

UCET Discussion paper on Continuing Professional Development UCET CPD Working Group, January 2021

Summary

This report is based on the wealth of experience and scholarship shared by UCET colleagues. It reflects on key aspects of CPD-related policy, practice and research over the past 50 years and highlights the following principles:

- Education professionals require an **expanding range of competences** over their career; these are often **context-specific**, unforeseen and go beyond any single framework
- As well as being **research-informed**, CPD should **engage educators in theory** so they can adapt their learning creatively to enrich their own setting
- **Reflective practitioners** are best cultivated by supporting teachers' in conducting their own research
- Effective CPD is built on **trusted relationships** between deliverers and learners and include a strong element of **coaching** and/or **mentoring** often by peers
- For sustained impact, CPD needs to be **sustained over time** (at least across two terms), making use of **multiple formats**
- By engaging teachers in their wider social, economic and environmental contexts, CPD will ensure **responsible professionals** in the fullest sense
- Developing teachers' **agency** will enable them to consider their practice critically, lead their own learning and thus maximise the positive impact they have on their learners
- All CPD should be subject to **robust quality assurance** mechanisms.

1. Introduction

The marketisation of continuing professional development (CPD) provision for schools over recent decades has brought benefits in terms of choice and enhanced professionalism but has raised concerns around quality assurance (QA) as provision has become increasingly fragmented. The Government's current tendering and procurement exercise for the national roll-out of the Early Career Framework (ECF), for example, marks an effort to ensure consistency

of content while moving a step closer towards the comprehensive privatisation of CPD provision for schools. The QA processes that run alongside these developments tend to focus on programmes and projects as they happen while it is equally important to evaluate longer term outcomes and impact, both in relation to particular provision and across the range of provision. The national roll-out of the ECF, together with the revised National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) for school leaders, prompted members of UCET's CPD Forum to come together in September 2020 to discuss our own preferred approaches to the structure, content and delivery of effective teacher CPD. Our initial discussions were wide-ranging while being guided by UCET's agreed statement on the Intellectual Basis of Teacher Education (IBTE) (BERA/RSA, 2014). This document reflects our discussion while adding some historical background and additional information on what research tells us about effective CPD.

2. Historical background

Taking a 50-year perspective, the James Report of 1972 outlined requirements for in-service education for teachers (INSET) with a focus on knowledge and skills (DES, 1972). James recommended that teachers should be entitled to INSET with pay for no less than one school term for every seven years of service. Needless to say, this recommendation was not taken up by government.

In the 1980s, growing dissatisfaction with the ad hoc nature of CPD left the government to try to standardise provision through Teacher Related in Service Training (TRIST), Grant Related in Service Training (GRIST) and Grants for Educational Support and Training (GEST) which took a school and system focus.

Post Education Reform Act (1988), appraisal schemes linking teachers' professional needs with schools' requirements became more common. Devolution of funding to schools and the introduction of five INSET days gave schools funding which could be used in part to decide on, provide and buy in training and consultancy for CPD.

In the 1990s, further devolution of funding to schools led to a greater focus on local education authorities (LEAs) to provide and deliver training. There was a marked increase in private training schemes, including consultants specialising in leadership and an increased involvement with industry. These changes, coupled with more 'flexible' and market driven university structures (Bolam, 2000), brought changes culminating in more systematic, programmed and professionalised CPD opportunities (Law and Glover, 1998).

Founded in 1994, the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) provided HEIs with opportunities to bid for professional development delivery for both early professional development (EPD) projects as well as MA Projects (TDA n.d.). Meanwhile, the Masters for Teaching and Learning (MTL) was introduced under the Brown premiership to encourage research informed practice within schools in challenging circumstances (CUREE 2009).

The above national strategies aimed to provide direction via regional directors to help support and shape the provision for teachers and teacher educators. As a result, the collaboration between the National College of School Leadership (NCSL), Universities and Schools, reflected how collaborative professionalism can lead to school improvement broadly conceived.

After the 2010 General Election these schemes and the funding for them were soon abandoned. The DfE launched and published 'Learning and Teaching: A strategy for professional development' (71/2010). Devised in consultation with the General Teaching Council (GTC), the strategy was designed to ensure that teachers were given more opportunities for relevant, focused, effective professional development; and that professional development was placed at the heart of school improvement. This document defined CPD as 'activities...that increase the skills, knowledge and understanding of teachers, and their effectiveness in schools and also promotes continuous re-examination, reflection and of professional learning.'

