

Needs-based Professional Development of Lecturers in Further Education and Training Colleges: A Strategic Imperative

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Abstract

Continuing professional development of lecturers in the Further Education and Training colleges is now a strategic priority of the South African government. This article reports on a competency-based training needs assessment study conducted in 2012. From a systems theoretical perspective, the article highlights inefficiencies at the different levels of the education system resulting from a poorly coordinated new curriculum change programme. The study used a mixed method of inquiry. Data was collected through questionnaires and focus group discussions. A purposive sampling procedure was followed. Findings show that more than 50% of lecturers in the study require continuing professional development. In rank order, the need is greatest in the following competency areas: understanding of the technical and vocational education and training context including the policy environment; use of information and communication technologies; understanding of and accommodating diversity of students; ability to reflect critically and being knowledgeable about the demands that will be made on their learners in the workplace. It is concluded that failure to align curriculum policy change with a proactive approach to professional development of lecturers has adversely affected the performance of students. The introduction of a regulated, needs-driven and credit-bearing mandatory continuing professional development programme is thus recommended.

Keywords: Systems; professional development; needs assessment; competences

1. Introduction

Professional development of the educator is instrumental to successful delivery of curriculum programmes. Poor throughput rates, high drop-out, low progression and poor completion rates among students on the National Certificate Vocational (NCV) programme in the Further Education and Training (FET) colleges are a symptom of poor teaching and learning. The FET colleges are the main providers of vocational and technical education and cater for school leavers who are above fifteen years of age. Key role-players in the FET colleges' sector attribute poor performance to inadequate preparation of lecturers who lack the requisite knowledge and skills for effective curriculum delivery. Among others, the South African Council of Educators (SACE, 2011:5) acknowledges the problem, linking it to "a lack of clear policy on the initial preparation of college lecturers as well as to a lack of professional development programmes". To Papier and McGrath (2009:7), the problem has arisen because higher education "institutions have, in the absence of national vocational teacher training programmes, been offering adapted versions of school-teacher preparation programmes". Historically, technical college lecturers were not required to have specific teaching qualifications to be appointed to teach in these colleges. Most were appointed on the basis of their technical know-how and workplace experience. Consequently, a significant number of lecturers in the system are either under- or unqualified.

With the pronouncement of the Policy on Professional Qualifications for Lecturers in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), the seriousness of the problem of lecturer preparation is acknowledged and has since become a government strategic priority. The purpose of this Policy is "to contribute to the availability and development of quality lecturers for the TVET sector by putting in place a set of suitable higher education qualifications that can be used for the professional and post-professional development of TVET lecturers" (Government Gazette 36554, 2013: 7). It further states that institutions offering TVET programmes need to have sufficient, appropriately qualified and competent lecturers who understand and have expertise in both the academic and work-related dimensions of TVET in order to make the critical contribution expected of them.

Whilst this Policy makes clear the urgency to develop quality lecturers, an immediate constraint facing policy-makers is lack of sufficient data as a basis for the planning of the envisaged professional development programmes. A literature review shows that limited research on the developmental needs of college lecturers has been done. For

example, an audit was conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in 2010. Research studies are done by the Further Education and Training Institute (FETI) at the University of the Western Cape on various topics and also by the Education, Training and Development Practices– Sector Education and Training Authority (ETDP SETA). None of these studies focused directly on the relationship between professional development needs and the competences required of a qualified lecturer for curriculum delivery. In view of this, the South African College Principals' Organisation (SACPO) commissioned a national survey in 2012 on the training needs of FET college lecturers. This article serves to convey some of the key findings of this survey. The study was also necessitated by changes in the TVET sector over the past 15 years. These have far-reaching implications for the calibre of lecturer that the system needs today. The next section highlights some of the systemic changes giving rise to the research focus.

1.1 Further Education and Training Colleges

The Education White Paper (Government Notice 196 of 1995) paved the way for the transformation of the technical and vocational college system in the post-apartheid period. After the promulgation of the Further Education and Training (FET) Act (98 of 1998), structural changes began with the rationalisation and mergers of the 152 colleges, creating 50 multi-campus FET colleges. To revamp the ageing infrastructure, the recapitalisation programme was initiated soon thereafter. By 2003, the new colleges were publicly declared in the provincial gazettes. Through the Further Education and Training Colleges Act (16 of 2006), powers for employment of lecturers and support staff were devolved to the college councils.

