



UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT UNIT

Improved quality of teaching and learning is our concern

A decentralized model for continuing professional development (CPD) of educators in Namibia

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Background

Namibia's strategic plan, Vision 2030, constitutes the country's road map towards achieving higher levels of industrialization and development. Meeting this goal means turning Namibia into a knowledge based society with major achievements in information technology, innovation and manufacturing. The Vision recognizes that the attainment of its aspirations is contingent upon a dynamic, responsive, and highly effective education and training system. Regrettably, however, it has been noted that the current education system does not rise to the call of Vision 2030 (Government of the Republic of Namibia [GRN], 2004, p. 77). In response, tools for pursuing Vision 2030 such as the Education and Training Sector Improvement Program (ETSIP) and the National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST) all point to continuing professional development (CPD) of educators as a key component for improving teaching and learning. In the Namibian context, CPD for educators refers to both the organizational system of support for professional learning that goes beyond and continues after the initial pre-service programme as well as individual activities that support improvements in knowledge and practice. In the international literature, CPD has been generally defined as opportunities for professional learning that lead to improvements in education outcomes (e.g., Fullan, 1990; Guskey, 1994; Huberman, 1992; Shroyer, 1990). MCA-Namibia, in consultation with all stakeholders in the education sector, is supporting the establishment of the Continuing Professional Development Unit in the Faculty of Education at the University of Namibia to help meet the recognized need for a collaborative, coordinated system of educator CPD.

Rationale for a decentralized professional development model

Namibia is a geographically vast country, covering an area of 825, 418 km². With a total population of 2 184 091 million and 2.5 inhabitants per square kilometers, it is thinly populated. The educator sector (teachers, teacher educators and educational managers) represent about 13% of the total population. The Ministry of Education, through the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) and the Program Quality Assurance (PQA), and the University of Namibia, through its Faculty of Education, are the key players at national level in CPD for teachers, teacher educators, school managers, inspectors and advisory teachers.

In terms of the provision of CPD, both the geographical vastness of the country and the move toward decentralization of government services impose serious constraints on these national level institutions that provide CPD for educators. The current decentralization drive calls for empowerment of local populations via democratization, participation, accountability, responsibility, efficiency and effectiveness. However, the many aspects of the current CPD approach employ the centralized cascade model. In this model, CPD activities are delivered through workshops, seminars, conferences and courses that are often brief, episodic, fragmented, de-contextualized and sometimes removed from the real

classroom situation. There is ample evidence in both local Namibian and international education research to support the conclusion that cascade training does little to improve the quality of instruction in classrooms or the quality of the education system in general (Barrow, et.al. p 18; Feiman-Nemsar, et.al. p 699; Leu, et.al., p 4).

Namibian literature and policy context for a decentralized model

Advocacy for collaborative arrangements that give more ownership, responsibility and accountability to regional and local structures tend to dominate the literature. Coombe, et al (1999), for instance, argue for a consortium of Educator Development Support (EDS) units at regional level which are responsible for coordinating the planning and delivery of educator development support services. Similarly, the Namibian CPD Consortium Concept paper strongly emphasizes the need for a decentralized structure for organizing CPD activities at local levels. The CPD Consortium Concept paper recommends the establishment of thirteen (13) regional CPD coordinating committees (RCPDCC) and school/site based CPD committees. This recommendation takes into account the recognized research that validates the need to enable teachers to identify, plan and meet their own professional development needs.

Such a decentralized approach casts new pedagogic images where teachers and other educators are seen as experts in their own right. They can and should participate meaningfully in the planning and implementation of their own professional development. A decentralized model such as the one envisaged in the Namibian literature calls for apportioning of responsibilities to regions for their own CPD activities in a well supported environment. Notable from the literature is that decentralization does not free central authority from its national role of offering national guidance, support, coordination and collaboration in a manner that genuinely recognize regional and local CPD practitioners as partners. Coombe et al in the – *Ten Year Plan for Educator Development and Support in Namibia, 2000-2010* – describe the situation as follows:

