WAYS OF DEVELOPING THE METHODOLOGICAL ACTIVITY OF LEAD TEACHERS DURING THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT HOUR

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Introduction. In the contemporary education system, a teacher's professional mastery is recognised as the decisive factor in achieving high-quality learning outcomes. According to the results of the comprehensive analysis carried out by L. Darling-Hammond, traditional one-off in-service training courses do not produce appreciable results in a teacher's practical work; instead, professional development programmes that are content-focused, collaborative, practice-related and sustained in form have been found to be highly effective [1]. This conclusion is confirmed in the critical review conducted by S. Sims and H. Fletcher-Wood as well, in which active learning, collaboration with colleagues and continuous support are identified as the principal characteristics of effective professional development programmes [2].

In this context, particular importance attaches to the way in which lead teachers working in schools organise the process of knowledge exchange — by providing methodological support to their colleagues and through mentoring and coaching. In their study of schools in Japan, Singapore and South Korea, T. Kim and Y. Lee established that the instructional leadership practices of school management exert their greatest influence on teachers' level of participation precisely in such forms of activity as mentoring, peer observation and coaching [3]. At the same time, R. Mina and R. Sanchez, examining the instructional leadership efficacy and competencies of lead teachers in Philippine schools, demonstrated that although their subject knowledge and teaching strategies are at a high level, it is precisely their mentoring and research skills that are comparatively less developed, and on this basis substantiated the need to design dedicated school-wide mentoring and coaching programmes [4]. At the institutional level, the Teacher Professional Learning Framework developed by the OECD [5] and the conception of shaping schools as Professional Learning Communities advanced by W. Admiraal and co-authors [6] show that the exchange of methodological experience through lead teachers can be organised systematically.

Table 1. Summary of the international studies underpinning the analysis

Source	Focus of the study	Key finding	Implication for the Professional Development Hour
Darling-Hammond, Hyler & Gardner (2017) [1]	A comprehensive review of effective teacher professional development	One-off, traditional in-service courses produce no appreciable change in classroom practice; content-focused, collaborative, practice-related and sustained programmes do.	The PD Hour must be sustained and practice-based, not a single event.
Sims & Fletcher-Wood (2021) [2]	A critical review of the characteristics of effective professional development	Active learning, collaboration with colleagues and continuous support are the core features of effective programmes.	The lead teacher facilitates active work rather than delivering a lecture.
Kim & Lee (2020) [3]	Instructional leadership and teacher participation in Japan, Singapore and South Korea	School leadership has its greatest influence on participation precisely through mentoring, peer observation and coaching.	Mentoring, peer observation and coaching become the central formats of the PD Hour.
Mina & Sanchez (2025) [4]	Instructional leadership efficacy and competencies of master teachers (Philippines)	Subject knowledge and teaching strategies are strong, but mentoring and research skills are comparatively underdeveloped.	Lead teachers need dedicated training in the coaching cycle, not further subject content.
OECD (2023) [5]	Teacher Professional Learning Framework	Professional learning becomes systemic only when institutional conditions and support mechanisms are in place.	Time resources, incentives and digital platforms must be secured institutionally.
Admiraal et al. (2021) [6]	Schools as Professional Learning Communities	Building sustainable school-wide professional learning communities is an effective means of continuous support.	The PD Hour is reconstituted as a standing professional learning community.

Source	Focus of the study	Key finding	Implication for the Professional Development Hour
Hayes (2000) [7]	Cascade training and teachers' professional development	In the traditional cascade, knowledge narrows at every stage; with collaborative, locally sensitive strategies the model can still work.	The PD Day – PD Hour chain must be adapted locally rather than relayed mechanically.
Korthagen & Vasalos (2005) [8]	Core reflection as a means of enhancing professional growth	Mastering new methods or technical knowledge alone is not enough; reflection on one's own practice raises professional capacity.	The PD Hour includes dialogue about real difficulties and professional identity.

Discussion. The results of the studies we have reviewed show that raising the methodological capacity of lead teachers must be not only institutional but also continuous. With a view to improving the methodological activity of lead teachers within the framework of the professional development hour, it is expedient to consider the following several interrelated directions.

