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## Introduction

This paper attempts to explore the many and varied ways teachers and school administrators can become more effective in their work. Professional development is something no teacher or administrator can ignore. It is an essential and continuous process. Completion of a diploma or degree no longer reflects that one is a fully-fledged professional.

Life-long education is essential for teachers today. The expansion of knowledge is more rapid and available than ever before. Teaching approaches and methodologies are also changing. Teachers need to keep up to date; they need continuous exposure to new knowledge, theories and approaches.

## Relationship between Professional Development and Teacher Effectiveness

Teacher effectiveness and professional development have a positive relationship. Only teachers can create good teaching and thus it is imperative that they occupy a central role in developing the curriculum and that they develop with the curriculum (Reid *et al.* 1987; Leino 1991). Teacher effectiveness depends on knowledge, attitudes, values and teaching skills. All these are dependent on continuous professional development.

Many people measure teacher effectiveness by examination results. However, this is a narrow measure. It should be measured in terms of students' developing their potential, learning skills, understanding values and concepts - to name a few. This all needs an effective teacher, a teacher who is professional. Such professionalism is enhanced by taking advantage of all opportunities for development. What are some of these opportunities?

## *Professional journals*

Professional journals keep teachers abreast with the latest news, views and research. Such journals are not expensive; all school libraries should subscribe to a few and school heads should encourage staff members to read articles that relate to their subject areas and to education and management in general.

## *In-service courses*

In Fiji, the Curriculum Development Unit of the Ministry of Education often organises in-service courses to supply and discuss new curricula, new methods and approaches. In-service courses keep teachers up-to-date with changes in the curriculum and as such they are part of professional development. It is understood that teachers are empowered through shared understanding and ownership of the curriculum development process (Walker 1994). For these reasons, school heads and their staff should welcome in-service courses and encourage their teachers to attend them. As Velayuthum (1994) argues, in-service education programmes need to be viewed by the staff as contributing to their professional growth rather than meeting some administrative requirement.

## *Mentoring*

The helpful and constructive criticism of other teachers can increase a teacher's effectiveness. Many teachers are reluctant to let other teachers observe a lesson but, if done in the right spirit, it can be of mutual benefit. This can be regarded as part of 'mentoring', something which has been found very effective in many different areas of work. Mentoring is a kind of professional support in which a more skilled or experienced teacher encourages and advises a less experienced teacher in order to promote his/her professional

development. Both mentor and mentee must agree to this arrangement and work *with* each other in an atmosphere of trust and friendship. Head teachers and principals could initiate mentoring in their schools, the experienced and effective teachers mentoring other teachers. These could be new graduates, who may have a hard time settling into a new school or they could be any teacher who feels in need of some help. Of course teachers are always ready to help each other, but if this kind of support is set up on a regular basis, a mentor/mentee basis, the benefits will be greater.

### *Professional associations*

School administrators and teachers can join professional associations for professional development exercises. For instance, the Fiji Institute of Educational Research in Suva and in Lautoka provides mutual exchange of ideas and considers the principles of educational administration. Another example is the Ba Teachers of English Association which organises debates, oratory contests and essay competitions for students in Ba schools. There are associations in many subject areas in other parts of Fiji. The teachers interact quite frequently, exchange ideas and become more confident teachers.

### *Teachers' unions*

Both the Fiji Teachers' Union and the Fijian Teachers' Association play an active role in the professional development of their members. Both unions are represented on Curriculum Development Unit (CDU) workgroups and are, therefore, well-informed about curriculum issues and can keep their members informed. While the unions' primary focus is on issues connected to rights and responsibilities of members, as teachers and as civil servants, the branches are encouraged to conduct activities which bring teachers together. Some examples are organising oratory competitions among schools in the area, pooling examination papers and inviting outside resource people to workshops on general themes such as community participation. Initiating and participating in union activities like these

contribute a lot to teachers' professional development.

### *Evaluations*

Teachers can improve their effectiveness by carrying out evaluations, i.e. collecting information in order to make decisions about any aspect of their work. This is formative evaluation, which can contribute to improvement in teaching and learning practice. Strengthening research capacity in developing countries is a sustainable means of advancing education development (Walker, 1994).

### *University of the South Pacific Extension courses*

Head teachers and principals need to encourage their teachers to take extension courses from the University of the South Pacific in their related areas. This would enable the teachers to upgrade their qualifications and expertise.

### **Role of the Ministry of Education in Promotion of Professional Development**

In general, the Ministry of Education could provide a great deal more encouragement, incentive and support for the professional development of teachers.

Besides providing more, and better, in-service courses, the ministry could provide material for schools' professional libraries. Photocopies of journal articles considered useful to teachers and administrators could be sent. Schools in remote areas especially are very out of touch with the latest research, resources and developments. A regular delivery of interesting articles would make the staff feel less isolated, as well as better informed.

Opportunities to take part-time courses at the University of the South Pacific are, at present, unequal. Urban teachers are much more advantageously situated. Even to take courses by Extension is difficult for teachers in some localities. Steps should be taken by the ministry to improve the equality of access to further studies. Furthermore, some financial incentive could be offered, such as

scholarships to those teachers who are about to complete their degree studies. This would motivate teachers to do a lot of courses from the university so that they could be considered for such scholarships.

## **Conclusion**

Professional development is a continuous process. Completion of a teacher's certificate or an administration course does not reflect that one is a fully-fledged professional. One needs to join professional associations, take courses continually, read professional journals to keep abreast of the theory and practices of the teaching/learning process and educational administration.

Professional development is a continuous process and the school teachers have to face this reality.

## **References**

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