


National Assessment and early childhood teacher professional development in South Africa:
Challenges and opportunities

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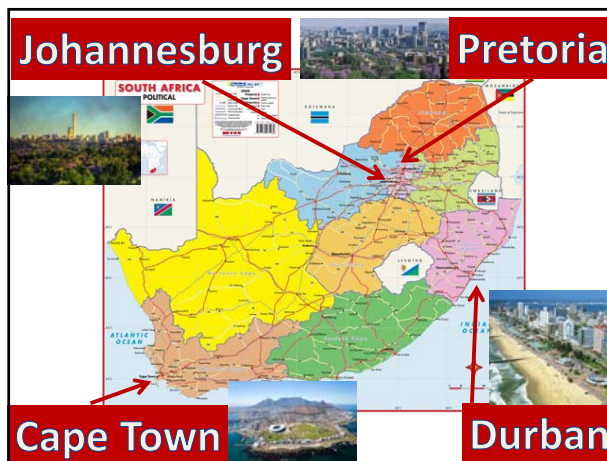


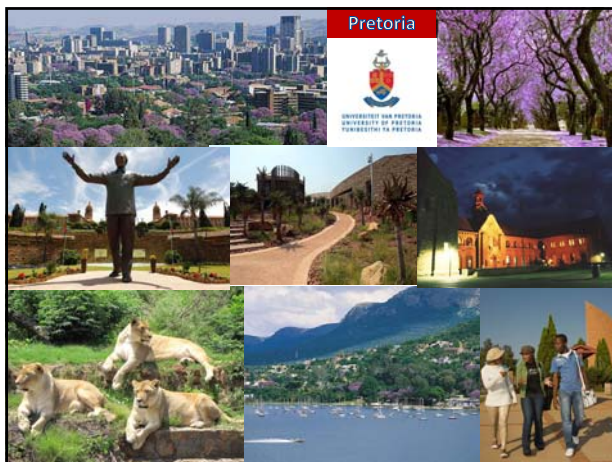
Structure

- Introduction
- Historical perspective of education in South Africa
- Educational purpose and impact of ANA
- Teacher professional development (TPD)
- Methodology
- Presentation of findings
- Recommendations



2





Introduction

- Post 1994 educational policies failed in most overcrowded and under-resourced schools
- Township schools underperformed in assessments
- *“While qualified, experienced teachers at well-resourced former model C schools were able to reflect OBE principles and adapt their practice, teachers in poorer under-resourced schools experienced challenges”* (Guilting, Hoadley & Jansen, 2009)

6



Students' performance in assessments

- Township schools struggle with new policies
- Assessment evidence on learner performance:
 - (A) Black learners unable to read and write at appropriate levels (PIRLS, 2006)
 - (B) ANA (2008/9/10/11/12) results confirm poor performance of learners
 - (C) Assessment results for 2009 show 8 out of 10 learners functioning at below 50% in literacy tests
 - (D) In 2011 almost 95% of learners in disadvantaged schools achieve less than 35% in ANA tests

7



Classification of schools

- **Dysfunctional** – breakdown in teaching and learning, material deprivation, poverty, disruption
 - NEIMS, 2009: 3600 schools without electricity, 2,444 without water supply, 11,231 with pit latrine toilets, 80% no libraries and computing systems
 - 2010 – 1209 schools average 60 learners per class (DoE, 2009)
- **Functional** – well resourced schools

8







The history of teacher training in South Africa

- Teacher training evolved from the Apartheid system.
- “In 1979, there were no White teachers without a matric-level (Grade 12) qualification, while one third of African teachers (32%) had no matric...” (Christie, 1994:130).
- Difference in qualification structure.
- “...most currently serving teachers received their professional education during apartheid...” (DoE, 2006).



Educational reform in South Africa

- To provide a system of education that builds democracy, dignity, equality and social justice
- To broaden participation in HE so as to reduce the highly stratified race and class structure of the country

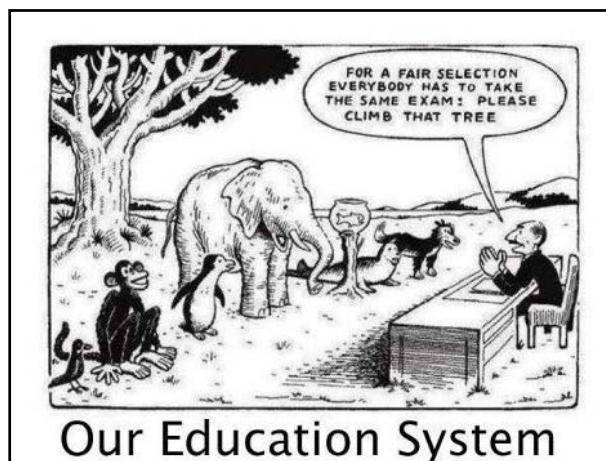


Educational reform in South Africa

“Governments have increased efforts to measure learning outcomes through national and international assessments, using these to ensure that all children receive the quality of education they were promised.”

