

Teacher Education: The South African Context

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ABSTRACT Teacher education in South Africa is a matter of concern. It is a concern because students who choose teaching as a career are few. The profession is surviving because of students who pass Grade 12 and find out that they are not qualifying to pursue their first prioritized, desired or chosen career in the university and hence turn to teaching as an alternative career. It becomes important to keep these teachers in the profession. It should always be remembered that teaching is a noble profession. It needs a professional individual who is dedicated to his work and who will practice roles of a teacher as per the norms and standards for educators. Teaching needs a professional individual who will be a role model to his learners. Students who choose teaching as a second choice and even those who choose teaching as their first priority career path need to undergo three components of teacher education in order for them to remain in the teaching profession for their entire career. In this conceptual paper researchers would like to emphasize the importance of incorporating three components of teacher education for the career span of teachers. The three components, which will lead the discussion, are initial teacher training, induction, and teacher development or continuing professional development.

INTRODUCTION

In South Africa, teacher education is concentrated on initial teacher training and continuous professional development. The component of induction is neglected, which is a concern to the researchers. Teachers enter the education system without undergoing the induction program that will be of assistance for their survival in their new role as teachers. One of the greatest challenges facing the South African education system is the lack of production of sufficient qualified, competent teachers that can provide quality teaching for all school subjects and phases (Centre for Development and Enterprise (CDE) 2015).

According to CDE (2015) through initial teacher education (ITE) programs offered at higher education institutions (HEIs) student teachers obtain either a four-year Bachelor of Education (B Ed) degree or a one-year Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) after a three-year undergraduate degree.

In this paper, researchers discuss the practice of teacher education in England and the European Union, pre-democratic and post-democratic South Africa and strategies for South Africa in the transformation of teacher education. For one to understand what should be done in teacher education in South Africa, the researchers find it necessary to discuss how teach-

er education is perceived in England and the European Union.

Teacher Education

Perraton (2015) states that teacher education includes four elements, which are improving the general educational background of the trainee teachers (initial teacher training), increasing their knowledge and understanding of the subjects they are to teach, pedagogy and understanding of children and learning (induction), and the development of practical skills and competences. The balance between these four elements varies widely. On the other hand, teacher education institutions have the potential to bring changes within educational systems that will shape the knowledge and skills of future generations. Teacher education institutions serve as key change agents in transforming education and society, such that a future is possible.

Teacher Education in England

It is said that in England, the evidence about who is being attracted into teaching is encouraging, that is, where once the average degree class of those joining postgraduate initial teacher training was below average for the graduate population, it is now above average. But England has a long way to go before the status of

teaching matches its status in the highest performing countries, that is, forty-three percent of the teachers rate the status of teaching as low, and sixty-six percent of final-year students at 30 top universities believe that teaching offers slow career progression and limited chances for promotion. The country continues to struggle to attract enough graduates in subjects like physics, chemistry and mathematics. While some countries draw their teachers exclusively from the top tier of graduates, only two percent of graduates obtaining first class honors degrees from the Russell Group universities go on to train to become teachers within six months of graduating from university (DoE 2010).

The initial training of teachers is the most important part of their professional development. Over a twenty-year period, initial teacher training has tended to focus more sharply on classroom practice. Even so, new teachers report that they are not always confident about some key skills that they need as teachers, for example, the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics as the proven teaching and leadership (DoE 2010).

Teachers Training and Development

DoE (2010) states that the state provides more opportunities for a larger proportion of trainees to learn on the job by improving and expanding the best of the current school-based routes into teaching, that is, school-centered initial teacher training and the graduate teacher program. A central application system makes it easier for potential trainees to find a suitable place. Their strongest schools take the lead and trainees are able to develop their skills, learning from best teachers. Increased opportunities for school-based training suits career changers, new graduates and existing members of the school workforce wanting to learn on the job and receive a salary as they train.

As part of its work, the Department of Education expects teaching schools to draw together outstanding teachers in an area, who are committed to supporting other schools. There are currently many designations for these teachers, including Advanced Skills Teachers, Excellent Teachers and Leading Teachers. The Department of Education has re-examined this range of designations to create a single simple designation, which identifies more clearly leading practitio-

ners who work to support others. Alongside this, the education department has created the national network of teaching schools, and the education department also designates 'Specialist Leaders of Education', who are excellent professionals in leadership positions below the head teacher (such as deputies, bursars, heads of department) support others in similar positions in other schools (DoE 2010).

