

Title of Research Project: From Initiation to Implementation: A Case Study of the Professional Development of Teachers in Ireland

Researchers: Sharon Coffey



Contact Details: sharoncoffey4@hotmail.com

Relevant key words: Professional Development; Educational Change; Collaborative cultures; School leadership; Teacher agency; Emotions

Summary:

The purpose of the study was to explore the factors (surrounding context) that support or hinder teachers implementing instructional practices from a professional development programme. The lack of research on teachers' experiences during implementation framed the broader context of the study. A multiple-site case study was used to explore the individual and group experiences of fifteen teachers from five post-primary schools in Ireland of the instructional change process. Five sequential phases of data collection and analyses were utilised, consisting of the administration of a quantitative questionnaire followed by in-depth, qualitative, semi-structured interviews to gain a better understanding of this complex area of educational change. Each phase informed the subsequent phase. The findings revealed that most teachers involved in this study changed their instructional practices after engaging in the professional development programme.

The factors that enabled context-facilitated teacher change in practice included having:

- (a) a skilled leader familiar with the professional development programme
- (b) collaborative cultures in schools designed to support teachers with implementation, and
- (c) teacher agency supporting teachers with implementation through autonomy, change in beliefs and collegiality.

The factors that hindered teachers' progress included:

- (a) the lack of time to develop resources and address curriculum demands in the context of the length of classes
- (b) students' perceptions of the change initiative.

The concerns of teachers and their emotions emerged as key factors.

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