3. Current initiatives and frameworks

Since 2010, the teaching profession experienced many changes, for example, the Education White Paper 2010, brought with it a wave of reforms, addressing changes in the National Curriculum for all Key Stages, as well as the way in which assessments take place. Funded MA provision was replaced by a scholarship scheme, which was subsequently removed after 2012. School Direct and Teaching Schools were also introduced with the latter envisaged as the hub of for teacher education, newly qualified teacher recruitment and Appropriate Body provision, all of which involved a move away from existing expertise held by Local Authorities, Universities, and Training Schools, who tended to work in collaboration.

Projects such as the Early Professional Development provision, which was a funded project for recently qualified teachers (RQTs) was removed leaving a gap in the support that had been provided prior to the 2010 White Paper. Meanwhile, Moor *et al.* (2005) had already highlighted that the teaching profession lost up to a quarter of its workforce within five years so the impending recruitment crisis was quite foreseeable.

The Carter Review (2015) highlighted the varying practices in initial teacher education (ITE) as well as the importance of mentoring, and the mentor's role to support the teacher trainee to grow and develop as new teachers. The review highlighted areas that needed to be addressed further by the ITE curriculum, for example, training and development to meet learners' needs (Teachers' Standard 5, DfE, 2012) and behaviour management.

As a result of the review, three documents were produced in 2016 entitled: Initial Teacher Training: Government Response to the Carter Review, which included:

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- Developing Behaviour Management Content for Initial Teacher Training
 - A Framework of Core Content for Initial Teacher Training
 - National Standards for school-based Initial Teacher Training Mentors

The 2016 Education White Paper continued to highlight the importance of extended Initial Teacher Education and Newly Qualified Teacher development.

These initiatives were all responded to in a variety of different ways, The Framework of Core Content (DfE, 2016a) was used by providers to map their provision, and to ensure that they embed the suggested issues outlined by both the Carter Review and the Framework. Mentor Training was mapped against the National Standards, and it was often noted that Ofsted Reports would make reference to practices in relation to these frameworks.

In addition, the Department for Education published the Standard for Teachers' Professional Development (DfE, 2016b), this document stated that CPD needed to adhere to the following requirements:

Effective teacher professional development is a partnership between:

- **Headteachers and other members of the leadership team;**
- **Teachers;** and
- **Providers of professional development expertise, training or consultancy.**

In order for this partnership to be successful:

1. Professional development should have a focus on **improving and evaluating pupil outcomes.**
2. Professional development should be underpinned by **robust evidence and expertise.**
3. Professional development should **include collaboration and expert challenge.**
4. Professional development programmes should be **sustained over time.** And all this is underpinned by, and requires that:
5. Professional development must be **prioritised by school leadership.**

(DfE, 2016b)

While this is open to a wide range of interpretation, the transactional, if not mechanistic emphasis on 'improving and evaluating pupil outcomes' may preclude some of the wider purposes of CPD.

The Chartered College of Teaching (2016) was also introduced as the professional body for the teaching profession, currently delivering CPD opportunities via its Chartered Teacher Course (2018) and Chartered Leadership Course (2020).

As **teacher retention** became a key concern, the Government set out its vision of how it would retain teachers within the first 5 years of their careers in the 2019 Teacher Retention and Recruitment Strategy. This vision included the Early Careers Framework (ECF) within which it outlined the requirement for a 2-year support programme for Early Careers Teachers (ECT). In addition, it outlined the value of mentoring, and how it could make a significant difference in supporting ECT to progress and flourish.

The early pilot for the ECF is currently being delivered and all the pilot materials will be made available online for others to engage with. In addition, interested providers are currently engaged in bidding for future opportunities to deliver the ECF nationally. This procurement process sees large commercial organisations with limited expertise in teacher education and development collaborating with the sector to bid for the provision. The current reforms include the ITT Core Framework and a Trainee Teacher Behaviour Toolkit, both published in 2019. Although the National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) were initially decentralised, running through a local delivery model outlined in the 2010 White Paper, the 2020 NPQ reforms are moving more towards a more centralised approach, again with national scale contracts being awarded. The reform proposals include the removal of the National Professional Qualification for Middle Leaders (NPQML) which is being replaced with an NPQ for Teaching and Learning, NPQ for Behaviour and an NPQ for Leading Teacher Development. These NPQs aim to provide a development pathway for teachers to continue to progress during the first five years of their practice. The principal idea is that the ITT core Framework, ECF and NPQs work together to create a clear professional pathway to ensure that ECTs are able to continue to grow and develop throughout their journey to become confident professionals. That said, there are concerns that the removal of the generic NPQML will leave a significant gap in CPD provision given that many OFSTED reports, of both primary and secondary schools, highlight the continuous need for general middle leadership development.