*“Inequalities in education has increased...”
(Irna Bokova, 2015. DG of UNESCO)*

17



Annual National Assessment in SA

- Measure learning levels for a specific age group. Gr 3 and Gr 6
- To establish areas of educational need for schools and to provide strategies and interventions
- Focus on how much knowledge and skills students have acquired
- Administered by National DoE.

19



Curriculum transformation

- Introduction of new policies to uplift standard and quality of teaching and learning
- DoE embarked on several curriculum changes since 1994
OBE (1995), RNCS (2002), NCS (2006), CAPS (2012)
- High expectations
- Teachers experienced challenges

20



Challenges

- Assessment results remained low
- Workshops failed
- Factors influencing teachers response to curriculum change:
 - i. Poor qualifications
 - ii. Lack of support and resources
 - iii. Inadequate training
 - iv. Absence of supervision
- Problems may be reason for learner underperformance

21



Response to low literacy assessment results (2012)

- Identified as “underperforming schools”
- The Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) introduced the Gauteng Primary Schools Literacy Strategy (GPLS) 2010-2014
 - school-based TPD to improve teaching of literacy
 - to raise literacy levels.
 - 792 schools
- Other 8 provinces continued with old TPD
- Give rise to investigate the impact of
 - GPLS as new TPD

22



Guiding principles of new TPD (GPLS)

- Regular monitoring of teachers
- Provide schools with all material and TPD
- “Simple Literacy Approach”
- Measuring literacy and raising expectation
- Provision of literacy resource packages
- Homework and parent support

23



Professional Development Programmes in South Africa

- Standards-based model: Information on policy and expected changes are presented to school-based personnel: Short
- Coaching/mentoring model: NEW. On-going school-based and directed professional INSET: 3 years

24



Research Questions

- How do teachers understand, experience, respond to and implement the new school-based TPD(GPLS)?
- What practices and procedures are in place to implement TPD?
- What is the relationship between policy, curriculum provisions and educational practices regarding GPLMS?
- What are the major opportunities and challenges observed in the implementation of the TPD program?

25



Methodology: Qualitative

- Interviews, observation and document analysis
- Three schools in a township in Gauteng Province
- Purposefully selected
- Nine teachers – certificate and diploma holders
- Principals and Heads of Departments

26



Theoretical frameworks

STAGES OF CONCERN	
DESCRPTORS	EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN
refocusing	exploration of more benefits and alternatives of use
collaboration	exchanges with others on the ideas of innovation
consequence	attention focused on the impact and consequences
management	attention focused on how to deal with the innovation
personal	consider when the innovation might mean for oneself
informational	collecting information
unconcerned	little concern

1. Lower stages: focus on self. During this stage a teacher may ignore and resist
2. Middle stage: teacher adopts change, its task orientated
3. Upper stage: focus on result and impact

27



Previous findings (Old TPG) 2009-2011

- Poorly coordinated and rarely budgeted for
- Poor understanding of TPG
- Little support for TPG at school-level and DOE
- Low literacy performance of children
- Lack knowledge and skills
- Shortage of teaching and learning material
- Overcrowded classrooms
- Lack parental support

28



Prior preparation for new TPD

- Purpose: to improve literacy achievements
- Training of coaches/mentors and school management
- DOE appointment of coaches/mentors, orientation workshops and mentoring, provide material
- Teachers had a clear knowledge and understanding of the purpose of the TPD

29



Training sessions

- Coaches had regular mentoring of documents and pedagogy
- Workshops every second week on continuous basis
- Long sessions during the holiday
- School-based and Professional Learning Support sessions (cluster)
- No leave

30



Teacher involvement and support

- Materials were supplied (with detailed activities and expected outcomes)
- Structured lesson plans were provided
- Professional assistance from coaches.
- Participate in groups and on individual level

31



Findings and discussion

32



Teachers' understanding of the goals and intentions of TPD

- *"This programme has been designed to the underperforming schools in the township with the aim of trying to uplift English standards and with this programme they want to improve the reading of the learners." (SA-P2)*
- *"This programme supports us teachers to improve literacy levels in class. The reason why learners fail ANA is because they cant read." (SB-P3)*

33



Impact of training

- *"Training was beneficial because we take back what we learnt at the training and put into practice in the classroom. We know the correct methodology to teach reading. I will never forget this methodology.The learners benefitted from our teaching... there is progress, good resources" (SB-P5)*

34



Coaches

The teachers welcomed and accepted the presence of the coach into their classes.

