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# The Journey to Becoming Teaching Professionals in Rural South Africa and Zimbabwe.

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*Abstract: There seems to be consensus on what constitutes effective professional development although the gap between rhetoric and practice remains wide. Knowing what professional development looks like is insufficient, what is critical is to get it engrained in school structures. The study explored professional development practices of twelve professionally unqualified practicing teachers in rural South Africa and Zimbabwe secondary schools. Drawing on models of professional development, analysis of qualitative interview data suggests that classroom teaching practice, in-school meetings and school-to-school subject cluster and association meetings are effective for teacher professional growth. The paper illustrates that if teacher professional development is to be supported in rural schools, systemic interventions should ensure that in-school support is built into structures and cultures to continuously and purposefully support and guide professionally unqualified practicing teachers to increase the likelihood of their professional development.*

## Introduction

Recruitment of professionally unqualified and under-qualified teachers into the teaching profession has become internationally acclaimed to address teacher shortage particularly in rural secondary schools (Chikoko, 2006; Parker 2003; Reddy, 2003; UNESCO 2004; Wedekind, 2005). This is notwithstanding that the use of teachers with limited professional education has often been linked to lower-quality education and poor student outcomes. It may not be surprising to find that poorly educated teachers produce poorly educated students. A study in Togo (Kruijer, 2010) found that students taught by professionally unqualified teachers performed worse than those taught by qualified teachers. In South Africa (SA) the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) (2005) argues that with the many unqualified teachers posted to understaffed rural schools, rural children receive poorer education. Majongwe (2013) from Zimbabwe assets that rural schools mainly staffed with professionally unqualified teachers, performed badly in the 2011 and 2012 Ordinary and Advanced level examinations. Secondary schooling in Zimbabwe is divided into 3 phases based on the Cambridge 3-tier model. Junior Level Certificate obtained after two years of secondary education (post grade seven), Cambridge Ordinary Level Certificate obtained after four years of secondary education and Cambridge Advanced level certificate obtained after six years of secondary education. A pass is required in a minimum of five subjects at Grade C (50%) pass or higher in the core 5 subjects (English, history, mathematics, science and a technical/vocational subject), to obtain an O-Level Certificate. A further two passes are required at the end of six years to obtain an A-Level certificate.

However, questions regarding how these professionally unqualified practicing teachers (PUPTs) professionally grow and develop in these rural contexts have not been adequately answered.

The purpose of this study was to explore how a sample of Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) part-time students practicing as teachers professionally develop in rural schools. It addressed the question: How do the PUPTs engage in professional development practices in rural secondary schools? As these teachers had been teaching for at least four years, the study sought to investigate how they professionally grow in these contexts. Rural education and rural schools have been associated with deficiencies and challenges (Arnold, Newman, Gaddy, & Dean, 2005; Pennefather, 2011; Wedekind, 2005) yet identifying interventions to enhance education quality and student learning in these contexts is difficult as relatively few scholars study rural education (Arnold et al., 2005). The rural context in this study is intended to illustrate that teachers can professionally grow in these settings. This may hopefully draw the attention of teacher educators and policymakers to both opportunities and threats in rural contexts to enhance development of strategies that promote teacher learning. Perspectives from this study may stimulate further research in rural communities and also provide some guidance for teacher educators and policy in reconsidering and reviewing teacher development programmes.

The study draws on a bigger project which investigated professional development experiences of PUPTs in rural schools in SA and Zimbabwe. These teachers held university degrees and were enrolled in two international institutional sites: University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) in SA and Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) in Zimbabwe. They were registered in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes in order to become professionally qualified: a PGCE at the UKZN and PGDE at the ZOU. Both programmes were offered through mixed mode delivery. Mixed mode combines school-based learning and face-to-face contact. While this paper focuses on school-based learning, the core Educational foundations modules in the formal component provided these PUPTs with a language of teaching and background educational theory. The decision to use two international institutional sites emanated from the researcher's involvement in the two universities as lecturer and coordinator of these programmes. Apart from teaching, teaching practice (TP) supervision mainly in rural schools where these teachers were practicing, was a key responsibility. This contextual and role understanding heightened an awareness, knowledge and sensitivity to some of the experiences and issues encountered by the PUPTs in rural schools. Thus, the study was undertaken with the perspective that PUPTs experience complex and diverse professional development. This was apparently a 'taken for granted' significant expectation, but the study interrogated how PUPTs engaged in professional development practices and the nature of support they received within those contexts to enhance professional growth. Given that new ways and ideas implemented often emanate from other countries, the study would fulfil this utilitarian value and consequently any feedback would be of maximum benefit to the researcher's work and responsibilities.


**Background to the Study**

On attaining independence, most African countries embark on massification of educational provision across all levels (Kapfunde, 1999; Parker, 2003; Wolhuter, Lemmer & de Wet, 2007). This creates severe teacher demand that often exceeds supply. To address these teacher gaps, governments end up recruiting professionally unqualified and under-qualified personnel into the teaching profession and most of these are posted to rural schools as this is where the demand

would be more severe (Mukeredzi, 2009). These PUPTs are then offered special dispensations to pursue formal professional programmes while on the job (Parker, 2003). SA and Zimbabwe have not been exceptions to this practice. In Zimbabwe, in 1995, half of the 24,900 secondary teachers were unqualified and by 1999, of the 8 386 University Graduates in the secondary school workforce, 4 035 (48%) did not have a professional teaching qualification (Nziramasanga, 1999). Currently, out of 98 446 teachers, 12 713 are professionally unqualified (Chiwanga, 2013). It is not clear how many of these are in rural secondary schools, but given that these are 'hard to staff', 'harder to stay' schools and, with more than half the population residing in rural settings, thus more schools in those contexts, it may not be unsurprising that the majority of these unqualified teachers are in rural schools.

