

To: Mr Abdul Rehaman Al Shaya, English School for Girls Owner
From: Julie Lindsay
Date: April 29, 2001

Re: Professional Development Policy: Summary of Proposal

Please find attached a policy proposal paper that outlines two alternative policies for Professional Development at ESG. Below is a summary of and recommendation for the preferred proposal.

The business of education in Kuwait is done in a competitive environment and is an important responsibility. The success of a school relies largely on students' performance and public perceptions of the benefits the school will have for their child in terms of current and future academic pursuits.

A staff professional development policy is important for the English School for Girls to implement as it will create an environment that stimulates and facilitates individual development and guide this development towards improving the schools performance. The ultimate aim of a PD program is to improve student learning outcomes but also secondary aims include attracting committed staff and retaining them by providing a means of identifying their needs and encouraging a positive response to change.

In order that ESG stay at the forefront of British style education in Kuwait it is essential that staff be given the opportunity to participate in a PD program. Also, given that ESG is going ahead with ECIS accreditation, the implementation of a PD policy will be viewed as a decision to promote a positive school climate and a sense of staff working together to improve the school. Ultimately this can only enhance the reputation of the school and improve learning outcomes of the students and therefore attract increased enrollments.

The policy (Alternative 2) proposal is a realistic option that gives the school control over the amount and direction of PD the staff take. The main points:

- Appointment of a PD coordinator
- Thematic PD plan to be developed and implemented over a 2-3 year span
- Compulsory minimum participation in PD by all staff as part of contract renewal
- Restructure of the school calendar to allow for student free days
- On campus and external courses approved
- Budget up to KD100 per staff member

The policy proposal allows for the appointment of a PD Coordinator who will liaise with staff and put together a 2-3 year plan. This will be revised and evaluated each year. It allows also for a maximum level of funding per staff member each year that can be used for initiatives at the discretion of the coordinator. Staff will be encouraged to look at the needs of the school and to suggest areas for improvement in line with school needs and in conjunction with an international perspective of where teacher training priorities lie.

One of the advantages of this proposal is that it makes participation in a minimum requirement of PD compulsory therefore giving the school the option of not renewing a contract for non-compliance. The budget of KD 100 is a figure that other schools in Kuwait allow each staff member for PD. Allocating this amount to a PD fund would be inline with expectations and priorities as experienced elsewhere in Kuwait.

Implementation of this policy will involve some restructure of the school day and calendar. It is a crucial component of this proposal that there be student free time where sessions can be organised and staff are not required to always attend out of normal school hours. Once a structure is organised and approved parents and students can be informed well in advance of intended activities and there should be no problems.

In conclusion, ESG is a school that is moving along the path of improvement and has already spent time and effort working towards that goal. My proposal is one for a feasible PD policy that will benefit the school in terms of staff retention, recognises the importance of high quality teaching and will ultimately provide for improved student results and therefore should be part of this development.

A POLICY PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN AN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

INTRODUCTION

Teaching must become a learning profession. New models of Professional Development (PD) need to be investigated. PD is a process rather than a project or an event (Hassel, 1999; Butler, nd; Craig, 1998) whereby a vision of life-long, inquiry-based and collegial activity is pursued. The aim of PD is to improve student learning and teacher effectiveness. Research has already determined that an increase in teacher education has a positive influence on students' achievement. (Darling-Hammond, 1999) Dollars invested in teaching quality net large student achievement gains than the same dollars invested in any other type of school resources. (WestEd, 2000) PD is important to satisfy career advancements, involve teachers as responsible members of an institution and to give intellectual vigor to professional life (Butler). It can be conceived as a right, but also a duty for the entire teaching profession. A professional development model is essential in an international school to focus on teacher quality and contribute to improving the schools performance and general school excellence, increase staff retention and bring the school in line with international trends for education standards. In individual terms PD would help staff do their job more effectively, enable them to keep up-to-date, increase job satisfaction and encourage a positive response to change. In school terms PD would increase the schools capacity to predict and cope with change effectively, to facilitate curriculum development and evaluation and increase the quality of pupil learning. The aim is to create a culture where PD is the norm. It must be an integral part of teachers' professional lives (Butler, nd) in any educational setting around the world.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The English School for Girls (ESG) in Kuwait was opened in 1994, is privately owned and run for a profit. It has 450 students K-11 (IGCSE standard) of mainly Kuwaiti background and 40 expatriate staff (mainly from the UK). There is traditionally a large staff turnover, average length of stay is less than 2 years. Contracts are signed for 1 year at a time. Currently there is no school initiated professional development. The school academic year is relatively short and staff generally have large allotments. There could be some flexibility to restructure the school day to allow for PD. An advantage the school has is that it is independent of any external considerations or influences (except the Kuwait Government and a compulsory requirement that all schools teach a minimum number of days and that Arabic and Religion are taught to all students) and is free to set its own agenda. It runs a British curriculum and is currently working through necessary requirements for accreditation with ECIS (European Council of Independent Schools). The school has a number of curriculum issues that have not been adequately addressed yet. By Western standards it has limited resources but it does have two computer laboratories and a networked Internet connection. All proposals to do with school change and financial considerations will need to be approved by the school owner, Mr Al Shaya. Access to PD in Kuwait is limited. The University of New Jersey provides some onsite sessions towards a Masters degree and recently there was an Australian initiative with courses starting in business and administration. Participation in distance education courses is becoming more common.

