

Educator professionalism: is the South African Council for Educators succeeding?

M.J. Mosoge & T.P. Taunyane

Faculty of Education Sciences, North-West University
North West University (Potchefstroom Campus)
Faculty of Educational Sciences

Summary

Policy initiatives since 1994 focused on the provision of quality education. The underlying premise is that achievement of quality education depends on the degree of professionalism among educators. This research investigated the activities of SACE in enhancing professionalism among educators through both a questionnaire and focus group discussions.

The major findings of the research indicate that SACE met its mandate of registering educators and drawing up and disseminating the educators' professional code of conduct but was hampered in its work of promoting professional development and research among educators. Respondents agreed that the establishment of SACE was a positive step towards enhancing professionalism among educators.

Opsomming

Sedert 1994 fokus beleidsinisiatiewe in Suid-Afrika op die voorsiening van kwaliteitonderwys. Die onderliggende begronding is dat kwaliteitonderwys afhang van die mate van professionalisme by opvoeders. Hierdie navorsing het die aktiwiteite van die SARO ondersoek wat daarop fokus om professionaliteit by opvoeders te verbeter. Vraelyste sowel as en fokusgroepbesprekings is in die ondersoek gebruik.

Die hoofbevinding van die navorsing dui daarop dat SARO hul mandaat van die registrasie van opvoeders sowel as die opstel en verspreiding van die opvoeders se gedragkode nagekom het, maar dat SARO dit moeilik gevind het om professionele ontwikkeling en navorsing by opvoeders te bevorder. Respondente is dit eens dat die stigting van SARO 'n positiewe stap was in die bevordering van professionaliteit by opvoeders.

Introduction and background

Reform during the last ten years in post-1994 South Africa has focused on the provision of quality education for all learners regardless of their background or circumstances in which they live (Smith & Ngoma-Maema, 2003:345). The quest for the provision of quality education was heralded by the White Paper on Education and Training (DoE, 1995) and the Policy Framework for Quality Assurance in South Africa (DoE, 1998). In post-1994 South Africa, the South African Schools Act (SA, 1996) and the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) changed the education scene, as educators were required to engage learners in meaningful learning activities suitable for a diverse learner population and implement and assess learner outcomes (Du Plessis, Conley & Du Plessis,

2007: 106). Given the inequalities that existed in education provision prior to 1994, the education scenario presents unique challenges and demands to both new and practising educators alike. It is especially educators who received their training prior to reform that are more likely to experience the pressures of reform in education.

Quality education rests, by and large, on educators who stand at the edge of education provision by being in daily contact with the learners. Verbiest (2006) points out that education and learning take place in the classroom, where the educator is relatively autonomous. What the educator achieves in the classroom has a telling effect on the quality of education in general. Among the many variables that influence academic achievement of learners (Van der Westhuizen, Mosoge, Swanepoel & Coetsee 2005: 90) educators are, arguably, the most important variable that has the power to mediate all other variables. Maldonado and Victoreen (2002: 1) echo the same sentiment when they state that "... it is the teacher and management of classroom instruction that can be indicators or catalysts for student achievement".

Unfortunately in South Africa, the subject knowledge of educators is found wanting. Wits Education Policy Unit (2005: 17) contends that educators show inadequate knowledge, poor grasp of their subject and make errors concerning the concepts and content presented in their lessons. It is against this background that staff development assumes greater importance in attempts to provide quality education to learners. Enhancing the professionalism of educators, therefore, lies at the heart of all efforts to provide quality education.

Besides pre-service and in-service training, which contribute immensely to educator professionalism, the South African Council for Educators (SACE) is charged with the duty of professional development of educators. In enhancing the professionalism of educators, SACE is expected to promote professional development by engaging educators in professional activities that expand their knowledge base and so enhance performance. In fact, the powers awarded to SACE incorporate professional development as one of its main duties (SA 2000). As a professional body SACE has the power to compel its members to achieve and maintain the highest standards of practice and to keep abreast of new developments in the profession (Searle & Pera, 1994: 22; Joubert, 1991: 1). The establishment of the South African Council for Educators (SACE) in South Africa through Act 31 of 2000 (SA, 2000), needs to be acknowledged and applauded. It put an end to the racially and culturally divided educators' councils of the pre-1994 era and marked the beginning of an era for the enhancement of educators' professionalism based on the democratic principles of equality and redress for the achievement of quality education for all.

