala Primary School: 'I will bring the teacher in my office and give him the policies. You see, at first you must provide the teacher with the tools to work with'.

Lonely Primary School: 'We assist each other especially when it comes to challenges'.

Loving Primary School: 'The teachers who have diploma unfortunately, most of us think that we know it all. I talk with the HOD and bring members of the SMTs when I do class visits'.

Leading Primary School: 'I ask an educator from another school to assist the teacher after teaching hours'.

Livingstone Primary School: 'Workload is too much. If one educator has to attend workshop it comes impossible to teach the learners'.

Longlive Primary School: 'The subject head to assist this specific teacher and also look at the subject meeting… help them with the subject meetings'.

Leeway Primary School: 'I can't find ways of helping them if I am not aware of the fields in which they are struggling, so after identifying that, making use of our system, our structures at our school – there's heads of departments, there's subject heads… so that's very practical'.

Mahlangumgwezane Primary School: 'I talk and try to assist them in their work. And however, if we cannot assist we involve the departmental officials'.

Mahamba Primary School: 'I through the SMT determine where they need improvement. I assign HOD's to administer the progress, and the turnaround strategies'.

Mgwezane Primary School: 'I have one on one session with them; I also advise them to go to other schools to get information if possible'.

Merry-go-round Primary School: 'I always encourage teachers to work, to assist each other, to do peer- teaching'.

Motherland Primary School: 'Through the class support visit'.

Maphepha Primary School: 'We develop a turnaround strategy for them and then through the HOD's and the departmental officials we help them'.

Mjindini Primary School: 'I call struggling teachers; I call them to the office and from there we discuss as to where does the issue lie and then she will indicate and then from there I'll ask whether she has enough resources for that particular subject'.

Mighty Primary School: 'We actually do peer coaching and then I ask for assistance from the CIs'.

Conclusion

Heads develop themselves through workshops, donors' involvement, Internet, IQMS, teacher unions, universities (UNISA, UFS and University of Pretoria). They develop teachers by setting example, delegation, mentoring, coaching and motivation, SMTs and HODs involvement, through workshops, IQMS, and motivational speakers. Teacher development strategies used by some Mpumalanga and Limpopo schools are individually guided staff development, observation/assessment and training strategies in developing their teachers. The inquiry and teacher involvement in a development/improvement process is not used in both the provinces.

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