

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

Stephanus Gert Pretorius

*Department: Educational Leadership and Management,
University of South Africa, P O Box 392, Pretoria 0003 South Africa
Telephone: 27 12 82 4445244 or 27 12 4600969, Fax 27 866287938,
E-mail: pretosg@unisa.ac.za*

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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.

INTRODUCTION

This article focuses on the concept of teacher effectiveness within the specific context of South Africa. A considerable literature on the general subject exists, and research has shown that every aspect of education reform depends on highly effective teachers for its success. Darling-Hammond (2010a, b) highlights the repeated finding that 'teachers are the fulcrum determining whether any school initiative tips toward success or failure'. In fact, teacher effectiveness is the single most important school-based factor predicting student achievement (Goe et al. 2008; Muijs and Reynolds 2002a, b; Rice 2003; Varlas 2009). "Even the shiniest new academy will struggle without decent teachers." Therefore, "an emphasis on better teacher quality is a common feature of all reforms" (The Economist 2011).

In spite of a general consensus on the critical importance of teachers in making a difference in the sense of helping to improve student achievement, Coggshall (2007) states: "Not only are there a multiplicity of perspectives on what makes teachers 'good', there are deeply held personal and professional beliefs and values surrounding what 'good' is and how to gauge it in a meaningful way." Varlas (2009) states: "Working definitions of teacher effectiveness are often elusive or so politically charged that they are unusable." Again Rice (2003) points out that the literature on teacher quality and qualifications is considered as inconsistent and inconclusive. "In the absence of a strong, robust, and deep body of research, the debate in this field is largely ideological." From a UK perspective it is claimed: "Our ignorance in the area of teacher effectiveness is virtually total" (Reynolds 1998).

Furthermore, there is growing awareness of the issue of complexity in the study of teacher effectiveness as it is strongly influenced by the context and conditions under which teachers work (Sammons 2006). Highly effective teachers in affluent areas with well-resourced schools, or teaching on a particular level of schooling, may not be equally effective in high-needs schools in areas where poverty is a severe socio-economic inhibitor, or in a different phase of educa-

Address for correspondence:

Dr Vijay Hamlall
154 Fleet Street
Westcliff, Chatsworth,
Durban, South Africa
Telephone: 083 4190441 / 031-4020063
Fax: 031-4047522
E-mail: vijayhamlall@mweb.co.za

tion, while the conditions that determine the effectiveness of teaching are dictated by ambient working conditions (Darling-Hammond 2010a).

However, the urgent need to place a highly effective teacher in every classroom calls for a clear definition of what makes an effective teacher in the particular context or set of circumstances (Varlas 2009; cf US Department of Education 2010). Varlas (2009) argues that “education communities must develop a comprehensive definition of teacher effectiveness, the professional support to maintain and build it, the methods to measure it, and the sustained incentives to reward it.”

Thus, the aim of this research is to develop a definition of teacher effectiveness for South African conditions and provide guidelines for the development of strategies to improve the quality of education in so many dysfunctional school environments.

The Context: An Ineffective Teacher Corps

The South African education system went through a complete restructuring process since 1994. Besides devising new policies and legislation governing education, new management structures such as the national and provincial departments of education and a new curriculum approach, educational expenditure has nearly doubled over the past 17 years to the extent that the education’s share of the country’s budget is 21%, which is 7% of the GDP and more than the spend on any other sector in the country (Burger 2011). In spite of all these efforts or reform and the sharp escalation of money spent on education, it is clear from international comparisons and national assessments that the South African education system, due to abnormal or impaired functioning, does not accomplish, in fact falls far short of the true purpose of teaching and learning for which it was instituted.

