

Professional Development Used to Enhance K-5 Teachers' Competencies Working with English Language Learners

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ABSTRACT

Over the past decade, the United States education system has predicted a significant increase in the number of English Language Learners (ELLs) enrolled in public schools. A substantial number of teachers who interact with ELLs lack the preparedness to support their student's academic needs. Research has shown that the lack of professional development (PD) debars teachers from receiving efficacious resources to support English Language Learners. Most professional development (PD) provided for teachers excludes addressing ELL's content. The absence of PD specifically focused on ELLs has left many teachers entering the profession not adequately trained to engage and support ELL students. The types of PD described by teachers tend to give the bare minimum coverage of how to work with ELLs rather than go in-depth on the issues that prohibit ELL students' ability to understand the learning content. The conceptual framework incorporated in this exploratory research will be Thomas Guskey's theory of teacher change to focus on the goals of professional development. This exploratory research will examine PD to further understand which delivery modes are optimal to address a major deficit in knowledge regarding PD training that limits teachers' competencies to understand and support ELLs.

Keywords: competencies, English Language Learners, learning outcomes, professional development, teachers

Introduction

When the 2020 Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) emerged as a pandemic, the U.S. educational system had to implement strict protocol procedures to ensure the safety of all educators and students. The new protocols pivoted many educational institutions to shift the classroom culture from in-person to virtual learning (Chaturvedi et al., 2020). The impact of the pandemic has affected the formality of how students receive instructional learning. For individuals who

identify as second language learners, the impact has had more negative experiences because several barriers such as lack of online learning resources, internet access, language barriers, and families' limited capacity to fully support their child's online learning shaped their educational experiences (Scheicher, 2020; Umansky, 2021).

Before the pandemic, an increasing number of English Language Learners (ELLs) were enrolled in mainstream classrooms with teachers who had not been formally trained to support ELL students academically (Feiman-Nemser, 2018). Over 3.8 million ELL students were enrolled in schools across the United States, with 16.2% registered in the elementary grade level (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2020). Rapid growth in the ELL student population required educators' attention as the academic success rate of ELL students continued to fall behind the rest of the student population (Batt, 2008; Sugarman & Geary, 2018; Zarrabi, 2016). Teachers encounter a multitude of challenges when selecting a method that is effective for developing English proficiency in the primary grade levels (Ariyanti et al., 2019). A growing number of teachers who interact with ELL students do not have previous experience or lack the preparedness to academically support ELL students in the classroom (Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016).

According to Ariyanti et al. (2019), teachers must identify what strategies particular students process new information. While PD such as graduate courses or after-school workshops may provide teachers with skills by demonstrating teaching strategies that work for linguistic learners (Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016), many teachers still feel unprepared to work with ELLs (Wu & Guerra, 2017). Guskey (2000) states, "We cannot improve schools without improving the skills and abilities of the teachers within them" (p.18). Primary teachers who are not properly prepared to serve ELL students face an increasing struggle to provide adequate instruction to ELLs (Hegde et al., 2018).

Teachers relied upon PD opportunities such as graduate courses or single workshops to demonstrate teaching strategies for today's educational climate, however, these opportunities are currently insufficient to equip teachers with the necessary knowledge to educate ELL students properly (Khong & Saito, 2013). Professional development training can offer teachers ways to improve their self-efficacy and deepen their knowledge about ELL students (Tran, 2014), yet 57% of teachers reported needing additional training to offer sufficient instruction to ELL students (Gomez & Diarrassouba, 2014).

Previous studies conducted before the pandemic show an increasing interest in the professional development processes (Dengerink et al., 2015), however, these studies do not provide sufficient evidence of the effectiveness of professional development as it correlates to ELL learning outcomes. As the pandemic continues into its third year, it has exposed several inequities in our education

system that have resulted in the heavy loss of instructional learning for K-5 students, particularly second language learners. Given that pre-pandemic, K-5 teachers felt that they barely understood how to meet ELL students' needs, and the pandemic only deepened these pedagogical concerns, given the educational losses of these students, it is important to discern what types of PD would be most efficient to support teachers working with ELLs?

