# Project Report

## Teachers' professional development: not whether or what but how

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## Introduction

This chapter draws on my research into teachers' experiences of professional learning. The teachers are recent graduates from the Institute of Education, University of London, Master of Teaching (MTeach) course, a mixed mode Masters course for teachers working in educational settings in London and the south of England. The research findings are based on interviews with a group of twenty MTeach graduates* from the course between December 2004 and December 2005. The study's findings are set against the current model in England of continuing professional development (CPD). This is a model that is predominantly concerned with measuring the impact of CPD in terms of student achievement through the implementation of policy initiatives. This model can be seen to have narrowed the purposes, content and modes of in-service teacher education, by creating a reductivist discourse of effective teaching and learning (Wrigley, 2004). Based on evidence from the teachers in this study it is suggested that there should be a new model of CPD. This will have as its focus the process of development, namely the 'how' of teachers' learning, which needs to be as central as the 'what', its content. This process should be located as much as possible in a cross-curricular, cross-phase, cross-experience approach to learning, which acknowledges and celebrates all teachers' experiences, expertise and insights, rather than privileging the voices of those who have their professional status through their appointed position. The CPD process would then be truly collaborative, active and engaging.

## The English CPD landscape: best practice or collaborative learning networks

### Best practice

Key to this research is an examination of the blurring by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in England and its associated agencies of professional development and professional learning. This examination is carried out by contrasting the views of twenty teachers about their diet of continuing professional development with the government's CPD Strategy document (DfEE, 2001) and the recent guidance, Leading and coordinating CPD in secondary schools (DfES, 2005). These documents focus mainly on professional development, defined as being about "increasing teachers' skills, knowledge and understanding" (DfEE, 2001, see www.teachernet.gov.uk). This highly technicist view of teacher development suggests that an increase is best achieved by a standardised approach to CPD, in which knowledge, skills and understanding are

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* One of the students was not an MTeach graduate but a student from another Institute course, who had written widely on CPD. To avoid constant reference to this, the research sample will simply be referred to as the MTeach graduates. All names have been anonymised.
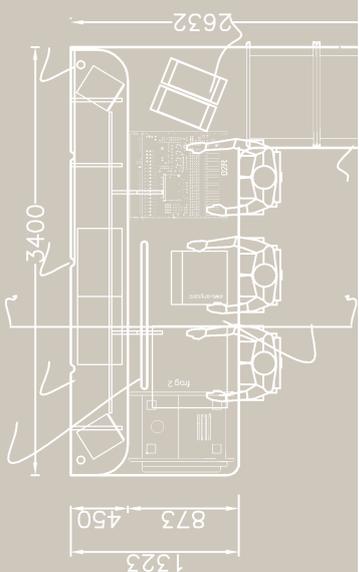
'delivered' to teachers, and thereby transferred, by a combination of top down experts and examples of best practice. This is certainly the view of the MTeach graduates in the research.

The best practice model of CPD has been challenged also by Fielding et al (2005), in a research report for the DfES, in which the teachers they interviewed advocated a 'joint practice development' model rather than the government's preference for transfer of best practice. In the research for this project, twenty teachers of varying experience, phase, subject specialism and school type were interviewed. Their views echoed those of Fielding's sample, in as much as the teachers most valued professional learning that was a genuine shared dialogue over time, in which teachers reflected and acted upon individual and collective experiences of teaching.

In summary, the teachers were saying that what was missing from their professional learning was

- engagement with their learning at a meta-level

- any sense of their responsibility for their CPD

- real collaboration that led to change in practice

and that what they wanted was

- to be actively engaged in their CPD, not to be passive recipients of other people's (often poorly delivered) sessions.

## CPD programmes and opportunities

The experiences of participants on the Institute of Education's Master of Teaching (MTeach) course are in stark contrast to many of the main professional development courses for teachers in England and much of the school-based and external training/INSET that they encounter. These professional development courses range from FastTrack for teachers in the beginning stages of their careers, Leading from the Middle (LftM) for subject leaders and middle managers, the National Professional Qualification for

Headship (NPQH) for aspiring headteachers and the Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers (LPSH) for experienced headteachers. Although there has been a shift towards learning as opposed to training on these courses, they remain largely technicist, positioned as they are in the DfES' CPD strategy (*see www.teachernet.gov.uk/ professionaldevelopment/cpdstrategy/*). This one-size-fits-all approach is characterised often by 'delivery' that is timed, proscribed and read out from a script, leading to it being anecdotally referred to as CPD by folder! The strategy overtly links CPD to performance management and school improvement and is focused on the passing on of national strategies to large groups of teachers en masse, not on individual or small group needs.

