

Original Research Article

# Advantages of On-Site Professional Development for Primary School Teachers Using a Competency-Based Approach

Phan Trong Ngo<sup>1\*</sup>, Ho Quang Hoa<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Hanoi National University of Education, Vietnam

<sup>2</sup>University of Education, VNU, Ha Noi, Vietnam

## Article History

Received: 28.10.2024

Accepted: 05.12.2024

Published: 09.12.2024

## Journal homepage:

<https://www.easpublisher.com>

## Quick Response Code



**Abstract:** On-site professional development for teachers is a form of training and capacity enhancement organized at their workplace or local community. The primary aim of this approach is to facilitate teachers' participation in learning and professional development activities without requiring them to travel far or take long periods off work. This study surveyed primary school teachers about their needs for on-site professional development, synthesizing evaluations to identify the advantages of this activity. These theoretical contributions help educational managers and higher education institutions design and organize on-site training programs for primary school teachers, meeting the requirements of the 2018 General Education Curriculum.

**Keywords:** Primary school teachers, professional development, competency-based approach, on-site training.

Copyright © 2024 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the current educational context, developing individual competencies of teachers and education personnel has become one of the key tasks to meet the demands of educational reform and international integration. Competency-based on-site professional development emerges as an effective method, not only enhancing the quality of the workforce but also optimizing available resources at educational institutions. This approach focuses on developing specific skills and competencies required for individuals through practical activities connected with their real working environment. Compared to traditional training methods, on-site training boasts superior advantages, such as personalized learning content, time and cost savings, and encouragement of learner autonomy and creativity. Moreover, it fosters continuous learning processes and builds on-site learning communities, thereby contributing to overall educational effectiveness.

This article analyzes the key advantages of competency-based on-site professional development while offering recommendations to optimize this method in the current educational context.

## II. RESEARCH FINDINGS

**2.1. High practicality:** Programs are typically designed to meet the practical needs of teachers and are directly

related to their daily teaching activities. The content of the professional development focuses on addressing specific issues teachers encounter, such as improving teaching methods, applying information technology, or updating professional knowledge.

**High practicality in on-site professional development for teachers:** One of the outstanding characteristics of on-site professional development is its high practicality. This is reflected in programs tailored to address the actual needs of teachers. The training content does not focus on general theories but on specific, essential issues faced during daily teaching practices.

**Alignment with Teachers' Practical Needs:** Before designing a program, education administrators often conduct surveys to identify the difficulties teachers face in their work. For example, these could include applying active teaching methods, organizing creative experiential activities for students, or managing classrooms effectively. Based on this, the training content is adjusted to suit different groups of teachers across grade levels or specific subjects.

### Focus on solving specific issues

**Improving teaching methods:** Teachers are guided on how to design more engaging lessons and apply new teaching methods, such as project-based learning, STEM

teaching, or differentiated instruction tailored to various student groups.

*Application of information technology in teaching:* With technological advancements, many teachers face challenges in using teaching software or online platforms. On-site training offers courses that help teachers become proficient in tools like PowerPoint, Zoom, or educational apps such as Kahoot and Quizizz.

*Updating professional knowledge:* Teachers are regularly provided with updated knowledge in their fields to meet the requirements of new education curricula. For instance, with the introduction of Viet Nam's new general education curriculum, teachers need a clearer understanding of the core competencies students are expected to achieve.

*Learning by doing:* During professional development, teachers are not only lectured to but also engage in practical exercises, such as designing sample lesson plans, participating in group discussions on specific scenarios, or role-playing to address pedagogical situations. These practical experiences enable teachers to relate to and immediately apply what they learn after the training sessions.

In conclusion, on-site professional development is highly practical as it not only provides theoretical knowledge but also directly addresses the specific needs and challenges teachers face. This allows teachers to quickly apply what they have learned to their work, thereby improving teaching effectiveness and contributing to the enhancement of education quality.

## 2.2. Time and cost savings

**Teachers do not need to travel far or take extended leave:** On-site professional development is organized directly at schools or school clusters, saving teachers travel time and allowing them to avoid long absences from work. This is particularly important for teachers in remote areas or those responsible for multiple classes, as attending lengthy training sessions in distant locations can be challenging. *Example,* A primary school teacher in a mountainous area often has to travel dozens of kilometers to the district center for training. On-site training enables them to access knowledge right at their school without the need for travel. This ensures that teaching schedules remain uninterrupted, and teachers can participate without rearranging work or altering their routines.

