

Teachers' Learning and Continuous Professional Development in Lebanon: A View Gained through the "Continuous Training Project"

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Abstract

This naturalistic study describes and analyzes the perspectives of teachers and trainers who participated in the new continuous professional development program in Lebanon (CTP). Qualitative methods and descriptive statistics are used to examine the teachers' learning and professionalism as well as the establishment of learning communities as active collaborative means of professional development.

The results indicate growth in professionalism and awareness to new teachers' and trainers' roles. Collaboration is related to establishing shared and common perspectives on teachers' learning and development of a professional identity. Perceptions about learning communities are related to identity transformations taking into consideration the social, political context and new learning environments such as marketization of knowledge.

This research discusses also the institutionalization of CTP. The results indicate that more efforts should be done especially regarding allocating resources, getting support from all partners, establishing clear expectations and policies, and aligning organizational structures with desired changes and communicating results.

Keywords: Continuous professional development, learning communities, teachers' learning, professionalism

Statement of Relevance

This research is one of very little research about the "Continuous Training Project" in Lebanon established in partnership with World Bank and French government for the continuous professional development of in-service public school teachers.

Professional training of teachers in Lebanon was done in almost all cases at the pre-service level. Afterwards, Lebanese stakeholders admitted that in-service education of teachers and trainers needs a new general orientation, a new framework of support for schools and teachers, and new political strategies and actions in order to facilitate the transition to an alternative effective model of constructing and providing a continuous training system (Official Journal, 1999). This research will discuss how this new continuous professional development is conceptualized based on societal pressures for education reform such as changes in global economy, and will take into consideration new trends such as decentralization, marketization of education, teachers' knowledge of change in new learning environments and theories of adult learning.

1. Introduction

The educational reform in Lebanon that was launched with an operational reform plan (1994) involved a new educational ladder (1995), and new curricula that were implemented in 1997 with textbooks for all school subjects (CERD, 1995). The Educational Centre for Research and Development (CERD) was in charge of establishing the continuous training project (CTP) to train public school teachers on new curricula and methodology at the Resource Centres (RC) where new positions of teacher-trainers were established. Teachers' and trainers' professional development at the RC consists in fewer, more than informal, individual, private learning on the job (Gharib, 2007) where "teachers teach teachers". The reform emphasizes the need to reflect and shape socio-political change in

Lebanon (Frayha, 2004). It provides a range of experiences in putting forward curricular responses to issues of social cohesion which can be investigated through learning communities. The agenda for strengthening in-service education in Lebanon is to build a system of teachers' lifelong learning to promote their professional growth.

The general situation in the field of the previous in-service teacher education in Lebanon was described as being quite problematic and unsatisfactory (Farah, 2002; Annahar, 2004; El-Amine, 2005). Activities involved one-time workshops, with short-term passive activities and limited follow-up, and were assessed as inappropriate, unfocused, boring and irrelevant to teachers' work (Annahar, 2003; Hoyek, 2001). With this approach, teachers were not seen as active participants in their own professional growth, much less as sources of knowledge themselves (Lieberman, 2012; Lieberman & Miller, 2004). In addition, in this traditional view of professional development, little interaction occurs among teachers. Rather than drawing upon teachers' classroom practice, professional development has been frequently disconnected from it both in substance and setting.

The changes, planned by the new reform, shed the light on the enormous tasks on teachers regarding capabilities and academic skills which were ignored for more than twenty years during the civil war (Tabet, 2007). Teachers are expected to develop new skills for the new curriculum areas such as the new evaluation system, new content, and new teaching methods. The new training claimed to provide adult trainees with learning opportunities that are meaningful and practical to them, to involve reflection on their many experiences, and to include social, active learning (ECRD, 2005). However, there were many doubts about its effectiveness and value particularly as it was done sporadically and attached to producing new curricula (Farah, 2002; El-Amine, 2005, Hoyek, 2001).

The current themes and recommendations emerging from the literature call for empirical studies capable of informing policy; these studies are expected to embrace multi-level, and multi-method design, and should be conducted in authentic contexts that holistically examine trainers and teachers' practices. This study is one of very few studies carried out on the continuous training project (CTP). It highlights the interdependence of learning, professionalism, and continuous professional development as teachers who are expected to cope with a wide range of tasks and demands in such a context are facing the need for defining and re-defining their professionalism and professional development (Day & Sachs, 2004; Hargreaves, 2000). The research base for teachers' learning and adult learning theories situated the study within the context and content of teachers' learning to teach their peers.

This study addresses the following questions:

RQ 1: What are the participants' perceptions about the Continuous training project "CTP"? To what extent do trainers see themselves as members of a new profession?

RQ 2: How does the design of the new training system help establishing learning communities?

2. Research Methodology

Naturalistic research (Figure 1) is used as it is perceived to focus on a problem that had little attention before and goes in quest for phenomena in context-specific settings (Patton, 1990). The constructivist paradigm adopted finds a strong voice in adult education (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999) and learning theory as it discards the notion that knowledge is independent of the view of an observer and replaces it with the proposition that knowledge is a construction of the individual's subjective reality. The purpose was to provide a detailed "thick description" of the interactions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and report the lessons learned; this embraces the researcher's explanation added to the observed context and processes.

