

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS

Chair: **Csaba Csíkos**
ELTE TÓK

THE RELATIONSHIPS OF BACKGROUND VARIABLES AND TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

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Professional development programs are seen as necessary contributors to effective educational systems. Effectiveness eventually depends on the impact these programs have on participants' practice. Such feedback, however, seems to be scarce. Data collected as part of a larger project was used to identify the factors that define teachers' perception of changes in their work they attribute to in-service trainings (IST). A nationally representative sample of 520 Mongolian teachers participated in a paper-and pencil survey. Demographic data collected included gender, educational level, years of teaching experience and school type (primary/secondary). Respondents rated the same list of teacher knowledge components from five perspectives on five point Likert scales in order to provide information on their perceptions of (1) present knowledge levels; (2) importance of professional knowledge in everyday practice; (3) professional development needs; and (4) their own changes after IST. Structural equation modelling was used to test models set up with these variables. Model A included all available knowledge components to create the latent variables (1)-(4), interpreted as teacher's perceptions above. Based on results from a series of factor analyses, Model B used latent variables (1')-(4') composed of four corresponding manifest variables from each perspective, interpreted as 'creating a learning environment', while Model C used latent variables (1'')-(4''), composed of seven other variables, interpreted as 'teaching content in the classroom'. The three model structures were similar, with many significant effects, but only Model B had appropriate model fit indices (RMSEA=.053; CFI=.926; TLI=.913; SRMS=.048). In Model B, the background variables affect teacher perception significantly and directly. The degree and the length of teaching experience influence the perception of present knowledge levels, gender influences perceived importance, and school type influences professional needs regarding creating a learning environment. Present knowledge levels and professional development needs influence the changes of practice after IST directly. Perceived importance and the included background variables make their influence through these variables indirectly. The findings suggest that differences in training and in the characteristics of school type may create different training needs and different training outcomes. This may be investigated further to provide more information for the development of more effective IST programs.

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