FOOTT PRINTTS:
Focus on Teacher Training

Practical Guidelines for
In-Service Teacher Trainers

Summary of the literature review

Executive Summary

Research has found that teachers' continuing professional development is one of the most important factors for ongoing improvement in school effectiveness and in student learning outcomes.[1] As highlighted by a 2017 European Commission Communication, teaching involves lifelong career development.[2] Recent education reforms challenge teachers to work with new technologies, to integrate competence-based curricula and new methods for teaching, learning and assessment, to tailor learning to diverse learners' needs and to collaborate with peers.

This literature review is part of the Erasmus+ project, Focus on Teacher Training - Practical Guidelines for In-Service Teacher Trainers (FOOTT PRINTTS). The FOOTT PRINTTS project focuses on continuing professional development (CPD) for early career and established teachers. A key aim is to identify the elements of effective CPD – in terms of CPD courses (micro-level), the teacher trainers and training institutions and schools (meso-level), and policy levers (macro-level). This will serve as a foundation for the development of guidelines to support quality assurance processes in different country contexts. The ultimate aim of the project is to support effective training for teacher trainers, and policies to promote and assure quality CPD provision in regional, national, public and private training institutions. The project is international, and while teacher CPD provision varies across countries, all countries will have opportunities for mutual learning.

The review covers a broad scope, including research in academic and grey literature addressing effective CPD, teacher trainer development, and policy-level support for teacher professional development. A mapping of the relevant policy landscape in the project partner countries is also included.

While we have aimed to be as thorough as possible, the review should nevertheless be considered as an indicative summary of evidence, rather than a fully comprehensive research review.

[1] Chapman C., Harris A. (2004) 'Improving schools in difficult and challenging contexts: strategies for improvement', Educational Research, 46(3), pp.219-228. https://doi.org/10.1080/0013188042000277296

[2] Ciesielski E.J.M., Creaghead N.A. (2020)' The Effectiveness of Professional Development on the Phonological Awareness Outcomes of Preschool Children: A Systematic Review' Literacy Research and Instruction 59 (2), pp. 121-147. DOI: 10.1080/19388071.2019.1710785.

The review is organised as follows:

Section 1 introduces the FOOTT PRINTTS project and the aims of the literature review. In the course of our research, we found only a few examples of quality assurance for teacher CPD. The conspicuous scarcity of CPD quality assurance frameworks and processes underscores the need for the FOOTT PRINTTS project. Nevertheless, the existing empirical research on the features of effective CPD may serve as guideposts for further inquiry and consultation.

Section 2 sets out definitions and concepts in the literature on teacher CPD. While there is no one widely agreed upon definition of teacher continuing professional development, research on teacher CPD tends to emphasise teaching as a "lifelong learning" profession[3], with professional development beginning in initial teacher education and continuing until retirement. Important aims include development of teachers' knowledge and competences, in addition to their professional judgement and independence, and changes in classroom practices.

Section 3 sets out the methodology for the review. An important body of research in this area has emerged over the past 15 years, addressing what is known about the impact of different features of CPD, and processes that support changes to teachers' knowledge, beliefs and practices. We also searched for literature on school level factors that support teacher development, including school leadership, school-level quality assurance, professional learning communities, teacher motivation, and so on. Other literature reviewed explores effective training for teacher trainers, policies to support effective CPD, and CPD quality assurance. The greater part of the academic research identified for this review is in English, but several articles and documents published in the language of the project partner countries have also been identified.

Section 4 shares the results of the partners' country mapping (Austria, Denmark, Germany, Greece, France, Poland, and Portugal). It covers a broad set of areas related to school governance, recent initiatives in school education and related professional development needs. The structure of CPD provision and requirements related to trainers' qualifications, the link between school and teacher development, and quality assurance systems for school, teachers and CPD providers are among the areas described. The mapping provides an overview of the broader context of and aims for teacher CPD. Detailed descriptions of country contexts are also included in Annex 1 of this report.