Although professional councils for educators are rare internationally (SADTU, 1999: 1), those that exist serve as a prototype for the functioning of SACE. In fact, the executive functionary of SACE spent some time in Scotland to study their model of a professional body (Interview with SACE executives). The duties of SACE generally encompass those of other professional bodies around the world. Thus,

- **The General Teaching Council (GTC)** in Scotland maintains a register of educators, oversees the standards of entry to the profession, accredits and reviews courses of initial educator education, supports educators and exercises disciplinary powers (GTC, 1999).
- In Canada, **the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT)** is charged with regulating teaching and governing its members, developing, establishing and maintaining qualifications for members of the council, providing ongoing professional development of its members and establishing and enforcing professional standards (OCT, 1999).
- The **National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE)** in India has the following functions and duties: to determine the minimum qualifications for registration, to co-ordinate and regulate educator education programmes, to provide academic support to educators and to promote and conduct innovation and research in various areas of educator education (India, 1993).

A salient feature that differentiates SACE from other professional councils is the source of its control. Professional councils around the world are controlled by the government. Although SACE is partly funded by the government and certain members of its executive are appointed by the Minister of National Education, it remains an independent body of professionals (Mothatha, 1998: 104; NAPTOSA, 2000: 1). The establishment of SACE resulted from negotiations in the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC); nonetheless SACE functions independently of the ELRC.

Clarification of concepts

A certain degree of ambiguity exists in relation to the concept educator professionalism (Patricio, 1997: 1) and other related concepts such as profession, professionalism, and professionalisation. For purposes of enhancing understanding and to talk the same language in research, these concepts need clarification.

Educator

In terms of section 1 of Employment of Educators Act (SA, 1998), the concept “educator” means any person who teaches, educates or trains a other person or provides professional educational services, including professional therapy and education psychological services, at any public school, further education and training institution, departmental office or adult basic education centre and who is appointed in a post on any educator establishment.

Profession

According to the National Teacher Education Department report (NATED, 1994: 26), a profession is an exclusive occupational group of registered practitioners that is established in terms of an Act. Adylotte (1990: 9) defines a profession as “a complex, organised occupation whose practitioners have engaged in a long training programme geared towards the acquisition of exclusive knowledge, through which they gain monopoly of service essential to or desired by the society”.

Professionalism

Sockett (1993: 9) explains that professionalism describes the quality of practice. It describes the manner of conduct within the practice and how members integrate their obligation with their knowledge and skills. This implies that professionalism is closely related to personal and behavioural determinants such as dedication, commitment and highly skilled practice. It is generally accepted that professionalism is associated with the delivery of quality service or workmanship.

Professionalisation

Professionalisation is a process by which an occupation increasingly satisfies the criteria set for a profession (Beletz, 1990: 16-17). Professionalisation is an ongoing, dynamic process that entails an improvement in the status of an occupation and in its real application and delivery of service (Sockett, 1993: 9; Bacharach & Conley, 1992: 313). Once the process has been achieved, the community may award the practitioners the status of a profession (i.e. professional recognition).

Framework of the study

Professions have some particular determinants that distinguish them from other occupations (Patricio, 1997: 1). According to Beletz (1990: 16) it is important to understand both the attributes of a profession and the factors affecting professional recognition. In this study educational law determinants and professional determinants were used to arrive at a set of characteristics or determinants that are suitable for the teaching profession. Educational law determinants are derivatives of legislation that affects a specific profession, in this case, teaching. Professional determinants are derived from the attributes of a profession mainly gleaned from traditional professions such as law, medicine and accounting.

Professional determinants

Professional determinants differ from profession to profession and there is no absolute agreement among researchers and authors about the ideal determinants of a profession. However, as professions mature, each determinant that is evident in well-established professions becomes internalised into the professional value systems and becomes the standard by which evolving occupations are evaluated (Beletz, 1990: 17; Loots & Theron, 1998: 11).

