TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

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The Role of the Teacher

Debate over the degree to which classroom teachers influence the achievement outcomes of students has been continuously investigated and recognised as fundamental to teacher and school effectiveness research. For educational policymakers it is clearly a matter of central importance and it has become the most prominent component in educational reform initiatives throughout the current decade. According to Kemp (Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs, 2001a, p. 5) "research both in Australia and overseas confirms the common sense view that high quality teachers are the foundation of highly effective schools". "The quality of teaching and learning provision are by far the most salient influences on students' cognitive, affective, and behavioural outcomes of schooling – regardless of their gender or backgrounds" (Rowe, 2003, p. 1).

Recognition of the centrality of the teacher in fulfilling the mission of Christian school systems is widely expressed in the Christian education research literature. Thayer (2005, p. 7) describes the teacher as supportive of "students in their quest for meaning, purpose and faith". Christian teachers develop plans, prepare learning resources and implement strategies offering opportunities to discuss Christian values and beliefs (Burton & Nwosu, 2003; Lawrence, Burton & Nwosu, 2005). Furthermore, teachers in Christian schools illuminate the character of God and the nature of His redeeming love through the manner of their relationships and interactions with students. Students frequently report that these interactions meaningfully illustrate the integration of faith and learning (Lawrence, Burton & Nwosu, 2005).

Acknowledgment of the importance of effective teachers to the success of student learning has been combined with finding from the teacher and school effectiveness research literature to develop policies and pedagogies for use to train future teachers (e.g., Authentic Pedagogy in the USA and Quality Teaching in NSW, Australia). The application of teacher and school effectiveness research to the training of *future* teachers is an admirable but inadequate plan for enhancing both affective and cognitive learning outcomes of students. "Unless educational leaders and schools are strongly focused on quality teaching and have in place the systems which guarantee it, they cannot be effective" (Ramsay, 2000, p. 35). However, "even if recruiting and preparation efforts were wildly successful, today's students do not have the luxury of waiting for a new generation of highly qualified teachers to staff our schools. For these students, it is imperative that their classroom teachers, today, are as effective as possible" (Gitomer, 2000, p. 2).

Effective professional development is founded on a comprehensive theory explaining changes in professional and personal cognition and behaviour. For a Christian this would include spiritual factors contributing to a concept of self and how we can make changes, especially changes in aspects of an individual's professional life.

Theoretical foundations of Professional Development: *Teacher Thinking and Teacher Behaviour*

Achieving teacher effectiveness through professional development is reliant on an individual's willingness to contemplate a change in their existing theoretical construct. Chinn and Brewer (1993) determined that the presentation of anomalous data is an essential element in achieving changes in an individual's hypothetical perspectives. 'Anomalous data' refers to the presentation of "evidence that contradicts their [students] preinstructional theories ... always a key step intended to precipitate theory change" (Chinn & Brewer, 1993, p. 2). Their research specifically related to theory modification among scientists, who regard changing theoretical perspectives in light of newer, more precise evidence, as a central tenant of the scientific process. Chinn and Brewer extrapolated the applicability of their results to predict that "the fundamental ways in which scientists react to anomalous data appear identical to the ways in which nonscientist adults and science students react to anomalous data" (Chinn & Brewer, 1993, p. 3).

Seven possible responses to anomalous data were postulated by Chinn and Brewer (1993). The possible responses are (a) ignoring the data, (b) rejection of the data, (c) exclusion of the data, (d) holding the data in abeyance, (e) reinterpretation of the data, (f) implementation of peripheral changes, and (g) changing theories. By ignoring data which conflict with someone's existing theoretical framework, the theory, and consequently the practice, remains intact and no consideration is given to assimilation of new ideas. Data may be rejected by casting doubt on the reliability of results due to methodological errors, random errors or due to fraudulence in achieving the results. A person may exclude data contradictory to existing beliefs by declaring the data irrelevant to their situation. By compartmentalising knowledge in this way, theory and practice are often perceived as unrelated. When anomalous data are held in abeyance, the individual is able to avoid assimilation of new information by suggesting that a theoretical change will be made in the future. The decision to reinterpret data is also intended to preserve a preferred theory.

