

Professional Development in Education

¹Kyline Burge, ²Mohammad Albataineh, *¹Adel Al-Bataineh

¹*Illinois State University, School of Teaching and Learning, United States.*

²*The World Islamic Sciences and Education University, Curriculum and Instruction Department, Jordan*

Keywords

Professional
Development,
Types of
Professional
Development,
Effectiveness of
Professional
Development

Abstract

This qualitative study examined professional development in education, its effectiveness, and the role of administration in professional development, and provided recommendations for improvement. This topic is critical because the literature suggests that professional development is a challenge for education stakeholders both locally and nationally. Teachers have criticized traditional forms of professional development as irrelevant and unhelpful for authentic learning and development. The literature review also suggests differing views on the effectiveness of professional development. Research shows that professional development can either significantly help teachers and positively impact their students' learning or be ineffective in promoting learning. This study surveyed teachers from one district in central Illinois, and participants were selected from various subjects and experience levels. This study concluded that teachers have negative perceptions of professional development, the role that administration plays in planning and implementing professional development, and its impact on and relation to teacher retention. This research aimed to assist teachers, administrators, superintendents, and professional development practitioners in creating, receiving, and delivering effective and beneficial professional development.

Article History

Received
Jan 21, 2025
Accepted
June 08, 2025
Published
June 30, 2025

*Correspondence to Adel Al-Bataineh, Illinois State University, School of Teaching and Learning, United States. ✉Email: adelalbataineh1@gmail.com

Introduction

Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) state that “beginning with pre-service education and continuing throughout a teacher's career, teacher development must focus on deepening teachers' understanding of the processes of teaching and learning and of the students they teach” (p. 82).

There are many reasons why a teacher would want to attend professional development, and the primary motivation is often internal. The latest trend in education to stay current is the Common Core standards and standards-based grading. Attending professional development on these topics is necessary for teachers to meet the many requirements. Not only are teachers motivated intrinsically to stay on top of the newest trends in education, but they are also motivated intrinsically to stay informed. Teachers like to be informed and want to stay up-to-date on teaching methods. Therefore, attending professional development will help with remedying this concern.

External motivation is also a factor in the professional development of teachers. One issue today for teachers is the notion that schools are failing. If teachers and districts received ample professional development from experts, it would address the issues at hand, as school improvement is a top priority (Borko, 2004) throughout the United States. With many government officials stressing the need for school improvement, so are the members of many communities. With this need for improvement comes the need to seek professional development to improve teachers' education strategies. It will make community members more content as they see professional development ideas gained and implemented by teachers in their community school district, and ultimately have students grow from the implementation.

The literature shows that professional development, while crucial for teachers' development and growth, has been problematic for stakeholders. Yurtseven (2017) argues that it is essential to consider teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of professional development, as teachers often hold negative attitudes toward it. They believe it is a corrective process rather than a helpful approach in finding and producing solutions to problems in their school, classroom, or curriculum. He explains that the goal of professional development is to enrich the teachers' practices in meeting the needs of their students.

Consequently, this study explored a school district's views on professional development. This study recognized a wide range of viewpoints among teachers, administrators, and practitioners, which suggests a variety of factors can influence that. Anyone who participates in the field of education should benefit from this study. They should be able to understand the potential positives and negatives of professional development and gain insight into teachers' perceptions and reactions toward it. As a result, many of these stakeholders can make more informed choices regarding whether to implement a change in professional development and the best ways to do so. Accordingly, this study examined the following research questions:

1. What are teachers' general perceptions of professional development?
2. What drawbacks or challenges have teachers encountered while completing or seeking professional development?
3. What are solutions to the issues facing professional development today?

Review of Related Literature

Learning is a continuous and ongoing process for both students and teachers. When people think about education, they often focus solely on the students and their learning

process, overlooking the continuous learning that teachers must undertake to stay current with the latest educational developments in instructional techniques and curricula. Teachers usually gain this new knowledge through professional development. For educators, there are many different aspects and roles in professional development. From new teachers to veteran teachers, professional development has a profound impact in various ways. There are many types of professional development for educators to participate in, ranging from conferences to mentoring, and the administration plays a crucial role in supporting their staff in all these types. Each educator may have a different reason for seeking professional development, but all good teachers strive to become the best they can be for their students.

Necessity and Types of Professional Development

Teachers are believed to serve as “human resources” (Ornstein, 2011, p. 118) for schools, students, and communities. Daily educators often carry out programs with a school that address all aspects of an individual: cognitive, social, emotional, behavioural, and physical. Teachers often find themselves addressing students' intellectual, social, and personal needs, as well as numerous factors that impact the classroom. Different perspectives and equity are all factors present within a school system and the community in which it resides (Basile, 2005, p. 167). School is no longer just an institution; it has evolved into a culture of learning and growth. If good teaching depends on response to students, then these factors apply to good instruction. Curriculum, societal factors, relationships, and technology are components of a school culture.

While many educators are committed to a higher purpose, they must also answer to the current state of responsibility for academic data and results. With the influence of federal, state, and local regulations, teachers must possess in-depth knowledge of their subject matter and understand how to teach it effectively (Oakes, 2013, p. 269). Professional development is essential for educators driven by intrinsic and civic motivation to exchange information, as learning standards are continually evolving. The most recent example in the Common Core Standards requires teaching content in terms of higher-level thinking skills that lead to proficiency and independence in complex information (Calkins, 2012, p. 12).

In addition to changing student learning standards, districts either currently have or are in the process of implementing evaluation systems that require professional development. Teacher accountability is an essential part of the evaluation process, with results influenced by the following: high-quality instruction standards, standards-based measures of effectiveness, training on tools and standards, training in interpreting results, and professional learning opportunities (National Comprehensive Centre for Teacher Quality (NCCTQ), 2012, p. 21). If teacher evaluation involves student achievement, professional development must be aligned with the Common Core for teachers to gain footing. The NCCTQ explains that new evaluation systems are being implemented to help improve teaching and learning, so teachers are not continuing a “status quo” of instruction out of line with evolving learning expectations (p. 11). Just as we provide our students with what they need to succeed, educators of all experience levels require development opportunities related to the learning standards to fairly evaluate teachers who are continually updating their curriculum and pedagogical practices. This could look different for different teachers based on their experience in their careers. Teachers are individuals, so they will have different professional needs based on community factors such as socioeconomics, diversity, prior experience, and district support.