Using the combined results of the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and/or the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Newsweek estimates of 2011 ranked the South African schooling system fourth last (97) in the world among 100 rated countries, and even lower in the rankings than countries such as Mozambique, Bangladesh and Iran (Van Wyk 2010; Wilmot 2010). The Annual National Assessments (ANA) of six million learners in 2011 confirmed that the

percentage of learners performing at adequate levels in literacy and numeracy is unacceptably low. The ANA report (Department of Basic Education (DBE) 2011a) shows that Grade 3 and Grade 6 learners scored average percentages of 35 and 28 respectively in literacy/language tests and 28 and 30 in numeracy/mathematics. In sum, 58% of Grade 3 learners and 70% of Grade 6 learners are not performing according to expected levels of achievement in literacy.

Recently the low expectations and standards of education were in sharp focus when the results of the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations of 2012 were announced. Although learner performance in the NSC examinations is regarded by government as one of the most important indicators of the performance of the schooling system, learners could graduate from high school by achieving a mere 40% in three out of seven subjects of which one had to be an official language, and at least 30% in three other subjects (DBE 2012).

In an annual report of the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation Taylor (2006) found, on the basis of an analysis of the NSC examination results, that the extent of the problem with schooling is such that “close to 80 per cent of South African schools are essentially dysfunctional.” Since then this finding has been confirmed by various authoritative sources (cf De Lange 2008; The Economist 2012).

This state of affairs could be attributed to various systemic and societal problems of which teacher ineffectiveness is the most vexing. Teacher morale is low. Teachers are reported to be dispirited, demoralised, underperforming, but angry due to a variety of teacher issues (Bloch 2009). An investigation by the Ministerial Committee on a National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU) (Republic of South Africa (RSA) 2009) found that teachers were tired of reforms. Furthermore, teachers are blamed for their weak subject matter and inadequate pedagogical knowledge and expertise. In public schools attended by mainly black learners the educators’ time on task is low, averaging 3,5 hours of teaching daily compared to 6,5 hours at former white schools known as “Model C” schools (The Economist 2012). Absenteeism, strikes, alcohol and drug abuse, habitual late arrival and running businesses as a sideline that cuts heavily into professional commitment are common indulgences among teachers (Afrol News 2012; Bloch 2009; News 24 2010).

The factors that contribute to the ineffectiveness of the South African teacher corps and the education system are widespread and complex and cannot be readily summarised in a paragraph or two. One of the first contextual considerations must be the legacy of the country's apartheid past and its unequal funding mechanisms and dismal neglect of education opportunities for black population groups. These factors led to a breakdown of a culture of teaching and learning in various communities. Besides, the vast majority of the country's population lives in extreme poverty with hardly a vestige of appropriate family structures and societal involvement in and support of education, which is currently characterised instead by problems such as high dropout rates, sexual abuse of learners, teenage pregnancies, truancy, malnutrition and the attendant problem of intellectual stunting, and ill-discipline. The education system is crippled by a lack of resources and school facilities in many communities, a multilingual language situation with limited possibilities for mother-tongue instruction, the powerful counterproductive influence of teacher unions, violence in schools and more.

In addition to the above-mentioned contextual factors, there is evidence that the education system as a whole and schools in particular have been badly managed in recent times. The well-known textbook saga of learners in Limpopo being deprived of learning support material for the greatest part of the year is a prime example. At the end of January 2013 a great number of teachers in the Eastern Cape did not receive their salaries on time. According to the Minister of Basic Education the large numbers of ineffective schools in South Africa are attributable to such factors as principals' poor or non-existent leadership, inadequate supervision of work performed by teachers and learners, poor curriculum delivery, failure of school management teams to understand their roles, vacant and unfilled teacher posts, teacher absenteeism, lack or shortage of textbooks, and learning and teaching support material (Mohlala 2010).