Within most theoretical constructs there are core propositions and other less essential propositions which are peripheral but necessary to the theory. By modifying an existing theory through the integration of peripheral components, the core components remain unaltered. Consequently, the peripheral changes require little significant change of cognition or behaviour. The willingness of an individual to change to a new theory on the basis of data which clearly contradict currently held views or beliefs commonly requires an extended period of time and the introduction of additional data supportive of the change.

According to Chinn and Brewer (1993) for a theoretical change to occur three decisions relative to the data must be made, firstly the data must be believable, secondly the data must be able to be explained, and thirdly a decision must be made as to whether a change of theory is necessary in order to bring congruency between theory and data. Responses to anomalous data are dependent on at least four factors; (a) the prior knowledge of the individual, (b) possible alternatives to the proposed new theory, (c) the contradictory data under consideration, and (d) the processing strategies used to evaluate the contradictory data. The prior knowledge of an individual may predispose them to holding an entrenched theory that is very difficult

to dismantle. Theories which are strongly supported by existing evidence and which offer satisfactory explanations for a range of phenomena are difficult to abandon. Similarly, theories which reinforce strong personal and social aims are difficult to relinquish or modify.

Some theories are so deeply established and act as the foundation for a variety of subsequent theories that they play an especially strong role in theory preservation in situations when anomalous data are encountered. Such ontological beliefs (those ideas presupposed by a theory) commonly limit the extent of openness to cognitive change.

Other factors that influence the ways in which teachers could respond to anomalous data include epistemological outlooks and background knowledge (Chan & Elliott, 2004).

A Model Describing Teacher Change

A number of research findings have provided empirical descriptions of changes in skills and attitudes as teachers progress from beginning teachers to experienced or even expert teachers however, little attention has been given to understanding how changes occur and how such changes can be accounted for using theoretical models (Desforges, 1995; Korthagen & Lagerwerk, 1996).

For the effectiveness of professional development training to be investigated it needs to be founded on a theoretical model that explains both the processes of teacher knowledge acquisition and teacher knowledge utilisation. Korthagen and Lagerwerk (1996) based their theory of teacher knowledge acquisition on the Van Hiele (1986) theory which distinguished levels of thinking applying to mathematics and described the interrelationships between the levels. Van Hiele's theory, in contrast to Piaget's age-related stages of cognitive development, postulated that levels of cognitive development were domain specific. Korthagen and Lagerwerk proposed three levels of teacher knowledge. The first level, known as Gestalt formation, refers to dynamics of perception, interpretation and reaction which teachers employ as almost automatic responses to numerous classroom situations. Gestalts are the outcome of previous experiences which possess a degree of similarity and which trigger a consistent response. Korthagen and Lagerwerk stressed "that Gestalts are not static entities in the teacher's brain, but dynamic and holistic constructions of reality, triggered and recreated by the actual situation under the influence of the person's need and the whole context in which the teaching takes place" (p. 175).

Gestalt formation is followed by Schematization. Schematization is a long-term process involving reflection on existing Gestalts and aimed at achieving greater clarity from past and present experiences producing a schema which has broader application and offers more response options than the original Gestalt. The third level of teacher knowledge is theory building. Theory building involves logical organisation and verification of schemata, "essential is the formulation of starting points, definitions and logically-derived propositions" (Korthagen & Lagerwerk, 1996, p. 169).

Other knowledge hierarchies relevant to teacher professional development are described in the literature. Kennedy (2002) described craft, systemic and prescriptive knowledge with specific interest in the components and factors contributing to craft knowledge in teaching. Oosterheert and Vermunt (2003) proposed that the combined

interactions of (a) external, (b) active internal, and (c) dynamic internal sources of knowledge are necessary for the construction of knowledge. They also identified the emotional components of change as having a strong mediating influence over the degree of change teachers willingly make when required to confront and change existing "perceptions of reality" (p. 157).