PROBLEM

In order to develop and improve ESG needs to attract qualified staff and provide them with the opportunity to participate in an adequate PD program. The school has a responsibility to provide the appropriate support for teachers to continually develop their knowledge, skills and career opportunities through a comprehensive PD program. Administrators must take the initiative and responsibility for implementing an effective PD program. If PD programs are to maximise their potential to contribute to school improvement then managers must have a key role and indeed obligation to support such programs the ultimate purpose of which must be to improve student learning outcomes. A PD model is essential because it is necessary to focus on such factors as technology, standards-based education, new forms of assessments, changed practices of special and bilingual education and new pedagogical practices such as project-based, collaborative and hands-on learning. Staff job satisfaction is also an important consideration here. ESG need to look at improving staff retention rates in order to assure stability and continuity in the school. As part of their move for improvement, and in line with the ECIS accreditation process, development of a PD policy would be a way to start to address important administrative and educational issues within the school. Staff changes can jeopardise continued use of implemented innovations (Butler, nd) so strong administration and policies are needed to reduce teacher mobility and to maintain project impetus. Curriculum goals need to be analysed and PD must be designed to tie in with these. Staff need to be encouraged to commit themselves to their own PD and at the same time have their strengths and needs identified by the school.

When teachers come to ESG as expatriate employees they are removed from the immediacy of normal support systems found in their home countries such as district educational facilities, subject associations and, in small schools such as ESG, even colleagues in the same subject area. There is very little interaction between the different international schools in Kuwait, most of which are either British or US in their curriculum focus. PD is also needed for international teachers as a sort of cultural induction as it is difficult to transplant some teaching ideas and methods from home to a

different country. Parent expectations and student abilities need to be taken into account. In order to minimise teacher isolation and support collegiality as a professional asset the opportunity to continue with PD could be an important motivational factor for teachers in an international environment.

The biggest barrier to PD is the lack of time in the school day and calendar (Teachers and Technology, 1995; Grant, 1996) Some reformers have recommended at least 20% of teachers work time should be given to professional study and collaborative work. (Cook, 1997) Successful PD models incorporate an understanding that change is a process and realise that time for learning and collaborating is critical to sustain and support personal growth and school re-structuring goals. Research has shown that a good PD program is job-embedded and tied to learning goals and provides time for educators to build a professional culture in the school which supports qualities of reflection and collaboration in the context of action. (Cook, 1997; Grant, 1996)

Teachers come to Kuwait largely to make money and to enjoy traveling opportunities and experiences. Given this generalised attitude and in combination with the availability of a short contract there is considerable impact on the way that PD should be made available. But teachers as well as administrators have a responsibility to maintain a level of awareness of educational trends and beware of the risks of focusing on short-term, immediate needs.

POLICY ALTERNATIVE 1

Financial assistance with PD will be made available and all staff may apply. This may be given up to a certain level depending on how many contracts the applicant has signed. There will be no time release or student free days. Teachers will make choices to participate in PD. Those that master a skill will have the opportunity to present it to colleagues. Teacher mentors will receive payment for delivery of in-house PD which will be organised outside of school hours. Staff will be encouraged to look at Distance Education options as a way of obtaining required skills while in Kuwait. The Principal in consultation with the school owner will make all decisions regarding PD allocation. Teachers will be encouraged to design an individual PD plan. Only some in-house PD will be made compulsory for all staff to attend.

