

# **Education of facilitators: Cooperation to compensate challenges of PD-courses for facilitators?**

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*While recent studies focus on PD-courses (Professional Development-courses) for teachers, only little is known about PD-courses for facilitators. One main challenge for facilitators is the balance between different types of knowledge in PD-courses for teacher. Some facilitators tend to focus exclusively on practical knowledge and good examples, which cumber the process of scaling up PD. PD-courses are one core element to educate facilitators, but they are limited in temporal resources, so that not all aspects can be in focus on depth. This paper focuses on the strength and limits of the cooperation between facilitators and how this cooperation can complete PD-courses for them.*

*Keywords: facilitators, scaling up, multipliers, forms of knowledge, cooperation.*

## **THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL BACKGROUND**

### **Starting points for PD-courses for facilitators and scaling up PD**

In Germany Professional Development (PD) – courses are lead by facilitators. These facilitators are more or less experienced teachers that are interested in PD. In Germany no binding standards for the education of facilitators exist and quite often they have none education for their work as facilitators. For this reason PD-courses for facilitators are very important in Germany. The idea of such courses is to prepare the facilitators for their own PD-courses for teachers.

Recent studies focus on the design and effect of PD-courses for teachers (e.g. Timperley et al., 2007). The formulation of Design-Principles for effective PD is one result of this research (Barzel & Selter, 2015). However, only little is known about PD for facilitators. As a first starting point results from cognate scientific disciplines and research fields are used, also preliminary findings about effective PD for teachers, but empirically grounded findings about the adaption for facilitators are missing. Another starting point are research findings on adult education. Typical for adults is, (a) that they already learned a lot during their life and have that in mind in new learning situations, (b) that they focus on the practical use of new knowledge and (c) that they have status specific behavioural expectation (Geissler, 2001). Empirical findings on the adaption of the principles of adult education for facilitators are also missing. Only some studies focus explicitly on facilitators (e.g. Borko et al., 2015).

Although recent studies do not focus on facilitators' PD, its relevance is undoubted. If innovations shall be implemented into school practice, PD-courses for facilitators are one out of three possibilities to reach a high number of teachers and to scale up PD. This way of scaling up is called Cascade Model. Learning in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and E-Learning PLCs are the possibilities to scale up (Maaß &

Artigue, 2013). In the research project the focus is on scaling up in the Cascade Modell, because it offers most likely the chance to implement innovations from research into practice at schools.

Coburn (2003) defines the following four quality criteria to evaluate the process of scaling up, which can help to identify more or less successful adaptations from the PD-course for facilitators to the PD-courses for teachers. For Coburn (2003) this process is successful if the facilitated innovations are understood and realized (a) in *depth* and (b) *sustainable*. Also (c) as much people as possible should be reached (*spread*) and (d) the target group has to make the innovation its own (*shift in reform ownership*). The more the four interdependent criteria are fulfilled, the more successful the process of scaling up is. This relevance does not change the fact that even if “the issue of ‘scale’ is a key challenge for school reform, yet it remains undertheorized in the literature“ (Coburn, 2003, p. 3; Rösken-Winter et al., 2015).

### The relevance of different roles for facilitators

The situation in Germany is that facilitators are typically more or less experienced teachers and work part-time as facilitators. Because institutionalised education for facilitators does not exist (yet), facilitators are quite often marginally skilled. They work in two roles at once, which can lead to role conflicts. Especially situations in which the expectations as teachers and as facilitators are mutually exclusive are problematic. But even if the two roles are not problematic for the facilitators, the evaluation of PD-courses for facilitators should always take into account that the participants have these two roles. Table 1 exemplifies this aspect in adaption of Lipowsky and Rzejak’s (2012) model for the effects of teachers PD for facilitator (similar to Guskey, 2000).

