Development support groups' contribution towards professional development of teachers through a training needs analysis

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Training needs analysis assists in identifying the kind of training that an individual employee needs and ensures that the training addresses any existing problems. The South African Department of Basic Education has made different provision for professional development of Foundation Phase teachers. One of them is the support that should be provided by the development support group (DSG) as part of the integrated quality management system (IQMS). The aim of the study reported on here was to explore the role of the DSGs in identifying professional development needs of teachers and the provision of relevant support. An observation-based qualitative study was undertaken to investigate how the DSGs identified professional development needs of teachers with the purpose of offering appropriate support. Five DSGs from 5 schools were purposefully selected to provide rich information about the issue under study. A case study approach was used to gain an in-depth understanding of the process. The findings reveal that needs analysis was not effectively executed since most DSGs combined different IQMS processes on the same day rather than allowing time between the evaluation and the review. I recommend that the role of the DSGs be reviewed and strengthened, and their activities be properly monitored to produce the envisaged teacher development.

Keywords: development support group; integrated quality management system; needs analysis; peer collaboration; performance standards; personal growth plan; professional development; professional learning communities; training needs

Introduction

Needs analysis is a step that should be done before any form of training is conducted with teachers. In schools, needs analysis assists in identifying the required training with the aim of providing focused teacher professional development (PD). Supporting this statement, Pavlou, Anagnou and Fragkoulis (2020:490) maintain that having a clear understanding about the teachers' specific needs can lead to training programmes that are "organised with targeted educational strategies and improvement of professional performance." In many countries, PD has become a priority for educational policymakers (Borko, Jacobs & Koellner, 2010; Huber, 2011). In a study conducted in Pakistan, it was found that PD training was not based on needs assessments of principals, teachers or schools; therefore, implementation was not successful (Magno, 2013). Croft, Coggshall, Dolan, Powers and Killion (2010) maintain that, unfortunately, many PD activities are unrelated to teachers' actual practice and school development needs. Rather, support needs should be identified by teachers themselves after analysing and reflecting on their own performance rather than from external coercion.

Educational reforms in South Africa have emphasised improving teachers' performance by offering more learning opportunities for teachers (Borko et al., 2010). The reforms have been occasioned by curriculum changes, the impact of rapid technological development and the need for online teaching due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic (Soudien, 2020). Without proper continuing PD, teachers may not be able to impart specialist knowledge, skills and attitudes required to improve learner achievement (Bayar, 2014; Lomos, Hofman & Bosker, 2011). According to skills development legislation (Republic of South Africa, 1998), all employees must undergo training to improve their skills in the workplace.

The IQMS is currently the tool used to evaluate teachers' performance in South African schools (Department of Basic Education [DBE] & Department of Higher Education & Training [DHET], 2011; Department of Education [DoE], 2003). The IQMS was negotiated in the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) with teacher unions and signed as ELRC Collective Agreement No. 8 of 2003 (DBE & DHET, 2011). Each teacher should choose one peer to form part of the support group that will contribute towards their PD. The support group is called the development support group (DSG) (DBE & DHET, 2011; DoE, 2003) and should consists of a member of the school management team (SMT) who is an appraisee's immediate supervisor, a peer chosen by an appraisee and the appraisee. The SMT is the leadership at the school which includes the principal, vice principal and the heads of departments (HoDs). The DSGs must hold pre-evaluation meetings to discuss the personal growth plan (PGP) (prioritised needs), observe and evaluate the teacher in class, hold post-evaluation meetings and give appropriate support to the appraisee. With this study I explored the role of the DSGs in identifying teachers' PD needs and offering appropriate support. Identification of training needs is the initial step in providing support to teachers without which teachers may be trained in areas that do not address their diverse needs. Some of the roles performed by the DSGs are more or less similar to that of professional learning communities (PLC) which focus on contributing to teacher development and the enhancement of learner achievement (Pang, Wang & Leung, 2018). Elaborating on the definition of the PLCs, Pang et al. (2018:232) reveal that although there is no universal definition of PLC but "there is consensus in that an effective PLC has the capacity to promote and sustain the learning of all professionals in the school community with the collective

purpose of improving learner performances." Darling-Hammond, Hyler and Gardner (2017) contend that teachers can create communities that positively change the culture and instruction of their entire school.

