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SOCIOLOGY | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Allocation of time in communities of practice: A strategy to enhance continuing professional teachers' development of high schools teachers'

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Abstract: The paper investigates allocation of time as strategy established by communities of practice to enhance continuing professional teachers' development in selected high schools. Having sufficient time by teachers to collaborate together and learn is essential to enhancing their professional development. The study adopted qualitative research approach and case study research design. Findings revealed that time allocated for communities of practice are limited which do not enable teachers to have opportunity to learn as a team. The study concluded that teachers do not have sufficient time to engage in collaborative learning activities. It is recommended that teachers should spend adequate time for learning activities in communities of practice. Regular and fixed time should be allocated for communities of practice such that teachers will have enough time to collaborate. Teachers should meet at least once in a week for a minimum of 1 hour in schools for communities of practice.

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Staff development is imperative in every organization as a way of getting quality output. This is also applicable to education sector. Teachers' professional development in high schools is of great importance in order to get quality outcomes in terms of teachers' performance which will, in turn, lead to positive students' performance. Teachers professional development ought to be a continuous one, thus, there is need for sufficient amount of time for teachers to collaborate and learn together as a group especially at the school-based level, which is communities of practice. Hence, this study investigated time allocation as a veritable strategy in communities of practice for enhancing continuing professional teachers' development in high schools in the Fort Beaufort Education District, South Africa. Findings from the study indicate that majority of the teachers did not have sufficient time to collaborate and meet as groups within the communities of practice.

1. Introduction
Ever since the democratic government of South Africa came to power in 1994, the government has implemented several curriculum-related reforms intended to democratize education and eliminate inequalities in the post-apartheid education system (Steyn, 2013). The national policy framework for teacher education and development is an attempt to address the need for suitably qualified teachers in South Africa (Kempen & Steyn, 2016). The policy framework focuses on two complementary subsystems, namely, Initial Professional Education of Teachers (IPET) and Continuing Professional Teachers' Development (CPTD) (Botman, 2016).

The CPTD system endeavors to:

(a) contribute towards improving teachers' professional skills to enable them to execute their essential and demanding tasks effectively;
(b) improve teachers' professional competence and the performance continually;
(c) enable and empower teachers by improving their professional confidence, learning area or subject knowledge and skills, and classroom management skills;
(d) improve the professional status of teachers; and
(e) Assist teachers in identifying suitable PD programs that may contribute toward their professional growth (Republic of South Africa [RSA], 2007, p. 1; Ajibade, 2016).

In order to implement the CPTD system, all teachers were required to shift from old patterns of teaching skills, teaching methodologies, thinking, and classroom management to new ones that would lead to change in knowledge as well as attitudes, values, skills, and relationships (Koopman, 2017; Kurga, 2014). Teachers were also required to strengthen their subject knowledge base, pedagogical content knowledge and teaching skills (Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010; Department of Basic Education and Department of Higher Education and Training [DBE and DHET], 2011). They needed skills in "recognizing, identifying and addressing barriers to learning and creating conducive teaching and learning environments for all learners including those with disabilities and other special needs" (RSA, 2007, p. 16). A range of methods have been used in South Africa to implement CPTD. These methods include teacher exchanges, sabbaticals from the classroom, peer networks, professional learning teams, mentoring, school-cluster workshops including communities of practice (Jojo, 2015). Among these methods, the most dominant traditional model for professional development has been the off-site cascade model (Ajibade, 2016; Keay & Lloyd, 2011).

To investigate time allocation as a strategy for enhancing CPTD among high school teachers, this study adopted adult learning theory proposed by Speck (1996). The theory notes that there are important points known as "checklist" that should be taken into consideration when professional development activities are designed for teachers who are also adults. Speck opines that adults will commit to learning when the goals and objectives are considered realistic and important to them. Thus, application in the "real world" is important and relevant to the adult learners' personal and professional needs. The relevance of the theory lies in its ability to show how teacher participation in communities of practice enhances CPTD. The study showed that each school try to find time to meet in their various school communities of practice, though the meeting time varies but still they were able to meet at least once in a week within the school and quarterly at the district level. Teachers were able to participate well in both formal and informal communities of practice when

they know the group members are willing to support and assist them in their weak areas and subjects which will actually enhance their professional development.