#### Facilitator in the role as...

##### ...facilitators:

F1: the response of the facilitator  
 F2: the learning process  
 F3: the planning of PD-courses  
 F4: the facilitation of PD-courses  
 F5: the learning of teachers



##### ...teacher:

T1: the response of the teacher  
 T2: the learning process  
 T3: the planning of lessons  
 T4: the facilitation of lessons  
 T5: the learning of students

**Table 1: Adaption of Lipowsky and Rzejak’s model for teacher PD for facilitators**

### Types of knowledge for PD

The differentiation of types of knowledge can be a starting point to determine the aims and contents of PD-courses for facilitators. Several authors already defined relevant types of knowledge for PD for teachers. Shulman (1986) claimed that a “conceptual analysis of knowledge for teachers would necessarily be based on a framework for classifying both the domains and categories of teacher knowledge [...]”

and the forms for representing that knowledge” (ibid., p.10). For him, the often-cited domains and categories are subject matter content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and curricular knowledge, and the forms of knowledge are propositional knowledge, case knowledge and strategic knowledge. The focus of this paper is on Shulman’s PCK, which will be further differentiated. Fenstermacher (1994) distinguishes knowledge facts in another way than Shulman does. He focuses on the differences between knowledge as a result of teaching experiences and knowledge as a result of research on teaching. While drawing on Fenstermacher’s approach, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) differentiate the owner of knowledge further. For Cochran-Smith and Lytle knowledge can be constructed in three ways: knowledge-in-practice (teachers experiences: e.g. practical knowledge), knowledge-for-practice (knowledge from science: e.g. categories for practices) and knowledge-of-practice (knowledge from reflections). All of these types of knowledge are important for the process of scaling up: e.g. without knowledge-in-practice innovations would not reach practice in schools (table 1), because the use-oriented teacher would not accept the whole PD (Geissler, 2001); e.g. without knowledge-for-practice teachers could not implement ideas on their own (shift in reform ownership) and reach sustainability; and e.g. without knowledge-of-practice the innovations are not understood in depth. For facilitators it is important to keep in mind, that all three types of knowledge have specific interdependent contents for the role as a facilitator and the role as a teacher.

But facilitators, especially those with little experiences as facilitators, tend to focus on knowledge-in-practice in their PD-courses for teachers (Wassong i.p.; Zwetschler et al., 2016). Thereby they fulfil the well-known expectations of teachers in PD-courses to learn practically useful aspects (e.g. Geissler, 2001). This focus of the facilitators even tends to fit their reflection and practice in their role as teachers – the more they reflect their lessons in categories of knowledge-for-practice, the more they facilitate those categories (Zwetschler et al., i.p.).

### **Relevance of perceived self- and group-efficiency for facilitators**

The connection between job-performance and the degree of experiences as facilitators hints to a further aspect: the self-efficiency, the individual beliefs to successfully overcome challenges by oneself (e.g. Bandura, 1997). Khursid et al. (2012) point out that a lower degree of job performance and perceived self-efficiency is typical for novice teachers in comparison to experienced teachers. This implemented development is accomplished by the development of group-efficiency, the beliefs of a group to successfully overcome challenges as a whole (e.g. Bandura, 1997). Schmitz and Schwarzer (2002) point out, that the longer people are part of a team, their perceived group-efficiency decreases in comparison to the increasing perceived self-efficiency. However, it is not yet known in how far these connections and implemented developments can be adopted for the performance and development of (novice) facilitators.

The aim of this paper is to better understand challenges of novice teachers and which connection to the construct of self- and group-efficiency exists.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

One possibility to overcome the described challenges lies in immersing facilitators in both roles (as a teacher and as a facilitator) in depth, but this would last a (unrealistic) long time. Typical PD-courses for facilitators endure only some days with distance phases in between and cannot realize both aspects in depth. Therefore, the facilitators have to find ways to compensate this gap in their education. As all facilitators worked together with colleagues and appreciated this cooperation, the construct of perceived group-efficiency seems to be relevant to understand their job performance - so the following research questions are pursued:

Q1 In how far does facilitators' self-efficiency of knowledge-in-practice, knowledge-for-practice and knowledge-of-practice influence their cooperation and their perceived group-efficiency?

Q2 In how far can the cooperation with colleagues foster the intended learning processes of the PD-course towards knowledge-in-practice, knowledge-for-practice and knowledge-of-practice for facilitators?

## **METHODOLOGY OF THE CASE STUDY**

### **Data gathering**

To answer these research questions sixteen semi-structured interviews (of 45-120 minutes each) were conducted. All interviewees took part in a PD-course for facilitators and facilitated PD-courses for teachers afterwards. All forms of knowledge (in-, for- and of-practice) were part of the PD-course for facilitators. The interview questions dealt with the general design of their PD-course for teachers, their PCK of the content, their experiences in the PD-course for facilitators and their experiences with the topic as teachers. To get further insights, we also simulated parts of a planning process of a PD-course for teachers. Eleven of these interviews were part of a project on facilitators in cooperation with Kim-Alexandra Rösike, Bärbel Barzel, Susanne Prediger and the author, the others were conducted by the author.