Large numbers of Foundation Phase learners in South Africa cannot read for meaning and according to their expected grade levels (DBE & DHET, 2011; Pretorius & Spaull, 2016). Despite the training interventions offered to teachers, South African learners are still underperforming in the Foundation Phase. Most PD programmes do not focus on individual teachers' needs but are generic, state-funded, skills programmes. Elaborating on the same issue, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) assert that teacher PD is often determined without understanding what teachers needed and that the shortfall is exacerbated by a lack of shared vision around what quality teaching entails.

To determine how PD can best benefit teachers, I focused on the role of the DSGs as specified in the IQMS, such as identification of training needs and offering support to the appraisees. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) maintain that without systems in place to ensure that teachers' needs are being appropriately identified and met, PD would not be as effective as it should be.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

The study was underpinned by the theory of social constructivism. Social constructivists maintain that meaningful learning occurs when individuals are engaged in social activities such as interaction and collaboration (Amineh & Asl, 2015; Vygotsky, 1987). Every human being needs to collaborate with other people wherever they find themselves and needs to share ideas and learn from one another. Vygotsky believed that knowledge is constructed through dialogue and interaction with others (Churcher, Downs & Tewksbury, 2014).

The framework was appropriate for this study because the study focused on how the DSGs collaborated and interacted with the appraisees with the purpose of identifying training needs (DBE & DHET, 2011; DoE, 2003). Each DSG must observe the teacher in class, do a needs analysis, decide what kind of support a teacher needs and then provide relevant support. Everything is to be done in a democratic manner and in consultation with the appraisee. The DSG should not impose anything on the appraisee. Instead, the DSG suggests ways of addressing the appraisee's needs. For instance, if a teacher has a challenge in teaching reading, the DSG needs to discuss the kind of support they can offer.

Vygotsky (1978) believed that learning is a "continual movement from the current intellectual level to a higher level which more closely approximates the learner's potential" (Amineh &

Asl, 2015:14). This movement occurs in the zone of proximal development as a result of social interaction. The DSG needs to apply Vygotsky's ideas to assist the appraisee to move from the level of actual performance to the desired level of development. They should ensure that the identified problems are addressed until they observe that the appraisee is confident and performing as required.

According to Kalpana (2014:28), social constructivists emphasise the importance of "social contexts of learning and that knowledge is collaboratively created and constructed." It is crucial that teachers interact with other professionals, including outside experts who can both acknowledge teachers' best practices and critique their misconceptions constructively (DBE & DHET, 2011). Through interacting with other people, they may share their views and generate a shared understanding related to the concept or phenomenon. This validates the importance of all teachers being engaged in activities like reciprocal teaching, peer collaboration, cognitive apprenticeships, problem-based instruction, web quests, anchored instruction, and other methods that involve collaborative learning.

Learning as a collaborative activity

Teachers may benefit greatly when they engage in working together as PLCs. PLCs involve peer-led learning, an increasingly popular feature of the world's most advanced school systems (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010; Pang et al., 2018). The DSGs perform similar roles as they also collaborate to share information and learn from one another. It is through sharing information and experiences with the group that the members learn from each other and have the opportunity to develop themselves personally and professionally. The idea of communities of practice is influenced by the social constructivist perspective of learning.

The DBE and DHET (2011) affirms that co-operative, collaborative, collective and self-directed teacher learning and development processes highlight the positive effects of teamwork and of sharing views and useful classroom teacher-learner support material. According to Werner and DeSimone (2012), as adults, teachers are self-directed and have acquired vast knowledge and experience that can be used as a resource for learning. Teachers may share their teaching experiences as a team, design lesson plans and conduct research about classroom issues. Like the case of PLCs, it was hoped that appraisees could view their DSG members as learning partners and are willing to contribute to their professional learning through engaging in interactions, dialogues, feedback, and reflections (Pang, Wang & Leung, 2016).