Teachers' practice is influenced by their evolving identity as educators. School culture, standards, and evaluation all create a complex web of what professional development can help

evolve. Ultimately, if these components of education are evolving, all teachers must evolve as well as the individuals they teach. This evolution includes the integration of the students and learning standards.

There are many types of professional development (PD), some of which are more effective than others. There are options for attending conferences hosted by approved institutions, participating in an in-service program hosted by a school district, pursuing graduate studies, attending an online seminar, and more. Some PDs are free of charge to teachers, and others cost a fee. If a teacher is thrifty, there are plenty of opportunities for them to receive PD free of charge, and many of those are within their region or district, even though all of these options differ by state. For Illinois, ISBE shows a professional development (PD) value chart. It helps explain the approved activities available for teachers, who can then show evidence of completion and receive a certain number of PD hours. PD that can be achieved based on this chart from ISBE can range from participation in a mentor program, serving on a committee, board, or task force, to presenting presentations or completing graduate work (2024).

Effective Professional Development

As teachers must evolve, the next logical question is: What does effective professional development consist of or look like? Considering the multifaceted demands that teachers must meet related to school culture, standards, and professional growth, the researchers in this study focused on analyzing the factors that influence development opportunities and whether these opportunities meet the current needs of all teachers at various stages of their careers.

With rapidly evolving standards, professional development often mirrors the changes in the field. This linear approach focuses on rapidly changing behavior through tools and lesson plans that have undergone developmental stages (Bodman et al., 2012, p. 18). This can often pose a difficult situation as many of these materials are "prescribed" and scripted, which takes away from teachers' decision-making or input and does not prepare them to do so concerning students. This does not allow the teacher to grow and adjust their identity. Teachers could benefit from a concept termed "reflection in action," which involves designing professional opportunities that consider both procedural knowledge that can be scripted and new information or practices as they occur, together (Bodman et al., 2012, p. 21).

Many first-year teachers enter the teaching field with an idealisation of the teaching experience. Unfortunately, the teaching field experiences a high rate of attrition. The number of teachers leaving the field exceeds those entering (Orstein, 2011, p. 119).

What type of support or development do teachers need to progress past the initial years of teaching? How can administrations and districts promote quality teaching that helps develop motivation and success among educators? One teacher described it as "the big things," including analysing individual practices and collegial relationships (Ornstein, 2011, p. 118). Collegial relationships can be fostered through mentoring programs that encourage open dialogue. According to Debra Banks's study on the supply and demand of teachers, an introductory program is necessary to help retain new teachers. She advises focusing on state or building issues and daily classroom issues (Banks, 2000, p. 13). Collegial relationships could be encouraged through a required mentee-mentor program, which would provide compensation for the mentor. With mentor involvement, this induction program supports new teachers and addresses ongoing challenges for veterans who need stimulation to continue their careers and effectiveness. Banks explains that creating financial motivation for teachers, such as loan forgiveness or salary raises, would have a long-term positive effect on teacher retention

(Ornstein, 2011, p. 16).

Given that not all districts are financially stable enough to allocate funds and have limited resources, another example of a program that could help encourage the "big ideas" necessary for maintaining motivation and professional development within schools is needed. A popular example and variation of this type of program includes professional development schools for pre-service teachers. While there are various practices concerning these partnerships throughout the educational field, many of these relationships have the same goal: "simultaneous renewal" (Trent, 2012, p. 1).

Regardless of who participates in professional learning to drive growth, it must be planned carefully. One particular survey revealed alarming information: 78% of new teachers have a mentor, and even more strikingly, only 60% had more than one conversation within the school year (Kardos & Johnson, 2008). Simultaneous renewal in the form of mentorships requires careful planning and coordination. Pre-service teachers may also benefit from more field-based experience involving actual classroom action with a mentor. Mentors can be on-site teachers who share a common planning time, allowing pre-service teachers, novices, or any teacher to discuss and critique various aspects of teaching, such as behavior management, extracurricular activities, and pedagogical practice (Moir, 2009, pp. 14-21). Interaction within any pre-service or in-school mentor program is crucial for achieving effective results.

Hunzicker (2011) argues that Professional development should effectively enhance a teacher's teaching methods and understanding of their content area. The usual professional development that has been offered for numerous years now, known as the 'one shot, one-stop,' "is becoming less effective in today's busy world. Much of the information gained is not likely to be remembered, and even less is likely to be applied once we return to our daily routine." (Hunzicker, 2011, pp. 177-179).

Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, and Yoon (2001) explain that for professional development to be effective, it must have the proper structural features. These features include (a) the form of the activity (e.g., workshop vs. study group), (b) the collective participation of teachers from the same school, grade, or subject, and (c) the duration of the activity.

Embracing and exploring the "notion that effective professional development addresses relevant teacher needs, which include the emotional aspects of their work in addition to technical teaching skills" (Yoo & Carter, 2017, p. 39) is a tedious process, but effective in helping make PD effective and allow for retention in the field of education. The effectiveness and retention aspects of professional development are crucial, as they facilitate the exploration of teachers' emotional identities and the negative consequences of low teacher morale.

The evidence is overwhelming in support of the need for well-designed and carefully implemented professional development in education. It plays a significant role in educating teachers and administrators, and not only that, but it also helps decrease turnover rates in the education sector. Educators will feel that they are being challenged and supported by well-developed and implemented professional development.

Methodology

This study used a survey to examine teachers' perceptions of professional development. The data was collected through qualitative means when collecting teachers' experiences with professional development. The qualitative data on the teachers' experiences and perceptions were collected through the phenomenological research design.