2. Literature review

In order to make continuing professional teachers' development a sustainable one, continuing professional teachers' development which takes the form of monitoring, mentoring, and coaching on site were introduced (Ngema, 2016). Lead teachers are supposed to monitor other teachers, and in most cases combine their monitoring with mentoring and support where they conduct demonstration lessons for their peers (Brookfield, 2015). These models also take the form of peer coaching and communities of practice. Communities of practice where teachers from across schools come together to collaborate on educational issues that are relevant to them is one of the off-site teacher development programmes that is taking place in South Africa. Collaboration is beginning to emerge as a strategic response to overcome teacher challenges (Brookfield, 2015; Liu & Tsai, 2017).

Communities of practice as one of the models of continuing professional teachers' development has been given different names by various authors, namely, professional learning communities, school clusters, professional and affiliation networks, learning team model, workplace learning, networked learning communities, collaborative teacher research, and collaborative practices (de Lima, 2010; Fraser, Honeyfield, Breen, Protheroe, & Fester, 2017; Hairon & Dimmock, 2012; Katz & Earl, 2010; Lassonde, & Israel, 2010; Macia & Garcia, 2016; Moolenaar, 2012; Pedder, Opfer, McCormick, & Storey, 2010). However, in South Africa, communities of practice are known as teachers' cluster or network (Jita & Mokhele, 2014; Mokhele, 2013; Tshiningayamwe & Songqwaru, 2017).

Time is one of the necessary aspects of structural resources established by communities of practice to enhance continuing professional teachers' development. Amount of time spent by teachers in communities of practice is important and will actually determine the extent of teachers' professional development (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Kennedy, 2016; Kopcha, 2012). Dickson and Mitchell (2014) alongside with Eaker and DuFour (2015) state that time is also critical for any learning that is not superficial. This implies that for effective learning to take place in teacher learning communities, this must be adequately planned for in terms of the meeting time for teachers to learn and discuss issues on their professional and classroom challenges.

The greatest challenge in ensuring effective teachers development in communities of practice is lack of time. Finding adequate time for communities of practice activities and programs has posed a lot of challenges to effective professional development of teachers (Goodnough, 2016; Noble & Billett, 2016). Most times teachers find it difficult to have time for communities of practice activities as there is no sufficient time for them due to school workload and activities. Teachers as adult learners need time for collaboration among themselves and learn together, share ideas and discuss various professional issues they are facing. Thus, school schedules should incorporate time for teachers to engage in communities of practice to collaborate with their colleagues for the purpose of addressing their professional challenges.

Teachers having time to talk and exchange ideas about professional issues is a main indicator of a learning community (Avalos, 2011; Eaker & DuFour, 2015). Thus, there is need for learning communities to be organized and to allow time for teachers to meet often. DuFour and DuFour (2012) claim that there is a need for schools to organize how teachers will be allowed to have time to meet and discuss on a very regular basis and discuss on how to enhance their professional development. Hagger and McIntyre (2013) state that how schools plan and organize their time-tables so as to make learning occur either within schools or other schools, staffrooms, classroom or elsewhere will determine how professional development is enhanced. However, it was not clear if teachers in high schools in Fort Beaufort Education District allocate sufficient time to meet for

communities of practice activities to enhance their professional development; hence, this study attempted to assess time allocated to communities of practice and the sufficiency of the time.

Desimone (2009) suggests that time spent on teachers' professional development vary with type of professional development that is available for teachers. Desimone (2009) states that informational professional development will not take much time like learning new ideas, skills or innovation which can take 20 h or more. However, any type of teachers' professional development programs requires time to plan, prepare, and perform. For instance, time that will be spent in communities of practice by teachers for professional development will vary with time that will be spent in a workshop organized by school management team. Thus, duration for professional development should be made long until the new skills or innovation are realized.

Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, and Orphanos (2009) also concur with Desimone (2009) that amount of time spent in professional learning communities can lead to effective teachers' development. They claim that substantial contact hours spent in professional learning communities for professional development by teachers ranging from 30 hours to hundred hours in total which is spread over a 6–12 months showed a positive and significant effect on their development. Thus, time allocated for professional development in learning communities is associated with the strong impact on teachers learning. This suggests that effective learning which in turn leads to teachers' professional development can only take place if considerable hours are spent in professional learning communities with dedicated efforts by teachers.

Allocation of time being one of the key structural elements established by professional learning communities must be structured in a way that teachers have time during work day and week to participate in learning activities. According to Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2007), in most European countries and Asian countries, teaching activities take up less than half of a teacher's working time. The rest of the time which is about 15 to 20 hours per week is usually spent on tasks related to teaching which includes lessons preparation, marking classwork or assignments, meeting with students and colleagues. Planning is mostly done in collegial settings and during meetings with subject matter departments and grade level teams (Datnow, Park, & Kennedy-Lewis, 2013).

In addition, allocation of time in communities of practice has to do with the number of hours' teachers spend in the learning and professional development and over what span of time the activity takes place, needs to be considered. Therefore, longer duration activities provide for the desired content, specific focus, active learning and more connection to teachers' other experiences (Barkley, Cross, & Major, 2014). This understanding indicates that teachers' development professionally in communities of practice is a continuing process that needs to last for the duration of the career of a committed teacher (Department of Education, 2008; Vangrieken, Meredith, Packer, & Kyndt, 2017). Andersson and Palm (2017) also advocate that sustained programmes over extended periods of time are much more likely to have a lasting impact on teachers'. That is the reason it is stressed that the CPTD system is considered as an essential, career-long component of a comprehensive teacher education system. One of the characteristics of CPTD as envisaged by Department of Education (2008) is that the system combines motivations and commitments to enable teachers' to continue improving their professional knowledge, understanding, and practice throughout their teaching career.

Also, in considering allocation of time in communities of practice, the key question is how long do organizational learning processes take and whether duration can be externally influenced (Saint-Onge & Wallace, 2012). They also contend that any learning processes that take the practice form takes time than those that are not in practice form. Thus, time consideration is then an important component to put into consideration in the process established by communities of practice to enhance continuing professional teachers' development. The conditions may not be suitable for an elaborate training or educational programme. Teachers' in communities of practice must consider time pressure as a tool that can influence learning and also speed up processes.

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However, it can be contended that time pressure can both accelerate and slowdown, can be motivating and threatening to the learning processes (Horn & Little, 2010).

Furthermore, a study carried out in the United States by McGraw, Arbaugh, Lynch, and Brown (2003) found that teachers were given longer periods of time to collaborate in communities of practice, this made the group had opportunities to improve on their teaching skills, methodologies and classroom management which enhanced their professional development. Duffy and Gallagher (2017) suggest that learning activities in communities of practice should seek to be maintained over longer periods of time, multiple semesters so that the groups have opportunities to move beyond the community forming stage of development. They claim that teachers' professional development can only be a reality if longer periods of time are spent. This is also expected to be on continuous basis as learning can only be effective if it is done continually. Eaker and DuFour (2015) state that allocation of time in communities of practice will give teachers the opportunity to be professionally developed if they are able to work together as a team and a group. Thus, teachers need to work as a team with the time allocated for learning activities in communities of practice.

Amount of time spent by teachers in communities of practice for professional development purposes is very important. Most teachers in high schools find it difficult to have sufficient time to engage in collaborative learning activities to boost teaching skills and methodologies. The key challenge teachers face in communities of practice is insufficient time (Hairon, Goh, & Diwi, 2014; Vangrieken et al., 2017). There are lot of workload teachers have to contend with ranging from teaching and learning activities which is usually overwhelming (Jiang, 2016). Due to the nature of workloads and tight agenda in some high schools, it is not easy for teachers to have extra time to engage in collaborative learning activities in communities of practice as means of enhancing continuing professional development. Hence, it is challenging to actually have sufficient time for teachers to meet in groups (Wang, Wang, Li, & Li, 2017).