All of this suggests that any CPD provision needs to align with this ethos of interconnectivity as well as being underpinned by sound practice and being research informed. It should be noted that the emerging picture provides rich and varied opportunities for UCET members to play a prominent role in supporting the development and roll out of these key initiatives in order to make a lasting impact on the development of future teachers and educators. The extent to which these opportunities are mediated by large contracting companies may be determined by the ability of UCET members to work together to engage in the Government tendering processes.

4. What does research tell us about CPD?

The conventional wisdom is that if you get the design of CPD programmes right then you will get the desired outputs. A number of studies have focused on what effective CPD might look like (for example, Joyce & Showers, 1995). However, more recent studies challenge the orthodoxy (Kennedy, 2016). So, design features may be unreliable predictors of programme success and may have acquired almost mythical status in education.

Perhaps the most widely asserted design feature is that CPD should focus on content knowledge. However, Kennedy's review found that: "programs that focused *exclusively* on content knowledge tended to have less effect on student learning" (2016, p. 27, emphasis in original). "When programs offering content knowledge were successful, the content was subsumed under a broader goal, such as helping teachers learn to expose student thinking" (p. 27).

Another widely promulgated design feature is “collective participation” which can lead to proponents advocating professional learning communities (PLC). However, not all learning communities are equally effective and Kennedy reported that in her review one PLC, which used video-based analysis of classroom teaching actually had a negative impact on student learning.

A third design feature that is frequently regarded as critical is intensity which can refer to the total numbers of hours that teachers are involved in programmes or the total time (for example, 60 hours), from start to finish, of a programme (for example, two years). However, Kennedy’s review found that “intensity appears to be less effective when combined with prescriptive messages, for instance, but more effective when messages provide strategies or insights” (2016, p. 28).

No discussion of CPD design would be complete without mention of coaches and coaching. However, coaching does not always lead to effective CPD in terms of student outcomes. Kennedy reported that “Coaches in more effective programs collaborated with teachers on lesson planning, providing a model of strategic planning”.

Kennedy argues that “education research is at a stage in which we have strong theories of student learning, but we do not have well developed ideas about teacher learning, nor about how to help teachers incorporate new ideas into their ongoing systems of practice” (p. 29). Despite optimistic claims that we know “what works” in education we only know what might work in some situations at some times. Over-simplistic frameworks for CPD based on such notions of “effective teaching” are likely to fail to produce desired outcomes. CPD is far more than a framework designed to structure career development, narrowly conceived as a means of improving academic performance. It also needs to be understood as something that supports teachers’ criticality, intellectual curiosity, pedagogic creativity and professional agency through engagement in and with research and development.

5. Rationale and Key Principals

Building on UCET’s IBTE document, we note that all CPD should seek to develop teachers as:

- **competent and confident professionals** – clearly this is a concern of the ECF and NPQs although focusing on this aspect alone suggests a narrow conception of the teaching profession.
- The UCET CPD Forum has a desire for CPD to have a broader remit, that is **not narrowly and directly focused on student attainment**, the aims are to focus on developing educators to **deepen** their learning which, as a result will impact positively on their practice – and ultimately pupils’ attainment and resilience as lifelong learners.
- While adhering to broad principles such as **research-informed practice**, it is also critical to view teachers as individuals and to ensure **context-specific** CPD is embedded as a matter of principle.
- **epistemic agents** – this is of particular importance given the reduced opportunity to engage in theory during initial teacher education (ITE). Teachers can be agents of change in their professional settings in terms of more than knowledge and can address a wide range of desired outcomes for education.

If teachers do not have a grasp of the theoretical foundations, and underpinnings of their own practice they will find it hard to a) improve and respond to local changes in a bottom-up manner and b) respond effectively to changes that are promoted in a top-down manner.

- **reflective practitioners engaging in enquiry-rich practice** – this has been a running theme in teacher education from the work of Lawrence Stenhouse to current thinkers such as Door (2016). Teachers engaging in their own research should be seen as a central plank of CPD. It is

important that CPD develop reflective practitioners *and* critical thinkers. To ensure that CPD develops critical thinking and reflection, it is also imperative that it is research informed.

It is important that we do not shy away from encouraging critiques of the status quo by early career teachers. This is a sure way of ensuring that professionals including ECTs understand the rules-of-the-game and engage fully within them while seeking opportunities to improve practice and push boundaries beyond the frameworks within which they find themselves working.

