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Exploring professional development interventions for improving the teaching practice of primary school teachers

by

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D **Letter to the School Principal**

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G **Self-assessment sheets**

H **Observation Sheets**

I **Letter to Provincial Directorate of Education for the Administration of the Questionnaires**

J **Letter to Respondents**

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that *Exploring professional development interventions for improving the teaching practice of primary school teachers* is my own work and that all sources that I used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signature:_____ Date:_____

Mrs CRCA Tembe

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ABSTRACT

Since the independence of Mozambique in 1975 teacher education and teacher continuing professional development (TCPD) have been a matter of concern for the Ministry of Education (MINED) and teachers. Both the MINED as employer and the teachers individually have permanently been looking for models and ways to upgrade their academic and professional qualifications levels.

The constraints faced by Mozambique are similar to those faced by other sub-Saharan African countries since their independence due to the increased pressure for more attention to all levels of education, with particular emphasis on primary education. Although TCPD is usually seen as part of the overall Strategy for Teacher Education (Ministry and Education and Culture, 2004), this scenario privileges initial teacher education since there are many unqualified teachers facilitating learning.

The main challenge of this study was to investigate the practices of primary school teachers in Grades 1 and 2 through a participatory action research (PAR) in a study titled *Exploring Professional Development Intervention for Improving the Teaching Practices of Primary School Teacher*. Mixed methods research was used, namely quantitative and qualitative methods. A quantitative method was used during the baseline study which consisted of questionnaires administrated to 1 028 teachers from six provinces in the country. Qualitative research was used with five practitioner-researchers (PRs) in one school. Each PR was approached as a single case study.

The findings of this PAR indicate that, on the one hand, the teachers are aware of the need for more academic and pedagogical qualifications, and on the other hand, of the individual responsibility they have. They believe that progression in their careers should be a credible procedure that recognises the TCPD programmes they have attended. The teachers are of the opinion that the MINED should formally recognise the TCPD by allocating credit points to teachers.

Although the self-directed professional development (SDPD) model used in this study was time consuming, it has revealed that TCPD can provide effective results when with the

appropriate support and follow-up of methods of facilitating the learning of reading and writing skills in Grades 1 and 2. The study involved all teachers appointed to Grade 1 in 2007, and continued with the same teachers until 2010. During this period the teachers were appointed to facilitate learning in Grades 1 and 2. Notwithstanding the fact that the PRs were only from 2 of the 7 grades provided in primary education, the study revealed the advantage of *whole school professional development*

The study took into consideration the Mozambican school context and calendar. For instance, the PRs were certified by the latest model of teacher education (10+2 teacher education programme) provided by the MINED. In addition, the meetings were carried out during the period scheduled for the planning of pedagogical practices and TCPD programmes.

Throughout the study the constant issue that emerged was the need for a paradigm shift in TCPD. Providers of TCPD need to introduce changes in the way they view primary school teachers and confer on them the responsibility for their individual continuous professional development. Action Research could be the new research paradigm used by providers and teachers to improve their work, understand learners' learning problems and find the appropriate solutions to improve achievement. The findings of this PAR both contribute to understanding the teachers' views with respect to the TCPD programmes being provided, and offer the option for a new paradigm for TCPD. In this regard the current providers of such programmes can also consider the school principal and the deputy principal as fundamental facilitators of TCPD through a SDPD model.

Key words: *participatory action research, practitioner-researcher, learning opportunity, learningshop, teachers continuing professional development, self-directed professional development, in-service educational programmes.*

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACHRONYMS

ADPP	Ajuda Dinamarquesa de Povo para Povo (Danish Support from People to People)
AR	Action Research
CFPP	Centro de Formação de Professores Primários (Primary Education Teacher Education Centre)
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CRESCER	Cursos (Courses of school capacity building: Systematic, continuous, experimental and reflexive)
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Technische Zusammenarbeit (German Government Technical Cooperation Organization for Development)
IMAP	Instituto de Magistério Primário (Primary Teaching Institute)
IMP	Instituto Médio Pedagógico (Pedagogic Medium Institute)
INDE	National Institute of Educational Development
INSEP	In-service Education Programme
INSET	In-service Education and Training
LLL	Lifelong learning
MEC	Ministry of Education and Culture
MINED	Ministry of Education
MP	Magistério Primário (Teacher Training College)
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PD	Professional Development
PR	Practitioner-Researcher
PRs	Practitioner-Researchers
QA	Quality Assurance
RM	Research-mentor
SDPD	Self-directed Professional Development
TCPD	Teachers' Continuing Professional Development
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
ZIP	Zona de Influência Pedagógica (Zone of Pedagogical Influence: a cluster of schools in Mozambique)