



La falta de mejora en el desarrollo profesional para profesores de idiomas: una revisión de la investigación local

The lack of improvement in professional development for language teachers: A review of local research

MSc. Ing. Herman Christian Zúñiga Muñoz¹
coordinaciónidiomas@uteg.edu.ec
John Ibáñez Bermello²
docentetecnico@uteg.edu.ec

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RESUMEN

La situación actual de los profesores de inglés que no han obtenido una certificación o el nivel B2 de inglés requerido, según el común europeo Framework for Languages, se vuelve más difícil debido a las restricciones gubernamentales. Este trabajo se considera como el inicio de un proceso analítico que producirá resultados que ayudarán a la sociedad de la enseñanza a autoevaluarse y evaluar el medio ambiente a través de pasos a seguir, para mejorar. Los resultados de esta investigación brindarán a los maestros una visión real de la importancia del desarrollo profesional y la mejora continua para ellos y para sus estudiantes, solicitando a las instituciones educativas donde trabajan. El apoyo a la viabilidad del desarrollo profesional de los docentes. Esta investigación se basa en la episteme dialectal que cubre el desarrollo personal del profesor en relación con los cambios continuos. De la Ley de Educación del Ecuador, siguiendo un enfoque cualitativo, de alcance exploratorio y descriptivo. El marco metodológico tiene características teóricas, inductivo-lógicas y sintéticas-analíticas, aplicando la encuesta como la principal herramienta de investigación para la recolección de datos. Los resultados determinaron la falta de información profesional, motivación, apoyo y el uso y / o aplicación inadecuados de prácticas pedagógicas e instrumentos académicos para el profesor de inglés.

Palabras clave: desarrollo profesional, motivación, estrategias de mejora, retos, problemas docentes

¹ Docente, Universidad Tecnológica Empresarial de Guayaquil. Ecuador

² Docente técnico, Universidad Tecnológica Empresarial de Guayaquil. Ecuador

ABSTRACT

The actual situation of English teachers who haven't got a certification or the required B2 level of English, according to the European Common Framework for Languages, turns harder due to governmental constraints. This work is considered as the start of an analytic process that will produce results that will help the teaching society to self-evaluate and assess the environment through steps to follow, in order to improve. The results of this research will provide teachers with a real vision of the importance of professional development and the continuous improvement for their sake and their students', requesting the education institutions where they work, the support for the viability of the teachers' professional development. This investigation is based on in the dialectal episteme covering the teacher's personal development in regards of the continuous changes of the Law of Education of Ecuador, following a qualitative focus, of exploratory and descriptive scope. The methodological framework has theoretical, inductive-logical and synthetic-analytical characteristics, applying the poll as the main research tool for the collecting of data. The results determined the lack of professional information, motivation, support and the inadequate use and/or application of pedagogical practices and academical instruments for the English teacher.

Keywords: professional development, motivation, strategies for improvement, encouragement, challenges, teacher's issues

Introduction

The world is changing faster than we expect. Trends and technologies appear in a blink of an eye. Then, it is mandatory for teachers to pursue that professional development that it is required to go with the movement.

However, to do this, many aspects must be observed. The responsibility to update, the viability to endure in the path of continuous learning and applying, the reexamining of the skills and methodologies required or needed to be a teacher of the new millennium. These, of course, should be accompanied by a revision of values and a self-constriction. The crucial role of teachers in changing minds and shaping lives give them that notorious duty, having in mind that it is the teacher the main reason of the rise or fall of a student.

None of these can be carried out without the support of educational institutions or the state. The present work reports many of the discoveries the authors have found in their search for answers throughout the study developed at Universidad Tecnológica Empresarial de Guayaquil.

Statement of the problem

There have been no records of the follow-up over English teachers in the past decades, which can provide with data available for the comparison of the changes or evolution of these professionals in education in the end of the last millennium and the beginning of this one. During the last ten years of government, crucial changes and development have been made in order to change the structure, goals and exit profiles of the members involved in bilingual education. All of these have provided with two teachers of the Universidad Tecnológica Empresarial de Guayaquil, the opportunities for English teachers to improve in their profession, to enhance in their abilities and purposes but more than that, to understand that with no development in their career there is no improvement in the whole.

