

Review of the Teachers' Service Commission Pilot Project on Teacher Appraisal and Development: implications for teacher education

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Abstract

In Kenya, the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) currently established under Article 273 (1) of the Constitution of Kenya remains the sole employer and quasi professional body for teachers. Under the constitution, the commission is mandated to review the standard of education and training of persons entering the teaching service. In addition, the TSC ACT (2012) has further mandated TSC to formulate policies to achieve its mandate and facilitate career progression and professional development for teachers. In this regard, the TSC has put in place policies and operational structures to enable it to realize the goals and objectives as a constitutional commission. The commission recently rolled out a Teacher Appraisal and Development programme (TAD) which is being piloted in selected secondary schools. It is against this background that this paper highlights the need for institutions that have the mandate to prepare teachers to re-conceptualize teacher education so that their products who are potential employees of TSC exhibit professional performance standards expected of them and the competencies they need to fully meet the expectations of TSC. This paper suggests that the education and professional development of every teacher needs to be seen as a lifelong task, and be structured and resourced accordingly. It is necessary to have both quality initial teacher education and a coherent process of continuous professional

development to keep teachers up to date with the skills required in a knowledge based society.

Keywords: *Teacher Education, Teacher Professional Development, Teacher Appraisal*

Introduction

The changing world of teaching

The environments in which teachers work, and the demands placed upon them by society are increasingly complex. Teachers strive to equip learners with a wide range of skills that they will require to take their place in a world that is in constant evolution; this hastens the need for the development of more competence-centered approaches to teaching, together with greater emphasis on learning outcomes. Learners are increasingly expected to become more autonomous and to take responsibility for their own learning. The learners in any class may come from an increasingly wide range of backgrounds and may have a very broad range of abilities. In this context, even initial teacher education of the highest quality cannot provide teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary for a lifetime of teaching. Teachers are called upon not only to acquire new knowledge and skills but also to develop them continuously. The education and professional development of every teacher needs to be seen as a lifelong task, and be structured and

resourced accordingly. To equip the teaching body with the skills and competences needed for its new roles, it is necessary to have both quality initial teacher education and a coherent process of continuous professional development to keep teachers up to date with the skills required in a knowledge based society. As schools become more autonomous, with open learning environments, teachers assume greater responsibility for the content, organization and monitoring of the learning process, as well as for their own personal career-long professional development. Furthermore, as with any other modern profession, teachers have a responsibility to extend the boundaries of professional knowledge through a commitment to reflective practice, through research, and through systematic engagement in continuous professional development from the beginning to the end of their careers. Systems of education and training

for teachers need to provide them with the necessary opportunities. This in turn presents teacher education institutions, teacher educators and schools with fresh challenges when developing or implementing programmes for both student teachers and practicing teachers.

It is most probably against this background that the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) came up with the Performance Standards for Teachers (PST) stipulated in the Teacher Appraisal and Development (TAD) manual (December, 2013). This document spells out a clear understanding of effective teaching which calls on various stake holders to focus on improving teaching and to have a clear vision of what effective teaching looks like.

Performance Standards for Teachers outline what teachers should know and be able to do. These Standards present a comprehensive picture of the elements of effective teaching organized around the domains of professional knowledge, professional practice and professional engagement. Schools and individual teachers are unlikely to be focusing on all areas of the Standards at once. Rather, the Standards should be seen as providing the basis and a common language for coming to a shared understanding of what effective teaching looks like in all schools.

The performance standards for teachers

These are baseline or minimum acceptable performance levels. They recognize the key role played by teachers in implementing government policy and making quality learning a reality. They express the expectations of an individual who is entrusted with the task of supporting learning in primary and secondary schools. The PST are generic in nature, defining knowledge, skills and abilities to apply to all teachers in Kenya. The standards celebrate, articulate and support the complex and varied nature of a teacher's work. They describe what teachers need to know and do to provide relevant and worthwhile learning experiences for individuals and groups of students in schools, and so 'equip young people for the future to enable them to contribute to a socially, economically and culturally vibrant society. As such, the standards:

- provide a platform for teachers to identify their professional development needs and drive their continuing learning and development

- inform program development for pre-service education
- represent the aspirations of the teaching profession.

Teachers employed by the TSC are expected to use the standards to devise and implement learning and development plans. In doing so, it is envisaged that they will ‘dip in and out of’ individual standards and combinations of standards as they consider their strengths and areas for further learning and development. Learning in one area may lead to the identification of a learning need in another area. So teachers, either individually or in collaboration with colleagues and mentors, will use selected standards for reflection when:

- reviewing student learning and teaching practice
- formulating goals to strengthen teaching practice
- establishing personal learning and development plans
- monitoring their achievement of personal learning and development goals.