Review of the Literature

Professional Development in Education

Traditional PD activities for teachers typically take the structure of one-size-fits-all. The basic model behind traditional professional development requires teachers to passively receive program “experts” that teach too many types of interventions in one setting (Yurtsever, 2013). However, many teachers find these types of workshops trivial due to the information not correlating with their specific needs. According to Loucks & Horsley et al., (1989), professional development must be a continuous learning process, not an *event*. Thomas Guskey (2002) identifies that “teacher’s knowledge of subject content and academic disciplines, the ways students learn, procedures, and classroom management that create an effective learning environment is continuously expanding” (p. 19). Therefore, teachers need continuous learning to adapt and adjust to their task environment. At least some of the PD opportunities need to focus on learning practices based on their current task environment and their knowledge of practices in curriculum instruction.

Researchers have begun to study the quality of practical PD opportunities based on student learning outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Van der Kinkl et al., 2016; Posthom, 2018). One study identified that the critical elements of effective professional development should be:

- a) content focus,
- b) incorporates activity learning,
- c) offers collaboration,
- d) modeling of instruction,
- e) offer coaching support, and
- f) adequate time (Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Research in the U.S.A. found that many PD opportunities do not meet the necessary elements to support teacher practices and student learning outcomes. There is also limited evidence showing specific PD opportunities that highlights ELL contents. In a survey, teachers reported participating in some form of PD that focused on subject content taught (85 percent), whereas teaching ELL students (27 percent) was a minor topic covered (Rotemund et al., 2017). The question that remains unaddressed is how to measure the effectiveness of PD activities on

ELLs' learning outcomes when there are limitations on the number of opportunities provided to teachers?

Van der Kink et al., (2016) findings identified that teachers valued quality PD opportunities that addresses their identities and students' different ambitions and learning needs. According to Guskey (2000),

A broader conception of professional development includes opportunities for educators to discuss, think about, try out, and hone new practices in an environment that values inquiry and expectations (p. 7).

Thus, the ideal design of PD opportunities looks to bring a continuous movement of positive change and improvement that will produce students' opportunity for success. These positive changes and improvements can be found when schools provide opportunities for educators to collaborate with other educators, give performance feedback, and allow teacher observation with experienced teachers (Postholm, 2018). In addition, one study closely examined how PD activities influence school improvement. The finding recognized the value of language through teacher reflections that could be used to enhance PD opportunities based on teacher knowledge (Postholm, 2018).

This study will define professional development as processes and activities to enhance teachers' professional knowledge, skills, and beliefs so they can improve and support individual learning needs (Guskey, 2000). A broader scope of how professional development is defined can be based on these three characteristics; it should be (a) intentional, (b) ongoing, and (c) systemic. When PD activities are intentional it creates a clear purpose and attainable goals for educators. These goals focus on the "result-driven" and can be assessed based on the evidence of students' learning (Sparks, 1996b). Teachers must be continuous learners throughout their careers for PD to be ongoing. As a "one-shot" event, professional development is insufficient to provide meaningful practices (Darling-Hammond, 2010); focusing on sustained durations allows teachers the opportunity to identify the challenges and develop practical solutions (Bates & Morgan, 2018). Darling-Hammond (2010) states,

Teachers judge professional development to be most valuable when it provides opportunities to do "hands-on" work that builds their knowledge of academic content and how to teach to their students and when it takes into account the local context (p. 227).

Professional development as a systemic process can be an approach that recognizes that everyone from the teacher to the organization affects student learning (Guskey, 2000). Thus, PD opportunities must be intentional, ongoing, and systemic, and be aligned to both the organization's and individual's goals to ensure improvement in teacher's competencies and student learning.