In KwaZulu-Natal province of SA alone in 2010, approximately 14% (about 12 000) of the teaching corps was completely unqualified or under-qualified (Hugo, Jack, Wedekind, & Wilson, 2010). More recently, Bertram, Mthiyane and Mukeredzi (2013) noted about 8 000 unqualified and under-qualified teachers in the same province. They have Relative Education Qualification Value (REQV) 9, 10, 11 or 12 which implies that they have no professional teacher training and the majority as Hugo et al. (2010) noted are in rural schools. Hugo et al. define REQV as the recognition and evaluation of qualifications for employment in the SA Department of Education (DoE). Apparently, fundamental to this recognition of qualifications is the allocation of a REQV to the qualifications that a teacher has. The REQV determines teacher salary level, whether or not they may be employed to a particular post, be registered with the SA Council for Educators, whether they qualify for a once-off cash-bonus on qualification improvement, or be considered as under-qualified or unqualified for employment in education (Loots, 2008).

A closer look at the educational provision in the two systems prior to liberation and independence reveals commonalities on key issues to do with segregation and discrimination, mission education and provision of different education systems and structures (Nhundu & Makoni, 1999; Parker, 2003). They followed similar routes: under the British colonial rule; Zimbabwe up to 1964 (Kapfunde, 1999; Nhundu & Makoni, 1999) and SA until 1912 (Wolhuter, Lemmer & de Wet, 2007). Education was classified and provided on racial lines and designed to engender white supremacy by under-educating the black child to protect the white compatriot from competition on professional, managerial, administrative and other capitalist roles (Chikoko, 2006; Kapfunde, 1999).

The education systems have thus been significantly shaped by apartheid and colonial governments. The Zimbabwean education system portrays elements of the British curriculum 33 years after independence (Mlahleki, 1995; Peresu, Nhundu & Makoni, 1999). On attainment of independence, other than expansion and massification to provide access, the British model of education upon which the Zimbabwean system was modelled, remained relatively undismantled (Mukeredzi, 2009). Whereas, the new SA government, embarked on rationalization, reorganization and redeployment processes to address the complex web of the apartheid teacher education system immediately upon attaining liberation (Wolhuter et al., 2007) and, redressing the apartheid legacies related to under-resourcing particularly in rural schools has been difficult (HSRC, 2005; Parker, 2003). The two systems draw on holistic education which in Zimbabwe, manifests in a focus on teacher attributes and the teacher as a person (Murerwa, 2004) while the SA policies emphasize practice as reflected in teacher competences and roles (DoE, 2011).

**UKZN PGCE and ZOU PGDE Curriculum**

The PGCE curriculum in the UKZN had three major parts: core education, teaching specialization and TP (UKZN, 2006). The core education modules focused on propositional knowledge around curriculum and assessment, theories of learning, classroom management, barriers to learning, language across the curriculum and a range of teaching strategies while specialization modules focused on school subjects or learning areas that the students taught or had specialized in (Bertram et al., 2013). Students were also introduced to pedagogical content knowledge - how to teach those particular subjects or learning areas. The TP component comprised one four- week module and one six-week module. These part time students did their practicum modules in the school where they were teaching, the four-week session in the first year and the six-week session in their second year. During this period, the university required that they receive school-based mentoring support from experienced teachers (UKZN, 2006).

The ZOU PGDE curriculum was composed of three components: educational foundations, teaching specialization and TP. The educational foundations modules introduced students to: learning theories, philosophy of education, educational management, curriculum, guide to school experiences, classroom communication, media and, research methods including an action research project (ZOU, 2001). Specialization modules covered school curriculum subjects that students taught or had majored in and this is where lesson delivery specifics were covered: scheming, lesson preparation, general pedagogy and pedagogic content knowledge (Mukeredzi, 2009). The one TP module extended over two semesters and, was carried out in the schools that the PUPTs were teaching. ZOU required that these PUPTs receive school-based support and tutelage from qualified, experienced teachers working as mentors for the entire period (ZOU, 2001).


## The Study Context

The study was conducted in rural secondary schools of SA and Zimbabwe. Coming up with a clear and objective definition of rural appears to be a conceptual problem. Coladarci indicates that; "there is no singular or multifaceted definition that will suffice to satisfy the research, programmatic and policy communities that employ the concept" (2007, p. 2). This, as some authors believe is because of the slipperiness of the definition given the ambiguity of the term and subjective nature of distinctions with urban (Abd-Kadir & Hardman, 2007; Anaxagorou, 2007) which often overlook the contextual differences as school curricular and practices are often remarkably similar (Howley, 1997).

The SA HSRC (2005) defines rural by identifying Traditional Authority (TA) land composed of community owned land and commercial farms in former white areas of SA and, former homeland areas as rural. During SA apartheid, a number of policies including the Land Act, the Group Areas' Act of 1953 and, the Separate Development Act forced native Black South Africans to live in rural or "homeland" areas. These former homelands are marked by either, considerably dense or sparsely populated village-style settlements and are characterized by poor infrastructure and, inadequate services and facilities (Wedekind, 2005). Gardiner (2008) adds that the poorest and least developed SA rural schools are those that are located in the former homelands, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, and Limpopo where the conditions of poverty and underdevelopment are reflected by the poor quality of education available there.

The deficiencies filter into schools and consequently competent, qualified and experienced teachers shun postings in such contexts citing geographical isolation, socio-economic conditions, cultural differences and the dominant discourse of deficiency that conceptualizes teaching in rural schools as inferior and undesirable (HSRC, 2005; Pennefather, 2011). Apart from issues of

'hard to staff', 'harder to stay', most SA rural schools lack material and infrastructural resources, basic services and facilities and, within the context of global pressures such as Education For All (EFA), experience increased class sizes and pressures of performativity in terms of students' achievement and, multi-grade teaching (Mukeredzi, 2009). Rural secondary schools are far spaced, between 40 and 55 km apart, without toilets on site and more than 50 learners per toilet, no water source near or on site, thus, relying on borehole or rainwater harvesting and, no source of electricity (Hugo et al., 2010). Mukeredzi (2009) further noted poor physical infrastructure, which limits public transport availability and, when available, it is expensive which forces children to walk long distances to the nearest school. As such, most teachers who accept posts in these contexts are either professionally unqualified or under-qualified.

