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A strategy for teacher involvement in curriculum development

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Education change in South Africa during 1996 took into consideration the valuable contribution of classroom practitioners in the curriculum process. To this end numerous policy documents released by the Department of Education alluded to greater teacher involvement in curriculum development. The Gauteng Department of Education involved teachers in the curriculum development process with the introduction of the new curriculum namely Curriculum 2005. The extent to which teachers impacted on the curriculum development process is questionable. Hence this study focuses on an effective strategy for teacher involvement in curriculum development. The strength of the strategy is that it involves formal teacher training with semesterised courses. There is phased- in implementation of the different phases of the curriculum development process. This formal training course will be accredited on the National Qualifications Framework. The responsibility for INSET is shared between the Education department and Higher Education institutions. Findings of the research indicate that the Department of Education needs to dedicate time during each term of the school calendar to conduct massive in-service programmes if teachers are to make a genuine impact in the curriculum development process. There is a need for a formal in-service (INSET) program in order to facilitate widespread curriculum change.

Introduction

Education policy decision making prior to 1994 was highly centralised and largely excluded educators. In a study conducted by Ramparsad (1995:29), teachers were hopeful that the new educational dispensation would redress the lack of teacher involvement in curriculum development. Whilst the various state policy documents such as A Policy Framework for Education and Training (ANC, 1994) of the African National Congress (ANC) alluded to greater decentralisation of curriculum development tasks, no significant change in terms of the involvement of teachers can be identified (Ramparsad, 1995:55). This is aptly stated in the ANC's Implementation Plan for Education and Training (ANC, 1994:136) when it is indicated that:

"... The present curriculum is effectively controlled from within a small locus and with hidden processes of decision making despite the rhetoric of decentralisation ..."

Although the White Paper on Education (National Department of Education, 1995) refers to commitment to the process of participation in curriculum development, one of the major stakeholders in education that is teachers appear to be unsure of their exact role in the curriculum development process. Presently, the Gauteng Department of Education appears to be giving expression to the rhetoric of teacher involvement in curriculum development by setting up structures within the education system for teacher participation in curriculum development.

During 1996 the National Department of Education released a number of draft policies on curriculum reform. This curriculum reform process was to be introduced in an incremental manner until 2005. The education approach proposed by the department to underpin this curriculum reform is an Outcomes-based approach. This approach to education refocuses on the roles of teachers in the curriculum change process. Curriculum policy documents released in 1996 alluded to greater teacher participation in the curriculum development process. During 1997 the National Department of Education undertook massive training programmes with grade one teachers in all provinces in order to afford them the opportunity to participate in curriculum development and implement the new curriculum as it emerged. In this study there is an attempt to ascertain the level of teacher participation in curriculum development as Curriculum 2005 was being introduced. The target group for the study was Foundation phase teachers in a district in the Gauteng Department of Education. Teachers' skills, training mechanisms, levels of their participation, their feelings and anxieties during the introduction of the new curriculum are explored. A study of this nature is important to ensure that recommendations regarding teacher training and participation in curriculum development, informs the next grade and phase for Curriculum 2005 implementation. It is also important to note as Vally and Spreen (1998:14) indicate that "... concerns over the new educational policy are not just about curriculum change, but also about institutional change."

Aim of the study and concept clarification

In this article there was an attempt to develop an effective strategy for teacher involvement in curriculum development. Roles and mechanisms concerning the involvement of Foundation Phase teachers in the curriculum development process were identified and described. Some of the key concepts used in the study may not imply the same meaning to the reader and the writer. In order to avoid misunderstanding, these concepts are clarified below. The concepts clarified are Foundation Phase teachers, Outcomes-based approach, strategy, teacher involvement and curriculum development.

Foundation Phase teachers

According to a discussion document on the National Qualification Framework produced by the National Department of Education (1996), the General Education and Training band comprises three phases, namely Foundation Phase, Intermediate Phase and Senior Phase. The Foundation Phase includes the reception year and Grades 1, 2 and 3. Foundation Phase teachers are involved in teaching these grades.