Models of teacher change had been proposed that conceptualise the broad stages of professional development. Initially it was generally believed that professional development needed to target changes in teacher knowledge and attitudes which would lead to changes in teaching practices and ultimately result in changes in student outcomes. The model of teacher change devised by Guskey (1986, 2002) challenged the view that learner outcomes were the final component in the professional development process, suggesting instead that teacher beliefs and attitudes would change as a result of changes in student learning outcomes. Guskey hypothesised that teachers changed beliefs once the new instructional process, adopted through some form of professional development, had been proven through its effective operationalisation in a real life situation. Guskey's model of teacher change is shown in Figure 1.
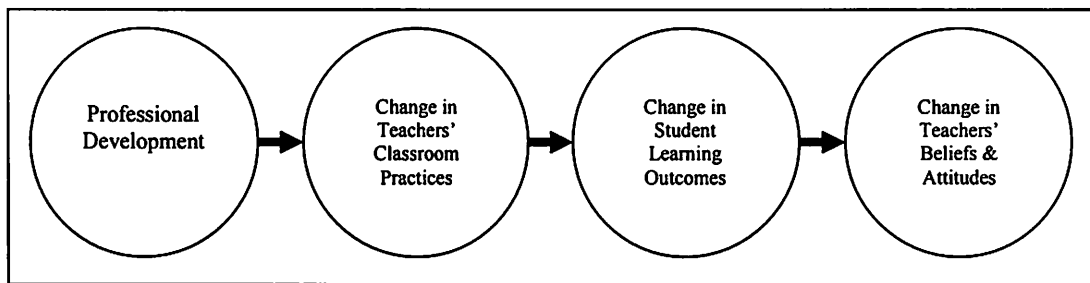

Figure 1: A model of teacher change (Guskey, 2002, p. 383)

The Professional Development Program

While this essay focuses on a Christian professional development process the empirical research that elicited the teachers' professional development outcomes has been summarised for the purpose of establishing the context of the discussion that follows. Previous research had established a significant, strong correlation between specific teacher behaviours described by two global teacher effectiveness variables: teacher cognitive clarity and teacher communication style (Coulson, 1994).

Teacher cognitive clarity has been consistently related to student achievement and satisfaction (Cruickshank, 1985; Hines, Cruickshank & Kennedy, 1985; McCroskey, McCroskey & Richmond, 2002). The teacher cognitive clarity construct has been defined, low-inference behaviours indicating clarity have been identified, and stability of clarity over time, subject taught, location, and grade level has been established (Cruickshank & Kennedy, 1986; Cruickshank, 1985; Killen, 1992). According to McCaleb and White (1980) teacher clarity instruments provide a suitable means of evaluating teacher effectiveness. The teacher cognitive clarity concept is described in

current teacher education texts (e.g., Arends, 2004; Barry & King, 1998; Killen, 2003) in reference to improving student learning outcomes, especially understanding of new knowledge, and the development of clear communication indicating that cognitive clarity is a current pedagogical issue.

The communication style construct, as described by Wubbels and Levy (1993), was developed from the theory of interpersonal interaction proposed by Leary (1957). Leary suggested that interpersonal interactions were controlled by a desire to avoid anxiety and maintain self-esteem. Successful interactions were repeated to a point where these interaction patterns were sufficiently established to be recognisable as a specific style of communication. Dimensions of interpersonal behaviour could be arranged to represent behavioural variation from normal through to pathological extremes. This model was adapted to instructional settings by Wubbels, Créton and Hooymayers (1985) (cited in Créton, Hermans & Wubbels, 1990). The eight Communication Style dimensions were: Leadership (DC), Helpful / Friendly (CD), Understanding (CS), Student Responsibility / Freedom (SC), Uncertain (SO), Dissatisfied (OS), Admonishing (OD), and Strict (DO).

