

Teachers' Views on the Utility of the Teacher's File

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Abstract

In 2010, the Department of Basic Education instructed its teachers to maintain a teacher's file. This article reports on a research project which described teachers' views on the utility of the teacher's file and its relationship to skill of reflection related continuous professional teacher development (CPTD). The research described the meaning and the sense teachers attached to maintaining this file in the light of assumptions and principles of the experiential learning theory (ELT). It also probed ideas related to how the file could be improved and developed into a resource that contributes to the professional development of teachers in terms of teaching, learning and assessment (TLA). The study utilized interviews and document study as tools to collect data which were later analyzed and interpreted to arrive at the research findings and recommendations. The study found that all teachers regarded the teachers' file as an administrative tool which had nothing to do with their own professional development. They regarded it as a management tool which was meant to monitor them. The study found that to acquire more meaning to the teacher, the file must be enhanced to include more teacher advancement related matters. In view of the teachers' feelings that the file was purely administrative, the Department of Basic Education could review its current format and render it relevant to the professional development of the teacher. The aspects of professional development must include specific areas such as teaching, learning, assessment, classroom management and administration.

Keywords: assessment, (CPTD), file, learning, portfolio, teaching, reflection.

Introduction

When carried out properly, classroom activities such as teaching, learning and assessment (TLA) should create opportunities for the learners to acquire knowledge and skills. The teacher is the one who is tasked to see to it that the teaching process results in learning on the part of the learners. To carry out this task the teachers undergo initial teacher training (ITE) and continuing professional teacher development (CPTD). One strategy accepted worldwide as a suitable for CPTD is the maintenance teacher's file/portfolio. In 2010, the South African Department of Basic Education (DBE) announced that teachers would henceforth be required to maintain a teacher's file. DBE specified that the file should be utilized for the purpose of planning and assessment activities. It is now four years since the introduction of this document. This article reports on research on teachers' views on this document in view of their need reflection related to continuous professional teacher development.

Research Problem

As in many other countries, formal and informal classroom instruction in South Africa is intended to achieve both national and specific outcomes. Hence, school instruction must result in learners acquiring outcomes alluded to in the nation's constitution, critical and developmental outcomes intended to be achieved by all learners, subject-specific skills, as well as knowledge of concepts, values and attitudes. Undertakings involved in this processes include initial curriculum or programme design, development, and evaluation. This is then followed by teaching, learning, assessment and classroom management. Implied in these educative processes is the need for teachers to acquire disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge and skills prior to and in the course of their professional practice. The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in South Africa adds to this the need to have fundamental, situational and practical learning and skills (DHET, 2005:8).

The demise of authoritative teacher-centred transmission instruction and its replacement by mediated or facilitated learner-centred learning requires that teachers be well informed of current TLA approaches and theories such as constructivism and related cognitive and socio-cognitive theories. The strategies of contextualization, recognition of prior learning and guiding learners to acquire meaning and significance of concepts on their own call for improved teaching skills on the part of the teachers. (Nieman and Monyai, 2013:5-7).

CPTD is an adjunct of staff development intended to promote achievement among learners. In turn CPTD, inter alia, implies and requires instructional leadership by the school principal and his/her senior management team (SMT) and attendance of internally or externally arranged formal in-service training and development courses (Du Plessis, Conley & Du Plessis, 2012:101-102). As mentioned in the introduction, another tool used by educators to continuously sharpen their skill and knowledge post initial training is the teacher's portfolio or file.

There were efforts by the South African Council of Educators (SACE) to assist teachers to develop an essentially professional development portfolio dating back to 2005 which seems to have not been pursued currently. The envisaged portfolio was going to be comparably more comprehensive and wide-ranging in scope than the current teacher's file. The contents of this SACE portfolio would have included, inter alia: the teacher's curriculum vitae, a brief biography, a profile of the classroom context, the school and community profiles, reflections on the teaching and learning contexts, reflection of participation in past professional development processes, professional development plans, steps to be taken to attain intended goals, and future plans. It contrasted diametrically with the teacher's file now required by the Department of Basic Education (DBE). The aforementioned SACE portfolio would have meant something different to teachers who are using the current teacher's file (Raven, 2005:36-37). Due to the apparent delay by SACE to implement this conception and lack of follow-up on the 2006 resolution to encourage teachers to maintain fully professional development portfolios, teachers found themselves having to maintain the teacher's file, a document that was decreed by the DBE at the beginning of 2010.

