

Teacher Professional Development Governance in Taiwan

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This article describes the situation of teacher professional development in Taiwan. With the diversity of teacher education system and institutions, Taiwan teacher professional development represent a gradually governance shift from the model of centralized and state regulation to new professionalism and marketization.

Traditionally, the concept of teacher professional development in Taiwan is mainly based on teacher in-service training and learning. In 1990's, the movements of educational reform in Taiwan led to changes in ideas of teacher education system and teacher professional development. The framework of teacher professional development gradually attempt to build toward a teacher career ladder and construct a consortium system of teacher professional development.

Historical Evolution of teacher professional development in Taiwan can be divided into three stages. The first stage is from the colonial period to 1978. At this stage, whether under the colonial ruling or Kuomintang government, related measures to enhance the ability or quality of teachers belong to the initial establishment phase. The second stage is from 1979 to 1993. In this stage, legislation clearly regulates the institutions and approaches of teacher in-service training and education. The third stage is from 1994 to the present, along with the diversification of teacher education system, teacher professional development policies towards a new professionalism and market orientation, and tried to establish a more comprehensive framework.

Before the 1980's, features and purpose of teacher in-service training and education mainly focus on: to obtain necessary teacher qualifications, or to obtain required university degree of teachers. The former refers to the rapid expansion of primary and secondary education in the process, because of the urgent need in a large number of teachers, leading to numbers of teachers entering into schools without necessary qualifications. Therefore, teacher in-service training and educations are as an approach to obtain qualifications of teachers. The latter is due to the response of the world trend, the government upgraded the condition of school teacher to university degree. Teachers in the workplace had to return to the teacher education institutions to obtain the degree.

Under the privileged professionalism discourse formation in 1980s and 1990s, teacher professional development represents a governance shift and cultural diversity in Taiwan. Most teacher professional development efforts in the late 1980s and early 1990s were based on a training paradigm which implied a deficit-mastery model and

consisted of “one-shot” professional development approaches. Research on these programs has provided evidence of the failure of earlier concepts of teacher learning as something that is done to teachers. These findings and increased criticism have provided an impetus for many researchers to conceptualize teachers’ professional development by taking a “change as professional growth or learning” perspective to professional development.

Since 2000s, teacher learning is seen as an active and constructive process that is problem-oriented, grounded in social settings and circumstances, and takes place throughout teachers’ lives. As a consequence, researchers have emphasized the notion of ongoing and lifelong professional learning embedded in schools as a natural and expected component of teachers’ professional activities and a key component of school improvement.

Approaches of teacher professional development in Taiwan represented a process of governance. Governance has a dual meaning; on one hand it refers to the state adaptation to its external environment, on the other hand, it denotes a conceptual or theoretical representation of co-ordination of social systems and the role of the state in that process.

There are new emerging ways of thinking about teacher professional development is characterized by some general concepts in Taiwan.

First, there has been a gradual shift from input control towards outcomes and output control. In public service production and delivery, institutional forms have become important than efficiency and productivity. Under the principle of commercialized professionalism, features of teacher professional development in Taiwan includes: teacher profession standard, and quality control. Not only profession standard or criteria of teachers were regulated, the evaluation of experimental teacher professional development has been taken since 2006.

Second, there has been a shift in perspective with regard to state-society relations and dependencies. State has nearly always been engaged in some type of negotiation with other significant structures in society. The state evolved as an actor which remains in control of some unique power bases in society, at the same time, however, the state was becoming increasingly dependent on other societal actors. There is a triple leveled, central-regional-school level, teacher in-service education system, and regional education consultant area and teacher education universities were coordinated as well. And national teacher in-service network, internet-assessed learning, and municipal in-service training centers are providing teacher training resources and excellent training environment.