The legacy of the colonial rule in Zimbabwe demarcated land into three classifications (Peresu et al., 1999). The former sparsely populated white farming areas, with characteristic developed infrastructure are located close to towns and cities, and along the watershed with rich agricultural farm lands (Mlahleki, 1995). Further away from towns and cities, are sparsely populated, black owned small-scale market gardening farming areas on infertile soils and with limited infrastructure (Nhundu & Makoni, 1999). At their 'hems' are the traditional village style sparsely inhabited remote, rural, communal lands known as 'tribal trust lands' or 'reserves' and according to Chikoko (2006) both terms signify some derelict land assigned by white colonial 'masters' but not owned by the black population. "Remote" in this context as Kline, White and Lock (2013) suggests denotes physical road distance to the nearest urban centre where the geographical distance imposes the highest restrictions. It is from this perspective that rural is understood both in Zimbabwe and in the present study. These remote rural areas stretch out for hundreds of kilometres away from towns and former white farms and are characterized by large tracts of infertile land for farming and animal grazing (Peresu et al., 1999). Rural secondary schools in Zimbabwe are located in these village style remote rural areas. Characteristically, there is an absence of infrastructure and severely under resourced schools where teachers often have to 'make-do' (Mlahleki, 1995). The schools are far apart, without communication facilities (telephone, cellphone, and broadband internet), electricity or piped water and, the poor roads make transport limited and unreliable, when available, charges are beyond the reach of many parents (Mukeredzi, 2009).

Howley (1997) points out that, rural places in the contemporary world suffer more than other places because of limited research and ill-advised efforts to develop appropriate strategies for education improvement. Howley further laments that not many scholars and decision makers pay attention to rural situations or offer substantial support to those who would like to see rural schools improve to benefit rural communities. Rural education has been regarded as a low priority area globally because urban people are more vocal and organized and, so they end up drawing attention and monopolizing government focus at the expense of rural communities (HSRC, 2005). In SA and Zimbabwe alike, education in rural communities lags behind educational development in all other parts of the country (HSRC, 2005; Mlahleki, 1995; Wedekind, 2005). Consequently, education delivery in rural schools becomes limited in many respects which impacts on teacher growth. Peresu et al. (1999) indicate that contexts are central to learning and they strongly shape how teachers professionally develop. They lament the limited teacher professional development in rural Zimbabwe schools. This is despite that the majority of school-age children live in rural settings. Chikoko (2006) discovered that 80% of Black Zimbabweans live in rural areas consequently most schools are in these settings. The World Bank (2012) estimates SA rural inhabitants to 40% of the entire population and Gardner (2008) indicates that KwaZulu-Natal province of SA alone has 2 956 rural schools with 1 097 499

learners. Thus, providing accessible, quality education to these communities is vital to the on-going development of a democratic society.

**Teacher Qualifications in South Africa and Zimbabwe**

Teacher education in both systems occurs within higher education. In SA, it is located in universities while in Zimbabwe it resides in two sites: teachers' colleges and universities. The teacher qualifications landscape in SA is complex because of the apartheid legacy where teachers of different races received different teacher education with regard to quality and duration (Bertram et al., 2013). A qualified teacher in SA at the moment should possess a three year post-school qualification with an appropriate teacher professional training at REQV13 (Department of Education, 2006; Hugo et al., 2010). Thus, teachers who have a three-year undergraduate degree, post-school education, are regarded as professionally unqualified as they have no professional teaching qualifications. The SA Department of Education (DoE) is working towards a minimum requirement for qualified teachers at REQV Level 14, and new teachers are now required to acquire either a four year Bachelor of Education degree or, a three year undergraduate degree plus a post-graduate professional diploma (Bertram, et al., 2013).

The Zimbabwe Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) Action Plan (2010) indicates that while teachers' academic qualifications (knowledge levels) vary greatly among serving teachers, the required minimum qualification for primary and lower secondary school teachers (Form one-four) is an 'Ordinary' level certificate plus a teachers' diploma/certificate obtained after three or four years of teacher education in a teacher's college. Teachers' college students who possess O-Level Certificates undertake a three- or four-year teacher training programme. Upon completion, they teach in primary or lower secondary schools, depending on whether their college was primary-or secondary school oriented. However, a significant number of student teachers will have gone through the A-Level but failed to attain the required points for university entry. Such students are usually offered a two-year teacher training programme and will teach senior secondary school classes. This number is supplemented by university graduates with professional teaching qualifications.

For senior secondary (Form five-six), possession of 'Advanced' Level certificate plus a teachers' diploma/certificate obtained after two or three years of teacher education or, 'Advanced' Level certificate, a three or four year degree plus, a teachers' diploma/certificate.

**Literature Review: Conceptualising Professional Development**

"…never before has there been a greater recognition of the importance of teacher professional development …" (Guskey, 2002, p.2). Indeed in developed countries, every proposal to reform or transform schools highlights teacher professional development as critical in effecting improved education quality and student outcomes (Nakabugo, Bisaso & Masembe, 2011). This is because the success of any education reforms for student improvement hinges on teacher professional development (Villegas-Remers, 2003) yet forms of professional development remain as diverse as they are context dependent (Komba & Nkumbi, 2008). Professional development has generally been assumed to refer to qualified teachers, but in this study it refers to PUPTs.

Broadly, the concept of professional development refers to the growth of teachers in their profession which Villegas-Remers (2003) defines as "a long-term process that includes regular

opportunities and experiences planned systematically to promote growth and development in the profession (p.12).

Literature review indicates ministry, school and teacher initiated professional development. For instance Hurd, Jones, McNamara and Craig (2007) reported ministry centralised teacher professional development in the United Kingdom. Elsewhere literature shows government financed school initiated professional development programmes targeting particular policies (Ono & Ferreira, 2010). Other alternative trajectories have adopted teacher professional development through meetings, workshops, conferences and seminars organised by school subject departments and, school-to-school subject clusters and associations (Chikoko, 2006; Ling & Mackenzie, 2001). Regardless of purpose, particularly in developing countries, teacher professional development has mainly been through government ministries focusing on improving technical aspects of policy initiatives (Komba & Nkumbi, 2008) while subject clusters and associations mainly focus on curriculum and assessment issues (Little, 2000). In Tanzania Komba & Nkumbi (2008) noted local government organised engagement and support for professional development, though teachers in this study reported that their schools did not invest in professionally developing them. In SA, Graven (2004) noted DoE workshops which were frustratingly ineffective 'one size fits all' set of professional development, while Mukeredzi (2009) noted cascaded teacher professional development workshops due to budget constraints in Zimbabwe. These cascaded multiplier approaches were also adopted in SA to reach many participants in a short space of time (Harley & Wedekind, 2005; Ono & Ferreira, 2010). Ono and Ferreira lament that cascaded models of teacher professional development are based on the type of knowledge worth teaching in schools that teachers must know, and are characterized by transmission where teaching is "telling", and learning is "absorption" (2010, p.2). Such models are often ineffective as they lead to no significant change in practice when teachers return to classrooms. Ono and Ferreira maintain that professional development programmes should be participant centred, knowledge centred, assessment centred and community centred to optimize teacher learning.