Outcomes-based approach

According to the Draft Policy/Phase document on the Foundation phase (National Department of Education, 1997:6), the Outcomes-based education approach is defined as an approach, which should "... be driven by the outcome displayed by the learner at the end of the educational experience (process)". A working document on the National Qualifications Framework (National Department of Education, 1996) distinguishes between three types of outcomes-based approaches, namely traditional, transitional and transformational. According to this document the traditional approach is content dominated. The transitional approach gives priority to higher-level competencies, such as critical thinking, whilst the transformational approach is collaborative, flexible and transdisciplinary.

Strategy

According the Concise Oxford dictionary (1995:1377), a strategy is defined as a plan of action. For the purpose of this study, a strategy comprises the most appropriate roles and mechanisms for teacher involvement in the different phases of curriculum development.

Teacher involvement

For the purpose of this study, this refers to teachers actively engaging in all phases of curriculum development at the school, district, provincial and national levels of educational organisation.

Curriculum development

Carl (1995:40) defines curriculum development as "... an umbrella and continuous process in which structure and systematic planning methods figure strongly from design to evaluation." For the purposes of this study, this definition is accepted as it includes all aspects from design, dissemination, implementation to evaluation.

Teacher involvement in curriculum development

The way in which the term curriculum is defined ultimately determines the scope of teacher involvement in curriculum development. During the early 1900s curriculum was viewed as a plan for action (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1993:9). This way of defining the curriculum was also known as the content-centred, objectives or traditional approach. According to Nomdo (1995:12) the objectives model for curriculum development possesses four main stages, namely:

- Identifying the aims and objectives of the curriculum.
- Selecting topics to be learnt cumulatively.
- Organising and sequencing the content.
- Evaluating the selected content.

Teacher involvement in curriculum development in this approach focuses largely on implementing the content in order to achieve the product. Involvement of teachers in the design or dissemination and evaluation phases is not emphasized. The child-centred approach gained momentum in the late 1960s and 1970s. This view lays stress on the role of teachers and pupils and their co-operative curriculum decisions. It is known as the experiential approach and bridges the gap between the content and learner-centred approach to curriculum. However, Sharpes (1988:36) indicates that few educators believe that an entire curriculum programme can be developed around student interest.

Children's interests may not be an adequate index of their developmental needs. Sharpes (1988:36) goes further and states that the relationship between theories of learning, stages of cognitive growth, the curriculum and teaching practice, is very ambiguous. The demands for educational excellence and academic productivity also resulted in the demise of this approach. In the learner-centred approach, the teachers' role in the learning process is largely facilitation. This is only one dimension of the teachers' role in the curriculum process.

In the Society-centred approach, society and not the child or the tradition, determines the foundation of the curriculum. Schooling is to serve the needs of society. Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1993:197), saw education as a means to enlighten people of the inequities in society and to empower people to acquire their freedom. The reconstruction orientation is society-centred as opposed to subject-centred. Sharpes (1988:37) questions whether the boundaries of society are the school, culture, the nation or the world. He goes further to question if the nature of technological society should determine the nature of curriculum. The teachers' role in the curriculum process is dictated by the needs of society. This implies that curriculum has to have a direct relationship with societies needs. The process of curriculum development would involve teachers acting and reflecting on society's needs in each stage of development. However the exact process to be followed is unclear. In the South African context where majority of the teachers are under-qualified and lack the necessary skills to participate fully in curriculum development such an approach is too vague and very demanding on teachers. There has to be major advances in teacher development in order for teachers to actively reflect on society's needs in each stage of the curriculum development process.

In the mid-1990s there was a shift to a competency based curriculum notion. The development of the whole learner through the choice of desirable outcomes, which facilitates lifelong learning is considered to be most important (National Department of Education, 1997:6). In this approach the learner is central to the process. Action and reflection in learning is emphasised. Civil society engages in the curriculum process. This implies that the public plays a role in shaping curriculum reform. The curriculum is both process and participation oriented. The outcomes-based approach to curriculum gives recognition to prior learning experiences, which are not time bound (National Department of Education, 1997:5). The outcomes-based approach has components of all other approaches mentioned above. The challenge will be to create a sense of balance in order to prevent an over emphasis on just a single dimension.

An analysis of the above indicates the focus on learners and outcomes. Hence this approach is learner-centred and the criticisms mentioned in the learner centred approach are also applicable. The other danger of this approach is if outcomes are viewed narrowly.

