



An Overview of the Recent Views and Practices in Teacher Professional Development

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Öğretmen Mesleki Gelişiminde Güncel Görüşlere ve Uygulamalara Bir Bakış

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Abstract

This paper presents an overview of the current trends and practices in teacher professional development (PD). The paper is intended to provide teachers, teacher educators, and trainers with the theories and practices discussed in the literature over the last 25 years. The data were selected from resources by entering relevant search phrases in journal databases, library catalogs, and websites on teacher PD. The paper primarily addresses the principles of effective PD and the models of PD. Next, different kinds of PD, including the practices that can enable teachers to improve their knowledge and skills as well as impacting student learning, are analyzed to determine the common denominators of those kinds that are considered effective in the literature. The paper also provides some implications that will be of value to researchers, teachers, and teacher trainers. The overview reveals that effective PD must involve teachers in decision-making as well as encourage reflection, classroom research, and collaboration. The paper further mentions that effective PD programs should include students and their perceptions in addition to evaluation and follow-up support in order to achieve the desired outcomes.

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Öz

Bu makale öğretmenlerin mesleki gelişimindeki (MG) güncel eğilimlerin ve uygulamaların genel bir değerlendirmesini sunmaktadır. Makalenin amacı, öğretmenlere, öğretmen eğitimcilerine ve eğitimcilere literatürde son 25 yılda tartışılan teorileri ve uygulamaları sunmaktır. Veriler; öğretmenlerin mesleki gelişimi üzerine olan dergi veri tabanlarına, kütüphane kataloglarına ve internet sitelerine ilgili sözcük grupları girilip kaynaklara ulaşılarak toplanmıştır. Bu makale, öncelikle etkili MG'nin ve MG modellerinin prensiplerine değinmektedir. Ardından literatürde etkili olduğu belirtilen MG çeşitlerinin ortak paydalarını belirlemek amacıyla ilgili MG çeşitleri incelenmiştir. Bu MG çeşitleri, öğrencilerin öğrenimini etkilediği kadar öğretmenlerin bilgi ve becerilerini geliştirmesini de sağlayan uygulamaları da içermektedir. Bu makale ayrıca araştırmacılar, öğretmenler ve öğretmen eğitimcileri için değerli olacak sonuçları ve çıkarımları da sunmaktadır. Genel değerlendirme, etkili bir MG'nin hem yansıtıcı düşünmeyi, sınıf araştırmasını ve işbirliğini teşvik etmesi, hem de öğretmenleri karar verme sürecine dahil etmesi gerektiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Makale, bunlarla birlikte, etkili MG programlarının istenen sonuçlara ulaşabilmesi için, değerlendirme, izlem, öğrenciler ve öğrencilerin algılarını da içermesi gerektiğine değinmektedir.

Makale Bilgisi

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mesleki gelişim, Güncel görüşler ve uygulamalar, Öğretmenler

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Introduction

The 21st century has witnessed important changes in the lives of individuals and societies with the creation of new socio-economic, technological, and educational trends. There is now a growing emphasis on life-long learning, personal growth, and the professional development (PD) of individuals who must learn to compete in the so-called global village. Likewise, education in the 21st century is characterized by the idea of innovation and continuous development of teachers' knowledge, skills, and teaching practices. It is becoming more essential for teachers to possess up-to-date information, learn from colleagues, and seek opportunities to share experiences in order to adapt to the new era. Thus, contemporary literature has emphasized teacher professionalism and PD, encouraging teachers and teacher educators to try new PD practices and take the initiative in their own development.