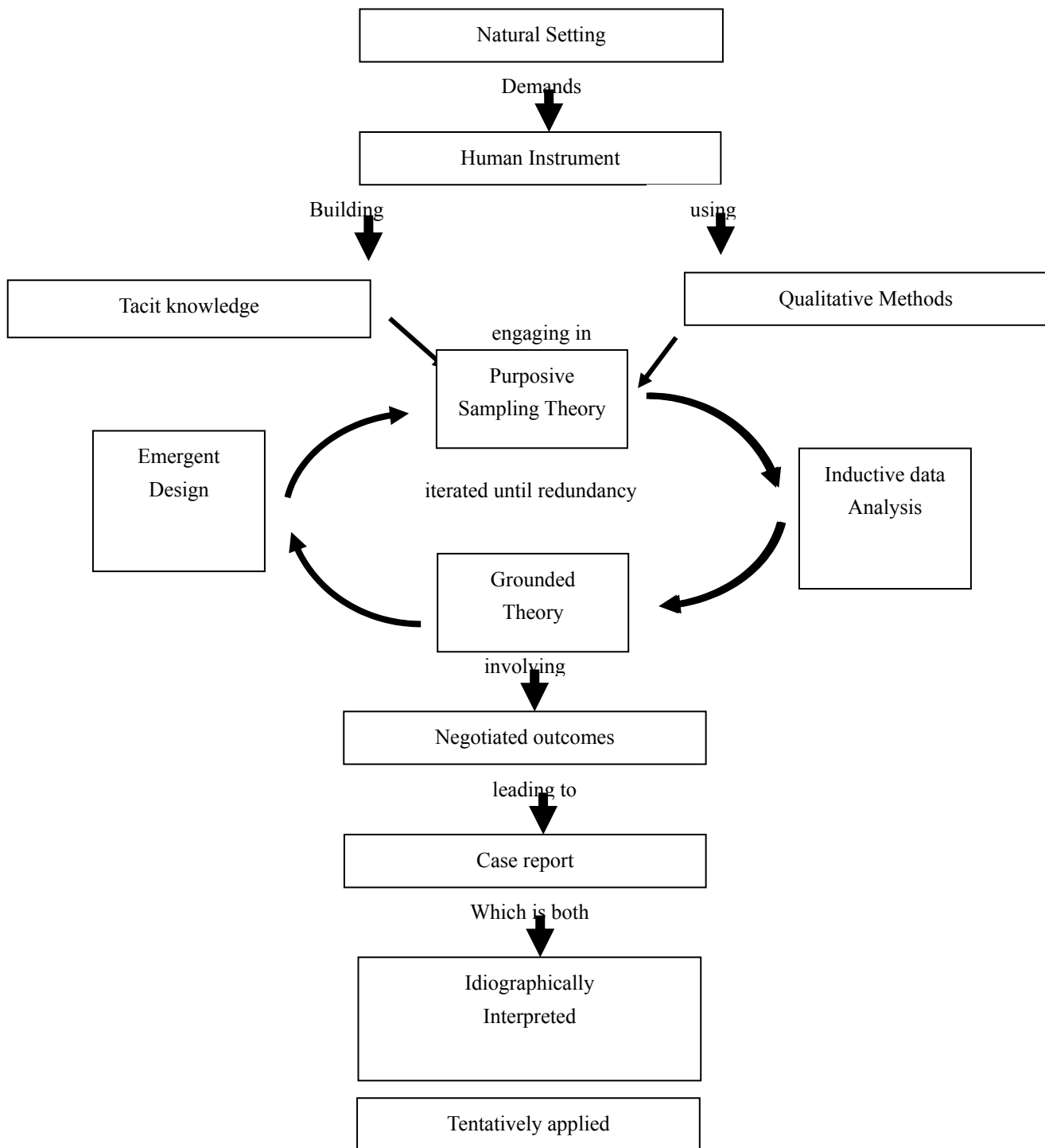


Figure 1. Naturalistic inquiry

2.1 Settings and Participants

The study took place in three of the resource centres (RC) established. Sampling was convenience and purposive; participants were selected on the basis of their knowledge of the subject matter (see appendix 1). A stratified sample was chosen to include identified subgroups from the population—trainees and trainers from all subjects in order to

include all opinions without representing these views proportionately. Focus groups were conducted consecutively with a first cut analysis of the data collected from each centre. This approach allowed selecting research participants in a way to inform the tentative research findings through “continuous adjustment and ‘focusing’ of the sample” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 202).

2.2 Research methods

The research tools used in this study were 2 questionnaires, 6 focus group interviews, video records and analysis of day in the life of a trainer and an RCR. The first questionnaire was piloted with 5 trainers, 5 trainees and one RCR. Careful checking and modifying some questions ensured that the questionnaires measure what was intended and ambiguity was avoided. The questionnaires were prepared based on the literature review, the personal experience and concerns of trainers as well as the content of the training sessions. Table 1 shows the schematic description of the first questionnaire (appendix 2).

