



# Evaluation of the behavioral and affective outcomes of novice teachers working in professional development schools versus non-professional development schools



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## A B S T R A C T

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the outcomes of teacher preparation based in Professional Development Schools (PDSs) in secondary education in The Netherlands over a period of three years. Approximately 150 teachers in non-PDSs were compared with 50 teachers in PDSs with declining response rates. Classroom observation ratings and student perceptions of PDS teachers in the second year were higher compared to non-PDS teachers. PDS teachers reported higher levels of teacher efficacy in each year. PDS-based teachers evaluated their teacher preparation and their learning opportunities significantly more positively compared to non-PDS-based teachers. Even though the sample size is not large and the design of the study does not warrant causality claims, the findings point towards increased transition smoothness and improved adhesiveness between teacher education preparation and the requirements on the job. Future investments in the co-operation between schools and teacher education institutes seem warranted.

## 1. Introduction

This study sets out to investigate the quality of teaching skills and well-being during the transition from being a student teacher to the first years on the job. Beginning teachers and schools have complained about the lack of alignment between the teacher education curriculum on the one hand and the teaching skills and knowledge needed in the schools and classrooms on the other hand causing transition shock, “painful beginnings” and high novice attrition rates (e.g., Corcoran, 1981; Huberman, 1989; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Den Brok, Wubbels and van Tartwijk (2017) explored self-reported attrition causes and revealed that causes in The Netherlands were similar to those revealed in international studies: being related to the characteristics of the teaching job and the local school context in which beginning teachers find themselves and personal reasons and, in many cases, it is a combination of factors rather than a single factor that causes attrition. Intensified collaboration between schools and teacher education institutes has become the focus for improving the alignment between theory and practice before professional certification. Induction arrangements have been developed to improve the support after certification (e.g., Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Co-operation between schools and teacher education during and after teacher preparation brings

together the expertise needed to enhance the development of teaching skills, and prevents stagnation of development. This way the support is constructed on both sides by both parties, i.e. the school and the education institute. In an experimental setting, Helms-Lorenz, van de Grift and Maulana (2015) revealed that after certification, attrition rates are reduced and the development of teaching skills is accelerated for teachers who teach in schools that work together with teacher education institutes to develop comprehensive teacher induction programs for their beginning teachers. Our study focusses on the longitudinal influence of intensified collaboration between schools and teacher education institutes on observed teaching skills and self-reported well-being of novices *before* qualification.

### 1.1. The importance of teacher education in general

Recent American and Dutch research shows the importance of teacher education programs. The better the teachers are educated in a formal teacher education program, the more effective they are, especially compared with those who did not receive any specific training (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2009; Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002; Helms-Lorenz et al., 2015). Consistently, The Dutch Inspection of Education (2011) concluded that teachers who

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are not certified and not educated in a formal teacher education programme an increasing problem for the quality of education. According to [Dronkers \(2010\)](#), who analysed the PISA-results, Dutch pupils would score substantially higher if all schools would have certified teachers trained in formal teacher education program. [Helms-Lorenz et al. \(2015\)](#) revealed that certification and level of teaching skills at the beginning of the career were important factors explaining teacher retention.

### 1.2. Professional Development Schools (PDS)

The general aims of partnerships between schools and teacher education institutes in the United States, called Professional Development Schools (PDSs), are to develop school practice; including the practice of all stakeholders, e.g. pre-service, beginning and experienced teachers ([Nath, Guadarrama, & Ramsy, 2011](#)), and that of school leaders. This is achieved through collaboration between novice teachers and experienced teachers and collaboration between school-based educators and university-based faculty ([Darling-Hammond, 2005](#)). The second aim of PDSs is to bridge the gap between the professional preparation and the real world of school reform, according to the [National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education \(2001\)](#). This gap between the ideas pre-service teachers have about teaching (developed from prior experience and from teacher education) and their first experiences as a teacher in a school, generally causes friction, which may result in a decline in motivation for the profession ([Flores, 2001](#)). Lower levels of motivation, in turn, may result in teachers leaving the profession as motivation has been shown to be related to teachers' professional commitment ([Canrinus, Helms-Lorenz, Beijaard, Buitink & Hofman, 2012](#)) and job stress ([Davis & Wilson, 2000](#)). Bridging this transition gap is one of the goals of PDS.