This study was conducted at a school district in Central Illinois. This district has teachers and administrators who regularly participate in professional development. Within this school

district, a Maximal Variation Sampling approach was implemented to include a variety of subjects, grade levels, and levels of experience, thereby developing an understanding from multiple perspectives of teachers who vary in the years they have completed in education. The teachers and administrators were selected using a random sampling method or by staff volunteers. This method was designed to encompass a diverse range of disciplines, backgrounds, experience levels, and settings.

Participants were informed of the purpose and the aim of the study. Each participant signed a waiver, agreeing to participate and reserving the right to withdraw at any time. Researchers anticipate that participants may feel uncomfortable sharing views that differ from those of their colleagues or administrators. Because of this difference in thought, pseudonyms were used to protect the participants' anonymity.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

This study utilised an online survey to collect data. Participants were asked to complete the survey about specific topics related to professional development. Questions ranged from the challenges teachers face with professional development to the effects of professional development on their students, the district, curriculum, and other aspects. Questions also covered areas such as surveying the time spent in professional development, the pros and cons of professional development, and the implementation of professional development sessions. The survey measured the teachers' perceptions and experiences. The questions were validated for content validity using a panel of experts.

Findings

In this study, a preliminary exploratory analysis was conducted to gather general ideas about the themes in the data, utilising yes and no questions and Likert scale questions. Data coding was implemented based on the common ideas and themes in the survey results. Afterwards, the codes were organized into major themes (such as negatives, positives, neutrals, etc.), which were ultimately reported along with the descriptors that help describe the professional development experience.

This study employed qualitative data collection to gather teachers' experiences and opinions regarding professional development. The qualitative data on the teachers' experiences and perceptions were collected through the phenomenological research design. The survey also employed Maximal Variation Sampling to include a diverse range of subjects, grade levels, and levels of experience, thereby developing an understanding from multiple perspectives of such teachers who vary in the years they have completed in education. The survey contained 22 total questions, which ranged from Likert scale questions to open-ended questions. The Likert scale questions were analyzed by calculating means and standard deviations. Other questions were categorized into themes and similar variables. These survey questions sought insight into teachers' perceptions of Professional development. Of the 50 teachers who were given the survey, 34 participated. The participation rate was 68%. The survey shows only the results and percentages of the 34 teachers who completed the survey. Each participant completed the survey through the Qualtrics survey platform. The participants' demographic data are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1
Participants Demographics

<i>Survey Questions</i>	<i>Number of Participants</i>	<i>Percent of Participants</i>
Employment Status		
Fulltime	34	100%
Part-Time	0	0
Total	34	
Years of Experience (employment)		
1-10 years	9	26.47
11-20 years	19	55.88
21-45 years	6	17.65
Total	34	100%
Level of Education		
Undergraduate	8	23.53
Master's	23	67.65
Master's+/PhD/Doctoral	3	8.82
Total	34	100%
Employment Building		
Elementary	13	38.24
Middle School	8	23.53
High School	13	38.24
Total	34	100%

The data from Table 1 shows that 100 percent of all teachers who completed the survey are full-time employees. The full-time employees consist of 26.47 percent new service teachers, 55.88 percent mid-career teachers who have served 11-20 years, and 17.65 percent of teachers with 21-45 years of experience in education. In terms of the participants' levels of education completed, 67.65 percent have a master's degree, 23.53 percent have at least an undergraduate degree, and the remaining 8.82 percent, including three teachers, hold a Master's degree plus a Ph.D. or Doctorate. All participants in this survey, considering their years of experience, employment status, and level of education, work at either the elementary building (38.24% of participants), the middle school building (23.53% of participants), or the high school building (38.24% of participants), respectively.

What are teachers' general perceptions of professional development?

The results are presented in Tables 2, 3, 4, and 5. Table 2 shows that, according to teachers' perceptions of professional development and whether the professional development sessions met their expectations, 20 participants, or 60.61 percent, stated that they met their expectations. The remaining 13 participants, representing 39.39 percent, said no, stating that the professional development sessions did not meet their expectations.

Table 2
Teachers' Perception of Professional Development

<i>Survey Questions</i>	<i>Number of Participants</i>	<i>Percent of Participants</i>
Do PD sessions meet your expectations?		
Yes	20	60.61
No	13	39.39
Total	33	100%

Table 3 shows that teachers' perceptions of professional development vary significantly. The explanations of professional development, including the perceptions of the participants, include but are not limited to "not being worth a teacher's time or the school's money, "PD is too generic and not grade level specific most often when offered by the school, however, when I seek PD outside of school my expectations are met," and that "they are insightful and give good knowledge towards the intended target, however, could be more focused—varying opinions or perceptions of professional development range from positive to negative aspects.

Table 3

Explanations of Table 2 Answers. Do PD sessions meet your expectations?

Survey Responses (included, but not limited to)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oftentimes, the presentations do not pertain to the needs of my classroom • I feel the PD sessions are well described and meet my expectations • PD is too generic and not grade-level specific, most often when offered by the school; however, when I seek PD outside of school, my expectations are met • Providers are well prepared and know their subject matter • Typical in-services are on literacy • They are low • They generally offer tools intended to help in some aspect of our daily methodology. • It is not PD that is usually relevant to my classes. Most of it is geared toward the elementary. They are usually ideas that the administration has heard about at workshops. We are then told to do whatever the newest thing is, which is never revisited. A massive waste of time and money • Nothing is ever geared towards a vocational teacher or a teacher who teaches skills. • This year, there has been a focus on one area, which has been a nice change. In the past, work has been completed, or conversations have taken place, but we never hear of it again. • Not many times do they relate to what I teach • Most of the time, the presenters try to make the presentations engaging • In the elementary school, we have had many sessions on guided reading this year. It would be nice to see it more diverse • Professional development sessions usually consist of a wide range of topics throughout the year, which provide a wide variety of information • Many do, but too many also seem redundant or led by people reading from power points. Some can be hard to find a use for • Our PD sessions meet my expectations for classroom teachers • Many times, they do not apply to elementary teachers • Yes, they typically align with our standards or school goals • Most PD sessions give us more work in our classroom, but there is never any follow-through. • The content is rarely relevant to my subject matter/needs • They are insightful and give sound knowledge of the intended target; however, they could be more focused • PD sessions tend to be on-topic, so it is easy to set expectations