From a comprehensive review of international literature on teacher professional development, Villegas-Remers (2003) suggested that professional development should be:

- Based on constructivism.
- Perceived as a long-term process
- Viewed as a process that takes place within a particular context
- Collaborative and occurring through interaction and debate
- Underpinned by a conception of a teacher as a reflective practitioner

Ono and Ferreira (2010) posit that there is consensus on what constitutes effective professional development, yet the gap between rhetoric and practice is still wide. Knowing what constitutes effective professional development is inadequate, what is critical is to get it deeply entrenched in school cultures and structures. "… not so much about knowing what good professional development looks like; it's about knowing how to get it rooted in the institutional structure of schools (p.63).This study attempted to understand the professional development practices in rural SA and Zimbabwe that PUPT teachers report they engage in, in rural schools.

**Theoretical Frameworks of the study**

The theoretical framework informing this study and providing tools for analyzing data to understand the PUPTs' professional development practices in rural secondary schools draws on a

triple-lens framework (Fraser, Kennedy, Reid, Griffiths & Wilson, 2008). The framework provides a composite structure for exploring teacher professional development as each lens presents a slightly different outlook.

1. Bell and Gilbert's (1996) aspects of professional learning,
2. Kennedy's (2005) framework for analysis of professional development models and
3. Reid's quadrants of teacher learning (see Fraser, Kennedy, Reid, & Mckinney, 2007).

The significance of using three different lenses in this study is that the combined insight that can be gained is more comprehensive, nuanced and, multidimensional, which is appropriate for understanding the complex nature of the PUPTs' professional development practices than any one of these three frameworks alone can offer. Thus, these combined perspectives enable issues of structure (PUPT's professional development within structures) and agency (of PUPTs) to be considered while fostering matters around the structure/agency dichotomy to be re-thought (Fraser et al., 2008). These authors further indicate that a triple-lens framework promotes understanding of a phenomenon under scrutiny from three aspects:

1) Conceptual – it offers multi-faceted approach for a multi-faceted problem i.e. enables understanding professional development – a complex phenomenon.

2) Analytical – enables focus on groups of themes at individual, individual/group, and external levels and, promotes integration of themes between levels, i.e. promotes focus on PUPTs in the classroom individually and, collaboratively within and outside the school can be examined.

3) Organizational- supports collaborative engagement i.e. enables focus on collaborative professional development supports that the PUPTS receive in these rural contexts.

Examination of the PUPTs' learning from these three aspects fosters a more nuanced understanding of their professional development practices in rural secondary schools. However, the distinctiveness and significance of each of the three lenses is outlined in Table 1.

| Framework (Lens) | Terms of categorisation | What is being categorised? |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Bell & Gilbert (1996) Aspects of professional learning | *Domains*: Personal/ social/ occupational | Domain of influence of professional learning: personal (which generates impetus to learn), social and occupational |
| 2. Kennedy (2005) Analytical framework for PD models | *Continuum*: Transmission/ transitional/ transformation | Capacity for professional autonomy and transformative practice supported by the professional learning |
| 3. Reid's Quadrants of teacher learning (see Fraser, et al., 2007) | *Dimensions*: Formal/informal Planned/incidental | Sphere of action in which the learning takes place |

Table 1: Triple-lens theoretical framework (Fraser et al., 2008)

Teacher professional development is viewed as a process located within broader conceptions of teacher change (Fraser et al., 2008). As well, wider contextual influences and

dynamics including social and political factors often need to be appreciated and acknowledged in any comprehensive study of teacher professional development. Day, Sammons, Stobart, Kington and GU (2007) highlight the influence of both personal and professional factors on teacher effectiveness, suggesting that teacher's sense of professional and personal identity are a fundamental variable in their motivation, job satisfaction, commitment and self–efficacy (p.102). This triple lens will therefore enable a range of situated and contextual factors related to PUPTs' professional development practices in rural schools to be explored.

## Research Design and Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative design for investigating how PUPTs engage in professional development practices in rural secondary schools.

The sample comprised twelve purposively selected information-rich participants, six in each country. All participants were in the final year of their programmes. Zimbabwean participants were identified from data sheets indicating biographical details, geographical location, distance from town, etc. SA participants volunteered during a registration/orientation workshop for second year PGCE Part-time students. Volunteers entered their demographic details on sheets provided and from these sheets; participants in rural schools were identified. Participants' biographical data shows diversity in teaching experience, specialisation, age, and gender. Teaching experience ranged from 5-16 years and 6-17 years for the SA and Zimbabwean participants respectively. Four Zimbabwean teachers taught arts/humanities and two were in commercials. The SA sample had four in mathematics and/or science and two in arts/humanities. Their mean age was 31.5 years and ages ranged from 26-41 years. The mean age for the Zimbabwean sample was 36 years and the age range was between 26 and 45 years. There were two men and four women in the SA sample and three each in the Zimbabwean sample.

In-depth interviews supplemented by photo elicitation (Warren, 2005) gathered data. Informed by Seidman (1998) who emphasises more than one interview, a series of three in-depth semi structured interviews was conducted with each participant using an interview guide. The same questions were posed to all participants following a similar sequence. Interviews lasted approximately 90 minutes and all were tape recorded. Participants consented to taking notes, tape-recording all interviews and using photographs for the research.

