Empowering Information Technology teachers through professional development: An evaluation

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Three approaches to IT teachers' professional development in South Africa

Traditional professional development (PD1)

Teachers can engage with each other

Workshop

Does not consider individual needs

Individual needs-driven face-to-face professional development (PD2)

Needs-based

Costly

Experts travel to teacher

Multimedia-based professional development (PD3)

Completes programme alone

DVD + Manual

Least expensive

Own time and own pace

Professional development:
On-going process where an individual acquires the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to not only better him/herself but also his/her teaching practice

RESEARCH QUESTION

To what extent do traditional professional development (PD1), individual needs-driven face-to-face professional development (PD2) and multimedia-based professional development (PD3) comply with the characteristics of effective professional development?

GUSKEY'S 21 CHARACTERISTICS FOR EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

After intensive research on the characteristics of effective professional development, Thomas Guskey compiled a list of 21 characteristics for effective professional development [6]. These characteristics focus on various aspects of professional development and can be used as guidelines when developing a professional development programme or as evaluation criteria after implementation of a professional development programme.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

- Evaluation research methodology
- Likert-scale where professional development programme complied with characteristics to no extent (0 points), to some extent (1 point) or to a greater extent (2 points)
- Two researchers rated professional development programmes and by means of discussion reached consensus where discrepancies in rating occurred.

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RESULTS

Table 1. Scores of each professional development approach

Nr	Characteristic	PD1	PD2	PD3
1	Enhances teachers' content and pedagogical knowledge	1	1	2
2	Provides sufficient time and other resources	1	2	2
3	Promotes collegiality and collaboration	2	1	0
4	Includes procedures for evaluation	1	2	2
5	Aligns with other reform initiatives	2	2	1
6	Models high-quality instruction	0	1	2
7	Is school- or site-based	0	2	2
8	Builds leadership capacity	0	2	1
9	Based on teachers' identified needs	0	2	2
10	Driven by analyses of student-learning data	2	2	1
11	Focuses on individual and organisational improvement	1	2	2
12	Includes follow up and support	0	2	2
13	Is on-going and job-embedded	0	2	2
14	Based on best-available research evidence	1	2	2
15	Takes a variety of forms	1	1	2
16	Provides opportunities for theoretical understanding	2	2	2
17	Helps accommodate diversity and promote equity	1	2	0
18	Driven by an image of effective teaching and learning	0	2	2
19	Provides for different phases of change	0	1	2
20	Promotes continuous inquiry and reflection	0	2	2
21	Involves families and other stakeholders	0	0	0
	Total	16	34	33

- PD 1 does not include follow-up opportunities nor is focused on individual needs- PD 2 scored the highest but should pay attention to include content knowledge in future endeavours
- PD 3 is only driven to some extent by the analysis of student data which can provide good feedback regarding efficacy of programme

CONCLUSIONS

- PD 1 does not include follow-up opportunities nor is focused on individual needs- PD 2 scored the highest but should pay attention to include content knowledge in future endeavours
- PD 3 is only driven to some extent by the analysis of student data which can provide good feedback regarding efficacy of programme

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