It is significant that all the above factors, mentioned by the Minister, are related to inappropriate management practices on various organisational levels of the education system. For example, the implementation of Curriculum 2005, which proceeds from an outcomes-based (OBE) approach to education, was the result of a man-

agement decision at national level which did not do the country's education any good. The DBE itself acknowledged that this curriculum "was never researched or properly trialed", and that there had been insufficient preparation and consideration with regard to the question whether teachers, pupils and the system in general were endowed with the capacity to cope with such a fundamental change within the rigorous time constraints envisaged (DBE 2009). The implication was that the national curriculum had to be completely overhauled with a second major revision, which took the form of the new Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS), scheduled to be implemented from 2012 onwards (DBE 2011b). As noted above, according to the Minister, problems such as vacant and unfilled posts, lack or shortage of textbooks, poor curriculum planning, and teacher absenteeism are all attributable to mismanagement and maladministration on provincial, district and local levels of education delivery (also cf Bloch 2006; Jansen 2005; Mohlala 2010).

The Research Problem

The urgent need to place an effective teacher in every classroom requires that every community develop a comprehensive definition (Varlas 2009) of the criteria that have to be met organisationally and personally for a teacher to function effectively under the unique conditions prevailing in South Africa. Thus, this research is based on the following problem question:

What makes an effective teacher in the specific context of the South African education system, and what needs to be done to improve the quality of education in so many dysfunctional schools?

RESEARCH METHODS

In view of its critics, school effectiveness research (SER) has come to a number of conclusions regarding the future methodological directions for its endeavours, of which the following have particular significance for this research. Because SER methodology has been mainly quantitative (Sammons 2006: 5), there is a clear need for a considerable amount of qualitative investigation over and above statistical analyses (Wyatt 1996). Furthermore, Teddlie and Reynolds (2001) proposed that the approach should

be contextually sensitive and longitudinal with adequate consideration of the relevant socio-economic context and geographical, as well as sociological and historical factors et cetera. Besides, teacher input in investigations, as well as systematic observation of teachers in the classroom, is emphasised because what teachers say and do, or do not do, in the classrooms is important to inform school improvement.

With all this in mind, a qualitative approach was adopted for this research, and a variety of data sources were duly explored and exploited. In addition to a thorough review of literature on teacher effectiveness, a qualitative survey was devised to collect data from a wider sample than could be reached by personal interview – from participants of far away and disadvantaged rural schools, to vibrant inner city schools and other educational institutions such as universities and education departments. A survey with broad open-ended questions related to teacher effectiveness was necessary in order to afford participants the opportunity to consider their written answers carefully and provide duly considered responses. Thus, participants were purposively selected to get the input of experts as well as teachers from a variety of situational contexts. Due to the longitudinal nature of this research the sample cannot be linked to a specific number of participants. The investigation was joined by teachers, school principals, teacher educators and officials associated with education departments. To get further input from teachers the researcher also had the opportunity to visit a variety of schools and systematically observe the lessons of novice and experienced teachers in a variety of contexts. All ethical requirements in terms of the required permissions for school visits, consent and anonymity of the participants were adhered to. To ensure trustworthiness, the data collected during classroom observations were personally discussed with the participants to ensure reliability and accuracy of their perspectives.

The research was longitudinal and data were collected over a number of years with the researcher continuing to shape conclusions as data accumulated and new information became available from ongoing interviews, classroom observations and more. The research falls into the category of grounded theory with deductions based on observations and gathered data.

Teacher Effectiveness: A Literature Review

Defining teacher effectiveness can be approached from a variety of angles. Some emphasise the teaching variables associated with effectiveness (Creemers 1996), while others focus on the behaviours (Muijs and Reynolds 2002a), characteristics (Sammons et al. 2002), qualities (Darling Hammond 2010a), dispositions (National Education Association (NEA) 2007), attitudes (Gourneau 2005) or strategies of effective teachers. Coggshall (2007) uses the term *teacher quality* as a catch-all for many qualities that make teachers ‘good’ at what they do. The term subsumes teacher effectiveness, qualifications, professional capacity, performance et cetera. The definition is brought down to specifics by delineating teachers’ contributions to student outcomes as final criteria.

