

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES APPLIED IN THE WORLD AND SUGGESTIONS FOR VIETNAM

Do Phat Loi¹

¹Van Hien University

¹LoiDP@vhu.edu.vn

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ABSTRACT

It is no denying that professional development is significant to teachers as requirements for teachers change over time and teachers usually have to fulfill different expectations from different institutions. This article first reviews the models of teachers' professional development applied around the world. In order to have highly-qualified teachers, institutions should be concerned about establishing recruitment procedure and initial education for teachers, improving environments for teachers' development, creating an effective evaluation system and encouraging teacher commitment to making educational renovations. Finally, the paper also makes implications on what Vietnamese academic organizations should do to have an improved the teaching profession and learning outcomes.

Keywords: *teacher education, professional development, educational support, teacher evaluation.*

TÓM TẮT

Chính sách phát triển nghiệp vụ của đội ngũ giáo viên áp dụng trên thế giới và đề nghị cho Việt Nam

Phát triển nghiệp vụ giáo viên là yếu tố rất quan trọng vì yêu cầu đối với giáo viên thay đổi qua thời gian và giáo viên luôn phải đáp ứng các mong đợi từ các cơ quan làm việc khác nhau. Bài viết này trình bày các mô hình về phát triển đội ngũ giáo viên áp dụng trên thế giới. Để có được đội ngũ giáo viên chất lượng cao, các đơn vị giáo dục cần quan tâm đến việc thiết lập quy trình tuyển dụng và đào tạo ban đầu cho giáo viên, nâng cao môi trường làm việc cho giáo viên phát triển nghiệp vụ, xây dựng hệ thống đánh giá giáo viên hiệu quả và khuyến khích giáo viên sáng tạo trong dạy học cũng như cải tiến giáo dục. Cuối cùng, bài viết trình bày quan điểm về những trường học và cơ quan giáo dục cần làm gì để nâng cao chất lượng dạy và học.

Từ khoá: *đào tạo giáo viên, phát triển nghiệp vụ, hỗ trợ giáo viên, đánh giá giáo viên.*

1. Introduction

Teachers and educators have been challenged by their communities to produce standardized educational outcomes. Under the pressure from society and government,

they are required to equip students with competencies to become good citizens and workers. Also, undergraduates need life skills and mind education to deal with potential arising problems at work

(Mansilla and Jackson, 2011).

A question is how to accommodate teacher education so that educational institutions have high-quality teachers. A glance at many developed educational systems can give models for Vietnamese context. In these high-performing educational contexts around the world, teachers are the center of both improving educational outcomes and making attempts in bottom-up reforms. They lead reforms because they find themselves responsible for improving their educational contexts. They also make investments in their professional development in terms of time and finance, which is hand-in-hand with their use of a wide repertoire of pedagogic strategies. In addition, education management deserves consideration on account that it facilitates teachers' development and reforms (Leithwood, et al, 2004).

The educational outcome and teacher development are in line with effective learning, which will require rethinking of several main themes: recruitment and initial training of teachers, teacher development, support, employment conditions, teacher evaluation and compensation, and teacher engagement in educational reforms (OECD, 2011).

The four aforementioned themes are, in fact, interdependent, not in isolation, which is the key to policymaking and self-challenge. They consist of making teaching an attractive career choice, recruitment standard raising, ensuring high-quality initial teacher training, pay raise, effective teacher collaboration, improving working conditions, establishing an effective evaluation system, achieving educational reforms and

securing good relationships between the academic institutions' stakeholders and teachers' unions.

It is significant to have a look at successful educational reforms carried out around the world as references to discuss and suggest what should be done to develop education quality in Vietnam.

2. Findings and discussion

2.1. Recruitment and initial training of teachers

The very first main concern may rest against how to recruit appropriate candidates for positions as teachers and initial education for teachers as new recruits. Dynamic selective recruitment criteria and training to prepare newly recruited teachers can play a crucial role in running educational institutions.

