

Continuous Professional Development in the Primary School

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Abstract— Teaching is a professional job. Continuing professional development (CPD) is a key responsibility for teachers and a key element in effective schools and successful education systems. INOVASI, a partnership program between the governments of Indonesia and Australia, is working with partners in the government and non-government sectors to develop a new approach to continuing professional development for Indonesian primary school teachers. This paper discusses the reasons why continuing professional development is so important, what we know about what works in continuing professional development, the INOVASI experience, and the role of the university in continuing professional development for practicing teachers.

Keywords— continuous professional development, primary school, teacher, partnership

I. INTRODUCTION

The evolution of notions of professionalism and professional development in the teaching profession is varied and dynamic. On one hand, traditional delivery of in-service training reinforces the notion of the teacher as a technician, uncritically implementing externally-imposed policies, rather than an autonomous professional [1]. On the other hand, the development of professionalism and professional development is seen very positively, because its main purpose is to improve learning and learning outcomes [2]. The need to improve schools, teacher quality, and learning outcomes in Indonesia is urgent. The improvement of teacher professionalism is seen as a means of achieving that goal.

The concept of professionalization is also dynamic because it is politically significant: professionalization is about having a job accepted as a ‘profession’ and thus commanding a high salary and status [3]. In this context, continuing professional development (CPD) is a strategy for the professionalization of teachers. CPD is a term used to describe teacher activities designed to increase work quality throughout the career [4]. These activities vary widely, but the focus is always on increasing the knowledge, skills, attitudes and professionalism of a teacher [5].

From the perspective of the teacher, CPD plays a role in optimizing professionalism. There is often a sense of urgency about this, as teachers seek to improve their incomes and professional standing. It is important for teachers to understand the ways to develop their careers, especially in the primary school environment. From the perspective of the policy maker or education administrator, CPD is a critical element in improving the system, and

especially in improving learning outcomes. One concrete example of efforts to increase the professional competency of teachers is the INOVASI program (Innovation for Indonesian school children). This is a collaborative program between the governments of Australia and Indonesia which aims to find out what works to improve learning outcomes. As part of the cooperation program, CPD can be sustained by optimizing the role of universities as the main institution for preparing and teachers and improving their professional capacity. This paper discusses the reasons why continuing professional development is so important, what we know about what works in continuing professional development, the INOVASI experience, and the role of the university in continuing professional development for practicing teachers.

II. WHY CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A. Teachers are Learners

Professional knowledge is dynamic and progressive. This is a natural outcome of the rapid change in science and technology, where improvements continually occur [6]. given the continual development of science and technology, teachers with up-to-date skills and understandings are best equipped to meet their students’ needs in terms of economic, educational, political, and technological content [7]. These changes underlie changes in policy and also changes in aspects of a teacher’s professionalism, which are continually developing on the basis of new professional knowledge around curriculum, pedagogy and the management of learning.

The professional teacher is a lifelong learner. Teachers need to continually improve their pedagogy, their subject knowledge and their understanding of child development. In order to continually improve their capability as teachers, they need to be constantly learning new things [8]. In contemporary education systems, the idea of the teacher as a lifelong learner is seen as a key concept for both the individual and society. Continuous learning is seen as a way to meet the need for continually improving the competency and capability of professional teachers. The basic principle of lifelong learning for teachers is that the educational careers of teachers require conscious and purposeful learning [6].

Lifelong learning may be defined as a learning process which continues throughout a person’s life, and which is characterized by flexibility and diversity, and may take place in many places and times, as it crosses sectors and

occurs outside the traditional concept of schooling [9]. According to the European Commission, lifelong learning is a continuously supportive process which aims to develop human potential, stimulating and empowering individuals to fully achieve their potential skill, understandings, knowledge, and values throughout their lifetime - with enjoyment and confidence in all contexts [10]. In a nutshell, lifelong learning can be seen as a way to bring individual life skills, learning skills, and social skills together as a whole package.

Effective professional development is on-going, and includes training, feedback, adequate time and follow-up. The development of teacher professionalism is important because it can help teachers to update knowledge in relevant areas, improve skills, and shape individual attitudes, especially when it comes to new approaches and new techniques or goals in education. In addition, it can give individuals the ability to adapt and apply new approaches and to keep up with the changes that occur in the world of education, in order to improve the quality of learning. As for schools, improving teacher professionalism can help schools develop and apply new strategies related to curriculum and other aspects of teaching, including exchanging information between academics and practitioners in the field so as to help address teachers' weaknesses so they can become more effective [11].

