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Strategies for Supporting Teacher’s Professional Development and Retention in Parayao Centro Elementary School

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates effective strategies to support teachers’ professional development and retention in a mid-career teaching staff sample. It explores demographics, educational qualifications, and professional development preferences, highlighting teachers’ challenges. The sample consists of 60% aged 35-44, with 50% having 11-20 years of teaching experience, and is predominantly female (90%), with half holding a Bachelor’s degree and 40% possessing a Master’s degree. Despite high engagement in professional development activities such as reskilling, cross-skilling, and upskilling, significant barriers remain, including time constraints and program costs. The findings reveal a preference for collaborative learning, mentoring, and in-person workshops, while independent study and online courses are less favored. These insights emphasize the need for practical, interactive professional growth opportunities that align with teachers’ learning styles. Educational institutions and policymakers must address the time and cost barriers, offering flexible and accessible development programs that cater to teachers’ preferences. Recommendations focus on fostering reskilling and cross-skilling through interactive, collaborative formats, minimizing common barriers to enhance the professional development experience. By accommodating teachers’ preferred learning styles and minimizing obstacles, educational institutions can contribute to improved teacher retention and overall effectiveness in the classroom. This study provides actionable insights for developing teacher-focused professional development strategies that align with their career stages and preferences, ultimately contributing to more effective retention efforts and fostering long-term success in educational settings.

INTRODUCTION

Professional development (PD) is essential for continuous personal and professional growth across all professions, including education. Earning a degree or professional license is just the beginning of one’s learning journey. PD provides ongoing learning opportunities such as coaching, training, seminars, workshops, and conferences to keep professionals updated on evolving skills and knowledge. For teachers, who play a critical role in shaping the future by educating the next generation, PD is vital as education constantly evolves with new teaching methods, technologies, and curriculum standards. Engaging in PD allows teachers to stay current with educational innovations, improve pedagogical skills, and positively impact student outcomes.

Active participation in PD also enhances teachers’ morale, self-efficacy, and professional identity, promoting a culture of continuous improvement and innovation. Furthermore, it prepares teachers for leadership roles by exposing them to experienced leaders, supports teacher retention by making them feel valued, and reduces turnover, contributing to the stability of schools. PD, therefore, plays a crucial role in teachers’ professional growth and the success of both students and schools.

According to Deryakulu (2021), PD is essential for improving student outcomes but remains a complex, multidimensional concept. Effective PD focuses on areas such as assessment, research, duration, collaboration, and

support. Runhaar (2008) emphasized that teacher quality significantly influences student achievement, highlighting the importance of HRM in facilitating PD within schools. Factors such as transformational leadership, self-efficacy, and team collaboration were identified as key drivers of teachers’ development.

Garet (2015) suggested five key features for effective PD: content focus, active learning, coherence, sustained duration, and collective participation. Research in the U.S. has shown that PD linked to classroom practices, leadership support, and longer-term learning is more successful. Finally, Darling-Hammond (2010) explained that PD improves teaching by refining pedagogical skills, enhancing classroom management, and introducing new instructional strategies. By staying updated on research, curriculum standards, and technology, PD ensures teachers remain effective and relevant, leading to more engaged students and improved academic performance. Given the significance of PD in enhancing teacher effectiveness and supporting educational quality, the researcher aims to explore strategies to promote teachers’ professional growth.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Related Literature

Teacher professional learning is gaining increasing attention as an essential strategy for equipping students with the complex skills needed for future success,

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including communication, collaboration, and self-direction (Gardner, 2017). Effective professional development (PD) is crucial in helping teachers refine the pedagogies necessary to foster these skills. However, research suggests that many PD initiatives fail to impact teaching practices or student outcomes significantly. Gardner (2017) reviewed 35 rigorous studies to identify the characteristics of successful PD programs, finding a positive link between teacher development, instructional practices, and student achievement. Similarly, Sailors and Price (2010) demonstrated that teachers who engaged in PD focused on cognitive reading strategies showed improved instructional techniques, leading to better student reading comprehension outcomes.

