

1-1-2011

## Supporting the Continuing Professional Development of Teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Integrated Teacher Education Model

Cosmas Cobbold

Albert Dare

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholars.fhsu.edu/alj>

 Part of the [Educational Leadership Commons](#), [Higher Education Commons](#), and the [Teacher Education and Professional Development Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Cobbold, Cosmas and Dare, Albert (2011) "Supporting the Continuing Professional Development of Teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Integrated Teacher Education Model," *Academic Leadership: The Online Journal*: Vol. 9 : Iss. 1 , Article 45.  
Available at: <https://scholars.fhsu.edu/alj/vol9/iss1/45>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by FHSU Scholars Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Academic Leadership: The Online Journal by an authorized editor of FHSU Scholars Repository.

# Academic Leadership Journal

## INTRODUCTION

The continuing professional development (CPD) of teachers has, since the 1980s, become an important subject in teacher education reform in the world (Ding, 2001). Increasingly, it is being realized that teaching is a specialized work and that teachers as developing professionals should reach their maturity both in the context and level of their profession through lifelong learning and exploring.

Added to this realization is the changing role of the teacher in the information and knowledge society. Traditionally, classroom learning has been about acquiring and applying knowledge, and the teacher's work is simply to disseminate knowledge to a younger generation and to prepare them for assessment and ultimately for employment in the society (Tang, 2001). Teachers learned the rudiments of teaching by watching the teachers who taught them; that is, through an apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975). The emergence of the information and knowledge society has brought a change of mindset in learning. New approaches to learning necessitate new approaches to teaching which challenge the teacher's traditional role as knowledge provider. These include teaching that emphasizes higher-order thinking skills, metacognition, constructivist approaches to learning and understanding, brain-based learning, cooperative learning strategies, multiple intelligences and different "habits of mind", employing a wide range of assessment techniques, and using computer-based and other information technology that enables students to gain access to information independently.

Andy Hargreaves (2003) sees teachers caught in a triangle of competing interests and imperatives in the knowledge society as: catalysts, counterpoints and causalities. According to him, the interactions and effects of the three positions "shape the nature of teaching, what it means to be a teacher and very the viability of teaching as a profession in the knowledge society" (p.10). Teaching for today's knowledge society is technically more complex and wide-ranging than teaching has ever been. It draws on a base of research and experience about effective teaching – research that is always changing and expanding. More and more governments, businesses and educators are urging teachers in the knowledge society to commit themselves to standards-based learning in which all students achieve high standards of cognitive learning. In this role, teachers create knowledge, apply it to unfamiliar problems, and communicate it effectively to others, instead of treating knowledge as something that students should simply memorize and reproduce.

Today's teachers therefore need to be committed to and continually engaged in pursuing, upgrading, self-monitoring, and reviewing their own professional learning. This would mean participating in face-to-face and virtual professional learning networks (Lieberman & Wood, 2002), adopting continuous professional development portfolios in which teachers accumulate and review their own professional learning (Day, 1999), consulting and critically applying the evidence of educational research so their practice is always informed by it (Hargreaves, 2001), undertaking action research and inquiry of their own and connecting professional learning with levels of reward in teacher pay (West, 2001). In brief, teachers can no longer take refuge in the notion that teaching is technically simple, and that once you

have qualified to teach, you know the basics of teaching forever. The new roles imposed on the teacher by the knowledge society means that teachers must be able to build a special kind of professionalism where they, among other things, promote deep cognitive learning; learn to teach in ways they were not taught; commit to continuous professional learning; work and learn in collegial teams; and develop and draw on collective intelligence (Hargreaves, 2003, p.24). If teachers are to win the confidence of their students and be seen as professionals in this knowledge society, then they must commit themselves to a process of lifelong learning through CPD. Teachers who do not keep learning to improve their practice are a liability to their students and to society.

For this reason, professional learning in teaching is now considered from a lifelong learning perspective, and acknowledged to be successful only with cooperation and guarantee from the teacher education enterprise. In developing countries, it is now a widely accepted idea that teacher education should fully support the processes of teacher's continuing professional development. This paper discusses the concept of continuing professional development for teachers and examines its provision in Sub Saharan- African countries. It notes that models of teacher education applied in many Sub-Saharan African countries do not seem to provide the environment that supports teachers in their continuing professional learning during their teaching career, and argues that this can be achieved through a model of teacher education which links pre-service education, induction, and professional development into one integrated process. The paper makes proposals for this model, emphasizing the need for partnerships among teacher education institutions, schools and government departments of education.