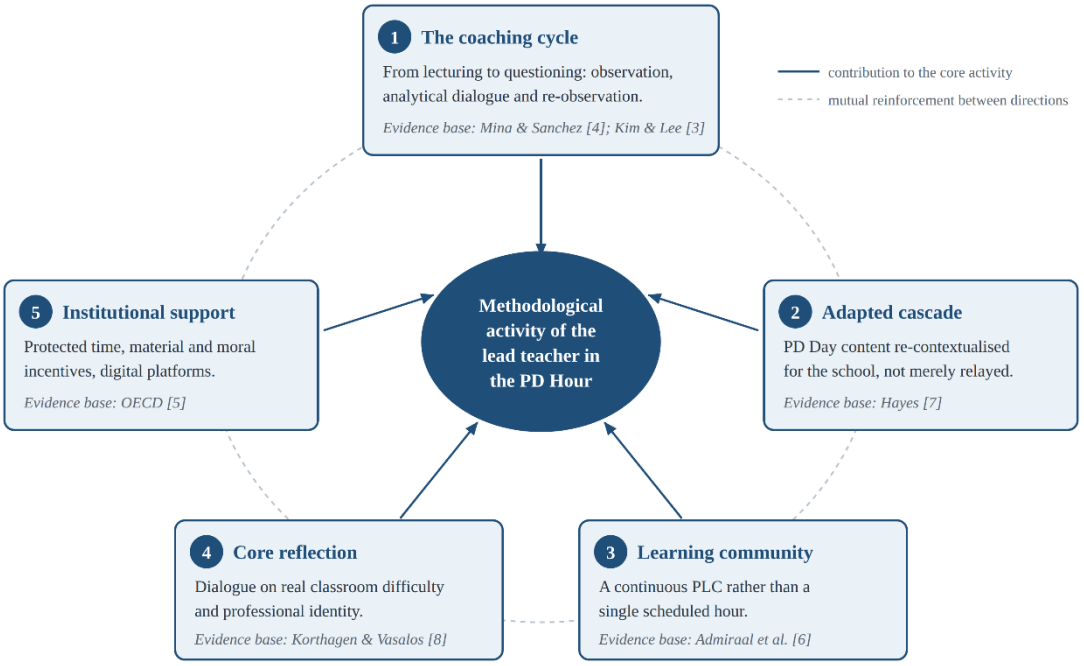


Figure 1. The five directions as a single, mutually reinforcing system

The first direction — in the professional development hour (PDH) the lead teacher should not confine themselves to lecturing alone; rather, they should prompt teachers, through questions, to solve problems themselves. The research of R. Mina

and R. Sanchez shows that although lead teachers' subject knowledge is sufficient, their mentoring skills are comparatively weakly developed [4]; it is therefore expedient to give lead teachers dedicated training in conducting a coaching cycle consisting of the sequence "observation – analysis and exchange of views – re-observation". Such a principle leads to the lead teacher being seen not merely as a presenter, but as a partner who observes and analyses the lessons of the teachers under their guidance.