Given the significance of professional development, it is clear that an effective strategy to improve teachers' ability to provide better learning experiences for their students is to conduct continuing professional development (CPD). In both theory and practice, professional development (PD) is the best way to meet the requirements for a professional teacher.

B. Improving the Professional Quality of Teachers

There are two main ways to improve the quality of a teaching force, firstly by improving pre-service teacher education for trainee teachers, and secondly by providing in-service teacher education for practicing teachers during their career. Those two schemes incorporate three forms of teacher professional development; (i) direct teaching, (ii) learning in school, and (iii) learning outside school [12]. The pre-service teacher education is provided by universities is focused on direct teaching, which enables pre-service teachers to acquire the pedagogic, professional and subject knowledge that is crucial for a professional teacher. Meanwhile, learning in school is the basis of teacher professional education – the school placements and practicums, which enable teachers to develop practical skills and knowledge. Learning in school and learning out of school are also the basis of in-service teacher education, which plays a vital role during the teacher's career.

Firstly, *direct teaching* is focused on basic knowledge, initial conversation, charismatic speakers, conferences, courses, workshops, and consultations. This form dominates the strategy used in the professional development of teachers when they are studying. The idea of 'teaching into learning' colors the approach to professional development. This approach moves teachers from passively listening, an object of the training, into a decision-making role, actively

involved in their professional development process, through learning.

Learning in school is more complex. This approach includes mentoring, coaching, action research, and peer-teaching; it involves teachers as scholars, teachers as leaders, and critical friends. Activities include sharing experience, forming problem-solving groups, using descriptive reviews, portfolio assessment, working on collaborative tasks with colleagues, using storytelling, and reviewing school quality.

The third mode is *learning out of school*. The approach is based on networks, such as school-university partnerships, cluster-based teacher working groups, subject-matter networks, informal groups, collaborations, and active teacher centers.

Improving the professional quality of teachers, thus begins when they are student teachers, studying in the university, and continues after they become practicing teachers. Improving professional quality of teachers through pre-service teacher education can be optimized during the process of recruitment and selection of student teachers, the process of teacher education, and, finally, teacher certification. Improving the professional quality of teachers through in-service teacher education, includes CPD, supervision, performance management, coaching or mentoring, and enhancing incentives such as career paths [13].

III. WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT 'WHAT WORKS' IN CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

At best, CPD can provide the key to improving learning outcomes for individual teachers and across an education system. At worst, it can be an expensive waste of time. To ensure that CPD is well planned and implemented, it is important to know, in depth, the factors that inhibit teacher learning and those that can optimize the learning process; that can support the professional development of a teacher throughout his or her career. What do we know about what works in CPD – and, conversely, what doesn't work? Before turning to what know about what works, the following are lessons learned from many years of implementing in-service training in Indonesia, about what doesn't work.

First, teachers do not generally learn well if they are isolated from their peers and colleagues. This can be critical because, without a networking component, communication cannot build up between one teacher and another. Teachers learn best in groups with their colleagues. As described in the previous section, collegial activity and shared communication is a key element of professional learning.

Second, in traditional systems, training events are often carried out with no follow-up. This 'hit and run' approach is rarely successful. Effective professional learning takes place over time in an iterative way and in a supportive environment. This usually means a series of routine training activities, interspersed with practical tasks, reflection and supervised practice, mentoring or coaching. This is sometimes called 'in-on-in'.

One-off events without supervision after the training typically fail to result in substantial or sustained changes to teaching practice. A lack of follow-up training and no mentoring can also lead to teacher anxiety about failure. Michael Fullan described the ‘implementation dip’, when teachers lose confidence when attempting to implement new practices, and revert to old practices [14]. This is when mentoring and peer support are most critical. In one-off training events this is absent.

Furthermore, training that is carried out en masse in large-scale groups is rarely effective. Participants in large-group events inevitably become the passive object of the training, because they cannot contribute to its content, delivery or focus. As a result, the material is often not relevant and participants are disinterested.

Another common cause of failure is that trainers have not sufficiently mastered the training material. Professional learning requires a balance between practice and theory with, for practicing teachers, the emphasis on practice. When trainers are academics, bureaucrats or officials who are unfamiliar with the classroom context, the training material tends to become overly theoretical and often comprised of dense information. When this heavy material is condensed in order to fit an often-limited time frame of two-three days training, it risks becoming meaningless.

