Research Paper   **Education**

Professional Development of Teachers: A Paradigm Shift

*Preeti Sharma   Assistant Professor, Kamal Institute of Higher Education and Advanced Technology, I.P.University, delhi.

ABSTRACT

Teacher development has moved beyond simple in-service workshops and has expanded into a more robust system of continuing education. In order to advance in their careers, teachers should seek out professional development of Educators must understand the concepts in processing professional development and what it means to education. The National Staff Development Council (2007) created a set of nine standards that all professional development should follow. They include content knowledge and quality teaching, research-basis, collaboration, diverse learning needs, student learning environments, family involvement, evaluation, data-driven design, and teacher learning. Through this paper, The researcher want to throw the light on some of the important aspects of Professional Development of teachers.

KEYWORDS   Professional Development, Teachers

Introduction

Professional development refers to the development of a person in his or her professional role. According to Glattenhorn (1987), by gaining increased experience in one's teaching role they systematically gain increased experience in their professional growth through examination of their teaching ability. Professional workshops and other formally related meetings are a part of the professional development experience (Ganzer, 2000). Much broader in scope than career development, professional development is defined as a growth that occurs through the professional cycle of a teacher. Moreover, professional development and other organized in-service programs are designed to foster the growth of teachers that can be used for their further development. One must examine the content of those experiences through which the process will occur and how it will take place.

This perspective, in a way, is new to teaching in that professional development and in-service training simply consisted of workshops or short term courses that offered teachers new information on specific aspects of their work .Many have referred to this dramatic shift as a new image or a new module of teacher education for professional development. In the past 15 years there have been standards-based movements for reform (Consortium for Policy Research in Education, 1993; Hord, 2004; Kedzior & Fifield, 2004: Sparks, 2002). The key component of this reform effort has been that effective professional development has created a knowledge base that has helped to transform and restructure quality schools.

Much of the available research on professional development involves its relationship to student achievement. Researchers differ on the degree of this relationship. Variables are the school, teacher, student level related to the level of learning within the classroom, parent and community involvement, instructional strategies, classroom management, curriculum design, student background knowledge, and student motivation. Richardson, (2003) published a list of characteristics associated with effective professional development, stating that such programs would optimally be: "statewide, long term with follow-up; encourage collegiality; foster agreement among participants on goals and visions; have a supportive administration; have access to adequate funds for materials, outside speakers, substitute teachers, and so on; encourage and develop agreement among participants; acknowledge participants existing beliefs and practices; and make use of outside facilitator/staff developers." (p. 402)

Professional Learning Approach

Professional Learning for teachers is varied and responsive to individuals' needs. Structured programs are available alongside more flexible programs where teachers identify their own learning needs. To complement the variety of programs, there are a number of approaches to learning which can be tailored appropriately to fit the individual's' requirements.Tried and tested professional learning strategies can, when implemented effectively, improve teacher practice and student learning which can be Improved through **Action Research** and **Professional Learning Terms**.

Action Research

Action research can support teachers, as researchers, to investigate and better understand their work. It is participative in that the researcher is also the practitioner - the teacher. The examination of teacher practice drives the action research process. While action research can provide learnings about the practice of teaching it can also influence policy decisions. The action research process is a cycle based on continuous learning. The cycle involves selecting the focus area, planning, implementing and acting on the plan, observing and collecting data, analysing, reflecting, re-planning and responding.

Professional Learning Terms

Professional Learning Teams can contribute significantly to schools becoming learning communities by fostering a culture of collaboration and collective responsibility for the development of effective teaching practices. Teams need to carefully plan the process they follow to achieve their objectives. This process must include strategies for collecting student outcomes data, the preparation of action plans, procedures for implementation, and methods of evaluating the impact of their work on teacher practice and student learning. Teams also need to be aware of requirements for successful teamwork, including - someone with high level leadership skills, time to meet regularly and reflect in a meaningful way, and support from the school leadership team. Developing the trust and capacity to work collaboratively is very important for the success of Professional Learning Teams. It takes time and persistence.