With these changes, the government was primarily concerned with the creation of a new FET college system rather than a modification of certain parts of the system. To maintain the momentum of change, the government announced the new NCV curriculum policy in October 2006, with January 2007 set for full-scale implementation. The NCV programme has three compulsory fundamental subjects namely a First Additional Language, Mathematics or Mathematical Literacy and Life Skills. This study focused on these. The programme uses an outcomes-based (OBE) approach and is characterised by a rigorous assessment regime. For some lecturers, OBE was new and the curriculum content was not familiar whilst the new assessment requirements posed a challenge for many others. It was also new for lecturers to teach students whose ages range from 15 to over 40 years. The minimum requirement for admission is Grade 9, when students are 15 years old. Students are also admitted after Grade 12. Therefore lecturers have to teach highly diversified and mixed-ability groups without being adequately prepared for such a responsibility. Lecturer preparation was limited to 2 or 3 days orientation workshops to introduce lecturers to the new curriculum.

The importance of professional development for curriculum change has been emphasised, thus:

'[R]egardless of the scope of the reform, the relationship between educational reform and teachers' professional development is a two way, or reciprocal, relationship ... educational reforms that do not include teachers and their professional development have not been successful. Professional development initiatives that have not been embedded in some form of structures and policies have not been successful either' (Villagas-Reimers, 2003: 24 cited in Ono and Ferreira, 2010: 60).

Taking cognisance of this, the Policy on Professional Qualifications for Lecturers in TVET, recently approved by the government prescribes 10 competences that a qualified lecturer must demonstrate. These are summarised below.

1.2 Basic Competences for Professionally Qualified Lecturers

There is no uniform definition of the term 'competence'. It is normative and varies according to context. According to the European Commission (2013: 8), "teaching competences are thus complex combinations of knowledge, skills, understanding, values, and attitudes leading to effective action in situation". Some researchers acknowledge that competences may include experiences, skills, traits, values and attitudes needed for proper functioning in a professional situation (Jeffrey and Brunton, 2011; Amankwah, 2011). Others refer to competences as "professional standards which specify the attributes, skills and knowledge and understanding that a qualified teacher is expected to reach and maintain" (Evans, 2011: 853). The competences as outlined in the Policy (Government Gazette 36554, 2013: 40) fit within these definitions.

To paraphrase, professionally qualified lecturers require a sound knowledge base in their subject specialisation and should select, competently sequence and pace the content. A sound understanding of the TVET policies and contextual realities, knowledge of the learners' diverse socio-economic background, age, culture, learning styles and

aspirations and their special needs is required. Lecturers must be able to communicate effectively in the language of learning and teaching and should manage teaching and learning environments effectively. Professionally qualified lecturers must be able to assess learners in varied and reliable ways, using the assessment results to improve both learning and their teaching practices. They must be computer literate integrating information and communication technologies (ICTs) effectively in teaching and learning. In addition, lecturers must know the demands of the workplace and must equip learners to meet these demands. They should have a positive work ethic, display appropriate values and conduct themselves in a manner that befits their profession. Lastly, they must be able to reflect critically with their professional community of colleagues to be able to adapt and improve their practice in line with the evolving circumstances. Combined, these competences suggest a high standard of professionalism that embodies not only intellectual but behavioural as well as attitudinal aspects of professional development.

This competency framework reflects a fundamental shift from the Vocational Education Orientation Programme (VEOP) launched in 2010, as an induction pilot programme for lecturers new to college teaching (FETI, 2012:6). Its aim was to introduce lecturers to the FET college context and to help them understand the curriculum requirements. It also intended to provide lecturers with a repertoire of integrated teaching and assessment strategies, whilst assisting them in managing the administrative processes related to teaching and assessment. The VEOP has not been popular because, at level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), with only 30 credits, it is regarded as too elementary to enhance the skills, knowledge and qualification profile of those lecturers who already have a university degree.

The survey of the training needs of college lecturers using the competences above as a framework generated data which has helped to reveal that a system-wide curriculum change programme was introduced without a concomitant effort to equip lecturers with the skills and knowledge required to deliver the new curriculum effectively. The systems theory was used to interpret the data.