The study adopts a balance between the approaches to defining curriculum and hence providing a continuum of roles for teacher involvement in curriculum development. Eclecticism looks at a compromise between the different approaches. Reflective eclecticism considers a state of compromising among competing conceptions of what our goals ought to be and the best ways to accomplish them. An eclectic definition of curriculum is as follows:

> Curriculum is the result of the interaction of objectively developed plans ... created by teachers for the benefit of students as well as for the better implementation of the plan (Longstreet & Shane, 1993: 51).

The plan is not the blue print for student learning but rather the strategy for curriculum development. The National Department of Education (1996:41) defines curriculum development as "a generic term for the initiation and ongoing and improvement of the curriculum". This definition appears to be pointing to an eclectic definition for curriculum

development in the present South African context since an outcomes-based approach to education appears to possess all of the necessary components of eclectic curriculum development. An eclectic definition of curriculum development alludes to teachers actively engaging in the design, dissemination, implementation and evaluation phases.

Method

In terms of the research methodology both qualitative and quantitative methodologies were described, and a case was presented for qualitative research. It is clear that case studies are more suited to studying teachers and education than experimental design. The basic strategies of qualitative research are applicable to the daily lives of teachers. Since the daily lives of teachers are used in this study, it may be an additional point in favour of qualitative research. Human errors of observation and logical inference are reduced due to this methodology being developed over a time span of 400 years. Qualitative research is less disruptive and cheaper than quantitative research. Interviews were conducted after school hours to minimize disruption. The researcher conducted the interviews. A further cost effective mechanism is the absence of questionnaires. Educational problems require a research methodology that provides the broadest and deepest understandings of the educational system. According to Vockell and Asher (1995:212), qualitative and interpretive data and methodology will be part of all educational research that provides these roads to understanding. Terminology in the qualitative paradigm, that is, reliability and validity, was also considered. The achievement of reliability and validity in the research was explored. External reliability to facilitate replicability of the study was ensured by describing the methods and procedures of the study explicitly and in detail, the process of data collection, processing, condensing and drawing of conclusions was discussed in-depth. The researcher was explicit and as self-aware as possible about personal assumptions, values, biases, affective states and how they come to play during the study. The study focused on synchronic reliability since observations concerning teachers in the three clusters occurred over the same period of time. The role of the researcher was described. Coding checks and quality checks for bias, deceit and informant knowledgeability was undertaken. Checks were made to observe if data collected from various sources and methods converged. Triangulation of data, from the different levels of education organisation ensured the validity of data. The data from the research was contextualised and related to relevant or similar research reports in order to further ensure validity.

A qualitative methodology, that is, interviews, was adopted in this research. Focus group interviews were used in the study. The interviews were taped on audio cassette and transcribed. The protocol for data analysis of the interviews was addressed in detail. An independent decoder was used in the analysis of the data.

Questions posed at different levels

Questions were posed at the three levels of the educational organisation, that is, teacher level, facilitator level and the provincial co-ordinator level. All three levels were asked the first question namely what role are teachers playing in the Foundation Phase with regards to the curriculum change process? This was conducted in order to firstly, establish the teachers' roles, and secondly, to ensure triangulation of information from all three levels. The second question was only posed to facilitators and co-ordinators because they are directly involved in establishing mechanisms for teacher development. The second question focused on mechanisms that are in place to ensure that teachers' skills are being developed to participate in the curriculum development process. Triangulation of data also occurred at these two levels, as the same questions were posed.

Results

The data analysis by both the researcher and the independent decoder resulted in the questions posed containing four categories and thirteen subcategories. The four categories were curriculum design, curriculum dissemination, curriculum implementation and curriculum evaluation.

The subcategories are: train colleagues, advocacy campaign, teacher organisations, teacher support, methodology, needs\problems, assessment of materials, submissions, pilot schools (in both the evaluation and implementation categories), resource materials, understand and produce. The discussion that follows is based on the four categories with the infused subcategories in terms of teachers' roles in the curriculum process. This is followed by a similar discussion on the categories and subcategories however the emphasis is on the mechanisms established by the Provincial Department to ensure teacher participation in the curriculum development process.

Roles in terms of the design phase:

Teacher involvement in the design phase appeared to be minimal. Because teachers have not been involved in the process, in the past their enthusiasm and quality of their input did not impact on the design process significantly. The education department did not perhaps use the most effective means of teacher involvement, which considers developing and training teachers to participate in curriculum discourse, and at the same time to provide feedback and evaluate such a process. There is also an indication that greater involvement of teachers in the design phase at the macro-level contributes to greater professionalism and empowerment.

