

Full Length Research Paper

Transforming teacher practice: a look at the experiences of two first-year teacher-learners in the NPDE programme

Vuyisile Msila

Advanced Studies in Education, Box 77000, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Summerstrand South Campus, Port Elizabeth, 6031. E-mail: Vuyisile.Msila@nmmu.ac.za

Accepted 9 May, 2008

The recent educational transformation in South Africa has created much uncertainty and disquiet among teachers who were required to introduce the educational changes in their classrooms. As "foot soldiers" in education, teachers are the implementers of educational innovations. The advent of outcomes-based education (OBE), like any other change, has made many teachers doubt their professional capabilities. The National Professional Diploma in Education (NPDE) is one of the programmes meant not only to upgrade teacher qualifications but also to ensure that they become confident implementers of OBE. In this one-and-a-half-year study the researcher looked into the professional development of two teachers in a rural district of Mpumalanga Province. Both of these teachers teach in the Foundation Phase of the same primary school. The researcher was interested in a number of issues that include classroom management, use of OBE guidelines and the presentation of lessons, the effects of support and guidance given to teachers and most importantly, the teacher-learners' roles as managers of change. The study discovered that while change can be daunting for many teachers, it is possible to empower teachers to embrace change through proper empowerment programmes. With adequate support, teachers facing educational changes can be able to attain professional maturity.

Key words: Transformation, Teacher and practice

INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM POSTULATION

The Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) regards teachers as key contributors to the transformation of education in South Africa (DoE, 2002). Furthermore, this policy envisions teachers who are qualified and dedicated. Among other things, teachers are expected to be mediators of learning, interpreters and designers of learning programmes and materials, leaders, administrators and managers, scholars, researchers and lifelong learners (DoE 2002). However, much research done in South Africa after the implementation of Outcomes based education (OBE) in 1998 indicates that the problems that arose after the implementation process were caused by inadequate consultation of teachers by policymakers (Christie, 1999; Jansen, 1999; Msila, 2002).

Years after the implementation of OBE there are a number of in-service and pre-service programmes that seek to equip teachers in South Africa with tools to cope

with the demands of the new system. South African teachers still need to be empowered as managers of change in the face of educational transformation. Coming from the apartheid past with its education system, many of them were schooled in the system of Fundamental Pedagogics, where the child was a *Tabula rasa* and the adult's responsibility was to impart knowledge. Under the previous system of Fundamental Pedagogics, education was a one-way process where only the adult (the teacher) was expected to "impart knowledge" onto the otherwise less competent child. Education was defined as the intervention of an educator in the life of a child to guide the child on his way to adulthood (Stuart, 1987). The learner being a blank slate was supposed to be obedient to the teacher at all times. According to that system, the child who did not accept the authority of the teacher would not become a proper adult, hence the child had to

be guided to obedience (Landman et al., 1982). The hidden curriculum here was to create learners who did not question authority. Paulo Freire refers to this uni-lateral form of education as a banking system (Freire, 1970). The teacher employing this banking system imparts facts upon the learner, with no regard for exchange of knowledge.

However, the learner has now become a partner in education: he or she learns together with the teacher. The curriculum seeks to create a lifelong learner who is confident and independent, literate, numerate, Multiskilled and compassionate, with a respect for the environment and the ability to participate in society as a critical and active citizen (DoE, 2002). Through a transformational pedagogy, the post-apartheid system seeks to produce teachers who will create critical individuals whose identity is compatible with the new democratic society. In this study we focused on two teacher-learners registered in one South African university's National Professional Diploma in Education (NPDE) programme and their endeavours in transforming themselves as they embrace educational transformation in their practice was explored. The study wanted to examine the potential of programmes such as the NPDE and other teacher development programmes, particularly with regard to the implications of these programmes for rural teachers. Craig et al. (1998) contend that the involvement of teachers in school reform is crucial because even teachers with minimal levels of education and training are capable of changing the classroom environment. All the teacher-learners in the NPDE programme are under qualified. They are educators who have grade 10 or 12 plus less than two years teacher training.

The problem explored in this study was: In a time of educational change what are crucial aspects that can lead to effectiveness of teachers as they implement the new educational strategies?