The process of many of the current CPD courses, no matter how interactive or evidence-based they are – and these are rare according to the twenty teachers in the study – is essentially a deductive, directive one. Knowledge of teacher development resides in the programme or course facilitators and is passed on to participating teachers, and is only then mediated by the teachers' experience. It is a 'received wisdom' or 'grand narrative' approach to knowledge construction, leading to professional development. CPD has become a large and growing part of the education 'market' in England in the last twenty years, fuelled mainly by national strategies, curriculum initiatives in the case of the Literacy, Numeracy and Key Stage 3 Strategies as well as school leadership programmes such as LftM, NPQH and LPSH. Within CPD provision Masters' courses are seen to play a part, albeit a minor one. The recently inaugurated Postgraduate Professional Development Programme, funded by the Training and Development Agency for schools (TDA, formerly the TTA), may be an exception to this rule. However, it still appears to be linked to government initiative-related CPD. Masters' courses are regarded still as relating more to personal choice of an intellectual, non-professional nature by individual teachers, rather than being 'of use' in impacting on classroom practice or whole-school development. Indeed, funding from government agencies for the MTeach at the Institute has not been

forthcoming because the course was not regarded, in the view of the TDA, as impacting directly on the classroom.

What teachers in England are currently faced with through the government's website (*http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/professionaldevelopment/*) is not just a rationale for the need for and value of CPD, but also a vast array of CPD guidance, pathways and professional networks. If teachers also wish to access the website of the General Teaching Council for England (*http://www.gtce.org.uk/cpd_home/*) or that of the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) (*http://www.ncsl.org.uk/programmes/index.cfm*), they will find a rich choice of CPD opportunities. Much of the CPD that comes from the GTCE and NCSL appears to try to move away from the delivery, top-down model of the national strategies, and locates CPD in local teacher networks. There are, for example, currently three GTCE learning networks, Achieve (for education professionals promoting racial equality and diversity in schools), Connect (for those who lead in CPD in schools) and Engage (for teachers starting their careers). These can be accessed at www.gtce.org.uk/networks. These networks are open to members of the GTCE, as is the Teacher Learning Academy (*www.gtce.org/uk/TLA*), which, as the website claims, "seeks to support learning communities within and beyond schools that enrich teaching practice and support innovation". As to the NCSL, the development of its online community learning environment, talk2learn, is, according to their website, "open to an increasingly wide range of school leaders – including headteachers, deputy heads, middle leaders and bursars". This online community provides access to a wide network of colleagues, experts and policy-makers with whom school leaders can "debate, discuss and share ideas". talk2learn is a crucial part of NCSL's Learning Gateway. The Learning Gateway is a managed learning environment, which supports the NCSL core business of delivering continuous professional development to school leaders. In addition to these CPD opportunities, there is also a large and growing volume of research available, through the National Foundation for Education Research (NFER) at http://www.nfer.ac.uk and the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre (see EPPI-Centre, 2003, 2005 and at www.eppi.ioe.ac.uk).

## Professional development or learning?

In the government's CPD documents mentioned earlier, there are references to professional learning, but the fine distinction between development and learning is not teased out or problematised. Learning is not articulated as the more personal, holistic process of professional development (Bolam, 1993; Day, 1999; Craft, 2000; Earley, 2005). Rather, in the DfES discourse, learning is seen as the acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding. This is a limited view of learning about teaching, which pays little regard to recent work about the effective learning of children and adults (see Watkins, 2005, for a more detailed analysis).