Table 1. Schematic description of first questionnaire

Questions' blocks	Questions		
Educational background	Age	Qualifications	Work conditions
Teaching context	Factors affecting teaching		Meaningful experiences
Features of new training	Content	Context	Process
Participants suggestions	Incentives	Physical conditions	

The analysis of the questionnaires' results and the subsequent refining of the questions allowed main themes to emerge. These themes guided the writing of focus group questions (appendix 2). Interchanging data collection and analysis is a well-known practice in qualitative research (Maxwell, 2004). This practice fits well with the applied nature of this study, since it offered the possibility of adjusting the interview guides for focus groups after the first phase of questionnaire administration. The trainers were chosen because of their teaching experience, their level of involvement in in-service training or in other educational practices such as being trainers or coordinators. They are considered to have a depth of knowledge and experience in this area. Focus groups were deemed as appropriate instruments because they provide a rich source of data from experienced people. The questions were based on participants' concerns about the establishment of the new training system such as recruitment, training of trainers and perceptions concerning the need for CPD. Questions also were about the types of activities carried out at the centres, needs analysis, collaboration among the participants, and reflection on practice. Each focus group lasted for 45-60 minutes.

The focus groups raised another issue that was not taken into consideration, the new profession of trainers, and its recognition by other partners in the education system as well as teachers' professionalism. The rich data obtained from the focus groups was used to construct the second set of questionnaires administered to trainers only regarding the newly established position of teacher trainer as well as the construction of an epistemic record for trainers (appendix 2). Finally, video recording of training sessions was conducted to observe opportunities for collaborative learning environments for teachers, in which they could reflect on practice with colleagues and share expertise to build a common understanding of new instructional approaches, standards, and the curriculum. These observations provided an opportunity to validate the information provided by questionnaires and focus group interviews, and to seek the nature of interaction within the context of training settings. A sequence of half- an-hour session for each trainer was videoed producing two hours of video.

The triangulation procedures applied in this study included data triangulation, investigator triangulation and methodological triangulation. Data triangulation came in the form of questionnaires, focus group interviews, and video records. Methodological triangulation included both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. Investigator triangulation was carried out with one observer for video records. Kelle (2001) explained that

triangulation can be interpreted in two ways: triangulation as a collective validation or as a way to provide a complete description of the phenomenon under scrutiny. Each method was used in relation to a different feature of the inquiry (Brannen, 1992) and not intending to subordinate qualitative to quantitative methods. The concern with triangulation is not only to integrate data but also to see whether findings from one set of data are found to produce an integrated account. This allows integrating the multiple realities looking for divergence or absence of evidence so as to derive a contextualized understanding of the concept. One method of increasing credibility was by gaining feedback on results from the participants through member checking.

3. Data Analysis

3.1 Open Coding

Open coding was used to conceptualise and categorise data by making comparisons and asking questions by labelling many individual phenomena. Concepts addressing the physical conditions such as place, time and more abstract categories, such as institutionalisation, included concepts and their associated properties and dimensions. Some categories were elicited by the participants themselves in “in vivo” language (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Others are formulated by the researcher to be abstract enough to summarise the statements and do not refer to any specific theory. Verified propositions are further developed into categories and properties, until reaching conceptual saturation (Glaser, 1994). A constant comparative method was used to recognise the main themes and the relations between common ones in different data sources.

3.2 Axial Coding

The subsequent stage of analysis involved a second coding which involved re-examination of the codes identified to establish relationships between concepts. This is managed by theoretical sampling, where the coding and analysis completed at the first stages established the following data to be collected; hence there was the creation of a model that details the specific conditions that give rise to a phenomenon's occurrence by: (a) continually relating subcategories to a category; (b) comparing categories with the collected data; and (c) expanding the density of the categories by detailing their properties and dimensions. Viewing the data through the participant's perspective (emic) or researcher-established criteria (etic) (Creswell, 2003) works well with Strauss and Corbin's (1998) relational investigative questions. To move from open coding to axial coding, a conditional relationship guide allowed complex conceptualisation of phenomena collected during open coding.

4. Discussion of Results

4.1 Participants' Professionalism

The video records revealed centrality of teachers' knowledge and beliefs regarding educational processes such as professional development; they show the creation of a culture of collegiality where teachers share their tacit knowledge in a supportive environment (Lieberman & Miller, 2004). Trainers defined their professionalism (figure 2) as *competency in accompanying others, in the construction of a professional identity and in adapting our new role in new professional situations*. CTP has moved progressively to the logic of demand to answer teachers' needs by carrying out a juxtaposition of multiple actions situated in the pedagogical, interdisciplinary, or strategic domains. The adjacent figure (Figure 2) shows how learning was perceived through expanding professional knowledge, individualisation, devolution in decision making and continuity. *Moral and social aspects* as well as situated cognition facilitated the transfer.