Teacher education in the Netherlands has a long history of a dominant practical component of school engagement in the curriculum. The aims of PDSs in The Netherlands are similar to the Anglo-Saxon aims: 1) to bridge the gap between the job requirements and the theoretical curriculum requirements (to reduce the transition shock from student teacher to becoming a teacher), and 2) to reduce the theory/practice gap experienced by novices. Schools prioritize the organization of pupil learning whilst teacher educators prioritize pre-service teacher learning. These aims can lead to contradicting and confusing practices for the novice teacher causing tensions in the pre-service teacher's learning process; e.g., by the school giving the novice too much responsibility (to treat the novice as an equal). Pre-service teachers struggle to teach and are pre-occupied with surviving the day, whilst experiencing the theoretical underpinnings as an extra burden if these are not connected to their reality.

The Dutch PDS is composed of one or more schools and one or more teacher education institutes forming a partnership and taking shared responsibility for educating pre-service teachers. In the Dutch context the shared responsibility, between the school and the teacher education institute is considered to be the best basis for teacher education. This partnership allows for handling the tensions between practical and theoretical insights. It entails structural appointments concerning job openings for pre-service teachers, organizing school-based teacher support staff, meetings discussing the teacher education curriculum and assessment procedures. Recent Dutch studies reveal that there is room for improving the quality of PDSs in the Netherlands, as the partnerships are capable of making structural appointments but are less capable of developing the curriculum and educating pre-service teachers in the same jargon and with the same goals and methods (e.g., [Timmermans, 2012](#)).

### 1.3. Effective elements of PDS

[Kruger, Davies, and Eckersley \(2009\)](#) studied seven effective and sustainable university-school partnerships in Australia to grasp which characteristics make these partnerships effective and sustainable. They concluded that an effective PDS "[...] encourage(s) each stakeholder (pre-service teachers, teachers, teacher educators) to contribute personal and professional resources, in the form of passion, commitment and professional understanding and expertise." (p. 10). Effective partnerships are characterized by 1) a focus on learning for all stakeholders, 2) all stakeholders taking on altered relationship practices, i.e., conversations aimed at improving the learning of school students, and 3) a focus on forming new relationships between partners ([Kruger et al., 2009](#)). [Mantle-Bromley \(2001\)](#) described five features of PDS-based teacher preparation that were thought to lead to more well-prepared teachers: (a) field experiences are spread throughout the teacher preparation program, (b) theory and practice are closely connected, (c) pre-service teachers are supervised by both the school and the institute personnel throughout the program, (d) a strong support system is provided, (e) the program is collaboratively designed and implemented.

Besides the ambitious aims of PDSs, possible drawbacks should be considered. One of the dangers [Hargreaves \(2000\)](#) anticipated is that limiting the period and level of certification for initial teacher education, or shifting the burden of "professional" preparation from higher education to the already overburdened world of schools ([Barton, Barrett, Whitty, Miles, & Furlong, 1994](#)), could reduce the opportunity for critical reflection. "The effect of this all can be to return teaching to an amateur, de-professionalized, almost premodern craft, where existing skills and knowledge are passed on practically from expert to novice" (p. 168). He advised in this respect that teachers should...

"[...] value and defend their entitlement to and their education in a rigorous knowledge base that undergirds their professionalism. [...] Engaging with such a knowledge base uplifts teachers from the pre-professional prejudice that only practice makes perfect. [...] It (the knowledge base) must also be treated as providing forms of educational understanding, and ways of assessing and filtering educational research, rather than falsely deifying and uncritically applying a body of incontrovertible scientific 'fact' on effective teaching, learning, management, and change strategies." (p. 170). ... "Attempts to dismantle or destabilize the university base of teacher education should be interpreted and resisted as constituting not only an assault on teacher education, but on the professional status of teaching itself" (p. 171).

Given the conflicting expectations of PDS, little quantitative evidence is available supporting the claim that PDS programs provide superior learning environments for teacher preparation. Studies investigating whether the aims of PDS are achieved, i.e., improving teaching practice and reducing the transition shock between education and work, are scarce ([Darling-Hammond, 2005](#)). To date, no studies were found evaluating the PDS aims longitudinally and in concert, but rather studies evaluating single aims in cross-sectional designs. These studies are presented in the following section.

### 1.4. The influence of PDS on the quality of teaching skills

A study by [Castle, Fox, and Souder \(2006\)](#) addressed the assumption that PDS educated teachers had more experience in teaching and thus would be better on the No Child Left Behind teacher quality indicators (i.e., planning, instruction, classroom management, assessment, professionalism and reflection). Based on student teaching evaluation forms and portfolio assessments, [Castle et al. \(2006\)](#) found differences

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