

Issues in Professional Development Planning and Design

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Introduction

Just as teachers are required to create lesson plans and activities to meet pre-established academic standards, professional developments require considerations of many factors to ensure quality and efficiency. Professional development has evolved from group presentations to models that focus on the specific needs of individuals. Fogarty and Pete (2007) summarizes the evolution from expert-led professional developments focused on groups to district-wide professional development plans, site based professional developments, professional learning communities and to individualized professional learning plan. The evolution from the group focus to the individual focus was primarily focused on the understanding that most professional development fail when teachers the stakeholders do not have a voice, information has no contextual basis, and creativity is not considered (Fogarty & Pete, 2007).

Effective Professional Development Planning

Steyn (2005) stresses that, "the design of professional development requires a new way of thinking and interacting and most importantly should be a step in the direction of improved student performance." (p.23). In planning professional development, it is important of establishing a common goal: to improve student achievement. High quality professional development focuses on teachers as central to student learning (Peixotto & Fater, 1998).

Tallerico (2005) establishes that in planning professional development, the focus should not be on the needs of adult learner, but on equipping the adult learners to focus on the students' needs. Jenkins and Yoshimura (2010) agree that professional development should identify what students' needs are to determine which direction should be taken to improve students' achievement.

However, Wells (2007) features Trek 21 professional development model that first collects data on participants regarding skill levels and their concerns. Wells (2007) distributed surveys that determined the level of experience in the subject, individual teaching style, and concerns. Although this could be viewed as a needs assessment, unlike the focus on what the learners want to learn, the focus is on what the learners know, to tailor the professional development to be at appropriate skill levels for them. Steyn (2005) also agrees that understanding teaching styles and school environment could influence the effectiveness of a professional development.

Consequently, mandated standards should be the basis of professional development planning. Professional development is shown to aid teachers in the implementation of new ideas especially those concerning content and pedagogy and when teachers have the opportunities to learn more about their teaching, they are able to transfer this knowledge into useful practice in the classroom (Borko, 2004). Lee (2007) agrees that a deeper understanding of content and pedagogical knowledge in subject helps to increase effective teaching practices. Sparks (2004) believes that focusing on the participants' intellectuality is important and that deepening understanding of what they teach can help them to broaden the strategies they use. Steyn (2005) emphasizes that it is important to continuously revise the staffs' professional knowledge, skills and attitudes in order to assist students to learn and perform at higher level. Professional development is supposed to respect and foster the intellectual and leadership competence of teachers, principals, and others in the school community (Peixotto & Fater, 1998).

Once the standards are considered, the students' needs are further evaluated. Rather than focus on various study areas, Jenkins and Yoshimura (2010) plan for professional developments by having teachers identify common low areas for students, and then targeting one area of particular interest.

Similarly, some professional developments use the backward model for planning and designing. Tallerico (2005) and Lee (2007) explain the use of reflective data and evaluation in planning professional development because it helps to guide the means to the end. In the planning stage, reflective data is used to plan activities that are tailored to the data specific to the goal. Steyn (2005) highlights that program evaluation as a vital and integral part of professional development and he introduces five levels of professional development evaluation. Each level builds on the earlier one, and the success at one level is required for the success at higher levels. Steyn concludes that ongoing professional growth is crucial if quality education to students is to be granted. He puts forward that the skills and knowledge of teachers can turn down over time. Consequently, there is a need for teachers to be regularly involved in quality programs of development revisit professional development in order to identify factors that will influence its

effectiveness.

Although data analysis is an important component of professional development planning and design, Sparks (2004) argues that focusing on data results in professional developments that are developed to meet compliance. These professional developments result in content that succumbs teachers to scripted teaching. As Eun (2008) describes with Vygotsky's developmental theories (which will be discussed later), teachers must develop their instructional strategies through stages of social interactions and psychological connections. If more and more focus is placed on the importance of results, and not on the consideration of the teacher's intellectuality, professional developments will become more and more geared towards scripted lessons and mandates.