This article reports on a study which asked the question: What are the experiences of teachers regarding the requirement to maintain the teacher's file and what meanings and sense do they attach to this responsibility?

Scientific Orientation

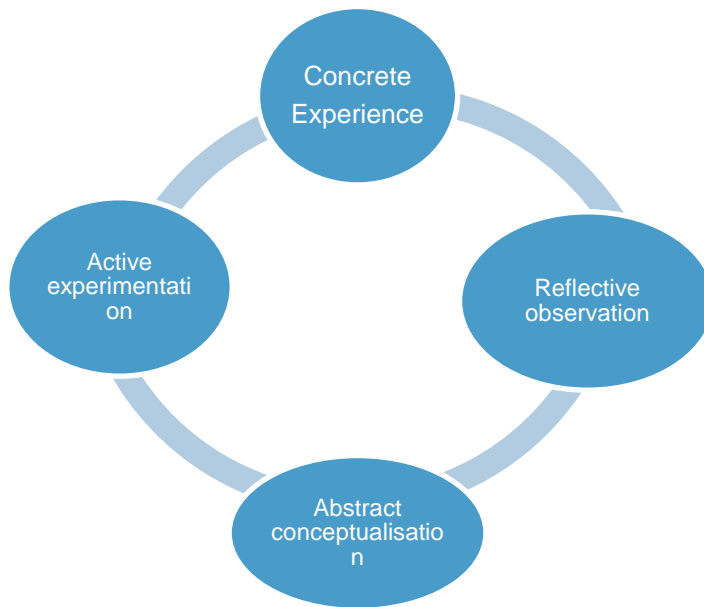
As indicated above, the focus of the study was to describe the experiences of teachers regarding the maintenance of the teacher's file. The experiences were related by the teachers themselves and then analyzed by the researcher to arrive at the meaning and sense they made in view of this phenomenon. Hence, the study looked at reality from the teachers' perspective and sought to understand how this reality was experienced. Therefore, its epistemology was interpretivist in orientation because it assumed that knowledge is a social construct or social reality created by people's action. It was also to an extent post-positivistic in that it assumed that there is a social reality out there, however, this reality cannot be perfectly described. Its approach is phenomenological in nature because it generated knowledge through interpretation and making sense of personal experience or narratives or observed behaviour. Its interpretative nature focused on analyzing the meaning of the participants' experience or on making sense of phenomena (Gray, 2014:23-25; Guest, Namey & Mitchell, 2013:5).

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

This section explains the conceptual and theoretical framework which assisted in locating the study and making clear its focus. It clarifies what was going to be studied and the theoretical boundaries thereof (Gray, 2014:168).

Reflective observation is an aspect of the experiential learning theory (ELT). The ELT was conceived back in the 20th century by scholar such as John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, Jean Piaget, William James, Karl Jung, Paulo Freire and Carl Rogers (Kolb and Kolb: 2008:1). Clark, Threeton and Ewing (2010:47) explain that ELT is broadly understood to be a series of practical activities sequenced in such a manner that they would promote acquisition of skills and advance educational experience. This process can be viewed from two perspectives. The first is where the student has a direct involvement with the learning event instead of reflecting on his encounter. This direct encounter implies active participation by the student rather

that to passively listen to a teacher. The second perspective of ELT which was at the centre of this study essential means reflection on one's involvement in everyday life. This reflection leads to development and life-long learning on the part of the participant. The components of this process are experience, reflecting, thinking and acting. These are best depicted in Kolb's model of experiential learning in the following cycle:



The four modes of Kolb's experiential learning Cycle (Kolb and Fry 1975)

Some authors believe that the four modes stand for feeling, watching, thinking and doing/acting. Scholars agree that ELT is characterized by the following principles:

1. *Learning is best conceived as a process, not in terms of outcomes.* It should be understood as a process on continuous reconstruction of experience fueled by feedback.
2. *All learning is re-learning.* Learning should be based on the learner's beliefs and ideas. In this process these are examined, tested and integrated with new ideas.
3. *Learning requires the resolution of conflicts between dialectically opposed modes of adaptation to the world.* Conflict and disagreement lie at the centre of learning. Resolution thereof leads to learning and better adaptation.
4. *Learning is a holistic process of adaptation.* Learning is not just cognitive; it involves thinking, feeling, perceiving and behaving.
5. *Learning results from synergetic transaction between the person and the environment.* A consistent transaction between a person and his environment results in enduring patterns of human learning.
6. *Learning is a process of creating knowledge.* This is where ELT converges with constructivism in the belief that personal knowledge results in the creation of social knowledge. (Kolb et al 2008:3-5)

Implied in the focus of the study was a question regarding to what extent does the teacher's file facilitate feedback, reflection and comprehension and transformation of experience inferred by the foregoing ELT principles to such a degree that it results in learning on the part of the teacher.

A teacher's portfolio/file (After 2010 South Africa chose to refer to the document as "teacher's file" rather than "portfolio"; however, in this study we will maintain the commonly used terminology of "teacher portfolio" and revert to "teacher file" where DBE is concerned) is an indispensable tool for teacher performance and development. A portfolio is essentially a collection of documents pertaining to one's attainments and materials about how you teach and the consequent learning by the learners. It could contain documents such as (i) proof of teaching experiences and responsibilities; (ii) a statement on teaching philosophy, principles and goals; (iii) a short explanation of teaching approaches, methods and strategies; (iv) a summary of important successes and major educational attainments, (v) a record of things done in

order to adapt and improve teaching strategies; (vi) a report on reflection on teaching and on peer evaluation (Mues & Sorcinelli, 2000:1; University of Adelaide CLDP, 2005:3). Bush, Kiggundu & Moorosi (2011:37) quote Wolf et al (1997) who defined this collection of documents as “a structured documentary history of a carefully selected set of coached or mentored accomplishments, substantiated by samples of student work.” Some authors have defined a teacher’s portfolio as systematic and organized evidence which a teacher uses to monitor the growth of their knowledge, skills and attitudes (Thomas, Britt, Blackbourn, Dean, Papason, Tyler and Williams, 2005:3). Others say that it is a tool for professional development and assessment of competence in teaching. It permits the teacher to regulate professional progress, document teaching experiences and outline the trajectory of the development of his or her professional identity (Khalil, 2014:1598 and Schlig 2005:123).

Another important aspect of a teacher’s portfolio is the question of reflection. Some researchers have described a portfolio as a means to monitor your progress as a teacher, to assess your competencies in teaching that allow reflections on professional growth. A report of the South African Council for Educators (SACE), titled Supporting Educators in Compiling Professional Development Portfolios (Raven, 2005:16-17), refers to the functions of a portfolio as that of supporting professional development and providing evidence that supports it. The report also refers to a portfolio as a tool to keep up one’s development as a reflective practitioner; the aim being to continually strive to improve one’s practice and revitalize professionalism. Khalil (2014:1598) says that a portfolio contributes to the teacher’s development through reflection. He says when analyzing instructional efforts and critically thinking about achievements and new understandings, you acquire better judgment and you are capable of effective planning in uncertain situations and become more aware of the processes of teaching and learning. Bush et al (2011:37) indicate in their case study that they found that portfolio documents kept by teachers were of variable quality, were well organized and included information-rich documents. Notwithstanding this, there was little indication of reflection based on the portfolio. Bush et al had an impression that “the portfolio was regarded as an assessment chore rather than a starting point of school improvement.” It is on the strength of these observations regarding reflection and professional development that this study seeks to find out the experiences and meanings that teachers attach to the utilization of the teacher’s file.