The new professional role of participants has evolved; it is *situated in a context with several constraints from national ministerial orders or administrative priorities and it is related to the interactions with adults (trainers, trainees, administrators, RCRs) who have specific demands*. The different modalities carried out by the trainers translate the presence of points in common such as their claiming of a *double occupation: teacher and trainer*, a real and voluntary engagement to change, a *strong implication in training*, and the importance of *training centred on the analysis of practices*. This enhanced the construction of trainer professionalism through the *development and elaboration of teachers' professional knowledge base as essential for their professional development*. The identity of professional teacher trainers can be established by a *specific status acquired through the development of a feeling of belonging to a professional group* that has proper identity and which develops strategies of promotion, legitimating and valorisation (Atlet, Paquay, & Perrenoud, 2002).

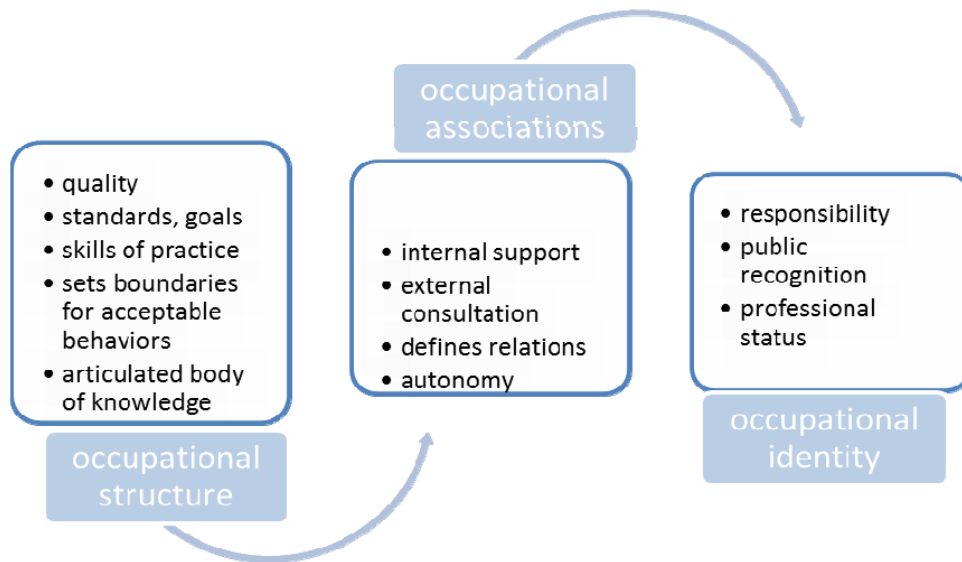


Figure 2. Professionalism

4.2 New Roles

Trainers and trainees perceive their new roles as essential to their own professionalism. This new role can help trainers *make compromises between the actual and individual needs of teachers and those of the education system and thus is a sign of their identity position. Devolution in decision making in needs analysis from centrally organised administrative structures* is viewed as empowering both trainers and trainees because they consider it as a *self-analysis of personal, professional and career goals (table 2).*

Table 2. New roles

Preparedness to new role	Reconsidering traditional behaviour: take mature role	Involvement that affected their beliefs, understandings	Environment that embraces interpretation of external factors	Need to	Limitations
Conduct training for an audience of different skills	Continuity promotes dialogue reflection	More group work Help trainees build competencies	Competition with other trainings, secure their survival	Develop personal posture	Trainees preferred readymade materials
Qualified trainees, Conscious of competence	Continuous inquiry. Follow-up day allowed feedback about implementation, notice change in behaviour.	Enriching experience Trainers: a lot of readings, affected their performance in own classrooms	Decentralization: increased satisfaction, democratization, efficiency	Trainers asked for opinions of specialists consultants	Conflict in authorities, or priorities. Administrative routines.

Prepare materials Handle group dynamics	quality Learning by doing Step away from regular practices	Personal knowledge practical	Marketisation of courses, diversity, popular products	of choice both trainers and trainees	Time by freeing both trainers and trainees	Do not see increase in value via certification
Need knowledge base Triple expertise	specific Desire to be up-to-date, self improvement	Freedom in choosing content Take account of practice, review practice	Mutual responsibility: individual - society	Clarify new roles of each	No common vision: meetings among trainers for collaborative planning, unify approaches, exchange	
Begin dialogue on professional topics	Critique encourage each other, draw on each other experience	No centralized source of expertise: creativity	Decisions about content. Adaptation to demands	Satisfactory motivators	Questionnaire: evaluation "a chaud"	
Acknowledge necessity for change	Build connections between beliefs and practices	Positive comments, conformity Supported by like minded	Involve all stakeholders, external expertise	Evaluation of outcomes: quality of activities, involvement, changes in attitudes)	Transmission by more experienced trainers	
Willing to modify practices Perceive usefulness of activity	Collaboration, focus on practical application	Evolution of competencies as an outcome of concerns with productivity, quality control, efficiency	Enhance competency to respond to social change: more than knowledge, skills.	Allocate resources Make CR place of encounter		

Participants mentioned several ways to strengthen the support of the new institution and secure its survival. Trainers perceive that the *organisational and social acceptance is primordial for the survival of the project*. The approaches to institutionalisation as emphasised by the participants included *motivation, the economic and socio-cultural character of the environment*. This meant to them mobilising the available resources, bringing alternatives to their goals and developing strategies to achieve their own interests. They are *modifying internal and external processes thus not conforming to institutional rationalities*.