Effectiveness of professional development

A further concern for those in professional development is what Guskey (2009) calls the closing of the knowledge gap. This concerns Guskey as it is; "a gap that is one between our beliefs about the characteristics of effective professional development and the evidence we have to validate those beliefs" (Guskey 2009). Guskey cites two works as those which choose to find fault with the professional development practices as they currently exist as being ineffective in improving student achievement. Yoon et al. 2007 analyzed research on professional development but they were unable to make any substantive conclusions regarding the effectiveness of professional development activities. Similarly, Blank, De las Alas, and Smith (2008), also reviewed the professional development programs of the National Science Foundation, but no evaluation was given regarding the professional development activities under the foundation's jurisdiction.

Collaboration is a major component that is discussed in planning professional development. Peixotto and Fater (1998) state that professional should be in the appearance of shared inquiry and involves long term planning. When teachers are given the professional development opportunities where they were offered chances to experience particular activities and then talk about the activities amongst themselves, there was more evidence that these activities were implemented later on in their own classrooms (Borko, 2004). This evidence is supported by the work of Cohen and Hill (2001) who found that when teachers were not provided with opportunities to use what they are learning in the professional development sessions then they are less likely to implement them successfully in their own classrooms later on.

In conducting planning, a planning team should be formed, including a faculty representative that would be able to provide insight into professional development activities (Jenkins & Yoshimura, 2010). Vygotsky's theory of development supports

the idea that social interaction between learners is a vital part of professional development (Eun, 2008). In Wells' (2007) Trek 21 model of professional development, collaborative work is emphasized in all stages of the professional development, including the planning stages. During the planning stages, a leadership team was developed to focus on designing the professional development.

Sturko and Gregson (2009) studied the effects of professional development activities on the learning and collaboration skills of teachers in Career and Technical Education (CTE). "The study found that different types of teacher learning collaboration occurred, depending on the context, process, content and structure of the professional development experience" (Sturko & Gregson, 2009, p. 34). In this study it was found that changes in programs required teachers to take on new roles such as that of mentor, coach and facilitator. These new roles required the teachers to work more in teams thus collaborative skills became of great importance. Sturko and Gregson believe that constant and on-going professional development in the workplace will be required for teachers to effectively change practices. It has also been shown that some teachers will complain when assigned to participate in one-day workshops run by "outside" experts who know and care little about the specific contexts of the school.

Unique implementation

Another concept is that of professional learning communities (PLCs). Servage (2009) found that there is an increase in the role of PLCs. In these communities, teachers work together to produce lesson plans, study curriculum, develop assessments with the ultimate goal of helping to improve student learning. The learning community has its beginnings in workplace learning (Servage, 2009). The difference in this case is the implementation of collaborative work in professional development. The work of Servage sought to establish what the learning community is in a professional development community. It is argued by Servage that the professional learning community will be used to reinforce what the schools are already doing. These collaborative learning communities are not being used to support current practice, but to reform those who feel that schools are in need of radical change (DuFour, Eaker & DuFour, 2005; Lamber, 2003; Zmuda, Kuklis & Kline, 2004). These works offer theories on collaboration, which will result in radical change while most such as Servage are directed toward using the professional development community to reinforce what is currently in practice.

Although similar to the idea of collaboration, one unique concept that was introduced was Eun's (2008) use of Vygotsky's developmental theory for professional development. Eun explains that learners, children and adults alike, move from one developmental stage to the next. First, learners need to socialize

with others to internalize the new knowledge, and then once the knowledge is internalized, learners should then engage in meaningful activities to apply their new knowledge. Following internalization and application, mediation is provided through both material and human resources. The final stage of the Vygotsky developmental theory in professional development is mastery that changes the attitudes and beliefs of individuals. Eun (2008) considers the psychological and social aspect of professional development.

Vygotsky's developmental theory supports other claims that professional development must be done through logical steps. Peixotto and Fager (1998) conclude that effective professional development is; (a) intensive and sustained, (b) occurs through collaborative planning and implementation; and (c) engages teachers opportunities that promote continuous inquiry and improvement that are relevant to local sites.