Goe et al. (2008) take the view that teacher effectiveness can be assessed from three different but related angles: namely *input*, *process* or *output*. *Inputs* are what a teacher brings to his or her position in terms of background, beliefs, expectations, experience, pedagogical and content knowledge, certification and licensure, and educational attainment. In the literature such inputs are often referred to as “teacher quality”, the term used by Coggshall (2007) as noted above. The *processes* angle refers to the interaction that occurs in a classroom between teachers and students. *Outputs* represent the results of classroom processes such as the impact on student achievement, graduation rates, student behaviour, attitudes, social-emotional well-being, and more. According to these authors, *outputs* can be referred to as *teacher effectiveness*. However, *teacher effectiveness* as used in the surveyed literature is often limited to mean impact on student achievement.

Creemers (1996) identified the teaching variables associated with effectiveness in the classroom as follows on the basis of a review of effectiveness literature:

- ♦ Structured lessons – students do better when their school day is structured with teachers organising student work to ensure that they are kept busy.
- ♦ Intellectually challenging teaching – student progress is faster when teachers stimulate them by using problem-solving and higher-order questioning and statements.

- ♦ A work-centred environment – this is associated with a high level of student time on task with students enjoying their work and demonstrating an eagerness to begin new tasks; noise levels are low; and movement around the classroom is minimal and work-related.
- ♦ Limited focus in sessions – students do better when teachers focus on one or two subject areas within the same classroom activity.
- ♦ Maximum communication between teacher and student – students learn better as communication between teacher and students increases. More particularly, communication with individual students is less effective than teachers using opportunities to talk to the whole class.
- ♦ Record-keeping – this is essential for the principal as well as the teacher as it is used in planning and assessment activities.

Sammons (2006) concludes from a thorough study of literature on teacher effectiveness that effective teachers display the following characteristics:

- ♦ They teach the class as a whole.
- ♦ They present information or skills clearly and engagingly so that learning becomes an exciting and memorable experience.
- ♦ They keep the sessions task-orientated.
- ♦ They are non-evaluative and keep instruction relaxed.
- ♦ They have high expectations for achievement and give ample homework, pace lessons faster and stimulate alertness.
- ♦ They relate comfortably to students, thereby reducing behaviour problems.

Sammons (2006) also offers a list of teacher behaviours which promote achievement and stresses the following points:

- ♦ Emphasise academic goals;
- ♦ Make goals explicit and expect students to show that they can master the curriculum;
- ♦ Organise and sequence the curriculum carefully;
- ♦ Use clear explanations and illustrate what students are to learn;
- ♦ Ask direct and specific questions to monitor students' progress and understanding;
- ♦ Provide students with ample opportunities to practice;
- ♦ Give prompts and feedback to ensure success;

- ♦ Correct mistakes and allow students to use a skill until it becomes automatic;
- ♦ Review work regularly and hold students accountable for their work;

Darling-Hammond (2010a) reports research which has found that teachers with a high effectiveness rating generally demonstrate the following qualities in ample measure:

- ♦ Strong general intelligence and verbal ability that help them to organise and explain ideas and observe and think diagnostically.
- ♦ Strong content knowledge in the fields they teach.
- ♦ Knowledge of how to teach others in their specialised fields, with particular reference to developing higher-order thinking skills.
- ♦ An understanding of learners and their learning and development, of how to assess learning, and how to support students with learning differences or difficulties, including those caught up in overcoming the obstacles of learning the language of instruction.
- ♦ Adaptive expertise that will allow them to form sound judgments about what is likely to work in a given context in response to students' needs.

Muijs and Reynolds (2002a, b) observe that teacher effectiveness research has led to the identification of a range of behaviours that are positively related to student achievement in basic skills. A consistent finding is that effective teachers have a positive academic orientation and create a business-like, task-orientated environment. They spend classroom time on academic activities rather than socialising. They are good classroom and behaviour managers and clearly instruct students on appropriate conduct. Students learn more in classes where they spend most of their time being taught, rather than working on their own. Teacher-led discussion, as opposed to individual seatwork, dominates. Therefore, effective teachers take an active role rather than just facilitating students' learning. In avoiding students remaining passive during a lesson, effective teachers ask frequent questions on low to higher levels to vary the intellectual input required and stimulate mental alertness.

