

Symposium 3 C | Evaluating teachers' improvement in sustained professional development efforts in a Nordic context: challenges and possibilities in methodology and ethics

Room: Kullager

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The context of teaching has changed dramatically over the last few decades. We increasingly expect teachers to continuously improve throughout their careers. They are required to adapt their teaching to curricula, new technologies, and demands from parents, and to differentiate their instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners. Such changes also increase the need for opportunities to develop as professionals after teacher training (Bressman et al., 2018). Research has repeatedly shown that formal in-service professional development (PD) is ineffective for improving teacher practice and student achievement due to its general and abstract focus (Borko, 2004; Harris & Sass, 2011; Wei et al., 2009). Rather, features of effective teacher PD initiatives, as summarized by Desimone and Pak (2017), involves a clear content focus (Garet et al., 2016), focuses on teachers' active learning in contrast to passive lecturing (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Putnam & Borko, 2000), integrates PD into the larger school system (coherency) (Borko, 2004; Wei et al., 2009), has sustained duration (Sailors & Price, 2015; Teemant, 2014), and involves collective participation in which teachers within the same school and subject participate together in the PD, building a learning community (Garet et al., 2016; Putnam & Borko, 2000). These features have been taken into consideration when designing two professional development interventions in Norway and Sweden respectively, conducted as site-based and sustained PDs that targets the use of research-based instructional elements (e.g. feedback, strategies instruction, modeling).

In this symposium, we discuss how to evaluate the outcome of PD efforts. We seek to add to the knowledge base by raising crucial issues of how we can gain knowledge of the impact of these often time-consuming and costly endeavors. We focus on design, methodology, and ethical issues related to site-based, individualized, and sustained PDs in literacy pedagogy (cf. Bean et al., 2010) that targets the use of research-based instructional elements, involving PD programs in both Norway and Sweden.

The three papers in this symposium discuss different aspects of evaluating PD efforts, considering teachers' and students' perspectives in connection to particular PD interventions as well as a more overarching focus on the dilemmas of methodology and ethics related to the use of video and observation manuals. Together, the papers discuss challenges and possibilities in methodology and ethics in PDs in a Nordic context.