Comparing community of practice (CoP) and PLCs, Owen (2014) maintains that the construct of PLCs is more specific to the educational context – the same that applies to DSGs. Elaborating on the CoPs, Vangrieken, Meredith, Packer and Kyndt (2017:49) contend that an effective CoP is built on three main principles: "mutual engagement, a joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire." Members of the DSG may acquire crucial lessons from the CoP and the PLCs as they all focus on teachers' PD. According to Vangrieken et al. (2017), CoP members share their professional experiences and are devoted to the process of PD and constitute a mutual engagement foundation.

Methodology
Research Design
This was a qualitative study embedded in the interpretivists research paradigm in which an exploratory case study research design was employed. This enabled me to obtain an "in-depth exploration of a bounded system based on extensive data collection" (Creswell & Poth, 2018:45). The interpretivist paradigm enabled me to understand how participants in a study interpret the world around them (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). The purpose of employing the qualitative approach was to collect rich, non-numerical data through interacting with the participants in their natural settings (Ningi, 2022).

Participants and Sampling Procedure
Purposive sampling, which relies on a researchers' judgement, was used to select appropriate participants (Sharma, 2017). The participants were five DSGs from five primary schools; each DSG consisted of three members – a total of 15 teachers who participated in the study. I believe that the selected participants would yield rich narrative information.

In presenting the findings I used codes S1–S5 to represent School 1 to School 5. As mentioned earlier, each DSG consisted of an SMT member (a principal, vice principal or HoD), peer and appraisee. The chairperson of the DSG is the member of the SMT. To protect the participants' identity, I used pseudonyms, for example, S1 Chairperson, S1 Peer, S1 Appraisee. The same pattern was used for all schools. Table 1 below shows the categories and the number of participants in the study.

Table 1 Categories of participants

School	School management team (SMT)	Peer	Appraisee
S1	S1 – Chairperson	S1 – Peer	S1 – Appraisee
S2	S2 – Chairperson	S2 – Peer	S2 – Appraisee
S3	S3 – Chairperson	S3 – Peer	S3 – Appraisee
S4	S4 – Chairperson	S4 – Peer	S4 – Appraisee
S5	S5 – Chairperson	S5 – Peer	S5 - Appraisee
Total	5	5	5

Data Collection Tools
I selected semi-structured interviews, unstructured classroom observations and document analysis to generate data for the study. To answer the main question of study, How do DSGs contribute towards PD of teachers through conducting a training needs analysis?, I needed to observe the DSGs' post-evaluation meetings as one of the IQMS process where teachers' PD needs were identified. Unstructured observations were relevant for the study since I attended the meetings as an observer without any pre-defined plans and characteristics.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted after post-evaluation meetings to follow up on progress and to seek clarity on certain issues of the meeting proceedings. Field notes and recordings were used to ensure that there was a backup in the event that recordings were corrupted or unusable. I also reviewed IQMS documents. The use of these methods of collecting data ensured triangulation, the importance of which cannot be underestimated in ensuring the trustworthiness of the data and results (Fusch, Fusch & Ness, 2018).

Data Analysis
Interpretive data analysis was used to make sense of the participants' voices, reflections and constructions of reality. Thematic analysis assisted in summarising key features of a large data set, as it forced me to take a well-structured approach to handling data, helping to produce a clear, organised final report (Queirós, Faria & Almeida, 2017). I followed six phases of data analysis, namely, 1: Familiarising myself with the data; 2: Generating initial codes; 3: Searching for themes;

4: Reviewing themes; 5: Defining and naming themes; and 6: Producing the report.

Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations included obtaining ethical clearance from the institution where I was employed and obtaining approval to conduct the study from the DBE. The participants were provided with forms of informed consent in which they were informed about the scope of the study, their confidentiality and their right to withdraw. I also sought permission from the participants to audio-record the semi-structured interviews.

Trustworthiness of the Study

I enhanced the trustworthiness of the findings by ensuring credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Various strategies were employed, such as member checking, where transcripts were shared with participants to allow them to verify that their views and activities were accurately recorded. Additionally, prolonged engagement with the participants enabled me to gain a deep understanding of both the context and the participants (Fouché, Strydom & Roestenburg, 2021).

The validity of the data collection tools was ensured through triangulation, using methods such as semi-structured interviews, observation, and document analysis. These tools provided rich, detailed descriptions of the context and enabled cross-checking and confirmation of findings, thereby ensuring the credibility of the results (Fouché et al., 2021). I used interview and observation guides to maintain a consistent set of questions and prompts for all participants, which increased the reliability of the results. Recording the interviews and taking field notes allowed me to capture the full details and nuances of the participants' responses, while also focusing on listening and engaging with them during the interviews.