Decentralization means devolution, delegation and deconcentration. It cannot be done in an ad hoc way: Schemes of delegation need to be drawn up within the context of a strong central policy which gives direction with respect to professional development. Decentralization will further highlight the significance of school-focused CPD ... (Coombe et al, 1999, p. 9)

Both Coombe et al (1999), the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture (2003) and the CPD Consortium Concept paper (2010) concur on the need for coordination of CPD through a central body, such as the CPD Unit at UNAM, that coordinates CPD provision and provides support and guidance to CPD partner institutions, structures and practitioners. Stated in a rather more extreme way, the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture (2003, p. 5)

observes: “no system will function properly without the guidance of a command centre defining the way to go”. The idea of a national pivotal body is embedded in the CPD Consortium Concept paper through the establishment of a coordinating CPD Unit at the University of Namibia. A national coordinating body takes into account the recognized need for education professional development to disseminate information and practices related to curriculum revision, changes in policy that impact on education delivery at school and local levels, and similar nationally driven innovations.

A Transformed Approach

As it should be clear from the foregoing discussion, a decentralized CPD model implies a transformation of both ways of working and attitudes about the provision of CPD by central institutions such as NIED, UNAM Faculty of Education, PQA and other institutions. It calls for a transformation of the institutions’ CPD functions from that of a central provider to that of a *facilitator* – an approach that fosters collegial support, capacity building, sustainability of professional development initiatives, and ownership of CPD activities at local levels. It calls for a new set of relationships that are underpinned by the principle of a learner-centred pedagogy that has long been the official, recognized method of teaching and learning in Namibia at all levels of the system.

In the next section, the ideas raised in the foregoing discussion are synthesized into two approaches that speak to a decentralized context, namely:

- (i) the site/school based or demand-side approach and
- (ii) the national level or supply side modified cascade system¹

The two approaches are envisaged to be used interchangeably, or even in some combination, depending on the nature of the CPD program or activities and the demands of the context at a given time. As Sayed (2009) rightly argues, while there are demerits in any CPD model, what is crucial is recognition of the conditions which make them work in particular contexts. Some CPD interventions, by their nature, are initiated centrally, and can be effectively delivered through a modified ToT model while some CPD needs will arise from concrete needs identified locally in a systematic manner.

¹ Please note that the terminology in the CPD Concept Proposal (p 10) makes use of the language of economic theory to describe two types of professional development in an education context. For purposes of this discussion, the term “demand side” refers to local, site based PD activities that are initiated and developed based on local needs at school, cluster, or larger components of the education system. The term “supply side” refers to national activities designed to disseminate information, skills, or knowledge required by changes in policy, curriculum revision, and related national level needs for the entire education community.

(i) The site/school based approach

Engelbrecht, Ankiewicz and Swardt (2007, p. 584) argue that the practice based or site/school based CPD approach is premised on the understanding that learning occurs within the normal working milieu and is by and large managed by the educators in order to fulfill their immediate and specific professional development needs. Drawing upon the methodologies of reflective practice, action research, adult learning, communities of practice, teacher/educator portfolios, collegial development, peer coaching and mentoring, and formal or informal professional networks, the site based approach for implementing CPD relies on constructivist rather than behaviorist theories of learning.

In this approach, continuing professional development needs are identified through participatory, site based processes that involve educators in the identification of their own learning needs (Ono & Ferreira, 2010; Frick & Kapp, 2006). Far from being externally determined, professional development needs are determined “based on the awakening awareness of one’s inability or incompetence to perform according to one’s own expectations or laid down criteria” (Steyn, 2008, p. 17). Learning activities are locally driven and self-directed, placing responsibility in the hands of educators, situating CPD in the daily realities of site/school or classroom life. When referring to professional development for teachers, Clark (1992, p. 77) and Goodson (1992) describe this approach as “self-directed development” that emphasizes the “teacher’s voice” as a critical factor in identifying, planning and executing professional development activities.