The time factor

Time is another area of concern for professional development planning and designing. Eun (2008) states that time is required for individuals to gain new skills and knowledge. Lee (2007) and Wells (2007) describe their professional development models, which is a yearlong process. Tallerico (2005) also shares that professional developments that are longer in duration allow participants to learn and reinforce content, because there is continuity in the professional development. Wells (2007) concluded that one area of the Trek 21 professional development model was the number of contact hours and span of time devoted to raising the teachers' comfort level on a topic. However, the issue is that in professional developments that are longer in duration, the activities are not always planned in logical sequence so that learning builds on prior activities.

Another aspect of time that should be considered is when professional developments should be held. Jenkins & Yoshimura (2010) found that when professional developments were scheduled around statewide testing season, there were fewer volunteers than in other times of the year. Personal and professional commitments could prevent teachers from participating in professional developments, but Lee (2007) suggests having various days for trainings, such as weekends, during the summer, or during the school day. In doing so, it provides opportunities for participants various opportunities to attend professional developments, while administrators are able to arrange for substitutes if need during the school day. Fogarty and Pete (2007) suggest that time should be designated for professional development. They suggest examples such as rescheduling time in the school day, extending time, or utilizing lunch and early morning times.

Systematic support

In addition to time, other resources that affect professional development planning is the systemic support. Systemic support could be in the form of human resources, administrative and parental support, and financial resources (Lee, 2007). With proper support, professional development planners can focus on content of the professional development. Peixotto and Fager (1998) outline six keys to success as follows: (a) ensure that district leaders and the school board support any proposed changes and share the vision, (b) ensure that district leaders are committed to listening to practitioners and building leaders, and will make adjustments based on stated needs, (c) use trainers and specialists from within the district, (d) enlist the help of highly trained administrators who are committed to continuous improvement of student learning, (e) train teachers in action research methods, and (f) use technology that can provide useful data about student learning and parent/staff opinions on implementation.

Effective planning also considers the participants. Fogarty and Pete (2007) share the belief that designers assume that adult learners are self-motivating and driven, but they imply that a professional staff developer must be aware of how to work with adults and learn how to facilitate change for the learners. They must be aware that not all adult learners are self-motivated and are resistant to changes for various reasons. Peixotto and Fager (1998) say an effective professional development activity is one that is rated positively by participants in terms of satisfaction with the experience. They believe that today, the call for establishing a link between a teacher's professional development experience and a change in the classroom that ultimately translates into improved student learning and performance is gaining strength. There are diverse needs to consider (Lee, 2007), fluctuations in participation and attendance (Wells, 2007; Lee, 2007), and individual perceptions (Jenkins & Yoshimura, 2010; Wells, 2007). Klein and Riordan (2009) investigated how well teachers implemented the professional development at one school. Professional development experiences were turned into learning experiences for the students. Many teachers report changes in their teaching when that teaching follows a professional development session but the Expeditionary Learning Schools Outward Bound (ELS) allowed the teachers to transfer professional development experiences into learning experiences for their students (Klein & Riordan p.62). This program was chosen as it emphasizes professional development that teachers can affect the teacher's practice and improve student learning. The program is noteworthy because it meets all of the 27 standards for NSDC staff development (Killion 1999).

Related to participants, grouping is an issue to consider in planning for professional developments. Trainings that are in large groups have been found to be

cost-effective in disseminating data, but does not provide individualization and choice (Eun, 2008). Eun also discusses the issue of group dynamics. Jenkins and Yoshimura (2010) and Lee (2007) suggest that participants be from the same school and have similar needs because it can become beneficial in cooperation and participation to diagnosing problems and guiding professional development content.