Moreover, educational institutions are now demanded by the state to require the B2 level of the CEFR to all the educators applying for a job in their establishments plus

continuous training and progress in their knowledge and expertise.

Importance of the problem

The development of the present work will contribute to understand how decisive professional development in the Teaching, for this case, of English is for all the people involved in this line of work. As mentioned before, Professional Development will have a constructive influence in all the actors and recipients.

Teachers take different opportunities across their career process, still, pragmatic studies reflect on how teachers methodically explore professional opportunities at different stages of their professional life (Richter, Kunter, Klusmann, Ludke, & Baumert, 2014).

According to the Project for the Improvement of the Teaching of English driven by the Ministry of Education of Ecuador, an agreement between the Ministry and Longman Ecuador S.A. was signed on September 23rd, 2013. Such settlement "attempts to strengthen and increase the level of linguistic knowledge of the English Teachers in order to achieve the B2 level according to the CEFR" (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2013).

Jasone Cenoz and Durk Gorter (2013) cited in their book that according to the CEFR, Level B2 "indicates that the subject can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialization. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party".

A decade on from the publication of the CEFR many publications in this series have engaged with the Framework and many authors have reflected on its place in their practice as well as its role in creating national policy norms (Byram & Parmeter, 2012). It is defined as one of the characteristics of good teachers to be the person who inspires, encourages, by giving their students the chance to strive for greatness, enhancing their potential in them.

Students learn through their teachers' commitment to excel and through their abilities the findings of personal growth (Bashir, Bajwa, & Rana, 2014). An increasing input of specific studies on the matter has declared that a well-designed specialized improvement as it is effectively applied, produce expected modifications in the teaching and learning (Darling-Hammond, Hylar, & Garner, 2017).

The profession of teaching of foreign language today faces an increase in enrollment and the shortage of qualified teachers. At the same time, the student population is changing rapidly, a national reform of the educational system, and the development of national standards for foreign language learning are placing a series of new requirements for teachers of foreign languages (Chicaiza, 2013). In regards of this topic, there is not much data from any previous work carried out in the state of Ecuador except for the data from a thesis presented by Chicaiza in 2013. Most of the information is provided by the Ministry of Education of Ecuador, however, there is no continuous updating in the page.

The field of language teaching is a subject of constant variations which must respond to paradigms and requirements from state institutions creating new challenges in curriculum, national tests, and students' output. Consequently, educators should

regularly update their professional portfolio incurring in professional development (Richards & Farrel, 2006). It can be implied, (Quigley, 2016) that the more experienced the teacher the more confident and competent he/she will become, as they have the time experience then they become successful.

Many activities have been developed since then in order to provide English teachers with the necessary information and tools to reach to the desired goal, which include continuous programs for professional development and constant publishing of seminars, workshops and lectures validated by the government educational entity (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2013). Different theories of how students learn and how teachers should teach have been the base for Professional Development (Kennedy, 2016).

Standards have been set to define the parameters to follow or the limits in which teachers must enclose; According to Jaime Usma (2009) "the definition of standards to regulate and homogenize teaching practice, language learning, professional development, and school accreditation according to the guidelines provided by the foreign consultants is an important asset in changing education". As in Latin America, in Ecuador during the past two decades the proposals for the improvement of education were sustained approach printed international banking development in the form of loans.

Certain progress towards implementation have been running various public policies in education since 2002 in the country, whose expression is the ten year Plan (2006-2015) which is stated as a policy of the State and the Citizen Agenda for Education. (FLACSO, 2008). When thinking of educational innovations and educational policies, nobody ignores the problems of the teacher and the quality of the training. Current school systems, configured in the currency by the end of the 19th century in Latin America, retain a trace of its origin: the centrality of the teacher, the teacher as technology and irreplaceable educational resource. Educators at all levels need just in-time, job-embedded assistance as they struggle to adapt new curricula and new instructional practices to their unique classroom contexts (Guskey & Kwang, 2009). Despite the advance of new technologies and the predictions about the schools of the future, it is not likely that this situation may change radically in the course of the next few decades. (Vezub,2007)

In regards of private educational institutions, their teachers are also required to fulfill updating requisites but by different means or sources from governmental activities. In spite of the interest of teachers to develop and/or improve, educational administrators' intrusion can hazard the improvement of teachers, which will result in poor training and ambiguous selection of training participants (Zein, 2016). Still, there are several points to discuss in relation to the title of this article. It is imperative to keep on the constant discussion on how teachers' development has to be improved in topics as analysis of the level of knowledge and skills, the contents to teach, and the degree or extend in which all of these have to be. (US Department of Education, 2005).

