

IPDA Slides Notes

Teacher Professional Learning and Teacher Motivation: Voices from Dubai.

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1. This research aims at exploring the phenomenon of teacher professional learning and teacher motivation to engage in professional development activities across different career cycles within the context of a private school in Dubai. The study explores teacher professional learning (TPL) from a motivational perspective, more specifically within the framework of Self-Determination Theory (SDT). The study aims at filling the research gap in this region as well as giving teachers the opportunity and voice to share their stories, their needs as well as their challenges and concerns.
2. Dubai: Dubai represents a unique education policy context that hosts a highly diverse education system. There are 193 private schools that host 183 nationalities and offer 17 different curricula. This huge private education sector is inspected by Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA). KHDA runs annual inspections, quite similar to the Ofsted UK model, on private schools and not on public schools.
3. Almost more than 90% of Dubai expat students, and more than 50% of Emirati students attend private & for-profit schools (KHDA Inspection Report, 2015). Expatriates are not allowed to enroll children in public schools that accept only Emirati students. Another unique feature is that 100% of male teachers are expatriates and more than 60% are female expatriates (Ridge 2010). Most of these teachers who come from Arab Middle Eastern countries lack pre-service training (Faour, 2012).
4. **Conceptual Framework:** The conceptual framework of my study makes connections between Self-Determination Theory, Professional Capital and teacher professional learning across different career phases. I am looking at teacher motivation to engage in their own professional learning across

different career phases from the perspective of Self-Determination Theory. SDT proposes that all humans have three basic needs for competency, autonomy and relatedness to sustain their intrinsic motivation and achieve psychological well-being, creativity and positive work-related performance and outcomes. (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Gagne and Deci, 2005; Deci & Ryan, 2007; Gorozidis and Papaioannou, 2014). These needs correspond respectively to decisional capital, human capital and social capital in the professional capital strategy. In addition, they are, as suggested by the literature in the previous section, interconnected with essential components of teacher professional learning represented in teacher motivation, teacher collaboration, teacher reflection, teacher self-efficacy and differentiation in teacher professional learning. In my study, I will seek to understand in-depth how these overlapping relationships are perceived by teachers from different career phases within the authentic setting of school context.

5. Key Findings:

The findings of stage 1 indicate **that students are key instrumental** in motivating teachers to learn more and remain engaged in their own professional learning. Teacher stated that they are more motivated to keep growing professionally and learn by their students than they are by their colleagues or their school leadership. The findings also suggest **lack of teacher autonomy** particularly in the context of continuous evaluation school cultures. **Teacher reflexivity** is an evident theme where teachers instantly reflect on their own students and form decisions whether the new learning in PD activities are applicable, realistic and/or relevant to the needs of their students or the contexts of their classrooms.

Teachers' tacit knowledge is also evident. Teachers in the study are able to articulate their needs and identify their gap areas and evaluate their professional learning opportunities with reference to how these opportunities help teachers benefit their own students.

6. Key Findings of Stage 2:

- Students are their teachers' main motivation to engage in TPL
- Collaboration & Social Capital are key influential in teachers' motivation to learn and grow professionally. Middle leaders as communication bridges. Team Cultures and relational trust. Feedback: the 'How to' rather than the 'What'
- Inspection and evaluative context are demotivating for teachers
- Teacher motivation varies by Career Cycle and by Context
- Teachers' level of Decisional Capital and agency grow gradually and are influenced by Leadership Cultures