The above behaviourist teacher effectiveness strand has been challenged by the 'connectionist' or 'constructivist' paradigm. How-

ever, teacher behaviours have been the most significant predictor of student progress over time (Muijs and Reynolds 2002b).

FINDINGS OF THE QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION

In view of the above research question respondents were asked to share their expertise and perceptions on “*What makes an effective teacher in the specific context of South Africa?*” In analysing the data the researcher looked for local perspectives with regard to teacher effectiveness that could add insights on teacher effectiveness under South African conditions. The sampled community of practitioners listed a multiplicity of perspectives which essentially confirm the findings of the literature review by reiterating, in the words of one of the respondents, “those basic teacher qualities and skills that have stood the test of time, that are basically universal and applicable everywhere”. The same respondent, a practitioner with a wide range of experiences of the education system on various levels, concluded:

New developments, modern technology and wider horizons require additions to and extension of the knowledge and competencies of teachers, but cannot and should not replace qualities so essential to the successful education of our children.

The findings were synthesised in the ensuing sections.

The Qualities of Effective Teachers

Practitioners’ responses emphasise that in order to be effective, teachers need to be very special people. A host of qualities, values, characteristics, attitudes and personality traits were listed which could be regarded as aspects of teacher effectiveness. For example:

An effective teacher is passionate about teaching and learning, motivated and is prepared to be a facilitator of learning for all students.

A good teacher should have high ethical and moral values and a personality suitable for being a teacher. She displays a genuine love for and interest in the welfare of children.

An effective teacher is willing to walk the extra mile to display active interest and commitment.

An effective teacher has an engaging personality that learners can relate to; goes beyond the job description and is happy to give learners extra help; is organised and punctual.

Above all, the teacher should serve as a living example to learners in key aspects such as dedication, commitment, punctuality, self-discipline and work ethics.

The primary vehicle for inculcating desired values, norms and healthy habits in our children is the teacher’s living example, character and conduct.

In reality, the impact of teachers’ example, conduct and habits lingers on in children’s lives long after they have forgotten the facts and skills a particular teacher tried to convey in a specific subject.

In short, effective teachers have strong personalities. They command respect and in turn respect others – the learners, fellow teachers and parents. They are intelligent, disciplined, full of confidence, positive, enthusiastic, friendly and genuinely caring about their students. They display a well-developed sense of humour and believe all students can succeed. Also, they understand diversity and teach in a manner that accommodates the diverse needs of students from different ethnic, religious and social groups, as well as those with learning barriers.

Pre-selection of Teacher Candidates

In light of the above, respondents stress the importance of pre-selection of candidates for a teaching career.

Only those with a genuinely suitable character and personality should be teachers.

I think it would be important to select candidates – an application process which includes a process of selection by means of student portfolio, individual assessment, group assessment (scenarios etc.), interviews and others.

The long-term impact of negative teacher conduct is equally powerful and deeply damaging to the lives of our children. How do we expect learners to be punctual when the teacher is frequently absent or late for school, or for his/her class? Will children learn to be organised, neat and tidy if the teacher is sloppy, his/her classroom or desk is a mess and his/her own work is untidy?

Persons lacking these qualities should be identified before they complete teacher training and should be directed into alternative occupations.

Keep the rotten apples out! Candidates who already have a record of criminality, substance abuse, dishonesty, laziness, et cetera should not be allowed into teacher training courses, much less into a classroom as a teacher.

The Knowledge and Skills Associated with Effective Teachers

Firstly, effective teachers must be demonstrably well-versed in the subject or discipline they teach, the factual superstructure of the subject and how it is put together in a coherent architecture, the relationships that tie critical concepts together, and how to apply discipline knowledge. Respondents confirm this assertion as follows:

Above all, an effective teacher must be knowledgeable with the learning area or subject.

The effective teacher has adequate subject knowledge, knows what is in the curriculum and knows what will be learned in the following year. He/she is master of different methods of teaching and learning and able to use different methods of assessment.