To fulfill its purpose of planning and moderation, DBE expects a teacher’s file to contain the following items: Firstly, it must have a copy of the annual work schedule for each learning area/subject which reflects the content you must teach as listed in the Content Core Knowledge and Concepts Framework or based on the textbook, arranged in weeks and terms, including assessment activities, dates of completion, comments, how you would support children with experiencing barriers to learning and the required resources. Secondly, it has to have an assessment plan indicating formal assessment tasks such as tests and examinations. Thirdly, it must have formal assessment tasks and memoranda including grids, rubrics and checklists. Fourthly, it must indicate textbooks that are being used as well as learning and teaching support media (LTSMs). Lastly, it must have record sheets reflecting the learners’ performance in formal tasks (DBE, 2009:3-4). The contents of the file are often indicated in the index as follows:

1. Planning
 - 1.1. Personal Timetable
 - 1.2. Year Plan
 - 1.3. Work Schedule
 - 1.4. Subject Policy
 - 1.5. Programme of Assessment
2. Assessment
 - 2.1. Lesson Plan
 - 2.2. Informal Tasks
 - 2.3. Recording Sheet
 - 2.4. Monitoring Reports

2.5. Moderation Reports

3. Reports

3.1. Analysis of Results

3.2. Minutes of Subject Meetings

3.3. Circulars

4. Intervention Reports

5. Documents

5.1. Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement

5.2. National Protocol for Assessment

5.3. National Programme and Promotion Requirements

6. Inventory of LTSMs

Additionally, the file's front cover will have the teacher's name, the grade, year, name of the school and learning area/subject and would most probably have a table of contents. These file records, which must be kept in a format that is easy to interpret, must be accessible to all relevant stakeholders such as parents, learners, school management officials from the area office and the Department of Basic Education (Du Plessis et al, 2012:93-94).

From what has been said above the connection between the teacher portfolio and the process of continuing professional teacher development is apparent. It is made apparent by arguments that the portfolio is a source of evidence utilized to monitor the growth of the teacher's knowledge, skills, and attitudes. It assists in monitoring teacher progress by assessing competencies in teaching. It is a tool for professional development and assessment of competence in teaching. It allows the teacher to regulate professional development and document teaching experiences. Moreover, it is an instrument for reflection on professional growth, making the teacher a reflective practitioner. Lastly, it provides evidence that supports professional development.

CPTD has been defined in various ways by different authors. Gray (2005:5) alleges the concept "Continuous Professional Development or CPD" was coined by Richard Gardner (1970). Practically, the concept means the intention of a teacher to continue improving their skills and knowledge beyond initial pre-service teacher training. It is more or less the same process that was previously known as "in-service training or INSET". This change in terminology signifies a shift in emphasis from the employer to the individual concerned. The new terminology focuses attention on career development of the individual.

Rose and Reynolds (n.d.:219) quote Day (199:4) who defined CPTD as "consisting of 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, which contribute, through these, to the quality of education in the classroom." The goal is for the individual to develop critical knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence necessary for professional thinking planning and practice.

The erstwhile South Africa Department of Education (2008:4-9) described CPTD as an essential component of a comprehensive teacher education system intended to develop professional practices for the whole duration of the teacher's career. It is a part of the core duties and responsibilities of a teacher employed by the Department intended to lead to improvement in learner achievement and schooling. The Department argued that teachers, individually and collectively had a high responsibility for their own development and identification of their own professional needs. The Department further argued that good teachers learned from many sources which included their own experience and own professional practice, thus in a way relating this process to, among others, the teacher's portfolio which can be a source of this learning.

The link between the teacher's portfolio and the process of professional development is obvious in Caena's (2011:3-4) suggestion of a framework of this concept. This framework has the enhancement of a teacher's personal characteristics (i.e. competences, beliefs and attitude) at its core, followed by teaching and instructional effectiveness in the classroom, teacher's cooperation and efficacy in the school context, and

finally consideration of national policies and institutional organization; thus, implying autonomy and accountability.

Teacher learning in professional development takes into account two theoretical perspectives. The first of these perspectives is to view professional development in light of psychological factors such as teacher cognition and motivation. The second aspect has to do with organizational factors such as leadership, teacher collaboration, staff relations, communication, locus of control and opportunities for teacher learning. Caena (2011:4) states that the second perspective on organizational factors is linked to the system theory on change, implying the structural, cultural and political dimensions of a school workplace environment. Additionally, she recognizes the necessary interplay between the two perspectives. Lastly, she says that common features supportive of professional development include professional development standards, minimum levels of professional development plans, induction and mentoring (p.6).