It is therefore essential that allocation of time as an aspect necessary for the functioning of communities of practice is indispensable to enhance continuing professional teachers' develop-ment. One of the key structural provisions for teachers engaging in professional learning is the allocation of time in hours in the workday, week, month, and years for the duration to participate in such activities. School days can also be rearranged by school heads and district officials to allow school-secured time for teachers' collaboration (Steyn, 2013). Communities of practice can also be scheduled in the school's annual program to enable teachers have sufficient time to collaborate in learning activities (RSA, 2011, p. 82; Jho, Hong, & Song, 2016; Attard Tonna & Shanks, 2017).

3. Objectives

The main objective of this paper was to investigate time as one of the strategies established by communities of practice to enhance continuing professional teachers' development in high schools in the Fort Beaufort Education District, South Africa. The specific objectives are as follows:

- time allocated for communities of practice; and
- sufficiency of time allocated to communities of practice.

4. Methodology

This paper employed interpretivist paradigm, hence qualitative approach and case study design that relied on the use of face-to-face interview and questionnaires as instruments for data collection. Qualitative approach was preferred in order to get in-depth information from the participants in relation to amount of time spent on communities of practice as a strategy to enhance continuing professional teachers' development (Creswell, 2014).

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4.1. Research instruments

Semi-structured interview which had features of both structured and unstructured interviews and structured and unstructured questionnaires which have both open-ended and closed questions were used to solicit views and get information from teachers, principals, heads of departments, cluster leaders and district officials. Both research instruments were used to solicit information on allocation of time in communities of practice as a structure established to enhance continuing professional teachers' development. The focus was on time allocated for communities of practice and sufficiency of time allocated to communities of practice in high schools. Face-to-face interviews enabled the researcher to get in-depth information as the researcher has the opportunity to probe the interviewee during the interviewing process to get rich information on the phenomenon under study (Morris, 2015). The semi-structured questionnaires were used so as to enable the researchers to get more useful and detailed information from all the participants on the phenomenon under study (Edwards & Talbot, 2014).

4.2. Participants

The district chosen for this study is made up of six clusters with 48 high schools. Ten high schools were selected from all the high schools in all the clusters in Fort Beaufort Education District using balanced sampling which is also known as sampling proportional to size. Two high schools were selected from four clusters because they have so many high schools than the other two clusters while one high school each was selected from the other two clusters. A total number of 15 participants were used as sample and consisted of nine teachers including principals and heads of departments, three cluster leaders and two subject advisors and one education district official. The number of participants chosen for sample were purposively selected because of their understanding and information about the phenomena under study; thus, judgmental sampling design which is a non-probability sampling technique was adopted for the qualitative data. (Mertens, 2014). The 10 schools were chosen purposively because of easy accessibility.

4.3. Procedure

Permission for data collection was sought at the provincial department of education and from each principal of the 10 sampled high schools. The researchers also got ethical clearance from University of Fort Hare. Digital voice recorder was used to record the interview schedules which the researchers had with all participants. However, their consents to be part of the research study were sought before the commencement of the recording. Each participant was given a consent form to sign to show their voluntary involvement and participation in the study. It was clearly stated in the consent form that participants can withdraw from participating in the study and opt out at any stage. The researchers also took some notes from all the interview schedules these were merged together with the recorded responses of the interviewees for data analysis. Credibility and trustworthiness were taken into account through inclusion of member checking, verifying, confirming and validating the research findings by providing the participants with a draft copy on interview transcripts to ensure that the findings of the study are not biased and to also determine whether these participants feel that they are precise (Creswell, 2014).

5. Results

This paper attempted to respond to the main research question, which sought to explore time as one of the strategies established by communities of practice to enhance continuing professional teachers' development in high schools in the Fort Beaufort Education District, South Africa. Teacher, principal, cluster leader, head of department, subject advisor and education district official participants are abbreviated in this paper as T1-T3, P1-P3, CL1-3, SA1-2, and EDO, respectively. The findings are presented below.