There is no exact source from which professional development can be referred. Professional Development is an ongoing process, one that evolves as teachers assess and reexamine their teaching beliefs and practices (Murray, 2010). Educators must be always searching for self-improvement and support other fellow teachers, Kumaravadivelu (2012) analyzes that language teachers have started critically analyzing and questioning their own readiness to deal with learner/teacher identities in their cross-cultural classrooms. As educators in the 21st century, it is important to

run toward professional development for the gain of being educated rather than drag themselves into varied ways of training (workshops, seminars, meetings or conferences) because they are either mandatory or will earn some reward for attendance (Huish, 2014). There is a clear belief that foreign language is more than a simple codification used to communicate as per L2 motivation researchers insist the language can be learnt similarly to other academic subjects (Zoltan & Ushioda, 2009) As new teaching information, techniques, and methods are continually being updated and changed, professional development for a teacher is necessary. It is a long-life learning process which make educators grow.

(Alstad-Davies, 2010). The teaching improvement and the improvement of the teachers' working conditions through policies of training teachers in service aims to change the teachers' behavior in the classroom and the design of strategies of pay for performance, particularly for those who work in sectors further behind (FLACSO, 2008).

This proposal presents six components that seek to develop holistic in teachers, a professional knowledge, skills and attitudes. This process is established in three dimensions: 1) staff; 2) discipline and 3) educational: some components such as educational identities, education, and change and learning of teachers, are closely related to social, also identified areas (Johnson, 2009).

Empowerment in the teaching profession gives the influence to become capable to engaging in, managing the control of, and influencing moments and educational organizations (Zepeda, 2008). Among the different values and suggestions provided we can remark the following: there is the need to be aware of available professional development options and activities, and require guidance in self-assessing, it is necessary to have some awareness of reflective practice and/or experimental practice, but, most importantly, teachers must have a sophisticated understanding of key issues and concepts in teacher learning. (Cambridge University, 2017)

The studies by Michael Garet and Heather Hill found that teachers adopted the practices taught in their professional development as they focused on the curriculum they would be based on for their teachings.

These teachers embraced new curriculum material when they were supported by training and several workshops.

Studies suggest that the more time teachers spend on professional development, the more significantly they change their practices and that participating in learning communities heightens the time spent on improvement. (The Southern Poverty Law, 2017).

Globalization has proved to be the main reason of drastic changes in Professional Development as the increase of the use of Internet as a link to communicate and self express have created controversy in the role of English learning, so positive and negative results have been produced from using such tool (O'Dowd, 2012). Provided the easiness or availability of technology, teachers can join an international professional association is another way to connect with colleagues and pursue personal goals worldwide (Murray, 2010). Through regular newsletters, video conferences and webinars, and having the chance to learn and cope with other professionals give the

effective results teachers must seek. Academic Investigation has demonstrated effective output and positive effects in teachers and students at the end of the process (Leithwood, 2004). Five critical elements must be taken into consideration when dealing with professional development:

1. Active learning,
2. Links between curriculum, assessment, and professional learning decisions in the context of teaching specific content,
3. Teachers apply new knowledge and receive feedback,
4. Deeper knowledge of content, and
5. How to teach it and sustained learning (Darling-Hammond, 2012).

On the other hand, while adequate time for professional development is essential, studies show that more time does not guarantee success; if the sessions do not focus on the subject-matter content that has shown to be effective, then the duration will do little to change teachers' practices and improve students learning (George Lucas Education Foundation, 2017).

Methodology

This study has been carried out within the Universidad Tecnológica Empresarial de Guayaquil. The methodology used is the Descriptive Research Method by applying a questionnaire for data collection. It consists of 20 items. The authors decided the questionnaire due its viability. The subjects of the study were questioned during the time. The total number of the sample was 58.

The professional development of the teaching of English is directly linked to the regulatory processes set out in the Education Act of Ecuador and the quality of the process teaching learning the language in question, influencing the formation of leading change that may increase the productive and attain the good living of the Ecuadorian family.