Findings

The main findings that emerged from the data were synthesised and presented thematically using narrative analysis. I believed that the post-evaluation meetings of the DSGs would yield valuable information as they were the meetings that took place at the end of the IQMS process where an appraisee's needs analysis should be done. In the meeting, the DSG is required to identify the appraisees' strengths and weaknesses. After identifying the appraisee's areas of development, the DSG should then be able to assist the appraisee based on their needs.

The data collected during classroom observations, document analysis and semi-structured interviews are integrated and reported on below.

Six themes evolved from the data:
- Different explanations during the exposition of the purpose of the meeting
- Identification of the appraisee's strengths
- Challenges that hinder effective teaching and learning
- Different views in scoring the appraisee's performance
- Shortcomings in the identification of areas of development
- Recommendations for development

The themes are discussed in more detail below:

Different Explanations During the Exposition of the Purpose of the Meeting

I observed that the DSGs defined the purpose of the post-evaluation meeting differently. Exposition of the purpose is the first item in the programme provided by the DBE that the DSGs should talk about. Understanding the purpose of the meeting was to assist the DSGs to perform their duty according to the DBE guidelines. The members of the SMTs had the responsibility to chair the DSG meetings. Three chairpersons of the DSGs described the purpose of their meeting as follows:

> *The purpose of this meeting is to discuss how the appraisee performed in class during our classroom visit* (S1 Chairperson).
> *The purpose of this meeting is to fill in DSG assessment report form* (S2 Chairperson).
> *We are here to fill in the post-evaluation report form* (S3 Chairperson).

The IQMS manual specifies that the purpose of post-evaluation meetings is to give feedback to the appraisee after classroom observation (DoE, 2003). After listening to how the chairpersons of the DSGs presented the purpose of the meeting, I realised that it was explained differently. S2 and S3 provided limited statements of the purpose of the meeting as they indicated that it was to fill in the report forms and said nothing about giving feedback to the appraisee. The chairpersons S1, S4 and S5 explained that the purpose of the post-evaluation was to discuss the performance of the appraisee which aligned with what is indicated in the IQMS document.

Identification of the Appraisee's Strengths

In the programme provided by the DoE, the second item that the DSG had to discuss was the strengths of the appraisee (DoE, 2003). The DSGs identified the strengths presented as performance criteria in the IQMS manual without elaborating. Below are some of the responses:

> *The appraisee was able to present her lesson well and to use different techniques of involving learners* (S2 Peer).
> *The teacher was able to interpret the subject matter to the level of the learners* (S5 Chairperson).
> *Teaching aids used were clearly visible, brightly coloured and appropriate for the level of the learners* (S4 Peer).

I believe that most DSGs did not do justice to this part because they did not elaborate on what they had identified as strengths. The analytical discussion should assist the appraisees to understand what they were doing right and to be encouraged to improve. One DSG member who provided some elaboration is quoted below:

> *The teacher has a clear knowledge of the subject. This was evident on the performance of the learners when they were discussing in groups. I commend the appraisee for her ability to discipline learners well. I also acknowledge that the appraisee paid attention to even slow learners.* (S1 – Chairperson)

Challenges that Hinder Effective Teaching and Learning

In all the DSGs, the chairpersons asked this question of the appraisees: *"What were the contextual factors that hindered you from producing high quality performance in class?"* One common challenge was identified by three appraisees (S1, S2 and S5), namely, that a large number of learners had serious learning problems – especially in reading. They indicated that as they were using pre-planned lesson plans provided by the DBE, it was difficult to properly assist learners who had serious learning problems as they needed to focus on curriculum coverage. Elaborating on the issue, the participants indicated that learning problems were possibly caused by a lack of learning resources both in schools and the environment. Three appraisees (S1, S4 and S5) identified the issue of learners who did not do homework because there was no one to assist and supervise them at home. The other participants identified absenteeism, late-coming and a lack of learning space. S4 identified the following factors:

> *Non-availability of reading material in the learners' homes.*
> *Lack of facilities like libraries at school and in the community.*

It was evident that several contextual factors hindered teachers from performing their duties properly. Some contextual factors were beyond the appraisees' control but required support from the school governing body (SGB), SMT, parents and learners to solve. Those factors were a lack of facilities like libraries, reading materials at home, absenteeism and late coming.