The DoE (2010) further states that at the same time, the department works to support the professional development of all teachers. As opportunities to observe and be observed are central to effective professional development, the government makes it clear that there is no 'three hour limit' on the amount of time a teacher can be observed. The Chartered London Teacher model provides a reward for teachers reaching the 'threshold', which have undertaken a program of collaborative professional development and meet challenging standards. The department looks at the scope for learning lessons from this nationally.

It is also vital that teachers are given the opportunity to deepen their subject knowledge and renew the passion, which brought them into the classroom. An independent panel gives awards to support those who wish to pursue further study in their subject or broaden their expertise (DoE 2010).

Quality Teaching: European Union Teacher Education

According to Emya (2013), teachers, school leaders and teacher educators are key actors in maintaining and improving the quality of education and training systems in Europe. Ministers of Education have on three separate occasions identified priorities for improving the quality of teacher education systems. Taken together, these statements describe a vision of teacher education in Europe based upon high quality standards, professionalism and effective support. Teacher quality is the most important within-school factor affecting student performance. As such, it is vital to the achievement of Lisbon goals. The key role played by teachers and trainers in creating quality education and training systems was recognized from the very beginning of the Open Method of Coordination in Education and Training (OMCET).

Emya (2013) states that early work led to the drafting and validation by representatives of all Member States and stakeholders of a key document named, 'Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications'. Council Conclusions of November 2007, 2008 and 2009 describe a vision of Teacher Education in Europe in as key professional values and attitudes such as reflective practice, autonomous learning and collaboration are promoted, practical teaching competencies are improved, recruitment and selection are more effective so that Member States attract and retain the best candidates for the teaching profession and promote teaching as an attractive career, the quality of Initial Teacher Education is improved, with all teachers having a HE qualification that is evidence-based, and balances theory and practice, all beginning teachers, during their first years in the profession receive professional and personal support ('induction'), all teachers are engaged in relevant and effective Continuing Professional Development, based upon regular reviews of their training needs, the recruitment and development of school leaders as leaders for learning is improved, the quality of Teacher Educators (Teacher Trainers) is promoted, and each Teacher Education System is organized as a seamless continuum and is adequately resourced and quality assured.

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

There are lessons to be learnt from England's and the European Union's strategies on teacher education development in South Africa. South Africa should emphasize the growth of teacher development like what European Union is practicing. This is to emphasize reflective practice, autonomous learning and collaboration, practical teaching competencies, quality of teachers, recruitment and development of school leaders as leaders for teaching and learning, and quality of initial teacher education.

It is of importance for researchers to point out that South Africa should incorporate initial teacher training/education, induction and teacher development or continuing professional development. According to DoE (2005), a professional teacher is a person with the educated competences and abiding commitments needed to engage successfully in the professional prac-

tice of teaching. A professional teacher is characterized more by a commitment to the ideals of the profession, and flexible competences to pursue those ideals in a variety of circumstances, than by mere obedience to the legitimate requirements of an employer.

The practice of teaching is a situated and interpretative contextual practice. Although this practice does involve skills and routines, it cannot be reduced to just that. Variations in what the exercise of this practice involves are dependent on variable contextual realities that include the level of the learners and the socio-historical, political contexts of practice. Expert teaching involves making situated, interpretive judgments, and this is one reason for saying that it is a professional practice.

Teacher education in South Africa cannot look further than Report of the Ministerial Committee on Teacher Education 2005, the National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa of 2007, and Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa (ISPFTEDSA) 2011-2025 Technical Report.

The Report of the Ministerial Committee on Teacher Education 2005 has been shaped by the following broad principles (DoE 2005), that is, the right to quality education for all is a right without limitation, and it is one of the basic rights in a democratic South Africa. Schooling is a public good, for which public funding is provided. Teachers are the key agents in the quality of the education system. They should be treated and conceptualized as members of a profession (as opposed to as 'service workers'), and higher education qualifications for teachers need to be protected and benchmarked. One of the key principles of a healthy democracy is that there should be various sources of authority to prevent the abuse of power by any one authority. This principle is of particular significance in relation to defining professional teaching and the 'public good', conceptualizing teacher education, and benchmarking 'quality education for all'.