Types of Professional Learning Terms

Case Discussions: Case discussions provide teams of teachers with the opportunity to reflect on teaching and learning by examining narrative stories or videotapes that depict school, classroom, teaching or learning situations. Cases are usually brief, rough and ready evidence of what students have done, said or written in class. They focus on events such as a

teaching dilemma, students engaged in an inquiry based activity, images of student thought processes, or teaching strategies in action. The cases normally describe the context of the class, what the teacher intended to do, and what actually happened, using pieces of dialogue and student work where necessary. The final part of the written case is analytical and reflective, using the evidence to clearly identify the problem or dilemma for discussion. Teams engage in discussion about the case. They ask what might be confusing or difficult from the point of view of the teacher or student, note their insights and then, for example, write them on butcher's paper in order to focus the discussion.

Study Groups: Study groups engage in regular collaborative interactions around topics identified by the group. This provides opportunities to reflect on classroom practice and analyse student learning data. Groups can also read and discuss educational research publications in a collaborative and supportive environment, over an extended period of time. Groups can pursue topics ranging from assessment and pedagogy to whole-school reform. For example, a group may focus on learning more about assessing students' understanding of key concepts. They may discuss research they have read, look at assessment examples they have developed and critique their appropriateness.

Features of Professional Learning
The studies are just some of the scientifically based research suggesting that certain professional-learning designs can improve teaching and learning, and what features of these designs have a significant impact. According to the research, high-quality professional-learning opportunities for teachers contain the following five characteristics:

Aligns with school goals, state and district standards and assessments, and other professional-learning activities.
Focuses on core content and modelling of teaching strategies for the content
Includes opportunities for active learning of new teaching strategies
Provides the chance for teachers to collaborate
Includes follow-up and continuous feedback.

The above characteristics indicate that a professional-learning activity meshes with the work of teaching. But the exact structure of professional learning might differ depending on the needs of the teacher, the school, and the district. Although there are only a handful of rigorous research studies on professional development, these have identified activities that can have an impact on teaching and learning. These features alone, however, are not a guarantee that teachers will improve instruction, but instead they are activities that have influenced teaching when well implemented. What follows are brief descriptions of the structures and features of professional development that researchers have found to be related to instructional improvement.

Programs for Professional Development of Teachers
High quality professional learning is one of the cornerstones of an effective school. It enables staff to develop the skills and knowledge they need to improve their practice and is central to improving student learning. Like the members of other professions, teachers and education support staff need to be continuous learners who see their own learning as being fundamental to membership of the profession rather than something that is incidental or optional. There is a range of professional learning programs and resources available for teachers and education support staff including awards, fellowships, and curriculum-focused professional learning. These are underpinned by the Seven Principles of Highly Effective Professional Learning which call for professional learning that is collaborative, embedded in practice and aimed at bridging the gap between what students are capable of doing and actual student performance.

Subject Specific Programs and Courses

Professional Development- Professional development opportunities on the Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority website available for principals, teachers and school administration staff.

Support Digital Learning - Includes information, advice, resources and professional learning opportunities to assist you to plan and embed the use of digital technologies for learning across your school

On Demand Webinars – A searchable archive containing recordings of past web conferences that have been run for teacher professional learning on subjects including English, Maths, ICT and Science'

Upcoming Webinars – A list of free professional learning opportunities which you can access from anywhere with an internet connection, using web conferencing software

Sustained and Regular Activities
Researchers and practitioners note that when the traditional programs of professional development—usually single-event, so-called "drive-by" interventions— are replaced by longer-term designs, there is a greater chance that teachers will improve instruction. For example, in the survey of 1,300 studies of professional learning mentioned previously, the one study with the most power effect on raising student achievement had teachers participating in the activity for about 60 hours over six months.