**Minimized travel and accommodation costs:** Instead of incurring expenses for transportation, meals, and lodging to attend off-site training programs, on-site professional development optimizes financial resources. This cost-saving approach is especially crucial for teachers in small or disadvantaged schools. Teachers can focus on learning without financial pressure, while schools or education management units also save on

organization costs. *Example,* A teacher from a mountainous region might spend millions of dong to attend a 3-5 day training session in a city, while on-site training incurs virtually no additional costs.

**Illustrative Cases:** In a lowland primary school, a training session is organized in the afternoon after teaching hours. Teachers participate in the session held in the school's meeting room, eliminating the need for travel or taking leave. A school cluster in a mountainous area organizes training at the cluster's central school. Teachers from surrounding schools travel short distances (under 10 km). The program takes place on Saturdays and Sundays to avoid affecting weekly teaching schedules.

On-site professional development is a practical solution that saves teachers time and costs, creating favorable conditions for their participation without geographical or financial barriers. This approach not only improves training efficiency but also encourages widespread participation, especially in challenging areas.

## 2.3. Learning in a familiar environment

**Teachers learn in a familiar context:** On-site professional development takes place in the daily working environment of teachers—their own school or a familiar school cluster. This creates a comfortable atmosphere, reduces stress, and enhances knowledge retention. Learning in a familiar space allows teachers to easily relate training content to real-life classroom situations. They do not need time to acclimate to a new environment, enabling them to focus more on the training content. Specific classroom scenarios can be discussed directly and resolved during the sessions. *Example,* A training session held at the school helps teachers immediately visualize how to apply new knowledge, such as reorganizing the classroom layout to effectively implement group teaching methods.

**Easy application of new knowledge and skills to teaching practice:** On-site learning not only helps teachers grasp theoretical concepts but also motivates them to apply what they have learned immediately. This is particularly important for new teaching methods or practical skills, as teachers can experiment in their actual classrooms right after the training.

**Example 1:** Teachers learning to use IT tools like Google Classroom or Kahoot for student interaction can practice in the school's computer lab and experiment with their students.

**Example 2:** A group of teachers attending an on-site training session designs a science lesson plan using the STEM model. After the session, they test it in the school's laboratory, teach the lesson, and receive feedback from students before returning to the session for discussions and adjustments.

**Example 3:** Teachers learn to apply problem-solving teaching methods in Grade 4 mathematics. Using familiar resources like interactive boards, models, or charts, they create lesson plans and find it easy to implement the new content without major adjustments to materials or facilities.

**Effective classroom management:** A workshop on student behavior management is held in the school's meeting room. During the session, teachers discuss common challenges, such as maintaining order during transitions. After the training, teachers apply the proposed solutions in their classrooms and see immediate results, as the solutions are tailored to the school's specific conditions.

**Benefits of learning in a familiar environment:**

*Immediate application:* Teachers not only learn theories but also test and adjust them in their own classrooms. For instance, after learning to use open-ended questions to encourage student discussions, teachers can apply this technique in their lessons the very next day.

*Ecollaboration:* Teachers work with colleagues in the school, sharing experiences and resolving issues within the context of their institution. This builds a strong learning community that supports long-term professional development.

*Reduced psychological barriers:* A familiar environment boosts teachers' confidence during learning and practice, reducing stress and improving knowledge retention.

Learning in a familiar environment helps teachers easily access new content and quickly transform it into practical skills. This is a significant factor that makes on-site professional development an effective and sustainable solution for enhancing teacher competencies.

## 2.4. Flexible methods

**On-site professional development** methods may include workshops, seminars, peer learning, or direct coaching from experts. Flexibility is a key strength of on-site training programs, enabling teachers to acquire new knowledge and skills in various ways tailored to their specific needs and conditions. Common formats include workshops, seminars, peer learning, and personalized coaching.

**Workshops:** Workshops are intensive training sessions, typically lasting a few hours to a full day, during which experts provide focused content and practical guidance. Teachers engage in interactive activities such as group discussions, problem-solving exercises, or lesson design. This format fosters active learning and better application of knowledge in practice.

*Example:* A workshop on "Applying Information Technology in Elementary Teaching" was held at a school. Teachers were guided in using tools like PowerPoint, Quizizz, and Padlet to create visual lessons.

After the theory session, they practiced creating online quizzes on school computers and shared their work with colleagues.

**Seminars:** Seminars focus on specific topics, with content often presented by an expert or team of experts, followed by in-depth discussions. These sessions provide specialized knowledge and encourage collaborative learning. *Example:* A seminar on "Developing Problem-Solving and Creativity Skills in Mathematics" introduced strategies to design exercises fostering logical thinking and creativity. Teachers discussed methods to apply such exercises in their classrooms, like finding multiple solutions to a single problem.