Professional learning also requires trust. Participant distrust of the trainer’s expertise becomes evident when the trainer does not understand their world of the school and classroom – and trust can be further eroded when the purpose of the training is unclear. In addition to this, the delivery style is also an important factor. In general, lecture-style professional development is ineffective, as it is one-way, doesn’t allow teachers to ‘own’ the training, and doesn’t enable practitioners to see the practice or to try it out in their classrooms.

Besides learning about what doesn’t work – in other words, what hinders professional learning - experience has shown us *what does work* in CPD, what approaches have been found to support the learning process. First, we know that teachers learn best when they are with friends and colleagues in ‘communities of practice’, school clusters, or school-based CPD [15]. This helps to increase comfort and confidence because the community builds constructive relationships of trust, especially if their CPD is routine, ongoing, and frequent. A regular schedule can help teachers to always feel organized and to focus on efforts to improve their professionalism.

‘Communities of practice’, like teacher working groups, also help to contextualize the learning, and make it easier to build ownership, so that the teachers in a specific school or group context, are able to define their professional needs and contribute to the design and content of the CPD program. This sense of belonging and ownership grows along with learning in training that involves active, group-based, and engaging activities. Teachers learn well in collegial groups because they can support one another in implementation of new practices. Informal discussions in the staff room, sharing problems and solutions during the school week, this is the real ‘stuff’ of CPD.

CPD is also more likely to be effective if the training material does not only promote theory, and is more practical in nature, so that teachers can see and practice it in their classrooms. Furthermore, learning is facilitated if the teachers are accompanied by trainers who are well-prepared and thoroughly understand the training material. This builds confidence among the learners, and supports the mentoring (in-on-in). Ongoing mentoring or coaching is critical, enabling facilitators to demonstrate new practices in the classroom and also to provide feedback to teachers as they attempt to implement these new practices. This process requires close and trusting relationships between trainer (or facilitator) and teacher. It is thus likely that experienced teachers from within the group will be more effective in this role than external trainers.

The support of trainers and teachers will not be separated and lost once the training is completed, and is much more likely to be sustainable. This is more likely to be achieved with a learning environment that is safe and supportive, and when the teachers know that the goal of their CPD is clear and achievable.

Finally, we know that CPD is more effective when it is embedded in the education system and not an ‘add-on’. This can mean, for example, structuring the training as a ‘short course’ which is delivered in brief teacher working group sessions, and is accredited with local government so that participants can earn points towards career advancement

IV. THE INOVASI EXPERIENCE

Indonesia has been very successful in getting children into school, achieving near universal enrolment at primary level. However, although there has been some improvement, based on PISA results in 2015 [16], Indonesia still lags behind other countries in basic skills. Workforce skills, 21 century skills, higher-order thinking - are all based on foundational literacy and numeracy.

The Australian Government is partnering with Indonesia to improve student performance by providing advice and expertise, and, importantly, by working with groups of teachers to find out what works in their contexts, to test new approaches, and to contribute research and ideas to improve education policies. The Innovation for Indonesian School Children (INOVASI) program, is a collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Culture, which aims to build understandings and evidence of what works to improve learning outcomes at the classroom, school, and regional level. The INOVASI program is focused on improving the quality of learning in the fields of literacy, numeracy and inclusion in primary schools in Indonesia [17]. INOVASI adapts international solutions to the local context, and designs, implements and tests solutions through a series of demonstrations.

INOVASI is building a body of evidence on what does and doesn’t work to improve student learning outcomes in primary education. The program operates at system and classroom level. The focus is on addressing quality and not access. INOVASI targets not only public primary schools but also private schools and Islamic madrasah.

A. INOVASI at a Glance

The INOVASI program works with four provincial partners and 17 districts. The four provinces are NTB, NTT, North Kalimantan, and East Java. The cooperation focuses on partnership pilots and grant programs in each location.

B. Why the Pilot Approach

Experience has shown that a top-down, one-size-fits-all approach to teacher training did not produce long-term and sustainable results and little systemic change. The wide gap between national policy and local implementation is a stumbling block to efforts to improve the quality of education in Indonesia. INOVASI works on national policy issues in a politically-informed way at sub-national level. In this context, INOVASI has adopted a pilot approach, in which local teachers and education administrators contribute to defining the solutions to the challenge of improving learning outcomes – in the local context. The approach is known as problem-driven iterative adaptation (PDIA) [18]

Local solutions are aimed at relevant local problems in education, this is supported with an approach to co-design, co-funding, and co-implementing of pilots. It is important that local authorities ‘own’ the pilots, that they are piloting their own solutions to the problems of literacy, numeracy and inclusion. Scaling out of these solutions requires local budget allocation and institutional arrangements, and the results inform policies.