Roles in terms of the dissemination phase:

In terms of models for curriculum dissemination, the education department in South Africa still appears to be using a top-down method of curriculum dissemination. Although the present method of curriculum dissemination had elements of good dissemination that is communication with teachers and other role players, mechanisms for good dissemination still have to be established.

Roles in terms of the implementation phase:

In terms of implementation, teachers were happy with the flexibility of their roles in the classroom situation and their ability to contextualise relevant content. However, they were most concerned by the curriculum developers' lack of understanding of the implementation problems.

Roles in terms of the evaluation phase:

Curriculum evaluation was neglected in the Foundation Phase. Pilot school teachers were the only participants at the school level who were involved in providing feedback on the OBE process. The pilot schools' input allowed for changes in the new curriculum to occur before its implementation. No other form of formal evaluation existed.

Mechanisms for teacher involvement in the design phase:

Inadequate mechanisms existed for teachers to participate in the design phase. Workshops served as a mechanism to develop teachers' skills to participate in the design process. These skills only related to design at the classroom level. The Gauteng Department of Education focused more on teacher participation at the micro-level hence more mechanisms existed at the classroom level.

Teachers in the study did not appear to fully understand the significance of their new role, as they were mystified by the jargon contained in the learning programme documents provided. Hence mechanisms were inadequate to ensure proper implementation of the new curriculum. The challenges of the new roles confronted by educators requires far more than the mechanisms that were in place. Teachers definitely need more training in the curriculum design stage.

Mechanisms for teacher involvement in the dissemination phase:

The Cascade training model was a major means for disseminating information. Foundation Phase teachers trained their colleagues at school. The Cascade training model also served as a mechanism for curriculum dissemination. Although the present method of curriculum dissemination had elements of good dissemination that is communication with teachers and other role-players, mechanisms for good dissemination still have to be established.

Mechanisms for teacher involvement in the implementation phase:
The mechanisms for curriculum implementation included the Cascade training model, learning area committees and specific programmes for the Foundation Phase. These mechanisms appeared to be inadequate to provide the quality training that teachers required in preparation for the implementation of the new curriculum. The facilitators also appeared to have limited time to train teachers adequately, given the national deadline for the implementation of Grade 1. On the other hand, the level of de-skilling teachers, due to their lack of participation in curriculum development in the past, has resulted in an enormous dependency culture, with teachers awaiting instruction, training, and curriculum interpretation \implementation from a top-down structure. Although minimum training had been provided by the department, generally teachers in the study appeared to be waiting for more details and step by step prescriptions on how to manage \ implement the new curriculum. The empowering experience that the new curriculum offers, only if they are creative or innovative enough, appears to totally escape them.

Mechanisms for teacher involvement in the evaluation phase:
Apart from the pilot school providing feedback on the OBE process, no formal mechanism exists for teachers to evaluate and make input on the new process. Mechanisms have not yet been fully established, given the relative newness of the process. At this stage in the study, no models for evaluation have been proposed. Perhaps aspects in this study may be used as part of the evaluation.

Discussion and recommendations
An analysis of the data and the subsequent results confirm the need to develop an intensive teacher development strategy in order to ensure quality participation in curriculum development. The strategy proposed includes the most valuable roles and mechanisms from both the theoretical and empirical, data and further innovations suggested by the researcher. The strategy suggested, includes the four phases of curriculum development and goes beyond them as well.

In terms of curriculum design, it was encouraging to note that teachers were for the first time ever invited to make submissions on curriculum policy issues. In terms of policy there was teacher involvement in the design phase at the national level.

A strategy for teacher involvement during the design phase should include:

The nature of teacher participation
Teachers should be trained on policy formulation if effective participation is to be guaranteed. In terms of policy development, teachers should be encouraged to make suggestions. However, this has to be supported by training in order that quality information is able to inform policy decisions. The kind of participation in the foundation phase was superficial, because firstly teachers did not realise the importance of making policy inputs, and secondly teachers did not possess the necessary skills to make significant input.