Sub-questions of this study were:

- I. What factors are crucial to in moulding teachers to be good managers of change?
- II. Can teachers be effectively prepared for educational change?
- III. What motivates teachers to learn?
- IV. How do teacher experiences influence their professional growth?

Definition of terms

A few operational terms will have to be explained before the commencement of the discussions. The following terms are explained; NPDE and OBE.

ACE- This is the Advanced Certificate in Education and it is usually taken by teachers who have completed a qualification of the NPDE. It is a higher diploma that tends to

be more specialised.

NPDE – This refers to a South African teacher qualification meant to upgrade teachers who are not adequately qualified. It is usually a 240 credit programme that teachers study over two years of part time study. The acronym stands for national professional Diploma in Education.

OBE- refers to the "new" system of education in South Africa after apartheid education. Since its first inception in the late 1990s this system has undergone much revamp to suit South African context. Some of its later versions are Curriculum 2005, Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) and the latest is the National Curriculum Statement (NCS).

REQV – This acronym refers to Relative Education Qualification Value and is a qualification grouping of teachers. If one looks at qualifications such as honours and higher degrees they have an REQV level of 15 and over. Teachers are considered unqualified or under qualified if they have a qualification that is less than REQV 13.

Context of the study

There is still an immense need to empower South African teachers as they grapple with constant educational changes in their classrooms. In fact, similar programmes, albeit informal, should be undertaken even after teachers have qualified in programmes such as the NPDE or Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE). This means the South African education system needs to emphasise the need for ongoing teacher development. However, for effective educational changes to take place teachers need to be consulted in all stages of the implementation of these educational innovations. Craig et al. (1998:85) point out, however, that in most countries when educational reforms are promulgated by education ministries or university-based educational theorists, teachers, especially those who are under trained or living in rural areas, are never consulted. The rural teachers in South Africa face many challenges as they work in areas that are worse off than their urban counterparts. Rural areas usually do not have the necessary educational facilities, such as desks and teaching aids or effective human resources. It is because of their peculiar state and the inadequacy of their resources that rural teachers need more empowerment in being change managers. Enabling teachers to be managers of change is a crucial aspect in the introduction of educational reforms. Craig et al. (1998) concede that research literature in industrialised nations is replete with the problems of changing teacher behaviour because many teachers "teach how they were taught". Teachers might find it difficult to shift from traditional practices. Therefore, ongoing teacher develop-

ment is crucial in changing teachers' pedagogical behaviour.

Literature shows that the implementation of OBE has been a challenge to many South African teachers (Jansen, 1999). This is even more so among rural teachers who tend to operate in schools that lack material including books and outside human resources to assist teachers in the implementation of the changes. Teachers need to be empowered to be receptive to change initiatives otherwise the educational changes will not make much sense. If teachers are to be able to be conscientious educators they will need to be capacitated to be aware of what will transform learners, teachers and the society setting the curriculum (Shor, 1987). The latter is in line with the NCS, which envisages a system of critical learners, that is, people who will be able to change the status quo in society.

The idea of changing teachers for a new system is not a simple subject. Transformation of teacher practices means a shift in tradition. Fullan (1993) defines change as a shift of the mind. Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) further distinguish between voluntary and imposed change and they state that change involves loss, anxiety and struggle. In his study, Msila (2002) suggests a model for teachers as managers of change. The model is illustrated as follows:

The above study found that teachers needed to pass through several stages as they moved towards empowerment. In the study the majority of teachers were in level one and two. Through ongoing teacher development it is hoped that teachers can reach the top-most level. In helping teachers to be empowered we need informal and formal strategies for equipping them with skills. The NPDE and similar programmes need not be the only programmes that can assist teachers to reach this higher level of development. There is a need for practising teachers and qualified teachers to take it upon themselves to continuously develop their skills. What is the nature of the NPDE?