5.1. Time allocated for communities of practice

In order to know the actual time allocated for communities of practice in various high schools, the respondents were asked to indicate the time they meet. The results are shown in Table 1:

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Table 1. Time allocation for communities of practice		
Tick the one appropriate to you, we meet	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Daily	1	1.56
Weekly	15	23.44
Monthly	38	59.38
Quarterly	10	15.62
Total	100	100.00

Presented in Table 1 is the time allocation for communities of practice. It shows that majority of the participants, 38 (59.38%) met monthly in their various schools' communities of practice while only one (1.56%) participant indicated they met daily for communities of practice in his or her school.

In order to get an in depth information on the actual time allocated for communities of practice, the participants (teachers, heads of departments, cluster leaders, principals and district officials) interviewed in selected high schools were asked how often they meet in communities of practice in their various schools or clusters. Teacher interviewed comments are as follows:

T2 commented:

We actually meet every week at school and with other schools. We spend minimum of one hour and we extend it to two hours if we have the opportunity to do so. If it is the cluster meeting, it is once in a quarter, that is every quarter. The cluster meeting is meant for all high schools within each cluster and it is based on each subject area.

T3 disclosed:

In our school we meet every week as a group where we assist each other concerning our work. We meet with other schools within our cluster weekly or monthly. For cluster meeting it is done quarterly and this comprises of all teachers in each cluster.

Most of the teacher participants said they meet every week for communities of practice in their schools, and they stressed further that the cluster meeting is done quarterly. Only TS1 said they meet monthly in his school and also indicated they meet quarterly for the cluster meeting. His comment is as follows:

It is monthly in our school but from time to time we arrange to meet with other schools once in a while, maybe once a week but that depends on availability of time. At cluster, we use a term to prepare so I can say it is quarterly. If we have enough time after the cluster meeting, we still meet with our colleagues from other schools whom we have formed subject association together as a way of assisting each other.

In the interviews held with the heads of department on the same issue, they also said they meet weekly for the meetings. HOD1 and HOD3 interviewed responses are as follows:

HOD 1:

We meet every week in our school, at the school level, we spend between thirty minutes to one hour and in some cases if we have a lot to do, we extend our meeting beyond one hour. We meet once in a quarter for cluster meetings which last between three to four hours.

HOD3 revealed:

We do not have a fixed time. We meet weekly in this school between one to two hours, then for cluster meetings it is quarterly, we spend 3 hours for the meeting which is between 9 am and 12 noon.

However, HOD2 response differs from HOD1 and HOD3 as his response indicated that they meet every month in his school communities of practice. His response is thus:

We meet once in a month for this meeting and learn together as a group to help ourselves.

In the interviews with the principals, most of them said they meet once a term and their responses showed they are actually referring to their meeting time for cluster meeting.

PS1 said:

We meet once a term for the cluster meeting, however, at the school we have this programme informally to assist ourselves, we meet once a week and at times twice in a month depending on various issues to address in relation to our subjects and school work.

PS2 remarked:

Once a term, that is when we have time to meet. We usually plan for the time, we just use one day by doing the planning before we agreed on when to meet.

PS3 response differs from PS1 and PS2.

PS3 commented:

We usually meet once in a month in my school. We ought to meet every day if possible so as to assist each other but the workload and time factor are the major challenges which do not permit us to do so.

In interviews held with cluster leaders, they were asked how often high schools in their cluster meet in communities of practice for learning activities as a group. They all said they meet quarterly for the meetings, and they gave their comments as thus:

CL1 said:

We meet quarterly for our meetings which comprises of all teachers in each cluster. However, within our school, we meet once in a month and sometimes if we have enough time, we meet twice in a month.

CL2 noted:

In our cluster we do meet once in a quarter for the meeting while each high school meets at different time based on their own personal arrangement. Some high schools still form network with other high schools while some meet immediately after the cluster meeting and schedule their meeting date and venue to meet.

CL3 revealed:

We meet once in a quarter. This is so because there are other commitments for teachers both at the cluster and district levels.