ANALYSIS OF THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF POLICY ALTERNATIVE 1 INCLUDING LIKELY SUPPORT AND OPPOSITION

The owner of ESG would probably support this alternative as it puts the initiative to organise and participate in PD largely back onto the teacher. Given the different climate of an international school as compared to in the home country it would be a reasonable estimation that not all staff would voluntarily participate in PD. This may be a better alternative financially for the owner as it puts less responsibility on the school. Considering that the school is meant to make money there is also the attitude that the owner is in the business of educating students and not teachers and would prefer to take as little responsibility as possible, and outlay as few funds as possible.

At the same time this policy tends to promote 'going it alone' whereby teachers individually will need to reconcile their practice and the culture of their workplace. It ostensibly provides for teacher alienation by being more of an add-on to the school day and a teachers load. It does not give staff time or opportunity for shared discovery and new theoretical learning. It has the potential to be a piecemeal policy and not comprehensive enough. It is also largely non-compulsory, a factor that will encourage staff support for the policy but is not good for the school ultimately.

There will not be full staff support of this policy, as it does not provide realistic incentives to participate. It is pertinent that in Kuwait teachers can make an extra 10%-50% of their monthly salary (tax free) by tutoring Kuwaiti students privately therefore a realistic salary increase, after completing PD or renewing their contract, would provide incentive. Inducing all teachers to enhance their job skills may ultimately require stronger incentives than self-motivation. Also the lack of time release or student free days puts extra pressure on staff whereby the highly motivated will participate only. Payment to teachers to mentor and/or deliver PD is an advantage but once again external motivation in the form of a cash incentive is efficient in attracting staff to deliver PD activities but studies show implementation of practices in the classroom is not so high. (Butler, nd) The advantage of staff mentoring is that it embeds more PD in the workplace that is more closely related to teachers work experience. It is also good that staff are encouraged to support colleagues, rather than paying somebody else to come into the school.

Policy Alternative 1 will rely largely on the strength of the Principal to be a fair but firm leader and have strong curriculum development goals in sight and be able to inspire her staff to follow her lead. It expects new forms of teaching to emerge within conventional structures and could possibly only focus primarily on episodic, narrow 'training' activities. She will need to ensure that a variety of approaches to PD are being fostered and that individual PD needs match their current post, the school development plan as well as future career prospects.

Support for this policy will come from parents as they often see the only valid use of teachers' time is in front of the class. The assumption is that planning, collaboration and PD are somehow a waste of time. This aligns with the limited view that teachers are only working when they are with students.

This policy promotes the use of distance education as a means to solve the time and distance problems associated with international teaching. The advantages of distance education are convenience, the immediacy, teachers are part of a professional association i.e. electronic discussion group, economical (no transport or accommodation), and there is a choice of courses available. The use of the Internet for continuing education is less expensive and less disruptive to classes and does help isolated teachers make new connections. It also provides online opportunities beyond what the school and the local area can offer. Many teachers would still see this as a more stressful option and have fears of equipment failures. Also, would the school provide adequate access to the Internet for staff to participate using this medium?

Alternative to distance education this policy will help fund PD taken in other countries during the holidays. The problem with this is that teachers are more likely to apply new instructional strategies if they receive immediate feedback and support while trying the new strategies in the classroom, as with a distance education option.

A localisation issue of this policy is the fact of Ramadan whereby the school day is shortened for a month. This could provide an opportunity for staff to participate in out of class time PD without making the day too long.

FEASIBILITY OF IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY ALTERNATIVE 1

Policy Alternative 1 could be easily implemented. It does not require any restructure of the school day. It will require the Principal to decide key issues. This she will do probably in consultation with middle management but not with the entire staff. The following considerations are needed for full implementation:

- Curriculum focus and goals for the entire school. Staff will need to be advised as to school PD needs and goals and given opportunity to extend knowledge in those areas each year.
- Faculty and personal PD goals to be submitted to the Principal by a certain date to be effected for the following year. In the case of a first contract there will be another date soon after the school year commences to give new employees a chance to benefit as well.
- Out of class compulsory sessions will be timetabled into the school calendar so that staff know well in advance where their time commitment is required. There will not be too many sessions each year that staff feel imposed upon.
- Staff will need to investigate distance education courses or other avenues of training themselves and present ideas to the Principal.
- Assessment and evaluation are considered as part of implementation.

