

DEVELOP PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY OF FUTURE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS

Sabo Akhmadalieva Murodovna
Kokand State Pedagogical Institute
UZBEKISTAN

ABSTRACT

The article reviews studies that focus on the professional development of teachers after they have completed their basic teacher training. Teacher professional development is defined as teachers' learning: how they learn to learn and how they apply their knowledge in practice to support pupils' learning. Professional development is defined as activities that develop an individual's skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics as a teacher.

Keywords: Teacher professional development; teacher learning; further development; continuous learning; multicultural classrooms; collaboration; continuous development.

INTRODUCTION, LITERATURE REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

Teacher professional development means teachers' learning, how they learn to learn and how they apply their knowledge in practice to support pupil learning. Teachers can learn through participation in various courses, in school when they reflect on their own teaching and in observation of and reflection on others' teaching in co-operation with colleagues. Learning can occur in planned reflection meetings between teachers, or teachers can learn from unplanned conversations with other colleagues before or after teaching, or in parent-teacher meetings. Thus, learning may occur in various ways, both formally and informally.

Teachers are asked to teach in increasingly multicultural classrooms; to place greater emphasis on integrating students with special learning needs in their classrooms; to make more effective use of information and communication technologies for teaching; to engage more in planning within evaluative and accountability frameworks; and to do more to involve parents in schools. No matter how good pre-service training for teachers is, it cannot be expected to prepare teachers for all the challenges they will face throughout their careers. Education systems therefore seek to provide teachers with opportunities for in-service professional development in order to maintain a high standard of teaching and to retain a high-quality teacher workforce.

Effective professional development is on-going, includes training, practice and feedback, and provides adequate time and follow-up support. Successful programmes involve teachers in learning activities that are similar to ones they will use with their students, and encourage the development of teachers' learning communities. There is growing interest in developing schools as learning organisations, and in ways for teachers to share their expertise and experience more systematically.

The development of teachers beyond their initial training can serve a number of objectives including:

- to update individuals' knowledge of a subject in light of recent advances in the area;
- to update individuals' skills, attitudes and approaches in light of the development of new teaching techniques and objectives, new circumstances and new educational research;

- to enable individuals to apply changes made to curricula or other aspects of teaching practice;
- to enable schools to develop and apply new strategies concerning the curriculum and other aspects of teaching practice;
- to exchange information and expertise among teachers and others, *e.g.* academics, industrialists;
- to help weaker teachers become more effective.

Development can be provided in many ways, ranging from the formal to the informal. It can be made available through external expertise in the form of courses, workshops or formal qualification programmes, through collaboration between schools or teachers across schools or within the schools in which teachers work. In this last case, development can be provided through coaching/mentoring, collaborative planning and teaching, and the sharing of good practices.

The volume (or intensity) of professional development can be influenced by the types of development activities that teachers engage in. Teachers' professional development may be, or may not be, compulsory. Some professional development may be deemed compulsory because the skills and knowledge the development activities aim to enhance are considered important for teacher quality. In some cases participation in such activities may even be required for teacher certification. It can also be important for teachers to exercise their own professional judgement by identifying and taking part in development activities which they feel are most beneficial to them. A high degree of compulsory professional development may be indicative of a more highly managed professional development system with less discretion for teachers to choose the development they feel they need.

The question arises as to whether the amount of teachers' professional development depends on the proportion that is compulsory. At the country level, there does not appear to be a clear relation between the average number of days of professional development and the percentage which was compulsory.

Teachers asked about their professional development activities, their impact, the support they received for undertaking them, the extent to which they wanted more than they had engaged in and the barriers they felt had prevented them from doing so, and the areas of their work they found most in need of further development. Therefore, almost all of the results are based on teachers' reports. The exception is the discussion of induction and mentoring policies in schools, which reports school principals' responses regarding the existence of such policies in their schools.

In interpreting the results, it is important to bear in mind the self-reporting nature of the survey responses. For example, teachers' reports about the impact of their development activities represent their perceptions; they are not part of an independent evaluation of the effectiveness of these activities. Nevertheless, teachers' perceptions are important and can be expected to influence their behaviour. Also teachers' views about their development needs are to be distinguished from an external assessment of these needs. This will examine the relation between teachers' reports of their development needs and the policies and practices that are in place to assess and appraise teachers' work.

Salary supplements are a less common means of support for professional development, teachers on average receiving them for activities they had taken part in during the survey period.

