

Professional Development for Teachers of Second Language Learners

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*Language Acquisition and Immigrant Integration:
Comparing US and European Experiences*

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We know that optimal professional development:

- Involves all teachers at a school site
- Is long-term, sustained, and coherent
- Focuses on concrete tasks of teaching, assessment, observation, and reflection
- Is discipline-specific
- Enhances teachers' knowledge of how to plan and enact specific pedagogical skills focused on specific subject matter content that provides learning opportunities for specific sets of diverse students
- Focuses on student learning, including analysis of the conceptual understanding and skills that students will be expected to demonstrate and analysis of student products

In the United States

There is no language policy; the preparation and professional development of teachers to work with English Learners varies from state to state. In general it:

- Does not match conceptions of “the seamless continuum” which would entail a deep theoretical conceptualization of the development of teacher expertise
- Is atomistic and short-term
- Coexists with multiple other dissonant efforts to “train” teachers in a school site through workshops
- Is informed by notions that were proposed a long time ago, under very different circumstances (BICS and CALP, comprehensible input, etc.)
- Is generic, not subject-specific

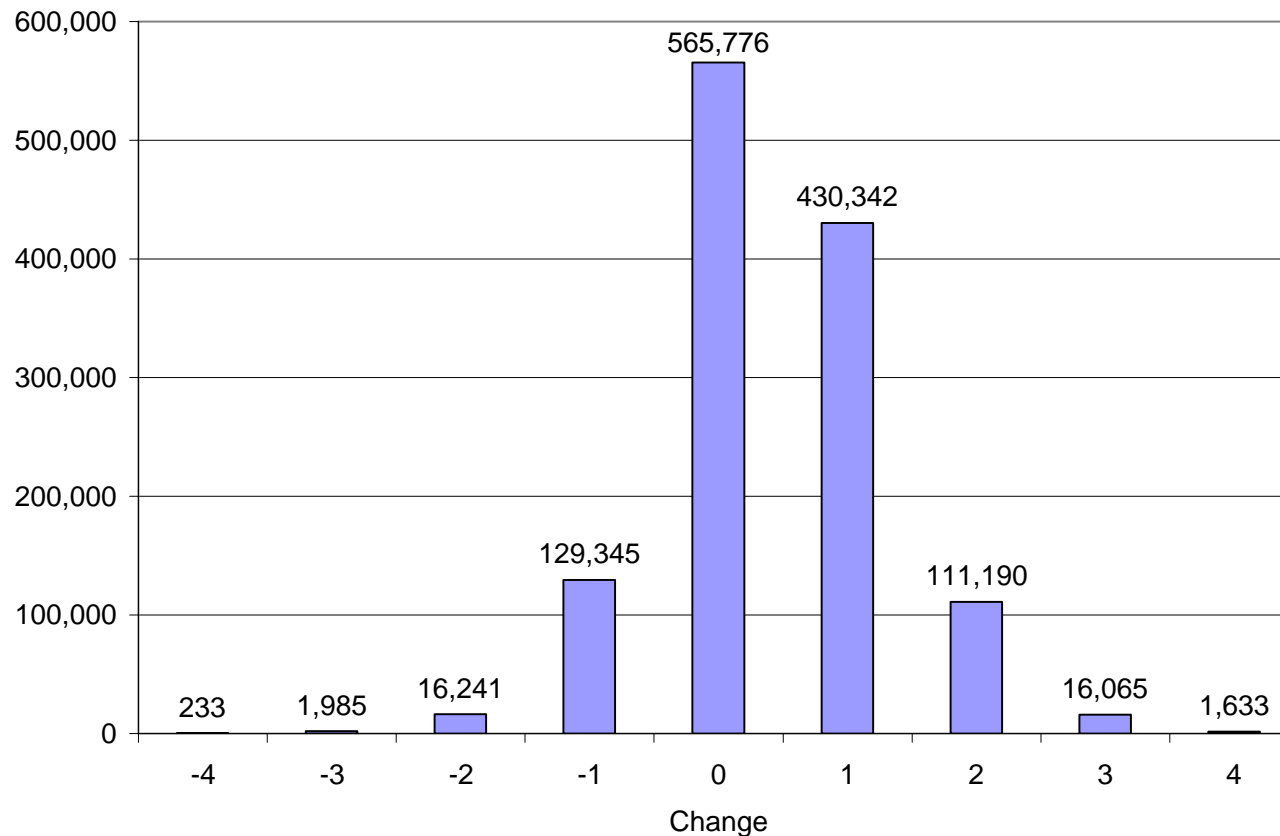
In California

- Pre-service lacks theoretical consistency, and entails “infusion” of knowledge to work with English Learners, changing from 3 courses to Standard 13
- Professional development is minimal, mostly low quality, isolated, for only some teachers. It further deprofessionalizes teaching by providing teachers with scripted curricula and poor materials
- Teachers struggle with conflicting mandates that require them to teach double periods of courses that were never designed for English Learners to their ELs who are underperforming