In explaining the rationale for CPTD, Steyn (2008:16-18) states that teachers are key to the improvement of learner performance. They have the most direct and sustained contact with learners as well as control of what is taught and learned, hence, the pressure for them to be competent in their work. This pressure is in turn justification for CPTD. The learning and development of the teacher is regarded as contributory to learner attainment of goals and enhancement of performance in school. This author says that South Africa needs quality teachers with appropriate training and development to meet the socio-economic needs of the country.

On the same issue, the Department of Education (2008:4) argues that teaching is at the heart of the schooling system. The quality of teachers' professional practices therefore dictates the quality of the schooling system. CPTD is therefore an essential element of a schooling system of high quality. The underlying principle of the National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development (2007) requires that teachers carry a high degree of responsibility for their own professional development and identification of their own professional needs. Teachers are expected to learn from many sources, including their life experience, their own professional practice, their peers and seniors in their schools (p.9). It is apparent that these expectations relate this matter to the need for teachers to maintain a professional development portfolio. Of course, concepts that relate closely to the maintenance of the teacher portfolio are teaching, learning and assessment. The whole maintenance of the portfolio is intended to improve these three processes. Vakalisa and Gawe (2004:2-3) explain that for any teaching to have any importance and value there must be meaningful learning. Therefore, every teaching relationship must culminate in learning on the part of the learner. Kruger and Van Schalkwyk (2010:11) agree with this idea when they say that the teaching and learning situation is always aimed at an objective: the learner must achieve specific knowledge and skills. This relationship between teaching and the acquisition of knowledge and skills is a very important aspect of the CPTD process, and consequently of maintaining the teacher portfolio. In South Africa learning is viewed as the acquisition of knowledge, skills, value and attitudes through the learning experience. While teaching is regarded as possession of practical, foundational and reflexive competences to mediate learning (Vakalisa et al, 2004:3-5). In addition, a teacher is also expected to have capabilities related to the design and interpretation of learning programmes and materials; to leadership, administration and management; scholarship and research and lifelong learning; to community, citizenship and pastoral roles; and to learning and subject specialization and assessment (Booyse and Du Plessis, 2013:35-36).

Assessment is defined by Dreyer (2010:5-6) as measuring or estimating the value of something. Assessment is important at all levels of education and training. The assessment process gathers and discusses information from multiple and diverse sources to determine what the learner knows, understands and can do after undergoing a learning experience. Kramer (2007:28-29) says that the NCS defines assessment as "a continuous planned process of gathering information about performance of learners measured against the Assessment Standards of the Learning Outcomes." The National Protocol on Assessment, defined it as a process of collecting, synthesizing, and interpreting information to assist teachers, parents and other stakeholders in making decisions about the progress of the learner. (Lombard and Lundie 2012:30).

As indicated above, these three concepts of teaching, learning and assessment are at the core of both the maintenance of the teacher portfolio and CPTD. Maintenance of the teacher portfolio should be about the improvement of teacher skills in terms of teaching learning and assessment. Furthermore, CPTD is about developing teacher effectiveness in the same process as TLA. The confluence of these two concepts i.e.

teacher portfolio/file and CPTD, makes it imperative for the two concepts to not be considered separately. The theoretical implication of this relationship is that effective TLA thrives on transferred, documented and developed teaching experiences. Sources for skills in TLA are the trio consisting of initial teacher training, teacher portfolio/file and CPTD activities.