Different Views in Scoring the Appraisee's Performance

All the DSG meetings were held after classroom observations of the appraisees. Members of the DSGs were required to give their ratings of the appraisees' performance. According to the IQMS manual, the appraisee should be scored between 1 and 4, ranging from unacceptable to outstanding, for their performance on each performance standard (DoE, 2003).

The members of the DSGs were required to observe teachers based on the following performance standards (DoE, 2003):

- Creation of a positive learning environment
- Knowledge of curriculum and learning programmes
- Lesson planning, preparation and presentation
- Learner assessment
- PD in the field of work or career and participation in professional bodies
- Human relations and contribution to school development
- Extra-curricular and co-curricular participation

During the meetings, each DSG member had to provide their ratings based on how they thought the appraisee performed. I observed that in some instances the chairpersons provided the lower ratings (2 or 3) but the peers provided high ratings, which were aligned to what the appraisees scored themselves, which was mostly four. Some discussion ensued before consensus was reached. I observed that, in some instances, consensus was based on compromise after long arguments – usually as a result of two votes against one. The conversation between the participants in S3's DSG meeting went as follows:

> *Could you please explain why you have given the appraisee a score of four on the creation of a positive learning environment* (S3 – Chairperson).
> *I believe the appraisee deserves a four because her classroom is well arranged. Learners are seated in groups which makes it easier for them to interact with one another. The classroom is very neat* (S3 – Peer).
> *I agree with you, but I do not think the appraisee deserves a 4 because there are more important elements that she needs to improve on regarding this standard. The classroom needs to promote a literate environment; text and colourful pictures should be displayed. The appraisee needs to make learners feel comfortable and relaxed during the lesson. She needs to encourage all learners to actively participate in the classroom discussions.* (S3 – Chairperson)
> *I believe I deserve to get a 4 as my peer has explained, I have ensured that I praise learners who answer questions well* (S3 – Appraisee).

In the above statements, the peer and the appraisee did not present a sound argument. They wanted a total score for the performance standards, forgetting that a 4 meant that the appraisee displayed outstanding performance in that area. A similar pattern was observed in the other DSGs (S1, S4 and S5). A score of 4 implies that the appraisee excelled in that area, which meant that the DSG did not need to prioritise that area for support.

Shortcomings in the Identification of Areas of Development

The purpose post-evaluation meetings is to enable the DSGs to identify the appraisees' areas of development so that they could provide them with

the relevant support. I observed that each performance standard included a number of criteria. According to the IQMS manual, four descriptors derived from the 4-point rating scale are provided for each criterion. In the post-evaluation meetings members were supposed to identify areas for development in terms of the criteria in the performance standards; for instance, if the DSG observed that a teacher struggled with the assessment of learners, they should record the area of development as knowledge of assessment techniques.

The DSGs chose the following criteria (Table 2) as recorded in the IQMS manual as areas for development:

Table 2 Areas of development identified by the DSGs

School	Performance standards	Related criteria
1	PD in the field of work or career and participation in professional bodies	Holistic development Involvement
2	Learner assessment	Assessment
3	Lesson planning, preparation and presentation	The use of teaching aids Learner involvement
4	Learner assessment	Knowledge of assessment techniques Application of techniques
5	PD in the field of work or career and participation in professional bodies Learner assessment	Leadership and coaching Organisation and administration Record-keeping

I observed that S3 chose "the use of teaching aids", which was not one of the criteria in the IQMS manual. At the end of the meeting, I asked why this element was included, to which the response was: "*It was important to prioritise it as I have observed that the appraisee needed more support on the use of teaching aids which is also referred to as resources*" (S3 – Chairperson).

I observed that the identification of areas of development was not properly discussed as the DSGs only listed the criteria without elaborating. The use of criteria limited the DSG members as they had to focus only on what was given in the IQMS manual which did not cover all contexts. S3 decided to be true to the appraisee's needs by choosing what they thought was a crucial need although it did not appear as one of the related criteria of the performance standard. This indicates that perhaps the DBE should have allowed teachers to indicate any areas of development that they felt they needed without being limited by the given standards and assessment criteria.