Table 4 presents the rankings of certain perceptions held by teachers regarding professional development and career development. The number one ranking was "I am satisfied with my current position," with 63.33% (19 teachers) ranking it first, respectively. Coming in second, "I feel the professional development offered does not offer enough work time to implement the materials into our curriculum when applicable," with 26.67% (8 teachers) ranking it second, respectively. Ranking third and fourth was "there are enough professional development opportunities offered," with 26.67% (8 teachers) and 30% (9

teachers), respectively. The sixth rank in this survey question was "I feel the professional development is relevant to my career," with 33.33% (10 teachers). Finally, ranking 7th in this survey question was "I feel the professional development's content allows me to easily implement the content into my classroom," with 33.33% (10 teachers).

Table 4

Teachers' Perception of Professional Development (Rank)

Survey Questions							Totals
Number and Percentage of Respondents							
1. I am satisfied with my current position							
19	1	5	1	2	2		30
63.33%	3.33%	16.67%	3.33%	6.67%	6.67%		
2. The participating district supports job-specific PD							
2	7	4	5	3	7	2	30
6.67%	23.33%	13.33%	16.67%	10.00%	23.32%	6.67%	
3. There are enough PD opportunities offered							
4	8	9	4	5			30
13.33%	26.67%	30.00%	13.3 %	16.6%			
4. I feel the PD is relevant to my career							
1	2	1	7	10	3	6	30
3.33%	6.67%	3.33%	23.33%	33.33%	10.00%	20.00%	
5. The PD's content allows me to implement the content into my classroom quickly.							
1	3	1	8	7	10		30
3.33%	10.00%	3.33%	26.67	23.33%	33.33%		
6. The PD offered is geared more towards specific grades and not all grade levels.							
3	7	5	2	2	4	7	30
10.00%	23.33%	16.67%	6.67%	6.67%	13.33%	23.33%	
7. The PD offered does not offer enough work time to implement the materials into our curriculum when applicable.							
5	8	4	5	1	2	5	30
16.67%	26.67%	13.33%	16.67%	3.33%	6.67%	16.67%	

Table 5 shows that, while continuing teachers' perceptions of professional development, out of 4 questions, question #1, "PD improved my knowledge and skills, ranked first with 57.69 (15 participants) respectively. "PD is worth my time to attend" and "PD is likely to have a positive and lasting impact on my career goals" ranked second, with both at 42.31% (11 participants). The final question, "PD increased my effectiveness with staff and/or students," ranked fourth in this survey, with 34.62% of respondents.

Table 5
Teachers' Perception of Professional Development (Rank)

Survey Questions					Totals
Number and Percentage of Respondents					
1. PD improved my knowledge and skills	15	6	3	2	26
	57.69%	23.08%	11.54%	7.69%	
2. PD is worth my time to attend	2	4	11	9	26
	7.69%	15.38%	42.31%	34.62%	
3. PD is likely to have a positive and lasting impact on my career goals	1	7	7	11	26
	3.85%	26.92%	26.92%	42.31%	
4. PD increased my effectiveness with staff and/or students	8	9	5	4	26
	30.77%	34.62%	19.23%	15.38%	

What drawbacks or challenges have teachers encountered while completing or seeking professional development?

The results are presented in Table 6. The results of Table 6 represent the drawbacks or challenges teachers encountered while completing or seeking professional development. In some aspects of whether professional development sessions are of high quality, 3.03% of participants (1) stated that it was always the case. Ranking third was that 1 participant felt it was of high quality 25% of the time. Most participants felt professional development was of high quality 75% of the time, with 42.42% (14 participants) and 50% of the time with 51.52% (17 participants).

Further data from Table 6 also provides more information on the drawbacks and challenges that professional development teachers have encountered. Regarding whether professional development sessions are relevant to teachers' needs, 5 participants (14.71%) believe it was rarely relevant (0%-25%) of the time. In the third, there were 3 participants, at 8.82%, who believed that professional development sessions were relevant 76% to 100% of the time. Ranking second in this question were 11 participants at 32.35%, who believed that the relevance of professional development sessions to their needs lies between 26% and 50% of the time. Finally, 15 participants, at 44.12%, believe that their professional development sessions are relevant to teachers' needs 51%-75 % of the time.

The results in Table 6 also indicate whether professional development allows for sufficient time for work afterwards. Most participants, 20 out of 34, believed that enough work time is given afterwards, sometimes, at 58.82%. Following in rank, it was believed that there was not enough work time after sessions with a firm, no, which 13 participants believed at 38.24%. Lastly, only 1 participant, at 2.94%, believed there was enough work time after professional development sessions. Continuing with the theme of after-professional development sessions, the question was whether participants believed that professional development sessions allowed for follow-up. The first in rank for this question was 16 participants, at 47.06%, who believed that 'maybe' there was a follow-up after professional

development sessions. Secondly, 13 participants (38.24%) believed there was no follow-up after the sessions. Finally, 5 participants, at 14.71%, believed that 'yes' there was a follow-up after professional development sessions.

Table 6

Drawbacks or Challenges of Professional Development

Survey Questions	Number of Participants	Percent of Participants
Are PD Sessions of High Quality		
100% of the time	1	3.03
75% of the time	14	42.42
50% of the time	17	51.52
25% of the time	1	3.03
0% of the time	0	0
Total	33	100%
Are PD sessions relevant to your needs		
0%-25% of the time	5	14.71
26%-50% of the time	11	32.35
51%-75% of the time	15	44.12
76%-100% of the time	3	8.82
Total	34	100%
Does PD allow for enough work time afterward		
Yes	1	2.94
Sometimes	20	58.82
No	13	38.24
Total	34	100%
Do you feel PD sessions allow for follow-up		
Yes	5	14.71
Maybe	16	47.06
No	13	38.24
Total	34	100%

What are solutions to the issues facing professional development today?