Mays (2002) cites revised statistics that state that in 2001 there were about 76 000 educators with fewer than three years professional training. Whilst it is currently (in 2006) difficult to get the actual numbers of unqualified teachers there are many who maintain that there are still a number of them. The NPDE staff attempted to obtain the numbers of teachers who have Standard 10 only and some years' experience in teaching and found about 450 teachers in KwaZulu-Natal. This then implies that the country needs to reduce that number as it equips its teachers to meet today's challenges. The present move to create a new NPDE (360 credit) is a means to accommodate even these teachers. The NPDE programme has opened its doors to thousands of under qualified teachers countrywide. Many teacher-learners who have Std 8/Gr. 10 qualifications and some teaching experience are admitted to the programme. The programme is a 240-cre-

dit programme that aims to improve the teaching practice of teacher-learners. Educators who are at Relative Education Qualification Values (REQV) 11 or 12 go through the programme designed to upgrade them to REQV 13. The nature of the programme and the way in which the curriculum has been developed, as well as the requirements for effective implementation has challenged established thinking regarding the professional development of classroom-based educators (Mothata et al., 2003). The University of South Africa's NPDE for example, ensures that teacher-learners are able to get the necessary empowerment through the use of mixed mode delivery. There are a number of ways used to facilitate learning in the programme and these include

- I. Tutorial letters.
- II. Contact sessions.
- III. Study guides.
- IV. Use of information communication technology (telephone and email).

Currently the NPDE programme accepts teachers who are:

- I. Practising and have Std 8/Gr. 10 and a certificate in teaching e.g. Std 8 and Primary Teachers Course (PTC)
- II. Practising and have Std 10 and a certificate in teaching (e.g. Std 10 and PTC)

At the time of writing this article, institutions offering the NPDE were awaiting the outcome of whether or not accreditation would be awarded for the 360-credit NPDE. The latter will cater for teachers who have Std 10 or Gr. 12 plus years of teaching experience. All the above teachers are educators who fall below REQV 13.

Methods of data collection

This study was conducted as a case study in one school. A case study is an in-depth study of one individual, a group of individuals or an institution (Brink 2000). Furthermore, Brink explains that case studies provide significant amounts of descriptive information and they provide explanatory information about *why* as well as *what*.

The sampling method used in the study was convenience sampling. Fraenkel and Wallen (2000) state that on occasion based on previous knowledge of a population and the specific purpose of the research, investigators use personal judgement to select a sample. Frequently researchers use their knowledge of the population to assess whether or not a particular sample will be representative. In instances where purposive sampling is employed previous information assists the researcher in assuming that the sample selected would be representative of the population. The two teacher-learners were chosen because of their availability and both were

colleagues registered in a university's NPDE programme. An ethnographic study was conducted and a number of visits were paid to their schools and where they were observed in their classrooms as well as outside during extramural activities. From the beginning, each time the researcher visited them, he wrote notes and then conferred afterwards to reflect on what had transpired during the lessons. Furthermore, after every visit, the researcher gave feedback on how to improve their teaching or strengthen some aspects of their effective teaching. The study was also interested in finding whether or not the teacher-learners are able to apply what they are learning in the NPDE programme in their schools. Looking at what they got from the assignments and their performance during contact session discussions addressed the latter. We were interested to see whether there was a balance between theory and practice.

The ethnographic methods employed in the study were appropriate. Goetz and LeCompte (1984) describe the purpose of educational ethnography as providing rich, descriptive data about the contexts, activities and beliefs of participants in educational settings. Being a field study, ethnography takes place in natural settings. Taylor and Bogdan (1984) also point out that in an ethnographic study the researcher tries to render a "true to life" picture of what people say and how they act, and people's words and actions are left to speak for themselves.

Findings of the study

The study took eighteen months and the two participants showed despondency at the beginning of the study. They were confused by OBE/RNCS. There was "too much on assessment, too much to record and too much to observe in our classrooms". Moreover, their schools being situated in semi-rural areas they did not believe that they had enough resources to teach "the OBE way" effectively. Whilst both confessed that they were involved in the NPDE programme because of the extrinsic motivation – salary adjustment – they also did the course so as to increase their understanding of OBE practices and concepts. They kept on emphasising that the new curriculum created much confusion (among teachers) in their respective schools.

The confusion that they shed light on was not peculiar to these two teachers. Mrs Lesedi (for both participants the researcher used pseudonyms) had been teaching for seventeen years when she first heard of OBE's implementation in 1997. Mrs Lefifi, the other participant, had twenty-two years' experience in 1997. Many teachers who felt disoriented during the implementation of OBE perhaps shared their confusion. Many writers and researchers have written at length about the confusion that was created by OBE during its implementation. Christie (1999) points out that the implementation of OBE

in South Africa was problematic. She states that although teachers were part of some of the committees formed to draw up the learning areas, they were not actively engaged. For most teachers the curriculum was implemented in a top-down bureaucratic manner, closely resembling the imposition of apartheid education in schools. Furthermore, Christie (1999) states that it has become commonplace for members of the government to admit that South Africa has excellent policies but knows nothing about implementation. The participants in this study also maintained that the "teachers were never part of the implementation process".

