

Analysis/Note: One of the teachers I spoke to, who has been teaching for about 4 years, I sensed a feeling of overwhelm and frustration in her experience as a ESL teacher in secondary school, as she does not know how to assist the learners in her class who of the majority do not know how to read and sometimes write in Grade 9, the way she expressed her experience shows a sense of hopelessness and a deep need for support which she does not receive from her supervisors or subject heads at her school.

I was also shocked to learn about a teacher with a child in class (Grade 9) who cannot write, the only thing she can write is her name, and this child receives no specialized external assistance apart from what the teacher tries to do in the classroom for her to be included. Nor does the teacher receive any specialized attention or assistance to assist this learner.

TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEW FOR Ms. Amupolo (Teacher B2: TB2)

Interviewer

Good morning

Teacher B2

Morning, how are you?

Interviewer

I'm good. Thank you. My name is Hilma as I introduced myself in the focus group. I'm a student at Rhodes University doing my master's in education English language teaching. I'm also your colleague because I work for the Ministry of Education responsible for coordinating and supporting teachers in continuous professional. So, the research study that I'm doing is in line with my work, which is focused on exploring the self-directed CPD needs for English teachers in Namibian secondary school. The information that we are going to discuss today is confidential, and nothing will be used against you, it is solely for the purpose of the research.

Teacher B2

Alright, yes.

Interviewer

So let me just define the key terms again. CPD is an activity that teachers engage in that facilitate the acquisition of knowledge and skills and upgrading their knowledge and enabling teachers to remain current and maintain certain levels of competencies in their areas of specialization. So, the

focus is on CPD, but not just general CPD, is also on self-directed CPD, self-directed means is a new approach that refers to CPD from teachers own initiatives where the process is internally determined and teachers take responsibility for their own CPD, it emphasized that the teacher's voice is a critical factor in identifying, learning and executing their CPD activities, not necessarily that they train themselves, but it's just that they have a voice and they are actively involved when CPD is being offered or is done. Let us start with the first question. I just want you to, before we go into deep, deep CPD, I just want to briefly tell you to briefly tell me about your experience as an English teacher in general. **How long have you been teaching English? How has that been for you? Have you been enjoying it? And so on.**

Teacher B2

Alright, so I've been teaching for about four years, and so far, the experience has been quite challenging for me, depending on the kind of learners I'm having. The kind of learners we have at our school, it's challenging and it can be time-consuming, now looking at CPD wise, sometimes it can be so time consuming that **I don't have time because of the numbers of learners I have in the class** and going as far as improving my self-knowledge, it has been a challenge.

Interviewer:

OK, how many grades are you teaching and how would you describe your learners? Are they at an advanced level of English, are they at the level of grade you are teaching, or do you feel they are a bit above or below grade level?

Teacher B2

Oooh my learners are **way below grade,**

Interviewer

Grade what are you teaching?

Teacher B2

I have three Grade 9s, and I can say all of them, they are below, way below this grade level. That's why for me I have to, sometimes you find even, like now in my exercise books, I have to go back to primary school basics...

Interviewer

The yeah. The basics

Teacher B2

You know, like this, this is what I have to teach. I have to go back there and teach that, because they do not understand, they don't know sounds, they don't know, even coming now to me as a secondary school teacher, I'm not experienced in that area, so it's challenging. So mostly **with most of the topics I have to go down, down**, down, but for them to be so that I can at least bring them to that level.

Interviewer

Given the background. What do you think causes that, did the kids maybe were not paying attention to in the in? I don't know, what is happening?

Teacher B2

For me ne, I think maybe it starts in primary school. Yeah, I think they failed to acquire the necessary skills there, now if they don't have that foundation of phonetics and so on, **I don't think they will be able to make it here**, they're still struggling there. For those ones who knows, you can see that at least there are those who have those skills, but there are most of them, more than 80% of the class, it's just a struggle.

Interviewer

Huh it's not easy. So, you said you mentioned that sometimes you go back, you are forced to go back to the lower level and it looks like that's already one of the strategies to improve you professionally, although you are trained to be teaching at secondary level, it seems like the content of the secondary level you cannot fully teach it because the learners in the class are the ones that determines what to teach them. **So what strategies are in place at your school to help teachers that are facing the same dilemma as you, is there** any support from the HOD's when you discuss these type of challenges, do they take you out to train you or anything, what are the strategies in place?

Teacher B2

Currently we had this teacher, she's a principal in the south, Ms. Khoises, she mostly comes every year to teach our learners, the basics, phonetics, both the teachers and the learners, mostly language teachers but all the teachers are supposed to be there because we are all experiencing that in all the languages. But, mostly it's the language teachers that attend and all the learners that we identify that are really struggling, so that is one of the initiatives that we have, and this one is just a new program that we started with, Ms. Basimike where just colleagues we come together to try and find solution that will help each other on how we can help these learners and we also have a

colleague teaching at another school, she specialized, I think in, I forgot, it's a learning difficulty mostly or she comes.

Interviewer

Sitting at the special school or just the?

Teacher B2

Yeah, in a special school, so far she has come here to just educate the teachers to know what is going on in our classes, and recently also I think it was last of last week, she came and also spoke to the learners at the award ceremony.

Interviewer

OK about? learning difficulties? How to how to handle learners that are struggling?

Teacher B2

No, just to talk to the learners themselves, you know sometimes as a learner maybe they might not know what is going on with themselves, you know. So just for them to identify maybe if they can pick out some of these characteristics in themselves and how they can go about it. For example, if you're having difficulties, you know there are those learners who are always up and down, they just cannot sit still for a longer period of time or difficulties finishing tasks and so on.

