

WHAT DO TEACHERS LEARN FROM IN-SERVICE TEACHER TRAINING?

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In-service teacher training (IST) is seen as an important contributor to personal professional development, and to systemic change in schools as well. Little is known, however, about the effectiveness of IST. The research mostly seems to be focused on the effects of particular methods of IST. This paper presents a project that collected information from a nationally representative Mongolian sample (N=520) to explore how they were influenced by their local and compulsory national IST sessions. As contextual information, data was also collected from national trainers (N=40). As a part of a larger project, a paper-and-pencil questionnaire was administered in early 2016. A list of teacher knowledge components was presented. Teachers indicated on five-point Likert scales how much they changed in their practice regarding each of these components. They rated a list of teaching and learning activities for usefulness in IST. They were also asked to comment on the most important element of their IST (625 comments from 331 respondents). Trainers were only asked to show the emphasis they give to the same teacher knowledge components and to rate the same activities on five point Likert scales. Quantitative and qualitative methods were used in processing data. Even without the possibility of statistical comparison of the two groups on knowledge components, the results are informative. The means were high. Some of the trainer curricular emphases on knowledge components are echoed by the frequencies of teacher comments, but there is no clear pattern of similarity between trainer concerns and teacher changes. In some cases (e.g. planning, assessment, commitment to promoting the learning of all students) the training seems enough to induce change, but in others, it does not (e.g. psychology of learning, using information from research). Regarding activities, the majority of the methods were evaluated similarly by the two sub-samples. A few but interesting significant differences surfaced (e.g. trainers preferred lectures less, but explanations more). Teachers did not mention traditional methods in their comments. However, when identifying most important elements in IST, 72 comments referred to collaboration, 66 to observation and discussion, and 59 to groupwork. All in all, teachers focused on activities more often than on knowledge components. Quantitative and qualitative information together gave a more detailed picture of the effects of IST and its long term impressions became clearer. The effectiveness of active learning was confirmed in a culture where it has not had a strong tradition. At the same time, one third of the respondents did not identify important effects from the training, while indicating considerable changes resulting from it. This phenomenon may be investigated in further research.

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