

---

## Strategies of Professional Development of Teachers

Dr. HELEN PREMA LATHA  
Assistant Professor,  
Grace College of Education, Padanthalumoodu.

*Professional development is a wide variety of specialized training, formal education or advanced professional learning intended to help administrators, teachers and other educators improve their professional knowledge, competence, skills and effectiveness. Teacher professional learning is of increasing interest as one way to support the increasingly complex skills students need to learn in preparation for further education and work in the 21st century. Using methodology, we found seven widely shared features of effective professional development. Seven major recommendations to improve teacher professional development.*

Keywords: Coursework, Authentic Artifacts and Learning Communities.

### Introduction

Professional development is a wide variety of specialized training, formal education or advanced professional learning intended to help administrators, teachers and other educators improve their professional knowledge, competence, skills and effectiveness. Professional development is learning to earn or maintain professional credentials such as academic degrees to formal coursework, attending conferences and informal learning opportunities situated in practice.

Teacher professional learning is of increasing interest as one way to support the increasingly complex skills students need to learn in preparation for further education and work in the 21st century. Sophisticated forms of teaching are needed to develop student competencies such as deep mastery of challenging content, critical thinking, complex problem-solving, effective communication and collaboration, and self-direction. Using methodology, we found seven widely shared features of effective professional development. Such professional development.

### Is Content Focused

Professional Development that focuses on teaching strategies associated with specific curriculum content supports teacher learning within teachers' classroom contexts. This element includes an intentional focus on discipline-specific curriculum development and pedagogies in

---

areas such as mathematics, science, or literacy.

#### Incorporates Active Learning

Active learning engages teachers directly in designing and trying out teaching strategies, providing them an opportunity to engage in the same style of learning they are designing for their students. Such Professional development uses authentic artifacts, interactive activities, and other strategies to provide deeply embedded, highly contextualized professional learning. This approach moves away from traditional learning models and environments that are lecture based and have no direct connection to teachers' classrooms and students.

#### Supports Collaboration

High-quality Professional development creates space for teachers to share ideas and collaborate in their learning, often in job-embedded contexts. By working collaboratively, teachers can create communities that positively change the culture and instruction of their entire grade level, department, school and/or district.

#### Uses Models of Effective Practice

Curricular models and modeling of instruction provide teachers with a clear vision of what best practices look like. Teachers may view models that include lesson plans, unit plans, sample student work, observations of peer teachers, and video or written cases of teaching.

#### Provides Coaching and Expert Support

Coaching and expert support involve the sharing of expertise about content and evidence-based practices, focused directly on teachers' individual needs.

#### Offers Feedback and Reflection

High-quality professional learning frequently provides built-in time for teachers to think about, receive input on, and make changes to their practice by facilitating reflection and soliciting feedback. Feedback and reflection both help teachers to thoughtfully move toward the expert visions of practice.

#### Is of Sustained Duration

Effective professional development provides teachers with adequate time to learn, practice, implement, and reflect upon new strategies that facilitate changes in their practice. Effective professional learning incorporates most or all of these elements.

We also examine professional learning communities (PLCs) as an example of a professional development model that incorporates several of these effective elements and supports student learning gains. This collaborative and job-embedded professional development

---

can be a source of efficacy and confidence for teachers, and can result in widespread improvement within and beyond the school level.

Seven major recommendations to improve teacher professional development.

#### Recommendation

Focus on teachers in low-income and crisis-affected contexts as professionals, learners and individuals

As with any vocation, teachers need to develop strong identities as professionals. In addition to obvious factors such as recruitment, remuneration, and opportunities for advancement, teacher professionalism is also impacted by access to quality professional development.

It's hard to feel like a professional when you don't feel competent, when you get no training or support, when you teach children with severe academic and emotional needs and when you have no idea how to address these needs. But not simply any professional development will do.

#### Recommendation 2

Develop, apply, measure and institutionalize standards for teacher professional development

We know from research what constitutes effective professional development. Despite this knowledge, within donor-funded humanitarian and development projects, there are no standards defining quality professional development and too few qualified providers.

Without a shared and codified understanding of "quality" professional development, teachers are often subjected to mediocre, and in some cases, malign professional development that doesn't help them and that in fact wastes their time and donor money.