Mentoring model

The authors Robinson and Carrington (2002) talk about the implementation of a model of PD called *Index for Inclusion 2000* at a disadvantaged school in Queensland, Australia. They mention that a global recognition of students' rights requires school organizations to recognize value and provide for diversity. They suggest schools to address professional development on two levels: reculturing of the school to reflect inclusive beliefs and values; and enhancement of teacher skills and knowledge to better address the learning needs of all students. The *Index for Inclusion 2000* program is one resource that can facilitate the process of professional development and facilitate change in school culture, policy and teaching practice. The process used incorporates a critical friend and peer mentoring model within an action research framework, which together provide benefits for all involved in the professional development process. The process also clearly encourages communication and collaborative problem-solving between members of a school community. It has been enhanced by the professional development model cultivated in this collaborative university and school partnership which engaged teachers in professional dialogue at a number of levels. Analysis of data collected indicates that the enhancement in teachers' sense of ownership and relevance of PD, it ought to be undertaken in a climate of school reculturing and collaboration. The findings are significant in the ongoing development of models of review and development of school culture, policy and practice for more inclusive schooling. Furthermore, there is a need to provide increased knowledge, skills and support to ensure individual teacher learning is successful. Apart from the need for time, sufficient funding and resources have also been recognized as evenly important. Importantly, the focus on curriculum, pedagogy and staff pupil relationships have contributed to the extension of teachers' practices in teaching, learning and assessment to meet the needs of diverse learners. The authors Robinson and Carrington certain that this model for inclusive school development addresses school culture, policy and practice through collaborative reflection and learning will improve outcomes for teachers and students.

Leadership issues

Kose (2007) discovers a white principal's experiences in designing an effective PD for the teachers of an integrated middle school. Although principals cannot

assume total responsibility for addressing social issues within or outside of school, the practices delineated in this article provide evidence that principals can play an important role in this endeavor. Without principal leadership, systemic school change for equitable and critical student learning is unlikely. The principal specially designed different PD for the whole staff, certain groups of teachers and individual teachers. The different professional developments were effective because they met the collective teaching needs of the teachers. These differentiated professional development were designed to fulfill the different teachers needs regarding equitable learning and preparing students who come from diverse backgrounds. However, the author says further studies are needed to fully understand how these practices affect student learning by (a) provide quality differentiated professional development, the entire school as a learning system needs to be considered, (b) curricular coherence should be clear, (c) articulate the importance of curricular coherence and provide the encouragement, opportunities, and available resources for their schools to develop this coherence, and (d) provide subtle clues that are important for guiding professional development related to preparing students to affirm diversity and understand and address social issues. Overall, the essence of the professional development program designed is not only for equity and academic excellence but also driven by the commitment for diversity and social justice.

Implications for practice

If we follow the concepts of Peixotto and Fater, (1998) that we establish a common goal of improving student achievement as being the central point of professional development then it should follow that individual schools or communities would be able to employ professional development programs which would help the teachers be of better service to their students. This means getting to know the students very well in order to be best prepared to help them in a variety of ways. Standards that are created based on professional development will be both appropriate and attainable as the teachers will know precisely what to focus on in creating lessons for their students based on the professional development background they have nurtured and seen grow over time. This can only mean that practice will continue to improve as the teachers progressively become better equipped to meet the needs of more students as their professional development résumé continues to grow. This building of professional development means that we will need to build on what we learn level by level as Steyn (2005) has shown this progressive building of professional development evaluation will mean that teachers will have to keep up the pace with activities so that they are not left behind due to a lack of experience with professional development activities. There does seem to be the potential for teachers to fall behind in their skill building as

they will need to be regularly involved in activities but may sometimes find it difficult to arrange their busy schedules to fit in time for potentially helpful learning activities. Obviously, progressive learning over time will be the best method for the teacher to develop professionally but this may not always be practical given each individual teachers work environment.

As the teachers make efforts to “close the knowledge gap” they may have difficulties in finding professional development activities which would be most helpful to them. Guskey (2009) noted that there are potential problems with activities that will help to improve student achievement. This may require the teacher to go outside of their district or school to find activities which may be helpful in as they try to close the knowledge gap. This may mean that the teacher will have to use local universities or other sources to help in their professional growth. This can not only be time consuming, it can also be expensive, thus causing further difficulties for the teacher who wants to develop skills but is not being given the proper opportunities to do so due to a lack of time or funds.