The relation between financial support for participation in professional development and levels of participation is not a straightforward one. On the one hand, one might expect higher participation in countries with a high level of financial support for participation. On the other hand, the extent to which financial support is provided for undertaking professional development can be a function of the volume of professional development in the system. On the premise that budgets are limited, it will be easier to pay the full cost of professional development

if uptake is low than if it is high. Another model of provision might require teachers to contribute to the cost of the activity but then reward the higher qualifications acquired in their remuneration.

Analysis of the data reveals a negative relation between the amount of professional development and the extent to which teachers had to pay towards the cost. In other words, the countries in which teachers reported that they had to pay some or all of the costs of their professional development are also typically those in which teachers reported participating in the highest average number of days of development.

To understand the relation better, the average number of days of teachers' professional development can be broken down according to those who paid all, some or none of the costs of the development.

Although at first glance counter-intuitive, this result fits the hypothesis that a limited budget will only fully cover the cost of professional development when the volume of professional development is relatively low. In other words, when the average number of days is small, it is more likely that the school or the education authorities will meet the full cost. The negative relation between the volume of professional development and the extent to which teachers have to pay also suggests that, in most countries, the provision of free professional development does not satisfy demand and teachers choose to supplement it by paying for additional development. Thus, the general trend is that higher intensity of participation in professional development goes hand in hand with a higher proportion of teachers having to pay something towards the cost.

Part of the explanation for the relation between the extent of personal payment and the intensity of participation is the fact that development activities that are more time-intensive (qualification programmes and research activities) are also those for which, according to the survey responses, teachers are more likely to have to pay some or all of the costs. Among teachers enrolled in a qualification programme (as a single activity or in combination with other activities), more than half paid some or all of the costs, significantly more than for any of the other activities.

In summary then, those who paid the full cost of their professional development devoted more days to those activities than teachers who either paid some or none of the cost. This is partly indicative of the fact that, according to teachers, more time-intensive professional development activities were less likely to have been provided at no cost. But it also seems to indicate a significant desire among some teachers to take on development activities which are costly financially and in terms of time. In some cases, this can be seen as an investment towards future career progression. Moreover, paying something towards the cost of the development they had received did not satisfy their demand, and these teachers – more than those who received free professional development – had a greater desire for more.

Another important type of support for teachers' development takes the form of schools' policies and practices to support teachers who are either new to the profession or new to the school. As noted in the review of teacher policy, the main challenges facing beginning teachers are remarkably similar across countries, such as motivating students to learn, classroom management, and assessing student work. Induction and mentoring programmes may help new teachers cope with these challenges and combat early dropout from the profession.

Researchers sought to learn the extent to which formal policies and practices for induction and for mentoring of new teachers exist in the lower secondary schools in which teachers work. This information was gathered from school principals rather than teachers and permits an examination of the broader development activities in schools where such policies do or do not exist.

To understand better the take-up of professional development and provide insight into potential policy levers, teachers asked who had wanted to do more professional development to indicate the reasons that best explain what had prevented them from participating in more professional development. They were entitled to select as many of the options as were appropriate.

Not surprisingly, there is a significant negative correlation between the extent to which teachers reported a lack of suitable professional development and the amount of professional development they actually had. In every country, teachers who reported a lack of suitable development on offer as the reason for not engaging in more development actually participated on average in a smaller number of days of development during the survey period than teachers who did not report this as a barrier. This is good evidence of the association between the perceived lack of suitable development on offer and the amount of development teachers embark on.

Compared with the allocation of scheduled time, there is a slightly stronger relation between the extent to which teachers reported cost as a barrier to taking more professional development and the financial support that they received. In other words countries in which a relatively high percentage of teachers had to pay the full cost of their professional development were more likely to report cost as a barrier to taking more. It is interesting that teachers who reported expense as a barrier actually had more days of professional development on average than those who did not report this as a barrier. The reason, as noted earlier, is probably that the activities that teachers were more likely to have paid for are also likely to be more time-intensive, particularly enrolment in qualification programmes.

So, in addition to the finding that teachers who had to pay for their development had more unsatisfied demand than those who did not, the preceding analysis shows that for these teachers more than others, cost is a barrier to satisfaction of that demand.

Having assessed the level of unsatisfied demand for professional development among lower secondary teachers and the areas of their work for which they have greatest development need, the level and intensity of participation in professional development activities and the support on offer to teachers and the perceived barriers against taking more development, this chapter now turns to the question of the types of professional development activities that are most effective in providing the professional development teachers need.

It has examined the extent to which teachers' demand for professional development is being met and how this varies according to the various types of support teachers have received and what they have perceived as hindrances to engaging in more than they did. Finally, it has analysed the types of activities that teachers reported as having had the greatest impact on their development as teachers.

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