Various researchers (Tschudin, 1992: 131-132; Moloney, 1992: 17-20; Calitz, 1996: 67; McGaghie, 1993: 225; Donnelly, 2001: 31) cite the following as the most common determinants of a profession:

- **Specialised knowledge:** This refers to the knowledge and expertise possessed by the professional, gained through a long period of study, that an outsider or even members from other professions do not have.
- **Professional development and research:** This means commitment to learning and participation in professional activities that enhance performance by expanding the practitioner's knowledge base.

- **Professional authority and autonomy:** Professional authority refers to the power or right to enforce obedience, or an influence exerted on opinion, based on recognised knowledge or expertise. This gives the profession autonomy to regulate its own affairs and make decisions on behalf of their less-knowledgeable clients.
- **Code of ethics:** A code of conduct is a set of ethical principles that embody personal qualities and life-style habits that are expected of practitioners of the specific profession. Every member of the profession is expected to internalise and display the qualities embodied in the ethical code. A code of ethics is an instrument that brings order and harmony in the profession and serves to protect clients from charlatans while, at the same time, protecting the reputation and credibility of the profession.
- **Control of access:** This means that professionals determine the admission and certification of members to the profession, establish high standards for entry into the profession and conduct examinations for new entrants, accredit all training of members and award certificates to eligible practitioners.

A number of commentators (Burbules & Densmore, 1991: 46-52; Pratte & Rury, 1991: 59-64; Soder, 1990: 47-49) argue that professional determinants serve as a traditional model for a fully fledged profession. The age-old question of whether teaching should be considered a profession that satisfies the above criteria has been argued in the literature (Loots & Theron, 1998: 10-11) and the conclusion is that teaching is hampered by a number of obstacles in becoming a fully-fledged profession. The question that begs an answer is: to what extent has SACE enabled teaching to increasingly satisfy the legal and professional determinants of a profession?

Legal determinants

According to Baxter (1991), professional councils are awarded certain functions or duties through appropriate law. The existence of SACE was ensured by the promulgation of the SACE Act 31 of 2000 (SA, 2000). The powers and duties of SACE, as outlined in section 5 of the Act, include the following:

- registration of educators;
- promotion and development of education and training;
- research and development of a policy to guide professional development of educators;
- assist with training programmes, workshops, seminars and short courses for educators and also publish a professional journal;
- compile, maintain and review a professional code of ethics; and
- suspend or impose a sanction on educators found guilty of breaching the code of professional ethics.

The SACE Act (Act 31 of 2000) provides the legal space for SACE to perform its duties regarding the professionalisation of education in South Africa. However, the Act appears to limit the powers and duties of SACE to three determinants for a profession, namely *registration, professional development* and *code of conduct*. SACE cannot succeed in its

mission if certain determinants of professions are disregarded. It is therefore crucial that legal and professional determinants be used in enhancing teacher professionalism.

Problem statement and research aims

At its establishment SACE was immediately faced with enormous problems and challenges. Low performance in some schools (Taunyane, 1999: 1), rife ill-discipline of educators and learners, low morale especially among educators, un- and under-qualified educators (Dikgomo, 2000: 1) and workshop overload (Smith & Ngoma-Maema, 2003: 360) were some of the enormous challenges facing the image of the teaching profession. To overcome these problems and address the challenges facing professionalism of educators not only required the attention of all levels in the education system but also, and mainly, a professional body.

As indicated previously, the South African Council for Educators (SACE), as the educators' professional body, is required the SACE Act (Act 31 of 2000) to perform duties related to the enhancement of professionalism among educators. Questions regarding its affiliation (Government, or ELRC or independent organ), funding, its role, task and mission (Education Portfolio Committee, 2006) retarded the full functioning of SACE. Given the above challenges facing SACE, the following question arises:

How well has SACE performed its legally-mandated duties aimed at enhancing professionalism among educators?