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In the interviews conducted with district official, the responses they gave were similar with what some teachers and principals said and same responses with what the cluster leaders gave. They also said they meet quarterly for the meeting as they gave their views from the cluster meetings which is a formal community of practice. The following are the comments made in this regard.

SA1 said:

I will say quarterly; we meet quarterly for the meeting. All teachers in each cluster come together as a group for the cluster meeting.

SA2 revealed:

Yes, we normally meet quarterly, that is all the subjects across the board. We are needed to meet quarterly, you know, to monitor, to moderate each subject per term. As the school work of the school and each subject has been divided according to different term...

EDO said:

Our meeting time is usually every quarter, this is to enable us to prepare ahead and to give teachers time to prepare too and this is so because of other commitment teachers have in their various schools.

Information gathered showed that the formal cluster communities of practice were usually done quarterly as all the responses from the participants interviewed revealed they met quarterly. Documents analyzed also showed that cluster meetings which is formal communities of practice were done quarterly. The meetings were organized by the Department of Education, and it was compulsory for all teachers of all subjects, mostly aimed at monitoring progress but also some training in content and methodology. Informal communities of practice meetings vary from monthly, weekly, once in a while to meet with other schools, different times for schools based on personal arrangements immediately after scheduled cluster meeting. There were lot of variations in the informal communities of practice. Some schools had time to meet weekly and this might make them to have more time to improve on themselves since CPTD should be a continuous learning activities, and it is expected that reasonable amount of time should be spent for teachers to improve themselves so as to enhance CPTD.

The findings of the study also indicated that the theory is relevant to the study as teachers were allowed to participate in small group activities, and they were given opportunities to speak out. The study found that teachers were allowed to engage in group works and are divided into small groups. Each group was given tasks and duties which helped teachers move themselves beyond understanding to application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. It was found from the study that teachers were able to interact freely with group members due to their small number within the group and this made communities of practice to be of significance to teachers who were adult learners.

5.2. Sufficiency of time for communities of practice

The researchers sought to establish if teachers have sufficient time for communities of practice in their schools. This information was found out through an in-depth interviews held with the participants (teachers, heads of departments, cluster leaders, principals and district officials).

Most of the teachers echoed that they do not have sufficient time for communities of practice in their schools because they have other activities and meetings to attend to at school and district level. They had to manage the little time they have so as to enable them to meet and learn together in order to enhance their professional development. The following are their comments:

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TS2 said:

Personally, I will say no. We do not have enough number of teachers in school so the work to do are so much, we manage the time we have to prepare for our work and to teach learners. There are other meetings and matters to attend to at the district office.

TS3 noted:

No we do not have sufficient time for our meetings. Time is a challenge to us but we try to do our best with the little time we have.

TS1 was the only teacher that agreed that teachers have sufficient time for communities of practice. The teacher made the following comment:

Yes, we have sufficient time for our meetings, we plan ahead for the meetings and we create time to attend.

Interviews held with Heads of Department also confirmed that they do not have sufficient time for communities when they were asked that as the Head of Department, do they have sufficient time for communities of practice meetings. They have the following to say:

HOD1 replied:

I cannot really say we have sufficient time to meet as a group because workload is much but we try to spare some time for the meeting to learn together and see how we can assist each other in areas where we are having challenges regarding our methodologies and pedagogy.

HOD2 responded:

I do not have sufficient time. Time is a major problem but I devout the little time I have to attend the scheduled meetings in my school and in other schools

HOD3 was the only one that has a contrary opinion, she said she has sufficient time for communities of practice. The following is her comment in this respect:

Yes, yes, we have sufficient time. In this school, we are staying here because it is a boarding school, so we did not disturb classes, even after school hour, we have time to meet and discuss on areas where we are having issues with our methodologies and classroom management.

All the cluster leaders interviewed also said teachers in their clusters do not have sufficient time for communities of practice. According to them, the workload on teachers were much, thus, they were unable to devote enough time as they wish to learn activities in communities of practice, thus, time was a major problem to them. They gave the following comments:

CL1 revealed:

Not really, the time is not enough, teachers do not have sufficient time to attend these meetings either within the school or with other schools, this is a major problem for us. There are a lot of workload and activities for teachers in our high school.