The results are presented in Tables 7 and 8 below. Table 7 shows the data in correlation to possible solutions for professional development. The first survey question in Table 7 asks about the professional development delivery models in which the participants are most likely to participate. The participants were able to choose multiple options. The option chosen most frequently was the 'Workshop (one day/one topic)' option, with 29 participants out of 34, resulting in 104 options being chosen overall, which accounted for 27.88% of the total. Secondly, a 'Seminar/Conference' was chosen by the 34 participants at 16 times overall, being 15.38%. Next was the option 'Institute (multiple days/single topic),' which was chosen 14 times, accounting for 13.46% of the selections. The fourth slot is tied between 'eLearning/Online Classes' and 'Video/Book Study', each with 9.62% of participants choosing them, with 'eLearning/Online Classes' being chosen 10 times and 'Video/Book Study' being chosen 10 times. The fifth place slot, after participants chose their options, was 'Mentoring/Intern/Coaching' at 9 times, or 8.65%. The next slot determined was the 'University Coursework' option at 6 times with 5.77%. The 7th was 'Problem-Based Project,' selected 6 times at a rate of 5.77%. Lastly, 'Study Team' was chosen four times by participants, at a rate of 3.85% each. The next survey question in Table 7 was, "What areas of your teaching practice

do you feel would benefit from more PD?" Participants had the option of choosing more than one answer for this survey question. Being chosen 16 times out of 120 participants, 'Content-subject specifics' had a rate of 13.33% among 100 participants. Tied at second were 'Effective-Teaching practice' and 'Assessment' at 13 with 10.83%. The third place slot was 'Personal PD (time management/stress)' with 11 at 9.17%. The fourth-place standing was 'Discipline Management' and 'Infusion of Tech. Into Teaching' with 10 each at 8.33%. The fifth spot went to 'Curriculum Development' at 9 with 7.50%. The sixth slot was 'Using Data to Drive Instruction' at 7 with 5.83%. At seventh was 'Group Dynamics- Team' with seven at 5.83% respectively. In the eighth slot, 'Differentiated Instruction' was chosen 6 times at 5%. The ninth slot ends up being a three-way tie with 'Parent Communication/Conferencing,' 'Classroom Management,' and 'Conflict Resolution' at 5 with 4.17%, respectively. Lastly, in the final slot at 10th is 'Leadership Development' with three at 2.50%. The overall options for participants had a final tally of being chosen 120 times at 100% participation. The final survey question in Table 8 provided insight into which time of day is most convenient for participants to attend professional development sessions. There were 34 participants at 100% participation in this survey question. The first option participants preferred for professional development sessions was the 'morning' option, with 12 selections at 35.29%. The second option is the 'afternoon,' which is 10% of participant selections at 29.41%. The next option would be 'late afternoon.' It was selected 5 times, at a rate of 14.71%. The fourth slot was 'early morning' with four selections at 11.76%. Next is the 'evening session,' which participants chose 3 times overall at 8.82%. Lastly, participants did not choose 'lunch hour' as it had a score of 0%.

Table 7
Solutions to Professional Development

Survey Questions	Number of Participants	Percent of Participants
Which of the following PD delivery models are you most likely to participate in (choose multiple options)		
Workshop(one day/one topic)	29	27.88
Institute (multiple days/single topic)	14	13.46
Seminar/Conference	16	15.38
eLearning/Online Classes	10	9.62
Mentoring/Intern/Coaching	9	8.65
University Coursework	6	5.77
Problem-Based Projects	6	5.77
Study Team	4	3.85
Video/Book Study	10	9.62
Total	104	100%
What areas of your teaching practice do you feel would benefit from more PD (choose multiple options)		
Content-subject specifics	16	13.33
Effective-Teaching practice	13	10.83
Discipline Management	10	8.33
Assessment	13	10.83
Infusion of Tech. Into Teaching	10	8.33
Personal PD (time management/stress)	11	9.17
Parent Communication/Conferencing	5	4.17
Differentiated Instruction	6	5.00
Using Data to Drive Instruction	7	5.83
Classroom Management	5	4.17
Group Dynamics- Team	7	5.83

Leadership Development	3	2.50
Curriculum Development	9	7.50
Conflict Resolution	5	4.17
Total	120	100%
Rate the times of the day that are most convenient for PD sessions		
Early Morning	4	11.76
Morning	12	35.29
Lunch Hour	0	0.00
Afternoon	10	29.41
Late Afternoon	5	14.71
Evening Session	3	8.82
Total	34	100

Table 8 gives explanations from the participants on what could be done to enhance professional development. Such explanations range from "Give us time to implement. We are given an in-service on one day and expected to implement it the next. Much time, it takes planning", "Clear expectations for the PD and then time to implement," "Vary the topics," "Allow more levels of topics to be discussed instead of an all-day event on one topic," "Offer more staff led opportunities instead of outside speakers (Kids at the Core, etc.)," "Have specific presenters for each school-we all have different problems-different speakers to address certain issues," and finally to "Stick with an idea," along with other input similar to those addressed.