Improved teaching (and, by implication, pupils' learning) is best achieved by a standardised approach to CPD, in which knowledge, skills and understanding are 'delivered' to teachers by a combination of top down expert witnesses and the transfer of good practice from teacher to teacher and school to school. In their study for the DfES, Fielding et al (2005) challenged the view that transfer of good practice was the most effective form of professional development. In the study teachers talk about the need for the mutuality of the CPD process and the need to see CPD as a learning partnership, not as the 'giving and receiving' relationship of transfer, but as what the research team came to call 'joint practice development'. Although not defined, joint practice development is seen as a validation of "the existing practice of teachers who are trying to learn new ways of working and acknowledges the effort of those who are trying to support them" (Fielding et al, 2005, p.3). This emerges from "their having developed creative ways of working and the complex task of opening up and sharing practice with others" (Ibid.)

The GTCE and NCSL networks notwithstanding, the unswerving central emphasis on CPD as the means of improving standards (i.e. pupil performance) inevitably means that

episodes of professional learning tend to be gauged by their potential for impact on pupil achievement. In practice achievement refers to pupil performance in national tests and, therefore, the emphasis is ever more limited. There is an inevitability that this will create a reductionist view of the provision of CPD, whereby most courses and training are designed almost specifically with impact on pupil performance in mind. This leads to a highly instrumentalist view of CPD. It exists fundamentally to improve the performance of pupils, and, in so doing, underplays the value of professional learning as an end as well a means. In this way, the tendency of writers like Guskey (2000) to suggest evaluating CPD through a hierarchical typology is unsurprisingly welcomed by the dominant, impact-based CPD discourse. Guskey's five measurable features of CPD are ordered as below:

- participants' reactions

- participants' learning

- organisational support and change

- participants' use of new knowledge and skills

- pupil learning outcomes.

What the teachers in this study say runs counter to this hierarchy, foregrounding instead the need for the content and mode of delivery to engage them first, if CPD is to then benefit the pupils. Teachers' learning and, therefore, the rate and nature of their professional development are dependent on a combination of highly complex and human factors that do not fit neatly into a simple hierarchical and linear typology, which positions teachers' learning relatively low down the hierarchy.

## What is good professional learning for teachers?

### The research
In the research for this chapter, twenty MTeach graduates, teachers of varying experience, phase, subject specialism and school type were involved in the exit and follow-up interviews. Ten of the teachers had between two and five years' teaching experience, six had between five and ten, and the remaining four had between ten and twenty years' experience. Twelve were secondary school teachers, two came from the post-compulsory sector, five were primary school teachers (including one from a special school) and one worked in an Early Years' setting. Fifteen of the teachers were female; five were male. This sample is similar to the overall gender balance of the MTeach course. Although most of the teachers came from schools in London, several came from schools on the London fringe and two worked in schools over fifty miles from the Institute.

It is important to acknowledge the self-selecting nature of those who undertake the MTeach course and of those who took part in the interviews. Teachers in England who enrol for M-level courses represent a small minority of the profession, compared with those who are involved in accredited professional courses and training and with those who do not take up any professional learning other than one-day INSET courses or school-based training. Moreover, the uniqueness of the MTeach, particularly in its work with NQTs and teachers of only one or two years' experience, suggests that MTeach participants are a particular breed, characterised by strong personal and professional drive. As one of the stated underpinning principles of the MTeach is to develop a questioning, critically informed disposition towards educational orthodoxies, it is to be expected that the participants have a tendency to also question the focus, value and efficacy of much of their continuing professional development (CPD).

Nonetheless, these teachers have valid views to offer about the nature and content of CPD in England. The analysis of their responses provides the substance of this chapter. Data sources include individual and group interviews, and questionnaires. Analysis of these qualitative data is thematic and will be considered in the concluding section for its significance, in relation to the hierarchical typology of CPD impact by Guskey (2000), noted above. In addition, in November and

December 2005, eleven of the MTeach graduates were asked to reflect on the best CPD they could recall. This they subsequently posted into an online discussion group. Some of them had to go back a long way:

> "It pains me, therefore, to have to write this, but the best inset I have attended was the first one, back in the September of 2001. I fear this may not meet the criterion of 'recent', but it was a model of how to run a staff training session and has simply not been beaten." Andrew

This example was chosen not just because it was simply the best experience, but it contrasted so markedly with their usual CPD diet, as Andrew himself noted:

> "I have sat through so much bad inset, that I actually find it difficult to differentiate the merely boring from the utterly intolerable"

As noted earlier, four key themes emerged from the data. Careful scrutiny of the exit and follow-up interviews from December 2004 to December 2005 identified what the twenty teachers regarded as features of good and bad CPD, as noted in the list below.

