

Chapter 10

Professional Development for Quality Teaching and Learning: A Focus on Student Learning Outcomes

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ABSTRACT

Quality teaching and student achievement have been the focus of much debate and research throughout the American education system. Despite implementation of teacher professional development, concerns remained about its effectiveness regarding quality teaching and student achievement. Thus, a paradigm shift ensued to promote effective, on-going capacity-building teacher professional development, known as job-embedded professional development. Educational milieus experienced reforms ranging from high-stakes testing to the standards movement, and recently, teacher evaluations incorporating value-added measures, all of which underscore professional development significance. The purpose of this chapter is to review, analyze, and synthesize current literature on teacher professional development, the need for job-embedded professional development, implementation challenges, and the relationship between teacher professional development and student learning outcomes. The chapter also examines gaps in the literature, followed by solutions, recommendations, and future research directions.

INTRODUCTION

In the current educational milieu, teachers increasingly are tasked with challenges associated with high-stakes testing, the standards movement, rigorous evaluation measures, and meeting the instructional and assessment needs of individual students who reflect increasingly diverse populations, all while striving to empower students with citizenship and 21st century skills. Thus, to address these challenges, the need for effective professional development is essential through its ability to provide quality, on-going training, especially as educators often are asked to achieve more, with fewer resources, and given that traditional

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teacher professional development has often been comprised of short-term workshops or conferences that offer little or no follow-up or support (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009).

The significance of quality teaching and effective professional development and the impact on student learning outcomes holds importance for a range of educational stakeholders including, but not limited to, current and pre-service teachers, building- and district-level administrators, curriculum specialists, teacher educators, teacher education programs, higher education, students, parents, professional associations, and officials at the local, state, and federal levels who shape education policy.

The chapter begins with an Introduction that establishes the significance of quality teaching and learning and its relationship to teacher professional development and student learning outcomes (Barbour & Mourshed, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 1997a; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Sanders & Rivers, 1996). The organization of the chapter, divided into six sections, is also explained. The second section, Background, provides readers with broad definitions of terminology utilized throughout the chapter, insights into recent and current national initiatives that impact teaching and professional development, and views from those who may question the efficacy of teacher professional development. The third section, Effective Teacher Professional Development, features an extensive literature review which examines and analyzes the current state of the literature to provide a context for readers to better understand the milieu in which quality teaching and learning and professional development occurs, and a framework for examining more recent research and suggesting further research. This section is divided into four subheadings including Landmark Reports and Seminal Studies: The Context for Teacher Professional Development, The Paradigm Shift to Job-Embedded Teacher Professional Development, Significance of Effective Teacher Professional Development on Student Learning Outcomes, and Gaps in the Literature.

The fourth section, Solutions and Recommendations, provides solutions and recommendations for numerous educational stakeholders regarding issues and concerns presented in the third section. The fifth section, Future Research Directions, discusses opportunities and suggestions for future research related to the chapter topic. The sixth section, Conclusion, provides closing remarks. The purpose of this chapter is to present a thorough review, analysis, and synthesis of the current literature that examines teacher professional development, including an historical context, concerns with traditional teacher professional development, the paradigm shifts to job-embedded professional development which underscores the relationship between quality teaching and student learning outcomes, as well as recommendations and future research opportunities.

BACKGROUND

The context of teacher professional development has been shaped by public policy at the national and state levels, which creates classroom-level implications for teachers. For instance, *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* (H. Res. 1804, 1994), serves as an example of education policy that influenced curriculum and instruction that touted lofty educational goals regarding increasing high school graduation and literacy rates, earning the rank of first in the world in math and science, while providing 21st century skills, all by 2000.

Similarly, the standards movement, which began in the mid-1990s, significantly impacted teaching and learning (Burke, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 1997b; Marzano & Kendall, 1996) through its content- and skill-based standards on what students should know and be able to do across the K-12 curriculum. Currently, the national standards movement centers on the Common Core State Standards, creating

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