The sub-questions are:

- Which of its duties has SACE performed well, moderately well and poorly?
- What differences and similarities exist between the opinions of educators and those of the SACE executive?
- What recommendations can be offered to assist SACE in its attempts to enhance professionalism among educators?

In view of the above, the aims of this research may be stated as follows:

- to determine educators' and SACE's executive members views about how well SACE has performed its legally-mandated duties of enhancing professionalism among educators;
- to compare the opinions of educators and SACE executive members on how well SACE has performed its legally-mandated duties; and
- to offer recommendations that will assist SACE in discharging its mandate to enhance professionalism among educators.

Through this research, aspects of professionalism that SACE has enhanced and those aspects that still need attention will be pin-pointed. This will assist SACE to focus attention on areas needing improvement and thus to draw plans and devise strategies to enhance these areas more effectively. In this way SACE will be more effective and its image improved among its constituents. In turn, educators will benefit from enhanced service delivery by SACE, quality education will be ensured and the legal reality of the

SACE Act will be turned into a living reality that enriches the lives of citizens of this country.

Empirical research design and methodology

The researchers used the **sequential explanatory mixed method design** in order to provide extensive information about the research problem and to obtain a deeper understanding thereof. The mixed method approach is defined as “a procedure for collecting, analysing and ‘mixing’ both quantitative and qualitative data at some stage of the research process within a single study to understand a research problem more completely” (Ivankova, Cresswell & Clark, 2007: 261). The research was conducted in two phases: the quantitative data was collected and analysed in the first phase while the collection and analysis of qualitative data took place in the second phase (Cresswell, 2003: 215).

In the first phase a quantitative survey questionnaire was employed to collect data because the researchers aimed at obtaining extensive data from a large and dispersed population with minimum time and costs (Maree & Pietersen, 2007: 155). In the qualitative research phase, the researchers aimed exploring and understanding a central phenomenon. To achieve this, the researchers selected a small sample (SACE executive) that has most experience in the studied phenomenon (Ivankova, Cresswell & Clark, 2007: 257). By utilising the focus group interview, the researchers were able to ask broad, open-ended questions to allow participants to share their views about and experiences with the phenomenon. The quantitative and qualitative approaches complemented each other in that responses from the quantitative approach were used to identify major themes to guide the focus group interview. In this way qualitative findings explained and clarified quantitative results (Cresswell, 2003: 215). Moreover, the quantitative and qualitative approaches enabled the researchers to compare the two sets of data in order to produce well-validated conclusions. The results from the two approaches were integrated at the interpretation stage of the study.

Quantitative approach

Instrumentation

The aim of the empirical research was to determine the opinions of educators about how well SACE has performed its legally-mandated duties aimed at enhancing professionalism among educators. For the empirical investigation, the authors used a questionnaire derived from the framework of professional and legal determinants of a profession. However, it was found that the legal determinants did not include all the professional determinants. Seeing that SACE was bound by law to perform certain duties, the researchers decided to construct the questionnaire using mainly the legal determinants; otherwise, the questionnaire would contain a lot of question items that were outside the mandate of SACE. Thus, the questionnaire was constructed using the following determinants derived from section 5 of the SACE Act (SACE Act 31 of 2000) (SA, 2000):

- registration of educators items: three question items were asked under this determinant, viz., C1, C2, C3.

- promotion and development of education and training: this consisted of four question items, viz., C4, C5, C6, C7.
- research and professional development: this determinant contained most of the questions totalling six question items, thus, C8, C9, C10, C11, C12, C13.
- Code of conduct: this determinant incorporated three questions item, viz., C14, C15, C6.

While it is true that the questionnaire was based on the legal determinants, the question items nonetheless also covered some of the professional determinants:

- registration of educators includes professional authority and control of access;
- promotion and development of education and training includes specialised knowledge;
- research and professional development includes professional development of educators, continuous research and control of access; and
- code of conduct encompasses professional code of conduct.

