

Public Abstract

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Title:The influence of sustained professional development on Panamanian teachers: Student engagement and perceptions

There are not many teacher-training programs in Panama, and aspiring teachers need more options to prepare for their future careers. In addition to quality teacher preparation, Panama's teachers require professional development programs that will help them meet their students' educational needs. ProEd Foundation is a nonprofit organization that provides mentoring and professional development opportunities to Panamanian teachers. The main purpose of this case study is to determine the effectiveness of ProEd's Teachers Teaching Teachers Program. It serves as a program evaluation that examines the impact participation in these workshops has on student engagement, lesson design, and student perceptions of their teachers.

Twenty teachers were chosen from Escuela San Jose de Malambo to participate in the study; some had attended ProEd's Teachers Teaching Teachers program 2 or more years, some had attended only one year, and some had never attended at all. They were observed during one lesson. The researcher looked at the amount of student participation and the activities used by the teacher in each lesson. After each observed lesson, students filled-in a student perception survey regarding their teachers.

The twenty teachers that participated in the research were divided into two groups: teachers who attended the Teachers Teaching Teachers workshops zero or one year, and teachers who attended for two to five years. Statistically significant differences between both groups were found for some of the classroom activities observed. With teachers who had participated in the workshops for a longer amount of time, students spent significantly more time working with each other and used more conferencing. Teachers who had never attended the workshops or participated for only one year, used more question and answer and observation by student as strategies during their lessons. Statistically significant differences between the two groups were found in four of the items in the survey, particularly in those that talked about teachers making classes fun, caring for their students, and respecting their ideas. This means that teachers who had attended TTT for 2 to 5 years received higher scores in these items.

Based on the results of this study, a recommendation for ProEd is that their Teachers Teaching Teachers program should become a two-year-program in order to have lasting effects on their teachers. To make this study stronger, it should be replicated in other schools that have participated in ProEd's workshops, possibly observing more than one lesson per teacher.