Teacher communication styles characterised by student responsibility, understanding, friendliness and leadership were found to be positively associated with both cognitive and affective learning outcomes (Brekelmans, Wubbels & Levy 1993; Henderson, Fisher & Fraser, 1994) whereas uncertainty and dissatisfied behaviours were negatively associated with achievement (Créton, Hermans & Wubbels, 1990).

Unsurprisingly, Ellen White has commented that: "Teachers often fail of coming sufficiently into social relation with their pupils. They manifest too little sympathy and tenderness, and too much of the dignity of the stern judge. While the teacher must be firm and decided, he should not be exacting or dictatorial. To be harsh and censorious, to stand aloof from his pupils or treat them indifferently, is to close the avenues through which he might influence them for good" (White, 1903, p. 280).

Communication style was also found to change throughout the career of a teacher with development of leadership, friendly and understanding behaviours occurring over the first four years and reaching a maximum toward ten years of experience. While learner cognitive outcomes may remain high after this time affective outcomes diminish as a result of increased strictness rather than the maintenance of good interpersonal relationships with students (Brekelmans, Holvast & van Tartwijk, 1992).

Another very significant benefit of positive teacher-student relationships is the important role this plays in supporting at risk students. The Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA, 2001b) completed research designed to highlight educational innovations supportive of at risk students. At risk students were identifiable by a number of factors contributing to low success during the transition to adulthood, commonly exhibited through behaviours including homelessness, substance abuse, and teenage pregnancy. The DETYA report concluded that "within an educational context, the notion of being 'at risk' specifically refers to those young people considered unlikely to complete school to Year 12" (p. 2). Furthermore, the three most consistent issues leading to students leaving school early were:

A non-stimulating environment with no clear relation to the wider community or the adult world; lack of support and referral to appropriate agencies for young people who are experiencing problems in their personal and academic lives; and negative teacher-student relationships which are propped up by rules and regulations which disallow young people from expressing themselves as adult and responsible members of the school community (p. 3).

Having noted the correlation between high cognitive clarity and the communication style dimensions or Leadership, Helpful/Friendly and Understanding further research was conducted to determine whether regular classroom teachers could improve their clarity and communication style ratings (Coulson, 1998). Teachers described their ideal teacher, their self perceptions of their teaching and received ratings by their students. Teachers developed action plans to focus their intentions to improve clarity and communication style behaviours relative to their ideal teacher, as well as data from students' perceptions of their teaching and teacher-student relationships. Results of the training program confirmed that teachers could enhance their clarity and communication style behaviours (Coulson, 2005). Furthermore, statistical analysis established a causal link between specific clarity and communication behaviours and reports by students of improved understanding of classwork (Coulson, 2005).

Teacher Outcomes of the Training Program

The experiences described by teachers, and the conclusions reached through analysis of training program outcomes, identified a number of attributes of professional development and learning. The key attributes identified during the training program included:

(a) the social context of the learning and professional development;

(b) responses by teachers were influenced by student perceptions;

(c) responses by teachers were influenced by changing self perceptions;

(d) concern by teachers to be well-regarded by students related to both personal and professional identity;

(e) learning processes resulted in changes to both the teacher's instructional practices and the teacher's perceptions of self;

(f) learning processes resulted in changes to existing understanding to teaching for student learning and understanding, and to new understanding of the influence of positive teacher-student relationships;

(g) growth in effectiveness contributed to a more positive self which in turn motivated further professional development;

(h) cognition and emotion played a part in determining if, what, and how to improve specific behaviours;

(i) feedback statements were regarded as credible and functioned to affirm strengths, identify weaknesses, and affirm increased effectiveness arising from the implementation of new cognitive clarity and communication style behaviours;

(j) new practices, introduced in response to feedback, broadened the instructional repertoire of teachers;

(k) construction of an 'ideal' profile provided teachers with a self-determined model of effective instruction and self-directed goals for improving their practice; and,

(l) knowledge acquisition involved interchange between internal (e.g., self cognition) and external (e.g., feedback statements) data through a self constructed process (Coulson, 2005, pp. 295, 296).