APPROXIMATE COSTS OF POLICY ALTERNATIVE 1

A realistic annual budget for this policy would be the cost of sending five staff to the UK to attend courses. An approximate figure therefore would be in the vicinity of KD2,000-KD2,500 (exchange rate: 1 Kuwaiti Dinar = US\$3.3) There would be no start-up costs and the cost for mentors and in-house PD would need to come out of the same budget. Staff who apply for assistance to attend external sessions could expect to receive reimbursement according to a scale relevant to the number of teaching years at ESG. For example after one year at ESG, and having signed a second contract, 25% of the cost could be reimbursed, up to 100% for a staff member who has signed a fifth contract.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF IMPLEMENTING POLICY ALTERNATIVE 1

Positive impact

- This policy aims to promote individually guided development. It assumes teachers are motivated by being able to select their own learning goals and means of accomplishing those goals. It puts the onus on teachers to address their own problems.
- It encourages in-house mentoring and collegial support for professional growth.
- It rewards staff who renew their contract, in fact gives them an incentive to do so.

Negative / unintended impact

- A fragmented PD program with the potential for reduced school development. There is no real staff ownership of reform and change. Teachers can use the PD money to improve qualifications, advance their career but with no direct concern for the school as such.
- Tends to be disjointed, unfocused and offers teachers few opportunities to learn by doing and reflecting on practice with colleagues.
- Lack of support from staff by them not actually applying to do any PD due to lack of incentive and motivation. No real clear benefits are evident for participating in PD and staff would prefer to travel during the holidays and make extra money tutoring during term.

POLICY ALTERNATIVE 2

A PD coordinator will be appointed. Her role will be to meet with staff, assess programs and develop a PD plan to be implemented over 2-3 years. Themes will be planned for each year such as technology integration, literacy, and pastoral care. All staff must participate in a minimum requirement of PD (30 hours per year) as part of contract renewal. This will include teacher observation and assessment, other PD as deemed necessary by the PD coordinator e.g. developing technology skills, or self-education. Time release such as curriculum days and afternoons will be provided. PD will also be provided in-house by staff mentors. Staff may apply for financial assistance for external courses and conferences with the condition that they share their knowledge on return as a staff presenter or mentor or writing a report such as "I have identified implications for ESG...". Time release to attend external sessions may be applied for.

ANALYSIS OF THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF POLICY ALTERNATIVE 2: LIKELY SUPPORT AND OPPOSITION

The appointment of a PD coordinator is an advantage as it takes the pressure away from the Principal and gives the other staff another focus for communication about PD issues. The role of the PD coordinator is to ensure that change is planned and controlled from the top down and that professional growth is experiential, collegial, continuous and research and best-practice based. Such an appointment shows that the school values leadership and is working to retain, stretch and nurture top quality people in the teaching profession. The potential to liaise with staff and promote two-way communication as to what is needed in the school as far as student needs, staff needs and curriculum goals is a positive factor when working towards overall school improvement.

There will be opposition from staff as to the compulsory nature of the policy. The PD coordinator will have to work hard to make compulsory PD sessions worthwhile, meaningful and productive for the ultimate benefit of the students. Unless PD is relevant, useful and exciting it will not have the desired impact. For school learning priorities it will be seen as necessary to mandate participation in PD and it will be an education process including persuading staff to see that it benefits all e.g. technology competence and integration.

Time release in the form of student free days, and a restructured calendar should be a great motivator for staff. This shows that the school is prepared to meet them half way and that value is put on the need to have continuous PD within the school environment. When planning the PD calendar the local situation means the month of Ramadan has shorter working days therefore a dedicated period of time can be given to PD for all. The aim to regularly schedule common time amongst teachers will have a big impact in the school. Teachers learn best by studying, doing and reflecting; by collaborating with other teachers; by looking closely at students learning and evidence of achievement; and by sharing what they see. (Recommended Guidelines California, 2001) So providing time during the normal school day is a positive contribution to the development of the school and to staff satisfaction with their job.

This policy is designed for school improvement, the most effective staff development program, (Butler, nd) rather than staff personal professional improvement. Research done by the World Bank shows that PD strategies work best when they are linked to pedagogical effectiveness, when institutions provide structure to support members in their PD and when the most effective teachers are deployed as modellers and mentors. (Craig, 1998) It also has parallels with the turbine approach (Mackenzie, 2000) where PD programs and providers are flexible and designed for the needs of the school.

There may be opposition from the school owner for this policy as students will be given certain time off to allow staff to meet and plan. Parents may not be happy and put pressure on the owner to remedy this. Also, from the owners' point of view, why pay for all staff to partake in PD when some will leave after 12 months? At the same time support should come from the owner because of an expectation of a more alert and knowledgeable staff.