Interview 1 focused education history and details of teaching. The key question posed was: 'how do you engage in professional development practices in a rural secondary school?' Participants discussed their practices in detail within the rural school context. The second interview: photo elicitation was based on photographs taken by participants depicting their professional development practices. Photo elicitation refers to using a photograph or other forms of visual representations in a research interview to promote more direct involvement of participants which stimulates data collection (Warren, 2005). Thus, participants took photographs of their professional development practices around: lesson delivery showing various teaching strategies (group work, pair work, individual work, whole class teaching, assessment, etc.); meetings within school structures (departmental, whole school staff and, mentoring); and, meetings/workshops outside the school (subject cluster and, subject association). They used these images as prompts to further examine and discuss their professional development practices. Thus, photographs in this study were only meant to promote participant discussion and involvement. Interview 3 - reflection on meaning, prompted teachers' reflection on their conceptions of professional development practices in a rural school. This paper draws on data from interviews one and two. Tape-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and data from

different interviews and across different participants cross verified. Data were further verified by checking field notes made after each interview and taking transcriptions back to participants for 'member checking' (Cresswell, 2008).

Field work was conducted between March 2008 and March 2009. Content analysis was used to analyze data, which according to Plunkett and Dyson (2011) involves "a careful, detailed, systematic examination and interpretation of a particular body of material in an effort to identify patterns, themes, biases, and meanings (p. 37). Thus, the process involved reading through transcripts over and over to determine categories/themes, comparing and contrasting them and repeating the process with all transcripts. At this stage Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2006) suggest involvement of independent judges to verify categories of relevant meaning. The data set were therefore sent the mentor to obtain a critical friend perspective to identify errors and omissions. This was followed by re-examining the data and selecting quotes representative of each theme, ensuring appropriate representation across the two international sites. The quotes would enhance description of the PUPTs' professional development practices in their terms, which as Singleton and Straits (1999) say, "… capturing in their language and letting them speak for themselves" (p. 349). Involving the mentor helped to establish credibility and trustworthiness.

## Data presentation

The study investigated how PUPTs engage in professional development practices in rural secondary schools. Findings from face-to-face interviews and photo elicitation are aggregated and pooled across the twelve participants and presented together. In discussing findings, participants are identified by codes (e.g., SA Teacher 1, Zim Teacher 1). Data analysis indicates that these teachers engaged in professional development from three major sites: classroom teaching (experience), meetings within school structures and, from wider professional communities.

### Professional Development from Classroom Practice Experiences

Learning from classroom teaching experience refers to a process of meaning making through direct experience which focuses on the learning process for the individual (Stavenga-de-Jong, Wierstra & Hermanussen, 2006). Hence, it is a knowledge construction process of the individual's experience. In this study, learning occurred through the process of performing core-functions of being a teacher. Such learning does not require a teacher nor is it learning about being a teacher or hearing people talking about being a teacher - it is about practicing in diverse roles of being a teacher. Caires and Almeida (2005) point out that learning by doing presents occasions for engagement in professional development practices relating to practical knowledge on preparation and organization of the teaching/learning process such as: teaching strategies, pupil motivation, classroom and group organization and monitoring and, time management. They contend that this enables teachers to reflect on and interrogate their practices, beliefs, and institutional modes of teaching practice. As well, Bell and Gilbert (1996) point out, it is through practical experiences in particular those with positive outcomes that promote conceptual change and acceptance of theory. This effectively occurs through reflection on and about practical experiences.

Data shows that PUPTs' practices of professional development through the hands-on teaching processes emerged out of lesson delivery. During interviews and photo elicitation, participants generally highlighted such things as teaching strategies, learner discipline and classroom management, reflection and evaluation, and, assessment as some of the activities from where they drew their professional development. To illustrate, one teacher explained:

> I learn from my teaching ... ways of making my teaching effective using different methods … you begin to reflect and evaluate your work and improve. Without evaluating, you won't see your mistakes, or improve ... you must see what worked or did not work and why, and then improve from there. When I mark, I reflect. … Questioning yourself and finding answers means professional development (Zim Teacher 5).

> From your teaching you will learn what to do and what not to do next time. You begin to understand what makes your learners "tick" [Sic], how to manage them and their activities. You can't learn these things if you don't teach. (SA Teacher 1).

The comments illustrate that classroom teaching experience promoted knowledge construction processes. Worth-noting is that classroom practice offered space for learning from evaluation and reflection. Critical self-evaluation and self-reflexion as Kennedy (2005) asserts, leads to crafting new knowledge and beliefs about content, pedagogy and student learning and, consequently, application of this new learning in subsequent lessons. Bell and Gilbert (1996) add that acceptance of theory emerges out of credible and empirical evidence grounded in practice. They point out that the impetus to learn originates from the personal aspect and is enhanced by teacher attitude towards learning.

**Professional Development From School Structures**

Seven of the participants mentioned mentoring and supervision and regarded these supports as key factors in their professional development. Collaboration in scheming, planning, teaching and assessment were key among the supports provided. Some participants had photographs taken during mentoring meetings and in some cases a photograph of or with their mentor. Further to the interview data, using photographs, one participant commended that:

> He demonstrates lessons … how he handles students and improvises helps me to think about my lesson and learn. … for lesson observations, we discuss before and after the observation, I learn from advice and feedback … it makes you think back to your lesson. This is where I learn more to be a teacher (Zim Teacher 4).

Collaborative opportunities promote professional development through feedback and reflection. These planned transitional and 'transformative' models strongly link theory and practice through supportive but challenging forum for both intellectual and affective interrogation of practice (Bell & Gilbert, 1996; Kennedy, 2005). Bell and Gilbert (1996) further emphasize strong socially mediated professional development through support of knowledgeable 'others' which give teachers an increasing capacity for professional autonomy and the power to determine their own learning growth pathways as they are initiated into the status quo by more experienced colleagues. The finding supports earlier findings by Vonk (1995) where student teachers valued supervisory support as essential for their professional development and effective teaching. The implied three-stage clinical supervision cycle: pre-lesson observation conference,

lesson observation and post-lesson observation conference resonates with Reddy's (2003) findings where SA unqualified practicing teachers placed great value on observation conferences. In the pre-lesson observation conference the mentor and mentee address 'what' 'when' 'why' and 'how' of the lesson while the whole cycle enables the supervisor to assist the trainee to learn from their own practice and from reflection and, this promotes professional development.