Challenges

One of the growing trends in the education field is addressing the concerns of teachers' inability to cater to culturally and linguistically diverse students. Several researchers identified common challenges that K-12 teachers face working with ELLs, including a lack of academic vocabulary, poor communication with students and parents, lack of time, and shortage of resources to provide culturally responsive instructions to ELLs (Akbari, 2015; Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016; Songbatumis, 2017). According to Hansen-Thomas et al. (2016), teachers feel unprepared and at a loss instead of finding strategies and resources to support and challenge ELL students. Teachers who do not have the proper knowledge of the students' cultural backgrounds with whom they work tend to have a negative attitude or belief about ELL students. Researchers found that teachers' most common issues could be narrowed down to a lack of PD activities and not being prepared well enough in their teacher preparation programs (Khong & Saito, 2014; Songbatumis, 2017).

The data available for PD activities are vague on a national level (Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2020) and there is limited evidence that has focused on the type of professional development that addresses ELLs content. However, several studies have recognized the effectiveness of PD opportunities for teachers. A recent Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) found that roughly 82% of primary teachers experience a positive impact after PD activities (Sim & Waterfield, 2019). However, when teaching in a multicultural setting, roughly 33% of teachers did not feel confident in their abilities to address the challenges of working with a culturally or linguistically diverse student body (Methlagl, 2022).

Identifying a promising approach to improve teaching quality and students outcomes requires relegation from the "sit & get" content delivery norm. Current PD opportunities are interactive models used to enhance teachers' competencies and skills in subject content, technology, classroom management, and other content areas (Rotemund et al., 2017). However, the COVID-19 pandemic provided limited PD opportunities for teachers to address the online teaching challenges and expectations (Trikoilis & Papanastasiou, 2020), hence the amount of data available is limited.

Conceptual Framework on Professional Development (PD)

Based on Guskey's model of teacher change (2002), the effectiveness of PD programs can assess the change in teachers' classroom practice, student learning outcomes, and teachers' beliefs and attitudes. Figure 1 models what teachers changed, based on a sequence of outcomes related to professional development. There is an assumption that for teachers to show commitment and acceptance for learning new strategies and skills, PDs must first address the teacher's attitude and beliefs.

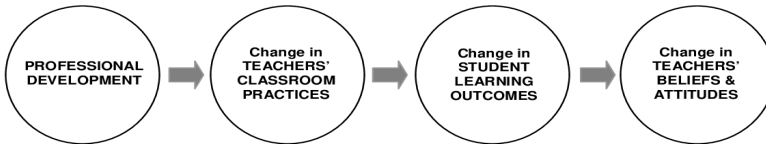


Figure 1. Guskey's Model of Teacher Change

Guskey (2002) argued, “an alternative approach would result in a significant change in teacher’s attitudes and beliefs occur primarily after experiential-based learning” (p. 384). Professional development opportunities that change teachers’ attitudes are the result of successful implementation of practices that change the way teachers’ perspectives on new instructional strategies. Support for this model was evident through studies from the late eighties, which found that adjusting teachers’ attitudes and beliefs before new practices were executed was unsuccessful (Bolster, 1982).

Similar results come from a three-year international study that infused drama courses into classroom teaching through an in-service program. According to Gatt (2009), a 3-year study designed to prepare Malta teachers to use drama education in their classroom had significant changes in teachers’ attitudes and beliefs, however, this was only evident after witnessing improvement in student learning. In addition, a 2018 year-long study examined changes in teachers’ beliefs about the implementation of inquiry practices to teach science to middle schoolers. This study found that teachers experienced significant gains in personal self-efficacy after practice-teaching sessions and reflection sessions (Lotter et al., 2016).

Guskey’s (2002) model of teacher change guides the creation of PD programs because it argued that change in teachers’ beliefs and attitudes occurred after student learning improvement (p. 383). Recent research has led experts to believe that professional development activity should consider teachers’ diverse learning styles and needs, and enhance their knowledge and experience (Hanover Research, 2017). With eighty-two percent of teachers stating that PD activities had a positive impact on their competency skills, there were still areas of improvement that needed to be addressed, such as the lack of PD opportunities for teaching in multicultural settings and about students with special needs (OCED, 2019). These could be evidence-based PD opportunities provided to teachers within their school districts.