The teacher must have adequate subject knowledge, must know and understand the curriculum and subject syllabuses. He or she must have the ability to effectively use different teaching methods, ways and techniques and apply a variety of assessment methods: question and answer, quizzes, oral and written tests, more formal examinations.

As can be seen from the afore-going statements, effective teachers also know how to teach their subjects effectively. Different subjects have different epistemologies and the implicit prescriptions and proscriptions are known to effective teachers (Clark and Walsh 2002). It is particularly important not to utilise teachers outside their fields of expertise, or outside the grade level they were trained for. An experienced teacher cautions: "Cobbler, stick to your last! If you are a language specialist, don't try and teach geography or maths."

In light of the above statements it is also evident that effective teachers have an in-depth knowledge of the curriculum, the outcomes and

assessment practices required and the particular contents to be taught in the relevant phase of learning. They cover the curriculum thoroughly. They know how to organise and sequence the curriculum carefully. However, they have a limited focus in sessions because they know learners do better when teachers focus on one or two curriculum areas within the same classroom activity (cf Pretorius 2012).

Effective teachers know the child, the developmental phases and the learning needs in the various phases. This is confirmed by the following subject responses:

An effective teacher knows every learner. He/she learns everything about every learner before and during transfer to his/her class and keeps learner files updated in terms of interventions, strategies that worked well and did not work well, as well as learning and other needs.

An effective teacher invites learner participation and cooperation by understanding the learners, their needs, their interests and their strengths and weaknesses.

A teacher should be trained so that he/she understands the child in totality.

Moreover, effective teachers know how to support students with learning differences or difficulties, which should include the difficulties of learning the language of instruction. "They are familiar with learning problems and remedial strategies." They understand diversity and teach in a manner that includes all the diverse needs of students from different ethnic, religious and social groups. "He/she is inclusive - all students are equal and are dealt with in a manner so that everyone in the class is included".

Although they expect the teacher to be equipped with a thorough command of subject matter knowledge and to know how to teach the subject, respondents share the view that effective teachers keep up their learning endeavours unremittingly in order to stay abreast of changing demands and the rapid expansion of knowledge in most disciplines. Effective teachers are therefore active, i.e. fully engaged, researchers and "members of the learning community".

Distinguished teachers are recognised by the atmosphere created in their classrooms. They create an inviting environment in their classrooms, displaying appropriate learning support materials which stimulate students' interest and which are changed often. However, they have

an academic orientation. They spend classroom time on academic activities.

“Effective teaching is only achievable if the teacher has mastered the art and craft of classroom management.” Therefore, effective teachers are competent classroom managers. They are able to plan and organise classroom activities and behaviours so that an effective teaching and learning environment is created. Noise levels are low and movement around the classroom is minimal and work-related. “They are also leaders in their own right.” They have appropriate knowledge of leadership theories and styles and apply democratic leadership principles. Students take part in decisions and behaviour management (cf Pretorius 2012).

Effective teachers are not only good classroom managers, they are also self managers. They manage their time effectively and apply counterstrategies to avoid burnout. “They keep refreshed and have a healthy balance between home and school life”.

An important characteristic of effective teachers highlighted by the respondents is that they are flexible. “They use a variety of teaching strategies” to ensure the best possible mastery of different aspects of the subject content.

Although most schools do not have the luxury of sophisticated technological equipment to enhance teaching and learning, technology should play a more and more important role in classroom practice. The view is expressed that teachers should “make a conscious effort to upgrade their computer skills and actively utilise the internet as a source to inform their teaching strategies”.

Effective teachers are excellent communicators. They communicate subject knowledge actively, clearly and in a structured way. In order to do so, they come to their classrooms well-prepared. They utilise appropriate and well-planned learning support material. They initiate lessons from an unusual and dramatic angle that will captivate students’ interest. Furthermore, their lessons progress in a structured way by linking work with students’ prior knowledge, stating clear objectives, outlining content, giving attention to key points, explaining the relations between concepts and other sections of the subject content, and reviewing main ideas at the end of the lesson. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace (cf Pretorius 2011).