In this approach, CPD is seen as a long term process that acknowledges that educators learn over time. This process is not a once-off activity. It is a continuous, never ending developmental process (Dean, 1991, p. 5), or as Avalos (2004, p. 121) terms it: a “permanent or continuing education” process. The lesson study approach, developed in Japan and adapted in several countries such as Zambia and Kenya, is a good example of site based continuing professional development that brings teachers together on a regular basis to collaboratively and systematically develop and implement improvements in instructional strategies.²

The site based approach acknowledges the fact that each educator is unique in important ways and that it is impossible to create a single program that will address everyone’s professional development needs. At the same time, the strategy recognizes that most effective CPD occurs when there is meaningful collaboration and interaction among teachers and other educators. Owen (2005) emphasizes the power of collegiality in site based professional development. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, an effective site

² A full description of how the lesson study approach works and some of the shortcomings can be provided.

based CPD program is part of a larger system of school improvement activities that are identified in a collaboratively developed school development plan.³

In order to be effective, site based CPD activities call for establishment of effective support mechanisms, a regular and sustained monitoring and evaluation framework and a quality assurance mechanism to ensure that meaningful professional learning takes place. In terms of the establishment of a CPD infrastructure, the site-based approach calls for the creation of a site/school-based CPD committee. As envisaged in the CPD Consortium Concept paper (2010, p. 44), the site-based CPD Committee is part of the broader feedback mechanism that is not only responsible for coordinating CPD at the local level but also responsible for collecting information from the field and transmitting the information upwards through the feedback mechanism system in a bottom-up manner so as to determine effectiveness of continuing professional development activities and to inform planning and decision making. Proposed terms of reference (TOR) for the local committees are included in a later section.⁴

(ii) A modified national level facilitator approach

A modified, national level facilitator approach uses some of the basic features of the traditional cascade mechanism. However, in order to ameliorate the well known negative aspects of cascade training,⁵ the approach puts emphasis on the development and availability of sustained support mechanisms by central partner institutions to local or site based CPD structures and practitioners. The modified facilitator training or development strategy includes follow-up support mechanisms where educators from central institutions such as NIED or PQA or UNAM Faculty of Education provide ongoing support to local or regional PD providers (Advisory Teachers, Inspectors, teacher educators) as a way of strengthening their capacities and ensuring consistency in terms of both methodology and content. At times it requires educators from NIED or PQA to co-facilitate site based CPD activities with their regional or local colleagues. Through such an effective support mechanism the dangers of dilution of CPD content are minimized.

In addition to an effective support mechanism, the national level approach also calls for instituting a regular and sustained monitoring and evaluation system to ensure that CPD activities meet their objectives and that observable improvement in practice occurs as a result of the CPD activities. One aspect of the monitoring and evaluation mechanism will be

³ The BESIII Project Final Report offers a description of how self assessment and school development plans inform and support site based teacher professional development.

⁴ The Zambia Education Leadership and Management Course can be used as an example of an effective support mechanism for site based professional development in a communities of practice environment.

⁵ There is a well researched and highly regarded body of education literature on the weaknesses of cascade training. References are included in the bibliography of this document.

the establishment of the CPD infrastructure through the creation of the Regional CPD Coordinating Committees (RCPDCC) in addition to the site-based CPD Committees which were mentioned in the previous section. Descriptions and terms of reference are discussed in the next section. It is important to note that the committees strengthen the national level model through their needs analysis, data collection and reporting functions so that results can be evaluated and additional interventions designed and delivered to ensure sustained behavior change.

Like the site-based model, the national level model is also based on problem solving pedagogies in the sense that the recognized principles of effective learning and their implications for designing the learning environment also apply to this model. As Ono and Ferreira (2010, p. 62) maintain “professional development programs should be learner-centred, knowledge-centred and community-centred” to optimize professional learning.

Participants and beneficiaries of the decentralized system

The decentralized model described here responds to the recognized need for a more coordinated, collaborative, and comprehensive approach to continuing professional development across the entire education sector in Namibia. The CPD Consortium, consisting of the UNAM Faculty of Education, NIED, and PQA, was established to help ensure a seamless system that can meet the life-long learning needs not only of teachers, but those of teacher educators, Inspectors of Education, Advisory Teachers, education managers, and school principals. The Consortium, with the financial support of MCA-Namibia, works with and through the CPD Unit to coordinate professional development activities for the full range of educators. One of the major components of the new system is the opportunity for University credit award for completion of CPD activities and courses. Additionally, with the CPD monitoring and evaluation system in place, data and information about the content and quality of CPD activities and courses will be available nationally, regionally, and locally to inform needs and plans for a more responsive CPD system.