## **CONCEPTUALIZING CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

In the literature, CPD is variously called teacher development, in-service education and training (INSET), staff development, career development, human resource development, professional development, continuing education and lifelong learning. The definitions and meanings given to these terms by different writers are sometimes different and overlap. Day (1999, p.4) defines CPD as:

all natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school and which contribute, through these, to the quality of education in the classroom. It is the process by which, alone and with others, teachers review, renew and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purpose of teaching and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence essential to good professional thinking, planning and practice with children, young people and colleagues through each phase of their teaching lives.

Essential elements of CPD in Day's definition include individual and collegial learning over the entire teaching career; and improvement of educational quality and professional renewal as important outcomes. Bolam and McMahon (2004) also identify from the wider literature four main reasons for teachers to undertake CPD: to improve individual performance; to enhance their ability to meet changing needs; to train for new roles or promotion; and as preparation for management.

Sparks and Hirsh (1997) see CPD as critical to implementing new educational programmes. They assert that sustained implementation of new practices requires a new form of professional development affecting not only the knowledge, attitudes and practices of individual teachers, administrators and so on, but also the cultures and structures of the organizations in which they work.

Sparks and Hirsh further argue that teachers must have opportunities to discuss, think about, try out and hone new practices by taking new roles, creating new structures, working on new tasks and creating a culture of inquiry. In this way CPD linked to a reform agenda must support a learner-centered view of teaching and a career-long conception of teacher's learning. For Fullan (1995) teachers are not only crucial to successful improvement efforts, but also key initiators. He argues that the rapid pace of change today imposes upon teachers moral and cultural imperatives that compel them to be active change agents.

The continuing centrality of CPD to the improvement of educational performance is evident from the importance attached to it over several decades in both the developed and developing worlds (Bolam & MacMahon, 2004). In developed countries in particular, CPD has been associated with nationwide and state-level reforms often based on dedicated or categorical funding, and coupled tightly to the implementation of reform policies. Research on school effectiveness and improvement also indicates that most of the factors that correlate with effective school outcomes have direct implications for teachers and indirect ones for teacher learning and CPD. Teachers in effective schools are reported to work collegially and to collaborate to achieve shared goals; they have high expectations of their students, teach purposely, monitor student work and give positive feedback (Teddle & Reynolds, 2000). The literature on improving schools indicate that such schools have learned to manage multiple changes and are moving towards the concept of learning organization. Fullan (1993) argues that learning teachers are the key to a learning organization and that one means of promoting this is to invest in teacher professional development.

Teacher learning and CPD are influenced by the changing contexts – policy, practice and professional culture – in different countries. Hence, CPD policies and practices are necessarily rooted in the particular context of a single education system and, indeed, are often the product of unique and dynamically changing sets of circumstances – political, economic, social, cultural, historical, professional and technical – in that system. The different contexts make professional learning in teaching either an individual obligation or an institutional right (Hargreaves, 2003). In Greece, where a gap of up to ten years often occurs between qualification and first appointment, CPD is mandatory for all new appointees (Le Metais, 1997). In China and several African countries Foskett and Lumby (2003, p.70) report of 'particularism' and 'universalism' as strong impacts on staff selection and CPD: "In particularist approaches selection is shaped by the personal affiliation of the players, for example kinship, religion, ethnic or political similarities". In the Netherlands, CPD is apparently problematic because of "the tradition of teachers' professional freedom whether or not they take part in such activities" (Karstanje, 200, p.30, quoted in Bolam & MacMahon, 2004, p.39).

## **PROVISION OF CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

A study of CPD programmes in SSA reveals a number of issues. First, provision of CPD is very low. Since the 1980s many African countries have had to operate in a context of financial austerity and underdevelopment, yet with a commitment to providing universal basic education for all their citizens. With competing claims for funding within education systems, basic education has attracted more resources, and CPD readily displaced as priority area. Added to this is the shortage of qualified teachers necessitated by increasing enrolments and devastating effects of HIV/AIDS on teacher supply in Africa. All these circumstances encourage an emphasis on pre-service education rather than CPD.

A second issue, derived from the low provision, is the ad hoc nature of CPD programmes for teachers.

Bellancan (1995) has aptly described such CPD activities as “the scheduling of awareness programs, usually of short duration, to inform teachers about new ideas in the field of education, or, in the worst case scenario, to fill mandated institute days with any available topic or speaker” (p.6). The report of a study conducted in Malawi exemplifies the typical situation in Africa: “Opportunities for in-service training for teachers and tutors arise only as a means of orienting them to new syllabuses or curricula. There is also lack of a professional development ethos at the school level” (Kunje & Chimombo, 1999, p.32). The image of the teacher embodied in such conceptualization of CPD is that of a ‘technician’ whose defects in meeting system and institutional needs must be rectified through “one-off” short courses and workshops. There is limited or no image of the teacher as a ‘reflective practitioner’ which takes a ‘growth’ rather than ‘defect’ view of teacher development. It is important to emphasize that a growth view of teacher development is embedded in the notion of teaching as a complex activity, requiring teachers to develop creative responses to the challenge of circumstance. The capacities for reflection lie in a sense of agency, realized through inquiry and CPD (Christie, Harley and Penny, 2004).

