Preamble

Professional development should be based on the notion of teacher as learner and reflective practitioner (Schon, 1987). Teacher education and professional development should be focussed on the needs of students in a particular school community. Teacher professional development should be seen as a collaborative activity as well as an individual activity. The particular needs of individual teachers may be met by professional development, however, this should take place in the context of collegial support, team building, collaborative planning at school level and interactive action research. The more highly skilled, motivated and effective are English teachers, the more effective learning outcomes will be for students in English classrooms.

In the context of increased system accountability, it is imperative that systems provide teachers with opportunities to participate in professional development that will assist teachers in the implementation of curriculum initiatives.

The Importance of Professional Development

Quality English teaching requires the provision of continuing opportunities for professional development. Teachers need:

- access to new research and knowledge in the teaching of literacy, language development and an integrated curriculum;
- appropriate, up to date qualifications in both the content area of the subject and in teaching methodology;
- opportunities to share expertise with other experienced teachers and educators leading to reflection on practice;
- opportunities for discipline renewal for teachers whose teacher education took place some years ago;
- a commitment at all levels to time release to attend professional development activities; and
- recognition at all levels of the value of professional development.

Quality teaching is directly related to the development of a strong, well informed and well supported professional body to respond to community and educational concerns and to influence opinion. Access to professional development is crucial in enabling teachers to:

- improve learning outcomes for students;
- take a more active role in curriculum planning, including building on and refining existing practices;
- constantly develop excellent teaching practices;
- actively participate in the evaluation of teaching practices and programs; and
- actively participate in the implementation of local, state and national curriculum initiatives.

Responsibility for Training and Development

AATE (with its member associations) has a strong commitment to professional development. The English teachers’ associations have a long history of cooperation with curriculum developers, classroom teachers, statutory assessment authorities and employing bodies in providing high quality inservice. The professional development roles which AATE believes should be carried out by employing authorities, English Teachers’ Associations and tertiary institutions responsible for the training of English teachers are as follows:
The Role of the English Teacher

To maintain and improve the quality of classroom practice, English teachers should:

- seek to renew their professional expertise;
- take advantage of and contribute to professional development opportunities available from many sources;
- support and inform colleagues in cooperative curriculum and teacher professional development activities, both on intra-school and inter-school levels.

The Role of the Employing Authority

To maintain and improve the quality of classroom practice, employing authorities should:

- provide adequate and appropriate professional inservice for English teachers;
- ensure that every teacher has access to appropriate and relevant professional development activities;
- undertake research and development into matters related to the teaching of language and literature;
- provide adequate and appropriate teacher education and professional development to support the introduction of new syllabuses, courses or policies;
- ensure that adequate consultation takes place on the most desirable structure and content of professional development;
- ensure delivery of professional development at appropriate and relevant times during the year; and
- ensure that professional development is within the financial reach of schools by committing funds to professional development which is relevant to the stated purposes of the employing authority.

Professional development should be accessible to all teachers. In this regard, there should be a mix of times and locations in which professional development takes place. As well as weekend, after school and evening professional development, the employing bodies should enable teachers to attend professional development during school hours. This will ensure that certain groups of teachers are not disadvantaged or denied access. For example, this arrangement will allow those who have child-care commitments to attend professional development activities.

The Role of English Teacher Associations

To maintain and improve the quality of classroom practice, English Teacher Associations should:

- provide support for members as deemed appropriate by Associations;
- empower English teachers through the provision of professional development;
- encourage and support self-directed professional development initiatives by English teachers;
- cooperate with employing authorities in the provision of professional development;
- provide informed advice on policy and curriculum issues;
- liaise between the employing authorities and English teachers in matters relating to language and literacy; and
- remain independent with regard to the nature of professional development.

The Role of Tertiary Institutions

To maintain and improve the quality of classroom practice, tertiary institutions should:

- provide initial teacher education and courses appropriate to the needs and requirements of English teachers in close consultation with schools;
- provide appropriate recognition and/or accreditation for teachers' participation in courses;
- provide teacher education and courses in language, learning and literacy appropriate to the needs and requirements of tertiary education;
- liaise with employing authorities and subject associations in supporting new curriculum initiatives, designing new courses and establishing or supporting professional development initiatives;
- maintain an informed, relevant awareness of current practice in schools;
- ensure that appropriate information about language/literacy issues be circulated among all tertiary institutions in addition to those involved in teacher education; and
• undertake research and development in literacy and language teaching.

In the interests of improving the quality of education for all, it is essential that research and curriculum development be given a high priority and that regular professional development be regarded as the right and responsibility of all teachers and for which employing bodies must accept considerable responsibility.

Collaborative Professional Development

The roles of the respective stakeholders, previously outlined, should not be seen as mutually exclusive. In a climate in which national priorities and agendas are being set, it is important to acknowledge the need for cooperation between governments, employing bodies, tertiary institutions and subject associations (which represent schools and teachers). Working partnerships among these groups are regarded as important for collaboratively designing, developing and implementing professional development. There should be recognition that the sharing of knowledge, skills, resources and expertise of these partners and improves the quality, relevance, value for money and reach of professional development programs. Accreditation of professional development programs, when they are the result of a partnership with tertiary bodies, should be organised. Where accreditation is not possible, formal recognition of participation in the professional development program should be provided.

Levels and Models of Professional Development

If teachers’ new knowledge is to lead to more effective teaching and learning in classrooms, schools and systems must provide conditions which support continuing education for teachers. This will require the provision of time when teachers can meet to discuss new information with colleagues, and to test, reflect on, and evaluate its effectiveness in classrooms. Effective dissemination of information by other means including publications is also required.

The following are key focuses for professional development:

• pre-service education;
• inservice within schools (including mentoring and workshadowing);
• inservice outside of schools;
• staff support e.g. consultants, curriculum advisers;
• formal retraining courses; and
• publications and information dissemination.

System level and individual professional development initiatives are equally important.

Delivery of Professional Development

Because people learn in different ways a range of options needs to be supported and made available. The range should include:

• large-scale, centrally supported professional development programs including conferences, workshops, seminars and courses;
• local or regional networks within schools or districts;
• school and faculty based professional development activities; and
• individual initiatives.

An effective professional development program will focus on the development of the teacher in the context of the school community.

Professional development should:

• empower participants - teachers in control;
• meet the identified needs of teachers, faculties and schools;
• be challenging;
• be informative;
• be innovative;
• be well planned;
• build skills;
• involve active participation;
• have realistic, achievable expectations;
• involve team work;
• link theory and practice;
• use informed presenters to share their experience or research;
• have a variety of approaches and styles;
• elicit feedback and respond to this as appropriate;
• be ongoing;
• have formative and summative evaluation processes;
• encourage networking; and
• be professionally fulfilling and enjoyable.

While large scale and regional programs tend to be more likely to attract funding, employing authorities and school communities must recognise and support the substantial professional development which teachers undertake in other ways. The planning together that occurs at the school level needs to be fully supported.

**Commitment to Action**

In order to ensure a high level of support for professional development, AATE makes the following commitments to:

- promote exemplary practice in the teaching of language and literacy;
- lobby employing authorities, curriculum bodies and accreditation agencies to take an appropriate role in the inservice of new curriculum and policies;
- seek increased financial support and recognition for relevant courses undertaken by teachers;
- negotiate for increased support in inservice programs shared with other organisation or agencies;
- examine alternatives to current inservice functions (e.g. sabbaticals, accreditation for involvement in professional development activity, different models of inservice);
- ensure that there is equity and access in all matters relating to professional development.