CL2 stated:

We do not really have sufficient time for the meetings. Things are so tight and we have to utilize the little time we have very well.

CL3 responded:

Do we really have sufficient time? No, I do not think so. We try to dedicate the little time we have for the meeting. most especially the cluster meeting which is compulsory for every teacher.

On their part all the school principals interviewed unanimously agreed that teachers do not have sufficient time for communities of practice meetings in their responses:

PS1 said:

Not really, teachers have to sacrifice the little time they have to attend this meeting in our school and with other colleagues in their various schools. At times they come on Saturdays, so I cannot really say they have sufficient time.

PS2 noted:

We do not have enough time. We really sacrifice our time because if we go for cluster meetings it is going to be the whole day and we are short staffed. When you leave, there is a gap behind.

PS3 commented:

We do not have sufficient time at all. It is very difficult for us but we are trying with the little time we have. If there is enough time, we suppose to meet with other high schools in our cluster regularly, but I tell you, that's always the excuse, the time is not sufficient for us, things are tight now and it is really difficult to get time to meet.

In interviews with the district officials, their responses also related with the majority of teachers and principals' responses as they also pointed further that teachers do not have sufficient time for communities of practice meetings.

SA1 disclosed:

*Teachers do not have sufficient time because we start the cluster meeting at 12 noon and it usually from 12 noon to 5pm. And this is the meeting we do just once in a quarter.
I understood there are other subject meetings where they start at 9am. In that case, if the program starts by 12 noon, there is no catering but if it starts by 9am, there will be catering.*

SA2 revealed:

I will say normally time is not sufficient, you know, it is not sufficient in the sense that in the district, normally it is expected that we do this cluster meeting after school. You can imagine getting teachers, when you call them that we will meet after school, teachers are rushing to their home, some claiming they stay far away and they claim they are having fixed transport or they have their kids to fetch from school too. I really see that time is not enough but we really sacrifice the time we have. We do our utmost best to consider what need to be considered. Otherwise, to me it should be the whole day to do exact justice. For instance, if we have challenges, together we can solve it but we recommend that we need to see the teachers later on through a follow up or a visit to schools, if there is a challenge, we cannot solve it there immediately because we do not have enough time.

EDO stated:

Time is a factor to us and we are really struggling with this. I tell you, things are really difficult in term of time we have to meet with teachers for this program. Time is so short and a lot need to

be done. We just manage the time available considering the fact that teachers engaged in other activities within the school. Otherwise, we try our best, because teachers need this learning activities. It is an avenue to help each other, we need to come together and voice our challenges and to improve ourselves.

From the responses of the participants, it was evident that time as one of the strategies of enhancing continuing professional teachers' development is not sufficient as teachers in formal and informal communities of practice do not have sufficient time to meet and learn together. The information gathered showed that most teachers and the school heads in informal communities of practice had to sacrifice the little time they have to meet together in order to enhance development. Time can indeed be a factor; however, they do not have to meet only during school time.

According to Speck (1996) adult learning theory, it was clearly stated that adults will commit to learning when the goals and objectives are considered realistic and important to them. The study revealed that teachers know the importance of leaning as a group in communities of practice and need sufficient time to meet and interact together in order to enhance their professional development. Despite the insufficient time teachers experienced due to other commitments in their various schools, they still found time to meet and discuss together as a group. The theory also indicated that adult learners need to see that the professional development learning and their day-to-day are related and relevant. Teachers in various schools sampled sacrificed the little time they had to engage in communities of practice activities because they see the benefits of interacting with others which has helped to improve on their professional development.