Teacher PD has been defined in the literature in several ways. Day (1999, p. 4) emphasized that PD involves "all natural learning experiences, conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school and ... contribute... to the quality of education in the classroom." Richards and Farrell (2005, p. 4) suggested that PD encompasses "teachers' knowledge of themselves and of their teaching situations" and includes reflective thinking about teaching practices. In this view, PD involves knowledge about language learning processes, taking on new "roles" depending on learner profile, making decisions for better instruction, and thinking about different approaches to and philosophies of teaching and evaluation. Regarding the current perspective on PD, OECD's (2005) review wrote:

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. (p. 95)

Borg (2015a) described PD as a multifaceted concept comprising teachers' behavior, knowledge, and emotions that occurs naturally in the workplace. According to Borg (2015a), the positive effects of PD should extend from a single person to larger groups and ultimately to the quality of education at large, enhancing student learning as well. However, before implementing PD programs, it is crucial to identify the required goals, content, implementation, and evaluation through needs assessment (Guskey, 2000; Harris, 2000).

In the teacher PD literature, traditional practices such as training programs, seminars, and one-off workshops are generally criticized due to their limitations and having little impact on teacher development; in traditional programs, teachers become too reliant on others for their own growth instead of taking charge of their PD. Assuming that trainers might be better informed and more capable than they are, teachers sometimes undervalue their own knowledge and experience, restricting their contributions to the content and process of the program. Moreover, as such programs usually work on an individual basis, this might constrain teachers from learning from their peers (Borg, 2015a, 2015b; Brown-Easton, 2004; Lieberman, 1995; Little, 1999).

In light of this, this paper aims to provide an overview of the recent teacher PD literature and present some of the PD activities that may be practiced individually or collectively. The first part of the paper will review the principles of effective PD and discuss different PD models. The second section will suggest some PD practices for pre-service and in-service teachers as well as discuss their strengths and weaknesses. To conduct a systematic review of the literature, library catalogs, electronic databases (EBSCO, ERIC, Web of Science), and websites were searched using key phrases such as "teacher professional development," "ways of professional development for teachers," "effective professional development," "continuous professional development (CPD) practices," and "current views on CPD." The books, papers, theses, and websites associated with each topic were selected and categorized according to theme and year of publication. References published over the last 25 years that were frequently cited in the sources were included in this overview of the current approaches and practices in teacher PD.

Principles of Effective Professional Development

Although there is no precise agreement on what constitutes effective PD, Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995, p. 82) wrote that it accepts "teachers both as learners and as teachers" and enables them to cope with the challenges of both roles. From Guskey's (2002) viewpoint, an effective PD program should accept individual and institutional

changes as a process, begin with small steps and a powerful vision, support teacher collaboration, and involve evaluation and follow-ups. From the constructivist approach, teachers' active involvement in PD is vital due to its potential positive impact on teaching practice and student learning. Drawing on a large body of PD literature, Borg (2015b, p. 6) outlined the characteristics of effective PD as follows:

- relevant to the needs of teachers and their students
- teacher involvement in decisions about content and process
- teacher collaboration
- support from the school leadership
- exploration and reflection with attention to practices and beliefs
- internal and/or external support for teachers
- job-embeddedness
- contextual alignment
- critical engagement with received knowledge
- valuing teachers' experience and knowledge

Borg (2015b) highlighted that PD activities involving these characteristics allow teachers to actively generate knowledge rather than passively consuming it. As long as teachers are involved in PD activities on their own initiative, the process can have a positive impact on the quality of education, teacher development, and student learning.

Having conducted a comprehensive review of the literature on the principles of effective PD, Richardson and Diaz-Maggioli (2018, p. 6) remarked that continuous PD is the key to enhancing "impactful teacher learning," which leads in turn to better student learning. Thus, institutions should support teachers' PD by conducting and evaluating evidence-based and contextually appropriate programs. Summarizing the elements of effective PD, Richardson and Diaz-Maggioli (2018) used the acronym INSPIRE for "impactful; needs-based; sustained; peer-collaborative; in-practice; reflective and evaluated programs." On the other hand, Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, and Orphanos (2009) referred to the importance of institutional encouragement, stating that teachers should receive support from administrators who

work with staff members to create the culture, structures, and dispositions for continuous professional learning and create pressure and support to help teachers continuously improve by better understanding students' learning needs, making data-driven decisions regarding content and pedagogy, and assessing students' learning within a framework of high expectations. (p. 3)

In addition to receiving administrative support, effective PD programs must be a source of enthusiasm and motivation for the participants. Furthermore, follow-up programs should be designed to ensure the desired outcomes. According to Corcoran (1995), effective PD includes room and time for follow-up support so that teachers can become proficient with their newly-acquired knowledge and apply it in their teaching practice.