Methodology

The study investigated how professional development enhances teachers’ competencies to support ELL students. In this case, the guiding questions for this study:

1. What types of professional development opportunities are optimal for supporting teachers working with ELLs?

2. How do primary teachers describe the role of professional development opportunities in enhancing teachers' competency?

By concentrating on these questions, this study will highlight the personal preference of teachers using three data collection methods: online questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and a focus group to ensure validity and triangulate data.

Population and Sample

In Miami-Dade County, approximately 338,000 students were enrolled in the 2020-2021 academic school year. Roughly 57% of the student population's primary home language was non-English, making it the highest population of second language learners in Florida (Miami-Dade County Public School, 2020). According to the NCES (2020), 7,350 teachers worked in the elementary sector. For this study, the target population was primary teachers with a minimum of three years of experience working with ELLs in classrooms. Using purposive sampling, the researcher recruited 18 participants based on specific characteristics that would provide the most reliable information based on experience and knowledge (Etikan et al., 2016).

Table 1.1 provides a population demographic of the teachers' backgrounds in this study.

Table 1. Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Degree	Questionnaire	Interview	Focus Group
101	Female	20-30	Master's	X	X	
102	Male	50+	Master's	X	X	
103	Female	40-50	Bachelor's	X		
104	Female	20-30	Bachelor's	X		
105	Female	40-50	Master's	X		
106	Female	40-50	Master's	X		
107	Female	20-30	Bachelor's	X		
108	Female	40-50	Doctorate	X		
109	Female	20-30	Bachelor's	X		
110	Female	20-30	Bachelor's	X		
111	Female	20-30	Master's	X	X	
112	Female	30-40	Master's	X		
113	Female	20-30	Master's	X	X	X
114	Female	30-40	Bachelor's	X	X	
115	Male	20-30	Bachelor's	X		
118	Male	30-40	Master's	X	X	X
119	Female	30-40	Bachelor's	X		
120	Female	30-40	Master's	X	X	X

Instruments

For this study, the researcher used three data collection methods to gather information on teachers' experience and knowledge of PD activities. The first method was an online questionnaire using the Qualtrics platform. Questionnaires collect information based on opinion, knowledge, and behavior (Yaddananpudi & Yaddananpudi, 2019). Questionnaires are an easy tool for surveying diverse perspectives to help fill in the literature gap related to PD and ELLs (Braun et al., 2020). The second method was a semi-structured interview which allowed participants to share their past experiences or reflections on given scenarios (Queirós et al., 2017).

The researcher elicited open-ended questions to allow teachers to share their perceptions on the quality of PD opportunities and how it enhanced their competency in working with ELL students. The final technique was a focus group that allowed participants to discuss PD issues for ELL teachers. Focus groups can be described as a meeting that is organized and has structure while providing open dialogue for the individuals to contribute to each other opinions (Sim & Waterfield, 2019). The researcher asked ten questions to the participants in each of the three methods that aligned with the research questions for this study.

Procedures

This study aimed to understand what types of PD were used to enhance teaching competency for teachers working with ELLs. No data collection occurred until the researcher received approval from the Institutional Board of Review (IRB). An email was sent to multiple social media platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn and to former colleagues who could provide external connections to teachers in this school district. To be eligible for this study, participants were asked: (a) Do you work with students in your classroom who identify as ELLs? and (b) Have you participated in any PD training within the last three years?

In addition, confidentiality was assured as each participant was assigned a pseudonym. Participants were given a confidentiality agreement which stated they agreed to provide the researcher answers based on their knowledge and experiences. For participants' safety and to manage the safety needs related to the COVID-19 pandemic, questionnaires, interviews, and the focus group were conducted through Zoom.