Empirical Design

This study described the experiences of participants related to the maintenance of a teacher's file and sought to establish the meanings of this obligation from the teachers' perspectives. Seeing that this study aimed to explore and understand the meaning teachers attach to the teacher's file it employed qualitative research methods. Its epistemology was interpretivistic in the sense that knowledge was generated through analysis and interpretation of phenomena to make sense of teachers' personal experience. It held that knowledge is a social construct or social reality created by people's actions. It further analyzed and interpreted symbolic dimension or reality in the form of text. because data were collected in the participants' setting, analyzed to arrive at emerging themes and interpretations, the data collection and analysis strategy was phenomenological in approach (Creswell, 2009:4; Smith and Osborn, 2007:55). The approach was suitable for describing how individuals perceived their situations and made sense of their world. Its focus was on a real-life or natural situation and it aimed at discovering novel and unanticipated findings (Brynard, Hanekom and Brynard, 2014:39 and Smith and Osborn, 2007:66).

Because data were obtained by in-depth engagement through semi-structured interviews and study of documents followed by analysis and interpretation, a sample of sixteen teachers, representing all four school phases, was purposefully chosen from schools in Mahikeng. Because of the uniform requirements of the DBE policy on the teacher's file, the choice of any schools around Mahikeng would have yielded sufficient data to answer the research question. The same applies to the teachers who were participants in this study. The number of participants was decided in view of the need to conduct an in-depth interview with each one of them. Eight participants allowed the researcher to obtain sufficient data and afford opportunities to analyze and interpret the data. A flexible semi-structured interview schedule was prepared. It included the following questions:

- a) What is the purpose of the teacher's file?
- b) What are the contents of the teacher's file?
- c) What are challenges of maintaining the file?
- d) How does the teacher's file assist you in TLA?
- e) How does the file contribute to your professional development?
- f) If asked, what would you change or add to the teacher's file?

These interview questions were open-ended and intended to obtain in-depth information about the participants' thoughts, feeling, beliefs, knowledge and motivations in order to gain understanding of their perspective concerning this matter. The interview included asking participants follow-up questions, as the need arose. All interviews were electronically tape-recorded and later transcribed (Johnson & Christensen, 2008:207-208). In analyzing the data, the researcher followed the IPA (Inductive Thematic Analysis) approach of looking in detail at a transcript of one of the sixteen interviews and establishing recurring motifs and themes. The emerging themes were listed, and their connections explored. Some instances were clustered together for dominant themes. This first transcript was treated as a case study and the results were utilized to analyze and interpret the remaining seven transcripts (Smith & Osborn, 2007:67-73)

The document study targeted the teacher's file. The purpose of the investigation was to obtain from it data which described the teachers' experience, knowledge, actions and values. I identified the contents of the file and compared them in order to find common experiences and areas of emphasis (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010: 361). Collection of data from these files also offered an opportunity to triangulate data obtained directly from the participants through interviews with document-based data.

Informed consent from the subjects of the study was obtained together with permission to conduct the research from the Provincial Education Department and schools involved. Guarantees regarding the

participants' anonymity was assured; they were informed that they were free to terminate their participation in the study at any time (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011:76; Frenkel & Wallen, 2008:446).

Findings

The research came up with the following findings:

- a) In terms of purpose, teachers interviewed, and documents found in the files indicated that the file was mainly a record keeping tool. Teachers indicated that the file was useful in keeping assessment and planning records, for the purpose of control, monitoring and supervision by senior management staff. Only one participant indicated that the file assisted in reflection regarding teacher ability.
- b) There was some consensus among participants regarding the content that should go into the file. The commonly indicated documents included the curriculum and assessment policy statement, timetables, lesson plans, assessment plans, assessment recording sheets, teaching plan, intervention forms, formal and informal assessment tools, moderation sheets list of text books and minutes of meetings. The only variation here was in terms filing of subject-specific documents. This aspect of filing these documents was indicated by all participants as the primary function of the teacher's file.
- c) Teachers were generally productive in terms of identifying challenges related to maintaining the file. Several participants indicated that putting the file together was a time consuming task. This included making sure that it was well arranged and properly organized. The next challenge teachers indicated was the scarcity of the documents that had to go into the file. Thirdly, participants pointed out that the file was not used on a frequent basis, neither was it useful in terms of daily TLA activities. This explains why it was challenging to submit it on time since they tended to use or work on it only when it was due for monitoring by management. They indicated that the file was not really required to facilitate classroom activities. Some participants indicated that filing documents every day as well as the need to redo the file every year for every Grade was itself a challenge. It was also mentioned that teachers usually attended to the file on the eve of submission.
- d) There was a variety of responses on how it assisted them in TLA. These ranged from "don't use it for teaching and learning at all" to "it's a filing facility" or "a purely administrative tool". However, other participants were positive and indicated that the file was useful in planning lessons, following up on learner performance recorded in the file, access to decision taken in meetings, keeping track of the teaching plan and identifying textbooks.
- e) Responses regarding the usefulness of the file in terms of continuing professional teacher development ranged from "not sure" to indication that the file helped teachers to follow the correct teaching plan. Only one participant indicated that it helped in reviewing teaching methods and approaches. Another participant indicated that it assisted the teacher in becoming organized and helps in self-management. There was also an observation by one participant that the file was absolutely not part of the integrated quality management systems (IQMS) currently implemented in schools, thus making it irrelevant to teacher current development efforts.
- f) Asked what they would add or remove from the file, teachers responded with answers ranging from "I do not see the use of the whole thing" to "all documents are useful". It was noteworthy to hear responses to the effect that nothing should be changed or removed. All documents are useful. This was said against the background of previous comments indicating dissatisfaction with the file. One important comment made by one participant was that the change should make the maintenance of the file part of the National Policy on Whole School Evaluation (WSE); a policy that is intended to improve overall quality in education in South African schools. Of course there were respondents who felt that some documents should be excluded and only those referred to when the file was monitored should remain. Some wanted to only retain the timetables and question papers. Other documents recommended to be added to the file were the teacher curriculum vitae and awards awarded to them.
- g) With regards to the contents of the file, they generally contained CAPS policy documents, timetables, lesson plans, assessment plans, formal and informal assessment tools, assessment recording sheets, moderation records, list of textbooks, minutes of meeting .

Discussion of Findings

The findings made it clear that teachers regarded the teacher's file as a mere tool for record keeping. They regarded it as an administrative chore which was now and then monitored by senior management. There was a feeling that it had no substantive meaning beyond this. It was not used frequently, neither was it fruitful in facilitation of classroom or daily TLA activities. Teachers felt that it was not used at all to improve teaching and learning. It fell short in assisting teachers to reflect on their work although to a limited extent it assisted them in lesson planning, following up on learner assessment and keeping track of the teaching plan.

Two significant findings stood out in this study. Firstly, teachers saw no link between maintaining this file and their continuing professional development. And secondly, the teachers pointed out that the file was not related at all to the IQMS and WSE policies. This perhaps is the main limitation of the teacher's file.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the use of the teacher's file in schools be reviewed with the view to:

- a) Augmenting its meaningfulness to teachers by relating it closer to daily classroom activities. Not only should teachers be required to carry it to the class room or file their daily plans and assessment records, they should be encouraged to utilize it to reflect on their pedagogy with the view to adjusting their methods and content. The senior management should on a weekly basis discuss these recordings with the teachers and provide instructional leadership. Such a move will make the file a platform for reflection by the teacher and his or her colleagues.
- b) Urgently link the teacher's file to IQMS and WSE. Already WSE policy emphasizes the importance of staff development and training. It aspires to create opportunities for teachers to continually develop themselves. It has identified teacher development as one of the areas for evaluation. Because this development implies growth in attaining knowledge and skills in TLA theory and practice, the file could be utilized as an evidence source for this. It could contain proof of how the teacher is growing in terms of qualifications, experience and capacity. This would link it clearly to the process of CPTD.
- c) To add to the weight of keeping the file, the DBE could also make it a requirement that the file be submitted as evidence in an interview for any senior post. Instead of curriculum vitae, candidates for senior posts advertised by DBE, the teacher could be required to submit a portfolio of evidence (PE) of experience, qualification and capacity. The teacher's file could serve this purpose.

Conclusion

Improving TLA quality requires multiple strategies to cultivate a progressive and sustained learning culture. Initial teacher education and training has not been a guarantor of better education in our schools. It needs to be backed up by other post-training strategies. CPTD is such a strategy. One tool for CPTD is the teacher's file.

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