Trainees can develop expert practical knowledge through experience and reflection in the company of more experienced mentors. Participants specified that *decentralisation is the uniqueness of the programme* because they are involved in a certain number of decisions. Trainers specified that they felt more professional and *enjoyed increased authority and collegiality* (a situative perspective). Learning is conceptualized as changes in participation in socially organized activities and individuals' use of knowledge as an aspect of their participation in social practices. *Trainees have the power to choose, implement, and discuss and trainers and RCRs make decisions that enhance goals of the new project*. Hence the new project must be able to exercise flexibility in order to be more responsive (professional craft knowledge).

4.3 Learning Communities

Participants expressed different points of view concerning standards for the new programme. Some trainers thought *defining standards is crucial to provide a common vision for partnerships*; others preferred working with no specific framework. RCRs were complaining that *each participant in this project is still holding his own visions and motivations*. They stressed the importance of *a shared vision and knowledge base*. Trainers expressed clearly their need to have *a common vision*. The major hindrance for this was the *administrative routines and conflicts in priorities*. Building a complex, continuous process such as teachers' knowledge involves both interpersonal and intrapersonal, experimental and constructivist learning. (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Learning Communities at the RC

Trainers stressed on trying to *build collaborative learning experiences where teachers feel supported and can build connections between their beliefs and experiences*. This support and reflection create the basis for teacher change and development. Trainers stressed the importance of *a critical analysis of their own practice and that of the trainees to become more conscious of their performance*.

An important issue that this research evokes is whether the teaching experience is sufficient to legitimate the task of teacher trainers. Trainers perceive their main tasks as *helping teachers build their professional competencies*. Trainers claimed that they *based the content of training on analysis of daily practices*. They perceived *listening and observing as the most useful skill to face problems*. They relate their capacities as trainers to their personal experiences based on the practical situation they lived; therefore they considered the *theoretical knowledge less useful in problematic situations of training*. For them a *trainer's career is not learned from theoretical perspectives: it is progressively constructed from experience*.

Furthermore, the essential domains of knowledge required for being a trainer are professional knowledge as well as knowledge of content. Trainers do not see themselves as adult trainers only; *they are experienced teachers whose mission is to help in the construction and evolution of new skills and accompany trainees while changing their practices*.

4.4 Continuous Professional Development

The concept of continuous professional development goes much beyond teachers' skills and knowledge and extends to the whole organisation. The social nature of professional development involves teachers in a process of change in which they take new mature roles. However, this continuous professional development cannot be deemed effective unless clear changes in the practices of all participants are perceived.

Trainers and RCRs tried to *marketize the courses*, they wanted *this new continuous training project to compete with other trainings offered*; they wanted it to be continuous, they wanted trainees to feel more motivated to learn as they

experience interests that learning will satisfy. They saw this as *a starting point for organising adult learning activities*. Trainees wanted their voice to be heard as professionals; *they wanted to be treated as adults with learning experiences to be valued; they wanted things applicable to their classrooms and schools' contexts*. (Figure 4)

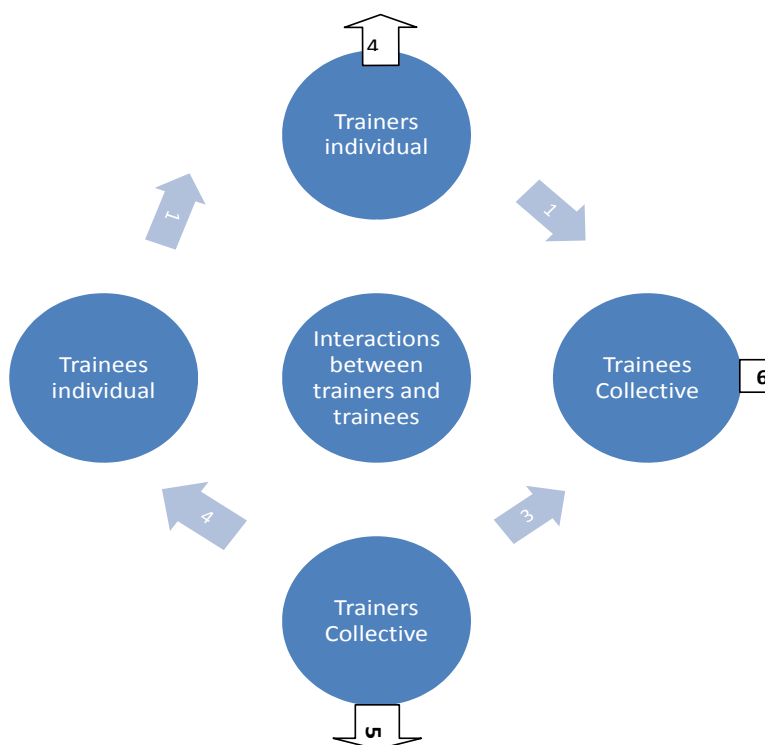


Figure 4. Interactions between trainers and trainees

1: Trainee(s)- Trainer : discuss, inform, experiment.

2: Trainees - Trainers: not identified

3- Trainers – Trainee: not identified

4: Trainer: Individual reflection on practice.