Taking these views into consideration, we can conclude that PD programs for pre-service or in-service teachers can impact teaching practice and student learning only if they are contextually appropriate, needs-driven, learning-centered, and evaluative. There is a need for teachers' engaging more in critical and reflective practice. Furthermore, collaboration is integral to effective programs because it allows teachers to learn from their colleagues, share ideas, and develop a mutual understanding of the issues. However, these practices cannot be implemented effectively without adequate administrative support throughout the program.

Models of Professional Development

Teacher PD has been described differently in different paradigms (Broad & Evans, 2006). In the deficit paradigm, teachers require specific subjects to make up for their deficiencies in knowledge and skills, whereas in the professional growth paradigm, which is more self-directed, teachers should get involved in PD to improve their knowledge and gain up-to-date skills. On a different axis, the educational change paradigm suggests that change needs to be the main aim of PD (Warren-Little, 2001), while the problem-solving paradigm urges that PD must offer solutions to the

problems of teachers (McLaughlin & Zarrow, 2001). Researchers who adopt an integrative view of PD assert that PD should involve the principles of all these paradigms in some measure.

In addition to the models above, Guskey (2002) proposed an alternative model to teacher PD, the model of teacher change, in which PD programs focus on three main goals: (i) change in the instructional practice of teachers, (ii) change in their beliefs and attitudes, and (iii) change in students' learning outcomes. The order of this process is significant. In contrast to the belief that PD begins with a change in the attitudes and beliefs of teachers, which will then lead to a change in teachers' instruction and ultimately enhanced learning outcomes, this model is based on the idea that it is only when teachers see evidence of learning in their students that their attitudes and beliefs begin to change.

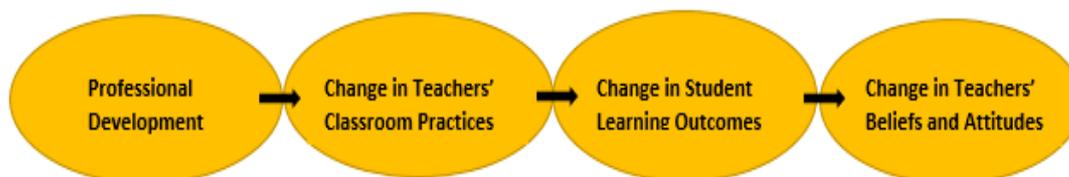


Figure 1. The model of teacher change by Guskey (2002).

Villegas-Reimers (2003) divided PD models into two categories: organizational partnership models, which are generally implemented in the form of teacher and school networks or partnerships, and small group or individual models, which include workshops, seminars, action research, reflective practice, teaching journals, and portfolios. These models can also be used in combination depending on context.

Kennedy (2005, p. 236) offered a framework consisting of nine models of CPD and explained that “training,” “award-bearing,” “deficit,” and “cascade” as transmission methods do not allow teachers to manage their learning, while “standards-based,” “coaching/mentoring,” and “community of practice” are more transformational models with more space for teacher autonomy. The last two, “action research” and “transformative models,” give teachers more autonomy and provide them with the power to follow and control their PD. The models’ main characteristics are:

- **Training:** a skills-based model that helps teachers refresh and develop their skills with the guidance of an “expert” who generally determines the content and process of the training
- **Award-bearing:** external validation such as quality assurance done by a funding institution
- **Deficit:** a performance-based model aimed at addressing teachers’ weaknesses to enhance their performance
- **Cascade:** a model in which teachers participate in a training program individually and “disseminate” knowledge and skills gained from the program to other colleagues
- **Standards-based:** a model based on a behaviorist stance that concentrates on teacher competence and related rewards
- **Coaching/mentoring:** a professional dialogue or partnership between two colleagues discussing and sharing knowledge, beliefs, and experiences on equal terms, or alternatively taking the more hierarchical form of a novice and a more experienced teacher
- **Community of practice:** a model based on involving a group of participants, such as teachers, academics, schools, etc., whose interactions are believed to create new learning opportunities for all members
- **Action research:** an inquiry-based model that can encourage teachers to question their instruction and result in teacher autonomy
- **Transformative:** a blend of the eight models above, as suggested by Kennedy (2005)

Listing the various PD models, Kennedy (2005) concluded that there is no one right model of PD, and that it is vital to ask “why” as often as “how” in the course of PD policy-making. Most importantly, teachers must become the means of their own development, in contrast to teachers who receive information and skills through dictation in a top-down way (Muijs et al. 2004, as cited in Rose & Reynolds, 2009, p. 220).

Richards and Farrell (2005), suggested four types of PD practices: “individual”, “one-to-one”, “group-based” and “institutional” as shown in Figure 2:

Individual	One-to-one	Group-based	Institutional
Self-monitoring	Peer coaching	Case studies	Workshops
Journal writing	Peer observation	Action research	Action research
Critical incidents	Critical friendships	Journal writing	Teacher support groups
Teaching portfolios	Action research	Teacher support groups	
Action research	Critical incidents		
	Team teaching		

Figure 2. Types of professional development by Richards & Farrell (2005).

In a more recent work, Borg (2015a, pp. 3-4) proposed some PD practices that involve practical, improvement- and research-oriented elements. These practices embody “participatory, social, inquiry-driven and evidence-based professional learning, set in a context where teachers are the key decision-makers with appropriate expert support and leadership.” These PD activities are proposed as follows:

- **Self-study** teacher research, action research, exploratory practice
- **Lesson-study** collaborative lesson planning, teaching and learning of teachers in a research cycle
- **Reading groups** meetings to discuss the issues read about in books
- **Reflection groups** meetings to share experiences and reflect on teaching and learning
- **Peer observation** peers giving feedback on one another’s lessons in a nonjudgmental way
- **Professional learning communities** meetings held by teacher groups to discuss issues in teaching and learning
- **Curriculum study groups** a group of teachers collaborating to improve the curriculum in a school
- **Collaborative materials writing** a group of teachers collaborating to design learning materials
- **Mentoring schemes** a practice in which teachers with more experience support novice teachers
- **Personal learning networks** using social media to interact with other professionals in the field

Despite such varied practices, no single version produces “universal success” (Borg, 2015a; Guskey, 2000) Thus, PD programs must be designed and implemented with consideration of the needs and demands of teachers, students, and schools. Furthermore, PD programs or practices should provide teachers with the opportunity to develop an understanding of teaching and learning as well as improve their knowledge and practice. Furthermore, these programs should involve the aspects of inquiry, collaboration, evaluation, and follow-up without ignoring the context. In the following subsections, some of the practices that have been suggested as constituting effective PD will be discussed in light of their benefits and drawbacks.

Action Research

Action research (AR) has become a popular PD practice in second language teaching. It is based on reflection on and research into classroom practice (Burns, 2010). AR is defined by Richards and Farrell (2005, p. 231) as “teacher-conducted classroom research that seeks to clarify and resolve practical teaching issues and problems.” It comprises a series of activities during which a problem is identified, data about that particular problem are collected, and a strategy

to solve the problem is devised, attempted, and finally its effects are observed. It is considered to be beneficial for teachers to get to know themselves and learners better as well as improve their teaching skills (Burns, 2010). However, as AR requires much time and high engagement over the course of the process, it might be better implemented with teacher collaboration.

