

Literature Review: High Quality Professional Development

Matthew A. McEwen

Bowling Green State University

## **Introduction to the Problem**

Education and change have gone hand in hand since the beginning it seems. There have always been ever different modes of learning and they don't seem to be slowing down anytime soon. It used to be that students would learn with a piece of paper, pencil, book, and a chalk board. Eventually education started to use movies, TV, internet, interactive white boards, and now we are on to the next stage which is digital textbooks. The trouble is that as our society and technology advances our use and understanding of it doesn't always match pace. Many teachers find it difficult to keep up with the ever changing landscape of education.

Therefore the problem with classrooms today as I see it is that there is not enough quality professional development for teachers. An article named "The New Teacher's Toolbox" talks about how easy it is to find professional development but yet outlines the frustrations of finding high quality professional developments (Romano, 2014). Further building off of this idea the demand for improved quality and effective professional development has grown in recent years with the further use of technology in the classroom (Creemers, B. P. M., Kyriakidēs, L., Antoniou, P., & Ohio Library and Information Network. (2013;2012;).

This study seeks to investigate the qualities needed to create high quality professional development.

## **Literature Review**

Professional development has been around since the beginning of education; perhaps called by different names the goals have always been the same. There are numerous places one can seek out professional development from in order to help push their teaching abilities

forward, but what constitutes high quality professional development is what these sources will be focusing on.

### **TLE TeachingLive™: Using Technology to Provide Quality Professional Development in Rural Schools**

In a study conducted by Dieker, L. A., Hynes, M. C., Hughes, C. E., Hardin, S., & Becht, K. (2015) found that rural schools especially suffer from the loss of quality teachers. They estimated that the cost of losing a quality teacher ranges between 20 to 150 percent of that teachers salary. In Connecticut alone the overall cost of losing high quality teachers is approximately \$67,000,000. It is believed that higher quality professional development can not only create better teachers but can help to retain higher quality teachers. The study outlines that professional development can be used to ensure that teachers are receiving the support and resources that they need to meet student's needs. The support this article speaks of is that of time and resources such as: books, technology, and financial aid. A supported high quality teacher will in turn be less likely to leave the profession and be able to better educate their students. (Dieker, L. A., Hynes, M. C., Hughes, C. E., Hardin, S., & Becht, K. (2015))

### **Student Work Drives High-Quality Professional Development**

In a study conducted by Blaine, J., & Haskin, M. (2006) found that simply giving professional development to teachers isn't effective unless it has a connection to the teacher and the subject. This study explains that the professional development needs to be built consistently into the teachers schedule with more time set aside for implementation. If the

professional development comes and goes with little to no follow-up the professional development has a lower impact on the teacher and the students overall. Therefore to achieve higher quality professional development a school system needs to commit to a professional development goal for a longer time frame than just a few hours after school here and there. (Blaine, J., & Haskin, M. (2006)

### **Lessons learned: Creating and participating in a quality professional development community**

In a study by Maurer, M. J. (2010) found that professional development often has little relevance to the teachers participating in it and a way to remedy this is through the creation of professional development communities which is part of a multi-step process. The first or three steps outlined by this research is that of creating a good fit: This requires the professional development to be applicable to the teacher. This is very similar to the way teachers try and show their students how their subject applicable to their students. This is not always an easy task, but the professional development should try to personalize itself for the various teachers or various teacher groups. Building off of the idea of teacher groups; the study outlines the second goal that needs to be met for high quality professional development and that is the need for the creation of Professional Learning Communities (PLC). PLC groups allow teachers to work in small groups and report back to one another on their findings. It is beneficial because the teachers are working on a smaller scale with teachers often of the same discipline; building on top of that the teachers learning and development is also accountable to this same small group. Finally the third area the study recommends for professional development to address in order to achieve high quality professional development is time for reflection. This time for

reflection goes in conjunction with the PLC groups for the study really impresses the idea that teachers need time to discuss how their implementation of the professional development has gone and how they can build off of what they have found. (Maurer, M. J. (2010)

### **How can we improve teacher quality?:**

A study conducted by Wilson, S. M. (2011) similar to the Maurer, M. J. study of 2010; outlines the necessities needed for high quality teachers in regards to professional development. One area that is discussed at length is the need for quality teaching materials to be made available to teachers leading up to professional development and following professional development. If there is no follow up with the teachers the professional development is less likely to have a measurable effect. The study also suggests that the school culture needs to support the professional development as well. All levels of a school need to be on board and involved for the professional development to take hold. This idea takes the PLC approach from Maurer, M. J. 2010 study and amplifies it to a school wide involvement. Finally this study advocates that the teachers receiving the professional development do need to have a certain degree of follow up in regards to what they have learned at their professional development. This idea builds off of the time for reflection that was outlined in the Maurer, M. J. 2010 study. (Wilson, S. M. (2011)

### **Summary**

After review it is fair to say that all studies reviewed in this paper agreed with one another that professional development is important for a healthy school system.

The studies conducted by Wilson, S. M. (2011) and (Maurer, M. J. (2010) cited specifically that teachers need to have a follow up with their professional development. This idea that it is not just a one and done arrangement for professional development is echoed throughout their studies and culminates in their belief that the school need to focus on an atmosphere that promotes professional development in the long run and on a much larger scale.

The studies conducted by (Blaine, J., & Haskin, M. (2006) and (Dieker, L. A., Hynes, M. C., Hughes, C. E., Hardin, S., & Becht, K. (2015) agree with one another in the idea that resources need to be made available to the teachers to help push their professional development forward. The resources they refer to include not only physical resources but also the time needed to implement and reflect on what they have learned which is an idea reinforced by Wilson, S. M. (2011) and (Maurer, M. J. (2010).

## References

- Blaine, J., & Haskin, M. (2006). student work drives high-quality professional development. *Journal of Staff Development, 27*(3), 22.
- Creemers, B. P. M., Kyriakidēs, L., Antoniou, P., & Ohio Library and Information Network. (2013;2012;). *Teacher professional development for improving quality of teaching* (1. Aufl.;2013;1; ed.). Dordrecht;New York;: Springer.
- Dieker, L. A., Hynes, M. C., Hughes, C. E., Hardin, S., & Becht, K. (2015). TLE TeachLivE(TM): Using technology to provide quality professional development in rural schools. *Rural Special Education Quarterly, 34*(3), 11.
- Maurer, M. J. (2010). Lessons learned: Creating and participating in a quality professional development community. *Science and Children, 47*(9), 32.
- Romano, M. (2014). Seeking quality professional development. *The Science Teacher, 81*(2), 10.
- Wilson, S. M. (2011). How can we improve teacher quality? recruit the right candidates, retain teachers who do well, and ensure strong preparation, good working conditions, and quality professional development. *Phi Delta Kappan, 93*(2), 64.