Explanatory Models for Professional Development

In the broadest sense these professional development processes involved a constructivist learning paradigm in which teachers built on existing knowledge by reflecting on their perceptions of the effects of new experiences. In addition, teachers appeared to maintain new practices as part of their regular instructional repertoire if those practices were affirmed through subsequent student feedback including reports by students of a more positive perception of the level of understanding of the lesson. The reciprocating effects of improved ratings followed by expressions of a more positive sense of professional identity, that in turn motivated further identification of clarity and communication style behaviours that could be improved, contributed to the process extending beyond a single level of professional improvement.

The processes of learning described by the teachers seem to be aligned with (a) the tenets of social cognitive theory (Thomas, 2005); (b) aspects of self-concept development, utilising reflected appraisals, as described by symbolic interaction theory (Bouchey, 2004); and (c) the transformational processes, especially processes of social identity, described by sociocultural theory (Wortham, 2004).

Social cognitive theory

Social cognitive theory seeks to explain learning within a naturalistic context influenced by a three-way interaction between the individual, the environment, and the behaviour (Gredler, 2001). Social cognitive theory argues that cognition acts as a mediating factor between the stimulus-response mechanisms advocated within classical behaviourist learning perspectives, thereby giving the individual control over behavioural responses to environmental factors (Stone, accessed 23/8/2005). The basic assumptions of social cognitive theory are that (a) an individual can learn by observation of others (known as vicarious learning) as well as through personal participation, (b) response consequences, such as rewards and punishments, effect the probability of specific behaviours being repeated by an individual, (c) an individual is more likely to display behaviours that are modelled by someone with whom they identify, and (d) learning is an internal process that is not necessarily evident through a change of behaviour (Stone, accessed 23/8/2005; Gredler, 2001; McInerney & McInerney, 2002; Ormrod, 2000). The aspects of social cognitive theory of particular relevance to this essay were modelling, response consequences, and reciprocal causation.

Modelling

Modelling may occur in response to either live or symbolic models. The effectiveness of modelling is influenced by attention, retention, motor reproduction, and motivation. If the learner pays close attention, remembers the behaviour, achieves close

replication of the behaviour, and wants to be able to demonstrate the learned behaviour then the likelihood of success is high. In addition to the achievement of new behaviours, modelling also affects the frequency of the new behaviour and influences the occurrence of related behaviours.

The construction of 'ideal' profiles as part of the feedback given to teachers during the training program could offer teachers a symbolic model presenting well defined behaviours consistent with very effective instructional practice. The teachers would be presumed to readily identify with such 'ideal' or model teachers since they developed these models on the basis of their own perceptions of effective cognitive clarity and communication style. Motivation to replicate behaviours highlighted by each teacher's ideal ratings of cognitive clarity and communication style profiles provides an account for the goal setting components of teacher's professional development processes.

Response consequences

Response consequences are most commonly experienced by the learner in the form of rewards and punishments which indirectly influence learning. Reinforcement promotes learning by generating a positive effect on cognition (Abbott, accessed 23/8/2005). Social cognitive theory also predicts effects due to the absence of expected rewards or punishments. "The nonoccurrence of expected reinforcement is punishing, and the nonoccurrence of expected punishment is reinforcing" (Ormrod, 2000, p. 469).

Positive responses, such as an improved rating on a behaviour the teacher has attempted to implement within the classroom, would be likely to contribute to increased frequency for that behaviour. Social cognitive theory would also suggest that by contrast, a low rating on a behaviour that the teacher has attempted to implement would be expected to reduce the likelihood of further occurrences of that behaviour.