2. Systems View and Educational Transformation

The systems theory was used to interpret the data for the reason that it has a long history of use in educational transformation (King and Frick, 1999). There are two main characteristics identified with the systems theory, namely, closed and open systems. A closed system receives no input from its environment, whereas an open system keeps evolving through its interaction with the environment (Ludwig von Bertalanffy, 1968; Schoech, 2004). Brown and Harvey (2006: 40), define a system "as a set of interrelated parts unified by design to achieve some purpose or goal". Schoech's (2004: 1) states that, "systems are nested in a hierarchy that means, systems consist of subsystems and systems operate within environments".

In this study, the focus was on the training needs of college lecturers. Therefore we relate the systems theory to the introduction of a curriculum policy that seeks to alter structures and functions within the colleges which are a sub-system of the hierarchical education system in South Africa. The education system is organised into three levels, namely, the national, provincial, local/district/college/school levels and change affects all the levels. Given this configuration, change programmes require a systemic design that looks at the process holistically. A mere tinkering with parts of the system in a piecemeal fashion is to be avoided (King and Frick, 1999). From this perspective, the overall efficiency of the system depends upon the degree of coordination and integration of activities at its different levels. This means that performance at each level largely depends on how the different levels work together and not how each works independently. In addition to coordination and integration, communication is another key principles associated with the systems theory.

Of the three models that portray education as a system, the functions-structure model has been used in the exploration of the research phenomenon (Banathy, 1996 cited in Jonassen (ed.), 2004). This model allows for an investigation of what the system is at a given time, including its goals, functions to be carried out to achieve the goals and the identification of the components that can carry out those functions and interrelationships among these. Using this model, the intention was to explain the relationships between the introduction of a new curriculum and the measures taken to equip lecturers with the required competences to deliver the curriculum successfully. Central to the argument are the changes required to make professional development processes more responsive to the needs of the changing curriculum programmes. By implication, a change in curriculum (function) must have due regard for lecturer development as these are inter-dependent, but also for the interdependence between these components and the larger system. The emphasis is on understanding that parts of a system are interrelated and that change in one affects the others.

As stated in the OECD report, studies on professional development of teachers "often use systems theory on change that links structural, cultural and political dimensions of school workplace environments to professional learning"

(OECD, 2010:33). Given the mergers, rationalisation, recapitalisation, restructuring and the new policy and legislative framework, the FET colleges have experienced all three dimensions of change, namely, structural, cultural and political dimensions. In this regard, the systems theory provides an adequate lens through which the research phenomenon is analysed to illustrate links and interconnectedness among these components. This brings attention to the often neglected needs-based approach to professional development discussed in the next section.

3. Professional Development: A needs-based Approach

A training needs assessment (TNA) is often the first step in the training cycle, wherein its results form the basis for the planning of professional development programmes. A training needs assessment is "an on-going process of gathering data to determine what training needs exist so that training can be developed to help the organisation accomplish its objectives" (Brown, 2002: 569). Others, (Anderson, 1994; Bailey and Gillis, 2011) concur, stressing that it is a systematic collection and analysis of information necessary to define skills and knowledge required to enhance organisational performance. Fisher and Tees (1987: 6) suggest that TNA can follow either a problem-analysis or a competency-based method. In the competency-based method, towards which the study was inclined, the emphasis is on proactively locating and describing competences critical to successful performance. In this way, TNA directly contributes to the design of professional development programmes.

Continuing professional development (CPD) is often associated with on-going training activities that take place after the completion of initial training. A broader view is that CPD "encompasses systematic activities to prepare lecturers for their job, including initial training, induction courses, participation at conferences, seminars or workshops and in-service training" (OECD, 2010: 19). The Perth College (2013: 2) defines CPD as:

"[t]he on-going training and education throughout a career to improve skills and knowledge used to perform a job or succession of jobs. CPD should be a planned, structured process, involving the assessment of development needs and the tailoring of training to meet those needs".