The first thing that deserves educators' concern might be how to make teaching as an attractive profession. Academic institutions should bear in mind that providing a good working environment for teachers working professionally is more important high pay. Teachers who regard themselves as professionals may not be attracted to top-down institutions with bureaucratic management, in which their voices are not appreciated. However, they tend to seek for a place in the environment where they take responsibility over their professional responsibility and work and their opinions are received through social communicative channels. Institutions with job security and professional autonomy are also attractive to high-quality teachers. These areas should be established in explicit policies (Masters, 2002).

Secondly, those with appropriate abilities and skills as teachers and

managers should be recognized and nurtured from a wide range of sources. In Singapore, for instance, graduates who are considered potentially good teachers are suggested to have trial commitments to teaching careers via working as a teaching assistant. In the first three years, these teachers experience a system of assessment and evaluation on an annual basis and training in which they serve as teachers. An important principle is teaching should not be left to those with inborn talents only. A similar system is applied to potential managers whose leadership performances are under a close watch from their immediate and other relevant managers. They are given adequate opportunities to demonstrate their innovative campaigns, plans and strategies prior to getting an official appointment (Schleicher, 2012).

To institutions with a shortage of teachers, a complicated rewarding recruiting program serves as an essential part in the upheaval. In the United Kingdom, Tony Blair dealt with a severe shortage of teachers during his execution. Costly recruitment plans were carried out, aiming to improve the teaching career with an emphasis on flexibility and diversity of this profession. Within a three-month period, the number of candidates attracted to serving as teachers tripled and the ratio of vacancies to declined by half for all subject matters after a year (Schleicher, 2012).

Another aspect to be concerned about rests against teachers' engagement which results in development. When teachers engage more in their jobs, bureaucracy generally reduces as professionals, not supervisors, can take over key positions

and make decisions simultaneously. To accommodate this to take place, teaching should be considered rewarding and teachers should have responsibility for what they do. Finland, for instance, gave teachers a high level of responsibility, such as suggesting solutions to arising problems on campus in 2010. The social status of teachers was, therefore, raised when over 6600 applicants competed for 660 teaching vacancies and then teachers enjoyed respect in society. As a result, well-qualified teachers were found throughout Finland and they illustrated their eager commitment to their jobs as well as administrative work, such as academic advisors, researchers and thesis supervisors (Darling-Hammond and Rothman, 2011).

After being recruited, teachers often want to know about their job-related issues, such as what they are expected to do and who they are directly and indirectly responsible to; therefore, training new recruits is really vital. Of all, three most important issues which are worth school administrators' attention are guidance, appropriate training in theory-practice balance and lifelong learning framework for teachers. In particular, these need to provide new teachers with required certification, on-going evaluation, professional development and institutional objectives. Take example, in Shanghai, new teachers are required to work with senior teachers who are willing to support the new teachers to improve their performances in the classroom. These Chinese teachers are also expected to do action research to identify existing problems among students and suggest a solution which is considered to be effective. They are periodically required to

make a report on their students' improvement based on a regular assessment system. This is similar to the models for building professional teacher network implemented in other Asian countries where the teaching workforce is expected to collaborate and cooperate to develop themselves (OECD, 2011).

2.2. Professional development, support and working conditions

Academic institutions are far from knowledge mills. In one sense, their practices need to constantly change in that professionals believe that they can develop themselves in a professional working environment. In another sense, they are keen on making and experiencing revolutions which contribute to the development to a certain extent. Therefore, they should set policies for professional development, create an environment for effective teacher collaboration and establish effective employment conditions (Buckingham, 2008).

What educational managers should bear in mind is pre-service training for teachers is not sufficient since the (Unit: %)

requirements for teachers can experience revisions over time and differ from employer to employer. Thus, there should be diverse in-service training for new teachers may help them to update knowledge and skills, to which several aspects are central for bridging the gap between ideally-assumed environment and everyday practice. Firstly, after a probation period, teachers should be required to access well-structured and –resourced information channels in which they are closely supervised and monitored by an experienced teacher. Secondly, on-going training, practice, feedback and support should be concerned about. Teacher education which requires practice and feedback can provide managers with some prompts for administrative and educational amendments. Freshmen are mostly in need of assistance. Thirdly, this should be in line with the overall objectives of the institution (Cooper and Alvarado, 2006). They are given regular assessment and evaluation on their performances so that they are aware of whether they meet their job requirements and informed of any newly-revised education standardization (Fig. 1).