The National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa of 2007, which has the motto or slogan of "more teachers, better teachers", has the following scope and purpose, that is, it is designed to equip a teaching profession to meet the needs of the

democratic South Africa in the 21st century. It brings clarity and coherence to the complex matrix of teacher education activities from initial recruitment and preparation to self-motivated professional development. The framework deals with teachers from schools and is not directed at teachers in adult education, early childhood development, or further education and training colleges. The policy framework aims to provide an overall strategy for the successful recruitment, retention and professional development of teachers. More specifically it aims to ensure that teachers are properly equipped to undertake their essential and demanding tasks, teachers are able to continually enhance their professional competence and performance, appropriately qualified teachers fill all vacancies in all schools, and that there is a dynamic balance between demand and supply of teachers, there is a community of competent teachers dedicated to providing education of high quality, with high levels of performance as well as ethical and professional standards of conduct, and teachers are deservedly held in high regard in South Africa.

According to the Teacher Development Summit Declaration, the new, strengthened, integrated national plan for teacher development should define clear roles, responsibilities and innovative, collaborative relationships among the key stakeholders for the improvement of teacher development, relate key decisions to the broader context of teacher supply, utilization and demand, define the appropriate institutional arrangements for the delivery of key components of teacher development such as teacher education and professional development, contain clear priorities and realistic timeframes for implementation, recognize the needs of Early Childhood Development (ECD) practitioners and Foundation Phase educators as a particularly important aspect of the plan, reduce the overload of policy prescriptions and regulations, provide for an equitable, adequate and efficient allocation of funds and other resources (including the source and destination of such funds and resources) to enable all teachers to perfect the art of teaching, which is the central concept underpinning the summit, and provide a platform for the development of robust human resource management and information systems that facilitate equitable and

efficient provision of and support for teacher development (DoE 2011).

Initial Teacher Education

According to Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa 2011-2025 Technical Report (2011), initial teacher education should consider the capacity, quality, cooperation, relevance, and initial teacher education programs should be improved. The total output of new teacher graduates should be increased to around 12,000 per annum by 2014 and 18,000 per annum by 2019. More aspirant teachers should be encouraged and supported to qualify as FET Phase mathematics, mathematical literacy, physical sciences, language, life orientation, economics and geography teachers. More aspirant teachers should be encouraged and supported to qualify as Senior Phase mathematics, natural sciences, economic and management sciences, arts and culture and language teachers. More aspirant teachers should be encouraged and supported to qualify as Intermediate Phase mathematics, natural sciences, arts and culture, economic and management sciences and technology teachers. More aspirant teachers should be encouraged and supported to qualify as Foundation Phase teachers, with particular emphasis on the ability to teach in an official language other than English or Afrikaans. Ways and means of encouraging and supporting private higher education institutions to increase their contribution to producing new teachers should be investigated. Direct incentives and other support should be provided to newly qualified teachers to teach in rural and remote schools and in quintile 1 to quintile 4 schools. Efforts to attract and recruit more teachers into the profession should be redoubled, including targeting foreign educators and retraining unemployed teachers or teachers employed elsewhere.

Teacher Education Induction

South African policies on teacher education do not state induction as part of teacher education. Policies and strategic framework emphasize initial teacher training and teacher continuous development and leave out the component of induction, which is part and parcel of teacher education.

Induction is a program of teacher education, which takes place during that critical period at the beginning of the newly qualified teacher's career, usually the first year after qualifying as a teacher. Induction, as the process of introducing the employee to the organization and the organization to the employee, begins at the time of appointment. Its purpose is to help new staff achieve competence quickly by possessing the necessary knowledge, support and guidance to carry out their duties effectively within a system that provides a foundation for further development (Early and Kinder 1994). To be effective, induction should lay foundation for a lifelong professional career (Coleman 1997). Recognizing the importance of the continuum of teacher education, induction aims to develop a culture of lifelong learning in each teacher. The purpose of an induction program is to offer systematic professional and personal support to the newly qualified teacher.

Pfitser et al. (2011) state that beginning teachers face many challenges and often have many problems and areas of concern. There is evidence from the literature that a teacher's first years in the profession are often challenging. These beginning years have been described as the "discovery and survival" phase of teaching. Educators and education researchers have long recognized the importance of teacher reflection as a means to foster teachers' growth in their professional practice. Since first years are different from what has gone before and what comes after, these years represent a special time in a teacher's career. Some examples that a novice faces could be problems that originated from instruction, school environmental problems, workplace problems, and supervision problems.

The first year is a difficult year to overcome problems for novice teachers. A new teacher faces the challenge of understanding and fitting into the culture of his or her new school. So, it is needed to support them. These include administrative support, continued support from teacher preparation institutions, colleagues with similar beliefs about teaching, and a supportive school community. In addition to the classroom-specific and school problems that new teachers often have, they are also adjusting to new situations in their personal life (Okumus and Biber 2011).