Large scale in-service training (INSET)
In order to participate fully in the curriculum development process, the department needed firstly to conduct massive inset on the curriculum change process. This should involve an understanding of both the theoretical aspects of curriculum as well as the curriculum change process. The most important dimension of the strategy proposed by this study, is the INSET programme. Proper training of teachers hence a good INSET programme is the most important mechanism for developing teachers' skills to participate in the curriculum development process. The rationale for this relates to the fact that teachers in the study indicated the need for more quality training and special courses that could help them during this change process. Teachers did not have necessary skills to impact on policy decisions due to the lack of training.

Realistic time frames
Although time is a constraint in the implementation of any innovation, sufficient time needs to be allocated to the training of teachers before participation becomes a reality. Clearly, the foundation phase teachers in the study were frustrated, because adequate time was not set aside for explanations and a clear understanding of the process. It is acknowledged that immediate curriculum change is necessary. However, the government needs to be involved in simultaneously engaging teachers in curriculum discourse and participating in the curriculum process.

Ensure majority teacher groupings / greater involvement
Teachers should be represented by teacher organisations, national Learning Area committees and by means of specialist subject / focus groupings. This would ensure that design and implementation does not occur in isolation. However, there has to be clear lines of accountability to teacher groupings, and a mandate to take every step forward. In terms of representivity at the design stage, teachers should be widely represented. This should be by virtue of their participation through teacher organisations, learning area committees and teachers with specialised knowledge on curriculum development. It should be an undertaking of all teacher groupings represented that feedback to the rest of the teachers is compulsory and part of the participation process. These teacher groupings should also be largely involved in pilot studies although it should not be exclusive to them. Curriculum specialists should serve largely to develop and guide teachers through this process.

Curriculum dissemination
Teachers were involved in disseminating information to their colleagues and to stakeholders in their community.

A strategy for teacher involvement in the dissemination phase should include:
INSET course / newsletters
Teachers who attend the Inset programme will be obliged to disseminate information to their colleagues and communities by means of ongoing workshops, newsletters and brochures. The rationale relates to the fact that the teachers in the study who were tasked to disseminate information did not feel confident. They also wanted more training and information in order to disseminate the information. The Cascade training model resulted in information being diluted as it was transmitted from the national to the school level. This resulted in confusion, lack of adequate information and selective interpretation of information. Once-off workshops appeared to be widespread. However they did not have the desired impact on terms of curriculum dissemination.

Confident / articulate and informed teachers
In terms of disseminating the new curriculum, teachers who are informed, confident and articulate need to advocate the new information. This could be a core team of teachers from a district who have volunteered their service. It is not a suggested compulsory process for all teachers in the curriculum development process. Teachers participating in the design phase may also disseminate information as one of the preconditions for participation.

Curriculum implementation
In terms of the four phases of curriculum development, teachers played the most significant role in the implementation phase. The new educational approach introduced by the department certainly dwelled on the implementation roles of educators.

A strategy for teacher involvement in the implementation phase should include:
Realistic time frames
The process of curriculum change should be gradual because quality is important and major curriculum reform occurs very few times. There is a need for teachers to be truly involved in this process. The rationale for

this relates to the fact that the teachers in the study believed that they needed more information and time to be trained before the implementation phase. Teachers had to undergo major changes in terms of management skills, methodological and training skills. This was undertaken in a relatively short period prior to implementation. The training needs of teachers to bring about quality implementation out-weighted the time-frames set.

Realistic goals
The nature of the intervention should take the necessary resources into consideration. The intervention would fail if the necessary infrastructure does not exist to support it. Teachers could be involved in the implementation phase by playing innovative, supportive and networking roles. However, these implementation roles can only be achieved if training, financial, resource and overcrowding needs are addressed. The teachers in the study repeatedly indicated their needs in terms of resources. The innovative methodologies suggested by an Outcomes-based approach, requires a vast amount of resources. These are both physical and human resources. Classroom accommodation, physical resources and parental support are problematic. The nature of the intervention must be realistic in terms of the demands in terms of resources. There needs to be greater allocation of funds to support infrastructural changes, teacher development programmes, post provisioning and curriculum resource materials.

Large scale INSET / appropriate training programme
The roles suggested are underpinned by greater training over a period of time as reflected in the INSET programme proposed. The rationale for this relates to the fact that teachers implemented policy that they could not clearly interpret and understand. This was as a result of inadequate training and a proper understanding of the new educational approach. The only formal training model that existed was the Cascade model. The Cascade training model refers to the model that was used to train teachers on the new outcomes-based approach at the different levels of education organisation. It involved training sessions, cluster and group meetings and workshops.