Population and sampling

As a result of a number of factors including distances between the schools in the two regions of investigations, time constraints and costs, convenience sampling was used. The area of investigation comprised the Northern Free State and Lejweleputswa education districts in the Free State Province of South Africa. The total population in the two regions is 2070 educators, from which a sample of 239 educators was selected by convenience sampling. Data was collected from 171 educators who completed questionnaires. The response rate was 71,5% which, according to Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (1990: 453) and Anderson (1990: 167), is adequate to draw valid and reliable conclusions. The data was analysed using frequencies, percentages and the mean score ranking technique but in this paper only the mean score ranking is reported.

Validity and reliability of the questionnaire

To ensure reliability and validity the questionnaire was submitted to empirical research experts in education management and the Statistical Consultation Service of the North-West University for evaluation and approved. Additionally, a pilot study of the questionnaire was conducted to ensure that reliable results were obtained. Because some categories contained less than five question items, the Cronbach coefficient yielded no results on the reliability of the questionnaire.

Qualitative approach

Focus group interview

A focus group interview was conducted focusing on unravelling the quantitative data obtained through the questionnaire. The focus group consisted of 5 members of the executive of SACE (see Appendix A). The focus group interview was largely unstructured so as to allow the group to explore the issues widely and in-depth. The researchers recorded the discussions on a tape-recorder and also took extensive notes.

Analysis of responses from focus group interview

The results from the interview were coded in the usual way as is customary for qualitative research. Open coding was used to identify segments of information using original codes derived from the categories pre-determined through the data.

Validity of interview responses

Triangulation was used as a way of controlling the validity of data (Gall Gall & Borg, 2003: 463-464). This involved comparing and collating data from the quantitative research, focus group interview and theoretical perspectives. Only data that proved consistent in all these methods was accepted for recording. This resulted in pre-determined categories derived from the questionnaire being collapsed into three major issues: autonomy and authority of a professional body, professional development of educators and the success of SACE.

Findings and discussion

Findings with regard to responses of educators to the questionnaire

In order to reach the aim of the research, the questionnaire asked respondents to indicate on a Likert scale activities which, in their opinion, were not done at all, were partially done, and were well done by SACE. Using the mean score ranking technique, it was possible to divide the mean score rankings into three categories:

- 3,00- 4,00 mean scores represented highest ranked items.
- 2,50-2,99 mean scores represented medium ranked items
- 1,00-2,49 mean scores represented lowest ranked items.

The discussion below follows the three identified rankings.

Highest ranking question items

Table 1 presents the highest ranking mean scores.

Table 1: Highest ranking mean scores

Item No	SACE has done its duty of...	Mean score	Std dev.	Ranking
C1	Registering qualified educators.	3,30	0,87	1
C3	Awarding registration certificate to educators.	3,14	1,02	2
C5	Encouraging educators to improve their qualifications.	3,01	1,01	3

According to Table 1 the three highest ranked question items are related to registration of educators by SACE. Question items C1 (ranked 1) and C3 (ranked 2) are related to the determinant of professional authority and the legal determinant with regard to registration of educators and awarding of professional certificates. From this ranking, it may be deduced that SACE has fulfilled its task of registering educators, as required by the SACE Act. According to commentators (Beare, 1992: 65; Moloney, 1992: 24; Kriel, 1993: 20; Fiddler, 1994: 17) registration of members of a profession gives a professional body authority over its members, thereby protecting the public against incompetent and ineffective practitioners. The opinions of respondents indicate that SACE performed these activities very well. Given the problems related to awarding certificates (Ngobeni,

2001: 8) it is surprising that item C3 should rank so high. The ranking of this item may be related to the apparent satisfaction of educators about registration because their salary advice slips served as proof of registration and this rendered a certificate redundant.

The third highest ranking item (C5) relates to the legal determinant of promotion and development of education and the professional determinant of specialised knowledge. The high ranking of this item is rather surprising because SACE is not directly involved when educators acquire qualifications. A moratorium was placed on the requirement that only educators with REQV 13 were eligible to be registered and in terms of section 22(4) of the SACE act (SA, 2000) all educators were afforded the opportunity to register regardless of their qualifications. It appears nonetheless that the fact that registration was linked to qualifications encouraged educators to improve their qualifications.

