

*Original Paper*

# A Narrative Literature Review on Teacher Professional Development

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## ***Abstract***

*Teacher professional development is a lifelong journey that spans the entire career of educators. However, teachers often do not actively participate in professional development activities, necessitating further efforts in this field. This study comprehensively reviews 22 articles in a narrative manner, providing a holistic understanding of teacher professional development. The review identifies key themes from perspectives of definitions, effectiveness, forms, strategies and technology integration. It highlights the importance of active learning, collaboration, expert support, feedback, and reflection in ensuring the effectiveness of TPD programs. This study underscores the importance of these components and outlines approaches in fostering teacher development, suggesting that future research should explore innovative strategies to further enhance TPD programs.*

## ***Keywords***

*Teacher professional development, collaborative development, active learning, technology integration*

## **1. Introduction**

The 21st century is characterized by rapid development and fierce competition, presenting both challenges and opportunities across all aspects of society, including education. The continuous emergence of modern technologies and the constant renewal of teaching concepts and methods have made both teaching and learning more efficient. However, these advancements also bring about new problems. How teachers cope with these challenges and engage in professional development to enhance their teaching skills in this complex world is of paramount importance.

Nothing within a school has a more significant impact on students' skills development, self-confidence, or classroom behavior than the personal and professional growth of their teachers. When teacher

examine, question, reflect on their ideas and develop new practices that lead towards their ideals, students are alive. When teachers stop growing, so do their students. Teacher professional development of teachers is a long journey which shall go through the whole life career of teachers.

The increasing global integration and exchanges in the fields of economy, culture, and political development have created a substantial demand for talents with comprehensive skills. This, in turn, has raised higher requirements for the quality and competence of teachers. Consequently, there has been a surge of interest in teacher professional development worldwide, and significant progress has been made in this area.

This study provides a comprehensive understanding of teacher professional development in educational settings through a narrative literature review and identifies key themes from perspectives of its effectiveness, forms, strategies and technology integration, offering valuable insights for educators and policymakers to come up with effective programs to support sustainable teacher professional development.

## **2. Definition of Teacher Professional Development**

Over the past several decades, numerous scholars have extensively researched teacher professional development. The research on professional development of teachers started early in United States by the end of 1960s and flourished since the 1980s. However, the concept of teacher professional development remains multifaceted and is interpreted differently by various scholars (Desimone, 2009; Avalos, 2011; Kunter et al., 2013).

According to Desimone (2009), professional development is aimed at enhancing teachers' knowledge and skills to improve student learning and achievement. Avalos (2011) further elaborates that it involves teachers learning to transform their knowledge into effective practice, thereby contributing to student growth. This process encompasses both cognitive and emotional engagement from teachers, both individually and collectively. Teacher professional development encompasses a variety of processes, actions, and mechanisms that are inherently shaped by the cultural, social, political, and economic contexts in which they occur (Bautista & Ortega-Ruiz, 2015). Based on the definitions, teacher professional development is a complex and comprehensive process that includes multiple elements such as knowledge acquisition, skill development, active engagement, reflective practice, and collaboration.

## **3. Current Studies on Teacher Professional Development**

The current research on teacher professional development centers on the following aspects: the effectiveness of teacher professional development, forms of teacher professional development, strategies for teacher professional development, and technology integration in teacher profession development.

### *3.1 Effectiveness of Teacher Professional Development*

The effective teacher professional development, as defined by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), refers to the structured learning experiences that lead to measurable changes in teacher practices and demonstrable improvements in student learning outcomes. It should engage teachers both as learners and as educators. Programs that targeted at effective teacher professional development need to be rooted in inquiry, reflection, and experimentation that are driven by participants. It should be collaborative, emphasizing the sharing of knowledge among educators and focusing on communities of practice rather than individual teachers (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011). According to Guskey, a crucial element of effective professional development is to deepen teachers' understanding of the content they teach and improve the mastery of the learning processes of their students. Collaboration is essential during this process, but to realize its full potential, it must be structured and purposeful, guided by clear objectives aimed at enhancing student learning. Furthermore, for professional development to be truly effective, teachers must recognize its importance and integrate it into their everyday teaching practices (Guskey, 2003).

Hunzicker (2011) explored the role of leadership, teachers' self-efficacy and teacher collaboration in TPD. The study emphasizes that for teacher professional development to be effective, it shall involve supportive, job-embedded, instructional-focus, collaborative and ongoing components. To effectively develop professionalism, teachers should actively participate in both individual and collaborative learning activities, such as coaching, mentoring, and study groups. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) proposed a framework for effective teacher professional development, which contains the following elements: content focus, active learning, collaboration, use of models and modeling, coaching and expert support, feedback and reflection, providing valuable and actionable insights for relevant educational stakeholders to design and implement PD programs. These elements identified in the literature are found to support teachers in various aspects of their professional growth. However, challenges were also identified that could hinder the effectiveness of TPD, such as the insufficient resources support or consistency school policies, calling for more attention in this field. Future study shall investigate factors that support and contribute to effectiveness of teacher professional development programs.