An appropriate training programme
Teachers appeared to be severely de-skilled by past education methods, and initiative appears to be lacking. The National Department of Education needs to devote time during each term of the school calendar to training teachers. This should not take the form of once off workshops, orientation sessions, Cascade training models or meetings. This should take the form of formal teacher training with semesterised courses. These courses could be included during extended school hours or during extended school vacations. It could also be allocated a period or two each week as part of a compulsory staff development process.

During this semester, phased-in implementation of the new curriculum should begin. Implementation here does not imply the application of this stage within the classroom. This refers to participating in the design phase and setting up mechanisms for curriculum dissemination. Teachers, after acquiring some knowledge on the process, would be able to make more meaningful input into the design stage. Submissions could be made by individuals, through teacher organisations, or through the Learning Area committees. However, it is important to provide teachers with feedback through these platforms in order to indicate the impact of their contributions. This would certainly serve as a motivating factor for teachers. It will also create a sense of ownership for teachers, because their input would be considered.

Obviously the design phase in terms of the learning programmes is dynamic in the sense that it allows teachers to chose the relevant contextualised content and assessment criteria. Hence teachers input in the design phase will be ongoing and dynamic. In planning learning units, teachers would be involved in continued cycles of acting and reflecting. It is, however, acknowledged that the critical and specific outcomes are fixed.

Semester courses and credits
In terms of this formal training programme teachers, after acquiring the required number of credits, need to be accredited a formal qualification according to the NQF. The credits should be acquired by successful participation in training and implementation in all four phases of the curriculum development process. The education department and higher education institutions could design the course jointly.

Once teachers have achieved credits in the design phase through both theoretical knowledge and practical participation, the dissemination of the curriculum begins. As indicated before, teachers with specialised curriculum knowledge, as well as other teacher groupings representing teachers at the Department of National Education, will be requested, as part of their task, to disseminate curriculum information. This could be school based, and also through information brochures developed by teachers.

During the second semester, teachers would receive formal training courses on innovative methodologies for implementing OBE, assessment, record keeping, classroom management and time management skills. During this semester these teachers will begin with pilot studies, which would include the curriculum implementation and evaluation. Although the phases of curriculum development is indicated in a linear manner, that is, curriculum design, curriculum dissemination, curriculum implementation and curriculum evaluation, it is however, acknowledged that the process is complex and the phases are inter-related. This will result in teachers participating in more than one phase simultaneously. Once teachers have been through this INSET programme, Learning Area committees, research and workshops will serve as mechanisms to continually enhance teachers' skills to participate in the curriculum change process.

Curriculum evaluation
A strategy for teacher involvement in the evaluation phase should include:
Ongoing evaluation during each of the phases of curriculum development as proposed by the Inset model. The rationale relates to the fact that such a curriculum reform process needs to be evaluated during each phase.

The strategy suggested in this study needs to be reflected on critically before the next phase of implementation of Curriculum 2005. Prior to the implementation of the next phase of Curriculum 2005 that is the senior phase, there is a need to conduct a skills audit of Grade 7 educators. This will provide an indication of the quality and quantity of teacher development required. This information may also be used to get teachers involved in larger numbers in all phases of the curriculum development process. The National Department of Education should guard against being driven by unrealistic timeframes for curriculum implementation. The process needs to be slower and deliberate in order that teachers for the first time ever will be involved in curriculum development.

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Corporal punishment in South African schools: a neglected explanation for its persistence

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The South African education system historically has used corporal punishment to maintain discipline. Criticism of its effects led, in 1996, to the banning of this form of punishment. But this legislative intervention did not end the use of corporal punishment in schools. This article offers an explanation for the ongoing use of corporal punishment. It is based on a survey of 16 Durban schools in September and October 1998. Corporal punishment has effectively disappeared from middle-class, formerly white, schools, but is still relatively common in township schools. Reasons for the persistent and illegal use of corporal punishment include the absence of alternatives, the legacy of authoritarian education practices and the belief that corporal punishment is necessary for orderly education to take place. A neglected explanation is that corporal punishment persists because parents use it in the home and support its use in school. There is a tension between the prohibition of corporal punishment in schools and the increase in parent involvement in the affairs of schools.