This article is based on the dialectic episteme, as it revolves around the quality of the education on the basis of the review and continuous improvement of the Ecuadorian education system. Before the new changes proposed by the present government, there was a number of teachers of English without experience in this field and without international certifications that could support their mastery of the language, this caused, according to the Government, the low level of quality in the teaching of the foreign language, especially in public education.

These governmental changes require today, in addition to a degree in a specific area, an international certification B2 or higher and attendance at seminars of professional and pedagogical update to all teachers in all levels as a solution to this problem, however, the low level of quality continues due to the lack of experience in the world of education. It is essential, therefore, the approach of a miscellany between professionalization and the teaching experience as key factors to achieve quality in education, to have teachers possessing a vast experience in teaching which contributes to improve the public education system (Zúñiga, Tinoco, & Conforme, 2017).

General hypothesis: The professional development of the teaching of English influences the academic performance of students significantly and hence in obtaining a quality education through the teaching performance in the classroom. Among the particular hypotheses are detailed as follows: obtaining the international certification

B2 affects the academic performance of students.

Continuous training affects the application of quality pedagogical strategies in the classroom and improves the learning process of learners. Establishing the relationship between the strategies to achieve a quality education and permanent training increases the academic achievement of the students who will get an education of quality.

The methodological aspects that apply to solve this problem have an approach or quantitative carácter exploratory, descriptive, correlational and bibliographical 132 paradigms; and qualitatively using theoretical methods and inductive logic. It is analytic - synthetic since it runs systematization from the introduction to the conclusions.

This research is of descriptive and scientific observation type because it allows knowing the reality through direct perception of entities and processes for which there must be some qualities that give them a distinctive character.

The information shall be generated based on research and analysis of primary sources described in official gazettes of the situation experienced by the Ecuador concerning education in English. Between the main techniques and instruments applied in the object of study the survey to current and former professors of the institution and the survey to students using the questionnaire designed with 10 items the Likert scale are considered.

The size of the population, as presented in Table 1, is composed of the following elements: 53 teachers of English and 87 English students who attended, during the quarter April-June 2017, a module of this language being a total of 140 individuals that make up the finite set to poll. It is noteworthy that current professors of the educational institution and faculty not already working in this institution form the population of teachers. Due to the size of the population to carry out the survey to all of the individuals has been considered.

Table 1. Population and size of the sample

Number	Description	Quantity
1	Present English Teachers	8
2	Former English Teachers	45
3	Students	87
Total		140

Fuente: Developed by Zúñiga and Ibáñez based on the institution, Ecuador, 2017

Results

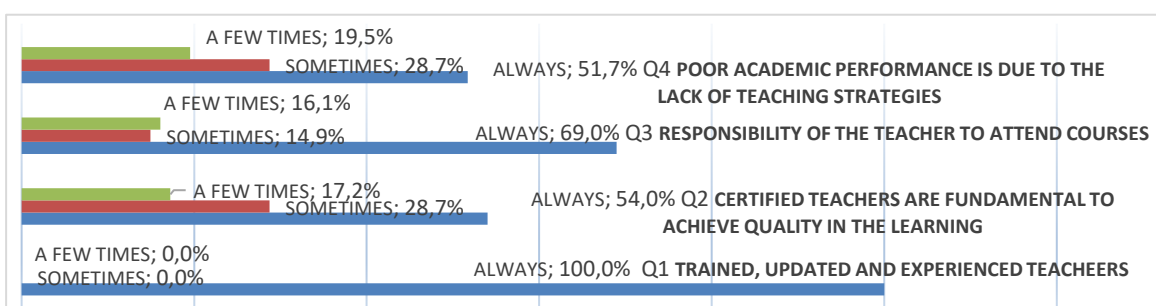
This research is intended to analyze the results of the surveys to students of English at UTEG. This was carried out during the academic period April-July 2017, as well as the tabulation of the results of the surveys of teachers and former teachers of the institution, with the aim of studying the performance of teachers in the classroom through the management of teaching learning strategies, the opening of the authorities of the institution to provide the necessary support for assistance to seminars and professional development courses that contribute to the scope of quality education in the teaching of the English language and to the success of the professional

career of teaching.