### *3.2 Forms of Teacher Professional Development*

Teacher professional development should be an ongoing and sustainable process throughout careers of teachers. As it's a must for teachers to continuously strive to keep up with the ever-changing landscape of knowledge, evolving student needs, and demands of society. Professional development programs can be categorized into two types: top-down and bottom-up. Top-down programs are those mandated by national or provincial authorities, or regulated by universities, which teachers are required to attend to enhance their teaching practices. In contrast, bottom-up programs are teacher-led, where educators take the initiative in planning, implementing, and evaluating professional development activities (Koşar et al., 2022).

Moreover, professional development programs can be divided into pre-service and in-service categories. For pre-service teachers, it is of great significance to develop their information technology literacy and improve digital competence. Meanwhile, in-service professional development for teachers should focus more on internal factors and informal learning opportunities, especially in the context of mobile internet integration (Gao et al., 2021).

Buendía and Macías (2019) reviewed 25 empirical studies and concluded that there is a need for further exploration of teacher professional development to empower teachers. There is a growing trend towards shifting from isolated work to forming communities of practice. Additionally, both teachers and researchers should pay more attention to social interaction and the diverse local contexts when designing professional development activities.

### *3.3 Strategies for Teacher Professional Development*

Researchers continue to investigate various methods to improve teacher professional development. Educators employ diverse strategies for professional growth, depending on the specific contexts in which they work. El Islami et al. (2022) systemically reviewed 267 articles published between 2015 and 2019, summarizing the trends and patterns in PD strategies and learning outcomes. In total, 19 professional strategies were concluded, such as demonstration lessons, lesson study, action research, mentoring, study group, professional networks and online professional development, which has witnessed a clear popularity in usage over the years. On the other hand, strategies like workshops, institutes, and seminars have been less popular gradually, marking a trend towards more collaborative and sustained forms of professional development.

Methlagl (2022) explored the relationship between teacher collaboration, teacher professional development and teaching practices. The study highlights some key patterns of TD, which involve active participation in various PD activities, such as courses, online courses and teacher networks; frequent collaboration with colleagues through activities, in-time and effective feedback through self-assessment or classroom observation, undertaking challenging classes and adoption of disciplinary classroom management practices. These patterns stress the importance of creating supportive educational environments that foster teacher collaboration, provide meaningful feedback, and offer diverse PD opportunities to enhance teaching practices and student outcomes.

Bautista and Ortega-Ruíz (2015) outlined different approaches for PD across countries. In the United States, PD focuses on content specificity, active learning, coherence with teachers' prior knowledge and curricular requirements, sustained duration, and joint participation. Australian teachers engage in PD that involves multiple stakeholders and contextual relevance, stressing adaptability and resilience. Finnish teachers benefit from a holistic approach, autonomy and agency, research competencies, and multi-professional collaboration. Hong Kong's PD is characterized by lifelong learning, influenced by Confucian heritage, and aligned with broader policies. Singaporean teachers have access to comprehensive PD resources, subject-specific PD, collaborative learning, and opportunities for innovation and research. Lastly, Spanish teachers emphasize career-long development, school-based

communities, a student-centered approach, and policy coherence in their PD initiatives.

Setiawan and Kuswando (2020) systematically reviewed articles on teacher professional development published between 2010 and mid-2018 in South East Asia. Such approaches as observation research, lesson study, and action research were dominantly applied to enhance teaching quality and improve professionalism. Professional learning communities (PLCs), lesson study and English-medium instruction (EMI) are increasingly popular among teachers for enhancing their professional development. In Indonesia, mentoring practices have been implemented as a form of continuing professional development and have proven to be effective in improving the knowledge and skills of English teachers (Rohmah, 2018). This mentoring process includes pre and post-teaching conferences, monthly workshops, and collaboration between senior and novice teachers. Novice teachers actively participate in these programs and report significant improvements in their communication skills and self-confidence.

Another strategy is the integration of lesson study with clinical supervision and quality assurance principles to support the professional development of English teachers (Achmad & Miolo, 2021). This approach encourages English teachers to engage in direct, professional, and collaborative discussions about instructional materials, thereby gradually and sustainably enhancing their teaching practices. It also helps in forming and preparing a community of professional English teachers.

EMI is another effective strategy for teacher professional development. Yen-Hui Lu (2022) highlights the benefits of interdisciplinary collaboration between content and language teachers, which significantly improves teaching strategies, confidence, and content creation due to a supportive peer-coaching environment. This collaboration also enhances teachers' instructional language use in EMI. To optimize EMI content design, delivery, and evaluation, content teachers are encouraged to actively participate in professional discussions and teaching practices with English teachers (Alhassan, 2021). Additionally, class recording and observation, as well as coaching and mentoring between experienced teachers, are recommended to further enhance teacher professional development. Collectively, these approaches underscore the necessity of designing PD programs that are not only contextually relevant and teacher-centered but also aligned with broader educational goals to ensure their effectiveness.