Collaboration difficulties also have implications for practice. As Sturko & Gregson (2009) noted, teachers may have to develop skills, which call for them to take on new roles in the school. This also has serious implications for practice as teachers may have difficulties in collaboration due to time constraints or personality conflicts. Teachers who cannot work well together will gain nothing from their development experiences. Unique methods that may be tried such as in Servage (2009) may be very effective in allowing the teachers to develop skills to take on new roles but they may also be the source of conflict from a teacher’s lack of confidence in methods that are unique, thus having little evidence of continued success on which the teacher can base confidence in the method as it is employed in the classroom. Collaboration among teachers who have completely differing views on these unique methods may lead to a lack of cooperation and thus a lack of success in employing the activity in the classroom.

The time factor will have implications for practice as well. As we have seen in Lee (2007) and Wells (2007), such activities can be long processes. The danger in these long development processes could be that the simple length of time to complete them will cause some teachers to lose their initial enthusiasm due to the length of time it takes to see results or to be able to develop activities, which will be useful in their current classrooms. Teachers who attend long development activities may see their reasons for attending those activities become less important over time as their classrooms and students change. Systematic support such as that outlined by Peixotto and Fager (1998) will be essential in ensuring that professional development activities will be successful. Their six keys to success could be emulated by other schools to create a culture within the school or school system

that is dedicated to seeing that their teachers receive the necessary support to allow them to continue to work on their personal professional development. This commitment from all parties will help to ease any stress that teachers may feel over the long time period of the professional development activities. The ability to make adjustments and the inclusion of technology and opinions will give a psychological boost to those who may feel the strain of the long period of development. Much like the support that the teacher gives to the student, this support will help to keep the teacher focused and confident of a positive result, without this support, the teacher may feel alone and when problems occur, alienated which may result in not benefit being derived from the long professional development activities.

When the teachers are able to see a link between their professional development experiences and classroom practice this will have great implications for the improvement of the classroom experience for the students. As evidenced by the work of Klein and Riordan (2009) we can see that this link is very strong. This link between what the teachers learn and how that learning is passed on to improve student performance is actually the heart of what professional development is all about. Further evidence of the improvement potential is the improvement of the climate of a school (Robinson & Carrington, 2002). A good relationship amongst teachers will help in the amount of cooperation between teachers and through this cooperation both knowledge and ability to help students can be enhanced by having teachers who work well with one another to make the school work better. Finally, there will be implications for the leadership in the school as the principals will need to understand the collective needs of a school (Kose, 2007) the principal as a resource for the teachers needs to be appreciated.

Conclusion

As an administrator, the primary goal is to educate the students. Educating students has changed drastically over the years. Teaching no longer is only about pedagogical and academic knowledge, but also implementation of effective strategies and techniques to deliver knowledge to the students. To ensure that teachers are prepared to instruct students efficiently, administrators will utilize professional development as tools to improve a teachers' repertoire.

Professional development requires careful planning. Content drives professional development, and that content is derived from statistical analysis from students and schools. There are many theories of effective professional development, but careful analysis of literature has suggested that there are several qualities of professional development that lays the foundation. First, student needs must be assessed. Lee (2005) establishes that a professional development planner must first consider the need to educate diverse student. Sparks (2004) and Lee (2005) both emphasize the

importance of “top-down support for bottom-up reform” (Lee, p. 47). Teachers must be involved in the planning stages, and be active contributors. Tallerico (2005) and Fogarty and Pete (2007) stress that professional development must consider adult learning styles and tendencies, from cultural to social differences and similarities, to proper learning environment and effective use of time and energy. Finally, a collaborative culture must be developed. Collaboration is not only restricted to good team dynamics, but sharing common goals, mentoring, coaching, and involving all stakeholders to become active participants in educating the students.

A seed planted in the ground requires essential elements, such as water, sun, and time, to develop into a tree or plant. Likewise, a teacher can become more effective with professional development that nurtures, supports, and develops in logical sequence. As such, professional development planners must consider critical elements to ensure that professional developments are achieving what they were established to do: improve student achievement through effective teaching practices.

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