However, four SA participants indicated an absence of mentoring and supervisory support. Supervision and mentoring in these contexts existed on paper as pointed out by Teacher 2: "Yes, on paper, supervision by School Management Team is timetabled and everything but it's not like it happens, no-o-o… Even mentoring is timetabled, but there is no mentoring …" Timetabling supervisions and mentoring seems to acknowledge an awareness of their need and value. The teachers' account suggests a total deprivation of the many dimensions of professional development practices, and a whole repertoire of in-school guidance and support structures. Bell and Gilbert (1996) and Fraser et al. (2007) concur that such structures promote collaborative interpretation of information and meaning making to reinforce shared beliefs and, reconstruction of personal and professional identities. Paris (2013) advocates for mentoring to help prevent teacher attrition and reduce professional isolation while Frempong, Reddy and Kanjee (2011) suggest a road map involving commitment and exemplary leadership as key to improving SA education. Frempong et al. view lack of effective leadership and appropriate structures as the major stumbling block in building SA education quality. This lack of school-based support was also documented by DoE (2006) who pointed out that success of on-site ITE in SA is hampered by an absence or poor quality in-school mentoring and supervision structures.

Data provided by half (six) the teachers further indicates professional learning from whole school joint meetings. This is illustrated by Zimbabwean Teacher 4:

> Here (showing the photograph) we had just left the staff meeting … I learn from colleagues through their ideas because they impart different ideas, they have trained at different colleges, so we have a cross-pollination of ideas in joint staff meetings … you get to understand how things are done in other departments.

These formal, pre-arranged and planned learning opportunities (Fraser et al., 2007) promote collaborative learning where the instructional leader acts as the facilitator. Bell and Gilbert, (1996) assert that communities which are guided by a common objective reinforce shared beliefs, values and professional identity. Comments also suggest transitional and transformative approaches to professional development which foster acquisition and application of new knowledge and an awareness of one's professional context (Kennedy, 2005). Plunkett and Dyson, (2011) noted in-school support cultures and positive climates as essential for effective teacher professional development, teacher practice and retention and, job satisfaction. However, four participants viewed their school joint meetings as simply transmissive information dissemination gatherings. To illustrate SA Teacher 4 commented that:

> Yes, we have meetings between 11.30 and 12.00 every day. … Not beneficial, he tells us what to do. He does not want us to say anything, he gets angry and will call you to the office … says teachers do this, do that without asking us, is it ok or not ... there is no learning …

Evidence suggests that while meetings were formal and pre-arranged (Fraser et al., 2007) they were essentially transmissive and unlikely to yield transformative professional development as they only focussed on occupational and technical aspects of the job (Kennedy, 2005). Kennedy further laments that transmissive professional meetings give little opportunity for teachers to take control over their own learning. Such approaches disregard effective joint

consultation, reflection and information sharing that address pedagogical, disciplinary and general school improvement issues and, as Bell and Gilbert (1996) argue, they overlook attitudes, beliefs and values which build teacher professional identity and enhance their confidence. The meetings also tend to discourage rather than foster professional development practices as teachers are denied an opportunity to question or comment. Rather than developing appropriate learning spaces through structured meetings for teacher learning and collegial engagement to broaden them, opportunities are invariably denied. Another two participants revealed a total absence of learning opportunities through whole school meetings. To illustrate SA Teacher 5 said: "No, not at all, we have never had any since I came here three years ago … We are left on our own… Something somewhere is wrong at this school …." These comments also suggest that any poor teacher performance may not only be attributed to individual teachers but also to organisational and management practices and cultures. Teachers are deprived of a whole repertoire of inter-departmental sharing and learning from a global perspective. This supports earlier calls by Ono and Ferreira (2010) for school-based professional education and training in SA schools for teacher professional growth and development through structured collaborative activities. Bell and Gilbert (1996) advocate for communities of practice within schools to promote mediation of new knowledge.

Another dimension of professional development within school structures was through specialisation meetings. Ten PUPTs confirmed that subject departments offered valuable professional development opportunities. Even those participants who had limited professional learning from whole school meetings reported benefitting from specialisation meetings. To illustrate, some made these comments illustrating with photographs.

> We meet to plan the term and at end of term we meet to review and reflect and then strategize. Here (pointing at the photograph) we were in the beginning of term meeting … I acquire new information on the subject and how to teach it. … There is always something for me to learn from our meetings (Zim Teacher 1).

> This is in the science office (showing photograph) with physical science colleagues. … we analyse learner progress every time and strategize. I learnt a lot, I can now analyse my marks and deal with learner diversity. We discuss what we teach, the methods and assessments (SA Teacher 1).

The accounts suggest collegial engagements with discussion, questioning and, evaluation of personal and collegial practices, reflection, observation, and listening. This is in tandem with claims by Bell and Gilbert (1996) that school communities should offer collaborative opportunities that promote interpretation of information and meaning-making to enhance personal and professional development. It is usually through interaction with confrontation that reflection is prompted which gives rise to professional growth. These formal and pre-arranged (Fraser et al., 2007) meetings support Villegas-Remers's (2003) suggestions that the most effective professional development occurs when there is meaningful collaboration and interaction. But again two teachers had no such meetings in their schools. One of them pointed out: "Eh-h, the only thing I can talk about are workshops we get from the cluster, at this school we don't have meetings …" (SA Teacher 2). The teachers' comments suggest absence of structures for learning from and with colleagues. This as Bell and Gilbert (1996) assert, portrays an absence of socially mediated learning or mutual engagement in common objectives to foster collective values and beliefs.

**Professional development from wider professional sites**

Wider professional sites here refer to school to-school cluster and association meetings as well as meetings by the ministry or department of education. Participants reported professional development from specialization cluster and association workshops. For example, some pointed out that:

> I learn from these teachers (pointing at the photograph), they will tell you how to discipline learners, how to manage them ... you learn from what they have done. They taught me how to set exams and how to teach certain information (SA Teacher 3).
>
> This (showing photo) was during our annual geography association conference in Masvingo (Zimbabwe) … learning from colleagues from other schools ... examinations, complex topics. … we get demonstration lessons, exam reports where the national chief examiner will tell you candidates' weaknesses. … assessments, weightings, marking etc. are set at the annual subject association conferences … (Zim Teacher 2).

