

Success factors and pitfalls for language and communication focused Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programs for teachers

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Aim(s)

The presentation will offer an overview of success factors and pitfalls identified when conducting a series of CPDs in elementary schools by our research groups. The CPDs all aim at improving use of evidence-based language learning activities and interactions in the classroom.

Theoretical framework/area of investigation

Weak language skills increase risk of academic failure, impacting both the individual her/himself, and society. Teachers play an essential role in developing language skills. Teachers' knowledge and skills in providing a language-fostering environment in the classroom might be increased by CPD programs. However, studies evaluating the effect of CPDs for educators targeting language development at school are scarce, and there can be many pitfalls and difficulties, both when conducting research studies, and when implementing findings into practice.

Methodological design

In our research group, we have conducted several studies evaluating the effect, on both participating teachers and their students, of different language and communication focused CPDs for teachers.

Findings and conclusion

In research and practice, there are several factors to take into consideration when planning CPDs. Building relations with the teachers, and openly discussing their teaching practices from video recordings and observations in the classroom, to enable personalized coaching can contribute to a positive experience of the CPD. Relevant background and expertise is crucial in making the CPD accepted and interesting for the participating teachers.

Changing teaching practices is a time-consuming process, and positive effects on teacher or student outcomes following CPDs are not guaranteed. Aligning the content of a CPD program with the teachers own specific needs and goals may be difficult. Research design must be thoroughly explained to the participants, to reduce the risk of data loss. Quantitative and qualitative results may paint somewhat different pictures showing the need of mixed methods when analyzing these kinds of data. A measurement of Intervention Fidelity, i.e., to what extent the participants implement the

intervention content as intended by the researchers, can help in evaluating the program's effectiveness.