Mrs Lefifi did not find it easy to make sense of the theory and practice highlighted in the NPDE material. She and Mrs Lesedi seemed to read their material initially to pass assignments. It was the tutors' explanations during contact sessions and the school visits that made them change their practice in their classrooms. When the researcher first visited the two teachers he found that the groups into which their learners were divided were teams in name only. The teachers had merely divided their classes into groups while they continued to teach in a teacher-centred fashion. The learners were not given much time to be actively involved in classroom activities. In her Grade 3 classroom, Mrs Lesedi would come to class with all the cuttings of animals, cars and fruit. Frequently these would have been coloured in as well, which did nothing for the learners' experimentation or motor skills. Both teachers had good "resource corners" or interest tables: these are tables full of various cuttings and pictures. However, Mrs Lesedi was initially reluctant to allow her learners' to touch the material, thus denying them the opportunity to practise their sensor motor skills.

The mixed mode delivery in the NPDE programme helped the teacher-learners in a number of ways. Unlike the traditional correspondence courses, the NPDE offers contact sessions as well. It was during the contact sessions, that the tutors were for example able to facilitate first-year modules such as Numeracy (NPD 004-8), Teaching and Learning Language and Communication (NPD007-B, Reception Year (NPD011-6), helping the teacher-learners to see that their material tries to minimise the teaching and learning challenges of OBE in their classrooms. Many examples in the study material demonstrate what needs to happen and how it should happen in the classrooms. Initially the teachers did not readily see the application of the reading material. They saw the material as a collection of manuals that needed to be studied when there was an assignment to be submitted. However, it was during the contact sessions that they realised the importance of the study material. Mrs Lefifi however expressed the challenge of the language in the NPDE study material. She told the researcher that the English language was not easy for her because for years she had been teaching in SePedi and had rarely used English as a means of communication. Another challenge

was the lack of study strategies for these first-year teachers. They found it difficult to plan their time although there are various tips for this in their study material. Linking theory and practice was another problem.

The teachers also constantly complained that although they were beginning to understand the objectives of OBE they were opposed to the fact that it created so much administrative work. They also believed that modules such as Assessment needed to be done by more teachers because few teachers understood what assessment is all about. Mrs Lesedi stated that even her principal barely understands what assessment of learners entails. Like the majority of teachers, the two participants experienced feelings of isolation because they felt that they did not know much. They felt it was better to apply the new methods by trial and error on their own in their classrooms than expose their ignorance to their colleagues. As Mrs Lefifi put it:

I knew that there were a number of things I was doing wrong. But I could not ask from any of my colleagues. My HOD did not seem to know much too. It was always better when I was in my classroom. No one could see my mistakes.

Mrs Lefifi echoed the above when she stated:

Who wants to be a laughing stock? I'd rather work on my own than share my shortcomings to other teachers. Although I could see that I knew much than some of them but I did not want to share what I knew.

In the beginning these teachers showed much uncertainty and low self-esteem. In fact, teachers are isolated in many instances and these two are a microcosm of what happens in many schools around the country. Teachers are content to do anything behind the closed doors of their classrooms. During the visits, the researchers would ask what they understood about OBE. It was curious to note that OBE was understood to mean "group work in the classroom". Even when they were trying to change their practice, they seemed not to know how to strike a balance between whole class teaching and group work. Mrs Lefifi in particular appeared to be opposed to teaching techniques such as explaining to learners, as she thought that this was incompatible with OBE.

The teachers also did not seem to understand what the role of teachers as change agents should entail. To them it seems as if the policy merely requires them to be implementers. It took them some time to understand that teachers have bigger roles to play in the educational policy formulation process. The NPDE study material encouraged them to be not only designers of learning materials but also to be interpreters of the curriculum. In the Figure 1 model above we found that Mrs Lesedi was in the *transcription stage*. She understood change but was not sure whether the new curriculum would work. She was

also tentative about working with other teachers in her school. Mrs Lefifi on the other hand belonged in the first level, the *transaction stage* in the above figure. Despite her twenty-two years' experience in teaching, Mrs Lefifi was threatened by the new curricular changes. She also believed that teachers should not expose their shortcomings to their colleagues. She was content with her teaching as long as no one dared to step into her classroom. In this study it was also investigated whether a course such as the NPDE can help teachers to embrace educational change.