Basing CPD programmes on assessed needs ensures upgrading and updating the right knowledge and skills to maintain the quality and relevance of professional services so that it has a positive impact on practice and learner experience (OECD, 2010; Wilcox, 2010; Institute for Learning, 2009; Institute for Continuing Professional Development, 2010). Generally, CPD requires self-directed, independent learning and demands an active rather than passive approach to learning. In this way, CPD becomes an embedded component of a lecturer's professionalism. Research has shown that, in practice, the key to the success of CPD is "thorough, focussed planning and regular monitoring" (Ofsted, 2006: 22, cited in Walker, Jeffes, Hart, Lord, & Kinder, DFE, 2011: 17). In discussing how education systems manage curriculum change, it is necessary to acknowledge that TNA and CPD are intertwined processes.

Within the limited scope of this article, linking TNA to CPD allows for a focused argument regarding the extent to which the introduction of the NCV curriculum programme created gaps in skills and knowledge of college lecturers teaching the fundamental subjects on the programme. The investigation centred on determining the professional development needs of these lecturers as measured against the prescribed competences in the Policy on Professional Qualifications for Lecturers in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) (Government Gazette 36554, 2013:40).

4. Research Design and Methodology

The training needs assessment (TNA) study was conducted by the author, assisted by a senior researcher. The study was commissioned jointly by the SACPO and the ETDP SETA. Being exploratory in nature, this study used the mixed-method research approach to cover a broader range of targeted sources and also for a deeper understanding of contextual realities and life experiences of the participants. Four questionnaires (Tools A, B, C and D) were developed. Tool A was for the collage-based curriculum managers. Tool B was for subject lecturers. Tool C was a semi-structured schedule of questions used during focus group discussions with subject lecturers and curriculum managers. Tool D, also a questionnaire about the professional development needs of college/campus managers, was administered in the Eastern Cape only due to financial and time constraints. A document analysis was done covering departmental policies, legislation, strategic plans and annual reports of the department of education as well as reports from other research agencies.

Sampling was purposive, and all the 50 FET colleges across South Africa were targeted. Three lecturers per

college, that is, one for each of the fundamental subjects on the NCV programme were targeted. The academic vice-principal or the NCV programme manager from each college was included in the sample. The actual sample obtained was 373 lecturers. Of these, a total of 202 also participated in focus group discussions.

The response questionnaires were checked for completeness before coding. Data was captured on Excel spreadsheets. The SPSS programme was used for the processing of quantitative data from Tools A and B. Tool C contained open-ended items. Common themes emerging from open-ended items were determined. Tool C, therefore, provided a framework of themes under which most of the data related to subject-specific questions were analysed and interpreted. Part of this data formed the basis of the generation of a priority list of areas for professional development of lecturers. To maintain focus on lecturer development, data from Tool D are excluded in this article.

The researchers were not able to visit the colleges for data collection due to limited time and inadequate financial resources. Questionnaires were sent via email to all the colleges. Completed questionnaires were returned via email or submitted as hard copies. At 78%, the response rate was good and a fair representation of colleges in the different provinces was achieved.

5. Research Findings and Discussion

The findings are presented in two parts. The first part focuses on the background characteristics of the lecturers, in particular, their level and type of qualifications and their teaching experiences. Findings on how in-service training, attendance at conferences and seminars are perceived to help bridge knowledge and skills gaps are then presented. This is followed by findings on the use of performance appraisal results to create professional development opportunities for lecturers. The second part presents findings specifically on the 10 competency standards of a qualified lecturer, as discussed earlier.

5.1 Academic and teaching qualifications

The lecturing staff comprised individuals with different qualifications that range from an academic university degree or an advanced university level teaching certificate to simply an end-of-college certificate, known as the N6 certificate. In between, a large number of lecturers held diplomas without any professional qualifications. As the findings presented in Table 1 below show, of the 373 lecturers in the survey, a total of 137 (37%) of lecturers had no professional qualification. Responses without the requisite information were excluded from the analysis.

Given the scarcity of adequately trained TVET lecturers, colleges often find themselves compelled to recruit inappropriately qualified lecturers.