Reciprocal causation

Reciprocal causation refers to the interdependence of three factors, the individual, the behaviour, and the environment. The individual exerts an effect on the environment through the choices of activities and situations encountered due to the influence of self-efficacy. The individual's influence on behaviour arises through choices in relation to factors affecting modelling (i.e., attention, retention, motor reproduction, motivation). Environment influences the individual through feedback from others and the effect this has on self-efficacy, and on behaviour through the predicted effects of rewards and punishments. Lastly, behaviour affects the individual since success increases self-efficacy while failure decreases it, and the level of reward or punishment received links behaviour and environment (Ormrod, 2001).

A three-way causation process provides a suitable explanation for the positive effects of improved student ratings as a consequence of increased implementation of cognitive clarity and communication style behaviours. The resulting increase in self-efficacy would in turn increase motivation and attention to the models described by teachers' ideals of effectiveness, as well as providing a more positive perspective

during reflection about the low rated behaviours identified in the feedback statements. Similarly, negative ratings would have an inhibitory effect on the frequency of new behaviours, causing self-efficacy to decline, which in turn would decrease persistence and motivation to improve instructional effectiveness.

Symbolic interactionism

In addition, the description of change proposed by symbolic interaction theory (SIT) was explored, and deserved inclusion in the discussion of interactions between teachers' self-ratings and students' ratings and how these interactions could account for changes in teachers' behaviour through reflected appraisals.

Symbolic interactionism is founded on existential phenomenology (van den Berg, 2002). This theory describes the reflected appraisal process to explain how an individual's self-concept is shaped by the implied perceptions of others (Amorose, 2003) through three elements, self appraisal, others' actual appraisals, and the perceptions of others' appraisals (i.e., reflected appraisal). When an individual becomes aware of the appraisal of others through either direct or indirect feedback the reflected appraisal is internalised. "When others think highly of an individual, he or she is presumed to recognize this positive regard from others and subsequently construct a positive self-image. This model is predicated on the fact that the individual's reflected appraisals are an accurate representation of 'reality' in the form of others' beliefs" (Bouchey, 2004, pp. 35, 36). This process seemed to offer a plausible explanation for the positive responses by teachers to the feedback based on students' ratings and predicted that teachers would be more motivated, have a greater sense of satisfaction and reduced anxiety in relation to teaching (Amorose, 2003; Penny & Coe, 2004).

Professional identity formation

Lastly, professional identity formation is discussed to offer an explanation for the increased sense of job satisfaction reported by teachers in response to the professional development program. By virtue of definition and context professional development involves identity development. "According to an ontological approach, learning changes not just what the learner knows (which would be simply 'epistemological') but also who the learner is" (Wortham, 2004, p. 716). From a sociocultural perspective learning is regarded as an identity transforming process occurring within a sociocultural context (Boreham & Morgan, 2004; Sfard & Prusak, 2005). Wortham (2004) describes social identification as the association of a socially established category and characteristics deemed to define a particular social category.

High ratings on behaviours that teachers regarded as significant characteristics of effective teaching would be expected to reinforce the 'effective' identity of such teachers. Conversely, participants who were fearful of receiving ratings that reflected less effective instructional skill also reported existing feelings of identity loss. Reinforcement of an individual's identity as an effective teacher may therefore provide a relatively simple but adequate explanation of the change in teachers' sense of job satisfaction over the period of a professional development program.

Application and Implications for Christian Education

Modelling

As stated earlier, modelling offers a significant explanation as to how teachers develop and reinforce their classroom practice and teacher-student interactions. Teachers tend to adopt behaviours expressed by models with whom they closely identify. Teachers operate in a professional context requiring routine consideration and appraisal against lists of professional standards, frequently established and mandated by external professional bodies. The virtues of modelling teaching behaviours identified through such professional standards are well articulated. The problem with this form of modelling is that it tends toward conformity and compliance rather than enhancing the desire to replicate ideal behaviours. This phenomenon is often described with some exasperation as the ideal behaviours illustrated by teacher educators to novice teacher education students are dismissed as the nonsense of 'out of touch' theoreticians. This viewpoint directly contributes to an unfortunate culture in which the teaching profession is identified as among the slowest to embrace real professionalism and to experience meaningful job satisfaction.