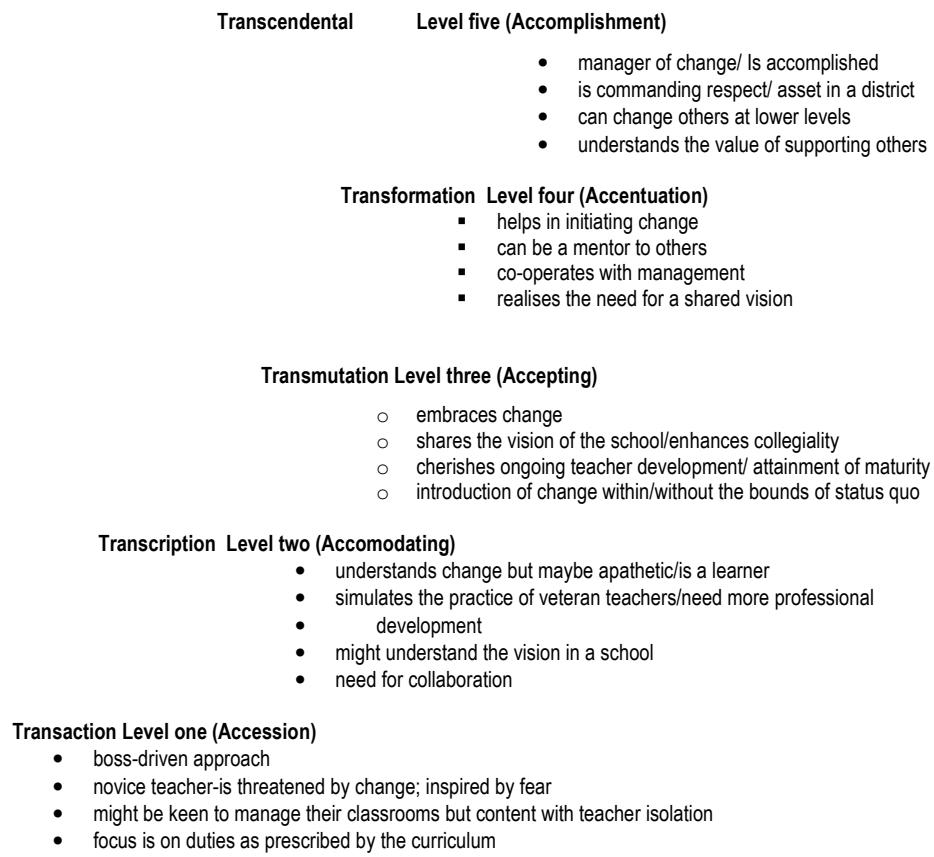
DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Preparing teachers for educational change

This study confirmed that teachers, in the face of constant educational changes, need to be prepared continuously if they are to acquire an enhanced professional development. Teachers' development cannot be attained fully in the absence of ongoing professional development. The RNCS requires teachers to be lifelong learners. By the end of the first eight months the participants also confirmed that the NPDE programme improved not only their own performance but also the performance of their learners. Craig et al. (1998) states:

Teacher education programs can make a difference to student achievement depending on the type of educational program and support that is put in place. Specific factors such as the years of teacher training (initial and in-service), the teacher's verbal fluency, subject matter knowledge, having books and materials and knowing how to use them, teacher expectation of pupil performance, time spent on classroom preparation, and frequent monitoring of student progress are all key factors identified in some key research studies that have a positive bearing on the quality of teachers' performance and consequently, student achievement.

