

# INVESTIGATION OF A TEACHER'S CONTINUED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN A THAI CONTEXT

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When asked, most educators will be quick to stress the importance of their own professional development and cite the necessary stress placed on continued professional development (CPD) by the teaching industry. However, when pressed for details, it might become quickly apparent that only lip service is being paid to the idea; with many teachers not really making much effort to develop their teaching skills, unless there are some coercive external factors to force them to do it. There is, however, in the current climate of educational development, a significant movement towards the encouragement of teacher development and a recognized need to facilitate improvements in pedagogy and ensure that lifelong learning is not just a concept that is only instilled in students.

CPD and lifelong learning is quite a new concept, but it is one that has been accepted by most educators; not all teachers, however, pursue some kind of personal development. Finding out why teachers engage in professional development is vital to ensure that the students receive the best education possible from the best teachers. The role of teacher has changed considerably and now most teachers have to assume a variety of roles distinct from their main (and previously singular) role of teacher. Traditionally, teacher/educators have identified the skills and abilities that teachers need to improve their classroom instruction and, in turn, improve student learning. Courses and workshops are prescribed, set up and implemented for teachers to learn the necessary skills and practice them in the context of their classrooms in order to improve their teaching.

The main questions that need to be asked therefore are: Firstly, what motivational factors lead to the teacher's pursuit of Continued Professional Development (CPD)? Secondly, what do teachers think is the effect of Continued Professional Development on their instruction? Thirdly, is there a pattern in terms of motivation that could encourage CPD? The final question is whether there is a pattern in the perceived benefits/detriments from CPD on instructional ability?

CPD is very important because it is vital for teachers to continually update their knowledge and skills to be better teachers so that they are participants in lifelong learning themselves; so that they are not only paying lip service to the concept. Some states in the US force teachers to do further study; other countries take a more laissez faire approach and leave things to the teacher. What is certain is that some teachers do not pursue any CPD while others do. We, therefore, need to investigate the factors that influence teachers in the pursuit of Continued Professional Development and the positive (or even negative) effects they can have on teacher instruction.

The fact that there should be a multitude of factors that lead teachers to pursue their own Continued Professional Development (CPD) does merit research, as it is already common thinking among foreign educators and educational leaders that professional teacher development and lifelong learning are important criteria for being accorded the status of an educator "As recently as 10 years ago, the idea that teacher knowledge was critical for educational improvement had little currency" (Darling Hammond, Linda 1996); There has recently been a significant paradigm shift so that "Professional development has moved from the periphery of teachers' professional lives to centre stage", (Bain and Roskos, 1998) and with it the dogma of lifelong learning. Both concepts, which are relatively new terminology, have made a triumphant and emphatic entrance into the educational lexicon. As educators, teachers today have a duty not just of instilling the concepts, skills, and appreciation of learning; teachers today, but also to manifest the characteristics of lifelong learning themselves and of applying them throughout the course of their own professional lives.

Professional development has become very important, there is a link between teacher development and what they know (Sykes, 1996) and therefore it is very important to discover what teachers think professional development is, how teachers can be motivated to engage in their own professional development, and what factors effect the motivation for Continued Professional Development (CPD). This