Interviewer

So, it's almost like a motivation and also character building. That's interesting. OK, as an English language teacher, with the learners that you have been teaching over the past years, what specific? CPD, do you think you need?

No before that, have you attended any CPD training in the past four years that you've been training and has it been consistent or is just ad hoc?

Teacher B2

Training?

Interviewer

Mhhh or what kind apart from that teacher who is coming, you and Ms. Basimike I see you at the school have something going on where you plan your own CPD activities, but the school or the region, does it invite you for training?

Teacher B2

Not for the past four years, that I know

Interviewer

For the past 4 years, you have not attended any CPD training? OK. Which area do you think you need further CPD? Which areas do you think you need further upgrading so that you are able to deal with the learners that you have?

Teacher B2

Mhhh Oh, I don't want to go out of topic, but

Interviewer

MMM, no, it's fine.

Teacher B2

For me I think, you know, with the type of learners that I have, I think it would be best, you know, learners, they're all diverse, so dealing with diverse learners in one class can be quite challenging.

And of course, I need to upgrade myself, I need to get to know my own learners individually, and I need to read about how to deal with those diverse learners in one class, how I can meet their individual needs. Maybe getting support for me I think getting that support from specialists, someone at least who's more knowledgeable, for me I think that would really do.

Interviewer

To deal with the different learners that you find in your class?

Teacher B2

Yes, yes.

Interviewer

So, since you are saying they you have not attended any CPD training from the region, that means this CPD that you were supposed to get, does not serve has not been serving your needs yet. How do you air your needs? Do you talk to the principal, or you just sit with your needs without telling anyone of what you need? Have you engaged your HOD to tell them: guys organize, this is what we need, these are problems in the classroom.

Teacher B2

Yeah, we do. That's why we came up with those initiatives, the ones I spoke about, of the teachers I mean the principals and the teachers that are coming, and you know, sometimes it's just impossible, as a teacher, I have to figure it out myself how I must deal with it? There's nothing much that the school can do, so mostly it's up to me to figure out how to deal with my own challenges that I'm facing.

Interviewer

Commented [HA1]: The teacher seem to be aware of the kind of support she needs and the kind of CPD she needs to engage in, however she receives no support from school or the region to address her specific needs.

OK, I think I have enough information. Anything else that you would like to add regarding? The CPT program that you are currently doing. Is it helping you? And if you would like you already mentioned that you would like to get CPD from maybe specialist that specializes in having different kind of learners in the class, how to handle them? What about subject content, do you have any needs in there?

Teacher B2

Ahhh subject content...

Interviewer

Is it fine? Is it more on management of learners or maybe...

Teacher B2

It's just, you know subject content you are good, but the problem comes with the learners, even if you are knowledgeable, now dealing with different learners, that's something totally different. I have a child in my class here, does not, the only thing that she knows is how to write her name, is in grade nine (9).

Interviewer

Really?

Teacher B2

Yes. Just her name, that's all. Anything else...

Interviewer

What do you mean, they can only write their names? Like other things, like what is the problem?

Teacher B2

I don't know. I think I tried; you know. I think, phonics, she does not know sounds, she does not, she hasn't mastered that at all.

Interviewer

Ohh my goodness.

Teacher B2

That's why even when she writes, you won't be able to read anything. She put TJ together... just like that, she just writes, you know, very clean.

Interviewer

Really?

Teacher B2

Really, yeah so **now having to include a learner like that in the class**, you know, it's only writing but when it comes to speaking, she's good. Speaking she is very good, she will participate very well in class, giving correct answers: when it comes to writing it's a different thing.

Interviewer

Oh, my goodness, so she cannot put together even a sentence or an essay that is meaningful?

Teacher B2

Nothing at all.

Interviewer

So what intervention, I'm even trying to explore what type of help you can give such a child. Do you send them back to primary school, do you call their parents to get a primary school teacher to have afternoon classes?

Teacher B2

You know, sometimes **parents, sometimes we don't have money**, we don't have what and like her she's a big girl now. I think she's 18 now, so this has been happening, you know, coming to a grade, fail and fail.

Interviewer

And she's just been pushed?

Teacher B2

Yes, just being pushed.

Interviewer

And now she's in grade 9?

Teacher B2

Now she's in grade 9, she is 18, so she's just waiting to be phased out. That's why she cannot even go to those EROS girls (special school for girls).

Interviewer

Oh, she's over aged.

Teacher B2

I even discussed it with Missus Esther. (The senior education officer at the **Region**)

Interviewer

OK.

Teacher B2

Commented [HA2]: The teacher contacted the regional office to highlight the challenge she's facing, the referred her back to put it in writing and never got back to her, somewhere else instead of doing proper intervention

She came er, she suggested I write a letter and then we send those names to them, so that at least they can try to see what kind of measures they can take. We did that, so we wait and see the results.

Interviewer

Alright, we have come to the end of our discussion, unless you have any closing remarks, what do you want the region to assist you with or maybe from my side as an education officer in terms of supporting teachers at school, any specifics when it comes to English?

Teacher B2

Umm maybe **material wise**, you know a material, maybe coming up with materials that will be able to fit, all the diverse needs of the learners, the gifted ones, even the ones that are struggling, you know, because when you give activities, you just give one, for all of when they're having different abilities.

Interviewer

So, you want **a type of training where teachers can be trained on how to come with different resources that can fit different types of learners at different levels,**

Teacher B2

Yes, because the other ones are left out. We are giving them something that you know very well they will not be able to do. So yeah, I think that will help.

Interviewer

OK. Thank you so much, Miss Amupolo, for making time for me. I appreciate it. Have a Good day.

Teacher B2

Alright, thank you, you too.