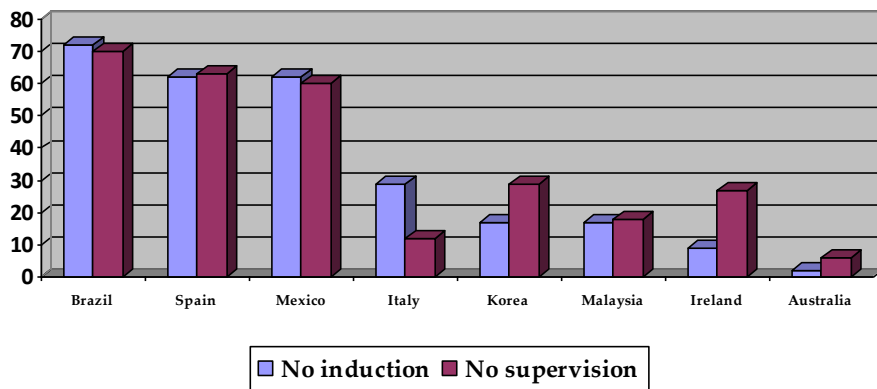


Figure 1: Ratio of new teachers with no induction and supervision by country

There is a relatively strong correlation between the ranking of education and the implementation of induction and supervision in these countries. The number of international students to Australia and Malaysia has increased in recent years, which surpasses those to the other countries.

However, there are a number of

teachers who are not keen on professional development. The six main reasons are conflict with work schedule, no suitable training, family commitment, fee, lack of support and no pre-requisite, among which nearly half of them cited the in-service training was in conflict with their work schedule.

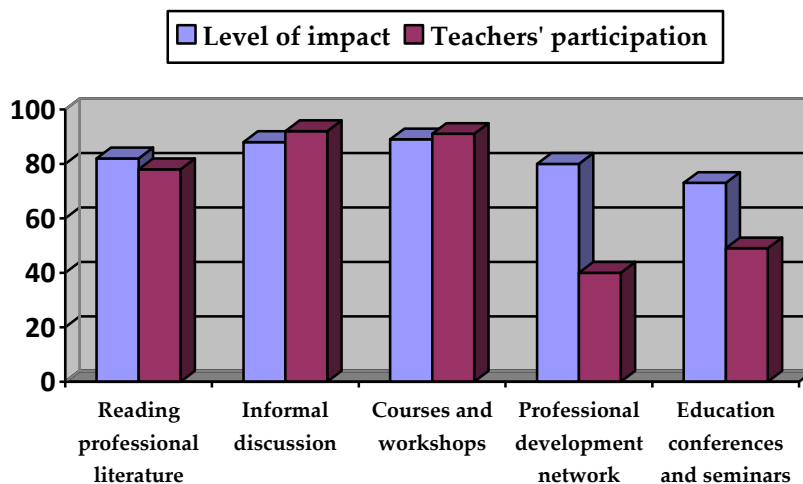


Figure 2: Common professional development activities by impact and participation
(Adapted from Harwell, 2003)

As can be seen from the chart, most teachers were keener on information discussion and courses and workshops which were also supposed to have greater impacts than other activities. In addition, teachers were also eager to read relevant literature review to widen their knowledge. They joined professional development network, but this was assumed to have the least impact of all. Conferences and seminars attracted teachers' engagement the least and this activity was not considered to have much impact on their career development.

It is also important for an institution to

encourage its teachers develop by setting an environment for teacher collaboration. There is no denying that teachers should share their expertise and experience systematically. Some countries provide teachers with extra money for their cooperative activities as surveys report this has good effects on teacher-student relations which is to foster school climate in several East Asian countries.

Teachers place dramatic emphasis on their relations with colleagues, students and school leaders. Great diversification can benefit teachers considerably. In Australia, the career path for teachers is

divided into four phases: from freshmen to experienced teachers. When they move up to the next phase, they are required to have and demonstrate their more profound knowledge and take on more responsibility. In England and Wales, when a teacher wants to be promoted to as a senior teacher, he or she needs to pass an assessment to show they meet standardized requirements, which is undertaken by an external assessor (OECD, 2011).

