Abstract. This chapter focuses on the role of professional development in the educational sphere, and its effect on the outcomes of the integration of ICT in school life. A major obstacle to meaningful educational change is the obsolete structures of prevailing professional development processes for teachers. This is evidenced in the inappropriate sectarian division between pre-service and in-service teacher training. This chapter argues for a radical change in the most basic structures of teacher training, including the blurring of the distinction between pre-service and in-service training. It examines the problem holistically to include the economic, social and environmental issues that affect both teachers and pupils as groups and as individuals. Finally, some examples of initiatives in Greece lead to strategic recommendations for the implementation of training processes to enhance the potential of ICT in education.

INTRODUCTION

The notions of “quality” and “change” that dominate the social realities of schooling today – at a time when Information Technologies, computers and the Net are penetrating every aspect of our economy, working life, education and society and causing major changes in perceptions, attitudes and practice – have set the scene for renewed discussion on teacher training and professional development. Both the quality of education and educational change are intrinsically and strategically linked to the training and development of teachers, especially in today's evolving Information Society and knowledge-based economy.

Teachers live in a changing world and are expected to prepare the future generations for this changing world. The new questions being raised and the new answers to old questions that are emerging call for much deeper reflection on social and economic change than former “traditional” standards of education systems. To put it more clearly, teachers are being asked, much more intensively than in the past, not only to transform or adapt their classroom practice, but to come to grips with a “culture of change” brought about by the new “digital” means of handling and presenting information and by social changes (“school openness”), all facilitated by the widespread use of ICT in almost every activity and facet of daily life. This requires new learning skills and roles for both teachers and students. In today's context, educational systems, schools and teachers are invited to interpret new realities and find ways of working that will enable students to interpret and cope with these new realities. The “culture of change” dominating today’s society has made continuous professional development a very crucial issue.
Teacher training and development seem to be viewed as a professional right and obligation, yet this can be problematic. Training entails notions of professional accountability as well as self-fulfillment and development. It is linked to a general problem of “professionalism” as defined by the multiplicity of stakeholders in teaching practice. In our societies, teachers are meant to simultaneously serve pupils, parents, the local community, the school and society in general. And so we end up with a kind of “need overload”, and even conflict, tension and anxiety.

At the same time, the notion of teachers’ professional status and role is being politically challenged. It has been argued that the increased intensification of the teacher's workload, coupled with the increased demand for continuous professional development and de-/re-skilling, have led to a situation that deprives teachers of essential control over their work and the ability to respond to or initiate change. Teacher training and continuous professional development add a further dimension to the debate. In other words, the demand for increased teacher training should be linked to a re-definition of their professional role and status as implied by the current realities of teaching.

While there is already strong evidence regarding the importance of teacher training and the way that it should be organized and effectively delivered, teachers’ professional development is not yet being dealt with as a priority in the agenda of policy makers in education, teacher associations and society at large. It seems that although certain clear findings have emerged from pilot projects and case studies, the means are not being provided to put these into action, since:

- in-service training and professional development are generally considered as processes supplementary to initial (pre-service) teacher training, allowing teachers to refresh their knowledge and acquire a broader understanding of subject matter, or
- teacher education is conducted as a means of facilitating the implementation of innovations and changes in the school system and is centrally organized to support the introduction of change/innovation (short-term perspective).

What chance is there that things will improve? In the present chapter, we highlight critical aspects and pertinent issues related to teachers' professional development as a driving factor in raising the level of quality in education, at the same time presenting our analysis from a positive perspective. The author shall also use this opportunity to recount experiences and recent developments in the Greek education system as a case of reference for the majority of European countries.

**THE EMERGING TEACHER TRAINING “MARKET”**

In a number of policy documents drawn up in Europe and other countries of the world, the focus is placed on the need to improve the quality of education and encourage innovation. To this end, reference is inevitably made to the importance of teachers’ in-service training as a catalyst for the continuous adjustments that have to