Table 8

Solutions to Professional Development Explanations

Participants Responses
<p>Suggestions to Enhance PD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to provide teachers in unique subject areas with the opportunity to receive professional development outside of the district alongside others who teach the same subject. • Grade-specific needs met, a survey of needs conducted, and time to implement the learned material. • Try to do more in buildings. What is essential in elementary school may not be important in middle school, and so on. • Vary the topics • Stick with an idea • Building or department-specific PD. English Teachers need different PD than Math teachers. • Offer multiple choices for teachers and make it teachers, not presenters. • Give us time to implement. We are given an in-service on one day and expected to implement it the next. It takes much time to plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let us pick one goal and focus on that • Find something to believe in and stick to it • Choices! Many times, PD only pertains to one subject/skill that does not pertain to all staff. • It would be nice to have some PD on time management and stress management • Clear expectations for the PD, and then time to implement • Offer more staff-led opportunities instead of outside speakers (e.g., Kids at the Core). • More geared towards elementary • Focus on 1 or 2 things • More specifically geared to my own subject and/or grade level • Content needs to relate to what happens in the classroom • Grade-level focus and team building

- More choice-based selections
- Options and time to collaborate or implement actual ideas!
- More variety/trim group options
- Allow for more levels of topics to be discussed, rather than holding an all-day event on a single topic.
- Continued efforts to give relevant PD
- Have specific presenters for each school. We all have different problems, and different speakers address specific issues.
- Team or curriculum meeting to work together on planning and implementing
- Have separate activities for K-5 and 6-12

Discussion

What are teachers' general perceptions of professional development?

After collecting all the data for this research inquiry, the first survey question that was addressed was: What are teachers' general perceptions of professional development? The survey results indicated whether teachers thought that professional development sessions met their expectations. Twenty of the participants believed that the PD sessions met their expectations, at 60.61%, while 13 other participants, 39.39%, believed that the PD sessions did not meet their expectations. At least for W-L, most teachers believe that their professional development sessions meet their expectations. However, a small percentage of employees still believe their expectations are not being met through the professional development provided.

Regarding prior research, the results of the study mentioned earlier in the literature review by Yurtseven (2017) were similar to those of this study. Their study produced such metaphors that were categorised and further analysed. The categories were professional development as a nutrient, an object, an investment instrument, a growing or evolving entity, an occupation including change, part of nature, a task requiring labour, a physiological need, a damaging/unnecessary occupation, an abstract concept, and finally, a challenging task. Similar metaphors were noted in this study, primarily related to nature, negative, and ultimately, a challenging task. As mentioned earlier, other findings suggest that teachers perceive professional development as a physiological need and an inherent part of education (Yurtseven, 2017). The teachers at W-L understand the need for professional development and provide feedback that expectations are met, but also explain that the execution of successful professional development, as stated by the participants, still needs improvement.

An example would be, "I feel the PD sessions are well described and meet my expectations", and "Most PD sessions give us more work to do in our classroom, but there is never any follow-through." On the other hand, regarding professional development and career development, there was clear feedback on teachers' general perceptions of professional development. The number one ranking was "I am satisfied with my current position," with 63.33% (19 teachers) ranking it first, respectively. Overall, this represents a significant percentage of participants who feel satisfied with their current position. Secondly, "I feel the professional development offered does not offer enough work time to implement the materials into our curriculum when applicable," with 26.67% (8 teachers) ranking it second, respectively. According to prior literature, it was mentioned that the usual professional development that has been offered for numerous years now, known as the 'one shot, one-stop' "are becoming less effective in today's busy world. Much of the information gained is not likely to be remembered, and even less is likely to be applied once returning to our daily routine"

(Hunzicker, 2011, pp. 177-179). Because there is a growing trend and increasing use of 'one shot, one-stop' professional development, numerous teachers' perceptions of professional development have faltered from being positive, as they know they will not receive the proper work time to implement the materials from the PD into their curriculum. Not only will the material to be implemented fall short of that goal, but the teachers will not likely remember the material without proper follow-up. Ranking third and fourth was "there are enough professional development opportunities offered," with 26.67% (8 teachers) and 30% (9 teachers), respectively. The sixth rank in this survey question was "I feel the professional development is relevant to my career," with 33.33% (10 teachers). Finally, ranking 7th in this survey question was "I feel the professional development's content allows me to easily implement the content into my classroom," with 33.33% (10 teachers).

While continuing teachers' perceptions of professional development out of 4 questions, question #1, "PD improved my knowledge and skills, ranked first with 57.69 (15 participants), respectively. "PD is worth my time to attend" and "PD is likely to have a positive and lasting impact on my career goals" ranked second, with both at 42.31% (11 participants). The final question, "PD increased my effectiveness with staff and/or students," ranked fourth in this survey, with 34.62% of respondents. This data analysis indicates that the professional development provided has improved the participants' knowledge and skills to some extent. Following that analysis, it also provides that the professional development was worth the participant's time to attend at 42.31% of the time. Most of this would be attributed to the issue of the negative perception of teachers and PD, and for professional development to be effective, it has to have the right structural features. These "features significantly affect teacher learning: (a) the form of the activity (e.g., workshop vs. study group); (b) collective participation of teachers from the same school, grade, or subject; and (c) the duration of the activity" (Garet et al., 2001, p. 915). If the professional development is not executed effectively, then the participants' perceptions will be negative. If the features mentioned above by Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, and Yoon are achieved, then the participants' perceptions will be positive. This is akin to a teacher delivering a subpar classroom lesson. The student's learning will be significantly affected if the lesson features do not possess the correct structural elements. Not only does this rule apply to students' learning, but also to teachers as they continue to learn through professional development. This needs to be considered by those acquiring the PD or presenting it, as failure to do so may result in unintended consequences. There will be many challenges to overcome.

What drawbacks or challenges have teachers encountered while completing or seeking professional development?

The challenges teachers encounter while completing or seeking professional development are noticeable and recognisable to numerous persons in the field of education. In some aspects of whether professional development sessions are of high quality, 3.03% of participants in this study (1) stated that they were of high quality 100% of the time. Another participant (1) felt it was of high quality 25% of the time. Most participants felt professional development was of high quality 75% of the time, with 42.42% (14 participants) and 50% of the time with 51.52% (17 participants). Professional development should be as effective as possible in developing a teacher's methods and understanding of a topic. It should not be viewed as a partially high-quality activity, but rather as a consistently high-quality activity. The traditional professional development, which has been offered for numerous years and is

known as the 'one-shot, one-stop' approach, is becoming less effective in today's busy world. It is ineffective and the most used PD model in school districts. Much of the information gained is not likely to be remembered, and even less is likely to be applied once we return to our daily routine." (Hunzicker, 2011, pp. 177-179). Suppose a session of professional development is not of high quality, as many participants mentioned that it is highly effective only 50% of the time. In that case, there is still significant room for improvement or restructuring of professional development.