The contents of the study material helped the participants in refining their skills in their classrooms. However, teacher-learners need constant guidance because programmes such as these could be misunderstood, as teachers tend to memorise the contents in order to pass the exams. The knowledge in the NPDE course strives to assist teachers as they face the challenges of curriculum changes. Teacher development is a process and not an event and it involves change over time and is achieved in stages (Craig et al., 1998). The professional growth of the teachers in this study was evident as the researcher saw the teachers develop their practice over time. The participants experienced problems in a number of areas during this study, such as handling the NPDE material and improving practice in their own classrooms. It was only after some time that they developed strategies of learning and teaching. (Meaningful changes were clearly evident



(Msila 2002)

Figure 1. Five levels of change

by the completion of the study after eighteen months).

The NPDE programme requires teacher-learners to be reflective in their approach to teaching. Initially this was very difficult for the two participants who felt uneasy about reviewing their own practice and being critical about it. On one visit the researchers gave them a list of questions to respond to after a lesson:

- I. Was I confident in this class?
- II. Did I plan well?
- III. Did I assess my learners in appropriate ways?
- IV. Was my lesson interesting?
- V. Did I use various learning activities?
- VI. Did I achieve the outcomes of the lesson?

The participants did not feel free to express their weaknesses. At one stage Mrs Lefifi's lesson on health was not very successful. Her preparation was not complete. She finished long before the time and she could not engage the learners enough in the activities. The researchers sensed that she could also see her shortcomings in that particular lesson but she hardly men-

tioned them. It was after a period that the two teacher-learners developed a thoughtful and honest assessment of their practice. In fact, they were also helped by one of their modules which dealt with some of these professional issues: The Teacher in the Classroom (NPD043-F). It took some time before they realised that sometimes teachers do not have all the answers and might have to consult books, other experts, colleagues and various other people interested in education.

Looking at Msila's cited model in Figure 1; after the study the researchers discovered that with proper support teachers can be prepared by being moved from one level to the other. When the researchers started the study they noted that despite the two teachers' teaching experience, they were in the *transaction level*. Both teachers were threatened by change as were their colleagues. They did not like the idea of sharing their teaching experiences with colleagues and believed in being told what to do by the principal showing no initiative of their own. By the conclusion of the study they were in level three or the transmutation stage where they were able to embrace

change and were showing the initiative by leading other teachers to change. The study was then also able to see a link between the movement of teachers from various levels and their motivation to enhance their practice.

What motivates teachers to change their classroom practice?

What the researchers discovered in this study was that as reluctant as they might appear many teachers would like to change their practice for the better. Prior to the NPDE experience the teachers in the programme stated that they felt less capable of dealing with educational changes in their classrooms. Mrs Lefifi in particular became more confident as her time in the programme increased. The use of OBE teaching strategies was not always clear to the teachers. In light of the fact that they were supposed to lead learner-centred classrooms, these teachers were not sure of the role of teaching strategies such as narration, explanation and description in the classroom. In fact, they thought that there was no room for these teaching strategies. It took them some time to understand that there was sometimes a need for teachers to take centre stage although it is important how this is done. What was noticeable at the beginning was that teachers tended not to write their lesson plans. There seemed to be a misunderstanding that OBE does not require lesson plans. The NPDE material that the two participants used showed the importance of plans. In fact this is what they later learnt from one of their modules: NPD 048-L (Understanding OBE). The module taught them that planning and preparation have always been an essential part of good teaching and the shift to outcomes-based and learner-centred teaching has increased their importance (Criticos et al., 2002). The two teacher-learners were not sure how to use strategies other than group work effectively. Whole class teaching, explaining and demonstration were all thought of as obsolete strategies that belonged to the past. It was only after some time that these participants realised that in practice OBE has imported some of the strategies from the past system. They only needed to learn how to refine some of these strategies to suit OBE practices. Explanation for example is not merely,

- I. Didactic lecturing
- II. Reading from the textbook
- III. Aimless chatter

That demonstrations in the classroom needed to be,

- I. More interactive
- II. More thoughtful and engaging

That group work should be meaningful and engaging. Some of the common problems of group work include the following:

- I. Using the learners' time inefficiently – underestimating how much time the learners need
- II. Assuming learners know how to work in groups – learners need some training to meaningfully work in groups
- III. Organising the physical space inappropriately – if groups have more than five people, some mind find it difficult to participate (Criticos et al., 2002)

These are some of the elements that we observed and worked on with the teachers especially when we became participant observers. All this shows how the will to change their learners motivated the teachers to embrace change as they interacted with their materials and were encouraged when they saw their potential of leading change in their school. All the above changes were not without the influences of the teacher experiences. The participants' past always posed a potential threat to their growth as they yearned to move up the levels of change.