Table 1: Cross-Tabulation of Academic Qualification by Teaching Qualification

Highest qualification	Teaching qualification	Total		
	No teaching qualification	Has teaching qualification		
N6		7	0	7
Undergraduate	Diploma	55	84	139
Degree		42	58	100
Postgraduate	Diploma	31	82	113
Master's		1	8	9
PhD		1	0	1
Total	137 (37%)	232 (63%)	369	

The majority of those with a professional qualification had undergraduate diplomas. Amongst the teaching qualifications listed were the Higher Diploma in Education (HDE), the Post-graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and the National Professional Diploma in Education (NPDE). From Table 1 above, an emerging profile of a lecturer bears the following characteristics:

- Lecturers with an academic qualification but no teaching qualification
- Lecturers with N6 certificate but no teaching qualification
- Lecturers with a partially relevant qualification in terms of the subject(s) they teach

- Lecturers with a matric + 3 years academic studies + a teaching qualification

Lecturer qualifications vary substantially. With this variation, it is evident that teaching and learning experiences will also differ. This not only implies lack of uniform criteria for recruiting lecturers but also a lack of uniform standards in the initial preparation of these lecturers. That 37% of lecturers are without professional qualifications, already suggests knowledge and skills gap in terms of the required competences. The Policy on the Professional Qualifications of TVET lecturers (Government Gazette 36554, 2013: 18) requires that as a minimum, a lecturer should have a matric plus 2 or 3 years post matric qualification and a teaching certificate /diploma. The variation in the qualifications of FET college lecturers shows that the four fundamental goals of transformation, namely, equity, access, quality and redress are far from being realised. Urgent interventions to bring parity of qualifications within the sector are desirable.

5.2 Lecturer qualification and teaching experience

The experience of the lecturers in the survey differs considerably. The results show that it ranges from 0-42 years. The mean number of teaching experience is 11.04 years with a standard deviation of 9.17. As Table 2 below shows, 20% of lecturers in the survey have little or less than five years of teaching experience, while only 17% have more than five years teaching experience. These lecturers have no teaching qualification. Of those with teaching qualifications, 17% have little or less than 5 years teaching experience.

Table 2: A cross-tabulation of teaching qualification and teaching experience

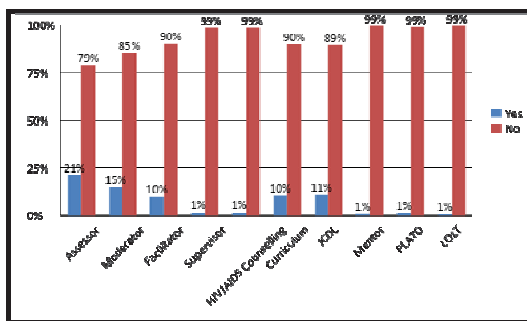
Experience	No teaching qualification	Has teaching qualification
5 years' and more teaching experience	17%	46%
Little or less than 5 years' teaching experience	20%	17%

Only 46% had the required qualification and more than five years' teaching experience. Although the age of the lecturer could be a factor in terms of experience, this variable was not taken into consideration as the focus was more on the experienced but still unqualified lecturer. It could be deduced therefore that more than 50% of lecturers teaching the fundamental subjects had professional development needs. To emphasise the point, even though experienced, there seem to be significantly high numbers of college lecturers who still have no professional qualifications. Combined, the inexperienced and the unqualified lecturers made up 37% of the total, a significantly high number if one considers implications of the situation for the attainment of curriculum goals. The need for professional development was therefore greatest for these two categories. As reported in the focus group discussions, colleges do not have a ready pool of qualified lecturers from which to recruit. Some are recruited on the basis of their industry experience, while others come as graduates of the colleges with no further preparation to become lecturers. It is a combination of these factors that causes colleges to recruit lecturers that are unqualified or under-qualified. Given this situation, one would expect to see vigorous attendance of in-service training and other capacity-building activities to improve the competences of lecturers.