The Consequences are devastating

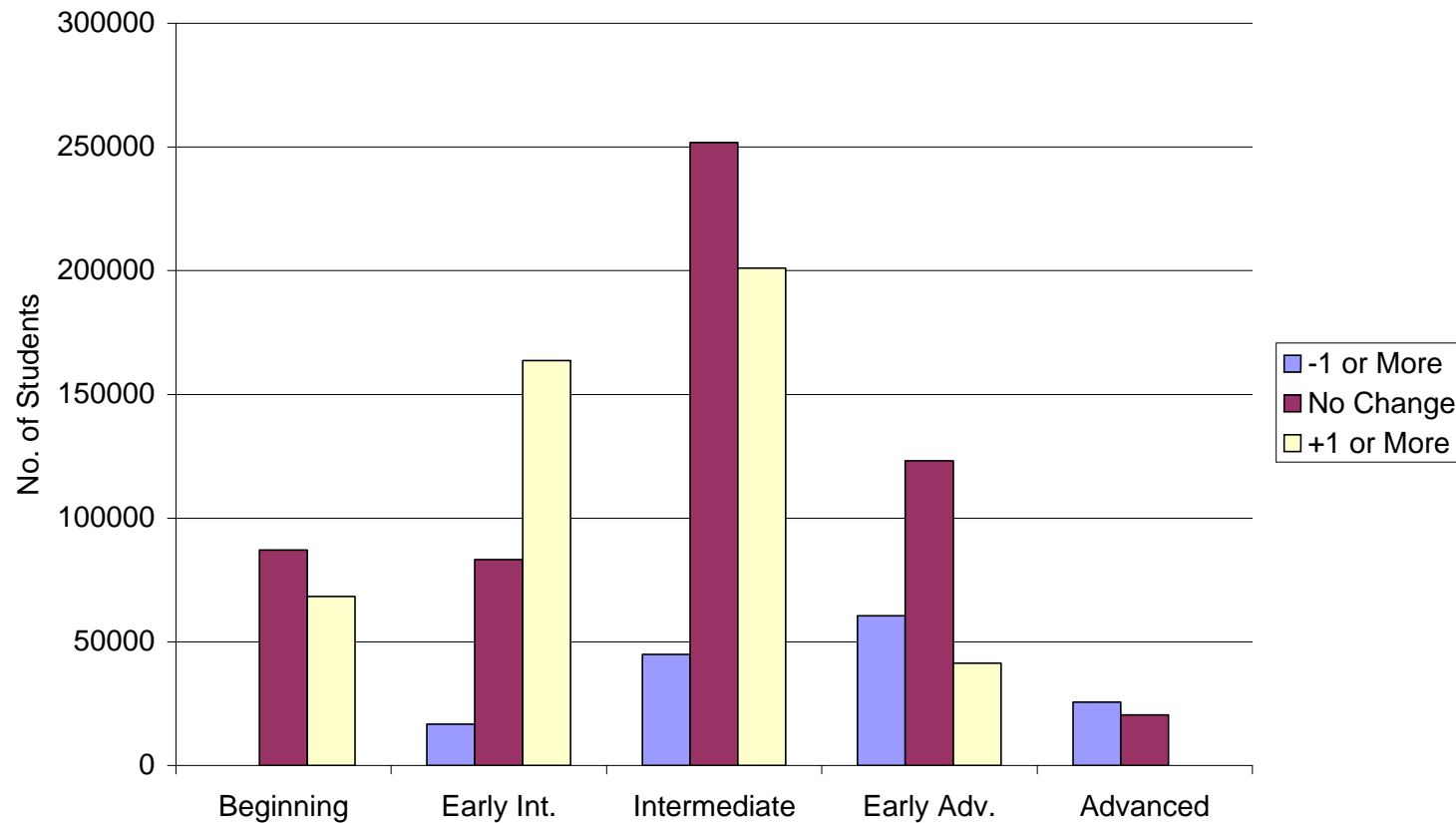
CELDT 2007 Annual Assessment Results

Change in Performance Levels 06-07



CDE, 2008

Change in CELDT Proficiency Level 2006-07 to 2007-08 by Previous Year Proficiency Level



CDE, 2008

What do other countries do to develop teacher expertise?

Nations that ranked at the top of PISA or TIMSS assessment offer formal and informal supports for the development of teacher expertise. These include:

- Extensive time for professional learning and collaboration
- Professional development embedded in teacher contexts, sustained and long-term
- School governance that supports teacher learning tasks

Formal Professional Development

- Sweden and the Netherlands require at least 120 hours of professional development per year beyond the many hours spent on collegial planning and inquiry
- In Sweden the “lifting the teachers” program pays for all teachers to study a post-graduate course. Grants support 80% of the teacher’s salary while the teacher works in the school for 20% of their time.
- In Singapore the government pays for 100 hours of professional development in addition to the 20 hours a week they have to work with peers studying teaching

Time

In most European and Asian countries instruction takes up less than half of a teacher's working time. The rest of the time is spent on work related to teaching:

- planning lessons
- assessing student work
- meeting with students and parents
- working with colleagues

In Finland teachers meet one afternoon a week to plan and develop curriculum jointly, with schools in the same municipality working together

Other productive teacher learning practices:

- In Finland, Denmark, Italy, and Norway teachers engage in collaborative research on specific aspects that impact their teaching
- In Canada and England: teachers are provided time and support to study and evaluate their own teaching strategies, and then share their findings with colleagues

The Case of Sweden: Planned Multilingualism

- Swedish is the national majority language