Alternatively, countries can use periodic reviews of teachers' professional development to measure how much its teachers improve in a certain time. Teachers, for example, can be required to renew their work permits systematically. This may provide opportunities to recognize and acknowledge their quality teaching.

2.3. *Teacher-related policy*

National and institutional policies on teachers can foster their professional development. School leaders should be wisely skilled at taking advantage of an

appraisal and evaluation system which is primarily based on teachers' fulfillment of their job requirements and career development and student performance. This system needs to be well structured and informed to all teaching staff.

It is essential to set up an effective appraisal system which is advancing from their achievements. In recent years, this system has focused more on what extent teacher appraisals affect learning outcomes rather than completing prescribed procedure, and policies. It is also worth administrators' concerning that this system should be carried out with care as this can be opposed to the stakeholders' objectives and interests. Secondly, only supposedly-guaranteed validity of evaluation and assessment strategies with standardized criteria interests the teaching staff (Fig. 3). For instance, this system requires training of evaluators and assessors and setting up evaluation procedures with significant qualified human resources (Bascia and Hargreaves, 2000).

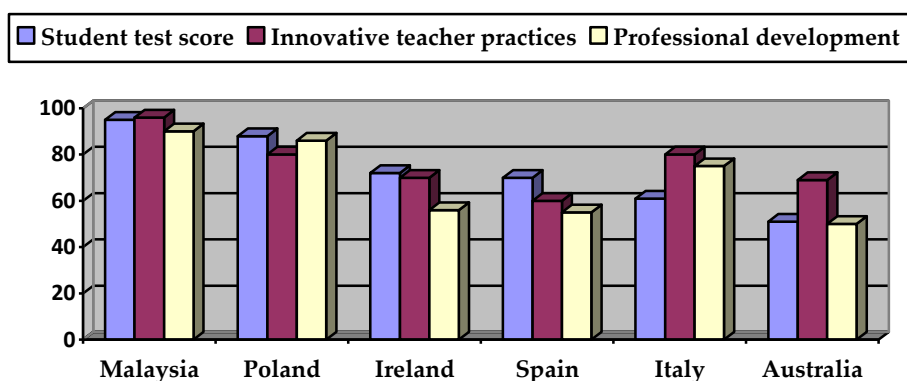


Figure 3: Criteria for teacher appraisal (OECD, 2003)

Of all the six countries, Malaysia was ranked the first with similar levels of

students test scores and teachers' innovative practices and professional

development. Differently, Irish students' test scores and teachers' innovative practices improved more than teachers' career development. The force behind the statistics rested against the implementation of their systems.

What should be first taken into consideration may be the positive impacts of appraisal and feedback on teachers. Statistics from some countries demonstrate that the system should include self-evaluation, informal peer evaluation, classroom observation and feedback from supervisors and peers. Teachers are likely to feel it fair to receive feedback rather than threatening as giving fears can undermine teachers' performances, but constructive feedback often makes them feel more confident and they in turn find some way to improve themselves.

It is also crucial to identify, nominate and reward teachers with good performance. The majority of surveyed teachers have said that their principals have not made and announced their effective teaching. In detail, feedback mechanisms should be involved in the school policies which are informed to all the relevant staffs. In a competitive labor market, a compensation scheme may be used to maintain the teaching quality and budget balance. In the United States, a high rigorous standard for teachers' qualification was established in 1987. Accordingly, outstanding teachers have been recognized and certified who receive annual supplementary pay and are documented for promotion. In Singapore, a comprehensive system of teacher appraisal and progression has been applied. Annual evaluations offer teachers incentives of

10%-30% of their base pays (Minxuan Zhang, Xiaojing Ding and Jinjie Xu, 2016).

2.4. Teacher engagement

No matter what model or approach is applied, teacher engagement plays the most significant role in education reform. Renovations implemented successfully by teachers in classrooms are the typical indications on teacher progression and engagement. This requires the responsibilities of teachers, those responsible for change and stakeholders.

