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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Enhancing teacher professionalism: professional development and its impact on student academic outcomes

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Abstract

Large language models now write a material and growing share of production software, including software that executes Teacher professionalism is one of the key components of successful education system. Employing effective professional developments tools plays a crucial role in ensuring the quality of education. This paper will examine the idea of teacher professionalism along with strategies for enhancing it. It emphasizes professional autonomy, teacher certification, ongoing professional growth and training, teacher-student interaction, and constructive criticism. The study emphasizes the value of ongoing education and professional development for improving instructors' knowledge, skills, and methods of instruction. The research also investigates how professional development of teachers affects student academic outcomes. Overall, the paper makes the case that enhancing teacher professionalism necessitates an ongoing, all-encompassing strategy that incorporates autonomy, professional development, certification, effective communication, feedback, and institutional support..

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Introduction

The professionalism of teachers in schools has still been one of the main issues in education system of many countries. To improve the professionalism of teachers, the governments in different countries have carried out multiple reforms and some policy changes, but it has remained as a central problem. Professionalism of teachers and student's achievement are always interrelated with each other, and obviously, low level of teacher's professionalism leads to low level of student's achievement. Therefore, development of the professionalism of

teachers is one of the main priorities for achieving quality of education in the school. Professional development is defined as activities that develop an individual's skills, knowledge, expertise, and other characteristics as a teacher (OECD, 2009). It means that development of teacher's professionalism is an on-going process, including self-learning, trainings, certification, getting feedback from students, being professional and always ready in the class, getting supports from parents as well as school administration. It is not an individual responsibility of teachers to do certain activities to increase their professionalism. Thus, there should be a shared responsibility between school principals, teachers, parents, and students for creating equal learning and teaching environment in the schools. This paper will analyze the following questions such as how teachers can be professionals in their field, what is the relationship between the professionalism of teachers and student performance, and what can be done to increase the professionalism of teachers.

IMPORTANCE OF TEACHERS

The recent studies show that there is a strong correlation between the quality of teachers and the outcomes of students (Malm, 2009). Obviously, academic performance of student studies in one school varies the outcome of students who study in other schools. Of course, there are many other intervening variables here, but the strongest emphasis is on the teachers and their professionalism. Thus, the educational background of teachers, in-service trainings that they attend, experience that they have, and most importantly their teaching style, attitudes towards students play a crucial role on the quality of education and the outcomes of students in the school. To be more precise, there are many aspects related to the importance of teachers in student's learning. As Malm (2009) pointed out, a teacher education, in-service training, teacher's confidence in their methodological and didactic competence, enthusiasm in teaching is positively correlated with the level of performance and the achievement of students at school. When researchers talk about the professionalism of teachers, they mainly touch upon the personal competence, related to personal characteristics, self-knowledge, academic background, and experience of teachers. However, the social competence is more important than personal competence because today's education is based on the two-way learning instead of lecture type. It means that teachers interact more with students than they do before, and teachers are also responsible for meeting the needs of students with special needs. Teacher education needs to focus on both social and personal processes involved in becoming a professional teacher, and the role of teacher training programs play a crucial role to create a balance between the cognitive and emotional dimensions of learning to teach (Malm, 2009).

COMMUNICATING WITH STUDENTS

Kramer (2003) mentioned that attitude, behavior, and communication help teachers to develop a stronger sense of professionalism. First to categories are the personal traits, but the communication is an outcome of social process. Thus, different facets of communication can affect professionalism of teachers. Among these are collaboration, cooperation, support and encouragement, and participation in learning communities, as well as basic modeling of proper language usage. For instance, a teacher who collaborate with parents, children and students in the classroom can create a good and equal learning environment for students with different background. Before teaching any subjects, teachers need to collaborate with parents, and communicate with students to define their needs, capacity, and difficulties. It helps teachers to see the current situation, the level of students and then it is much easier to organize the course based on the needs of students and assure providing the quality of education in the school. For example, there might be students with special needs, or students with special talents, or students with learning disabilities or students with some social problems; therefore, it is the duty and responsibility of teachers to create an equal learning environment of all students in the class and help them to learn the subjects effectively despite of all the challenges they face. The role of teachers in classroom management is not just limited with collaboration or communication; teachers are also motivators and role model for students. Thus, there might be some students who are socially isolated, and do not participate in group discussions, in that case, the teachers should motivate those students by employing some strategies and techniques. A great teacher has the classroom management skills and can ensure good student behavior, effective work, and study habits and over the sense of respect in the classroom. Teachers set the class of their classroom, build a warm environment, mentor, and nurture students, become role models, and listen and look for signs of trouble (Pachina, 2019). It means that one

of the aspects of being professional teacher is to work collaboratively with parents, observe or communicate with students, define their capacity, and needs, adjust curriculum based on their needs and ensure that every student in the class get a quality of education.