In the following section, the terms of reference and proposed composition for the CPD infrastructure or committees are outlined. The ideas presented here are built upon work that has already been done by NIED.

CPD Coordinating structures

(i) National CPD Coordinating structure: the National CPD Consortium Advisory Committee

At the national level, CPD activities will be coordinated through the National CPD Consortium Advisory Committee with the CPD Unit at UNAM serving as the national CPD Secretariat. In general, this Committee will oversee the development of a comprehensive policy that will guide CPD system development, delivery and participation, setting up of

systems for monitoring and evaluation, as well as for credit accumulation. The committee will oversee matters concerning the professional development of teachers, teacher educators, education managers and other concerned stakeholders.

Membership to this Committee will be as follows:

- ❖ NIED Director plus another NIED representative;
- ❖ PQA Director plus another PQA representative;
- ❖ UNAM Faculty of Education x two representatives;
- ❖ CPD Unit Director & staff (also serving as Secretariat);
- ❖ MCA – Namibia support through two representatives
- ❖ Representation by NANTU as the accredited teacher union

(ii) Thirteen (13) Regional CPD Coordinating Committees (RCPDCC)

The RCPDCC is an essential component in both the needs analysis and the CPD feedback mechanism. This committee is charged with the responsibility to coordinate continuing professional development activities in the regions. In addition, the committee also serves as a feedback mechanism for the flow of information to the CPD Unit and the National CPD Consortium Advisory Committee. With the support of the CPD Unit, the committee will mobilize feedback teams at cluster and circuit levels, mobilizing teams for data collection, training on data collection, collecting data and reporting through the coordination structure on the impact of CPD activities. The data generated through the feedback mechanism will provide an ongoing and continually updated needs assessment system to inform CPD planning and decision making.

Membership to this committee will be as follows:

- ❖ Regional Education Officer (Deputy Director of Education) as Chair
- ❖ Faculty of Education representative from regional campus (in those regions with UNAM regional campuses);
- ❖ Regional TRC manager;
- ❖ Inspectors of Education;
- ❖ Senior Advisory Teachers;
- ❖ Principal representatives (2)
- ❖ NANTU Regional CPD Officer
- ❖ Regional Senior HR Officer

Functions/Roles and responsibilities

1. Establish CPD structures to coordinate the needs assessment and analysis, implementation, support and monitoring of CPD programs at TRC, cluster and school level;
 - 1.1. With the TRC Manager as the lead, working through already existing structures if available, maintain an annual calendar of CPD programs undertaken at Regional,

Circuit and/or Cluster levels. The calendar should inform a quarterly report that includes demographic details of participants, facilitators, topics, etc.