The benefits of AR are that it is instant, explicit, and responsive to the needs of teachers. First, AR can offer teachers a methodology to explore and enhance their teaching, as it involves reflective thinking and practice, which can lead to improvements in instruction. Due to the review, exploration and clarification processes, teachers can form links between theory and practice, which can turn into experience and contribute to teacher PD (Brown & Macatangay, 2002; DeLong & Wideman, 1998; McNiff, Lomas, & Whitehead, 1996). Moreover, getting involved in AR or “professional inquiry” might encourage teachers to become “teacher-researchers/practitioners,” and the data collection part of the process might help “improve student and teacher learning and performance” (Broad & Evans, 2006, p. 15). With its focus on research and reflection on teaching and learning, AR can help teachers become more autonomous and critical professionals who endeavor to suggest solutions to classroom problems.

Lesson Study

Lesson study (LS) is defined as the “systematic investigation of classroom pedagogy conducted collectively by a group of teachers/students, with the aim of improving the quality of teaching and learning” (Tsui & Law, 2007, p. 1294). Dudley (2014, p. 1) stated that LS is a “highly specified form of classroom action research focusing on the development of teaching practice knowledge.” LS includes many elements of effective PD programs, being contextual, practical, collaborative, student-centered, and research-oriented (Murata, 2011). Dudley (2014, p. 4) further mentioned that LS can enhance both experienced and inexperienced teachers’ professional learning. Through cycles of collaborative planning, observation, and analysis, teachers can see the features of student learning “through eyes of others as well as through their own” and have the opportunity to “compare actual learning observed in the research lesson with the learning we imagined when we planned it.”

However, LS could not be considered without its drawbacks. Understanding the model and its components, preparation before lesson planning, workload, arranging time for the meetings, and sustainability are among the main difficulties experienced by teachers during the process. However, these hardships can be overcome through peer and institutional support. Another suggestion is the involvement of a mentor teacher with LS experience who could also facilitate the process for less experienced group members (Bayram & Bıkmaz, 2018; Fatimah, 2013). Despite its downsides, LS can grant teachers a perspective on student learning and motivate them to perform observation, research, and collaboration to positively impact the teaching and learning in their classrooms.

Peer Observation

In peer observation, a group of teachers alternates in observing one another’s teaching and reflects on the data gained from the in-class observation, audio-, or video-taping of a lesson. Bell (2001) reported that observers or “reviewers” can gain much from the experience of observing a peer’s lessons. For inexperienced teachers, peer observation gives them a chance to observe more experienced teachers, while for experienced teachers, it allows them to see another teacher teaching and managing his/her class. It is also possible to learn a variety of teaching techniques and strategies from one another. While observing a colleague, the observer may construct personal meanings through “observing, analyzing data, reflecting this onto their own teaching, and making decisions about further classroom work” (Engin & Priest, 2014). According to Richards and Farrell (2005), peer observation is a way of forming collegiality, a means of collecting data about teaching and raising self-awareness of one’s teaching practice, as well as an opportunity for receiving feedback from a colleague.

Peer observation may create negative attitudes among teachers for being judgmental; however, the central issue is the teaching rather than each teacher, so there is no place for evaluation in this practice (Richards & Farrell, 2005). The entire process must be conducted in a non-judgmental way. Only when constructive feedback is exchanged between the group members does peer observation become a tool for learning and an appropriate approach to reflective practice. Similarly, Bell (2005) advised that the real focus of peer observation should be on helping teachers

improve their teaching practice so that they can have a mutual experience in which they observe, share insights, and offer assistance to each other. Including peer feedback, reflective practice, and evaluation aspects, peer observation can enable teachers both to assess themselves and their instruction and to see how their peers teach the same material.