Regarding whether professional development sessions are relevant to teachers' needs overall, 15 participants, at 44.12%, believe that 51%-75% of the time, their professional development sessions are relevant to teachers' needs. If professional development is irrelevant to teacher needs, why should teachers see PD as a needed aspect of their job or as something beneficial to themselves as educators? As older trends are no longer as effective as they once were or nearly as relevant as they need to be, newer styles are more engaging and hands-on. The evidence is overwhelming in support of the need for well-designed and carefully implemented professional development in education. It is vital to educate teachers and administrators further to help decrease education turnover rates. Educators will feel that they are being challenged and supported by well-developed and implemented professional development.

Another drawback in education and professional development is whether professional development allows enough time for work during or after sessions, conferences, and other events. Most participants in this study, 20 out of 34, believed that enough work time is allocated afterwards, sometimes at a rate of 58.82%. Following in rank, it was believed that there was not enough work time after sessions, with a firm 'no', which 13 participants believed at 38.24%. Lastly, only 1 participant, at 2.94%, believed there was enough work time after professional development sessions.

The theme of time continued, and participants were asked whether or not they believed professional development sessions allowed for follow-up. The first in rank for this question was 16 participants, at 47.06%, who believed that 'maybe' there was a follow-up after professional development sessions. Secondly, 13 participants (38.24%) believed there was no follow-up after the sessions. Finally, 5 participants, at 14.71%, believed that 'yes' there was a follow-up after professional development sessions. The literature review indicates that active learning during professional development has a significant impact on teachers' instructional practices (Desimone et al., 2002). A need for follow-up is crucial to ensure that teachers and administrators implement certain effective practices correctly and efficiently in a classroom. Professionals cannot expect the same results when the same style of PD from 20-30 years ago is used, and the PD format and structure need to change as the times and the education system change. Teachers are constantly being "upgraded" as the times change, so why shouldn't professional development be held to the same standards? When this is accomplished, the effectiveness of professional development can be at an all-time high, rather than a low.

What are solutions to the issues facing professional development today?

Possible solutions for professional development were analysed through the data above, specifically in Tables 7 and 8. The first survey question in Table 7 asks about the professional development delivery models in which the participants are most likely to participate. The participants were able to choose multiple options. This helps narrow down the best options that would entice participants to have a greater 'buy-in' to the structure of the PD and be able to discard the styles or types of professional development in which they would not participate.

The option chosen most frequently was the 'Workshop (one day/one topic)' option, with 29 participants out of 34, resulting in 104 options being chosen overall, which accounted for 27.88% of the total. As the most preferred option in this survey question, participants would prefer to participate in a session focused on a single topic, held over one day. Secondly, a 'Seminar/Conference' was chosen by the 34 participants at 16 times overall, being 15.38%. Next was the option 'Institute (multiple days/single topic),' which was chosen 14 times, accounting for 13.46% of the selections. The fourth slot is tied at 'eLearning/Online Classes' with 9.62%, having been chosen 10 times by participants. The 'Video/Book Study' option is also chosen 10 times, with a 9.62% share. The fifth place slot, after participants chose their options, was 'Mentoring/Intern/Coaching' at 9 times, or 8.65%.

Few participants would like to participate in this type of session because they prefer conferences or small-sided sessions to groups, and they also prefer one-to-one professional development with a mentor, intern, or coach. The next slot determined was the 'University Coursework' option at 6 times with 5.77%. Seeing that this option was chosen very few times, it suggests that, as an option for professional development for teachers, they would rather participate only in university coursework if it were to advance their careers for salary reasons or to pursue a higher education degree beyond their undergraduate studies. The seventh was 'Problem-Based Project,' selected 6 times at 5.77%. Lastly, 'Study Team' was chosen four times by participants, at a rate of 3.85% each. This indicates that participants would prefer larger group PD over small-sided options. After examining the various styles or types of professional development sessions, it can be concluded which sessions are practical and which are not for professionals.

The following survey question in Table 7 was "What areas of your teaching practice do you feel would benefit from more PD?" with participants having the option of choosing more than one answer for this survey question. With being chosen 16 times out of 120 by participants, 'Content-subject specifics' had a 13.33% share, respectively, out of the total. Tied at second were 'Effective-Teaching practice' and 'Assessment' at 13 with 10.83%. The third place slot was 'Personal PD (time management/stress)' with 11 at 9.17%. The fourth place standing was 'Discipline Management' and 'Infusion of Tech. Into Teaching' with 10 each at 8.33%. The fifth spot went to 'Curriculum Development' at 9 with 7.50%. The sixth slot was 'Using Data to Drive Instruction' at 7 with 5.83%. At seventh was 'Group Dynamics- Team' with seven at 5.83% respectively. In the eighth slot, 'Differentiated Instruction' was chosen 6 times at 5%. The ninth slot ends up being a three-way tie with 'Parent Communication/Conferencing,' 'Classroom Management,' and 'Conflict Resolution' at 5 with 4.17%, respectively. Lastly, in the final slot at 10th is 'Leadership Development' with three at 2.50%. The overall options for participants had a final tally of being chosen 120 times at 100% participation. As participants have many options to choose from, a clear distinction exists between the preferred and least preferred options. As participants would like content-subject-specific professional development the most and would benefit from having this type more, they also indicate that leadership development is unlikely to aid their teaching practices.

The final survey question in Table 8 provided insight into which time of day is most convenient for participants to attend professional development sessions. This is always a positive solution to enhancing professional development, as the time of day a teacher receives professional development plays a more significant role than most professionals think it does. There were 34 participants, and all of them participated in this survey question. The first option participants preferred for professional development sessions was the 'morning' option, with 12 selections at 35.29%. The second option is the 'afternoon,' which is 10% of participant

selections at 29.41%. The next option would be 'late afternoon.' It was selected 5 times, at a rate of 14.71%. The fourth slot was 'early morning' with four selections at 11.76%. Next is the 'evening session,' which participants chose 3 times overall at 8.82%. Lastly, participants did not choose 'lunch hour' as it had a score of 0%. The survey participants indicated that they would most benefit from professional development during the morning, with the afternoon being a close second in selection.