The data collected from the three instruments were transcribed for thematic analysis. Thematic analysis identifies pattern recognitions through themes in qualitative data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017; Roberts et al., 2019). The initial data analysis revealed multiple themes which were further analyzed and coded using the NVivo software system. Using Braun et al. (2020) six-step framework that involved:

- a) familiarization,
- b) generating initial codes,
- c) generate themes,
- d) reviewing themes,
- e) defining themes, and
- f) writing the results.

After coding the data, common themes emerged from the study that addressed the research questions. One limitation which may affect the validity of the findings was that attrition occurred due to participants withdrawing from the study early due to personal obligations or high demands from their job. Additional questions required further investigation on professional development and student learning outcomes.

Results

This section provides a step-by-step report on what types of PD activities were optimal for enhancing teaching competencies based on teachers' perceptions of the types of PDs offered in their school district. Previous studies have shown that teachers often feel unprepared and frustrated when working with second language learners (Feiman-Nemser, 2018; Villages, 2018). The literature review revealed that more research is needed to understand how teachers are prepared to work in today's diverse classroom setting. This study's primary objective was to understand teachers' experiences by incorporating the competencies learned from PD activities. Eighteen participants took part in the online questionnaires, however, most teachers opted out of the study due to personal reasons or job obligations.

Research Question #1

The first research question asked "What types of professional development were optimal for teachers working with ELLs? This question was sectioned into two parts to bring clarity for teachers in the study. The participants shared the number PD received and identified what professional development activities specifically cater to ELL students. The range of PD opportunities provided to teachers was 3 to 15. The number of PD activities provided during the 2020–2021 academic school year was contingent upon the teacher's interest. In Miami-Dade County, the school district offers a 24/7 On-Demand Professional Learning tool that encompassed various instructional practices and resources to improve teacher effectiveness and learning outcomes, allowing teachers to select courses they were interested in attending (*Office of Professional Learning & Career Development*, n.d.). Figure 1 shows the percentage of teachers participating in selected PD activities.

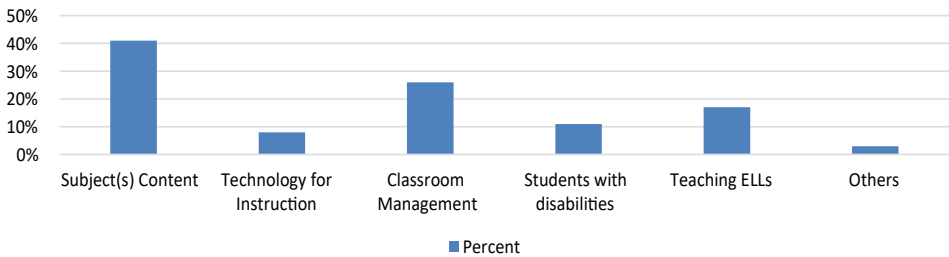


Figure 1. Participating in professional development activities SY 2019–2020

The most prevalent topic of PD activities by teachers in 2019–2020 was subject content (40 percent), followed by a variety of classroom management strategies (26 percent), and teaching ELLs (17 percent). All participants mentioned attending on average two PD activities that focused explicitly on ELLs. In addition, teachers identified peer observations and collaboration as the most efficient pedagogical techniques for enhancing their competency skills and support for ELLs. Some participants found that seeking support from experienced teachers was most helpful in identifying good teaching strategies.

Participant 117 stated, “I like hands-on demonstrations and watching other teachers because it gives real-world examples.” Participant 119 stated, “I think the most effective PD is when real lessons and units are presented to show how to support the students as opposed to vague strategies that they expect you to master instantly.” Overall, this type of PD opportunity can be voluntarily pursued or required, depending on the school, district, and state level policies. Further studies on peer observation and collaboration analysis could highlight the limits and potential that could help strengthen teaching competencies.