#### *3.4 Technology Integration in Teacher Professional Development*

With the snowballing of technology, ways for teachers to learn and teach also get updated. Various technologies have been increasingly applied in both teaching and teacher professional development programs across global educational settings. Hu et al. (2021) conducted a comprehensive review on ICT applications in teacher professional development and teaching practice, involving 18 empirical articles published in high-impact journals from 2013 to 2019. Their findings identified four major ICT applications in teacher professional development, including Web conferencing, Web 2.0 supported teacher development, video-based training, and mobile technology. As to teaching practice, six different tools were reported, namely, Web 2.0 supported student learning, digital game-based learning,

multimedia-based learning, virtual reality, mobile technology for students, and online learning platforms. The functions, impacts and challenges in applying these technologies were also highlighted in this study.

Another systematic literature review was done by Hrastinski (2021), this study offers a comprehensive overview of how digital tools can enhance teacher professional development within the context of lesson studies. The findings of this study suggest that the application of digital tools opens new avenues for implementing lesson studies in classrooms, potentially improving teacher learning and teaching skills. Diverse digital resources, such as fictional animations and video materials, not only enrich classroom activities but also transform teaching strategies, facilitating more frequent hybrid and online collaborative practices. Zhang (2022) explored the integration of technology in EFL teaching and its significant role in enhancing teaching and learning, leading to improvement of teacher professional growth. As indicated by the study, the application of technology would bring about numerous advantages to both students and teachers, such as increased student engagement, more effective learning experiences and better learning outcomes. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of technology integration into classroom is closely related to comprehensive teacher professional development programs.

More scholars have also identified other forms of technology being utilized in teacher professional development programs, such as computer-assisted teaching (Hermans & Kreijns, 2017), YouTube Vlogs (Saiful, 2019), and blogs (Khan, 2016). These studies have observed significant improvements in teachers' teaching competence, awareness, and reflective abilities with the help of technology. However, not all teachers actively participate in these professional development programs, which underscores the need for further exploration into how technology can more effectively enhance teachers' professional growth.

#### **4. Implications for Future Teacher Professional Development**

Through careful and thorough engagement with the literature, this study draws various implications and provides directions for the development of more effective PD programs. The study highlights the crucial role of collaboration, technology, and collegial learning environments in the process of teacher professional development. School leaders or educational stakeholders should incorporate these elements into PD programs or professional trainings tailored to meet the specific needs of teachers. To fully utilize these teacher professional intervention tools, teachers' beliefs, cognition, motivation, peer support, and positive attitudes play a crucial role. Therefore, implementing bottom-up activities that involve smaller groups of teachers first and then further motivate other teachers to improve their teaching practices would be applicable and achieve better outcomes. Moreover, educators should be well-versed in using technology to meet the demands of modern, digitally-native students.

Additionally, current TPD practices, including mentoring, lesson study, action research, online professional learning communities, and training seminars with active feedback, have been proven to be

effective in enhancing both teaching and learning. This highlights the need for further efforts to ensure the sustainability of these practices. The promotion of interdisciplinary collaboration and advocating for educational integration represent future trends. Teachers should actively participate in relevant training to broaden their knowledge and improve their capabilities.

However, while the review is extensive and well-structured, it is limited to a number of articles selected, potentially missing relevant studies from other sources. Future research could conduct a more systematic literature review, selecting articles from high-impact journals to offer more comprehensive and targeted insights for continuous professional development. Additionally, researchers could explore the specific challenges and opportunities associated with technology integration to better address the broader implications of technology integration, such as teacher engagement and the development of effective online communities of practice.

## 5. Conclusion

This study aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of teacher professional development in educational settings in recent years. Utilizing a narrative literature review approach, this study holistically reviewed 22 articles on TPD. Educators have continuously strived to enhance their professionalism through various initiatives and programs.

Key components such as active learning, collaboration, expert support, feedback, and reflection have been identified as essential to ensure the effectiveness of TPD programs. These elements play a crucial role in fostering teachers' growth and improving their teaching skills. Two types of TPD programs were identified: bottom-up and top-down activities, this former of which has been perceived as more effective in meeting teachers' specific demands. Various strategies have been successfully adopted in different educational contexts to support teacher development. These include demonstration lessons, lesson study, frequent interactions among teachers through various collaborative activities, mentoring, study groups, professional networks, and online learning communities.

Moreover, the integration of various technologies in the process of TPD has opened new avenues for teachers' professionalism. This digital transformation in TPD aligns with the evolving needs of modern, digitally-native students and prepares teachers to effectively leverage technology in their classrooms. Future research should continue to explore innovative approaches and strategies to further enhance TPD, ensuring that educators are well-equipped to meet the evolving demands of the educational landscape.

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