At the heart of this pilot approach, is the teacher – and CPD - the teacher in in-service. The teacher is, however, part of a larger context, a community and a culture, a system of schools and cluster-based CPD; a system of pre-service training; a system of government, funding, policy and politics. INOVASI works within all these contexts to try and build evidence about ‘what works’ to improve learning outcomes.

Co-funding for INOVASI comes from the district budgets (APBD), village budgets (ADD), school budgets (BOS), and corporate social responsibility (CSR) funding. These funds can support ongoing CPD and improve the supply of books, both traditional (paper based) and electronic books. Ultimately, the aim of all these pilots is to produce credible evidence which informs policy development at district, provincial and national levels.

V. THE ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY

Universities and teacher training institutes all over the world have three basic functions: teaching, research, and service. The challenge is how to balance these three. In Indonesia, the three functions are packaged in the *Tridharma Perguruan Tinggi* model, which is implemented by educators within all universities [19]. The task of a lecturer in teaching is supplemented by guiding students during their learning. In addition, lecturers are also required to conduct research and provide service to the surrounding community. Unfortunately, these last two points are still often regarded as a ‘side job’. Lecturers typically focus more on routine assignments as teacher and student guide rather than supporting innovation through research activities, or providing community service such as CPD.

Universities consist of a number of faculties that provide academic and professional education in specific disciplines. Higher education also serves to prepare students to become civilized citizens, well-rounded individuals with the behavior, values and norms of the culture, so as to realize the totality of a whole and independent human being according to the way of life of the nation.

In order to compete within the ASEAN region, Indonesia needs to radically improve the outcomes of education at all levels – including basic education, especially literacy and numeracy, which provide the foundation for all education which follows. Universities can play at least four important roles in anticipating the implementation of the ASEAN Economic Community (*Masyarakat Ekonomi ASEAN*, or MEA) [20]. First, socialization of MEA and support for local governments, communities and businesses to improve Indonesia’s regional competitiveness. The second function is to improve quality and relevance within the universities. Third, is to strengthen cooperation between higher education institutions with the industry and the business world. And fourth, to strengthen capacity in research on regional cooperation. But a fifth and perhaps even more important role can be to support the professional development of teachers.

The role of the university does not stop when a teacher graduates, but can continue throughout a teacher’s career. Universities are the key repository of knowledge on pedagogy, education content (subjects) and teacher professionalism. They are at the forefront of developing new professional knowledge. They are the best placed to take on the role of helping districts and other agencies (such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs and private school networks) to design, deliver and evaluate CPD.

However, to effectively play this role, universities need to get closer to the education systems they serve, and to adopt a more entrepreneurial, business-like approach. Academics need to get out of their comfort zone and spend time with students, teachers and children in schools and classrooms, in order to develop the knowledge of the practitioner to balance and enrich their theoretical knowledge.

VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, because the development of professional knowledge is a dynamic and progressive process, it is important for teachers to continually improve their abilities and understandings in pedagogy, subject content and scientific understanding.

CPD is a systematic and long-term solution to meet this need and address these challenges. To improve the professionalism of Indonesian teachers, as a strategy for improving learning outcomes and national competitiveness in the 21st Century, universities can play a role in both pre-service training and in-service training education. But in both cases, the design of programs must take into account the lessons of the past, which are outlined in this paper. Pre-service teacher education and CPD must become more systematic, more practical, more collaborative, and based in the real world of schools and classrooms. Universities and

schools need to be more collaborative. New approaches to teacher professional education (PPG) and practicum (PPL) can assist. This is the challenge for universities.

INOVASI, as a partnership between Indonesia and Australia, is addressing the challenges of CPD and the weaknesses of learning outcomes in Indonesia, especially in relation to early grades literacy and numeracy. INOVASI cooperates with four provinces and 17 districts in Indonesia and is piloting new approaches to CPD in each of these. Higher education institutions can also become important partners in the process, because CPD and improving teacher professionalism is firmly based in the three core functions of education, service, and research.

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