TEACHERS' EXPERIENCE OF PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT IN A CHANGING EDUCATIONAL SETTING

by

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ABSTRACT

The introduction of outcomes based education, what in South Africa is called Curriculum 2005, in 1998 ushered in a new era in South African education. Curriculum 2005 will take some years to filter through the whole schooling system, yet a revision has already had to be instituted and a New Curriculum Statement is envisaged to be introduced to schools starting in 2004.

This study has examined the experiences of teachers with regard to the purpose, scope and practices of professional support within the changing educational setting of South Africa. In doing so the study also examined the actual experiences of teachers with regard to educational change and professional support, particularly in relation to outcomes based education. The study also indicated the measures that can be taken in order to improve the provision of professional support for teachers.

The study used a qualitative method of research. It used a non-positivist interpretative / constructivist approach. To obtain information, the study used open ended interviews with five teachers from Thohoyandou District, Limpopo Province. The teachers, three males and two females, all teach grade 7 classes. Purposeful sampling was used to select those teachers who I regarded as having the necessary and relevant knowledge, understandings, and experiences for this research and were willing to share their experiences. The data analysis used here is based on the ideas of grounded theory, which argues for detailed grounding of theory in the systematic and intensive analysis of empirical data in a microscopic detailed fashion. The report discusses issues such as politics and educational change, the context of change, teacher collaboration, commitment and
accountability. Other issues discussed included advocacy for the changes, the timing of workshops for outcomes based education and training for teachers, in school support by principals and heads of department and site visits by curriculum advisors to provide support for teachers as they grapple with the changes. The research indicates that teachers within the same context can have different conceptions or multiple mental constructions about educational change and professional support which may contradict each other, or be in conflict with each other. This research therefore calls for a more personal interactive mode of professional support provision, involving a juxtaposition of conflicting and contradicting ideas, in which efforts are made to obtain the multiple perspectives that teachers have. This will lead to a reconsideration of ideas, methods and positions as the provision of professional support progresses, thus allowing for complementarities to be discovered.

**Keywords**

1. Professional support
2. Education policy change
3. Teacher understandings of education policy change
4. Teacher experiences of education policy change
5. Qualitative research
6. Open-ended interviews.
7. Trustworthiness in qualitative research.
8. Politics in educational policy change.
9. Teacher collaboration
10. Context of educational change