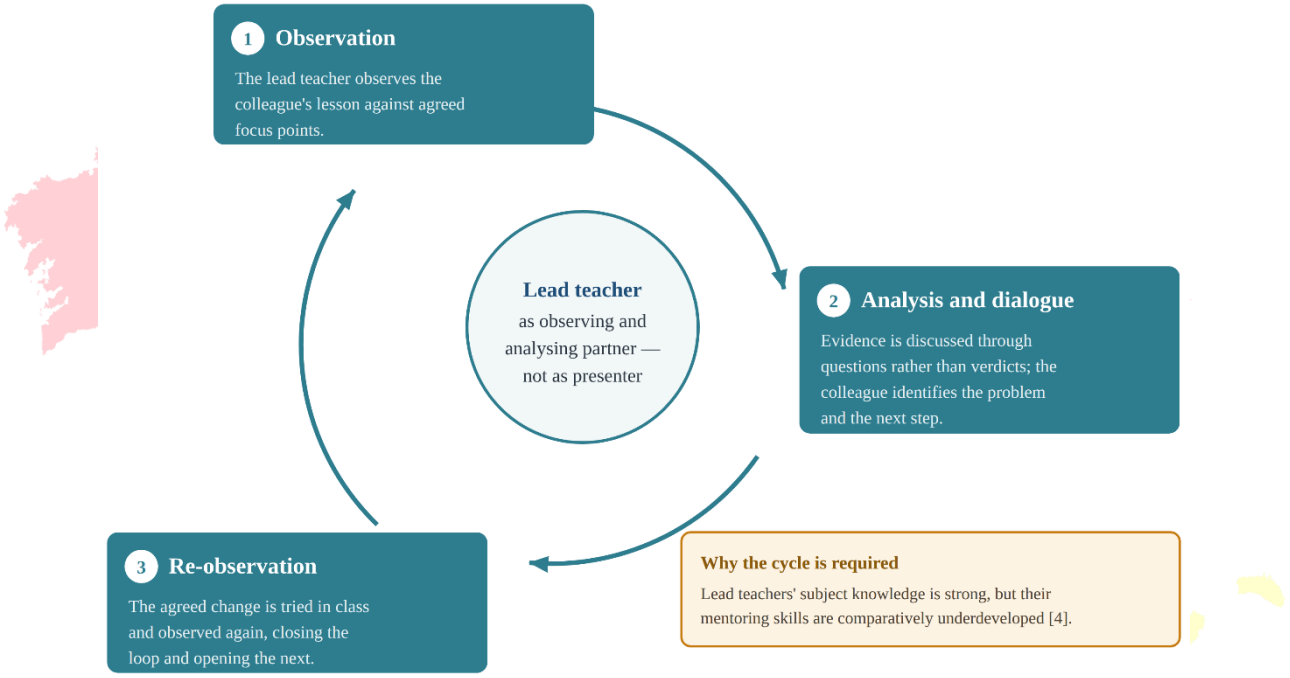


Figure 2. The coaching cycle: observation – analysis and dialogue – re-observation

The second direction — the "Professional Development Day – Professional Development Hour" chain calls for an improvement of the classic cascade model. According to the analysis conducted by D. Hayes, in the traditional cascade model the knowledge acquired at the centre "narrows" at every stage and, by the time it reaches the classroom teacher, is considerably diminished or subject to certain alterations; if, however, collaborative strategies that take local conditions into account are applied, this model can be turned into an effective instrument of professional growth [7]. Accordingly, instead of mechanically retelling in the PDH the knowledge acquired on the Professional Development Day, it is expedient for the lead teacher to re-contextualise it for the local school, to adapt it to learners' needs, and to enable teachers to organise their own professional development creatively.

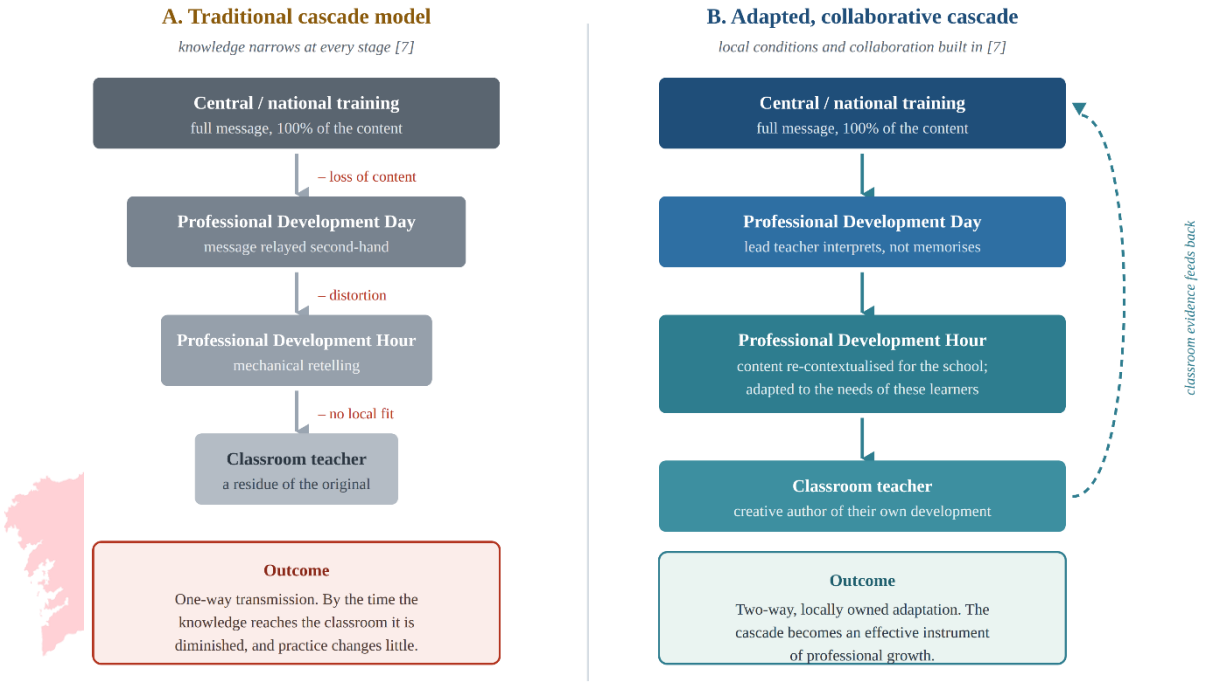


Figure 3. The traditional cascade model compared with the adapted, collaborative cascade