### **Data analysis**

All interviews were audio recorded. A qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2015) was conducted by paraphrasing aspects according to the research questions. Selected parts were transcribed and analysed in detail by Vergnaud's (1996) theory of conceptual fields. This theory offers "a fruitful and comprehensive framework for studying complex cognitive competences and activities and their development" (ibid., p. 219). Theorems-in-action as "proposition[s] that [...] [are] held to be true by the individual subject for a certain range of situation" (ibid., p. 225) and concepts-in-action as "categories [...] that enable the subject to cut the world into distinct [...] aspects and pick up the most adequate selection of information" (ibid.) were the focus

of the interpretative analysis. So the theory of conceptual fields enabled a deeper understanding of the facilitator's thoughts.

## **EMPIRICAL INSIGHTS FROM TWO CASES**

To exemplify the results, prototypical empirical insights of two representative facilitators are presented. The first facilitator is Greg. He is an experienced teacher with only little experiences as a facilitator. The second one is Julia, who is experienced as teacher and facilitator.

### **Greg: Cooperating to compensate gaps in knowledge-for-practice**

Greg focuses in his PD-courses for teachers primarily on knowledge-in-practice. Thereby he fulfils teachers' expectations. So sustainable scaling up in depth and with a shift in reform ownership probably will not happen due to his exclusive focus (Zwetzschler et al., 2016).

In the following sequence Greg explains his needs as a facilitator:

Greg: That is certainly uh as I said also the part of pedagogical content knowledge based on uh let me say of the theory, wished not only examples, whether even more, what is the extent, what's the PCK idea, the advantage of theory uh beginning, let me say in the first main part, that you know there – even more in depth [...] That you just get more experienced in that aspect.

Greg wants to learn more about PCK, playing for him a role as a background theory. PCK as a theory explains for him the extent and the idea behind examples. It is a type of knowledge that categorises his action. So his need can be condensed as a need for knowledge-for-practice: he wants to be more experienced in knowledge-for-practice. Other paragraphs show, that he has no needs for knowledge-in-practice. His perceived low self-efficiency with respect to knowledge-for-practice and high self-efficiency with respect to knowledge-in-practice matches the analysed problem of his PD-courses: the main focus is on knowledge-in-practice. But knowledge-for-practice is also part of his PD-courses for teachers, although his prior knowledge and the PD-course for facilitators are insufficient for him.

In the following sequence Greg explains how he prepares his PD-course for teachers:

Greg: And that is the way how we did it [...]. We chose a topic, that matched our work [at school], that was our topic after the next, so that you could prepare

Interviewer: hmhm

Greg: and uh that's indeed the way how it is here either. I said: So now you can individualise and differentiate

Interviewer: yes

Greg: So you take aspect uh out of your textbook, and than I also talked to Ben, I said: Ben, you already did lots of PD-courses for teacher

Interviewer: hmhm

Greg: Yeah, I said: Do you have something against, uh, if you send me one of your versions, that I can design my own by it, what the content is about. And yeah, then Ben sent me that and then I did with the staff, no matter if it is about individualising and differentiating or productive practicing, took that and worked with it.

Interviewer: hmhm

Greg: as basis, as scaffold

In the first three paragraphs Greg describes his preparation for PD in his lessons at school. He tries to get practical experiences in his lessons, which he can use afterwards in his PD-courses for teachers. His experiences prepare himself for knowledge-in-practice in PD-courses for teachers. Thereby he perceived high self-efficiency with respect to knowledge-in-practice. In the last three paragraphs Greg adds a second well-established aspect of his preparation for PD-courses for teacher. He asks his experienced colleague Ben for his materials. These materials are the basis for Greg and help him to identify and organise the content. So the ideas of Ben help Greg to compensate his gaps in knowledge-for-practice. The combination of his practical experiences and the theoretical ideas and structure of Ben guide Greg in creating his PD-course for teachers. This helps him to overcome individual problems with knowledge-for-practice. So his perceived group-efficiency is in general higher than his perceived self-efficiency.

