

IMPORTANCE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS

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Any professional needs to improve his skills, traits and competencies that contribute to his success in the workplace and this process is called professional development. According to Wikipedia.com: “Professional development refers to skills required for maintaining for career path or to general skills offered through continuing education, including the more general skills area of personal development. It encompasses all types of facilitated learning opportunities, ranging from college degrees to formal coursework, conferences and informal learning opportunities situated in practice” [3].

Glenn Martin described that “Professional development can be defined as the systematic maintenance, improvement and broadening of knowledge and the development of personal qualities necessary for the person to sustain their relevance and effectiveness at work throughout their working life” It is a continuous improvement process lasting from the time an individual decides to enter education until retirement [21;1]. Mann described that “PD is an on-going, self-directed and autonomous effort of a teacher to acquire new knowledge and skills and continually improve them after initial formal training in their career [1;104].

From these definitions we can see that professional development is an important thing for people who are engaged in professional activity and it should be continuous. Why it should be continuous? Because time never stands in one place. The demands of the society, the requirements of employers and consumers are increasing day by day. In order to meet these needs professionals should work on themselves continuously to learn, update, and improve skills, abilities, and behaviors all the time.

To achieve and assess performance improvement, the professional should always do reflection over his ways by answering the questions like Where have I been? What is my previous knowledge base or experience? Where am I now? What are my current strengths and weaknesses? Where do I want to be? What level of skill/knowledge should I obtain? How will I get there? What strategies should I adopt? and others.

Professional development is very crucial for teachers as well. Because teachers are the group of people who work with young people, who need in new ideas, in new approaches necessary for their upbringing and in tools and techniques for their development. Our observations showed that many teachers consciously or unconsciously develop themselves learning from their own experience, working with and learning from the experience of others and becoming more active in their professional activity. But they do not know the ways of developing professionally. Reviewing the literature we have found several ways to encourage professional development. From our point of view one of the most effective and cost efficient ways to help teachers refresh their knowledge and pedagogical practice is collaboration with other teachers of his own school by exchanging information and ideas about teaching issues. So, school authorities should create environment for their teachers to gather and share their experience, news and ideas.

The second way is to improve communication with other schools. By meeting teachers from other schools, teachers have opportunity to be in touch with different teaching styles as well as advances in their field of expertise. At the same time, sharing ideas, experience and good practice helps to spread new things beyond their own school and raise education system on a higher level as a whole.

The third way is to enable the teachers to take part in professional development courses. Most of local English teachers are attending courses in order to increase their reading listening, writing, speaking and teaching skills and take certificates to identify their level according to CEFR. We consider these courses to be effective to our English teacher to refresh their knowledge, to gain competencies as well as to develop their teaching skills. In addition to the classic ways of professional development, today’s teachers can also take advantage of online materials, courses

and opportunities of Artificial Intelligence, as well as teacher communities which are easily accessible and cost efficient.

Our survey has found that many young teachers desire to work with various education professionals, parents, and other stakeholders in the continuous improvement of themselves, and most of old teachers would like to improve their ability to use appropriate technology in teaching and learning processes. Small groups can help students with varying abilities to accomplish separate goals. But still teachers are not satisfied with the situation when the teacher isn't present within the group at all times, groups derive their own dynamic inductively [3]

Different teachers use professional development for different purposes. Some teachers have problems in planning, implementing, and evaluating effective instruction in a variety of learning environments, some would like to create and maintain positive learning environments in which students are actively engaged in learning, social interaction, cooperative learning, and self-motivation, the third group of teachers are eager to be able to use appropriate techniques and strategies that promote and enhance the critical, creative, and evaluative thinking capabilities of students.

In conclusion we'd like to say that there are variety of factors that impact on learners' achievement and teachers' role is considered as one of the influential factors among them. Even experienced teachers confront great challenges each year, including changes in subject content, new instructional methods, advances in technology, changed laws and procedures, and student learning needs. Educators who do not experience effective professional development do not improve their skills, and student learning suffers. So, professional development activities help teachers to be able to use teaching and learning strategies appropriate to each student's culture, learning styles, special needs, and socioeconomic background, use assessment strategies to help the continuous development of the learner and to create and maintain positive learning environments.

REFERENCES

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