The third direction — organising the professional development hour not merely at a set time, but in the form of a continuously operating professional learning community, leads to appreciable results. As W. Admiraal and co-authors emphasise, forming sustainable school-wide professional learning communities is considered an effective means of providing continuous support for teachers' professional development [6]. On this basis, they hold that the lead teacher should be in constant contact with colleagues not during a separate "hour" alone, but through regular meetings, shared methodological projects and joint lesson analysis.

The fourth direction — the lead teacher must cultivate deep reflective practice both in themselves and in their colleagues. According to the "core reflection" model proposed by F. Korthagen and A. Vasalos, it is held that teachers find it difficult to develop professionally by mastering new methods or technical knowledge alone. Reflecting on their own knowledge in the course of professional development serves to raise their capacity [8]. On this basis, when in the professional development hours the lead teacher organises discussion with colleagues not only about methodological techniques, but also about the difficulties they encounter in the lesson process and their awareness of their own professional selves, this serves to improve their pedagogical design.

The fifth direction — consolidating all the above directions at the institutional level. On the basis of the professional learning framework proposed by the OECD, support mechanisms should be introduced in the form of time resources, material and moral incentives, and support through digital platforms [5].

Table 2. The five directions operationalised for the Professional Development Hour

Direction	Problem addressed	Proposed practice in the PD Hour	Evidence base
1. The coaching cycle	The lead teacher acts only as a presenter; mentoring skills are weak.	Training in the cycle "observation – analysis and feedback dialogue – re-observation"; colleagues are prompted through questions to solve problems themselves.	Mina & Sanchez [4]; Kim & Lee [3]
2. Adapted cascade model	Content is relayed mechanically down the PD Day – PD Hour chain and narrows at each stage.	The lead teacher re-contextualises central content for the school, adapts it to learners' needs and enables teachers to shape their own development creatively.	Hayes [7]
3. Professional learning community	Professional development is confined to a single scheduled hour.	Regular meetings, shared methodological projects and joint lesson analysis sustained across the year.	Admiraal et al. [6]; Darling-Hammond et al. [1]
4. Core reflection	Discussion is limited to techniques; deeper professional questions go unexamined.	Dialogue on classroom difficulties and on the teacher's awareness of their own professional identity, alongside methodological technique.	Korthagen & Vasalos [8]
5. Institutional support	Isolated initiatives do not produce sustainable results.	Protected time resources, material and moral incentives, and support through digital platforms.	OECD [5]

When the five directions reviewed above — introducing the coaching cycle, applying the cascade model in adapted form, forming professional learning communities, developing deep reflective practice and strengthening institutional support — are regarded as a single, mutually complementary system, they serve to raise the methodological activity of lead teachers in the professional development hour to a qualitatively new level.

Conclusion. The analysis carried out shows that developing the methodological activity of lead teachers in the professional development hour is a complex, multi-layered process, which must be implemented not within the framework of a single event or an isolated training, but as a coherent system of five mutually complementary directions. As international experience shows [1–4], a lead teacher's methodological capacity depends more on their mentoring, coaching and reflective dialogue skills than on their subject knowledge; developing precisely these areas in a targeted way is

therefore a priority task. At the same time, organising the "Professional Development Day – Professional Development Hour" chain in a manner that differs from the classic cascade model — adapted to local conditions and based on collaboration [7] — transforming it into the form of continuous professional learning communities [6], and introducing deep reflective practice [8] emerge as the central elements of this system. Unless all of this is reinforced by the institutional support mechanisms recommended by the OECD [5], isolated initiatives may not yield sustainable results.

Thus, implementing the five proposed directions — the coaching cycle, the adapted cascade model, professional learning communities, deep reflective practice and institutional support — as a single system creates a real opportunity to raise the quality of the methodological activity of lead teachers in the professional development hour in general secondary schools, and thereby to improve the teaching quality of the whole school staff. At the next stage of the research, subjecting these directions to practical trial and empirically evaluating their impact on the quality of learners' knowledge remains a pressing task.

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