In a large-scale study, Glassett and Copas (2015) evaluated the impact of a PD program combining teacher observations with coordinated development efforts, noting significant improvements in student achievement. They argued that aligning PD with classroom practices and providing targeted, ongoing support helps teachers identify and address specific areas for growth. Desimone (2002, 2009) and Yoon (2001) further identified that PD programs are more effective when they emphasize structural features—such as duration, form, and collective participation—and core features, including content focus, active learning, and coherence with other educational activities.

Innovations in PD, like the intelligent training platforms highlighted by Gao (2023), also demonstrate how new technologies can enhance professional development, offering teachers data-driven tools to improve teaching and research activities. In contrast, Kesson and Henderson (2017) critique the traditional standardized PD models driven by external mandates, advocating for more democratic approaches that consider the unique needs of teachers and promote social justice.

Professional learning communities (PLCs) are emerging as a promising form of PD that supports teacher collaboration, reflection, and real-time implementation of new practices (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Casale, 2017). These communities, supported by school leadership, create a culture of continuous professional growth, fostering both teacher and student development. Garet *et al.* (2016) and Wendell (2017) stress the importance of embedding PD within teachers' work schedules, suggesting that PD integrated into daily practice is more sustainable and impactful. Ultimately, the role of leadership is critical in ensuring the success of PD initiatives, as administrators are key in creating environments that support teacher collaboration and learning (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Casale, 2017).

Related Studies

Research studies have extensively explored the impact and characteristics of effective professional development (PD) for teachers. Desimone (2017) emphasized that PD activities provide instructional methods through both formal (seminars, conferences) and informal (teacher-

to-teacher interactions) means. Lom and Sullenger (2018) argued that self-directed and informal PD is often misunderstood and less recognized, suggesting that such learning requires trust, reflection, and teacher participation. Luke and McArdle (2017) pointed out that research and theory are essential in selecting and evaluating effective professional learning experiences, though not all studies agree on key characteristics.

Hill (2018) highlighted the challenge of scaling up effective PD programs, suggesting that PD should be tailored to individual teacher needs. Hawley and Valli (2016) identified eight principles for effective PD, emphasizing goals tied to student performance, job-embedded learning, collaboration, and continuous support. Pritchard (2017) noted challenges in PD implementation, such as lack of follow-up and issues with scheduling that make it difficult for teachers to attend sessions.

Wilson and Berne (2018) summarized effective PD as involving collaboration, inquiry, and active learning. Large-scale studies have shown that PD impacts teacher knowledge, skills, and classroom practices through key features like content focus, active learning, and coherence. Wayne *et al.* (2016) added that sustained, job-embedded, and content-focused PD improves teacher instruction and student achievement.

Kaplan and Owings (2016) emphasized that teacher quality is one of the strongest predictors of student success, while Schleicher (2016) argued that traditional PD approaches are ineffective and teachers need continuous training to address challenges throughout their careers. Lyndon (2016) further noted that effective PD should include collective participation, research-based practices, and coaching for continuous development. Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2017) echoed the importance of well-structured PD, focusing on aligning content with local curriculum and increasing teacher efficacy.

Stephenson, Carter, and Arthur-Kelly (2017) identified six principles for sustaining new teaching practices: concrete practice, collaboration with researchers, and feedback. Fishman, Marx, Best, and Tal (2003) stressed the importance of linking PD to teacher and student learning to support systemic educational reforms. Finally, Kesson and Henderson (2017) critiqued the standardized approach to PD, advocating for democratic and social justice-oriented professional learning that considers teachers' contexts.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed both descriptive qualitative and quantitative research methods. The quantitative aspect involved collecting numerical data such as test scores or frequency of multimedia usage, while the qualitative aspect focused on gathering and organizing descriptive data from events or categories, which was analyzed to reveal patterns. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data, making it more manageable and understandable. The study also incorporated in-depth interviews, a common qualitative method, to collect detailed personal

insights from respondents. These interviews provided a conversational setting that allowed the researcher to gather precise data on beliefs and motivations, while follow-up questions were used to obtain further information as needed. The study was conducted at Parayao Centro Elementary School, with ten teacher-respondents (nine females and one male). Data were collected using a self-made questionnaire based on a 5-point Likert Scale to assess challenges and strategies related to teachers' professional development and retention. The researcher obtained necessary permissions from local educational authorities, distributed the questionnaires, and conducted interviews and observations to validate and analyze the data.