Research Question 2

The second question asked, “How do primary teachers describe the role of professional development in enhancing teacher’s competency?” This school district provided teachers with a professional development catalog and the opportunity to collaborate and observe their peers. Although a few teachers had described PD activities as not being helpful, a significant number of teachers reported positive feedback when implementing instructional practices in their classroom after receiving PD that addressed ELLs content.

The responses can be found in Table 2. The researcher asked participants to share their PD experience and how it built their competency skills to support their ELL students.

Table 2. Teacher's Perception After Receiving Professional Development

Participants	Perception on Professional Development
120	It helped me to consider that all PPT slides created need to be done with a lot of images, and a lot of pictures that are labeled, in order for students who cannot read as easily are learning the meaning of words as they go. It's reminded me that the strategy of repetition is important, and to incorporate Spanish (the primary secondary language of our ELL students) into my lessons whenever possible.
107	Gave me strategies to support reading listening and speaking needs
119	The professional development focuses on ELD standards and incorporating ELL strategies in all subject areas.
118	We had a complete training in a program called Systemic ELD. Part of this was how to develop sentence frames to use in our content areas blocks.
116	The models and examples, as well as step by step techniques and variety of ideas.
115	The training helped me to learn ways to communicate with students and get to them on a personal level.
109	They have given me tools to use in my classroom.
106	As a native English speaker, I am not always aware of the challenges ELLs face. By attending training, not only was I introduced to those challenges, but I was also prepared to deal with those issues as they arise in the classroom.
105	Using images, dictionaries and hands-on materials were all gained during professional development.

The finding shows that teachers who received PD training that addressed ELL content reported having a higher confidence level in their ability to instruct ELLs than those who had not received any PD opportunities. Roughly half the teachers found the PD activities did not support their individual needs in the classroom. As participant 118 shared, “On the surface level no. Kind of feels like a lot of PD and instructional types of stuff focuses on the best-case scenario, and there are always a lot of hiccups and roadblocks trying to implement in the classroom.” This is evident from previous literature reviews that showed many teachers entered their classrooms feeling unprepared to engage and support ELL students (Feiman-Nemser, 2018; Mellom et al., 2018; Villegas, 2018).

However, some participants pointed out that PD is not always helpful nor easy to implement. Those participants who received PD believed that more improvements should be made to support teachers' individual needs in the classroom. Furthermore, some PD activities focuses on the surface levels whether than going in-depth to address the challenges that occur in diverse classroom settings. Guskey (2002) stated, “What they [teachers] hope to gain through PD opportunities are specific, concrete, and practical ideas that directly relate to the day-to-day operations of their classroom.” (p. 383). For teachers who receive PD activity addressing ELLs content, there is a level of dissatisfaction regarding how

the content is delivered and a desire for more PDs that informs teachers how to serve second language learners.

Discussion

Professional development activities should be continuous throughout a teacher's professional career, promoting knowledge and skills to address the students, schools, and national needs (Avidvov-Ungar, 2016). For decades, many educators have used a variety of PD opportunities to enhance their knowledge of pedagogical skills. The primary models of professional development identified are:

- a) training,
- b) peer observation of teaching (PoT),
- c) involvement in development,
- d) study groups,
- e) action research,
- f) individually guided activities, and
- g) mentoring (Guskey, 2000).

Extensive research has been conducted on PD trainings as a means to achieve effectiveness and students' learning achievements (Avidov-Ungar, 2016; Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2020; Postholm, 2018).

Many scholars have identified a problem in the past couple of decades: a high number of teachers reportedly feel overwhelmed and unprepared to work with ELLs (Ariyanti et al., 2019; Villegas, 2018). In the United States, the population of ELLs is increasing rapidly in mainstream classrooms (Lopez, 2019). Researchers have predicted that by 2025, one out of every four students will identify as non-native English speakers. This study examined one U.S school district's methods of administering PD to see which type of PD opportunities were beneficial to help teachers working with ELL students.