Through the instrument of data collection as the teacher survey and the survey to the students of the UTEG related to the professional development of the teaching of English, the governmental requirements and the teaching strategies used in classes to achieve quality education, the results for analysis and descriptive interpretation have been achieved.

Analysis of the survey taken to the students of the institution.

The results of the most relevant questions selected in the survey taken to the students at UTEG are shown below:



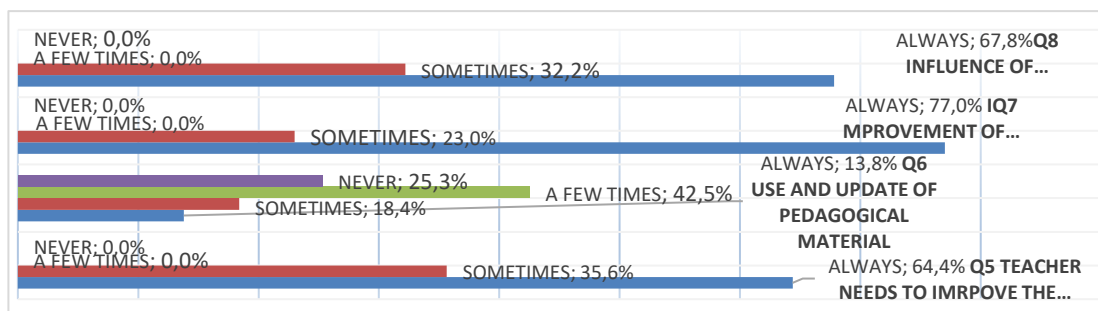
Graph 1. Training courses and certifications

Source: Developed by Zúñiga and Ibáñez based on the institution, Ecuador, 2017

Graph number 1 shows that 64,4%, in question 5, expressed that the teacher must improve the way he/she teaches his/her classes to keep students captivated and attentive; in question 6, in regards to the use of didactic material during classes, 13% said that the teachers always make use of this tool, however, 42% indicated that this material is rarely used, and 25% expressed that this type of materials are never used; in question 7, 77% of the respondents expressed that teachers should always improve their knowledge in terms of teaching strategies; in question 8, 67% said that innovative activities have positive influence on the educational process.

Analysis of the Survey of Teachers from the Institution.

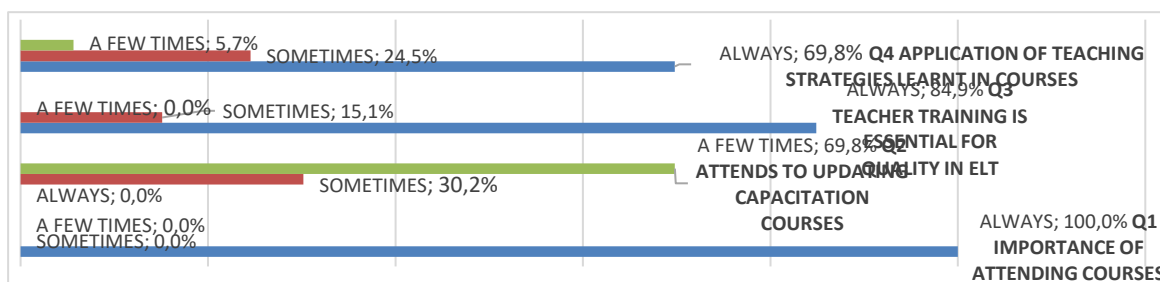
The results of the most relevant questions selected in the survey applied to teachers and former teachers of the institution are shown below:



Graph 2. Importance of attending updating courses

Source: Developed by Zúñiga/Ibáñez based on polls, Ecuador, 2017

Graph number 2 presents in question 1 that 100% of teachers surveyed said that it is really important to attend Updating and professional development courses in order to achieve quality education; in question 2, almost 70% mentioned that they attend training for very few times; in question 3, 84% of the surveyed teachers ensured that the training of teachers is essential for quality in the learning of the English language; in question 4, 69.8% said that the teaching strategies learned in the seminars are applied in their classes.