Section 5 shares findings from empirical research on the key features of effective CPD. Several meta-analyses have identified features associated with effective CPD. While the findings across these studies are remarkably consistent, more recently, several researchers have noted that programmes that adopt features identified in the literature are not consistently successful. In addition, research on the processes and mechanisms of teacher learning and changes in behaviour is needed.

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3   Livingston, K. (2012) 'Approaches to professional development of teachers in Scotland: pedagogical innovation or financial necessity?', Educational Research, 54(2), pp. 161- 172.

Section 6 explores studies on the effectiveness of online/blended CPD. While OECD's 2018 TALIS found limited teacher participation in online CPD[4], online teacher learning is a growing area. There are several potential advantages for online delivery of professional development. A greater number of teachers may be reached, including those working in remote areas, more diverse course formats and topics may be covered, etc.[5] The structure of online learning, however, makes a difference to its effectiveness. The degree to which participants are encouraged to reflect and are challenged, as well as opportunities for active collaboration with peers are among the features that need to be carefully designed.

Section 7 reviews literature on teacher training and quality assurance. A "codified knowledge base" for teacher educators[6] is missing. Given that the role of teacher educators/trainers differs significantly from that of the teaching profession itself, this is an important gap. A few countries have developed standards for educators providing initial teacher education (Belgium, Israel, the Netherlands and the United States). (Details are provided in Annex 2 of the report.) A framework setting out essential knowledge domains for teacher educators is also shared.[7]

Section 8 reviews literature on school-level factors, which have a profound impact on teacher professional learning. The quality of relationships within the school, responsive school administrators, teacher collaboration -- including through mentoring, peer feedback, and critical examination of teaching practices – are all important. Active learning in job-embedded contexts over an extended duration (with learning over weeks, months, or the academic year) also have an impact on the effectiveness of continuing professional development. A focus on balancing needs for school- and teacher-development can reinforce and support individual and collective professional learning.

Section 9 highlights literature on policies to support quality continuing professional development. While there is a significant body of research on effective approaches to teaching, learning and assessment that can support evidence-informed practice, the understanding of teacher quality and professionalism is ultimately a normative endeavour. Any CPD quality assurance system needs to be based on a clear statement of what counts as 'good quality' CPD – developed through a stakeholder consultation process.

The need for precise teacher standards is presented, and models highlighting main elements of effective CPD, along with mediating features (e.g. policy, school context, the motivation of teacher trainers

4   Minea-Pic, A. (2020), "Innovating teachers' professional learning through digital technologies", OECD Education Working Papers, No. 237, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/3329fae9-en.

5   Vuorikari, R. (2018) 'Innovating Professional Development in Compulsory Education Examples and cases of emerging practices for teacher professional development', JRC Technical Reports, http://dx.doi.org/10.2760/734136.

6   Goodwin, A. L. and Kosnick, C. (2013). Quality teacher educators = quality teachers? Conceptualizing essential domains of knowledge for those who teach teachers. Teacher Development, 2013 Vol. 17, No. 3, 334–346, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13664530.2013.813766 DOI: 10.1080/13664530.2013.813766

7   Ibid.

and of teachers, among other elements) are shared. These models can guide discussions on the broad set of elements that need to be considered in the development of a quality assurance framework.

Specific policy mechanisms and concrete examples of how some countries are currently promoting quality assurance for teaching continuing professional development are highlighted in this section. These include accreditation of CPD providers, alignment with school-level quality assurance, support for whole-school approaches to improvement, tools to support matching of school and teacher CPD needs, and CPD provision, and monitoring and evaluation of continuing professional development.

The review ends with a brief discussion on gaps in knowledge and some suggestions for investments in research that brings together insights of researchers, practitioners, and policy makers.

FOOTT PRINTTS

is an Erasmus+ co-financed cooperation partnership with seven European educational training institutions and organizations, ensuring a comprehensive approach to in-service teacher training.

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