5: Trainers: Opportunities to change learning, school cultures inside CR, no networks (professional socialization) awareness, trust, experiential learning

6: Trainees: discuss, inform, show, encourage, empower, commitment.

The new training project used the model of experienced teachers as facilitators who are *supposed to guide other teachers to engage on their professional growth in the theory and practice of teaching and provide teachers with more choices for meeting their professional needs*. This moves training away from the traditional in-service mode toward long - term continuous learning in the context of the classroom with the support of colleagues. Explaining the content, character and sources for a knowledge base of teaching suggests an answer to the professionalization of teachers. This “wisdom of practice” enabled trainees to infer principles of good practice to keep the best creations of practitioners and prevent them from being lost to both contemporary and future peers.

Several bureaucratic hindrances are expressed among all participants that might hinder this: trainers perceive *lack of*

continuity due to workload on trainees, schools principals who are trying to decrease absenteeism rates from schools, lack of incentives for training and lack of vision for the whole training project.

5. Conclusion

The term professionalism was used for CTP as a marketing slogan to recruit trainers and to motivate trainees. Professionalism, in this context, can be described as *changes in occupational identity (structure, status) and improvement of skills*. Participants stressed that *menu of courses and modalities of activities promote continuous inquiry and improvement embedded in the daily life of schools*. Being teachers and coordinators at their schools, trainers claimed *responding to external demands*; they view this as a broader definition of PD where they *include the experiences and voices of teachers by providing opportunities for interpretive processes that examine complex contexts of classrooms*. They claim that the *opportunities to learn new contents provide occasions to reflect on relation to practice and integrate new knowledge with existing practices*. Trainers are claiming a certain *professional autonomy* that serves primarily their own interests. However, this professional autonomy can only be maintained if “members of the profession subject their activities and decisions to a critical evaluation by other members of the profession” (Hoogland & Jochemsen, 2000). Not all trainers seem to be very encouraged to share their work with other trainers in the continuous training programme or from outside the programme unless with whom they deem to be *experts in the field*. Trainers’ professionalism is perceived by the fact that trainers account for their actions, develop clear standards about their practice and systematically review their practice with the aim of improving their performance; some trainers mentioned discussing their work with colleagues to share experiences.

The main concern of trainers was that the occupation of the teacher-trainer is recognised as a profession. They claimed that, from their daily practices, they realised that they need a specific knowledge base and competencies different from those of a teacher. They perceive this difference in the targeted audience (heterogeneous regarding to age, knowledge, and previous experience). Trainees’ needs are individualised. If trainers require triple expertise in teaching practices, animation of adults and analysis of practices, they are perceived to be academics, accompanists and professionals. Trainers’ competencies have developed as an outcome of concerns with productivity, quality control and efficiency. Their argument owes to the commercial language of market reform with its prominence on standards, outcomes and public responsibility.

Trainers as members of a professional group are claiming a professional status; they defined their visions of the programme (related to empowerment, leadership, innovations...) and they tried to satisfy their trainees’ needs. Trainers feared that they become “deprofessionalised” by bureaucratic institutions that are increasingly interfering to regulate their actions and taking a pretext of quality assurance. They are claiming an activist (Sachs, 2003) professional identity encouraging inquiry oriented, collaboration with other trainers and with trainees at their schools hence they perceive the purposes of teaching and learning go beyond reform agendas.

This new continuous training is marked by decentralisation and teacher empowerment, a shift in authorities, which is expected to increase satisfaction. These new practices of cutting production cost, producing only popular products and advertising the courses echo business practices in democratisation, decentralisation and efficiency. The centres of resources are expected to show flexibility and be more responsive. The increased autonomy of the trainers and RCRs was attributed to the fact that there is no centralised source of expertise in the community. The centres of resources are perceived as small dynamic units able to respond quickly to social change. But the environments at the centres are not seen as conducive for such practices. New skills, roles and enough time are required to make professional communication and decision-making skills. Participants explained that it is imperative to constantly seek out ways to continue to grow professionally. The professional action of trainers has evolved; it is situated in a context with administrative priorities but related this to their interactions with adult trainees. Hence the construction of the professionalism of the trainer occurs through the experience during co- and self-training. (Figure 5).