By contrast, teachers who seek to emulate Christ as their ideal and model will always find potential for more in-depth and expansive understanding of how to think and respond Christianly.

"In the Teacher sent from God, heaven gave to men its best and greatest. He who had stood in the councils of the Most High, who had dwelt in the innermost sanctuary of the Eternal, was the One chosen to reveal in person to humanity the knowledge of God" (E G White, 1903, p. 73).

To do this, teachers need to begin by closely identifying with Christ. Symbolic interactionism identifies four components for achieving successful modelling: these are (i) attention, (ii) retention, (iii) motor reproduction, and (iv) motivation. Firstly, the individual needs to pay close attention to Christ's life and words. Time for adequate contemplation is essential. The examination of Christ's life needs to be engaged with an in-depth manner rather than a surface reading and superficial understanding of contexts, methods and motives. Attention demands personal participation and active engagement.

Secondly, if a teacher seeks to model their professional and personal behaviours on those of Christ then those qualities need to be remembered. Recollection is enhanced through regular review and through articulation of the qualities that the individual seeks to retain. Teachers should regularly and frequently contemplate aspects of the life of Christ that will reinforce positive behaviours in their own professional and personal lives. Attendance at, and participation in, worship programs, in particular programs where the life and teachings of Christ are emphasised, present an important opportunity for retention of key qualities.

The third component of effective modelling involves close replication of those behaviours and qualities with which the individual has positively identified. Similar to the experiences of trying to improve a physical skill through careful repetition

followed by more and more successful articulation until the skill can be completed with confidence, teachers will benefit from close replication of Christ's methods.

Fourthly, motivation is essential. In general circumstances of applying the four components of effective modelling, success is dependent on the desire of the individual to be able to demonstrate the learned behaviour. The setting of goals, such as when an action plan or personalised professional development plan is written indicates an individual's motivation to succeed.

The experience of John, the disciple, illustrates this experience: "In adoration and love he beheld the Saviour, until likeness to Christ and fellowship with Him became his one desire, and in his character was reflected the character of his Master" (White, 1903, p. 87).

Response Consequences

Professional development success, such as the increased evidence of a positive behaviour, is increased through the implementation of expected reinforcement or affirmation. Conversely, the absence of expected reprimands is predicted to support the increased occurrence of the behaviour. Therefore administrators, teaching colleagues and students can assist a teacher during an intensive professional development process through affirmation in relation to specific behaviours. Guskey (2002) postulated that new behaviours are tentatively adopted until the teacher receives either positive or negative feedback in relation to the new behaviour. Therefore the need for meaningful feedback should not be disregarded.

Reflected Appraisal

A complicating factor in providing feedback has been identified by researchers of symbolic interactionism, particularly application of aspects of reflected appraisal. This theory suggests that self concept is shaped by three factors: self appraisal, others' actual appraisal, and an individual's perceptions of others' appraisal (i.e., reflected appraisal). A teacher who is seeking feedback from administrators, colleagues or students may misinterpret the responses they receive depending on the degree to which the individual accurately perceives and receives personal information. Individuals predisposed to interpret feedback negatively are likely to find professional development opportunities daunting and threatening.

Identity Development

The sociocultural perspective of proposes that learning is an identity transforming process arising in a sociocultural context. Two final observations about professional development will be presented in relation to the sociocultural view of learning. Firstly, professional development of Christian teachers will be more success if the context is conducive and if teachers within that context sense value in identifying with other Christian teachers. A positive work environment where individuals convey enthusiasm and confidence about their Christian identity will have a positive influence.

Lastly, the best illustration of professional identity transformation is described in 2 Corinthians 3: 18 "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (NKJV).

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