- **responsible professionals** – this includes addressing the wider social, economic and environmental context in which teachers work; the ECF and NPQs are silent on broader societal values, aspects that can both engage learners and speak to the wider purposes that schools find themselves addressing and which can themselves provide valuable learning opportunities (e.g. aroundersenseofpurpose.eu).
- Although frameworks, such as the ECF are welcomed as an initial first step to systematise CPD provision, it is also important to continue to develop critical and reflective practitioners, who understand how to align with the expected frameworks and standards. Indeed, professionals need to learn to look at developing a broader range of competences as their career advances. It is important to look at the status quo with a critical lens, to enable educators to think creatively, and ensure that they are motivated to not only deepen their own learning but develop skills to address deep learning for learners in their care too. This principle needs to be embedded in CPD practices in general as well as at subject and phase specific levels.
- CPD is a **continuum from ITE through to senior leadership and/or through to increased confidence and professionalism over a teacher's career**. We therefore need to recognise that there are different dimensions in terms of content and purpose as well as different levels of CPD; these may be contested and are not necessarily linear. We may wish to consider strands and content in a three-dimensional model.
- In short, CPD frameworks also need to ensure that teachers have the opportunities to develop their **agency** to enable them to lead on their own learning, deepen their practice, and consider practice with a critical lens to develop research informed practices that will benefit all learners in their care.

6. Practical implications for (a) UCET members and (b) other stakeholders

This guidance provided by the key principles, is not intended to be overly prescriptive in relation to structure and delivery; we recognise that research on what is most effective can be inconclusive and more importantly, that there is a complex interplay between the structure, content and delivery of learning programmes that impact effectiveness more than any single dimension of a given programme.

That said, we do recommend that teacher CPD moves away from the single session 'firework display' model in favour of a longer-term approach, with repeated/multiple sessions wherever appropriate.

There is also scope for a mixture of face to face and additional online support, whether it be online taught sessions or online coaching and mentoring support. Online CPD does and can further provide opportunities for staff who may find access difficult as well as making training available in a manner that is more convenient to them. Historically, evidence does not provide a strong basis for recommending online methods for teacher CPD, however this is likely to change given recent advances in this area and with increased familiarity with a range of tools (TEAMs,

Zoom, etc.) during periods of lockdown due to COVID 19. Supervision of Master's and Doctoral study that supports powerful professional learning has already been happening online for years. Within longer-term CPD programmes, the use of portfolio-type models, particularly e-portfolios which will be familiar to NQTs and early career teachers, is also worth considering. This type of evidence, along with any formal certification, is key for supporting teachers as they advance in their careers. For this reason, we are cautious about narrowing the focus of CPD impact down to pupil attainment. It is self-evident that an additional focus on the well-being of teaching staff, particularly in their early career, will have a profound impact on retention. This will, in turn, favour student outcomes but this is a non-linear relationship that cannot be captured by short term data gathered over a single academic year.

We would also highlight the importance of CPD being flexible and adaptable to the needs of individual learners and their contexts. This can best be achieved through localised provision and through programmes that encourage learners to adapt and build upon content covered in taught sessions and which involve an element of student-led action research. While frameworks are useful for ensuring coverage of core material, every effort should be made to avoid detailed prescription; consistency must not be confused with uniformity. CPD needs to be responsive to changing circumstances and its content must support teachers in new learning e.g. in pedagogic developments for safe schools and in sustainable ecologies for education.

We commend and support the work of local networks, supported by School Groups and by HEIs, and the multi-dimensional relationships that are built in such contexts. These span a range of teacher education activities, including student placements and research. Such relationships can ensure that CPD is tailored to the needs of a particular school or a cluster of schools as well as adapting effectively to changes in circumstances as they arise.

The importance of strong quality assurance (QA) for CPD is also key. We recognise the robust nature of QA processes that underpin M-level and doctoral level professional development in HEIs, as well as those followed by other national providers (Chartered College, National Colleges, etc.).

Related to this, we would also stress the need to be assured of the qualifications of those providing CPD. We advocate the need for providers of CPD to hold appropriate qualifications and experience in a field related directly to their provision.

We expect CPD to be in line with the principles set out elsewhere in this document and in particular for CPD providers to be able to demonstrate how the work they are presenting is research informed. Contemporary research and policy developments are key elements that should be expected to underpin good CPD.

Concluding comments

In the light of the implementation of the ECF and the NPQ reforms, the UCET CPD principles provide an important complement, based on research and the rich experience of UCET members. We have outlined the key characteristics that we feel will enhance CPD to ensure that it has a powerful and lasting impact on the development of teachers and leaders for the future of the profession and the learners that it serves. The principles here highlight the need for CPD to be contextualised, bespoke, individualised, and provide teachers with agency to become critical, reflective practitioners, with a deep understanding of their practice, and with a strong knowledge base to impact positively on the learning of others and their organisations.

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