Summary of Article – “How Professional Development for Teachers Works”

In the article, “How Professional Development for Teachers Works,” Laurie L. Dove (2010) examines the role of professional development in education. She briefly outlines the reasoning behind professional development, stating, “The overriding idea behind professional development is that increased knowledge helps teachers improve student achievement. That's because professional development focuses on what each teacher needs to fine-tune his or her classroom practice” (2010, p. 1). The author then goes on to explain briefly how one becomes a teacher, and the need for recertification periodically after one is certified. She states that as part of the latter recertification, professional development is required. However, Dove (2010) points out that recertification is not the only reason that teachers need or seek professional development.

Dove (2010) next breaks down her article into three parts – Professional Development Plan for Teachers, Professional Development Workshop for Teachers, and Benefits of Professional Development for Teachers.

When discussing professional development plans, Dove (2010) states, “Each teacher creates an individualized professional development plan based on the age of students in his or her classroom, the subject taught or any specialized knowledge he or she desires to learn”(p. 2). She asserts that because these plans are individualized, no teacher’s plan will look exactly the same.

In the next portion of the article, Dove (2010) says that as part of a professional development plan, a teacher needs to attend various meetings – including workshops and conferences – based on their professional assignment. She says that though many of these meetings take place off-site of an educator’s workplace, some meetings take place on-site – such as collaboration with or observation of other teachers; or listening to experts brought to the school site to give in-service training. Another area for training that Dove mentions is online. She states that many educators and school administrators are finding online training to be cost effective and more flexible (p. 2).

The final segment of the article discusses both the up and down sides of professional development. Dove (2010) acknowledges that certain types of professional development can bring an increase in a teacher’s pay using as an example National Board Certification. But she also admits that professional development can be both time consuming and, at times, extremely costly. Still, the author argues that, ultimately, professional development pays off, not only financially and personally, but in the lives and academic careers of students of those teachers who remain up to date on current best practices in education.

Analysis:

I felt that this article was realistic in its outline of what professional development is, why it is necessary, and the positive and negative aspects of it. I also thought that the article supported the first question that John Hughes and I presented as part of our research into professional development. This article was also a good introduction for someone looking into the field of education on what is expected of educational professionals.