5.3 Attendance of in-service training

Lecturers were asked to report on the number, type and length of training courses, workshops, seminars and conferences they had attended in the last two years as part of their professional development plans. It was found that 48% of lecturers had not been involved in any kind of training in the last two years. Among those who participated, it was found that the most common training was on assessment (21%), followed by that on moderation (15%). Only 11% had training related to the international computer driving licence (ICDL) and/or information and communication technologies (ICT). Among the least common was training on curriculum supervision and mentoring, at 1% each. The same was found for the Language of Teaching and Learning (LOLT) and the Programmed Logic for Automatic Teaching Operations (PLATO). Training on curriculum content was at 10% participation rate. Figure 1 below depicts participation in training related activities:

Figure 1: Percentage of lecturers who attended training in the last two years



In the focus group discussions, lecturers reported that they were offered in-service training (INSET) courses regardless of their relevance to their needs. This one-size-fits-all approach has been a source of great dissatisfaction to the lecturers themselves as well as a great disappointment to the policy-makers as it yields no real benefits in terms of improving lecturer competence. Lecturers also reported that cascading information by the few who receive training does not happen as expected. When asked what could be done differently, the lecturers suggested more innovative professional development methods that are differentiated according to their needs, focusing on what lecturers want, and where their problems are. They viewed orientation programmes like the VEOP as inadequate to address their professional development needs. Figure 1 shows that participation in in-service training is irregular and highly restricted. In the absence of subject specialists and curriculum facilitators that the provincial level is expected to supply, no on-going support was provided for lecturers to make up for the weaknesses in in-service training. Furthermore, the reported absence of subject associations/committees or any other “community of practice” forums/net-works meant that exchange of ideas, sharing of information and good practices was not happening. Lecturers were therefore left in isolation, with no support or monitoring.

The college councils, having been given the authority to employ staff were also mandated to take up the responsibility for reskilling and up-skilling their staff. This seems to have been overlooked. There has never been an institutionalised training programme specifically for FET lecturers. The process of capacity building, therefore, was not made an integral part of the new curriculum change programme. This shows that policy-makers did not have a coherent plan to build capacity among the lecturers to ensure that the NCV curriculum is delivered effectively.

Through performance appraisal, lecturers identify areas where they need further development. These are recorded on their Professional Growth Plans. The next section discusses how the outcomes of performance appraisals link to professional development activities.

5.4 Performance appraisal and professional growth plans

Lecturers were asked to outline the process of performance appraisal and indicate its benefits in terms of their professional growth. The responses suggest that participation in any form of performance appraisal is irregular. Lecturers remarked about the unsuccessful attempts to modify the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS), a performance measurement instrument used within the schooling sector to make it fit the college context. Overall, the analysis shows differences in perception about consistency in the manner of conducting performance appraisals. A few reported that performance appraisal was done according to the IQMS procedure. Others did not think that any specific procedure was followed. For some, performance appraisal was primarily done for purposes of getting cash bonuses and not so much as a vehicle for professional development. Lecturers pointed out that their Professional Growth Plans (PGPs) which are part of the mandatory IQMS were filed, never to be used in any planning of professional development activities. Table 3 below presents a summary of these findings:

Table 3: Percentage of lecturers commenting about use of performance appraisal results

Lecturers are sent out for training in the form of short courses	PGPs are used to provide the relevant assistance from senior lecturer	PGPs are filed and no assistance given to improve on weaknesses
20%	25.5%	53%

According to the survey, only 51.4% of line managers implement the IQMS. A host of negative comments about the appropriateness, relevance and usefulness of IQMS were given as reasons for poor implementation. It was also mentioned that some conducted appraisals for compliance. This may indicate lack of understanding of the importance of performance appraisal in addressing professional development needs of lecturers.

In the preceding section, findings show that the FET college system lacks a coherent strategy for lecturers to upgrade their skills and knowledge. Based on the competency framework, ratings by lecturers reveal that more than 50% of respondents need to upgrade their skills and knowledge. These findings are discussed below.

5.5 Findings on the basic competences

The literature review section discussed the competency-based method of conducting TNA and a summary of the ten basic competences is given. Lecturers were required to rate their perceived level of competence using these standards. In other words, through the questionnaires, the lecturers anonymously assessed their training needs in terms of the skills and knowledge required to teach the four fundamental subjects on the NCV programme effectively. The respondents were requested, through the questionnaire (Tool B) to rate on a scale 1 (=low) -4 (=excellent) their level of skill, knowledge and attitudes on each of the ten competences. This item is the main one used as a means to determine the gaps between what lecturers have and what is required to be competent for the effective delivery of the curriculum. The overall findings based on the ratings by the lecturers on the ten competencies (C1-C10) are in Table 4 below.