TRAININGS FOR TEACHERS

Education is an on-going process, which does not stop after earning a degree and starting a career (Importance of Professional Development for Teachers, 2020). Through their carrier path, teachers can constantly improve their skills and become more proficient at their jobs. Teachers are responsible not only for providing equal learning environment and quality of education to students but also being more effective and satisfies in various other aspects of their profession. As we live in a globalized world, everything including the school curriculum standards are constantly changing, and it challenges teachers to keep up the new trends and best practice in the field. Teachers training programs help teachers to be better and more adaptive and well-qualified educators in their field by enabling them to create relevant and tailored course instructions for today's students. When teachers equip new teaching techniques and strategies during the trainings as part of professional development, they can go back to the classroom and make changes to their lecture styles and curricula to better suit the needs of their students.

Teachers usually allocate most of their time to the curriculum development, student evaluation, and other paperwork instead of spending more time in the classroom with the students. Professional development training can help teachers to become better at allocating their time efficiently and staying organized in and out of the classroom. This ultimately makes teachers more efficient and gives them extra time to focus on students rather than the paperwork. Since teachers are main education provider in the classroom, students see them as a source of information and do expect teachers to be subject matter experts for the topics they teach. This means teachers should be able to answer any question that students asked. In that case, teachers need to continue their learning and being professional in their field, therefore, professional development trainings can enable teachers to expand their knowledge based on different subject areas. The more professional development a teacher undergoes, the more knowledge and industry insight he or she gains. Involving in different kinds of professional development trainings gives teachers an opportunity to step out of their routine, because it makes them be the student instead of the teacher. This keeps educators engaged because they feel like they are receiving the professional help they need to be better teachers. After all, professional development nurtures the talents of teachers who aspire to take on educational leadership positions, and teachers must learn from other experienced leaders to become effective future leaders themselves. Implementing professional education development and training programs have benefits for both teachers and students, but most importantly, it helps teachers become better educators and develop into competent future school administrators.

TEACHER CERTIFICATION

Teacher periodic certification is another crucial technique to ensure teacher professionalism in the classroom. The different teacher certification programs are employed by governments to test whether educators have enough knowledge, skills and pedagogical abilities for effective teaching. Thus, this type of certification program promotes teacher professional growth, continuous learning and overall teaching quality. As Ingvarson (2013) argues, the teacher professional development is usually effective when it is guided by professional standards and connected to certification systems that recognize and reward accomplished practice. This effective tool is used to eliminate those educators who are insufficient to teach effectively in classroom, on the other hand, it motivates those teaches with professional sufficient skills and knowledge to continue working on themselves by having recognition and financial support. Cantrell et al. (2008) provide evidence that rigorous certification systems can successfully distinguish more effective teachers from less effective ones. Their findings support the view that well-designed certification processes can serve as a meaningful tool for identifying teaching quality and promoting professional excellence within the teaching profession.

The certification itself is not only tool to ensure teacher professionalism and quality of teaching. Kane et al. (2006) challenge the assumption that certification alone is a reliable indicator of teacher quality. The authors found substantial variation in effectiveness among teachers holding similar credentials, suggesting that teacher evaluation

systems should incorporate measures of actual classroom performance and student learning outcomes in addition to certification status. Thus, the result of teacher certification itself should not be a solid indicator for teacher professionalism in classroom, implementation of knowledge and competences should also be considered. The relationship between teacher professional development and student achievement reveals whether teacher certification exams and in-service training are effective tools to ensure teacher professionalism.

TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Student achievement is one of the primary outcomes of teachers' professional development, particularly professional certification and related competency-building programs. Guo and Tian (2025) demonstrate that teacher certification can positively influence student achievement through its effects on teachers' self-efficacy and pedagogical innovation. Their study suggests that certification not only serves as a quality assurance mechanism but may also strengthen teachers' confidence and willingness to adopt innovative teaching approaches. According to the data from TALIS 2018 and PISA 2018 in Turkey, there is a positive correlation between student performance in science, math, and reading and teacher certification (Guo & Tian, 2025). This study reveals that those teachers who achieved better results from certification exam are more likely to use creative methods while teaching which eventually leads to higher student academic outcomes. Thus, the certification exams that incorporate reflective practices, teaching portfolios, and classroom observations may offer important insights into the effectiveness of teachers' instruction and their ability to promote student learning (Cantrell et al., 2008). Students who received instruction from higher qualified teachers often did better than those who received instruction from less qualified teachers. However, variation in student academic outcome is not always explained solely by teacher professional development, but also students' socioeconomic backgrounds (Clotfelter et al., 2008).

