

Teacher Effectiveness in the South African Context: First Steps towards a Comprehensive Definition

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ABSTRACT It is widely agreed by researchers and policy makers that the success of every aspect of school reform depends on the dedicated efforts of highly effective teachers. Teacher effectiveness must be clearly defined to profile the teacher who should be standing in front of the classroom. Communities should therefore develop a comprehensive definition of effectiveness and create the conditions in which the model can be developed and sustained. This paper is based on longitudinal research aiming at developing a comprehensive definition of teacher effectiveness for the South African context. South Africa is grappling with large numbers of dysfunctional schools in high-poverty areas. Teachers are reported to be dispirited, demoralised, underperforming and tired of reforms. In addition to a thorough literature review a qualitative survey was implemented to probe practitioners' perceptions of teacher effectiveness. Interviews were also conducted with a variety of educational specialists. The findings revealed that participants' perceptions of effectiveness are largely in agreement with models developed elsewhere, and that they reiterate basic teacher qualities and skills that are sought and brought to bear across the board.