The TSC is committed to making the standards as valuable and useful as possible for teachers. In working with the standards, teachers are encouraged to collectively examine the culture active in their profession, system and work sites. The standards may support and empower teachers to identify and exert influence within their profession, system and schools by pursuing personal and team professional learning and strengthened practice. Increasingly, the standards are being acknowledged as an ‘umbrella’ that encompasses all aspects of teachers’ work. This means that no matter what the policy, curriculum or initiative, the standards support reflection and development for individuals and teams of teachers. As well, new applications of the standards are considered and trialled as the framework is embedded in systemic processes.

The standards will also serve as an important guide for those seeking to enter the teaching service. These standards, therefore, have a lot of implications for institutions charged with the responsibility of preparing teachers for employment by the TSC. Such providers of pre-service teacher education are encouraged to establish programs that enable their graduates to demonstrate the skills and professional capabilities outlined in the standards. The standards provide considerable guidance both in

terms of the Professional Performance Standards expected of the teachers and the competencies they need to benefit fully from the TAD system. The rationale for the TAD system is:

- Participating in TAD helps teachers become reflective practitioners
- TAD clarifies the teachers tasks and makes them accountable
- Enhances teamwork and relationships

The standards are presented in three domains. Each domain is further split into various performance standards.

Domain A: Professional Knowledge

Performance standard 1: Know the learners and how they

learn The teacher is expected to demonstrate knowledge of

- Physical, social and intellectual development and characteristics of learners. How these affect learners and core curriculum and co-curriculum nourishes these
- Research/Investigation into how learners learn and the implications of teaching
- Strategies for differentiating teaching to meet the specific learning needs of learners across the full range of abilities
- Teaching strategies that are responsive to the learning strengths and needs of learners from diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socio-economic backgrounds
- Legislative requirements for learners with special needs
- Legislative requirements and teaching strategies that adopt gender responsive pedagogy

Performance standard 2: Know the content and how to teach it

The teacher is expected to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of

- Concepts, substance and structure of the specific subject area as well as effective teaching strategies.
- Development in the subject and its relationship with the rest of the curriculum and promote the value of scholarship.

- Content selection and organization.
- National curriculum assessment and reporting as the basis of designing learning sequences and lesson plans.
- The value of ICT and where it can be effectively used to support learning.

Domain B. Professional Practice

Performance Standard 3. Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning.

- Set learning goals that provide achievable challenges for learners of varying abilities and characteristics.
- Produce and implement well structured schemes of work and lesson plans that engage and promote learning.
- Use a range of teaching strategies to develop knowledge and skills.
- Use a range of resources to engage learners in their learning.
- Use a range of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies to support learning and achievement.
- Use various strategies to evaluate personal teaching and learning plans to improve learners learning.

Performance Standard 4. Create and maintain a supportive and safe learning environment.

- Support inclusive learner participation.
- Organize curricular and co-curricular activities that maximise learner time on learning tasks.
- Use child friendly approaches to manage challenging behaviour.
- Use ICT safely, responsibly and ethically.

Performance Standard 5. Access, provide feedback on and report on learners learning.

- Use formal/informal, formative and summative assessment strategies.

- Provide timely and appropriate feedback to learners.
- Make consistent and comparable assessment both written and oral.
- Use learner assessment data to analyse and evaluate learner understanding of subject content and identifying appropriate intervention and/or adjust teaching strategies.
- Report clearly, accurately and respectfully to learners, parents/guardians about learners' achievement.

Domain C

Performance Standard 6_ Demonstrate an understanding of

- The role of Kenya Teacher standard and TAD system.
- Develop effective professional relationships with colleagues knowing when to and how to on advice and specialist support.
- Rationale for continued professional learning and improved practice by evaluating own teaching, learning from effective practice of others and by seeking and applying constructive feedback from supervisors and colleagues.

Performance Standard 7

- Comply with professional/ethical legislative and administrative requirements- TSC code of regulation and code of Ethics for employees.
- Establish and maintain respectful collaborative relationships with the parents/guardians regarding their children's learning and well-being.
- Participate in professional teaching and community networks and forums to broaden knowledge and improve practice.