Introduction

Why does corporal punishment persist in schools when law has specifically prohibited it? This is the problem that this article addresses. An answer is offered by first examining the history of corporal punishment in South Africa and recent educational policy interventions. Secondly, local definitions and understandings are explored to show that there is no unanimity amongst educators, parents and learners regarding corporal punishment. In the third section, the role of parents is considered. The fourth section describes the methodology and results of a survey conducted in 16 Durban secondary schools. The final section focuses specifically on the practices of discipline and punishment at home as reported by learners. These findings suggest that parents continue to use corporal punishment in the home and believe that it should be used at school. It is argued that domestic modes of discipline play a significant role in sustaining the practice of corporal punishment in schools.

History and current context

Corporal punishment was an integral part of schooling for most teachers and students in twentieth century South African schools. It was used excessively in white, single-sex boys schools and liberally in all other schools except in single-sex girls schools where its use was limited (Morrell, 1994). The introduction of Bantu Education in 1955 exposed black children who had hitherto largely been outside the education system to school beatings. Unlike white girls, African girls were not exempted from beatings.

The effects of corporal punishment were hotly debated in the 1970s and 1980s (Newell, 1972). Psychologists argued that it did serious emotional damage, affected the self-esteem of learners and impacted adversely on academic performance (Cherian, 1990; Holdstock, 1990; Murray, 1985). Respectful relations between teachers and students were not possible, they argued, in a context where corporal punishment was used. Social commentators pointed out that corporal punishment was part of a wider web of violence that fueled antagonisms and hatred (Kenway & Fitzclarence, 1997). Teachers responded by arguing that without it, discipline could not be maintained. Critics responded that corporal punishment seldom reformed wrong-doers and had no educative potential.

The ending of apartheid and the establishment of a human rights culture in the 1990s laid the foundation for the ending of corporal punishment. Taking a lead from legal precedents in the European Union (Pete, 1994; Maree, 1995; Parker-Jenkins, 1999), South Africa's law courts held corporal punishment to be an infringement of a person's human rights. Section 10 of the South African Schools Act (1996) reflected this finding by banning corporal punishment in schools.

Since 1996 newspapers have routinely reported that corporal punishment continues to be used in schools, sometimes resulting in hospitalisation. In rare cases, teachers have been charged in terms of the Act, but few have received more than a rap over the knuckles. Throughout the education system there has been an apparent reluctance to prosecute teachers and it was only late in 2000 that the national Department of Education moved beyond public condemnation of teachers who continued to use corporal punishment to elaborate alternatives (Department of Education, 2000a).

Official ambivalence about the continuing use of corporal punishment can be explained by referring to a number of features of the emerging, unified education system. Corporal punishment was much used and favoured by teachers. Many felt it to be indispensable to their work. The transformation of the education system — for example, trying to equalize the number of teachers working in public schools and trying to introduce a curricular (outcomes-based) alternative to Christian National and Bantu Education — pushed the issue of corporal punishment down the agenda. Confused, over-worked and under-qualified teachers were unlikely voluntarily to give up corporal punishment when they considered it their only means of keeping order in class. And effective alternatives were not initially introduced (Vally, 1999). Teacher resolve to continue using corporal punishment was strengthened by assertive and rebellious students who challenged traditional concepts of classroom authority. KwaZulu-Natal's minister of Education, Dr Vincent Zulu: described the situation in the following words: "We cannot deny that in many schools in South Africa, structures of control are virtually non-existent, and the teacher, the erstwhile figure of authority, has become ineffectual in the wake of the learner's militancy" (Daily News, 18 April 1997). Discipline continues to be considered a major problem by teachers and students alike (Mabeba & Prinsloo, 2000).

At the policy level, government attempted to fill the vacuum left by the banning of corporal punishment in two ways. It introduced school-level codes of conduct and gave parents an unprecedented involvement in school affairs. Both were in line with consensual democratic ideas about school governance. The new approach involved a different philosophy towards punishment — one that stressed consensus, non-violence, negotiation and the development of school communities. School Governing Bodies (SGBs) were constituted as a major vehicle for the democratic transformation of schools. Parents constitutionally comprise the majority of SGB members. SGBs are not involved in the