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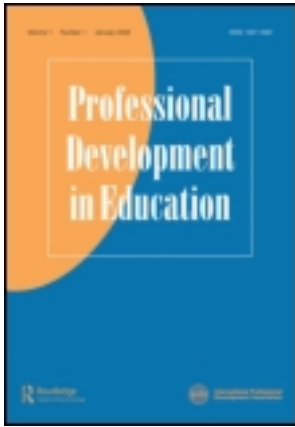


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Professional development of teachers has become an essential condition in today's knowledge-based society to sustain the quality of teaching. Therefore, the Dutch government promotes this now professional development. As a result, Professional Development Plans (PDPs) are now increasingly used to stimulate and support the professional development of teachers. A PDP is used to encourage teachers' professional development and structure their development path in terms of learning goals and plans of action. However, it cannot be taken for granted that teachers will formulate high-quality PDPs on their own. Previous research suggests that guidance is important in supporting teachers' development. This study examined the effects of guidance on the quality of PDPs. An experimental group of Dutch teachers from a school for secondary vocational education was offered a series of workshops whereas the control group did not have such guidance. Both groups had to fill out a simple structured PDP. To determine the quality of the PDPs, an assessment tool was developed. The results suggest that guided teachers are more capable of identifying their strengths and in formulating learning goals. The guided teachers' PDPs also showed more consistency. No differences were found regarding the action plans which teachers described.

Keywords: professional development; professional development plan; self-regulation; guidance; support; teachers

Introduction

In the Netherlands, the educational labor market is challenged by quantitative as well as qualitative shortages (Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science 2007). Therefore, the Dutch government introduced the Education Professions Act in 2004 (wet op Beroepen In het Onderwijs, BIO). According to this law, teachers are obligated to maintain and develop their professional abilities and record the process in a portfolio. On the basis of this law, the Dutch foundation for the quality of teachers (Stichting Beroepskwaliteit Leraren, SBL) defined a list of competences that are needed in the teacher profession. These competences serve as a frame of reference for the professional development of teachers (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science 2005). Moreover, the government argued that to achieve high-quality education schools need a solid personnel policy. This policy is

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