The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data helped identify patterns and insights from the teachers' experiences. The study aimed to understand the challenges teachers face in professional development and identify effective strategies for their growth. Statistical tools like frequency counts, percentages, and weighted means were used to interpret the results.

The percentage formula used was:

$$P = (f/N) \times 100$$

where:

P = percentage

f = frequency

N = number of respondents

100 = constant

The mean scores of the respondents in the different variables were obtained using the formula:

$$WM = TWF/N$$

where: WM = weighted mean

TWF = total frequency

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the study's findings, which analyzed the demographics, professional development strategies, challenges, and preferences of the teaching staff. The data provides insight into the respondents' characteristics and professional development needs, highlighting patterns in age, gender, educational attainment, and years of experience.

The discussion explores how these factors influence the teachers' engagement with professional development activities, their preferred methods of learning, and the obstacles they face. By examining these results, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of professional development among the teaching staff and offer recommendations for enhancing these programs to meet their needs better. The results are analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively, offering a well-rounded view of the data and its implications for future professional development initiatives.

The data indicates that the majority of the respondents, 60% (n=6), fall within the 35-44 age range. This suggests that middle-aged teachers constitute the largest demographic within the sample. The next significant age

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage Rate Distribution of the Teacher-Respondents in terms of Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage Rate
Under 25	0	0
25-34	1	10
35-44	6	60
45-54	3	30
55-64	0	0
65 or older	0	0
Total	10	100

group is the 45-54 category, representing 30% (n=3) of the respondents.

Only one respondent (10%) falls within the 25-34 age bracket, while there are no respondents under the age of 25 or above the age of 54. This distribution implies that the teaching staff is primarily composed of individuals in their mid-career stage, with a smaller representation of younger and older teachers.

Table 2: Frequency and Percentage Rate Distribution of the Teacher-respondents in terms of Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage Rate
Male	1	10
Female	9	90
Prefer Not to Say	0	0
Total	10	100

The data reveals a significant gender disparity among the teacher-respondents. The majority, 90% (n=9), are female, while only 10% (n=1) are male. There are no respondents who chose the "Prefer Not to Say" option, indicating that all participants were comfortable disclosing their gender. This distribution suggests that the teaching staff in the sample is predominantly female, with males being underrepresented. The lack of respondents in the "Prefer Not to Say" category also implies that gender disclosure was not a sensitive issue for this group.

Table 3: Frequency and Percentage Rate Distribution of the Teacher-Respondents in Terms of Teaching Experience

Teaching Experience	Frequency	Percentage Rate
Less than 1 year	0	0
1-5	0	0
6-10	2	20
11-15	5	50
16-20	3	30
More than 20 years	0	0
Total	10	100

The data shows that the majority of respondents, 50% (n=5), have between 11-15 years of teaching experience. This indicates that most teachers in the sample are relatively experienced, falling within the mid-career range.

Following this group, 30% (n=3) of the respondents have 16-20 years of teaching experience, suggesting that a significant portion of the sample has advanced to a later stage in their teaching careers.

Interestingly, 20% (n=2) of the respondents have 6-10 years of experience, representing the less experienced but still seasoned teachers. There are no respondents with less than 6 years of teaching experience or more than 20 years, indicating a lack of both early-career and very senior teachers in the sample.

This distribution suggests that the teaching staff is predominantly composed of individuals who are well into their teaching careers, with none being new to the profession or having extensive experience beyond 20 years.

Table 4: Frequency and Percentage Rate Distribution of the Teacher-Respondents in Terms of Highest Educational Attainment

Highest Educational Attainment	Frequency	Percentage Rate
Bachelor's Degree	5	50
Master's Degree	4	40
Doctorate	1	10
Other	0	0
Total	10	100

The data reveals that half of the respondents, 50% (n=5), hold a Bachelor's degree as their highest educational qualification. This indicates that a significant portion of the teaching staff has completed undergraduate education. Following closely, 40% (n=4) of the respondents have attained a Master's degree, demonstrating that a substantial number of teachers have pursued further education beyond the undergraduate level.