**Peer learning:** Peer learning involves teachers collaborating, sharing experiences, and addressing real-world teaching challenges together. This format strengthens bonds among teachers and provides opportunities to learn from colleagues. *Example:* Teachers at a school formed small groups to discuss differentiated instruction. One teacher shared their experience organizing classes with varying proficiency levels, using flexible task assignment boards. Others applied the method and shared feedback on its effectiveness.

**One-on-one coaching:** Personalized coaching involves experts working directly with individual teachers or small groups to address specific issues. This approach provides tailored support, ensuring practical application. *Example:* An expert in STEM education worked with a group of teachers to design a STEM lesson on "Forest Ecosystems." The expert guided them in content selection, activity design, and evaluation methods. Teachers implemented the lesson in their classrooms and received constructive feedback for improvement.

Flexible methods in on-site professional development enable teachers not only to acquire diverse knowledge but also to practice and refine their skills effectively. Combining various formats like workshops, seminars, peer learning, and personalized coaching optimizes learning and enhances teaching quality.

## 2.5. Long-Term Effectiveness

**Opportunities for peer learning:** On-site training allows teachers to learn from both experts and colleagues. Sharing experiences and discussions help them explore different teaching approaches and problem-solving methods. This collaborative learning enhances pedagogical skills while building trust and mutual support among teachers. *Example:* A teacher shared their successful use of peer learning methods in teaching mathematics, inspiring colleagues to apply the same approach in other subjects like Vietnamese or Natural Sciences.

**Building a school learning community:** A significant long-term benefit of on-site training is fostering a

learning community within the school. This group of engaged teachers regularly shares knowledge, skills, and solutions to teaching challenges, promoting continuous professional development. *Example:* After a training session on active teaching methods, a group of teachers decided to meet monthly to discuss lessons implemented and improvements. They also organized joint practice sessions, observing each other's classes and providing constructive feedback.

**Promoting sustainable professional growth:** On-site training not only provides immediate knowledge but also equips teachers with tools and methods for lifelong learning. Regular participation in learning communities and applying new knowledge boosts confidence, adaptability, and personal growth over time. *Example:* A teacher who attended a STEM teaching workshop successfully designed a student project that garnered attention from colleagues. The teacher shared the experience during a professional meeting, inspiring others to adopt innovative methods.

#### **Illustrative Scenarios:**

**Classroom management skills training:** An elementary school organized a training session on classroom management. Afterward, teachers continued periodic discussions during professional meetings, sharing strategies for handling challenging situations. These discussions became a school tradition, helping new teachers integrate quickly and learn from experienced colleagues.

**Teaching struggling students:** A teacher attended on-site training on teaching methods for slow learners. The teacher successfully applied several strategies and shared them during a school-wide meeting. This experience evolved into a seminar for the entire school cluster, benefiting a broader audience.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

On-site professional development not only delivers immediate benefits but also contributes to long-term impacts by fostering a closely-knit learning

community within schools. This approach enables teachers to achieve sustainable professional growth while enhancing the quality of education and promoting cohesion and creativity in the workplace. These attributes reflect the enduring and sustainable value of on-site training programs. In summary, on-site professional development is an effective solution for improving teacher competencies while addressing the urgent need for local educational human resource development.

### **REFERENCES**

- Dung, T. K., & Loan, Đ. T. K. (2016). Solutions to improve the quality of training with a competency-based approach at the Ho Chi Minh City Education Management Training School. *Journal of Educational Management Science*, 4(12).
- Hải, N. T. H. (2019). Some solutions for competency-based training and development of civil servants. *Journal of State Management*.
- Hiền, N. V. (2019). Application of "Blended Learning" in capacity-building training for civic education teachers. *Journal of Education*, 456(2), 45–49.
- Ministry of Education and Training. (n.d.). Competency-based teaching. Teacher training materials.
- Hồng, T. T. (n.d.). Quality management of education training to meet innovation requirements (Master's thesis). Vietnam National University, Hanoi.
- Ministry of Education and Training. (n.d.). Training materials for competency-oriented teaching.
- Hà, N. V. (2021). Improving the quality of teachers and educational administrators in the current period. *Communist Journal*.
- Minh, T. H. (2015). Innovating the assessment of high school students based on competency approaches. Workshop materials.
- Lan Anh, N. T. (2017). Professional development for general education teachers based on competency-oriented teaching. *Vietnam Education Journal*, 9, 12–18.

---

**Cite This Article:** Phan Trong Ngo & Ho Quang Hoa (2024). Advantages of On-Site Professional Development for Primary School Teachers Using a Competency-Based Approach. *East African Scholars J Edu Humanit Lit*, 7(12), 400-403.

---