Effective teachers ensure that students are actively involved in lessons in various ways. The teacher asks “well-planned and thought-provoking questions” and constantly monitors students’ progress and understanding. Students take part in discussions, in problem-solving and in well-planned group work.

For the vast majority of South African black learners the hours in school represent the only time and opportunity vouchsafed for learning and studies (Burger 2006). Thus, an effective teacher considers it his/her task to ensure permanent mastery of curriculum content - “the application, consolidation and internalization of new knowledge and skills happen right in the classroom, during normal school hours”.

Effective teaching requires a conscious effort on the part of the educator to ensure that the material being taught is absorbed by the learners.

Although the situation in many African households is less than ideal for studying at home, respondents emphasise that homework should fulfill an essential role in instruction, even if learners have to do it in “scheduled sessions at school during afternoons”. Provided that thorough feedback is being given, student learning improves when regular homework serves a clear purpose and is matched to the current topics being taught in class. Therefore, effective teachers integrate well-planned homework into their teaching strategies and enhance the learning process with thorough feedback.

Lastly, effective teachers “don’t work in isolation”. They collaborate well in teams with their peers, and with administrators, parents and education professionals to ensure student success, with particular reference to those with special needs and at risk of failure.

Teamwork must be “out in the open”, that is visible to all interested parties at all times.

CONCLUSION

It was argued in this paper that it is indispensable to formulate a clear definition of teacher effectiveness as a precursor to placing a highly effective teacher in every classroom. Communities should develop a comprehensive definition of effectiveness and most importantly create the conditions to develop and sustain it. On the basis of the research methodology as specified earlier, the following comprehensive summary as a

definitive statement of the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours required of teachers to be truly effective at performing their professional task can be concluded:

- ♦ Effective teachers display a deep knowledge and understanding of the subject or discipline they teach, the salient concepts thereof, the relations among concepts, and how to apply discipline knowledge.
- ♦ Effective teachers know how to teach their subjects to others. Different subjects have different requirements with regard to the tuition thereof and the implicit methodological secrets are known to effective teachers.
- ♦ Effective teachers are excellent classroom managers. They plan and organise classroom activities and behaviours to create an effective teaching environment. They are consistent in their management techniques. Noise levels are low and movement around the classroom is minimal and work-related. Although a business-like and task-orientated atmosphere is maintained, a healthy classroom climate and friendly atmosphere exist.
- ♦ Effective teachers have an in-depth knowledge of the curriculum, the outcomes and assessment practices required and the particular contents to be taught in the relevant phase of learning.
- ♦ Effective teachers cover the full curriculum, organising and sequencing the curriculum carefully.
- ♦ Effective teachers have the knowledge and skills to keep abreast of technological developments and internet sources that could enhance their teaching.
- ♦ Effective teachers know the child, the developmental phases and the learning needs characterising the various phases.
- ♦ Effective teachers understand diversity and adopt teaching strategies that cater for all the needs of students from different ethnic, religious and social groups.
- ♦ Effective teachers know how to support students with learning differences or difficulties, including the difficulties of learning the language of instruction.
- ♦ Effective teachers have an academic orientation. They create a workmanlike and task-oriented atmosphere effectively enhancing students' time on task. They spend classroom time on academic activities.
- ♦ Effective teachers create an inviting environment in their classrooms, displaying appropriate learning support materials which stimulate students' interest and are frequently changed.
- ♦ Effective teachers are excellent communicators. They communicate subject knowledge actively, clearly and in a structured way to ensure maximum communication between teacher and learner.
- ♦ Effective teachers have strong personalities. They command respect. They have a good sense of humour. They are intelligent, imperturbably confident, relaxed, positive, committed, enthusiastic, friendly, and genuinely concerned about their students.
- ♦ Effective teachers believe all students can succeed and have high expectations of them. They hold learners accountable.
- ♦ Effective teachers persistently maintain their learning endeavours in order to stay abreast of changing demands and the rapid rate at which knowledge in most disciplines is expanding. They are active researchers.
- ♦ Effective teachers are flexible and can adjust to a given context. They apply a variety of strategies and teaching approaches to ensure the best possible mastery of different aspects of the subject content.
- ♦ Effective teachers teach the class as a whole because communication with individual students is less effective than talking to the whole class.
- ♦ Effective teachers come to their classrooms well-prepared. The three most important words to a teacher are: preparation, preparation, preparation.
- ♦ Effective teachers initiate lessons from an unusual angle for dramatic effect to captivate and retain students' interest.
- ♦ Effective teachers' lessons progress in a structured way by linking work with students' prior knowledge, stating clear objectives, outlining content, giving attention to key points, explaining the relations between concepts and other sections of the subject content, and reviewing main ideas at the end of the lesson. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace.
- ♦ Effective teachers limit the focus of sessions because they know students do better when teachers focus on one or two curriculum areas within the same classroom activity.