### **Julia: Cooperating not needed – her own ideas are good enough (or better)**

Julia balances in her PD-courses for teachers the different forms of knowledge and mediates competently between teachers' experiences and aims of the courses (Zwetzschler et al., 2016).

In the following sequence Julia speaks about her needs as a facilitator, also in relation to cooperating with colleagues:

Julia: Well, if there would be anything that I would like to learn, than I would claim it.

Interviewer: hmhm

Julia: But I realised in a PD-course for teachers, that I, that we did in a team – a new facilitator of the team came along

Interviewer: hmhm

Julia: She is also experienced in PD-courses for teachers [  
[...]

Julia: How great the extent was, what she prepared, right?

Interviewer: hmhm

Julia: It began with little notes on each table, where they, well – things like that, that aren't important for me in PD-courses for teacher

Interviewer: hmhm

Julia: Things I don't need, but they are good for colleagues. I think, that in the cooperation with others I often realise aspects missing aspects in my work [...] Hmhm. I believe, that if, if I could consciously name something, that I need

Interviewer: hmhm

Julia: Then, I would consciously get that and uhm – break me in

In the paragraphs Julia reports on her needs as a facilitator. Directly at the beginning and again at the end she claims that she would try to overcome needs if she had some. This shows her beliefs of having no (important) needs at the moment. Her perceived self-efficiency as a facilitator seems to be very high. In the middle she talks about experiences of cooperation. In those situations, she realizes differences between her work and the work of others. She claims, that those moments can be starting points for her to identify further needs as a facilitator. But in the end she dissociates herself from the other facilitator, by judging the differences as irrelevant for her. In contrast to the benefit of the cooperation for Greg, it stays suspect if Julia judges the cooperation as beneficial. For her the perceived collective-efficiency seems to be lower than her perceived self-efficiency.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The knowledge of facilitators and the perceived self-efficiency seems to match the benefit of collegial cooperation and perceived collective-efficiency for the different forms of knowledge: Greg perceived high self-efficiency with respect to knowledge-in-practice, whether his perceived self-efficiency with respect to knowledge-for-practice was relatively low. Although his perceived self-efficiency with respect to one type of knowledge is high and one is low, he focuses on cooperation and his perceived general group-efficiency is high. Instead, Julia's perceived self-efficiency is high with respect to knowledge-in- and knowledge-for-practice and her perceived group-efficiency is low. She doesn't focus on cooperation. Table 2 shows these matches.

	<b>knowledge-in-practice</b>	<b>knowledge-for-practice</b>	<b>focus on cooperation</b>
<b>Greg</b>	Self-efficiency(high) v General group-efficiency (high)	Self-efficiency (low) ^	✓
<b>Julia</b>	Self-efficiency(high) v group-efficiency (low)	Self-efficiency(high) v group-efficiency (low)	X

## **Table 2: Matches: self- and collective-efficiency for forms knowledge and cooperation**

These results lead to the following theses: As long as the perceived group-efficiency with respect to *one* form of knowledge is higher than the perceived self-efficiency, the facilitators prefer cooperation.

It seems as if the facilitators compensate gaps in forms of knowledge by cooperation, which supports the adaption of the already explained findings about self- and group-efficiency for the group of facilitators: Novice facilitators seem to have a lower degree of perceived self-efficiency in comparison to experienced facilitators. And the more experienced facilitators are, the lower the perceived group-efficiency is.

This qualitative study shows first matches between forms of knowledge, specific competences and self-efficiency with collective-efficiency and cooperation. Further research is needed to broaden these qualitative results and confirm them quantitatively.

Another aspect for further research is the quality of cooperation. In the case of Greg the collaboration enabled him to prepare and facilitate PD-courses for teachers, but his courses focus excessive on knowledge-in-practice, impeding scaling up in depth (Coburn, 2003). This illustrates that the cooperation could not enhance the PD-course. Greg needs further learning situations. Aspects of a PLC like the mutual visitation and shared visions could support his learning process (Hord, 1997, for visitations: Khursid et al., 2012). As a consequence of these results focussing on the Cascade Modell for scaling up should be reconsidered: if especially facilitators with gaps in forms of knowledge tend to cooperate with colleagues – how can we take this systematically aspect into account and improve the quality of the cooperation?

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