It may be seen by staff that another disadvantage of this policy is that it is designed for more control from the top and not enough control from the bottom up therefore causing staff alienation and dissatisfaction. Further opposition may come from staff who would rather buy textbooks and material resources e.g. more computers, software, furniture. The PD coordinator in conjunction with other school administration will need to stress the benefits of participating in ongoing PD and that a 2-3 year plan means a commitment to an ongoing process, a difficult but not unrealistic task in Kuwait.

Support for this policy is likely to come from the Principal. PD is considered everyone's job and this policy allocates adequate time and resources to support this.

FEASIBILITY OF IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY ALTERNATIVE 2

The administration at ESG has a responsibility to show leadership and to ensure the school stays at the forefront of British education as it is offered in Kuwait. It must ensure that a PD program is implemented that will do this. It would be considered unusual for a school not to have a PD program and a plan of curriculum goals and objectives in relation to staff training. Therefore it is feasible that this plan can be implemented but it will take some restructuring and adjustment from administration, staff and the wider school community. The following points are pertinent:

- The school day and calendar will need to be organised so that parents as well as staff know when PD time has been scheduled.
- The PD coordinator should form a committee to look at PD priorities within the school and also meet with staff on an individual basis.
- To make this policy successful and true to its nature planning and requests should also come from the faculty and individual teachers not only from above. There should be staff participation in deriving the PD platform.
- Funding arrangements seem open-ended and will need to be looked at by the PD coordinator in conjunction with the Principal and a committee.

APPROXIMATE COSTS OF POLICY ALTERNATIVE 2

A salary increase for the PD Coordinator of KD80 per month would be a start up cost to the program. Allocation of KD100 per staff member per year on average would be a reasonable amount to budget. (See note *) This must provide for internal and external PD as decided by the coordinator. Implementation of a special fund, which can be retained until the next year if not used, of KD150 to fund an international guest speaker or some other collaboration with schools in Kuwait.

POTENTIAL IMPACT OF IMPLEMENTING POLICY ALTERNATIVE 2

Positive impact

- This policy is designed to retain staff (by increasing job satisfaction), enhance school reputation and improve teaching.
- It gives the school the capability of not renewing contracts of those who refuse to attend. Once again a top down control mechanism of this particular policy.
- It will ensure happier staff, by serving teachers needs this policy has embraced a range of opportunities that allow teachers to share what they know and to connect their learning to the contexts of their teaching.

Unintended impact

- That the policy could end up providing a watered-down version of what was really intended. The compulsory component could be misconstrued to include such things as general staff meetings and free time whereby staff take the opportunity to tidy their desk or catch up on marking.
- Providing time release days, afternoons etc. may mean that the school year is extended by an extra week. This will not be popular amongst the staff.

*Note: This figure is based on personal research conducted amongst other schools in Kuwait.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE WITH POSSIBLE MODIFICATIONS

Implementing Policy Alternative 2 would provide a number of formal and informal approaches to PD over time. It will make PD part of everyday life at school with ongoing and follow-up sessions made available on a regular basis. Staff will be encouraged to share experiences and new findings with colleagues in a supportive environment. Encouragement will be given to all staff to work together to improve the school.

Modifications:

- Have a discretionary clause that allows the owner to stipulate that everyone will attend certain sessions e.g. on new syllabus.
- Have an owners opt-out clause e.g. if major building expenses occur.
- Provide an evaluation component. This should be based on the intended outcomes of the overall school improvement effort e.g. student outcomes evaluated. Also include criteria for improvement in teaching, improvement in student learning, narrowing of student achievement gaps.
- The opportunities that technology provides in the PD process must not be discounted. Models of practice, ending isolation, on demand PD should be carefully investigated in terms of effectiveness for delivery of PD as well as PD outcomes. This includes looking at distance education courses and advising teachers as to the best options available.

CLOSING

In order to become a place of intellectual challenge, learning and growth a school, no matter what setting, has the responsibility to provide teachers the opportunity to plan their own development through formal and informal means of professional support. A PD policy that strengthens teachers' roles and involves teachers in the planning and delivery of PD is legitimate and efficacious. The use of exemplary teachers to lead PD is not only a money saver but also nurtures and supports the strengths of the schools teaching staff.

ESG is a school that provides an opportunity for an English speaking education to a Kuwaiti clientele and makes no apologies for making money out of the process. At the same time it is a school that needs to improve its ability to retain staff and provide students with an enhanced learning environment that staff continuity provides. It must provide staff with an ongoing PD program that is reasonable and effective.

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