- *"The coach has been there throughout this programme to support the teachers to make sure they are implementing this programme according to its requirements. The teachers share a very close relationship with the coach...." (SB-P4)*
- *"Yes the coach comes to our school at any time or at least twice a month . She observes our lessons. She gives us feedback. She checks the learners' book."*

36



Resources and material

- *"We have received most of the resources like we have the DBE books, the lesson plans are given to teachers, there is a library trolley with supplementary readers, there are group guided readers although there are some shortages with the group guided readers because of the big classes."* (SB-P4)
- *"We even watch the DVD on how to use the lesson plans"* (SA-P1).

37



Quality of resources

- *"I think Department of Basic Education (DBE) books are extremely good. The materials are extremely good. DBE books are well illustrated. A variety of activities that a learner can use to improve the literacy levels in FAL (First Additional Level)"* (SB-P4).

39



Fast pace

- *"I try my best but sometimes it's a challenge because lessons are fast tracked to make sure we cover everything for the term. So most learners in the township are slow learners. They come to school with their own problems. Some of them live with grandparents, and there are no parents."* (SC-P5)
- *"Well the teachers can keep pace but the problem lies with the learners we have. One must understand the school has been declared as underperforming so most of these learners underperform because they come from disadvantaged backgrounds. We have high levels of poverty unemployment, orphans and single parents in the townships and it's a struggle for most of these learners to concentrate fully in the classroom so it's easy for a teacher to fall behind..."* (SB-P4)

40



Marking

- *“We have a lot of marking. We have learners’ classwork, DBE books, and assessment tasks. So we have to take marking home and this is exhausting and stressful. We have to mark daily because we do corrections in the morning and when the coach visits us she wants the marking to be completed. (SC-P5)*
- *“We got an average of 60 learners in some of the classes and it’s not easy for a teacher to mark some of these activities. Yes, marking is a great challenge .” (SA-P1)*

41



Creativity

- *“We must follow everything in the lesson plan. Where is the time for creativity?” (SB-P3).*
- *“Everything is planned for us. Lesson plans are there, resources are there. The coach uses a checklist to see if we are following the methodology for listening and speaking ... They tell us everything so we can’t be creative or flexible.” (SC-P5).*

43



Attitudes toward progress

- *“Learners are reading confidently. They are speaking with confidence. They now understand English better”*
- *“Learners are more motivated to learn because of the availability of resources and we see the quality of written work has improved. They write more meaningfully” (SC-P5).*

44



Teacher empowering

- *“Yes the coach showed us how to teach group guided reading. At the beginning I was not sure but now I am empowered and I can teach group guided reading.”(SB-P1).*
- *“Oh yes the coach showed us how to teach literacy and I can do it but before I could not do it.”*

45



Support and cooperation from the HoD

- *“I make sure that teachers attend the GPLMS programme and workshop and I also monitor their lessons. I go to their classes. I check if they have challengesWe discuss progress and we share ideas on how to overcome challenges.”(SA-P4).*

46



Assessment results Self-worth

- *“There has been an improvement in our results in 2012 and 2013. We noticed a big improvement in our ANA results. I am pleased to note that in 2013 the literacy average for Grade 3 was 62 %.” (SB-P4)*
- *“We can teach and are no more ‘underperforming ‘ teachers.”*

47



Parent involvement

- *“We do have parent evenings every term where parents are being briefed about GPLS..... Unfortunately few parents attend.” (SA-P2)*

48



Teachers perceptions of new TPD (GPLS)

Teachers responses:

- Coaching is important for effective implementation
- Improved standard of learners' performance and literacy levels
- Gained more confidence and competence
- Lack of creativity, parental support, overcrowded classrooms and marking are problematic

49



Challenges

- Overcrowded classrooms
- Lack parental involvement
- Sustainability: Lack budget
- Program is too ambitious.
- Programme is too structured- no creativity
- Fast pace of learners
- Program is too expensive

50



Opportunities

- Coaching/mentoring
- Improved assessment performance
- Provided support and material
- Learning process for teaching
- From training to supporting learning
- Multiple forms of collaboration
- Empowered teachers and enhance self-worth

51



Recommendations

- TPD should target the raising of teachers' professional development and pedagogical growth whiles local governments should address the infrastructural and logistical support
- TPD should be incorporated in the strategic plan at all levels and budgeted for
- Schools in township could extend the school day with an hour to allow learners to do homework and keep up with the pace
- Mentoring, cluster and school in-house workshops and collaboration should continue

52