#### Recommendation 3

Create professional development opportunities that promote teacher collaboration

The research on teacher collaboration everywhere is unequivocal. Collaborating with colleagues and the culture of trust and knowledge sharing that collaboration produces has been linked to increased teacher effectiveness, improved student test-score gains and teacher willingness to adopt new innovations.

To further promote teacher collaboration, the three actions should be followed.

- Design for collaboration, for example by promoting peer-to-peer classroom visits with time for feedback
- Strengthen peer-to-peer instruction,

- 
- Promote and nurture effective and active teacher learning communities.

#### Recommendation 4

##### Provide Teachers with Ongoing Support

Teacher “support” is not monolithic, but rather a multilayered array of different types of assistance that help teachers successfully transfer learning from a professional development setting to a classroom setting. It can include administrative, instructional, resources, peer support, supervisory support and instructional support from a “more knowledgeable other.”

To address this situation the guide proposes four actions:

- Develop systems for (real, “high touch”) instructional coaching—not just monitoring or data collection that we misbrand as “coaching”
- Use appropriate and available technologies to provide ongoing support
- Shift professional development away from workshops to more support-based interventions—modelling, coaching, observations and feedback
- Strengthen school leadership so that head teachers and directors can provide ongoing support.

#### Recommendation 5

##### Invest in High-Quality Teacher Educators

Teacher educators or teacher trainers, in- or pre-service, are often the weakest link in the teacher education ecosystem. Implementing agencies eagerly inventory the shortcomings associated with many teacher training colleges and ministry of Education-run in-service providers.

Teacher educators need the same skills as teachers—among these are deep content knowledge; different models of instructional strategies and assessment practices; learning and development of children and adults; clinical and supervision skills; the ability to model effective instructional and assessment practices; the ability and disposition to coach and support teachers and hold planned or informal meetings with teachers; and the ability to support teachers through observations, feedback, modeling, workshops, coaching, and/or planned/informal meetings.

To ensure those who are employed to advance teaching are effective in their work, the guide proposes the following:

- Recruit professional development providers with extensive teaching experience
- Strengthen teacher-professional development provider capacity
- For areas with no teacher educators offer audio/radio instruction, or didactic materials, and draw on skilled community members and other teachers to provide instruction in key areas.

#### Recommendation 6

---

Build instructional leadership at all levels of the educational system. School directors are second only to teachers as the most important school-level determinant of student achievement. They are responsible for the quality of teaching and learning in their schools. Yet too often we see poor instructional school leadership holding back teaching and learning. Schools in disadvantaged areas benefit tremendously when their lead learners, the head teacher and the school director, ensure that teachers are in their classrooms every day, covering the syllabus at an appropriate pace, instructing students in developmentally appropriate and engaging ways, and attempting to apply to their classes the knowledge and skills gained through professional development activities.

For the better involvement the following must happen

- Help Ministries of Education establish and implement instructional competencies for head teachers and school directors
- Promote collaboration among head teachers and among school directors
- Ensure practical professional development opportunities for head teachers and school directors.

#### Recommendation 7

Use Information and Communication technology (ICT) to provide access to content, professional development and professional learning communities

Technology—radio, mobile phones, TV and the Internet—can offer teachers, even in low-resource environments, access to content, to curriculum, colleagues and a variety of learning experiences.

To support the wise application of ICT three priority actions were

Offer audio-learning to support teacher development in and with particularly difficult-to reach areas and populations

- Promote the use of video for teacher self-study and to share models of intended practice
- Provide teachers with access to teaching and learning resources through open content and help them integrate this content into their instruction.

#### Conclusion

Poor and ineffective professional development hurts teachers. It hurts their students. It hurts their community and, since quality education is so highly correlated with economic growth, it hurts their nation.

While the above broad recommendations do not address all the intricacies of teacher professional development in fragile contexts, we hope that the INEE guide can jumpstart serious conversations about promoting the quality of professional development where it's needed most—in the poorest and most fragile contexts of the globe.

## Reference

<https://www.teachthought.com/pedagogy>

<https://www.nwea.org/blog/teacher>

<https://www.cuny.edu/lit/hseframework>

<https://www.nap.edu/read/chapter>