A smaller proportion, 10% (n=1), has achieved a Doctorate, highlighting the presence of advanced academic qualifications within the group, though at a much lower rate compared to Bachelor's and Master's degrees. There are no respondents who selected "Other," indicating that all participants' highest educational attainments fall within the traditional academic pathways. This distribution suggests that while the majority of the teaching staff have a Bachelor's degree, a significant number have pursued higher education, with nearly half holding a Master's degree or higher. The presence of teachers with Doctorate degrees, though limited, adds to the overall academic diversity and expertise within the sample.

Table 5: Frequency and Percentage Rate Distribution of the Teacher-Respondents in Terms of Grade Level Taught

Highest Educational Attainment	Frequency	Percentage Rate
Kinder	1	10
Grade 1-3	5	50
Grade 4-6	4	40
Total	10	100

The data shows that the majority of the respondents, 50% (n=5), are teaching in Grades 1-3. This suggests that a significant portion of the teaching staff is focused on the early elementary grades, where foundational skills in literacy and numeracy are typically developed.

Following this, 40% (n=4) of the respondents are assigned to Grades 4-6, indicating that many teachers are responsible for upper elementary students, where more advanced subjects and concepts are introduced.

Only 10% (n=1) of the respondents are teaching Kindergarten, showing a smaller representation of teachers at the early childhood education level within the sample.

This distribution implies that the teaching staff is primarily concentrated in the elementary grades, with a fairly balanced split between lower and upper elementary levels, and a smaller proportion dedicated to early childhood education. This could reflect the staffing needs or the focus areas within the educational institution from which the sample was drawn.

Table 6: Summary of the Weighted Means of the Strategies for Promoting Teachers' Professional Development and Retention

Strategies	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
Upskilling	3.88	Often
Reskilling	4.2	Often
Cross-skilling	3.92	Often

Legend:

4.21-5.00 *Always*

3.41-4.20 *Often*

2.61-3.40 *Sometimes*

1.81-2.60 *Seldom*

1.00-1.80 *Never*

The highest weighted mean of 4.2 was observed for reskilling, which corresponds to the verbal description "Often." This suggests that teachers frequently engage in reskilling activities, such as updating their existing skills and learning new teaching methods or technologies, to adapt to changes in education. The high emphasis on reskilling indicates a strong recognition among teachers of the importance of staying current with educational trends and innovations.

Cross-skilling received a weighted mean of 3.92, also falling under the "Often" category. This indicates that teachers regularly integrate skills and knowledge from other disciplines into their teaching practice, collaborate with professionals from different fields, and explore new strategies from outside the traditional educational sphere. The engagement in cross-skilling reflects teachers' commitment to broadening their perspectives and enhancing their ability to meet diverse learning needs.

Upskilling, with a weighted mean of 3.88, is also categorized as "Often." Teachers often seek opportunities to acquire new skills or knowledge, participate in training programs, and pursue professional growth through further education. The focus on upskilling highlights the

importance teachers place on continuous learning and skill acquisition as essential elements of their professional development.

Overall, the findings suggest that all three strategies—upskilling, reskilling, and cross-skilling—are regularly employed by teachers to promote their professional growth and retention. Among these, reskilling is the most frequently utilized strategy, followed by cross-skilling and upskilling, indicating a balanced yet slightly varied approach to professional development within the teaching community.

Table 7: Summary of the Weighted Mean of Challenges Faced in Engaging in Professional Development

Challenges	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
Lack of time	3.80	Often
Cost of programs	3.80	Often
Irrelevant content	3.20	Sometimes
Limited availability of local opportunities	3.20	Sometimes
Difficulty in applying what is learned in the classroom	2.80	Sometimes

Legend:

4.21-5.00 *Always*

3.41-4.20 *Often*

2.61-3.40 *Sometimes*

1.81-2.60 *Seldom*

1.00-1.80 *Never*

The highest weighted means, both at 3.80, were observed for “Lack of time” and “Cost of programs,” with a verbal description of “Often.” This indicates that these two factors are frequently perceived as significant barriers to teachers’ participation in professional development activities. The lack of time likely reflects the busy schedules and demands of teaching, while the cost of programs highlights financial constraints that can limit access to professional growth opportunities.