Experiences of reforms around the world give some prompts on how to engage teachers in education reform. In Summit of OECD countries, delegates considered how to engage parents, teachers and administrators to support changes. Several main points given were building consensus on the objectives of education reforms and dynamically involving teachers in implementing change policies, developing realistic expectations to improve academic results, providing financial sustainability, improving teachers' professional motivation and applying effective co-ordination and leaderships. Stakeholders may find it costly to carry out all these things; however, it will bring materialistic things in return in a long run (OECD, 2011).

Teachers should take an active well-defined role in designing and implementing reforms. In particular, they need to analyze the effectiveness of their practices and their students' progress. Reform advocates can build a network among experts. In Australia, teacher unions are involved in setting professional

standards across the country, which is endorsed by the federal and state governments (MCEETYA, 2003).

Communication channels should also set up for all those responsible and interested in to join. Several organizations provide a forum for teachers and stakeholders where they can share what they are expected to do and supposed to do to meet the requirements. These institutions seek to obtain the combination of teacher autonomy and administrative accountability. The greatest challenge may be about how to build trust among communities on campus. In Finland, teachers have been long considered to be professional and responsible for change; nevertheless, only recently they have gained a high level of trust. This success lays its background on teachers' high morale. The explanation is teachers cannot make any reforms and develop themselves if they find themselves are under administrators' attack (Ferre, 1992).

Another concern would be about job incentives for teachers. Structures with too few incentives may make teachers stop teaching or teach less when they enter positions as educational leaders. In 2008, the Union of Education Norway introduced a new pay scale based on teachers' competence and it was adopted by the Norwegian Ministry of Education. In order to meet this standard for pay raise, teachers had to join an in-service training program. Teachers who registered were granted a leave of absence from work with 80% of their base salaries. The implementation was then considered successful with competent teachers and improved learning outcomes (European Commission, 2013).

3. Conclusions

The discussion has laid an emphasis on the teacher's key role in educational reforms. What should be first put into consideration from the statistics demonstrated is about the recruitment policy of an institution in that the teaching profession may attract well-qualified graduates if they are given responsibility and respect. These people mostly hesitate to apply for teaching vacancies if this career is not really trusted by the communities as it is occupied by people with low levels or skills.

The professional development should be an on-going process. One-shot training courses, as a traditionally applied model, cannot assist teachers so far. Only when there is combination between teachers themselves, school managers and policy makers can this be done successfully. No matter what model is used, in-service education and reward systems should be concerned about.

Collaboration among the teaching staff may help improve individual competences as it is a channel of communication for experience exchange. Action research, as a form of problem-solution approach, can be carried out in the classroom for both teachers' and students' improvements.

Nonetheless, investments in professional development may contradict stakeholders' interests as it takes time and needs funds. Communication between reform makers and stakeholders, in this case, is always significant. Unless effectiveness from a long-term investment is proved, any project cannot be implemented.

4. Recommendations

Building a high-quality teaching profession is not an easy task as it takes time and needs cooperation and collaboration. Those interested in professional development should bear in mind the four main factors: recruitment procedure and initial training for teachers, working conditions, evaluation system and teacher engagement.

In the first place, authorities should make teaching attractive to public so as many well-qualified graduates are eager to become teachers. Institution administrators need to recruit the right candidates as only those with a passion for teaching and having commitment with students are willing to develop themselves as well-qualified teachers. New recruits should receive initial training as different institutions may have different requirements for teachers.

In order to foster an environment

for effective teacher collaboration, schools should set employment conditions which meet the need for career development which is considerably motivated and accommodated by support from managers. This usually increases the number of teachers preferring further training and collaboration for development.

In addition, an effective evaluation-compensation system should be established and announced to all staffs which will result in positive impacts on teacher willingness to work. An unfair system and treatments may discourage changes.

Educational reforms always need teachers' involvement. Administrators should set goals or require teachers to set goals for themselves to finally achieve the goals of the entire organization. In the public sector, this certainly needs governmental agencies' assistance in setting policies as well as finance.

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