Professional Learning Visits

With the enhanced forms of communication available nowadays, it is possible to form new “professional networks” and “school-university partnerships” that can encourage teachers to learn outside school and be exposed to new perspectives (Liebermann, 2000). As professional learning does not happen only by attending training programs or seminars, continuous learning should become a way of living or a regular activity in a teacher’s life (Tobin, 1998). Liebttag and Ark (2017) suggested that school visits are “one of the best forms of professional learning.” When teachers are given the opportunity to visit another department, school, or institution, they often return with comments like “that was the best PD I’ve had for a long while” (Allison, 2014, p. 67). Furthermore, Liebttag and Ark (2017) stated that teachers can gain various experiences through school visits. First, school visits give teachers the opportunity to observe the practice on-site and hear about experiences from the original source. Second, when teachers leave their “comfort zone,” they can plant the seeds of a new collaborative experience, through which they can see how their colleagues practice and learn creative ideas to apply in their own classes.

However, it is important that those who attend school visits have a tolerant, eager, and appreciative attitude towards this type of practices. If conducted in an atmosphere of resistance and disagreement for any reason, the program is likely to fail without achieving its objectives. Thus, school administration or team leaders must make clear the motives for organizing such programs and explain to teachers the expected outcomes of the program (U.S. Department of Education Academy for Educational Development, 2010).

Self-Observation

Self-observation leading to self-awareness and reflection is regarded as the basis of PD, “essential ingredients, even prerequisites, to practicing reflective teaching” (Bailey, Curtis, & Nunan, 2001, p. 22). It can be practiced by observing another teacher’s class, audio or video recordings of lessons, doing in-class surveys, holding interviews with students, colleagues, and supervisors, keeping teaching journals or portfolios, and preparing lesson reports on relevant parts of lessons (Richards & Farrell, 2005; Mermelstein, 2018). Conducted in any one of these ways, self-observation provides the opportunity to question what went well and what did not in a lesson, allowing teachers to learn from their experiences. When video recording, the whole classroom must be recorded without disturbing the students so that it is possible to observe how students respond and react to the lesson plan as well as how teacher behavior, language, and position impact learning. Furthermore, doing surveys and interviews with the aim of receiving feedback from students and colleagues is also useful for teachers to reflect on their own practice. Despite requiring more time than other practices, teachers may also keep a teaching journal or a portfolio that will help them record teaching and learning problems and professional experiences for the purposes of self-evaluation and improvement of their future instruction (Mermelstein, 2018).

Engaging in self-observation can make for a good way for teachers to plan their PD because, by monitoring or observing their behavior, they can gather data about their own behavior and practice in an objective and systematic way (Bailey, Curtis, & Nunan, 2001; Richards & Farrell, 2005). That is to say, rather than being evaluated by a manager or a supervisor, teachers are in this way able to evaluate their own teaching (Richards & Farrell, 2005). If the practice is implemented properly and at regular intervals, it can become a tool for formative assessment, develop one’s teaching practice, and ultimately contribute to student learning (Goe, Bell, & Little, 2008). This way, teachers can get a better understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. By stimulating teachers’ self-awareness, self-observation has various benefits to teacher PD.

Student-Led PD

“Student voice” is a recent term in education literature that refers to the idea of students’ active involvement in decision-making about issues that are important to both students and teachers. The concept is based on continuous communication and interaction between students and teachers (Fielding, 2004; Lodge, 2005; Mitra, 2008). Flutter (2007, p. 344) argued that “listening and responding to what pupils say about their experiences as learners can be a

powerful tool in helping teachers to investigate and improve their own practice.” When teachers and students are able to trust and collaborate with each other, this might pave the way for a “positive learning culture within the school.” Flutter and Rudduck (2004) stated that listening to what students think about teaching, learning, and education can help teachers understand students’ points of views, think of alternative approaches and practices, and lead to a change in classrooms and schools. Allison (2014) wrote that there are arguments about the positive and negative sides of the “student voice,” with opponents arguing that the concept offers little to teachers and school managers. As teachers are the ones with all the expertise in teaching, students should not advise teachers on how to do their jobs. On the other hand, proponents argue that, as students attend a great number of lessons each year, they can say what affects their own learning positively or negatively. For the implementation of student-led PD, holding student-led learning walks, student question-and-answer panels, and student feedback are regarded as essential practices.