“Irrelevant content” and “Limited availability of local opportunities” each received a weighted mean of 3.20, categorized as “Sometimes.” These findings suggest that while these challenges are not as frequently encountered as time and cost issues, they still present occasional obstacles. Irrelevant content points to the mismatch between the available professional development programs and the specific needs or interests of teachers, while limited local opportunities highlight geographical or institutional constraints that can restrict access to relevant training.

The lowest weighted mean of 2.80 was observed for “Difficulty in applying what is learned in the classroom,” which is verbally described as “Sometimes.” This suggests that, although not as prominent as other challenges, some teachers occasionally struggle with translating the skills and knowledge gained from professional development into practical classroom applications.

Overall, the findings indicate that the most common challenges teachers face in engaging in professional development are related to time and cost. While issues like irrelevant content, limited local opportunities, and difficulty in applying new knowledge are less frequent, they still pose occasional barriers to effective professional growth.

Table 8: Frequency and Percentage Rate Distribution on the Preferences on How to Engage in Professional Development

Preferences	Frequency	Percentage Rate
In-person workshops or seminars	6	60
Online courses or webinars	2	20
Collaborative learning with colleagues	8	80
Independent study or reading	6	60
Coaching or mentoring	8	80
Other	0	0

The data reveals that “Collaborative learning with colleagues” and “Coaching or mentoring” are the most preferred methods, each with 80% (n=8) of respondents indicating these as their top choices. This suggests that teachers highly value interactive and supportive environments for their professional development, where they can exchange ideas and receive guidance from peers or mentors.

“In-person workshops or seminars” and “Independent study or reading” are also popular, with each method being preferred by 60% (n=6) of respondents. The preference for in-person workshops underscores the importance of face-to-face interaction in learning, while independent study highlights the value teachers place on self-directed learning to enhance their skills and knowledge.

“Online courses or webinars” were preferred by 20% (n=2) of respondents, indicating that while some teachers appreciate the flexibility and accessibility of online learning, it is less favored compared to more collaborative or in-person methods.

Notably, no respondents selected “Other,” suggesting that the listed methods adequately capture the range of preferred professional development activities among the teachers in this sample.

Overall, the findings indicate a strong preference for collaborative and interactive forms of professional development, with a balanced interest in both structured in-person learning and self-directed study. Online learning, while appreciated by some, is less frequently chosen, possibly due to a preference for more direct, personal interactions in the learning process.

CONCLUSION

The conclusions of the study highlight a predominantly mid-career teaching staff, with 60% of the respondents

aged 35-44 and many having 11-20 years of experience. The gender imbalance is evident, with 90% of the teachers being female. In terms of educational qualifications, half of the teachers hold a Bachelor's degree, while 40% have pursued a Master's, and a small portion hold a Doctorate, demonstrating a commitment to higher education among the staff.

Professional development strategies used by the teachers primarily focus on reskilling, followed by cross-skilling and upskilling. These strategies reflect the teachers' dedication to updating their skills and broadening their knowledge base. However, participation in professional development is often hindered by common challenges, particularly a lack of time and the high cost of programs. While issues like irrelevant content and limited local opportunities are less frequent, they still pose obstacles for some teachers.

When it comes to preferences for professional development, teachers show a strong inclination toward collaborative learning and mentoring. There is also significant interest in in-person workshops and independent study. However, online courses are less favored, indicating a preference for more interactive and face-to-face learning methods.

The study emphasizes the importance of developing professional development programs that address time and cost barriers while incorporating preferred learning methods. Focusing on collaborative, interactive approaches, along with opportunities for reskilling and cross-skilling, will help enhance teacher development and retention. To support this, the study recommends offering incentives for ongoing education, ensuring flexible and affordable professional development options, and aligning programs with teachers' preferred learning methods to maximize engagement and effectiveness.

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