

## Teachers' experiences as a means to evaluate professional development outcomes: The case of a longitudinal PD intervention in Norwegian secondary schools

**Camilla G. Magnusson & Jennifer Maria Luoto**  
University of Oslo

To better understand how PDs can be effective, we need knowledge about the process by which teachers grow professionally and the conditions that support and promote that growth (Sancar et al., 2021). This study sheds light on how a professional development program – that includes many of the factors deemed to be important for successful development (Bayar, 2014; Desimone & Pak, 2017) – is experienced by the participating teachers. It shows how eliciting teachers' thoughts and feelings around taking part in a PD program can contribute to our understanding of what factors that drive success, which can guide future PD designs.

The study involves nine lower secondary language arts teachers' experiences of a two-year long professional development (PD) program in Norway, designed as a video-based coaching focusing on instructional scaffolding. The PD was grounded in site-based, individualized, and sustained PD in literacy pedagogy (cf. Bean et al., 2010) and targets the use of three research-based instructional elements within the dimension of scaffolding: modeling, strategy use, and formative feedback, drawing on the Protocol for Language Arts Teaching Observation (PLATO, Grossman, 2015). We conducted semi-structured interviews designed to broadly elicit teachers' perspectives of what they perceived as challenges and successes in the PD.

The teachers reported on several different ways the PD was a success, such as introducing a common language for discussing their work, raising awareness of their own instruction when watching themselves on video, and enhancing their scaffolding skills. Many teachers stated that they now try to implement the scaffolding

elements when it is natural to do so. Still, none of the teachers could yet report on their students actually learning more after the PD – which is the intention of most PDs. The teachers also refer to a mix of challenges in implementing the instructional scaffolding, related to the video-based coaching, school leadership, and theory of scaffolding.

The study indicates that PD programs need to be tailored more specifically to the individual needs of teachers, especially when it comes to their need for spending more time and engagement in understanding the theoretical framework, and how to connect theory and practice. Although the PD intervention was designed to allow a great deal of flexibility in how the coach-teacher dyads worked together for improving classroom practices, this study indicates that more emphasis should be put on each teacher's expectation in advance – and throughout – the intervention.

It is difficult to reliably measure the effects of in-service PDs, and we here argue that using teachers' communicated experiences can give meaningful information about both what teachers perceive as useful in participating in such a PD as well as unfulfilled expectations, both from the teachers' and in terms of the intention of the PD. However, implementing new practices takes time, and while this approach does not give straightforward answers to whether or not scaffolding practices are being successfully implemented to support student needs, it gives valuable information of how future PDs can be designed to be flexible enough to comply with teachers' both collective and individual needs in order to accommodate success.