- Five official national minority languages were ratified in 1999 (Sami, Finnish, Meänkieli/Tornedals-Finnish, Romani and Yiddish)
- There are 200 other minority languages from immigrants comprising more than 100,000 speakers (Arabic, Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian, Farsi, Turkish)
- English is considered a second language, almost a lingua franca and German, French, Spanish and other foreign languages are learnt at school or elsewhere

Swedish Indigenous Languages

Are protected by:

- Council of Europe Framework
- Convention for the Protection of National Minorities
- The European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages

Some Tensions

- With English: Aim for balanced bilingualism, with a careful discussion and monitoring of the role each language plays.
- Avoidance of diglossia and cultivation of Swedish (The Language Council of Sweden)

Language Planning in Sweden

... does not derive from some narrow minded national or ethnic chauvinist imperative. It is based firmly on (linguistic) human rights in a world where cultural diversity is slowly beginning to be seen as just as important for the survival of the human species as are biological and political diversity respectively. (Neville Alexander, 2003)

Multilingualism in Swedish schools

- 14 % of the students in compulsory school are characterized as having a '*foreign background*'
 - the students themselves were born abroad of foreign parents
 - both their parents were born abroad.
- 15 % of these students are in upper secondary school
- 80 – 100 % in multilingual urban areas
- 140 mother tongues other than Swedish are represented in Swedish compulsory school

Lindberg, 2008

Minority language students in Swedish compulsory school (Lindberg, 2008)

Language	Number of students	% of all students
Arabic	24 053	2.30
Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian	14 950	1.43
Finnish	9 992	0.95
Spanish	10 074	0.96
Albanian	7 634	0.73
English	7 250	0.69
Farsi	6 537	0.62
Turkish	5 183	0.50
Kurdish	5 181	0.50
Somali	4 396	0.42
Other languages (122)	48 085	4.60
Unspecified languages	350	0.03