Thirdly, the literature on CPD presents a consensus of the desirability of a pre-service/in-service continuum. However, there appears to no teacher education programme in SSA that brings together these two aspects of teacher development. Where these aspects are recognized, they are treated separately and often the role of the teacher education institutions (colleges and universities) end with the pre-service preparation stage; in-service is seen as the responsibility of the schools and government departments of education for whom, unfortunately, CPD is not a priority. As already noted CPD is ad hoc and loosely planned, with erratic and irregular funding, rather than being regular and institutionalized. In many African countries, CPD is a way of completing pre-service education, rather than being part of a continuum (Christie, Harley and Penny, 2004). The Malawi Integrated In-Service Teacher Education Programme (MIITEP) and the Untrained Teachers Diploma in Basic Education (UTDBE) program in Ghana provide examples of the use of CPD to allow untrained teachers to become qualified. But what happens to these teachers after gaining professional qualification?

## **INTEGRATED TEACHER EDUCATION FOR CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

To promote teacher professional development, it is proposed that contemporary teacher education reform in Sub-Saharan African countries should consider pre-service education and training (PRESET), induction, and in-service education and training (INSET) as related aspects of a continuum, and focus on building a lifelong integrated teacher education system of pre-service preparation,, induction guidance, and in-service development (Ding, 2001). In this model, PRESET should be considered as only the first phase in teacher education. During this stage, as much as possible should be done to prepare the prospective teacher both theoretically and practically for the work of teaching. However, successful completion of PRESET as measured by the college-or university-based examination should not qualify a candidate as professional teacher, as is the case in Ghana (Cobbold, 2007). Instead, the candidate should be given Provisional Teacher status.

The first few years (two or three years) should be designated Induction period during which the new teacher engages in further professional learning to develop his/her knowledge and skills. The period of induction should provide the provisional teacher with time to consolidate and develop his/her professional knowledge and skills in independent practice, and to demonstrate that their professional practice meets or exceeds standards of professional practice for full registration. Besides ensuring that

provisional teachers demonstrate their competence in a set of minimum standards, the provisional registration requirements should aim to encourage the development of formal, consistent structures and processes across the system to support the entry of all new members into the profession. Successful completion of the induction program and demonstrated evidence of competence in all the laid down standards should lead to full registration as Professional Teacher. This should be the second stage on the teacher education continuum.

In the third stage of the proposed model, progression on the professional hierarchy should be based not just on years of teaching experience and success in interviews, but on merit and professional recognition. Different status titles may be used in different countries to describe teachers who attain to particular levels on the professional hierarchy (e.g. senior teacher, lead teacher, chartered teacher, master teacher, etc.). It is important, however, that such titles and their corresponding responsibilities and expectations recognize explicitly the teachers' work and experience and motivate them towards continuing learning and training. CPD activities at each level should include involvement in academic and research projects and learning circles; facilitating training sessions; subscription to professional journals; action research in classroom practices; providing consultancy to community clients; and mentoring of younger teachers. All these must be properly documented in a portfolio of consistent and forward-looking professional projects, which should be carefully assessed before a teacher is considered for promotion to the next professional stage.

The successful implementation of the proposed model would require that teacher education colleges and universities do not see teacher education as a finished agenda once PRESET is completed. They should work with schools and government departments of education to design and implement a structured professional development programme for teachers to complement what is provided during the PRESET stage. It should be possible for teacher education institutions to re-package some of their courses into professional development modules for teachers, successful completion of which should count towards the award of higher professional qualifications and admittance to higher professional status.

There is also a need for schools to create an infrastructure, especially collaborative patterns of professional development, to enable knowledge of best practice and research findings to be utilized. Schools, like other workplaces, must become sophisticated professional learning systems that are organized and structured to encourage professional learning for teachers, so that it becomes an endemic and spontaneous part of their work. In the complex, fast-changing knowledge society, teachers, like other workers, cannot depend forever on what they learned during initial training; neither can they work and learn entirely alone. No one teacher knows enough to cope or improve by himself or herself. It is vital that teachers engage in action, inquiry and problem-solving together in collegial teams or professional learning communities. While in universities, lecturers are enjoined to either 'publish or perish', teachers working in African schools are also advised to either 'learn or leave' the profession.

