

Heritage Language Teaching: designing professional development

Abstract

Portuguese teachers still have little preparation for teaching Portuguese as Heritage Language (PHL) and only recently special attention has been dedicated to this issue [1]. Helping teachers in accomplishing the complex task of meeting students' diverse profiles and expectations implies designing professional development offers (PDO) based on their needs and concerns, which teachers have been identifying in a hybrid professional development (PD) space including PDO in the country of origin, as well as in the host country. This study shares a 3-phased PD strategy designed and supervised by the pedagogical coordinator, which has been being implemented since 2014 with PHL teachers in Switzerland.

Research question: How to foster professional development of a group experienced & scattered PHL teachers?

Data collection: questionnaires, work in progress grids and oriented written reflections

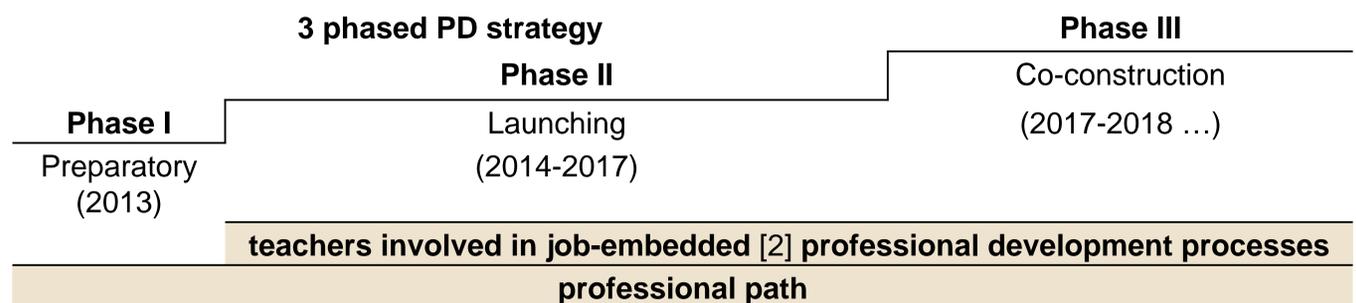
Participants: around 80 PHL teachers

Conclusion

Designing professional development offers (PDO) based on teachers' needs and concerns with an immediate impact on their practice, following a job embedded approach empowers teachers to identify their needs and to find their voice, thus upending the traditional top-down approach to PD.

This study points out that teachers in the middle of their careers need PDO that assist them in becoming not only collaborative constructors of professional knowledge but also pedagogical leaders who understand the urge and long term impact of transformative teaching practices.

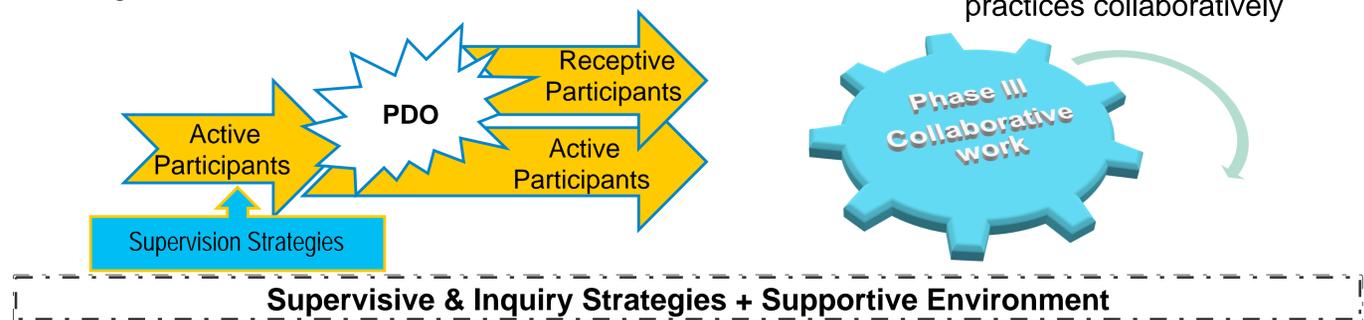
Professional development strategy design



Aim: getting acquainted with teachers' practices
Strategy: Analysis of curricular development documents and tools, chairing pedagogical meetings

Aim: meeting identified teachers' needs, gather professional knowledge, and make *professional capital* [3] circulate among teachers
Strategy: (i) several workshops offering direct connection and extension into teaching practice; implementation and results sharing and discussion:
(ii) seminar on HL teaching concepts and practices presented by teachers
(iii) one and two-days conferences (2014 and 2017) where teachers shared their practice by presenting it through posters and workshops

Aim: helping teachers shaping their own PD with their active collaboration
Strategy: conceive and provide a PD space to foster individual and collective competencies towards the co-construction of professional development paths
(i) *Transformative mornings* - a place to share and plan practices collaboratively



Findings

Phases I and II

- Receptive participants (RP) acquired new knowledge and/or teaching tips during the PDO to put in practice in the future
- Active Participants (AP) conducted research, developed new knowledge, and reflected on their own practice prior to the PDO, as preparation for their intervention – the growth path started long before each PDO. AP profited supervision, feedback and monitoring of the PC during the preparation process.

Phase III - fed the positive impact of AP and RP and enacted these roles in a collaborative PDO. The working groups produced different teaching tools and products which were implemented in classes. Teachers experienced this collaborative work as *the missing space*, where they could share emotions, practices, good and bad experiences.

Next steps: further assistance in providing tools to...

- foster a deeper reflection on teaching practice including impact on pupils' learning
- conduct collaborative work efficiently and overcome the most mentioned problem: the lack of time!

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- [2] DiPaola, M.F.; Hoy, W.K. (2014). *Improving Instruction through Supervision, Evaluation, and Professional Development*. North Carolina, Charlotte: Information Age Publishing, Inc.
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