Recommendations for Development
The DSGs were asked to discuss their recommendations for improvement with the appraisee and the kind of support that would be beneficial to the appraisee's development (see Table 2). Only S4 discussed the recommendations. The DSG members recommended that the appraisee needed to apply different assessment methods to cater for all the learners and collect a variety of information for each learner. For leadership and coaching, the DSG advised the appraisee to be actively involved and to play a leading role in motivating learners to participate in all school activities together with other teachers.

The other four DSGs (S1, S2, S3 and S5) skipped or ignored this part in which they were required to discuss what they recommended the appraisee should do to improve. This part is important because it indicates the kind of support that the DSG should provide the appraisee, and to follow up what they had agreed upon in the post-evaluation meeting.

After the post-evaluation meeting, I asked the DSGs whether they had conducted a pre-evaluation meeting and had been discussed at the meeting. Two participants responded as follows:

> *Due to the limited time, we could not conduct a pre-evaluation meeting, but we filled in the template for pre-evaluation meeting during this post-evaluation meeting* (S4 Chairperson).
> *Yes, we have met earlier today for pre-evaluation before going for classroom observation. It is convenient for us to do all the processes in 1 day* (S5 Peer).

The DoE (2003:7) stipulates that "each DSG must have pre-evaluation discussions with the appraisee concerned and discuss what is expected of them." Some participants in individual interviews mentioned that they identified their needs in pre-evaluation meetings with their DSGs.

It was evident during DSGs' post-evaluation meetings and interviews with me that they combined most of the IQMS processes into 1 day instead of spreading them throughout the year.

I also asked whether they had attended IQMS workshops arranged by the DBE.

Two participants responded:
> *Yes, we attended IQMS workshops but I think the workshops did not cover all the IQMS processes. I remember when we were trained on the IQMS, we were not told that we needed to hold formal pre-evaluation and post-evaluation meetings.* (S2 – Appraisee)
> *Although we attended IQMS workshop for 1 day, it was not enough because not all processes were addressed. We learned that we are required to conduct formal meetings and submit minutes when the IQMS monitors and circuit managers visited our schools.* (S3 – Chairperson)

I regarded this as an irregularity as teachers were not uniformly informed about the purpose of the

meetings or trained on how to conduct them. As mentioned above, the IQMS manual does not give details about the pre- and post-evaluation meetings – a gap identified by this study.

Document Analysis

The appraisees were expected to complete the pre-evaluation forms before being evaluated. The aim was to enable the appraisees to record their strengths and weaknesses so that the DSG members knew about them before observing the appraisees in class. After document analysis, I determined that of five DSGs that participated in the study, only three appraisees managed to complete the PGP forms. I observed that some PGPs were not fully completed, only included short entries and had a number of blank spaces (S3 and S5). I observed that the PGP template had a few narrow spaces which made it difficult for the appraisees to write freely although they could amend the template to suit their needs. All the participant appraisees used the original form taken from the IQMS manual.

The appraisees were required to evaluate themselves using the same tool that would be used by the DSG prior to classroom observation. The appraisees scored themselves during the discussion of scores with the DSG (after classroom observations).

Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore the role of the DSGs in identifying PD needs of teachers and the provision of relevant support. During the post-evaluation meetings, DSGs were able to identify appraisees' areas of development as reflected in Table 2. According to the template provided by the DBE, DSGs had to record their findings as "performance standards" and "related criteria." I observed that this hindered teachers from freely recording the areas of development that were not listed in the IQMS. However, knowledge is not fixed and contextual factors differ in different areas within an organisation. As much as explicit knowledge is important, easily transferable, and coded, tacit knowledge is also crucial and deeply rooted in the system (Abubakar, Elrehail, Alatailat & Elçi, 2019).