Teacher experiences and professional growth: when teaching matters

The teachers' past experiences appeared very crucial in this study. It also seems that one cannot be able to address teacher change and enable teachers to be managers of change without addressing their past internalised beliefs. Past experiences mould identities that become an individual culture within a school. One can imagine having twenty nine individual cultures in a staff of twenty nine. Certainly school leaders are not wishing for a uniform staff but they need staffs that share a certain vision with teachers who have a matured approach in their practice.

One of the areas that the researchers discussed with the teacher-learners during contact sessions was teacher isolation and its impact on professional growth. The OBE system was not only supposed to create learner cooperation but also teacher collaboration. School reformers regard the teacher professional community as a desirable outcome of restructuring plans and they might for example seek to increase participation among teachers through educational reforms (Westheimer, 1998). However, it appears that OBE has not been able to create new teacher communities in schools or sustain the existing ones. The two participants in the study were also initially not very open to the sharing of experiences with their colleagues. Both teachers, especially Mrs Lefifi, were happier with the idea of closing the doors of their classrooms to her colleagues. It was the content of the NPDE study material that made them realise the importance of sharing of ideas. The NPDE programme requires teacher-learners to practise what they learn, hence even during contact sessions tutors try to model the way in which teachers should handle their classrooms. This is difficult if teachers do not share their failures and suc-

cesses.

Teachers in the face of change need to form communities. McLaughlin's definition of "community" is preferred. Westheimer (1998:9) cites McLaughlin, who defines community as a metaphor that "draws policy attention to norms and beliefs of practice, collegial relations, shared goals, occasions for collaboration, problems of mutual support and mutual obligation". Westheimer (1998:10) states that current reforms that aim to build teacher professional communities do not address ambiguities effectively and, as a result, these reforms encourage teacher isolation. The latter is relevant to South Africa because OBE had created ambiguities among teachers, and because they are not sure about their abilities they tend to work in isolation. Teacher change will not be easy if there are no teacher communities. Teachers need collegial support to change their practice, because professional alienation does not enhance teacher change.

Teachers as change agents and the NPDE

Having observed the above, the researchers saw the justification of formal in-service programmes for teachers. The NPDE programme ensures that teachers are directly involved in the change process as change agents. The programme deals with contemporary debates and teaching strategies. Craig et al. (1998) state that:

When teachers are actively involved and empowered in the reform of their own schools, curriculum, pedagogy and classrooms, even those with minimal levels of formal education and training are capable of dramatically changing their teaching behaviour, the classroom environment, and improving the achievement of their students.

While many teachers maintain that they were never involved during the introduction of OBE, the NPDE programme has accorded them some understanding of what the new system entails. While they were doing the programme to better their qualifications, it was also effective in enhancing staff morale with regard to OBE/RNCS issues. Mrs Lefifi felt so empowered in the end that she made herself available for running small workshops at the school using the knowledge gained from her modules. She has moved from being a *transactional teacher* to being a *transmutative teacher*. While she was still not fully confident she volunteered to do a number of things for her colleagues, from showing them how to facilitate groups to running assessment workshops. Mrs Lesedi was by the end of the study between the *transmutative teacher* and the *transformational teacher*. She was motivated to do more in her classrooms.

Not all teachers are involved or will be involved in programmes such as the NPDE. This then means that schools should create a climate of trust among collea-

gues where there is collegial collaboration. Teachers need to learn from one another if they are to create dynamic schools. The role of teachers as change agents and effective managers of change requires them to take an active and leading role in the transformation of education. Schools need to create teams where teachers learn from teachers, such as Mrs Lefifi and Mrs Lesedi, as professionals who have become agents of change. It is up to the management of schools to break teacher isolation by introducing more teamwork and collaboration. When looking at OBE some teachers complain about the lack of resources. However, in the same schools some work effectively with minimal resources. Teacher collaboration within one school and between district schools can help curb common problems associated with educational change.