Clearly these planned and pre-arranged meetings (Fraser et al., 2007) provided for transmissive, transitional and transformative professional development (Kennedy, 2005). Teachers had a chance to listen, share ideas and learn from colleagues' experiences. Interaction here is dynamic as members mutually engage in a common objective: advice-giving, skill exchanging and sharing build on openness and trust which enhances professional development and profession-wide autonomy (Bell & Gilbert, 1996).

Teachers also spoke about professional development through Ministry/Department of Education workshops. Such pre-arranged workshops generally focussed on specific policies or aspects of policies. However, all participants were unhappy with the structure and content of those workshops. For example some participants said:

> Jah, for NCS (National Curriculum Statements) all educators attended workshops. Inspectors didn't know anything, they are like us. You ask and they will say read the document, and discuss, how can we discuss what we don't know and don't understand … (SA Teacher 6).
>
> … they are very important, we would benefit from curriculum issues but this time only the Head goes and then comes to train us … subject specific questions he cannot answer, sometimes he gives wrong information or just the general so this is not helpful (Zim Teacher 3).

While these workshops were essentially transmissive, intended to address the occupational and or technical aspects of the job, ignoring needs, feelings, beliefs and values (Kennedy, 2005; Bell & Gilbert, 1996), the sentiments above imply limited learning. Earlier findings from SA studies (see for example Graven, 2004; Harley & Wedekind, 2005; Ono & Ferreira, 2010) government workshops were criticised for overlooking teacher variability in contexts, knowledge, experiences and needs. Bell and Gilbert (1996) emphasize differentiation of prior knowledge, experiences and expertise as important motivators in teacher learning from centralised workshops. As well, Fraser et al. (2007) advocate for ownership of learning opportunities, teacher choice and control of engagements. Further, criticisms have also been levelled against the cascaded models of teacher professional learning for distortion in understanding, interpretation and implementation of documents (see for example Harley & Wedekind, 2005; Ono & Ferreira, 2010) as was experienced by Zimbabwean participants.

## Discussion and Analysis

Findings suggest that transmissive, transitional and transformative (Kennedy, 2005) professional development for these PUPTs occurred from classroom teaching, meetings within school structures and from wider professional sites. However, there was no meaningful professional development from government workshops.

From classroom practice, PUPTs' professional development seems to develop from critical self-evaluation and reflection on their practice which supports Villegas-Remers's (2003) view that effective professional development conceives a teacher as a reflective practitioner The main thing about learning in this domain seems to be the manner in which classroom teaching activities are processed with regard to reflection. By reflecting on the degree of achievement of their outcomes, PUPTs seemingly noted improvement in their professional development. From self-interrogating, stepping back, 'replaying' and evaluating their classroom experiences, they apparently developed new knowledge and beliefs on content, pedagogy and student learning. Professional development was transformative given that it was through reflection that new knowledge was constructed and then applied in subsequent activities (Kennedy, 2005). Such learning from practical experiences particularly with positive outcomes as Bell and Gilbert (1996) contend, leads to conceptual change and acceptance of theory as beliefs and attitudes on teaching are derived from empirical classroom practice evidence. Professional development in this domain seems to have been enhanced by learning in the educational foundations modules in the formal component. Aspects of teaching in the formal domain in course modules were only experienced through discussion and debate and, apparently became more pronounced through the experiential domain where the PUPTs connected the formal and the practical learning.

From school structures, only six participants experienced professional development through whole school meetings. These inter-departmental meetings provided space where teachers emerging out of diverse biographies, experiences, disciplines and understandings pooled these into planned and structured gatherings (Fraser et al., 2007) creating enriched forum for professional sharing. Kennedy (2005) views this type of learning is transformative as it promotes both individual and organizational professional learning and autonomy. For Bell and Gilbert (1996) collaborative engagements reinforce shared beliefs and values and, foster reconstruction of personal and professional identities and, self-efficacy. However, half (six) the participants did not experience meaningful learning in this regard. Joint meetings generally did not exist, when they occurred, learning was essentially transmissive with principals as 'experts' giving tuition that focused on technical aspects of teacher practice. In contrast Villegas-Remers's (2003) calls for effective professional development through interaction and debate. Kennedy (2005) indicates that transmissive models do not promote professional learning and autonomy, instead they foster replication and compliance.

Concomitantly, findings reveal that only seven PUPTs experienced professional development through mentoring. This contradicts suggestions by Bell and Gilbert (1996) that powerful, socially mediated professional learning occurs with knowledgeable 'others' in this case mentors, more experienced colleagues, school management etc. Such collaborations not only promote transitional and transformative professional growth, but are also essential for personal, and social development (Bell & Gilbert, 1996; Kennedy, 2005). Creating appropriate structures, environments and opportunities that promote teacher learning is the responsibility of the principal (Moloi, 2007). Findings reveal an absence of such supportive structures and

cultures for the SA sample. Initiatives for principals and aspiring principals rooted in-school professional development in the SA Policy Framework for Education Leadership and Management Development were introduced through the Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) programme (Moloi, 2007) but this might take a while before effectively translating into school-based teacher support. Where PUPTs' professional development practices lack organisational support, even the most promising attempts emerging out of the personal aspects (Bell & Gilbert, 1996) may not succeed.

In this study, while the universities required that these PUPTs work under the tutelage of school-based mentors throughout TP and, expected formal mentoring relationships to have been established, this was not the case in the SA context. Unfortunately, these institutions do not have any control over the quality of schools, their structures and cultures including mentor choice and quality of mentoring support as the PUPTs are already in post in the schools when they enroll on ITE programmes. Again, the uneven quality of schooling as currently experienced in some SA schools (Bertram et al., 2013), it is unsurprising that some of the appointed mentors did not feel that they had the capacity and expertise to support the PUPTs. This is particularly so when the PUPT in fact has a higher tertiary qualification than the mentor since s/he has a degree. Further, in this study, UKZN did not mount face-to-face mentor training, neither was there any monitoring or strong school-university partnership. Letters to principals and mentors were distributed to students during a contact session. The university assumed that principals and mentors would engage with the material and this would inform their mentoring practice. Kecik and Aydin (2011) lament that often school-based teacher educators are not provided with the appropriate preparation and support needed for mentoring student teachers, as was the case in the SA context.