Mother tongue instruction

10 most common mother tongues in compulsory school

Language	Students	% participating in mother tongue instruction
• Arabic	22 785	65.2
• Bosnian/Croatian/Serb	14 901	50.6
• Finnish	10 830	36.2
• Spanish	10 265	62.6
• Albanian	7 773	65.8
• English	6 871	56.7
• Farsi	6 624	54.5
• Turkish	5 239	65.8
• Kurdish	5 111	57.7
• Somali	4 298	59.3
• Other languages (120)	46 691	60.0

Swedish as second language

- Has been taught as an auxiliary subject from the end of 1960s
- Is a subject in its own right equivalent to mainstream Swedish since 1995 (obligatory if needed in compulsory school)
- Provides the same type of credits than Swedish Language Arts courses

Teacher preparation in Sweden

- Teachers are municipal employees
- They receive between 3.5 and 4.5 years of pre-service education, with 1 1/2 years common to all before specialization
- English is compulsory for all teachers as well as advanced proficiency in a second foreign language
- Each course offered in pre-service requires one day of school practice a week
- As of next year, all Swedish Language Arts teachers will get some SSL preparation

On-going professional development

- Every teacher goes through 120 hours of professional development a year
- Professional development is offered by universities, thus ensuring coherence with preparation
- Many teacher exchange programs are sponsored, especially with the Nordic countries, with financial support of the Nordic Community

De facto, a difference is made between:

- European foreign languages, which enjoy high status
- “Foreign” -minority- languages, which are not understood, valued, nor supported in the same way by the educational enterprise

Mother tongue and Swedish as an L2 are low status school subjects

- There is a lack of well prepared teachers in second language methodology; the emphasis is on foreign language
- Courses are poorly integrated into the mainstream curriculum
- There is weak curricular support
- Language assessment methods are inadequate

In general, there is a wide gap between policy, intentions, and actual practice in both subjects

National survey on the provision of Swedish as a second language, 2004

- 50% of the schools with a high percentage of bilingual students do not offer any SSL instruction at all
- In 20% of the schools immigrant students are automatically assigned to instruction in SSL without any prior language assessment
- 50% of the schools engage teachers without any formal training to teach SSL
- Great confusion and ignorance as to the character, function and curriculum of SSL among principals and teachers
- A perspective of deficit characterizes the view of bilingual students in most schools
- SSL often regarded as a school subject for “weak and difficult students”

(Myndigheten för Skolutveckling 2004; Elmeroth 2005)

Prevailing myths

(Mohan et al. 2004: 2)

- Language minorities will acquire an education and a second language easily and quickly simply by exposure (comprehensible input)
- All that language minorities need is a basic course in the second language
- The education of language minorities can safely be isolated from the mainstream of education
- Educational changes for the benefit of the language minority students will happen automatically or by the efforts of second language teachers or bilingual teachers acting without curricular change, institutional support or professional development

A monocultural and monolingual norm prevails ...

The experiences and resources of bilingual students are often not valued in Swedish schools

- a strong urge for students to become “Swedish” as soon as possible and “leave their ethnicity behind”
- bilingualism often associated with problems rather than seen as an asset.

(Lahdenpää 1999. Parszyk 1999)

A monocultural and monolingual norm prevails

- An idealization of a linguistically and culturally homogeneous Swedishness prevails in many schools
- Alternative constructions of Swedishness, based upon more heterogeneous linguistic and cultural experiences are rejected and stigmatized (Haglund 2005, Runfors 2003)

Persisting performance gaps between bilingual students and their monolingual peers

- more than one in five students with a mother tongue other than Swedish fails to qualify to enter a national program in upper secondary school, which is more than twice as many as among majority language students (Skolverket 2005a:6, 2005b:50)
- big differences within the group of minority language students
 - Gender and socio-economic factors
 - First and second generation students

In conclusion, there is a lot to learn from our European colleagues, both by positive and negative example

- National policies provide the impetus for thinking through and enacting quality practices
- Realizing the immense potential of linguistic minorities will require concerted efforts to interpret equity as investing differential, not equal resources
- We need to be aware of the gap between policy and practice