- ♦ Effective teachers ensure that students are actively involved in lessons in various ways. The teacher asks frequent questions on low to higher levels, making sure that they are well-planned and intellectually challenging; and he/she constantly monitors students' progress and understanding. Students take part in the discussions, in problem-solving and in well-planned group work.
- ♦ Effective teachers allow ample opportunity to practice. Learners are encouraged to use a skill until it becomes automatic.
- ♦ Effective teachers incorporate regular, well-planned and challenging homework giving thorough feedback to students on their progress. They mete out generous praise and encouragement.
- ♦ Effective teachers know how to assess learning. They apply a variety of formative and summative assessment strategies according to the school's assessment policy, utilising achievement scores to determine trends and apply corrective teaching measures. They give prompt feedback to learners.
- ♦ Effective teachers develop effective systems of record-keeping in order to comply with the afore-mentioned criterion.
- ♦ Effective teachers are able to think systematically about and reflect on their teaching practice in order to isolate deficiencies and continuously improve their teaching strategies.
- ♦ Effective teachers contribute to the inculcation of positive academic, attitudinal, and social adjustment qualities in students, for example, regular attendance, dedication and self-efficacy.
- ♦ Effective teachers are leaders in their own right. They are thoroughly conversant with leadership theories and styles and apply democratic leadership. Students take part in decisions and behaviour management.
- ♦ Effective teachers are self-managers. They manage their time effectively and apply antidote strategies to avoid burnout.
- ♦ Effective teachers cannot teach in isolation. They collaborate well with their peers in teams and with administrators, parents, and education professionals to ensure student success with particular reference to those who have special needs and/or are at risk of failure.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the above indicators of effectiveness be considered as guidelines with a view to reforming both pre-service and in-service teacher education. Considerations such as deficiencies in teachers' knowledge of subject matter and in their pedagogical expertise, which have been indicated above as specific contributors to the ineffectiveness of many South African teachers, can only be corrected by means of relevant or further training. Proper curriculum coverage, classroom management skills, teacher attitudes and values, as well as compliance with all the above requirements identified as attributes of effective teachers, have direct consequences for teacher education. In view of the above findings, pre-selection of teacher candidates ought to become a high priority. Because an emphasis on quality education is a common feature of all modern day reforms the education system should develop ways of providing an ongoing supply of effective teachers. This will not happen overnight because there are no quick fixes. The factors contributing to the ineffectiveness of many South African teachers have been clearly addressed in this paper. What is required is a concerted effort by all role players on all levels of the organisational structure of the education system to create conditions that are as near as possible to ideally suitable for teachers to comply with the above effectiveness requirements. To be effective teachers, their work environment and conditions of work, first and foremost, need to be well managed. The quest for well-trained managers throughout the education system is as dire as the quest for effective teachers.

A follow-up paper will concentrate more on specific directions and guidelines aimed at improving the situation and developing the conditions to foster and sustain teacher effectiveness.

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