Teaching Portfolio

Teaching portfolio is a PD practice mostly based on self-appraisal and teacher-directed learning. Brown (2007, p. 506) defines it as “an assembly of professional handiwork, thoughts and reflections, beliefs and principles, and personal data.” By keeping a teaching portfolio, a teacher is able to evaluate his/her own performance and progress as well as set PD targets (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Furthermore, portfolios might serve as a demonstration of professional qualifications due to their summative nature on the one hand, or as a show of progress with selected documents in relevant areas of concern due to their formative nature (Brown, 2007).

Teachers may keep a portfolio as a demonstration of their work and evidence of how they think, create, and practice. A portfolio can be shown to a supervisor or manager to prove the progress the teacher has made. Besides, a portfolio can serve as a means of self- evaluation and reflection. Keeping a portfolio can encourage teachers to engage in self-assessment. With the help of a portfolio, teachers begin thinking about their priorities, goals, and areas for development in the future. Another benefit of the teaching portfolio is that it can encourage collaboration with other teachers. For instance, it might be used as for peer coaching or peer reviews. With recent advances in technology, portfolios can take the form of electronic portfolios, containing the same content and goals but presented on a computer (Constantino & de Lorenzo, 2002). In this way, it is possible to present portfolio content in audio, video, graphics, and text format.

Team Teaching

Team teaching is defined as “all arrangements that include two or more faculty in some level of collaboration in the planning and delivery of a course” (Davis, 1995, p. 8). In team teaching, the act of giving instruction is shifted from an individual teacher to a team of teachers with the aim of enhancing teaching and learning. As in all collaborative practices, the partners’ understanding of and respect for each other provides a basis for success (Buckley, 2000; Tajino, Stewart, & Dalsky 2016). While there is no one method of team teaching, it should generally involve collaborative planning, content integration, teaching, and evaluation of all teaching and learning processes (Davis, 1997).

As to the benefits of team teaching, Bailey et al. (2001, p. 182) stated that team teaching can help teachers with presenting interactive activities such as role-playing with one another, providing different linguistic models for the learners, performing peer observation, and debriefing after lessons with another peer, which allows for in-depth exploration of what worked, what did not, and why. Additionally, Carless and Walker (2006) suggested that team teaching can encourage communication between teachers, provide more support, make it easier to monitor students better in crowded classes, and provide different perspectives on teaching.

On the other hand, a lack of training in team teaching may cause conflict between team teachers and result in ineffective lessons (Horwich, 1999). If team teaching is implemented without clearly stated objectives and the distribution between the partners is unsatisfactory, it might pose a problem instead of enhancing teaching (Benoit & Haugh, 2001). Rabb (2009) remarked that the rules and roles must be clearly identified and the partners must be aware of how their efforts will contribute to the whole process. The downsides of this method might be overcome if teachers were able to select their own team teaching situation and their partners (Bailey et al., 2001). However, the biggest

challenge for team teachers as proposed by Rabb (2009) is the “time and energy” needed to work as a team. The time and effort needed to plan and prepare for team teaching may cause teachers difficulties in their tight and loaded schedules. Thus, supervisors or administrators should provide teachers with the encouragement, time, and understanding required for them to try out this type of PD practice.

Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

Globalization has made it vital for everyone, including teachers, to continuously learn, share, and collaborate in and outside the workplace. Recent literature on teacher PD has suggested that teachers must seek their self-strategies of improving their instruction and act on their own initiative. Despite the variety of forms PD programs may take, the effective ones do share some common principles. Effective programs respect teachers as individuals, taking their needs, ideas, and decisions into consideration without imposing on them. In effective programs, the focus shifts from teaching to learning, and PD should ultimately result in improved student outcomes. By sharing individual knowledge and expertise with each other, teachers can create a community of practice with their colleagues, engage in research, and reflect on and evaluate their practice to improve student learning. No matter what type of PD practice teachers are involved in, whether it is individual, collaborative, face-to-face, or online, it is essential to design and implement the programs in harmony with the needs and expectations of teachers, learners, and the learning environment. Thus, identifying teachers’ needs through surveys, in-depth interviews, or observations can contribute to making effective PD programs. Very importantly, students should be placed at the heart of all teaching and PD practice. For this reason, teachers need more opportunities to experiment with learners, focusing on how they think, learn, and get motivated. If their perspective shifted from teaching to learning, teachers could hear what their students were saying and shape their own PD practices depending on the feedback.

Although there is no “one-size-fits-all” PD practice, awareness is regarded as the key to improvement. As the literature suggests, self-observation can trigger teacher awareness, initiate reflection, and result in improved instruction. Thus, it is essential that observation, either by oneself or by peers, is encouraged among teachers by school administrations, senior teachers, and teacher trainers, expressing how these practices can facilitate PD and what sorts of benefits teachers can expect from the process. Though encouraging teachers to learn from each other’s ideas, knowledge, and practices, peer observation can be met with resistance from teachers, as they might mistakenly think that they will be judged, criticized, or evaluated during the process. Particularly in societies where there is an absence of collaborative culture, it would not be unexpected in the first place for teachers to be resistant to peer observation. However, if the aims and procedures are openly discussed with teachers and those with experience in peer observation guide inexperienced teachers, teachers’ prior concerns and prejudices might be overcome. Thus, collaborative practices should be integrated into PD programs and encouraged more among teachers. This might also help overcome teacher isolation as well as their fear of observation and collaboration.

Furthermore, by participating in professional learning visits, teachers can build rapport with other teachers who work in other institutions and share their knowledge and experience. Very importantly, they can realize that they are not the only ones who face certain concerns and problems in their profession. This might come as a relief to teachers and motivate them. Collaborative PD practices like professional learning visits, peer observation, team teaching, and lesson study might be challenging in light of teachers’ other duties because they might require a lot of time and effort to prepare for, implement, and evaluate. Until teachers have adjusted to collaboration and are able to benefit from its advantages, they might feel uncomfortable and dissatisfied trying to achieve several things at once. This might negatively affect the quality of their work, decrease their motivation, and make them feel like there is no opportunity for PD. In this case, administrator support is essential. Without receiving support from their supervisors or line managers, teachers may feel unconfident about taking steps forward in their development. Thus, administrators have as much responsibility to design and conduct effective PD programs as teachers do.

As the literature suggests, action research and lesson study can enable teachers to conduct classroom research, develop their research skills, and improve the quality of teaching and learning in their classrooms. If teachers are supported in doing research either individually or in collaboration with other colleagues, they can apply theory in practice in a real environment. Furthermore, teachers can keep a record of the experience from a study or research in a teaching portfolio and reflect on their learning throughout the process.

On the other hand, PD programs are unique and vary depending on context and the needs and profiles of participants. Thus, it is important to plan context-specific and teacher-led PD through which teachers, learners, and schools can achieve positive outcomes. PD can impact quality only when all the stakeholders have a shared vision of and similar expectations from education. For this reason, there should be more collaboration and cooperation among universities, school leaders, teacher trainers, and educators to enhance the standards of teaching and learning. Pre-service and in-service staff and policy-makers should work together and exchange ideas and experiences more often. There should be more communication between teachers, who can benefit from opportunities to observe each other and to teach and reflect on teaching together. Finally, no further improvement can be expected without evaluation and follow-up. A PD program should be evaluated by all participants and periodically redesigned in line with the feedback. Only if a program is sustainable and has a significant duration can we make sound decisions about its strengths, weaknesses, and impacts.

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