As mentioned in the introduction and coupled with these performance standards, teacher education needs to be revamped so that all teachers acquire and continue to develop the knowledge and skills they need. The solution, says Linda Darling-Hammond, lies in a transformation — and extension — of teacher preparation and development. A system of teacher development anchored in agreed-upon expectations for what teachers should know and be able to do has to be enacted. Equally important, that

system must encompass the entire teaching continuum, from recruitment through preparation, certification, induction, and the rest of a teacher's career. From her research, Darling-Hammond concludes that governments need to take two key policy steps:

identifying teaching standards that articulate what teachers should know and be able to do at different points in their careers; and

using these standards to develop more thoughtful certification and licensing systems; more productive teacher education and induction programs; and more effective professional development.

Progress Toward A Standards-Based System of Teacher Education and Development

Teaching in Kenya is now at a juncture where the medical profession stood at the dawn of the 20th century, Darling-Hammond believes. Back then, one could prepare to be a doctor by undertaking a rigorous, science-based program of medical training at

one of the few good programs available or, instead, qualify by taking a three-week course and memorizing a list of symptoms and a set of cures. By this, it is meant that the teaching profession in Kenya has not been accorded the seriousness it deserves. So many institutions have been licensed to train teachers without keen supervision for standards. In 1910, however, a landmark study made it clear that, though much was known about the sound practice of medicine, most doctors did not have access to that knowledge. That revelation resulted, over time, in the creation of the now-familiar system of study, internships, residencies, and career-long continuous learning requirements. Darling-Hammond sees the teaching profession today as characterized by “motley” notions of the preparation and ongoing development needed for teachers. New expectations for student learning are clashing with old conceptions of teaching and outmoded approaches and structures for teacher learning. This scenario should purposefully change toward a coherent system akin to that of medicine (and other professions which have embraced professionalism in totality), intended to ensure that:

- more attention is paid to recruiting those candidates most likely to succeed as teachers;

- teacher education programs be held accountable for offering access to an agreed-upon body of knowledge and providing teacher candidates with practical experience to complement theory;
- licensing, or credentialing, tied to standards based performance;
- standards embedded in an induction process that includes mentoring;
- performance assessment at the end of a probationary period grounded in the same standards as the preservice work; and
- ongoing professional development that targets the kind of accomplished practice that's recognized and rewarded by a body in charge of Professional Teaching Standards.

Reconceptualizing Teacher Education

I beg to begin with a plea that we stop thinking of teacher education as preservice preparation followed by intermittent sessions of inservice training, but to think of it as professional development that is ongoing throughout a teacher's career. It needs to be looked at as the education and support that teachers need during and after their initial preparation. At the center of improving teacher performance there needs to be an attitude of ongoing professional development. It is time to move away from the traditional idea that there is an initial compartment called "preservice" training followed later by some other compartmental training programs that periodically occur called "inservice" training.

Teacher education should be a process, not an event.

This paper takes the view that teacher education means comprehensive growth and support from the time teachers begin any initial preparation and/or teaching. Provision needs to be made for ongoing development of knowledge of subject matter; concrete skills to teach, observe, assess, and reflect; incentives; and career growth. There also needs to be a linkage with other teachers and supervisors to help solve problems and to support each other through discussion, modeling, and coaching, and an involvement with other aspects of school and educational change. The isolation and lack of communication

between all players need to be reduced. The Ministry of Education, the TSC and regional office staff have a responsibility to provide sufficient

teaching and learning materials to support the curriculum, ensure adequate facilities, and provide ongoing support for the issues that teachers face. The following are some of the concerns I would raise as efforts toward a reconceptualized teacher education:

Selection of Candidates for Initial Teacher Preparation Programs

The national system of education uses one criterion for selection of candidates into initial teacher education programs - certificate, diploma and bachelors degree. While this criterion has been in use from time immemorial, it is high time the ministry looked into the inclusion of additional requirements identified frequently in the research literature as ideal criteria for the selection of candidates for teaching positions. These include among others:

- Sitting for an entrance examination that might consist of scholastic achievement and general knowledge;
- Personal interviews to look for such characteristics as communication skills, language proficiency, commitment to teaching, prior preparation, and personality;
- Submission of letters of reference for character and academic checks.
- Command of the subject matter knowledge,

Student intake into teacher training institutions should be determined by government bodies in collaboration with teacher education programs. The number of candidates admitted should be based on the demand for teachers or the funding available to support their time in the program. In the United States and Canada, program size depends on the number of interested candidates meeting entry requirements and the admission policies of individual institutions. In many Canadian provinces, faculties of education have intake quotas for specific areas of concentration (Darling-Hammond and Cobb 1995).