Medium ranking question items

The medium ranking means scores are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Medium ranking mean scores

C14	Distributing the code of conduct for educators amongst educators.	2,95	0,93	4
C2	Setting the minimum requirements for registration of educators.	2,85	1,00	5
C6	Setting admission standards for educators entering educator-training institutions.	2,66	1,04	6
C16	Applying the code of conduct for educators in cases of offences by educators.	2,63	1,03	7
C8	Designing a professional development policy for educators.	2,63	0,97	7

The medium ranked question items (Table 2) suggest that SACE has done its duty to enhance educator professionalism, but not as well as in the highest ranking items. Items C14 and C16 deal with the criterion of the code of conduct, which has also been enshrined in the SACE Act. A higher ranking of these items could have been expected because of the imperative of the law for SACE to perform these duties. Additionally, the code of conduct was popularised through the radio and television and distributed to public schools (Brijraj, 2001: 9). However, the opinion of the respondents seems to have been influenced by delays in handling cases of misconduct against educators. These cases are still pending due to lack of relevant law (Dhlamini, 2003: 10).

The ranking achieved by Item C6 is not congruent with the literature study. SACE is not, as yet, setting admission standards for educators entering training institutions, although literature indicates that it should, as an aspect of the criterion of controlling access to the profession (Beare, 1992: 65; Moloney, 1992: 24). Literature shows that the ranking of Item 8 differs from the views expressed by Lemmer (1998: 114) that the past is marked by a notorious lack of a coherent policy to guide in-service training. In the light of the recent establishment of SACE, it also cannot be expected that SACE could have developed relevant policies already, because it takes time to develop policies.

Low ranking question items

Table 3 presents the lowest ranking mean scores.

Table 3: Lowest ranking mean scores

C7	Defending the profession in the public media.	2,31	1,06	8
C4	Setting standards for educator training programmes.	2,29	0,94	9
C9	Organising in-service training and workshops for educators.	2,08	1,07	10
C12	Publishing and distributing professional journals and other publications.	2,01	0,97	11
C11	Instituting educational research projects.	1,98	0,95	12
C13	Organising education conferences for educators to share their knowledge.	1,97	1,04	13
C10	Accrediting workshops conducted by non-governmental organisations.	1,86	0,92	15

Although the above question items (Table 3) were derived from the legal determinants of a profession, most people also refer to professional determinants such as the professional development of educators and control of access. It is not surprising that these items have low ranking mean scores, indicating that the respondents' view is that SACE has not performed these duties. It has been indicated earlier that SACE cannot succeed in its work to enhance professionalism among educators if it concentrates only on the legal determinants, because the legal and the professional determinants are intertwined.

Most of the question items above relate to professional development and should, therefore, rank higher because the SACE Act (SA 2000) clearly states promotion of professional development as a duty of SACE. Mokgalane (2001: 6-7) mentions two professional development projects that were identified, but only one of these was carried out in areas other than the Free State, which is the area of investigation. Obviously, educators in the area of investigation were not aware of these projects. Moreover, the projects dealt with aspects related to ethics, and not to classroom and teaching related matters. According to the annual report of SACE (SACE, 2005: 7), the Council failed to undertake research projects. Professional development will hopefully receive more attention from SACE in the near future because it is already featured in the latest policies (SA, 2007).

It is surprising that item C7 achieved a low mean score, whereas literature indicates that a public and communications officer was appointed at the beginning of 2000 (SACE, 2003: 12) to focus on enhancing the image of teaching and counteract the publication of negative aspects in public and printed media (Mokgalane, 2001: 4). The low rank of this item suggests that educators are not aware that SACE defends their profession; or alternatively that the work of SACE in this aspect has not yet been effective.

Literature, however, raises the expectation that a professional body should encourage continuous research among educators. For example, Act 73 of 1993 in India (India, 1993) requires the professional council to promote innovation and research in various areas of educator education. Commentators (Burbules & Densmore, 1991: 46-52; Calitz, 1996:

67; Soder, 1990: 47-49) mention continuous research as a determinant of a profession. It is noted that items related to continuous research (Items C11, C12 and C13) are ranked low, indicating that educators are of the opinion that SACE has not performed these duties. The low ranking of these question items may be attributed to lack of capacity and financial resources on the part of SACE (SA, 2005: 7).

