

Flexible and Sustained

Professional learning should be linked to participants' needs and take into account the culture and context in which the teacher or leader works. Therefore, it is important that professional learning takes account of variables such as career stage, priorities, motivation and the professional confidence of the learner.

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (aitsl) research ¹ highlights the “availability of flexible and non-linear programmes of activity and support”, as a characteristic of effective professional learning for school leaders.

Other research highlights the importance of professional learning being available when needed as important, and stresses that engagement with learning is greatly improved if it addresses a specific need. Building a national strategy for career long leadership development has to support the role of the individual practitioner in shaping their professional development. More personalised learning approaches are complex and make specific demands on learners. It is important to ensure a balance between the system need for leadership capacity and the scope for the individual practitioner to shape their own professional learning.

Researchers such as Wasik and Hindman (2011)² and Tabernik and Williams (2010)³ found sustained professional learning to be a key characteristic of effectiveness. Teachers and school leaders who received sustained professional learning over time were more likely to put strategies learned into practice.

Many of the learning processes cited in Cosán, such as working as a cooperating teacher, availing of a secondment or engaging in an externship fit into the category of sustained professional learning.

¹https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/australian_charter_for_the_professional_learning_of_teachers_and_school_leaders

²Wasik, B. A. & Hindman A. H. (2011) Improving Vocabulary and Pre-Literacy Skills of At-Risk Pre-schoolers through Teacher Professional Development. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 103 (2), pp.455-469.

³Tabernik, A. M. & Williams, P. R. (2010) Addressing Low U.S. Student Achievement in Mathematics and Science through Changes in Professional Development and Teaching and Learning. *International Journal of Educational Reform*, 19 (1) pp.34-50.