However, there is not always a direct correlation between formal credentials and student results. Harris and Sass (2008) found that typical pre-service teacher education had a minimal impact on student achievement. Instead, there was a stronger link between content-focused professional development and better student performance and teaching experience. Their findings suggest that certification, which establishes minimum professional standards, may not have as much of an influence on increasing classroom efficiency as practical experience and continuous professional growth (Harris & Sass, 2008). It means that certification itself cannot account for instructor performance. Professional development, teaching experience, instructional tactics, and assessment literacy all have a significant impact on improving student achievement.

AUTONOMY OF TEACHERS IN THE CLASSROOM

If we look at the PISA performance rankings since 2001, Finland has always been near to the top-ranked countries in this assessment due to the success of highly qualified teachers in the country's education system. Undoubtedly, the teaching profession has always been respected and appreciated by Finnish society. The reason that makes the teaching profession attractive is that teachers receive support from the school, enjoy autonomy to choose what to teach and how to teach in the classroom. Decentralized education system enables teachers to consider local context and address diversity among students they teach (Lavonen, 2017). Teachers in Finland have a freedom on choosing which textbooks to use for teaching the subjects, and what kind of assessment tools to use to measure students' performance in the classroom. They even have autonomy to design the local curriculum and their teaching methodology based on the needs of students, which make teachers be more professional in their field and provide quality of education to the students. Having pedagogical and decision-making autonomy in the school, teachers are responsible to choose textbooks, teaching methods and adjust them based on the needs of students with different backgrounds and those with the special needs. Another reason for Finland to have the best education system and highly qualified and professional teachers in the world is that teachers are responsible for using different kinds of tools and strategies to continuously assess the progress of students and their knowledge on different subjects (OECD, Finland: Slow and Steady Reform for Consistently High Results, 2010). It means that there are no national assessment tests for pupils in basic education in Finland. Thus, it is the teacher's responsibility to choose which textbook to use, and what kind of assessment tools to employ to measure student's performance. It can help teachers to firstly define what is the capacity of students and what kind of difficulties and special needs they have before designing the course and assessing their knowledge on different subjects. Therefore, we can say

that the autonomy that teachers have in the classroom is very important for both professional development of teachers and learning outcome of students.

FEEDBACK FROM STUDENTS

Students feedback giving is one of the most important techniques to increase the professionalism of teachers. Professional teachers perform up to standards and give to the best of their capabilities, but their professionalism is not purely reflected by student test scores; rather, it can be measured by student perception surveys and feedback forms (Brown, 2018). Receiving regular feedback from the students is necessary for teachers to improve their effectiveness in front of a classroom. Therefore, teacher performance feedback forms are so helpful. Recent studies show that student feedback helps teachers improve their teaching style in the classroom, and it in turn allows students to get a quality of education and achieved more academic results. The Institute of Education Sciences compared teachers who received regular feedback (four times a year) to those who did not receive regular feedback, and the results showed that the former group had higher performing students than another one (Brown, 2018). Improving teacher performance by collecting constructive feedback from students in the class is important because teachers have the most influence on student outcomes. There are many benefits to gathering feedback from the students. Initially, gathering feedback from students help teachers to create more student-centered instructional practices. Thus, teachers define the needs of students and see some shortcomings in their teaching style as the result of constructive feedback by the students. It helps them to see the needs and demands of students and design their curriculum and do a little bit more on that. As a result of students' feedback, teachers can create a strong connection with the students in the classroom. The use of student feedback also provides teachers with a systematic approach for regular reflection, which supports and advances their own growth as a professional. Obviously, students know their teacher best, but they are not the only ones who can offer insight into teacher performance. School administrators and parents can give teachers feedback in ways that students might not be able to. Therefore, teachers should collaborate with students, parents, and school administrations to perform well, be professional in their field and ensure a quality of education in the school.

CONCLUSION

Teacher professional development is an ongoing process to make teachers improve their skills and be more professional in their fields and in return boost student outcomes. Obviously, good teachers are better at teaching students effectively, and they are better equipped to become good teachers when teachers have access to continuous learning opportunities and professional development resources. As the world is constantly changing, education is also following the new trends and practices, which challenges teachers to adapt the new system of changes. Therefore, the professionalism of teachers has been observed extensively as one of the main issues in education. Teacher professionalism needs to be improved time to time along the growing of needs in education. Increasing the professionalism of teachers can only be possible by training teachers to adapt new changes and trends, motivating them to collaborate with students, parents, and school administrations to address the needs of students, and giving them more autonomy in the class to be more productive and professional in their fields.

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