After teachers have completed initial teacher training and are employed in different schools,

they need to be inducted in order to understand transition from theory and practice. Induction is a comprehensive process of sustained training and support for new teachers. In concurrence, Kengwee and Adjei-Boateng (2010) state that significant mark of the teaching profession is its ability to ensure the smooth transition and success of its new entrants by bridging the gap between classroom learning and actual field practice. Beyond the initial excitement of joining the teaching profession, beginning teachers generally experience multiple challenges related to the profession. The discrepancy between their vision of teaching and the reality on the ground makes things more difficult than they had anticipated.

AFT, Ingersoll and Smith in Kengwee and Adjei-Boateng (2010) state that induction and mentoring are necessary to help beginning teachers succeed in their first years and remain in the profession as well as beginning teachers who are provided with support, are less likely to leave their schools and the noble profession. There has been a growth of teacher mentoring.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

CPD obligations are common to most professions. Many professions define CPD as a structured approach to learning to help ensure competence to practice, taking in knowledge, skills and practical experience. CPD can involve any relevant learning activity, whether formal and structured or informal and self-directed. There are however some factors to be considered when dealing with CPD. The Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa (ISPFTEDSA) 2011-2025 Technical Report (2011) states that continuing professional development should consider the following, that is, responsibility for continuing professional development should be devolved to more local levels, and allow for the participation of a variety of role-players, while ensuring that national and provincial priorities are addressed. The personnel and paperwork required in order for teacher development to occur should be reduced. Teacher development should be separated from performance appraisal. Meaningful teacher induction programs should be developed and supported. Teachers in all schools should be encouraged and sup-

ported, through an informational and advocacy campaign and the use of appropriate facilitators, mentors and guidelines, to establish new or strengthen existing professional learning communities. Time for teachers to participate in professional learning communities and engage in quality teacher development must be deliberately and formally scheduled. Teacher knowledge and practice standards for all teaching specializations and professional practices should be developed. Diagnostic self-assessments tailored to assess teacher knowledge and practice standards should be developed and made available, with associated professional developmental resources, in both paper-based and electronic (including online) formats. Continuing professional development courses that are pedagogically sound, content rich, curriculum relevant and quality assured, should be identified and/or developed. Specific groups of teachers and schools in need of targeted development should be identified on the basis of the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements National Curriculum Statements (CAPS) implementation review, National Senior Certificate (NSC) examination results, Annual National Assessments (ANA) and research on teacher qualification profiles. All Grade R teachers should be encouraged and supported to become professionally qualified. All unqualified and under-qualified teachers should be encouraged and supported to become professionally qualified at REQV 13 level or higher. All special needs teachers and teachers in special needs schools should be encouraged and supported to improve their qualifications and also their competence to teach in sign language and/or braille. All subject advisors should be encouraged and supported to improve their curriculum competence. The number of subject advisors should be increased, possibly by redeploying competent excess provincial managerial staff, recently retired teachers and/or 'excess' teachers. All provincial and district managers involved in teacher development should be encouraged and supported to improve their competence. The kinds of programs, services and partnerships offered via teacher development institutes and education resource centers need to be regularized and quality assured. Direct incentives and other support should be provided to teachers in rural and remote schools to improve their qualifications.

Ways and means of encouraging and supporting private higher education institutions to increase their contribution to developing practicing teachers should be investigated.

CONCLUSION

Teacher education in South Africa has challenges, although the challenges are not insurmountable. The challenges include amongst others, the capacity, quality, cooperation, and relevance of teacher education to be improved, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to be taken seriously and giving attention to inducting novice teachers. Induction program, which is neglected, should be considered in order to retain trained teachers for longer period. If educators are to become skilled professionals they need to be inducted, and if they are to stay in the field, stakeholders need to take coordinated action to expand and improve induction programs and to take them more universal.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Teacher education is composed of three components, which are of equally importance. They are initial teacher training, induction and teacher continuous development. If all these components are equally considered, South Africa will never run short of teachers.

Initial teacher training, recruitment and selection of candidates should be more effective in order to attract and retain the best candidates for the teaching profession and to promote teaching as an attractive career.

Induction

The induction program should be developed in order for novice teachers to acclimatize with their new profession. Induction is the process of introducing the employee to the organization and the organization to the employee, and it should begin at the time of appointment.

Continuing Professional Development

This should involve any relevant learning activity, whether formal and structured or informal and self-directed because teacher knowledge and practice standards for all teaching special-

izations and professional practices should be developed.

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