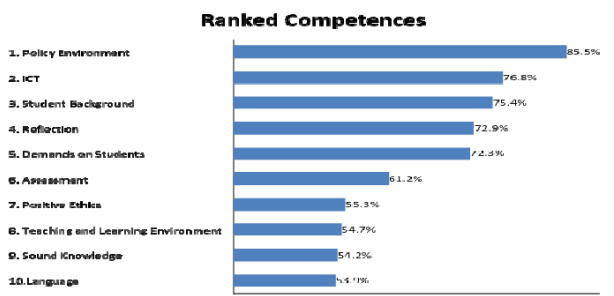
Table 4: Number and % of lecturers needing to improve competence in the ten areas

Competency	Number=358	Valid Percent
1. C1= Content knowledge (of subject)	194	54.2
2. C2= Policy and legislative context	306	85.5
3. C3= Student background	270	75.4
4. C4= Language	193	53.9
5. C5= Manage teaching and learning environment effectively	196	54.7
6. C6= Assessment	219	61.2
7. C7= ICT	275	76.8
8. C8= Demands on students	259	72.3
9. C9= Positive ethics	198	55.3
10. C10= Reflection	261	72.9

Table 4 above shows the number and percentages of lecturers who need professional development in the different competency areas. The data shows that more than 50% of the lecturers needed training in one or more of the competency areas.

A further analysis of this information resulted in a ranked order of needs for training purposes as presented in Figure 2 below:

Fig. 3: Priority order of competences according to training needs



The top ranking competency means the most important area where intervention is needed. It is a noteworthy finding that professional development in the area of policy and legislation has emerged as a top priority. This is an area that is often

overlooked when training courses are developed. Poor understanding of policy and legislation among the lecturers is an illustration of a lack of coherent communication strategies. This is to be expected in a system where a centre-to-periphery approach of introducing change happens without defined communication and support structures to maintain a regular flow of information from the macro-system level to the college level. Significantly, the systems theory perspective regards effective communication of policy intents as a cornerstone in the successful implementation of change in complex organisations.

The respondents rated knowledge of language as the least important area for training. This is the most surprising finding given that language has been identified as a serious barrier to effective teaching and learning in South Africa. Results from previous local and international surveys highlight the problem of poor language proficiency among learners and educators alike. The second most important area is ability to use ICTs and how to integrate these in teaching and learning. This is consistent with the public view that generally, computer literacy levels among educators in South Africa are low. Training in ICTs is most needed among those teaching Life Orientation.

Curiously, sound knowledge of the content in the subject of specialisation emerged as the second least important area after language, although the Policy lists this as the first area in the competency framework and was mentioned as top priority in the focus group discussions. Being competent in teaching and managing learning environments emerged as the eighth on the priority list, but in the focus group discussions lecturers pointed out that their worst challenge was to deal with classroom management issues such as discipline, punctuality, absenteeism, incomplete assignments and so forth. Knowledge and skill in assessment practices is ranked as 6th in terms of the order of importance. This finding is interesting in that assessment training is usually in great demand. Given that more than 20% of lecturers in the survey had been trained on assessment practices (Fig. 1 above) the need therefore, may have been reduced. Assessment courses were the only ones that were reported to be credit-bearing and offered by accredited training providers. This is to be emulated in the design and provision of new CPD programmes.

5.6 *Emerging topics for lecturer development*

The items on the questionnaires covered all ten competences. Some items required the lecturers to identify specific areas where they experienced challenges in the teaching of their subjects. In others, they were required to indicate those areas where they needed to develop new skills and knowledge in order to close the competency gaps. In the focus group discussions, competency levels were also assessed using such topics as the pedagogical and content knowledge, involvement in professional associations and learning networks, teaching methods and practices, curriculum planning and interpretation of curriculum objectives, performance appraisal and personal growth plans, quality and quantity of in-service training and assessment practices. In addition, they also had to indicate their attitudes and feelings in a variety of issues relating to their responsibilities as lecturers. Based on the list below, gaps appear to be in all three aspects of what make a competent lecturer, namely, pedagogy, didactics and workplace experience (Policy on Professional Qualifications of Lecturers in TVET, Government Gazette 36554: 10). The following is a list of emerging topics that could inform the planning of continuing professional development programmes:

1. Induction and orientation programmes through a mentoring and coaching process.
2. Deepening lecturer's content knowledge in the different subject areas
3. Policy and legislation
4. Understanding how students learn [instructional guidance and classroom supervision]
5. Facilitation strategies and [action] research skills
6. Selecting appropriate instructional materials
7. Using appropriate instructional methods to promote effective learning
8. Assessment practices to measure student performance
9. ICTs and how to integrate them in the teaching and learning process
10. Curriculum management and instructional leadership

6. Conclusion

That the FET college lecturers teaching fundamental subjects on the NCV programme require continuing professional development is undisputable. The introduction of the NCV without a structured professional development programme has resulted in deficiencies in the competences of lecturers. It appears that failure to apply a systems design approach as a framework for the transformation of the FET college sector has continued to bedevil the NCV programme to date. The

functions-structure model referred to earlier allows an examination of the system through its various component parts, whilst at the same time proving a bird's eye view lens to understand the interface between the education system and its environment. The transformation process appear to have failed to embrace such an approach.

The manner in which the introduction of the NCV curriculum happened suggests a piecemeal approach typical of many bureaucracies. Bureaucratic approaches tend to be characterised by authority, power and red tape whereby the coordination and synchronisation of activities at the different levels of the system diminish. The fact that the first ever policy in post-apartheid South Africa on professional qualifications for lecturers in vocational education and training has just been pronounced (Government Gazette 36554, 2013: 7) is a cause for concern. The policy void as identified by the South African Council of Educators (SACE, 2011: 5) has undoubtedly exacerbated the problem of high numbers of colleges with unqualified or under-qualified lecturers. Without the policy, norms and standards for lecturer development were not clear. The variations in lecturer qualifications attest to this.

Lack of structured and institutionalised mechanisms within which to plan and deliver professional development programmes for lecturers is a systemic weakness. The general conclusion from this research is that introducing curriculum programmes without adequately equipping lecturers with the required competences creates a multiplicity of problems that adversely affect learner performance. It is the hiatus between policy introduction and mobilisation of human capacity for effective implementation that seems to be a serious setback for the NCV programme. The fact that the upgrading of the physical infrastructure was prioritised over lecturer development in terms of timing and allocation of resources indicates poor design of the change programme. What is emphasised here is not only the need to take due regard for mutually interdependent relationships between components of the system, but to reiterate the view that the change process should be holistic, rather than sequential and piecemeal.

It is the contention of the author that based on the systems theory, the introduction of the NCV curriculum in 2007 needed to be paralleled by changes in lecturer development policies as both are critical components of the college education system that was being transformed. From the planning and policy formulation stage by the national level through to policy implementation at college level, the activities needed to be pulled into a coherent cycle to enforce relationships and interactions between all elements of the change process. The systems theory is particularly useful in exploring the problem of poor preparation of lecturers as symptomatic of the inefficiencies of the system at its different levels. The problem emanates from failure to adopt a systems thinking approach in the design of a change programme where coordination, synergy and communication are critical success factors. The following recommendations emphasise the centrality of CPD programmes in support of curriculum change.

7. Recommendations

Regulated and structured continuing professional development programmes need to be put in place to enable lecturers to upgrade their qualifications in terms of the prescribed basic competency framework. The recommended CPD model is based on identified needs. It could be centrally coordinated with programmes delivered either by higher education institutions or by accredited private training providers. Programmes should adequately cover subject matter/content, pedagogy and workplace training skills. Innovative modes of delivering CPD programmes such as residential, open distance learning, on-the-job training and twinning colleges with industry need to be used. Top-down, undifferentiated and workshop-type of activities should be replaced by decentralised, college cluster-based CPD activities that are appropriately institutionalised. Credit-bearing courses/modules that lead to approved qualifications should form a large part of the CPD programmes.

To fully appreciate the extent of the problem of poor development of lecturers in the FET colleges, it is recommended that further needs assessment studies be conducted covering other critical curriculum areas such as Engineering, Hospitality and Tourism. A well-developed and accessible database on the professional development needs of lecturers needs to be established. This will assist in the design of new qualifications that the Department of Higher Education and Training has proposed in the new Policy on Professional Qualifications for Lecturers in the Technical and Vocational Education and Training sector.

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