In the subsequent online discussions, the four key themes of the study were developed and refined. It is the comments from the teachers that are the core of the thematic evidence that emerged from the year-long research study.

## Learning and meta-learning – theme 1

The first theme from the interviews was the need for these teachers to feel engagement with learning in general and their learning at a meta-level when involved in CPD. In good CPD the learning challenges them, taking them, as one of the teachers, Angela remarked, slightly 'out of their comfort zone'. Although this was often done, and needs to be done, in subject or phase groups, the opportunity to come into contact with teachers cross-phase, cross-subject and cross-experience was highly stimulating. To some extent this is untypical even of the forward-thinking learning networks that have been set up by the GTCE and the NCSL. Here networks are either hierarchically constituted, as with aspiring or serving headteachers at the NCSL, or where they are experience and position related, as for CPD leaders in the Engage strand of the GTCE networks and for teachers starting their careers in the Connect strand.

These learning exchanges on the MTeach could be at general level, as a primary school teacher, Millie, remarked:

> "I enjoyed the academic stimulus and the contact with other teachers, whom I would otherwise not normally come into contact with."

However, it did also lead to practical benefits with regard to the sharing of practice, or Fielding et al's (2005) joint practice development, to improve learning. A secondary teacher, Leanne, notes below

| Good | CPD | Bad |
|------|-----|-----|
| learning | | teaching |
| co-constructing | | judging |
| learning | | entertaining |
| learning | | performance |
| internal | | external |
| interactive | | passive (esp. PowerPoint) |
| challenging | | patronising |
| optional | | forced |
| high level | | low level |
| individual/group needs | | mass needs |
| ongoing | | one off |
| information (new knowledge) | | instruction (been there before) |

how she adapted a suggestion from Millie, the Year 2 teacher above, to her own practice:

"Yes, and someone from your group, when we first started 'Leading Learning', someone brought up 'Bubble Time', I can't remember who it was. Was it M (Primary)? Right, Years 7–13 now book a 'bubble' with me every week."

This learning is stimulated also when the course or training is an ongoing, not an isolated one-off experience. As both Theresa and John observed, this could also be an experience that was somewhat removed from the current favoured type of INSET or course.

"One good form of CPD I've been lucky to experience on an ongoing basis over the last year is the observation of NQTs. This wouldn't be regarded as a traditional form of CPD, but I feel more than anything over the past year, it's made me reflen and improve my own practice." Theresa

"Probably the best example I had last term was training on transition from Reception to Year 1. This has been part of an ongoing training programme looking at how to plan and create high-quality learning opportunities for young children that are not overly formal but challenge children to learn through play. Why was it good? Well, I think one of the key reasons was that it wasn't an isolated experience but one that was in a sequence of three. I strongly believe that isolated INSET experiences often have little sustainable and lasting impact as they get gradually subsumed back into the morass of day to day classroom life and other competing priorities." John

Engagement with learning works best when the CPD experience is refreshing, informative and stimulating. Bad CPD seems at times to distance itself from or ignore learning.

"Another failing of INSET/CPD is that so much of it is not about learning, which is why we all work in schools in the first place." Craig

However, more than this, a key ingredient is the amount of learning that teachers themselves do, both in its nature – the challenge referred to above by Angela – and the time to reflect on one's learning commented on by John. Craig sums this up when he describes

"… the best INSET I experienced was during my first year as a BT. This involved all the teachers spending a day experiencing what going to different classes was like. Each group went to three classes, my group went to Maths, RE and PE, we were taught by our colleagues for about 40 minutes and had time to ask questions, complete activities, etc. This INSET was excellent as it gave/ reminded everyone of what it felt like to have to move around the school and attend different classes as well as revisiting the atmosphere of sitting in class and sampling the different teaching styles of the subject teachers. Essentially it was about learning and whatever improves our understanding of learning is a valuable use of teacher time."