Table 8 also showed explanations from the participants on what could be done to enhance professional development. Such explanations range from "Give us time to implement. We are given an in-service on one day and expected to implement it the next. Much time, it takes planning", "Clear expectations for the PD and then time to implement," "Vary the topics," "Allow more levels of topics to be discussed instead of an all-day event on one topic," "Offer more staff led opportunities instead of outside speakers (Kids at the Core, etc.)," "Have specific presenters for each school-we all have different problems-different speakers to address certain issues," and finally to "Stick with an idea," along with other input similar to those addressed. Considering comments and constructive criticism when planning professional development can make a significant difference in teachers' attitudes and 'buy-in' for a professional development session, particularly if it addresses the audience's preferences. Regarding feedback for professional development, when looking to implement and give effective PD to education professionals, "presentation-style workshops are an efficient way to accomplish this" (Hunzicker, 2011, pp. 177-179). Hands-on activities, known as kinesthetic learning, have proven to be a PD winner with participants. As stated by Hunzicker, "Effective professional development is anything that engages teachers in learning activities that are supportive, job-embedded, instructionally focused, collaborative, and ongoing" (2010, p. 177-179) are classifications of successful PD. It can benefit both the teacher and the students directly affected by their teacher's attendance at professional development opportunities.

Conclusion

Research on professional development indicates that many teachers remain dissatisfied with the professional development they receive. The trends in data show that the specific number of teachers who are satisfied with professional development hovers around 50% and never breaks the 60% marker on specific survey questions. There is still a significant gap to be filled for staff members to feel that they have benefited from professional development in a meaningful way. This research study explored the staff's perceptions of professional development. Research results helped gather data that allowed a more meaningful exploration of issues and solutions. To further this study, it would be helpful for other districts to survey their staff, compare results with this study, and analyse the data and trends for similarities or differences. This can lead to a positive impact or adjustment to professional development. Furthering the study even more, expanding it to a regional or national level can help lead to a more significant impact or a broader study of professional development.

Recommendations

For professional development to succeed in schools, districts are suggested to create a teacher and administration committee to design and implement professional development together. It is suggested that teachers place a more significant emphasis on planning and facilitating professional development, that administration helps ensure the professional development aligns with state and national regulations/laws, and that teacher-planned professional development is approved as needed. This approach would positively contribute

to bridging the gap in staff satisfaction and achieving beneficial results, as professional development is planned, implemented, and executed under a stronger teacher-led role, with administrators also involved. While furthering recommendations, it is incredibly beneficial for teachers to be given more follow-up professional development sessions and time to implement and follow through on any ideas gained at such sessions.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

References

- Banks, D. (1999). Issues of supply and demand: Recruiting and retaining quality teachers. School Development Outreach Project. *U.S. Department of Education*, 2–36.
- Basile, C., Barker, H., & Olsen, F. (2005). Teachers as Advisors: Fostering Active Citizens in Schools. *Kappa Delta Pi Record*.
- Bodman, S., Taylor, S., & Morris, H. (2012). Politics, policy and professional identity. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 11(3), 14–25. <http://education.waikato.ac.nz/research/files/etpc/files/2012v11n3art1.pdf>
- Borko, H. (2004). Professional development and teacher learning: Mapping the terrain. *Educational Researcher*, 33(8), 3–15. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X033008003>
- Calkins, L., Ehrenworth, M., & Lehman, C. (2012). Pathways to common core: Accelerating achievement. Portsmouth, NH.
- Darling-Hammond, L., & McLaughlin, M. W. (2011). Policies that support professional development in an era of reform. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 92(6), 81–92. <https://doi.org/10.1177/003172171109200622>.
- Desimone, L. M., Porter, A. C., Garet, M. S., Yoon, K. S., & Birman, B. F. (2002). Effects of professional development on teachers' instruction: Results from a three-year longitudinal study. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 24(2), 81–112. <https://doi.org/10.3102/01623737024002081>.
- Garet, M. S., Porter, A. C., Desimone, L., Birman, B. F., & Yoon, K. S. (2001). What makes professional development effective? Results from a national sample of teachers. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38(4), 915–945. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312038004915>.
- Hunzicker, J. (2011). Effective professional development for teachers: a checklist. *Professional Development in Education*, 37(2), 177–179. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2010.523955>.
- Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). Educator licensure: Renewal and professional development for educators (<https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Professional-Development-for-Educators.aspx>).
- Kardos, S. M., & Johnson, S. M. (2008). New teachers' experiences of mentoring: The good, the bad, and the inequity. *Journal of Educational Change*, 11, 23–44.
- Moir, E. (2009). Accelerating teacher effectiveness: Lessons learned from two decades of new teacher induction. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 91(2), 14–21.
- National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality. (2012). *Linking Teacher Evaluation to Professional Development: Focusing on Improving Teaching and Learning*, Washington, DC: Laura Goe, Ph.D., Kietha Biggers, Andrew Croft.
- Oakes, J., Lipton, M., Anderson, A., & Stillman, J. (2013). *Teaching to change the world* (4th ed.). Boulder, CO.

- Ornstein, A., Orstein, B., & Pajak, E. (2011). *Contemporary issues in curriculum* (5th ed.). Boston, PA: Pearson.
- Trent, J., (2012). Teacher professional development through a school-university partnership. *What role does it play? Journal of Teacher Education*, 37 (7), 1-106.
- Yoo, J., & Carter, D. (2017). Teacher emotion and learning as praxis: Professional development that matters. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 42. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2017v42n3.3>.
- Yurtseven, N. (2017). The investigation of teachers' metaphoric perceptions about professional development. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 6(2), 120. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/jel.v6n2p120>.