Findings with regard to focus group interview

The findings in this section must be seen in the light of the responses to the questionnaire items. The results of the quantitative data and the focus group discussion were strikingly similar although the quantitative data expressed the perceptions of a section of educators about the activities of SACE. However, due to the unstructured nature of focus group discussion, not all aspects of the quantitative data could be considered, as other issues assumed precedence in the discussion. The following results emerged from the focus group discussion:

Several determinants of a profession relate to the autonomy and authority of a professional body in regulating and governing the profession. The establishment of SACE meant that the teaching profession now had a body that would serve this purpose. It appeared that the autonomy of the teaching profession was seriously compromised by the inclusion of non-professional members in its council. Literature indicates that autonomy in teaching is difficult to achieve because educators operate within the bounds of a bureaucratic dispensation (Loots & Theron, 1998: 10). On this issue it became apparent that teaching was so important in society that other stakeholders had vested interest in the activities of the profession. One member was convinced that this had to be so, because:

educators are not educators for themselves but are educators for the state and society. The Minister must account to what extent her employees are performing as they are doing.

The inclusion of non-professionals in the council for educators is not unique to SACE as most, if not all, professional councils had non-professional governors. As one member of the Council put it:

It is not uncommon that other constituencies are represented [in a professional body], most councils in the world have non-professional sectors serving in the council because teachers serve the larger interest of society. The focus should be that practising professionals are in the majority.

The inclusion of non-teaching members also did not hamper the functioning of the council in terms of professional matters, because:

When it comes to professional matters there is hard debate but the council has matured beyond the stages of each constituency representing its own interests. The words: "My union said ..." do not feature anymore in the language of the Council.

Literature and empirical study revealed that professional development for educators is lacking. The notion is also supported by SACE officials, as one of them remarked:

But one area that we have been neglected on was our main mandate – professional development of our educators.

This has been largely attributed to lack of funding and conceptual understanding of professional development. The main issue is to determine what SACE should do in connection with professional development. The question was whether SACE, with its limited staffing, would be in a position to provide workshops and other training to the educators and that the Act did not specify how SACE should offer this service. One of the officials of SACE responded as follows:

If you ask people generally what is that they want SACE to do in terms of professional development, I have no doubt that 95% of what they will ask us to do has nothing do with professional development.

The issue of professional development clearly needs clarification so that SACE should know exactly what it is expected to do. In stating their case, the functionaries admitted that professional development was at the heart of the duties of a professional council but cited two important reasons for its neglect, besides funding:

While we have not been doing sufficiently in terms of professional development we should also try to get clarity on the conceptual understanding of professional development.

The second reason indicates a misunderstanding concerning the actual delivery of professional development, which SACE believed was not within its mandate. This matter was voiced as follows:

Our responsibility is not to do professional development but to facilitate it. There has been a misconception that we must be service providers, but we will be sued by service providers because that is not our mandate. What we need to do is to find some form of common understanding of who is supposed to do what.

A new policy introduced on 27 April 2007 seems to address the above concerns. The National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development deals extensively with how SACE should carry out its mandate of professional development of teachers (SA, 2007). This piece of legislation introduces the concept of Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) as the new system that SACE will manage and implement. Its main duty will focus on assuring quality of professional development activities by endorsing service providers and their activities, monitoring delivery of the programmes through feedback from teachers and by appointing quality assurance bodies to undertake formal monitoring and evaluation on its behalf.

The new policy provides incentives and obligations for teachers to develop professionally under the CPTD scheme. By undergoing professional activities under the categories of school-led programmes, employer-led programmes, qualifications programmes including upgrading of qualifications, programmes offered by NGO's, teachers unions, community-based and faith-based organisations and self-chosen activities, educators will be awarded

professional development points (PD points). Each teacher should earn a target number of PD points in each successive three-year cycle by undergoing professional development activities endorsed by SACE. Earning PD points places the teacher in a better position for performance recognition and promotion than those who do not. All teachers will be expected to earn the maximum allowable PD points in a three-year cycle, failing which the teacher will be accountable to SACE. However, the Act does not specify what action will be taken in case a teacher does not earn the required PD points. SACE should ensure that educators amass PD points at the expense of learners' achievement, while at the same time, SACE should ensure that teachers' workloads allow them to earn the necessary PD points.