## Collaboration – theme 2

The second key theme about good or bad CPD was the extent to which real collaboration took place. Collaboration was characterised by the sharing and enacting together of practice and learning in a non-hierarchical way, reflecting the benefits noted above of a non-hierarchical approach to CPD. Theresa noted the benefits of the non-judgemental nature of such an approach, when talking about her NQT observations mentioned earlier.

"The follow-up dialogue with the NQT is equally useful, providing a forum for discussion about approaches – not all one-way. I think the two-way nature is really important, and I always hope the NQTs go away feeling inspired to look at things differently, rather than just feeling 'judged'.

Another secondary teacher, Laura,

developed this thinking by noting the mutual benefits possible from collaborative CPD whilst commenting on the rarity of such opportunities:

> "I totally agree that CPD should involve more observation of peers. We are always told that we should share good practice but this is rarely formalised. You seem to be enjoying this aspect of your role and it is great that it is has two-way benefits."

The teachers in this study said also that genuine opportunities for collaboration enabled them to develop through their CPD both the individual meaning making and co-construction of knowledge that characterises successful learning communities (Watkins, 2005).

In describing his best ever CPD experience, back in 2001, Andrew remarked that

> "[the] training, a twilight session, was on assessment, and drew on the *Inside the Black Box* work from King's. Summaries of the research were available, and a member of the King's team gave a short and stimulating presentation on their findings. Crucially, the meeting broke down into subject teams to allow colleagues to discuss the relevance of the research to practice in the school, and to construct a shared understanding – a pedagogy – of assessment.

And Craig re-inforces the benefits to all parties, not just the recipients, of the sharing and enacting of good practice.

> "By referring to observing and follow-up discussions with NQTs you have identified the very practical learning and reflection which is a big part of our BT training. I also think that the learning conversations which we can have with NQTs, BTs, etc are an invaluable part of our [my emphasis] CPD."

## Responsibility – theme 3

The third theme that featured strongly in the analysis was that these teachers felt that what was lacking in their CPD diet was an articulation of their responsibility for their CPD. This was not just in terms of what they needed personally but also what they had to contribute to the professional learning of others.

With regard to their own needs, the teachers had a general distrust of and disregard for mass INSET sessions, which were undifferentiated and simplistic.

> "My school management assumes that a staff of 60+ can all usefully be given the same lectures. I remember one Tuesday afternoon when they thought they were doing something clever by bringing someone in to talk about learning styles or something equally vital to understanding education. Unfortunately, I learnt nothing." Andrew

The teachers were also surprised and frustrated that their needs were not identified, let alone met. Craig, responding to Laura's comments about a bad INSET session on display, commented

> "[it's] obvious from your posting that good INSET/CPD must have an identifiable, practical application. I think this is essential, as teachers do not have the luxury of spare time to idly consider the latest trend in CPD/INSET. Does your school canvas teachers for their training needs? It sounds like the Display session was not based on demand by teachers."

And, in responding to John he repeated this view, using an interesting metaphor to illustrate the decontextualised and irrelevant nature of much bad INSET.

> "Good INSET is surely about responding to identifiable teaching and learning needs whereas bad INSET is often parachuted into our diaries without real context."

With regard to making contributions to their and others' CPD, some had been able to contribute what they had learned on the MTeach, especially the findings from their practice-based-enquiry. For a primary school teacher, Jane, this had benefits for the school and for her own learning.

> "I have used my Research to inform

curriculum development across the school. I have since been involved in Leadership and Management Training and was able to come to this course with prior knowledge, which was useful. I am much more aware of my own learning and it has given me a more positive approach and attitude towards myself …. I have moved much more towards being a 'reflective teacher' whose 'errors' are now seen as learning experiences."

For Claire too, in the post-compulsory sector, her research, in particular, and the course in general brought benefits to her college and herself.

"As a department we set up a Good Practice Group, of which I'm a part. I also fed back my findings from my research project. I hope and feel it has made an impact on my teaching and made me realise the benefits of keeping my finger on the pulse of theory."