Findings further show that ten participants engaged in professional development through school specialization meetings. Specialisation meetings are distinct from whole school staff meetings in the sense that they are limited to teachers in the subject specialization. As such they usually provide space for the PUPTs to engage in specialised professional development practices. From the study findings, such pre-arranged meetings (Fraser et al., 2007) combine transmissive, transitional and transformative learning depending on the agenda (Kennedy, 2005). Darling-Hammond (1996) describe specialization departments as 'talking departments' because they are marked by an active exchange of professional ideas and information and are bound by a clear and shared sense of vision. In this study, as professional development practices were generated from within a specialisation, this seemingly enabled PUPTs to take advantage of the planned and structured opportunities (Fraser et al., 2007) to learn specific knowledge and skills from colleagues with particular subject expertise.

PUPTs also engaged in professional development activities in subject cluster and association meetings. Given the collegial echelon in which they interacted, teachers apparently developed communities in which the PUPTs could publicly and confidently, non-formally and informally (Fraser et al., 2007) talk about their practice and learn from experienced colleagues (Bell & Gilbert, 1996) in a trusting environment. Engagements of this nature while combining transmissive, transitional and transformative learning models they often enhance individual and collective professional development and autonomy (Kennedy, 2005) as teachers deepen their content, general pedagogy and pedagogic content knowledge. Participants also spoke highly about professional learning through subject associations. They portrayed them as offering powerful influence in setting national assessment standards, articulating and implementing these standards and structures and, subject curricular. While associations are fundamentally independent of employers, transcending school walls, they are positioned to exert influence on teachers' dispositions to particular policies and reform agendas (Little, 2000). Through these pre-

arranged meetings, both informal and incidental professional development occurs given that incidental learning sits at the verge of the planned gatherings (Fraser et al. 2007). Such learning shapes teacher attitudes, beliefs and values (Bell & Gilbert, 1996). However, Little (2000) laments the nearly invisible position of subject matter associations in mainstream professional development literature despite their prominence in teachers' professional lives.

Findings also show limited professional development from Ministry/DoE workshops. Teachers blamed workshop content and modes of delivery. Fullan (1999) criticises education departments for viewing training synonymously with professional development where presenters share their expertise and provide a common 'jacket' for all. From the data, the workshop approaches were without participant choice, ownership or control of content and agenda and, did not promote participant interaction. There was seemingly, no consideration of the diverse teacher needs, contexts, experiences and myriad expectations for engagement in effective professional development. Bell and Gilbert (1996) and Fraser et al., (2007) concur that these are important aspects that promote professional learning and shape their attitudes, beliefs and values. Zimbabwean participants further talked about cascaded, transmissive workshops, which they criticised for watering down, distorting or mis-representing crucial information. These cascaded/top-to-bottom "multiplier" models can effectively transmit messages about aspects of educational reform, provided there is both material and psychological support, close monitoring and follow up (Ono & Ferreira, 2010). This kind of support was seemingly unavailable in the Zimbabwean context due to budget constraints.

## Findings of the Study and Implications

This study examined the professional development practices from the perspective of the PUPTs in rural secondary schools and the ways in which they traversed and negotiated their rural school contexts as they become teaching professionals. Findings indicate that overall PUPTs' professional development emerged from classroom teaching, school structures and from cluster and association meetings. However, within school structures half the sample did not benefit from whole school meetings and five did not experience any mentoring. Further, PUPTs blamed Ministry/DoE workshops for ineffectiveness in professionally developing them.

These findings have some implications. Findings suggest that in-school support structures are effective for professional development and socialization of teachers. Making PUPTs' in-school support an important component of how principals are trained and even part of their performance management at the policy level may make a difference. They would develop a heightened awareness of their responsibility to PUPTs' professional development which may eliminate unrealistic expectations of PUPTs to be able to perform as fully qualified, experienced teachers when they arrive at the door. While these experiences are based on a small sample, lack of effective structures and cultures for unqualified teacher professional development support particularly in SA schools has been documented (see for example Bertram et al, 2013; DoE, 2006; Kiggundu & Naymuli, 2009; Marais & Meier, 2008; Moloi, 2007). Interventions at policy level may influence support of both PUPTs and novice teachers. Policy needs to ensure that all schools have a clear, methodical and regular approach to in-school professional development through collective structural activities to enhance both individual and organisational development. Systematic professional development recognizes professional learning as a vital process for everyone who affects students' learning (Guskey, 2002). Individual learning and organisational learning thus, need simultaneous focus as any development made in one component is more likely to be annulled by challenges in the other.

Again, findings suggest a need for more focused and comprehensive mentor training for school-based teacher educators. This would be important not only for mentoring PUPTs and novice teachers, but also for the mentors' professional growth. A UKZN mentor training project funded by KwaZulu-Natal DoE in 2010 may need to be revived and taken up as an on-going and long-drawn-out collaborative process. Until teacher educators, education departments and schools engage in serious and committed discussions around unqualified teacher supports, the possibility of significant improvement in this area is unlikely. The success of school-based ITE programmes resides in them being a co-production, hence, to achieve desirable outcomes for all stakeholders, there may be need for a re-appraisal of institutional policies to provide institutions and site-based teacher educators opportunities to undertake these kinds of dialogues. This implies that higher education institutions should take a lead in developing and/or maintaining strong school-university partnerships and, in ensuring that appropriate strategies are put in place to enhance mentoring effectiveness.

In relation to the Department/Ministry workshops, findings show limited professional benefits. Study participants reported lack of preparation, poor facilitation skills and strategies and, adopting cascaded/multiplier approaches as having negatively affected professional learning from government workshops. Facilitators need to be well trained and thoroughly grounded in the workshop content in addition to being well equipped with facilitating, active and reflective work-shopping skills. In this regard, SA teachers studied by Graven (2004) recommended: "a lot of personal interaction, ample opportunity for discussion, ample opportunity to criticise, evaluate and disagree, being treated like professionals and, facilitators not being dictatorial and judgemental" (p. 87) for effective professional development through government workshops. Hence, taking cognisance of the experiences and knowledge which teachers bring to the programme and drawing on these as resources while viewing learning as a two-way process between presenters and participants would also probably help sustain teacher learning and participation in such ministry/departmental workshops (Fraser et al., 2007).

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