## **CONCLUSION**

This paper discussed CPD and its provision in teacher education in Sub-Saharan Africa. It noted that in many Sub-Saharan African countries, CPD remains a relatively ad hoc response to 'events' and is instrumentally tied to a model of the teacher as technician rather than the teacher as a reflective practitioner. This approach does not promote continuing learning for teachers. A model for teacher education that supports teachers' professional learning was therefore proposed. The model links pre-

service preparation, induction, and in-service education into a continuum, and emphasizes the need for collaboration among teacher education institutions, schools and government departments of education in the planning and delivery of teacher education. While linked to promotion, the model is structured for professional development rather than for promotion on the career ladder.

The proposed model is an attempt to contribute to the development of a national policy and strategic plan for CPD in African countries and the setting up of appropriate structures and modalities for its implementation. It provides guidelines for ensuring the institutionalization and operation of CPD and strengthening the structural links between PRESET and INSET.

The model also has the promise and potential to move beyond teacher as technician to teacher as reflective practitioner, which is so vital for the complex and changing contexts in which teachers work today. It again creates opportunities for teachers to expand their influence outside their profession. Their expertise as knowledge managers and trainers may be sought by organizations outside the education circle.

In the implementation of the model, there is the tendency for teachers who reach higher levels of competence through their professional learning to leave the service prematurely for other professions or occupations, as currently happening in some countries. This likelihood points to the necessity for adequate remuneration and incentives for quality work in teaching. It also draws attention to the hard fact that in today's learning organizations it may not be always possible to keep all good employees. If teaching is credited for being able and willing to develop people not just for its benefit but also for the improvement of society at large, the credibility of the profession will be very high. Ultimately, it may serve as good recruitment advertisement for the profession. It is hoped that the proposed model will be tried in Ghana and other countries in SSA.

### **NOTE**

This article was modified from a presentation at the international conference on teacher education in Sub-Saharan Africa held in University of Cape Coast, Ghana, July 2008.

### **REFERENCES**

- Bellancan, J. A. (1995). *Designing professional development for change: A systematic approach*. Palantine: IRI/Skylight.
- Bolam, R. & McMahon, A. (2004). Literature, definitions and models: Towards a conceptual map. In C. Day & J. Sachs (Eds). *International handbook on the continuing professional development of teachers* (pp.33-63). Berkshire: Open University Press.
- Christie, P., Harley, K & Penny, A. (2004). Case studies from sub-Saharan Africa. In C. Day & J. Sachs (Eds.). *International handbook on the continuing professional development of teachers* (pp.33-63). Berkshire: Open University Press.
- Cobbold, C. (2007). Induction for teacher retention: The missing link in teacher education policy in Ghana. *Postscript*, 8(1), 7 – 18.
- Day, C. (1999). *Developing teachers: The challenges of lifelong learning*. London: Falmer Press.

- Ding, G. (2001). The integration of pre-service and in-service teacher education: The case of Shanghai and Jiangsu. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education and Development*, 4(2), 61 – 72.
- Foskett, N. & Lumby, J. (2003). *Leading and managing education: International dimensions*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing.
- Fullan, M. (1993). *Change forces*. London: Cassell.
- Fullan, M. (1995). The limits and the potential of professional development. In T. R. Guskey & M. Huberman (Eds.). *Professional development in education: New paradigms and practices*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Hargreaves, A. (2003). *Teaching in the knowledge society: Education in the age of insecurity*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Hargreaves, D. (2001). Revisiting educational research: Past lessons and future prospects. In M. Fielding (Ed.). *Taking education really seriously: Four years hard labour*. London: Falmer Press.
- Kunje, D. & Chimombo, J. (1999). *Malawi: A baseline study of the teacher education system*. MUSTER Discussion Paper, Centre for International Education, University of Sussex Institute of Education.
- Le Metais, J. (1997). Continuing professional development: The European experience. In H. Tomlinson (Ed.). *Managing professional development in schools*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing.
- Lieberman, A. & Wood, D. (2002). From network learning to classroom teaching. *Journal of Educational Change*, 3(3-4).
- Lortie, D. (1975). *The schoolteacher: A sociological study*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Sparks, D. & Hirsh, C. (1997). *A new vision for staff development*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and National Staff Development Council.
- Tang, K. S. (2001). Addressing the lifelong learning needs of teachers: A continuing teacher education framework. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education and Development*, 4(2), 173-188.
- Teddlie, C. & Reynolds, D. (2000). *International handbook of school effectiveness research*. London: Falmer Press.
- West, M. (2001). Reforming teachers' pay. In M. Fielding (Ed.). *Taking education really seriously: Four years hard labour*. London: Falmer Press.



VN:R\_U [1.9.11\_1134]