Graph 3. Importance of attending updating courses

Source: Developed by Zúñiga/Ibáñez based on polls, Ecuador, 2017

Graph number 3 shows in question 5 that most of teachers surveyed, 77,4%, expressed that an international certification that supports their mastery of the English language is essential to achieve a quality education; in question 6, 64.2% said that very few times they are granted with the permissions required on the part of the institution where they work to attend seminars, even 35.8% indicated that they are never granted with permission in certain educational institutions; in question 7, 73.6% of respondents said they had the financial support of the educational institution for very few times to cover the costs of the courses of professional development and updating. 26.4% said that they have not had that support at their educational institution; in question 8, the total of the respondents mentioned that the teaching strategies always influence the academic performance of the students especially if they are updated; in question 9, 100% of the surveyed teachers indicated that it is vital to always count with the support of the educational institution where works to attend professional development courses, since this leads to prestige in society.

Discussion

Taking into consideration the general hypothesis: the professional development of the teaching of English influences significantly the academic performance of students and hence in obtaining a quality education through the teaching performance in the classroom.

This is validated by the results of the survey to students in questions No. 1 and 2 where all the students surveyed say that it is very important to have English teachers trained, updated and with experience in teaching to have teaching and learning quality processes. Teachers confirm the validation of the hypothesis in question 11 where they agree on the real importance of attending updated teacher training and professional development courses in order to achieve a quality education in the learning of the English language.

The first particular hypothesis raised in this study is the obtaining of the international certification, the B2, affecting the academic performance of students, which is validated through the surveys to students and teachers. In question 3, the majority of the students surveyed indicated that having teachers with international certifications that support the mastery of the language is fundamental to achieve quality in the learning of the language.

In question No. 15, the greater part of teachers expressed that the international certification is a document that validates the domain of language and, therefore, should better results on the academic performance of students, generating, possibly, better job opportunities. The second particular hypothesis, continuous training, influences the implementation of quality pedagogical strategies in the classroom and improves the learning process of learners.

This is validated with the survey in question No. 5, where 52% of the surveyed students recognize that their academic performance is due to the lack of pedagogical strategies employed in class to facilitate the teaching process learning of language. Question No. 6, where 90% expressed that the dynamics of motivation and training materials during the class by the teacher with the aim of improving the process and maintain an interactive class are always necessary. Teachers validate this hypothesis in question 10 and 14 since most of them manifest that they must be employed activities or current, innovative and educational strategies to achieve an improvement in the academic achievement of students.

The third particular hypothesis: the support of the educational institution influences the professional development of teachers of English and therefore in the quality of the learning process of this language, is validated in question No. 20. 100% of the teachers surveyed indicated that it is of vital importance to have the support of the educational institution where they work to attend professional development courses, since this leads to prestige in society.

Conclusion

Teachers need to gain knowledge and access to new curriculum resources and technology tools for the classroom. This is especially important in the contemporary world of education. To be a professionally developed teacher implies that a teacher is inspired and motivated to continue improving his/her teaching. It is also important for a teacher to think always about how he/she teaches.

This study has the following conclusions which should be used as strategies that will help teachers to reduce their lack of enhancement:

Teachers must be professionally developed in order to be aware of how to motivate his or her students as it is known, motivation operates a great part in learning and teaching as well. Teachers can be motivated and encouraged when adopting and using new ideas, techniques and resources. Teachers dwell in a world of varying technology; therefore, they need to keep updated. Well-equipped schools with products of new technology support teachers' development. Teachers' role enacts in their professional development along with the role to be performed by the government.

Therefore, both educators and government take complementary functions to be carried out in Teachers' Professional Development. Teachers need to be updated through the various ways proposed, for example, by sharing experiences and ideas.

Experience and reflective teaching are requisites for Professional Development. Ongoing professional development is very critical and essential, as no knowledge is static.

By giving teachers a feeling of community and belonging means that teachers are not working in isolation but they are working together because they face similar challenges due to the nature of school environment. New teachers on the field need to work in partnership with experts and experienced teachers so that they should not be dazed by the demands of their jobs.

Positive attitudes towards their profession provide educators positive results, which highly influence the way teachers perform and succeed, and so these are diffused to their learners and determine the situation they create in their different sections of work. Teachers must participate in workshops and conferences. Through such opportunities, teachers progress.

Effects like being burnt out and left behind can directly affect teachers if they are not given constant feedback and regular supervision. Finally, good salaries and career progression can highly motivate and encourage teachers, on the contrary, low payment conducts to frustration and disappointment among teachers and thus they overlook seeking opportunities to grow professionally.

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