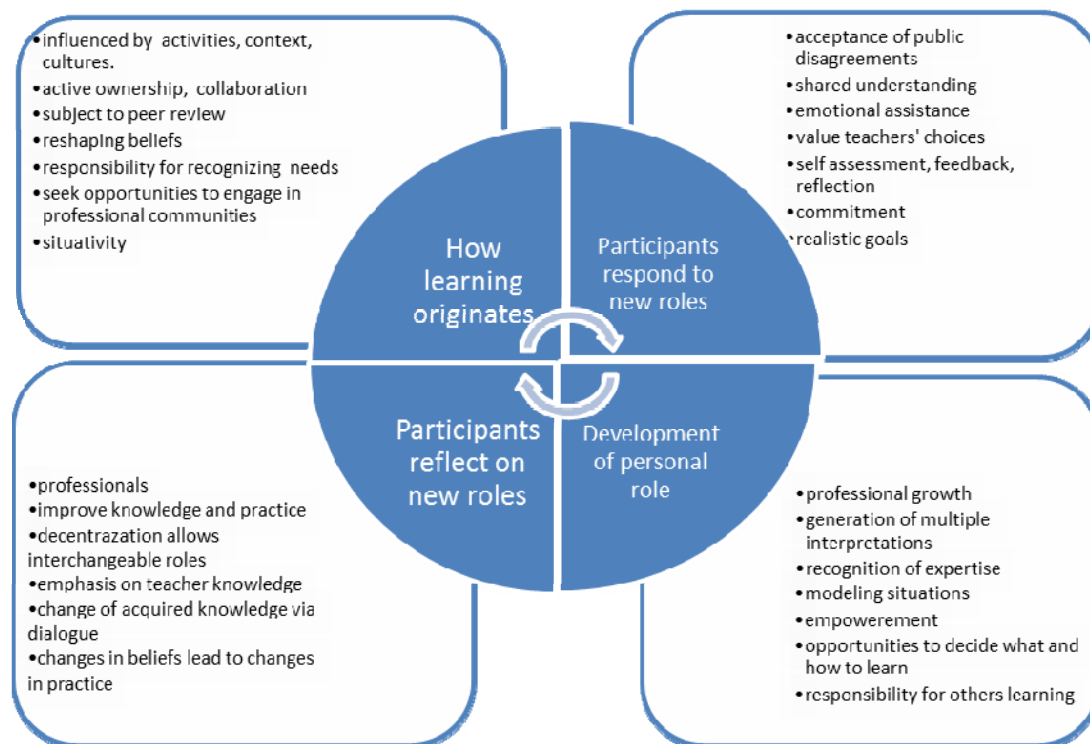


Figure 5. Teachers' learning

6. Recommendations

This research identified themes that have relevance for continuous professional development in the context of educational reform in Lebanon and recommends aspects for contributing to teachers' learning in professional learning communities at the RC.

6.1 Institutionalization of the RC

RCs are perceived as institutions with particular strengths in continuous improvement, flexibility, teamwork, and exercising initiative. Therefore a system annual agenda is recommended that could adopt more school oriented learning outcomes approach, encourage greater openness to external ideas and new knowledge and creating new visions rather than reinvesting old ones and showing openness to innovations. This Research shows that there is institutional dysfunction; no structures to share opinions, no common policy, language. To secure their survivals, the RC must try to adopt a certain institutional formality by balancing internal structures and modes of operation, through modifying their organisational structure, goal, and environment.

6.2 Training Approaches Used

The training model is still used. This research recommends trainers to be perceived as accompanists or professionals. Hence follow up at schools is highly recommended.

6.3 Role of Centres

RC are perceived to broaden, refresh and update teachers' knowledge especially after reform but also empowering them to take new initiatives. This research recommends that the practices at the RC not to be limited to training sessions but to insinuate new organisational cultures to be considered as learning communities. This research also showed ambiguous legislations; there is need for long term vision to interpret goals and outcomes of the CTP. A recommendation is to examine the organizational structure to see if there are bureaucratic structural barriers to this. Moreover, a commitment to continuous improvement through a self evaluation of programs and performance of system at regular intervals is highly valued.

Regarding cultural conditions, marketization of courses based on new standards of supply and demand, offering choice diversity were regarded as uniqueness of program; this enhanced their social acceptance.

6.4 Resources

Training centres are called “centres of resources” (RC). Participants perceived lack of physical resources at the centres such as books, references, ... A recommendation is to make the centres a place of encounter for teachers outside training hours, to make use of available resources and mentoring of trainers. Trainers are also encouraged to disseminate materials through networks. There is need for coordination of efforts to expand possibilities to wider community.

6.5 Professionalism

Decentralization allowed interchangeable roles, examine opportunities, generate multiple interpretations. This enhanced the personal role of each since each one is responsible for his learning and the learning of others. Participants are seen to start on a self analysis of personal, professional and career goals which could be seen as a sign of identity position. However, this needs further investigation. Trainers started constructing and occupational identity, their competencies evolved due to concerns of productivity and quality control. More investigations are needed for their expectations, perceptions about profession, professionalism as well as enhancing the competency of trainers by opening RC as places for mentoring and consultation.

6.6 Continuous Professional Development

The RC constituted an environment that embraced interpretation of external factors, hence a mutual responsibility for teachers' learning, more decisions about content and better adaptation to demands. Legislations such as (Cahier des charges) should be exposed to public and continuously updated to give standards and indicators for teachers' development.

An ecological change (Fullan, 1992) is seen through knowing the context of environment, development of self understanding through focus upon teacher as a person, match between needs and likes, and decentralization of activities. This research indicated several barriers to development. The cultural barriers were manifested by teachers' practices that are deeply influenced by schedule-tight examination oriented & individualistic oriented culture and atmosphere. Teachers were not willing to leave classes with official examinations, and wanted readymade materials. Added to this is the work load, unstable country conditions as well as the country's profile (crowded classes, absenteeism from schools).