Quality teachers are the key variable in student success, given the complexity of the work, and given the increasing expectations for what teachers will accomplish, recruitment of teacher education candidates is pivotal. The stakeholders must search out those who appear to have

the vision, motivation, and disposition to work effectively with children, particularly those in underperforming schools. Typically, prospective education students need to be screened not only on the basis of their prior academic record, but a more effective program should interview candidates individually to assess the probability that they will become a good teacher (Mitchell et al., 2000; Darling-Hammond & McDonald, 2001; Zeichner, 2001). It is more cost effective — and less harmful to everyone involved — to recruit the right people into the profession and sustain them rather than having to counsel out either preservice or practicing teachers. The importance of having command of the subject matter knowledge, the skills to communicate effectively and create and sustain a learning environment, the language proficiency, and the commitment to teaching are identified frequently in the research literature as ideal criteria for the selection of candidates for teaching positions. In desperate circumstances, a willingness to learn and a commitment to teaching are essential; the subject matter knowledge and appropriate skills can be developed through on-the-job support and inservice programs.

Preparation

The appropriate length of initial preparation courses and their organization is debatable. The reality is that there are a variety of ways to prepare and support teachers in a variety of environments. Just as there is no single type of effective teacher, but there are common elements associated with successful teachers, there is no single type of effective initial preparation course, but there are common elements that should be discussed and incorporated where appropriate in design and implementation. Not all teacher education programs are created equal. Among the traditional shortcomings of such programs are:

- uncertain goals, for example, lack of clarity about what the program aims for with student teaching;
- individually determined course content, rather than a coherent program of relevant studies;
- disjunctures among areas of knowledge;
- and, uninspired pedagogy

In many programs, candidates learn theory out of context and experience the idiosyncrasies of practice without adequate theory to make sense of them. In the same vein, there tends to be front-loading of coursework, with a dollop of student teaching tacked onto the end of the program, allowing insufficient time for practice to take root.

Extraordinary teacher preparation programs, by contrast, involve these elements:

- strong grounding in content areas to be taught and in how to teach them to children at particular ages;
- focus on curriculum development in the subject area, that is, on how concepts fit together and add up;
- emphasis on learning and the use of assessment to understanding how and what students are learning and what to do if they are not getting it;
- commitment to a broad repertoire of strategies to meet different needs of learners;
- connection of theory and practice, that is, courses and clinical experience are integrated;
- extended study (18-30 weeks of supervised student teaching) with expert mentors in a model setting, for example, professional development schools, which are state-of-the-art settings, similar to teaching hospitals, where all the pieces are in place to allow candidates to emulate good practice; and
- a well-developed relationship with schools.

Induction/Mentoring

Research shows that beginning teachers who have mentoring and other kinds of support are more likely to stay in the profession, will continue to be effective in helping students learn. In the ideal, new teacher programs provide newly minted professionals with feedback, opportunities for guided reflection, and encouragement to experiment with and modify strategies. Good induction programs may include a variety of elements, among them sustained support by veteran mentors during the early years and a standards based

analysis of practice. They may also incorporate peer observation; coaching; local study groups and networks for specific subject matter areas; teacher academies that provide ongoing seminars and courses tied to practice; and school-university partnerships that enrich collaborative research and learning opportunities.

Induction programs that guide and support beginning teachers in their first year or two of teaching are essential to develop sound teaching practices as well as to retain teachers in the system. Some countries prefer school-based induction programs, while others such as Israel, have induction programs run by teacher colleges and the academic schools of education (IBE 1996). Some key guidelines for running induction programs, as summarized by Odell (1989) are presented here:

- Provide continuing assistance for beginning teachers to reduce the identified common problems that typically occur in the early stages of teaching.
- Support development of the knowledge and the skills needed by beginner teachers to be successful in their initial teaching position, and provide resources for instructional materials.
- Integrate beginning teachers into the social system of the school and the community.
- Provide an opportunity for beginning teachers to analyze and reflect on their teaching.
- Accompany reflection time with coaching from veteran support teachers.
- Increase the positive attitudes of beginning teachers toward teaching.
- Provide incentives and compensation to those participating in the program, including the mentor teachers.
- Provide release time for observations of other teachers—coaching and planning is necessary for both mentors and beginning teachers.
- Waive formal appraisals and evaluations during the first year of teaching.