6. Discussion

This study examined time as one of the strategies established by communities of practice to enhance continuing professional teachers' development in high schools in the Fort Beaufort Education. Amount of time allocated for communities of practice in high schools is important, and it will actually determine the extent of continuing professional teachers' development (Kennedy, 2016). Desimone (2009) states that in order for teachers to develop on their intellectual and pedagogical knowledge, the professional development activities should take place over a long period of time. Eaker and DuFour (2015) also concur that professional activities teachers engaged in should be spread over a longer period which will cover certain number of days, terms and hours. Hence, if most high schools meet every day and weekly for professional activities, it would help them improve, thus enhancing continuing professional teachers' development.

The paper established that majority of the high schools met for professional development activities in communities of practice in their schools once in a month. The finding of the study is in accordance with the report of Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2007), where it was stated that in most European countries and Asian countries, professional development activities take up less than half of a teacher's working time. The rest of the time which is about 15 to 20 hours per week is usually spent on tasks related to teaching which includes lessons preparation, marking classwork or assignments, meeting with students and colleagues.

It also emerged from the findings that few high schools met weekly for communities of practice activities in their schools. Despite the busy schedule and workload some teachers complained about in their schools, few high schools still had time to meet weekly for professional development activities. The findings of this study are in alignment with OECD (2004) report which states that teachers in schools in Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Italy, Norway, and Switzerland meet regularly once a week to jointly plan and develop curriculum. Also, being a measure put in place in professional learning communities, schools within the same municipality are encouraged to work together and share materials.

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Data also showed that some of the respondents indicated that they meet once in a quarter and that is mainly for formal cluster meeting. According to the respondents, they said they are busy with other schoolwork and activities and this affects the time they have to meet for communities of practice meetings. The meeting time is an arrangement with the department of education and this is the time when teachers from high schools in each cluster meet as a group to learn and share their ideas and experiences together with the guidance of the district officials.

Teachers in professional learning communities need sufficient time to spread the professional activities they engage and this should cover certain number of days, semesters and hours (Eaker & DuFour, 2015). This is in line with the findings of the study as data showed that majority of the participants said they do not have sufficient time for communities of practice in their schools because the workload in the schools were much due to shortage of teachers; thus, they have to manage the little time they have. However, the findings contradict a study conducted by Hairon and Dimmock (2012) in Singapore on professional learning communities, the study revealed that despite long-time consideration given to teachers' in professional learning communities, teachers' pedagogy has been slow to change. This was due to the fact that teachers are previously overburdened by both teaching and non-teaching tasks; consequently, introduction of professional learning communities in schools was seen by teachers as yet another burden. This made them not to value the time given to them; thus, teachers' professional development was hindered.

The findings of the study further revealed that some of the participants said they had sufficient time for communities of practice meetings as they plan ahead for the meetings and create time to attend. This implies having sufficient time has to do with the number of hours' teachers spend learning activities to enhance continuing professional teachers' development. The finding of this study is in support of assertion made by Zepeda (2012) that sufficient and longer duration in professional development activities in communities of practice provides desired content, specific focus, active learning and more connection to teachers' development. The finding is also in line with a study conducted by Duffy and Gallagher (2017), they found that teachers were given longer periods of time to collaborate in communities of practice, this makes the group to have opportunities to move beyond the community forming stage of development to teachers' professional development.

7. Conclusion

It is imperative that the amount of time teachers spent in engaging in collaborative learning activities has a long way to go in terms of their professional development. It was established from the study that most teachers do not have sufficient time to actively engaged in collaborative learning activities within their schools and with other schools in their cluster or district. This was due to the nature of the teachers work schedules in their various schools, and other educational activities they are meant to attend to at the education district. The study revealed that despite the busy schedule and workload teachers experienced in their schools, they still meet once in a week. In addition, the study found that other high schools met once is a quarter mainly for the cluster meeting which was the arrangement made by the department of education in Fort Beaufort Education District for all teachers in high schools to have time to collaborate and learn and interact as a group.

8. Recommendations

Based on the aforementioned findings, it is recommended that time allocated for communities of practice activities in each high school should be increased and each high school should meet at least once a week for at least 2 hours for communities of practice activities. Likewise, the Department of Education should ensure that cluster meeting for all high schools in each cluster should be organized at least once a month and sufficient time for all teachers in each cluster to collaborate should be put into consideration.

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