6.7 Supportive Environment

This research revealed positive interactions inside the RC but no communication with other educational authorities. Although decentralization enhanced leadership, it is complicated since there are no policy directives for roles (for ex conflict for RCRs role as instructional leaders or administrators. Another example is the role of “education inspection” as well as “orientation and guidance directorate” in this CTP. New organisational structures for such communications among other educational directorates are recommended to perceive staff meetings and shared vision as useful practices for their professional development.

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Appendix 1: Participants

Participants	Group no	No of participants	Subject matter specialty	Work Experience
Trainers	Trainer 1	5	Mainly literary subjects	More than 20 years experience
	Trainer 2	5	Languages + sciences	More than 20 years experience
	Trainer 3	5	Anglophones	More than 10 years experience
	Trainer 4	3	Mainly sciences	More than 30 years experience
Trainees	Trainee 1	8	Language	More than 10 years experience
	Trainee 2	10	Social studies	More than 10 years experience
	Trainee 3	10	Arts	More than 10 years experience
	Trainee 4	6	Sciences	Less than 10 years experience

Appendix 2: New Focus groups questions for trainers**1. System organization:**

- Why in your opinion, were innovations introduced into Lebanon's in-service teacher training?
- What are the main differences between the traditional training paradigms and this new type of training (continuous professional development)?
- How do you see your relation with other members in charge of this project: CTF, RCR, DEN, BF....

2. Types of activities:

- Describe how did you plan activities for professional development, organized them, carried them out and what kind of follow up did you plan? What influences and guides decisions about these activities?
- Describe how did you match the provision of needs to the context in which teachers work.

3. Relation with trainees:

- Describe how an ongoing support is built to allow participants to obtain clarifications and guidance?
- Describe how the participants' knowledge and skills is acknowledged and how was the professional development built on those skills in ways that neither talk down not frustrate participants?
- How are opportunities provided to build a knowledge base and conceptual understanding where teachers reflect on their practice and to change their practice?
- How are opportunities provided to gain and share expertise?
- Do you think that you and the trainee form a collaborative team?
- How did you manage to deflate some of the negativism and hesitation that might interfere with teachers and show them that you recognize their frustration?

4. Trainers' stance

- From where can trainers gather knowledge useful for their professional development?
- What in your opinion develops a true profession for teaching?
- Are there any constraints on the choice of PD activities? (Curricular, non curricular...)
- What are trainers views regarding the challenges in addressing teachers' learning needs?
- Did the activities effect teachers' beliefs and attitudes?

How do the teachers and trainers involved in the process evaluate these innovations?

Questionnaire for trainers- Part 2

Choose among the following possibilities, the only ONE that you consider the most significant.

Teaching and learning process:

1-What types of trainings you perform at the centres:

- Face to face,
- Individualized training,
- Help teachers in self development,
- Distance training

Context and Outcomes:

- 1-The best situation for knowledge construction is
 - a. Teaching practice
 - b. Professional experience
 - c. Self- training
 - d. Exchange with others
 - e. Continuous training of trainers
- 2- Main reasons that encouraged you to become a trainer
 - a. Will to enhance the teaching practices
 - b. Encourage link between theory and practice
 - c. Desire to make others learn new things
 - d. Develop a culture of cooperation among teachers
 - e. Fight against the school failure

Evaluation:

- 1- What are the capacities that characterize the function of a trainer?
 - a. Helping teachers build professional competencies
 - b. Accompanying teachers and analyze their teaching practices
 - c. Analyzing the needs of teachers
 - d. Animating of a group of adults
 - e. Preparing a training action and evaluating it
- 2- What are the favourable competencies to face the problems encountered in training
 - a. Listen – observe- experience
 - b. Technique of group animation
 - c. Solid theoretical knowledge
 - d. Professional experience
- 3- Domain of essential knowledge for becoming a trainer
 - a. Knowledge of content
 - b. Animation of a group of adults
 - c. Pedagogical knowledge(learning theories, analysis of practices, reflexivity)
 - d. Knowledge constructed based on practices
- 4- In your profession, you consider yourself as a:
 - a. Teacher-trainer
 - b. Teacher before anything else
 - c. Training technician
 - d. Reflective practitioner
 - e. Accompanist
- 5- You consider the role of research in this project as:
 - a. Necessary
 - b. Obligatory
 - c. Should be accessible
 - d. Not important
- 6- Identity: your status as a trainer
 - a. Is not well recognized
 - b. Is not recognized at all
 - c. Recognized enough

Open ended questions:

1- Did you use the resources available at the centre for preparing your training material? Did you let the trainees use the resources? (TLP)

2- Do you think that other inset provided by the government will affect the work of the centres especially that the other insets are obligatory? (SO)

3- Give two examples about :

a. How you involved trainees in decisions about future training courses (TLP).

b. Training materials you used in your course (TLP)

c. Instructional process (TLP)

d. Objectives (TLP)

e. How is your course related to educational reform (Context- Outcomes)

4- Why in your opinion the centres are called centres of resources and not training centres? What was your contribution in this issue? (Context- Outcomes)

5- In the courses offered, did you take into consideration the heterogeneity of public concerning age, educational level, experience (TLP)...

6- Are there any tasks in the system of reference that can't be accomplished (Context- Outcomes)
