

Chapter 102

A Decade Later: Twelve Teachers' Retrospective Views on a National Programme for Teachers' Professional Development and ICT

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ABSTRACT

Today, an increased impact of information and communication technologies (ICT) in the society at large has lead teachers to engage in professional development activities related to the use of ICT. Even though this development has been prominent for more than two decades, its long term effects seem complex to determine. This paper is based on interviews with twelve Swedish teachers who participated in a national program for promoting school development and use of ICT in 2000-2001. The program was aligned with the pedagogical approaches set out in the national Swedish curriculum, such as a shift from teaching to learning and giving pupils more responsibility, introducing interdisciplinary approaches to teaching in teams, and a problem based pupils-oriented pedagogy. The analysis of the interviews show that teachers still feel a high degree of appreciation for the program, and that they share a relative agreement of the importance of the program for their teaching with ICT in the last decade. The general intentions of the program to be more concerned with school development and pedagogy rather than technology and ICT seem also to be present today as a long term effect.

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INTRODUCTION

The last ten to twenty years has seen an increase in the interest in teachers' professional development (e.g., Villegas Reimers, 2003; Yoon, Duncan, Lee, & Shapley, 2008). This may be due to an increased interest in comparing educational systems (Alexander, Broadfoot, & Phillips, 1999), as well as an increased global interest in the accountability of educational systems (Ozga, Dahler-Larsen, Segerholm, & Simula, 2011). The extensive literature review of Villegas Reimers (2003) makes it evident that teachers' professional development (TPD) is a broadly used term. Hellevé (2010) claim that the term is elusive. It also seems to be an area of concern for many stakeholders (Loucks-Horsley & Matsumoto, 1999). One concern uniting stakeholders is an interest in TPD that have effect. In some way or another TPD ought to make a difference. But since TPD is conceptualized in different ways, how this difference it so be perceived seems not so clear. It seems that it can denote a process of teacher change (Guskey, 2002; Mouza, 2004), as well as implicate teacher learning (Borko, 2004). TPD can also concern the improvement of teachers knowledge (Bailey, 2010), skills (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001) and practice (Sato, Chung Wei, & Darling-Hammond, 2008), and also to improve her or his students learning (Yoon, Duncan, Lee, & Shapley, 2008), as well as a way of steering the development in schools by implementing reform (Shymansky, Yore, & Anderson, 2004). A problem that follows is how to establish the effects of TPD, how it is to be measured, when, and at what frequency. For the problem of measuring the effects of professional development Wayne, Yoon, Zhu, Cronen, and Garet (2008) recommends multiple waves of data collection to provide information on the effects. It has also been argued that long term effects of professional development should not be measured to soon (Shymansky, Yore, & Anderson, 2004) and that effects on students achievement is far

from easy to predict (Yoon, Duncan, Lee, & Shapley, 2008).

In this paper, focus will be on the experiences of teachers taking part in a professional development program delivered somewhat ten years ago. One of the largest and most influential programs on the use of ICT in the Swedish school was the National Program for ICT in Schools (in Swedish shortened ITiS). It was financed by the Swedish government between 1999 and 2002. It is an example of a larger, government financed program in which the use of ICT is aligned with other initiatives concerning school development. This paper opens for a discussion concerning the possibilities of measuring long-term effects of TPD, as well as a discussion on the problems related to such an enterprise.

But before describing the case of ITiS and the experiences of the teachers participating in this study, a short account of research on the effectiveness of teachers' professional development will provide a framework for this paper.

RESEARCH ON EFFECTIVE TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Although the long term effects of teachers' professional development seem complex to determine (cf. Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010), and several barriers to teachers professional development have been identified (Diaz-Maggoli, 2004), there are many studies trying to establish what makes professional development effective (Boyle, While, & Boyle, 2004; Boyle, Lamprianou, & Boyle, 2005; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, & Gallagher, 2007). Studies have also been trying to establish if there is a relationship between different characteristics of professional development and student achievement (Huffman & Thomas, 2003; Johnson, Kahle, & Fargo, 2006; Shymansky, Yore, & Anderson, 2004; Yoon, Duncan, Lee, & Shapley, 2008). As

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