As reported by Darling-Hammond and Cobb (1995), interest and support is growing among APEC members for induction programs as they recognize the first years of teaching as critical for the development of effective skills and positive attitudes. APEC countries such as Hong Kong, the Peoples' Republic of China, the Republic of Korea, the United States, Canada, New Zealand, and Japan have or are developing induction programs, transition periods, and on-the-job support for beginning teachers. In Chinese Taipei, teacher candidates, prior to licensure, undertake a year-long internship following their course work. In mainland China, responsibility for training new teachers

Inservice

During the early 1990s, school-based inservice programs were adopted by several African countries including Lesotho, Ghana, and Swaziland. This is an area that the stake holders in Kenya must seriously consider in teacher education. In most countries, trainers come from a variety of backgrounds including:

- Full time trainers in inservice centers—former teachers who have specialized in training and tend to be responsible for organizing courses, regulating supply and demand, and managing training operations.
- Teachers and trainers in initial and inservice training institutions—tend to provide training in their institutions and are sometimes involved in the training provided in schools.
- University staff, experts, and teacher-researchers—provide training in universities and respond to specific requests from training institutes or schools.
- Teachers with a reduced teaching load in exchange for providing inservice training to their colleagues—“peer” trainers working mostly in schools but also in specialized inservice training institutions.
- Inspectors, education advisors, head teachers, and other administrative staff—provide training, some of which is compulsory and often of short duration, on guidelines related to educational policy or educational priorities, developments, and reforms in their country.

- Trainers and experts from the working world and business—mainly provide training in vocational teaching; lead study visits and supervise teachers providing inservice training in businesses.

Job Professionalization

Associated with job status is teacher professionalization, an important issue in current educational debate. An increasing number of researchers have argued that improving

schools and teaching performance requires professionalizing the job of teaching. Teacher professionalism begins with instructional competence and commitment and extends into a number of related issues dealing with the degree of decision-making autonomy and accountability. Therefore, initial steps in developing teacher professionalization

should focus on helping teachers develop basic instructional expertise. These should be overseen by real professional bodies which as it were now are nonexistent in Kenya. The TSC as well as the Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT) purport to be but in practice they cannot be said to functioning in the same ways the Medical and Dentistry board, Law Society of Kenya, Architectural Association of Kenya among others do.

Ongoing Professional Development

To help practicing teachers improve and become increasingly expert over the course of their careers, we must start by recognizing that teaching is a lifelong journey of learning rather than a final destination of “knowing” how to teach. Policies must then ensure that teachers have the support needed to make this journey. Unfortunately, well over half of Kenyan teachers get less than a day’s worth of professional development annually, as contrasted with teachers in many other countries who work on professional development for 10-20 hours a week. Many Kenyan professional development experiences focus on general “training” delivered en masse to large groups of teachers on a given day. There is little or no follow-up that might enable teachers to incorporate what they’ve just learned into their own classroom settings — to continue learning and, in the process, transform their new skills and knowledge into deep understanding and more effective teaching. In Germany,

France, Luxembourg, Switzerland, and Japan, teachers have time in each day or week when they do not work with children but, instead, plan curriculum and lessons and evaluate one another's teaching. Professional development strategies that succeed in improving teaching tend to be:

- experiential, engaging teachers in concrete tasks of teaching, assessment, and observation that illuminate the processes of student learning and development;
- grounded in participants' questions, inquiry, and experimentation, as well as research;
- collaborative, involving a sharing of knowledge among educators;
- connected to and derived from teachers' work with their students, as well as to
- examinations of subject matter and teaching methods;
- sustained and intensive, supported by modeling, coaching, and problem solving; and
- connected to other aspects of school change.

There is need for engagement in practices that support high-quality professional development initiatives and removing constraints so that schools can implement them.

Professional development policies should attend to school structures that stifle teachers' continual growth. The most critical change for supporting high quality professional development is to structure teachers' workweek so they do not spend virtually all their time teaching, but instead have adequate preparation, consultation, and collaboration time. Regular time for teacher collaboration can help ensure that lessons are more highly polished, students' needs are better met, and curriculum is cohesive from year to year. This structural change calls for a radical rethinking of how professional development fits in the organization of schooling, but it can be made without added costs.

Conclusion

Teacher education and professional development needs to be thought of as one phenomenon-a long term process which begins with initial preparation

and only ends when a teacher retires from the profession. The TSC new approach to the standard of teaching expected calls for a transformation of processes and policies that support teachers, their education, their work and growth in the profession. Schools, teacher preparation institutions and other related institutions such as universities must work collaboratively in order to ensure the development of teachers from the very beginning of their careers. Piecemeal teacher development policies, not connected by a common vision, are roadblocks to teaching and learning. What's needed is a cohesive and comprehensive approach aimed at aligning policies and incentives for recruitment, certification, preparation, induction, and professional development under the same set of standards. Do that well, says Linda Darling-Hammond, and extraordinary results from students will follow.

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