The two research questions were "What types of professional development are optimal for supporting teachers working with ELLs?" and "How do primary teachers describe the role of professional development in enhancing teacher's competency?" The majority of participants stated that they attended virtual or on-campus workshops provided by the school district. The findings are not generalizable to the overall United States education system as limitations such as the changing sample size and all participants preparing for standardized test [Miami-Dade County School District].

The responses showed that teachers were not satisfied with the PD content being provided by the school district and felt improvements could be made to further support teachers' needs in multicultural classrooms. This paralleled results from other research studies that found that certain types of PD opportunities that are one-way learning often do not provide teachers with the resources to practice

and reflect on new skills (Gomez and Diarrassouba, 2014; Garcia and Weiss, 2019; Nguyen, 2018). For this study, participants were satisfied with observation and peer collaboration to improve their knowledge and pedagogy skills. Compared to a single-based workshop, observation and peer collaboration connected teachers to what they wanted and needed to strengthen or improve their practice. Bates and Morgan (2018) asserted, "Collaboration supports a togetherness mindset and develops collective knowledge that extends beyond individual, isolated experiences in classrooms" (p. 624). A key element of collaboration requires a trusting environment for individuals to share, reflect, and solve problems within their practices (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). When PD opportunities utilize collaboration effectively, the outcomes produce evidence-based conversations which change professional behaviors, tweak curriculum instructions, and focus on the next steps of meeting students' needs.

Some teachers found that observing veteran teachers modeling specific skills in their classrooms gave them a vision of what effective practices would look like before implementing those competencies. Using models and modeling can support teachers by providing a visual of the techniques and including observations of colleagues, videos, and sample lesson plans or units (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Modeling the different methods gives teachers an idea of what to expect and allows them to set attainable goals suitable for their student's needs (Bates & Morgan, 2018). As Guskey (2000) states, "Observations that are well planned, focus on specific issues, and provide follow-up to document improvement are generally the most effective." (p. 24). Researchers have found that when it comes to the relationship between PD and student learning outcomes, observation and peer collaboration seemed to help enhance teachers' competencies and student learning more than traditional workshops did (Desimone & Garet, 2015; Huber et al., 2020; Hunzicker, 2010). Therefore, school districts with high numbers of second language learners should consider providing teachers with PD opportunities that incorporate active learning through observation and peer collaboration.

Conclusion

Professional development opportunities can help to determine teacher effectiveness when they target subject matter content, instructional practices, and student learning. Garcia and Weiss's research (2019) found that teachers were not given the proper resources and time to practice and reflect on new instructional practices. Professional development experiences vary across the United States. Previous research has acknowledged the disconnect traditional one-shot training has on addressing teachers' wants and needs (Daniels et al., 2013).

In this study, eighteen teachers selected from Miami-Dade County School District were asked to identify PD activities were optimal for supporting their

ELL students. The school district provided teachers with a digital platform to select PD activities that touch on the subject matter, classroom management, and technology. However, most teachers acknowledged not receiving any training focused on ELLs. Their dissatisfaction comes from a limited amount of PD that focuses on ELLs, and PDs are informative, making teachers passive learners. In addition, results showed that teachers found observing experienced teachers and collaborating with their peers to be the methods most beneficial for increasing competency skills to work with diverse students. This allowed teachers to witness classroom practices, thus enhancing their confidence to implement similar practices in their classrooms.

The sample size was a limitation in this study, therefore future research should expand the population sample to identify if similar findings could be drawn from other school districts across the country. Furthermore, research should closely examine student academic growth based on teachers' practices implemented after peer collaboration and observations. As the world transitions back to normalcy, school districts must consider new ways to make PD opportunities relevant to address the unprecedented challenges teachers now encounter post-pandemic. This includes providing teachers with what they strongly desire (Starks & Wissnink, 2019) and more PD opportunities that actively engage and builds teaching competency to support ELLs' learning needs.

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