- 1.2. With the Senior Advisory Teacher(s) as lead, collect and maintain a quarterly record of school based CPD activities which includes demographic details of participants, facilitators, topics, etc.
- 1.3. With local DNEA education officers (and Faculty of Education staff where regional campuses of UNAM exist), establish a regular, ongoing series of local CPD programs for Inspectors, school principals, advisory teachers, and teachers on the analysis and utilization of learner performance data such as the SAT results reports. As needed, request the assistance and support of the CPD Unit to develop and implement a series of CPD activities on using learner performance data to inform improvements in instructional practice.
- 1.4. Collaborate with the CPD Unit M&E Coordinator on designing and implementing a system of monitoring and reporting on regional CPD activities on a regular basis.
2. Coordinate CPD programs at the regional level;
 - 2.1. Establish and maintain a regular meeting schedule (monthly is suggested) for the Committee to update the annual calendar of activities, discuss current issues related to CPD, recommend action plans at local levels as needed, and monitor the reporting mechanisms that have been establish
 - 2.2. Maintain communication with the CPD unit via quarterly summary reports
3. Avail space, equipment, materials and advice for regional, cluster and site/school-based CPD programs;
 - 3.1. Establish and maintain a structure to include CPD needs in the Regional Education Office annual budget by participating in the budget planning process.
 - 3.2. Solicit support for CPD activities by collaborating with local NGOs and the local private sector business community
4. Facilitate monitoring and evaluation activities and communicate data regularly to the CPD Unit in order to ensure effective CPD planning and decision making;
 - 4.1. As noted in 1.4 above, collaborate with the CPD Unit M&E Coordinator on the monitoring and feedback system as it develops
 - 4.2. Develop and maintain a local system of feedback to schools through the offices of the Inspectors of Education and the Advisory Teachers to inform changes in practice based upon the outcome of CPD activities.
5. Maintain and analyze records of learner outcomes disaggregated to local (school, cluster, circuit levels) to inform the design and implementation of site-based CPD programs;
 - 5.1. As noted in 1.3 above, engage with the local DNEA officers to establish a regular, ongoing system of maintaining, analyzing, reporting and utilizing SAT results reports to plan school improvement programs and classroom innovations.

- 5.2. Establish a regular system of reporting learner achievement results in cluster level meetings with parents and community members; engage parents in developing improvement plans based on SAT results
6. Maintain a database of CPD activities conducted in the region, educators that attended the programs together with the hours accumulated for regular reporting to the CPD Unit;
 - 6.1. Collaborate with the CPD Unit staff (Credit Coordinator, M&E Coordinator, and Administrator) as the databases for maintaining and reporting records of CPD activities are developed and maintained over time.
 - 6.2. Appoint one person (Regional Planner?) to coordinate the database mechanism

(iii) Site/school-based CPD Committee

In order to ensure CPD programs that meet local needs of educators and are relevant and practice based, the site/school-based CPD Committee will be established. Inspectors of Education will establish practice-based CPD committees that are across circuits in order for them to share best practices and learn together as communities of practice. Senior Advisory Teachers will facilitate the establishment and support of practice-based committees to build learning communities of advisory teachers. In the school context, a whole school approach will be taken where various communities of practice can be constituted depending on subject areas or such communities of practice can be constituted across subject areas when pursuing cross cutting issues such as pedagogy, issues related to HIV and AIDS, environmental education or ICT Integration. It is recognized that many schools in Namibia have in place some version of a functioning site based CPD committee. The guidelines offered here serve as an example or model for schools which do not have a functioning committee. The school level CPD Coordinating Committee membership should consist of:

- ❖ The School Principal;
- ❖ Heads of Department;
- ❖ Two teacher representatives (one experienced and one novice)
- ❖ Parent and/or community member is also suggested

Functions/Roles and Responsibilities

1. Facilitate a site-based CPD needs analysis and coordinate the facilitation of CPD activities to address the identified needs;
2. Plan and implement continuing professional development for teachers and school managers within and outside the school, e.g. the cluster or circuit level;
3. Monitor and evaluate the implementation of CPD activities at the school/site- level;
4. As a feedback mechanism, collect data on practice related observable behavior changes that are taking place as a result of CPD and pass it along the system for further CPD planning and decision making;

5. Document reports on CPD activities undertaken and disseminate such reports through to the Regional CPD structures;
6. Create opportunities for sharing of exemplary practices at site-level;
7. Collaborate with other school-based/site-based CPD Committees to exchange best practices.

Conclusion

In the foregoing discussion, a decentralized model to CPD has been outlined. The decentralized model hinges upon two approaches, namely: site/school-based approach which meets locally identified concrete needs, and the national level ToT strategy which combines elements of both the traditional centralized structure and the site-based approach. The decentralized model also proposes a support and monitoring and evaluation strategy that feeds information throughout the system to respond to both national and local level professional development requirements.

In order to implement the model effectively, a coordination and feedback mechanism is defined at three levels, namely: the National CPD Consortium Advisory Committee; the Regional CPD CC, and the site/school Based CPD Committee. This mechanism blends both the top-down and the bottom-up flow of information in order to break down the hierarchy in the system.

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