Considering the challenges facing SACE in the new South Africa, one is struck by the great success achieved by this body in a period of just ten years. One member noted:

It took some councils, notably the Scotland GTC, ... 50 years to reach their objectives.

The greatest reason why SACE has been successful is that it uses a democratic approach to decision making, but

the democratic nature of the organisation means that it takes a long time to arrive at decisions but its decisions are long-lasting. As leadership in council we have tried hard to use consensus rather voting and take turns to sell our ideas.

There was also optimism about the future of SACE. One member commented:

SACE has a brighter future because in discussions I have never heard the mandate of SACE being duplicated.

On this point comments attested to optimism about the future success of SACE, for example:

*We are going to be a world leader [of professional councils].
I still have 30 years to go.*

Summary of findings and recommendations

The main aim of the research was to determine educators' opinions and SACE executive members with regard to how well SACE has performed its legally-mandated duties to enhance professionalism among educators. This aim involved determining duties that have been performed well, those that have been performed moderately well and those that have been performed poorly by SACE. In respect of each of the major duties of SACE, the findings of this research may be summarised as follows:

Registration of educators

There is agreement between quantitative and qualitative research that SACE has done well in the area of registration of educators. Qualitative research reveals that this was achieved in spite of the problems that SACE experienced in registering educators.

Promotion and development of education and training

As a result of the open-ended nature of the focus-group interview this duty did not receive attention in the qualitative research. However, opinions of educators, supported by the literature study, reveal that SACE did moderately well in performing this duty. It can be recommended, therefore, that SACE should accredit and continuously review courses of initial teacher training and advise the Minister of National Education on educator training programmes.

Research and professional training

Both educators' opinions (quantitative research) and those of SACE functionaries (qualitative research) reveal that in the area of research and professional development, SACE has done poorly in executing this duty. The reason for this poor performance, according to the opinions of SACE functionaries, is that there was no clear indication about who and how professional development should be delivered. On the basis of the above, it is recommended that SACE should:

- initiate, support and facilitate professional development of educators;
- accredit service providers and professional development courses because SACE itself is not responsible for the delivery of professional development initiatives, but should ensure that policy is implemented;
- promote innovation and active research projects by educators; and
- organise research and educational conferences for purposes of disseminating research results.

Code of conduct

Although this aspect of the duty of SACE did not receive attention in the qualitative research, opinions of educators show that it was performed moderately well by SACE in spite of the fact that most educators are aware of the code of conduct and that it was distributed among them. Educators are of the opinion that SACE has done moderately well in dealing with cases of misconduct SACE. In this respect, it is recommended that SACE should accelerate the rate of dealing with cases of misconduct by appointing lawyers qualified to deal with these cases.

Conclusion

The establishment of SACE represent a milestone in supporting quality education in South Africa. Unlike other teachers' councils around the world, SACE is the brain-child of teachers who saw it fit that their practice needs to be watched over by its members. It seems that SACE has done well in two of its mandates, namely *registration* and *code of ethics*. Professional development has been neglected, largely due to lack of funding and misunderstanding of the councils' mandate regarding this aspect. Fortunately, it seems that additional funds have been secured and the DoE is willing to support SACE in facilitating professional development.

Regardless of problems and rightful criticisms levelled against SACE, its establishment was a positive step towards enhancing professionalism amongst teachers.

Appendix A

SACE MEMBERS INVOLVED IN THE FOCUS-GROUP DISCUSSION

Mr Raj Brijraj (Chief Executive Officer)

Mr Muvia Gallie (Director: Administration)

Mrs Ella Mokgalane (Manager: Professional Development)

Mrs Charlotte Ngubeni (Manager: Registration)

Mr Morris Mapindane (Financial Officer)

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