However, it has not all been plain sailing and the contributions that some of the teachers have wanted to make have not always been received with universal acclaim, as Debbie, a secondary school teacher, noted

"[in] my school there was a sense of, 'we've got so much to do how can you possibly spend time doing this when you should be doing all the other stuff?' And, although I have shared with my department what I did, and I've implemented certain things in our workshops, it's very hard to share across school, because it's not really understood."

This resistance to others' contributions and their wish to contribute to CPD, particularly if they seemed too innovative, could be disheartening. Angela said in her secondary school it was

"…a bit demoralising [when some teachers don't engage with the thinking behind new ideas] because you know how much benefit it has. You want other people to see how much benefit it has. People don't necessarily see it …. You try to get others to look at new, different ways of doing certain things. I am getting some resistance from older members of staff."

In their research, Fielding et al (2005) noted that teachers benefited most from professional development activities, which engaged them in learning about their practice in an atmosphere of trust and mutuality. The distrust that teachers may have about CPD, that it is imposed on them regardless of need and experience, may explain some of the resistance noted above. For the teachers in my research distrust often took the form of trusting more in practising teachers in general as CPD leaders, rather than experts from outside. Also, they tended to trust and benefit more from teachers working in similar contexts. Talking about a generally bad whole-day INSET experience, Theresa said that,

"[the] part of the day that many people did find useful was a set of 'spotlights' from staff on ways they're using ICT already. So why not spend the INSET teaching each other, rather than sitting in front of an 'expert' all day?"

What tied in also to a feeling or professional contribution to their CPD was the element of choice that they had, which per se often led to more enjoyable and fruitful CPD experiences. As Laura noted:

"On joining my new school in September I attended an internal course on using Interactive whiteboards run by the school's ICT Manager. The format was a PowerPoint presentation combined with demonstrations over an hour. Questions were answered throughout. It was effective because it was a very practical session with demo. There was also a chance to try out some of the things he has taught us…. The training was also optional and I chose to go, so that might be significant – it was not imposed blanket training that we get on INSET days!"

## Active engagement – theme 4

The fourth and final theme emphasised the need for CPD to be active and experiential. These teachers wanted to be engaged

actively in their CPD. They did not want to be lectured to and at by external or internal experts, mainly because they did not learn much from the experience.

> "One bad example of CPD came last term, when a guy… came to do a whole school INSET. There were a number of things that made it ineffective: firstly, he spent a lot of time trying to entertain us with jokes, anecdotes and QuickTime videos of sheep saying their times tables. Vital in a long INSET, yes, but not at the expense of learning …. In short, the INSET had all the elements of a bad or average lesson – a focus on teaching and 'entertainment' over learning, and a lack of ways to ensure any learning there was had been sufficiently embedded by the learners." Theresa

They often resented this all the more because they knew that they would be heavily criticised as teachers if they taught in this lecture style, as Theresa and Craig, independent of one another, emphasised:

> "It amazes me that approaches that would be criticised by Ofsted in a lesson observation seem to be the preferred model (government or otherwise) for the 'teaching' of teachers." Theresa

> "I have also thought many times, how come we are expected, encouraged to teach in a certain way yet CPD/INSET is usually a lecture in a way that would create serious discipline problems within the classroom context? It really does lend a 'do as I say and not as I do' approach to much of our CPD." Craig

Often the over-reliance on and inappropriate use of technology only compounded the problems of the lecture style, 'stand and deliver' approach to delivering CPD.

> "I remember another interminable hour-long instruction on the use of data (when I'd just spent a year – again on the MTeach – processing enough data to break a mainframe); this last one rambled on in an vague

manner, with the lecturer talking to number-packed 'PowerPoint' slides, captured from page after page of 'excel'. Colleagues battled on, man- and woman-fully peering valiantly at the screen, cocking their heads on one side and trying to stop the numbers dancing in front of their eyes. Occasionally, the instructor would randomly throw in some really impressive theoretical concept (which she had just learnt on her course at King's) which regrettably had little connection with the ostensible purpose of her talk. On one of these occasions, I thought to myself 'do they run their classes like this?' There'd be a bloody riot'. Andrew

What then is active engagement in CPD for the teachers in this study? Nancy, a secondary school teacher gave this recent example from her school:

> "Because we've going to have OFSTED soon, in the INSET we were going to be told about how OFSTED grade lessons. This school is really going for the upper end, we're looking for excellent for everything. We had the deputy head and headteacher leading the session. What happened was the deputy head had this totally interactive session, absolutely. First of all we had to stick post-it notes on each others' heads and try and describe the best cartoon we've seen. Then we were sticking post-it notes on our heads about what makes a good lesson. What do you think are the characteristics of a good lesson? We had to stick all of them on the wall. Then we had a different teacher read it out to the group. Then we watched videos and discussed them with the person next to us, what we thought the grade should have been for that. Then we looked at some feedback for a lesson observation. We were trying to, just by reading the text, decide what the level of the lesson would have been. So it was the most interactive thing I had and there was all this opportunity for learning more and discussing, which was really great. But meanwhile, the headteacher

was writing the observation sheets out for the whole thing. So she was observing the lead session. And at the end she went and gave us her feedback about what she thought was good about the session. She actually graded the deputy head in front of everybody and it was really good. It doesn't happen very often, but it was really practising what you preach."

John, from his primary school perspective, sums up Nancy's example when he reflects on the good features of his course on children's transition from Reception to Year 1,

"The day itself was effective because there was a very high degree of interactivity between participants, coupled with a bond that we were pursuing the same goals of creating a more appropriate, play-based curriculum. ALL of the people delivering presentations etc. are current classroom practitioners which helps no bounds when it comes to question the do-ability of what is being advocated."

## Overall – issues and impact

Returning to the earlier summary of the research findings, these twenty teachers have indicated that what they find most enhances their professional learning are:

- an engagement with learning, the pupils' and theirs

- a sense of their responsibility for their CPD

- real collaboration with people they trust

- active engagement in their CPD, not being passive recipients of expert advice.

However, how does this sit with Guskey's (2000) five-stage hierarchy of effective CPD, especially the ultimate need for it to impact on pupils' achievement? From the evidence presented it might seem that these teachers are only interested in CPD from the point of view of their reactions, their learning, organisational support and their use of new

knowledge and skills and they are not looking for, or concerned with, evidence of impact on pupils. Are they, indeed, seeing CPD from a somewhat professionally self-indulgent perspective as some teacher-researchers do (Brooker & MacPherson, 1999)? One of the teachers raises this as a possible issue, when giving an example of some INSET that he regarded as bad:

"I will pick a three-morning course on autism, mainly because I feel it was bad INSET yet also useful. The basic set up was detailing about the disorder, its many facets and suggestions for classroom practice. The three mornings were mind-bendingly boring, consisting of three people reading off PowerPoint presentations (the new OHTs!) and making only occasional links to classroom practice that seemed completely abstract. There were almost no opportunities for discussion and this seemed a major handicap to making the days a success, as we were unable to compare our experiences, admittedly with children of hugely different backgrounds. Yet, I did feel I took away quite a bit of factual knowledge that helped me have a better understanding of the autistic child in my class. So I suppose some bad INSET can have good impacts. I suppose this leaves the question: is INSET bad because it is badly done and delivered or bad because it doesn't result in any learning?" John

This is a perfectly valid issue to raise. Perhaps bad courses and INSET are less of a failure where they impact on pupil performance. However, it is also valid to raise again the issue that many of the teachers commented on in the section on learner engagement. This is that, if we accept that what is good pedagogy in the teacher-learner setting of a school or college leads to good learning and good performance, then surely this must apply in the teachers' CPD context. If as school teachers, they are encouraged to use a form of Kolb's (1984) learning cycle (do-review-learn-apply) or Watkins' et al's (2002) evidence that teaching-learning

processes work best when there is:

- activity, with reflection and sense-making

- collaboration for learning

- learner responsibility for learning

- learning about learning

then this will surely work also with regard to their own CPD. This approach resonates clearly with Bruner's (1996) four models of folk pedagogy, in which learning develops through:

1. being shown

2. being told

3. constructing meaning

4. joining a knowledge-generating community.