The appraisees identified different contextual factors that they thought hindered them from performing their jobs effectively. These included inadequate learning space, overcrowding in classrooms and frequent absences of learners due to illness. Reporting on a study in Nigeria, Olaleye, Ajayi, Oyebola and Ajayi (2017) revealed that most of their classrooms were overcrowded, which significantly affected effective teaching and learning. Some challenges needed to be communicated with parents, such as learner absenteeism and failure to do homework. Some challenges needed to be addressed by the SMT

together with the SGB, such as overcrowding and a shortage of resources.

I observed confusion regarding how the DSGs should fulfil their roles. The DBE and DHET (2011) reports that the problems related to IQMS implementation were exacerbated by the fact that neither teachers nor district officials had the capacity or were adequately trained to use and benefit from it. During the meetings, the participants focused on completing the post-evaluation template instead of focusing on providing feedback to the appraisee and discussing the support that would be given. With this study I established that the pre- and post-evaluation discussions were the only means of identifying the teachers' needs in schools. I also observed that the two meetings were not effectively conducted. Some PGPs submitted at the pre-evaluation meeting were not fully completed and most DSGs did not take the time to discuss the appraisees' areas of development. They did not engage in constructive discussions aimed at guiding the appraisees on how to improve the identified needs.

I observed that the DSGs completed most IQMS processes on the same day. They first met for pre-evaluation meetings, then observed the appraisee in class, and immediately thereafter sat for a post-evaluation meeting. After asking the DSGs why they did most IQMS processes in one day, they stated that it was because of the pressure from the circuit offices that they should submit scores and school improvement plans before the end of each year. Van Driel, Meirink, Van Veen and Zwart (2012) found that school organisational conditions may affect the outcomes of PD due to work pressure and minimal time for teachers to spend on their PD. DeMonte (2013) recommends that teaching, learning and development activities should be integrated with the day-to-day work of teaching and the standards guiding that work.

As mentioned earlier on, the challenge with the IQMS is that the scores are used for remuneration purposes, and consequently, the developmental part of the IQMS is compromised because the focus is on getting high scores for remuneration purposes. Queen-Mary and Mtapuri (2014) found that most schools rushed to submit the forms in order to receive the 1% increase and some teachers even complained that what they were doing was worth more than the 1% they received. Elaborating on the same issue, Ngema and Lekhetho (2019) indicate that most of the participants conducted IQMS hastily in 1 day without giving due attention to all the critical aspects required for PD of every teacher.

Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to explore the role of the DSGs in identifying PD needs of teachers and the provision of relevant support. The findings

reveal that DSGs went through most IQMS processes, most of them in 1 day. Teachers still need to understand all IQMS processes which were compromised by factors like being executed in a short space of time, teachers' attitudes, lack of proper monitoring of the processes and other contextual factors. The DSGs did not give themselves time for pre-evaluation meetings as required. I observed that the DSGs rushed the process as they wanted to complete all the processes on the same day.

There should be close monitoring of IQMS implementation. It is not correct for the departmental officials to require schools to submit school improvement plans (SIPs) without having monitored how they were developed. The PGP, and pre- and post-evaluation forms need to be reviewed so that they are user-friendly. It would be convenient if the DBE would distribute an electronic version of the IQMS document to schools and encourage teachers to complete and submit all templates online. It would make it easier to compare the appraisee's performance with that of the previous years to see whether any improvements had been made. Teachers need to be trained in completing the forms.

The aim of conducting a needs analysis is to provide relevant support to teachers according to their needs. Based on the study I recommend that the role of the DSGs needs to be reviewed and their activities be properly monitored to produce envisaged growth in each teacher. I suggest that accountability be strengthened and reporting about the support provided should be done at least twice a year. Currently, the impact of the DSG's support is not clearly assessed or monitored for the purpose of improving their role. Further research could be conducted to find tools that could be used to assess and monitor the impact of the DSG's support in improving the appraisees' performances. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017:17) assert that "while many professional learning community efforts have been poorly implemented and superficial in their design and impact, there is evidence that PLCs can, when implemented with a high degree of quality, support improvements in practice, along with learning gains." Addressing the gaps that have been identified through this study would improve identification of the teachers' needs, which is the crucial initial step before providing any kind of authentic and efficient PD.

I maintain that future research needs to focus on exploring teachers' and district officials' perspectives on how the DSG support can be maximised to improve teachers' performance. Research also needs to focus on how the process of teacher evaluation can be digitalised for efficiency.

Notes

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