Conclusions and Recommendations

There is no guarantee that all teachers involved in pre-service or in-service programmes will be effective change agents. Adopting change in any situation presents many challenges. Moreover, whether voluntary or imposed, all change involves loss, anxiety and struggle (Fullan & Stiegelbauer 1991:5). The NPDE programme supports teachers as they move towards changing their practice for the better. It reassures them as they try out new strategies in their classrooms. This study showed, however, that programmes such as the NPDE have a great potential if best practices models are adopted to assist the teacher-learners in embracing education innovations. Furthermore, education in South African schools will never improve without the constant empowerment of teachers, be they involved in formal programmes such as the NPDE or informal one-month in-service courses. Teachers cannot transform education if they are not empowered. Killen (1999) states that if administrators want OBE to succeed in their schools they must empower teachers. Teachers have a role to play in bringing forth education that supports the democratisation of society. As Shor (1987) puts it:

School is a dependent sector of society that plays a role in reproducing the alienated consciousness; it is also an arena of contention where critical teachers can search for openings to challenge inequality, through critical curriculum in a democratic learning process...

Recommendations

The role of school principals as curriculum leaders needs to be taken seriously by district offices. When teachers do not have a strong knowledgeable leader who is well versed with changes educational change can be nerve wrecking for teachers.

There also needs to be a strong focus on ongoing professional development in all schools so as to break the isolation of teachers. This will need to be formalised and should include the involvement of teacher. Currently schools differ in how they attend to issues of professional development.

The idea of peer evaluation needs much attention. Teachers prepared to be change agents and managers of change will constantly need to interact more with their peers in search of constant, invaluable feed back. The school management team should ensure that teachers do form teams that would facilitate this.

Further research still needs to be conducted as to what leads to conscientious, empowered teachers who are able to face constant educational changes. In a time of persistent technological change teachers need to equip themselves to be effective change agents as well as good managers of change.

REFERENCES

- Brink HI (2000). Fundamentals of research methodology for health care professionals. Kenwyn: Juta.
- Christie P (1999). OBE and unfolding policy trajectories to be learned. In J. Jansen, & P. Christie. (Eds) Changing the curriculum: studies of outcomes-based education in South Africa. Kenwyn: Juta.
- Craig HJ, Kraft RJ, Du Plessis J (1998). Teacher Development: Making an impact. ABEL/USAID: Washington.
- Criticos C, Long L, Moletsane R, Mthiyane N (2002). Getting Practical about Outcomes based Teaching. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- Department of Education (DoE) (2002). Revised National Curriculum Statement grades R-9: Arts and Culture. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- Fraenkel JR, Wallen NE (2000). How to design and evaluate research in education. Boston: McGraw Hill.
- Freire P (1970). Pedagogy of the oppressed. New York: Continuum.
- Fullan M. 1993. Change forces. Bristol. The Falmer Press.
- Fullan M, Stiegelbauer S (1991). The new meaning of change. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Goetz JP, LeCompte MD (1984). Ethnography and Qualitative Design in Educational Research. Orlando: Academic Press.
- Jansen JD (1999). Why Outcomes-based Education will fail: An elaboration. In J. Jansen, & P. Christie. (Eds) Changing the curriculum: studies of outcomes-based education in South Africa. Kenwyn: Juta.
- Killen R (1999). Managing Curriculum change: -The challenge of OBE. A paper presented at the Educational Management Association of South Africa Conference, Port Elizabeth.
- Landman WA, Killian CJG, Swanepoel EM, Bodenstein HCA (1982). Fundamental Pedagogics. Cape Town: Juta.
- Mays T (2002). Developing a community of practice among educators: A case study of the National Professional Diploma in Education (NPDE) in South and Southern Africa. An unpublished paper.
- Mothata S, Van Niekerk L, Mays T (2003). Learner assessment in practice: Lessons from the NPDE. Perspectives in Education. 21 (1): 81-99.
- Msila V (2002). Teachers as managers of change. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. Port Elizabeth: Vista University.
- Shor I (1987). Educating the educators: A Freirean approach to the crisis in teacher education. In I. Shor. (Ed). Freire for the classroom. Portsmouth: Heinemann.
- Stuart JF, Van Niekerk LJ, McDonald MEW, De Klerk D (1987). Didactics. Pretoria: Southern Books.
- Taylor SJ, Bogdan R (1984). Introduction to qualitative research methods. New York: John Wiley.
- Westheimer J (1998). Among school teachers: community autonomy and ideology in teachers' work. New York: Teachers College Press.