The teachers in this study said that most of their professional learning, external and internal, does not get much beyond Bruner's second stage. For them for CPD to be successful the complete focus does not need to be on pupil performance, such that the means and the ends of the CPD are totally outcome focused. For the teachers it is the purpose, content and pedagogy of the CPD, which brings about effective teacher learning. It is this that will challenge, contextualise, resonate with and improve their practice. It will definitely not be:

"too many of us still sitting in bare halls, lured by free coffee and biscuits, to watch PowerPoint and doodle. Exactly what would students do in that situation? …We had a guy in to talk about (and that's what he did) values education. He gave us his CV. It was impressive. He had a PowerPoint and a little piece of video. I think he was telling us to teach a value a month. None of us were really sure, and surely that's the point. As teachers we have a clear aim, and we assess how much closer the students are to reaching that aim. We use this knowledge to feed into their future learning, just as Andrew said, no recognition of prior

knowledge, our current practice, or assessment for learning. I think the biggest lesson is the lack of focus – what are we learning?  Leanne

Instead of this sterile atmosphere and non-learning outcomes, good CPD should be more learning-focused, engaging, collaborative and reflective, like Theresa's NQT observations.

"I often feel quite privileged to have a job that allows me to watch other staff teach. I always take something from the lessons – from good ones, it can be an actively good idea that I'd like to try. From others, it might be that, in sitting at the back watching the behaviour of disaffected students and the teacher's response to them, I reflect on whether I'd do anything better in their situation."

## Concluding remarks

This research suggests that the professional development of teachers in England needs to adopt a different conceptual model, a new design, if it is to meet both the professional and personal learning needs of teachers and to then impact on pupil learning outcomes. In the new design the focus on the process of development, namely the 'how' of learning, will be as important as its content, the 'what'. At the heart of this process should be a cross-curricular, cross-phase, cross-experience approach to teachers' learning, rather than a focus on skills-based, information-centred development. In this way there needs to be a distinction between development (growth and gradual professional unfolding) and learning (Abbots' (1994) 'reflective activity' which is both retrospective and forward-looking). This is so that development, the more professional aspect of teacher learning, is seen only as a part of the richer and more influential holistic learning that individual and collaborative reflection and activity bring.

The new CPD design is located in and reflects teachers' experiences and experience, rather than privileging the voices of those

who have gained professional status by virtue of their appointed status. Accordingly teachers will then be better prepared, through a learning-centred model, for the challenges they are likely to meet throughout their careers. The current focus on performance management and school improvement is replaced by one in which, as Abbott suggests, teachers' CPD draws on previous experience to understand and evaluate the present, so as to shape future action and formulate new knowledge (1994, 12).

The changing (inter)national and local context of teachers' CPD will influence and be influenced by four tensions, as yet unresolved, but highly stimulating areas for dialogue about a new design for CPD. These are:

1. the needs of the system (top-down best practice ) as opposed to local needs (bottom-up joint practice development)

2. the provision of central training (delivery) as opposed to locally clustered collaborative opportunities (discovery)

3. new technology being used to transmit knowledge the old way (presentation) as opposed to new technology used to enhance learning and meta-learning (dialogue)

4. teacher networks that reflect group interests/hierarchies (exclusive) as opposed to networks that encourage mutuality based on an 'everyone can contribute' approach (inclusive).

At the heart of this report have been the voices of the MTeach graduates. It feels right then to end with a quotation from one of the teachers in the research study. As an illustration of these four issues, he suggests, as the others in the study did, that paradoxically we know what works to bring about effective teacher learning – discussion, not lecture – but seem happy to put on and 'endure' what we know does not work nearly as well.

**"Bad CPD/INSET is similar to a manufactured boy/girl band. It might look nice, be catchy and fashionable but will you remember it by this time next year? Probably not, unless it is really awful. This brings me to INSET I endured on Emotional Intelligence or EI. INSET on ET would have been more useful or relevant! This seemed like a really desperate attempt to repackage and resell something that has been around for years. Most of my senior colleagues merely nodded their heads, recognising that this was merely rebranding, and possibly it would have been better to have an interesting 30-minute discussion rather than a three-hour lecture by PowerPoint."** Craig

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**Master of Teaching (MTeach)** www.ioe.ac.uk/mteach/

**National College for School Leadership (NCSL)** www.ncsl.org.uk

**National Foundation for Education Research (NFER)** www.nfer.ac.uk

**Teachernet** www.teachernet.gov.uk

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