Job Embedded
This term has been included in many descriptions of high-quality professional development, often without a definition or explanation of what the term means in relation to the work of teaching. According to the National Comprehensive Centre for Teacher Quality, or NCCTQ, professional development is job embedded when it is grounded in day-to-day teaching practice, and is designed to enhance teacher's instructional practices around content. It is integrated into the workday, and part of a continuous improvement cycle. It is intended to improve student learning. It is directly connected to learning and application in daily practice. A teacher working with a teaching coach to plan and execute a lesson. A group of teachers meeting to analyze student test scores and discuss ways to change instruction and share important resources. An instructional facilitator conducting a model lesson for a group of teachers working on a particular instructional practice. These are job-embedded activities because they are authentically related to the work of the teachers involved and are informed by what the teachers are doing and need to do. These are not the only possible forms that job-embedded professional learning can take place, but they provide illustrations of how it might look.

Collaboration Among Teachers About Improving Teaching
One of many challenges facing teachers is the lack of opportunity to learn from colleagues, particularly in a setting where there is a structure and protocol for revealing excellent teaching practices and having a group of professionals discuss and learn from them. Many of the professional-learning designs that show improvements in teaching and learning include some kind of regular collaboration among teachers in a school or across grade levels—sometimes with an instructional leader—to work on better strategies and practices.

Coaching
Coaching is often part of professional-development programs and the research that does exist suggests that, like other features listed here, it works in conjunction with other aspects of professional development. If coaching is longer in duration, if teachers collaborate around what they learn from coaching, if they get to observe instruction and then talk about the observation with a coach, then it is more likely to be effective. This feature hinges on the expertise of the coach to do this work. If the coach is not an expert in teaching teachers, then it is unlikely that coaching will be effective.

Use Technology Wisely

Video can be a useful part of professional development, but like the other features mentioned in this report, it appears to be best leveraged as part of a program that includes other features as well. To illustrate this point, let's look at My Teaching Partner, a system of professional-development supports developed by the Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning at the University of Virginia. According to researchers, one or more of the above features are almost always part of high-quality professional development, regardless of the subject area; grade level; and location of the classroom, school, or background of the teacher or students. School context should be a key consideration as high-quality professional learning opportunities are put into place. Simply put, context matters, as it can and will affect the success of the program, for better or worse. It should be obvious that a coach who is an expert on beginning reading, for example, is probably not the best fit for a middle school where students who are struggling with the comprehension of complex text challenge teachers.

How Much Professional Development Is Enough, and How Well Is It Working?

Studies suggest that the more time teachers spend on professional development,   the more significantly they change their practices and that participating in professional learning communities optimizes the time spent on professional development. Therefore, it is striking that one national survey found that in nine of 10 content areas, most teachers said that they spent one day or less on professional development during the previous year.

While adequate time for professional development is essential, studies also show that by itself, more time does not guarantee success. If the sessions do not focus on the subject-matter content that research has shown to be effective, then the duration will do little to change teachers' practices and improve student learning.

Conclusion

Our changing goals for learning, coupled with shifts in curriculum emphasis and a deeper understanding of teacher learning and student thinking, have led to new findings about the impact of teacher professional development and how best to sharpen teachers' skills and knowledge. What matters most is what teachers learn. Professional development should improve teachers' knowledge of the subject matter that they are teaching, and it should enhance their understanding of student thinking in that subject matter. Aligning substantive training with the curriculum and teachers' actual work experiences also is vital. The time teachers spend in professional development makes a difference as well, but only when the activities focus on high-quality subject-matter content. Extended opportunities to better understand student learning, curriculum materials and instruction, and subject-matter content can boost the performance of both teachers and students

Bibliography

1.   Guskey, T. R. (1995). Professional development in action
2.   NKedzior, M., & Fifield, S. (2004). Teacher professional development. Education Policy Brief, 15(21), 76–97. New paradigms and practices.
3.   Richardson, V. (1999). "Teacher Education and the Construction of Meaning." In G. Griffin (Ed.) Teacher Education for a New Century: Emerging Perspectives, Promising Practices, and Future Possibilities
4.   Trends and new possibilities of Distance Learning experiences. Educational Media International. 37(1),39-44.