



UP

Moving on

So you've ensured your students will progress three levels by the time they reach KS4 – now, what about you? **David Weston** has some words of wisdom concerning CPD...

In the last DfE audit, the combined continuing professional development (CPD) budget for all schools was just £178 million pounds. To put that in context it's around 0.5% of total education spending, compared to £208 million reported to have gone on Ofsted, and £600 million on initial teacher training. Sadly, schools weren't even getting value for money for this modest investment. A TDA snapshot suggested that only 1% of CPD courses and consultancy they examined were good enough to transform teacher practices, and according to an NFER survey, only 3% of secondary schools ever formally checked if the CPD was improving pupil outcomes.

It's curious that teachers report that their most common CPD experience was passively listening to a lecture, especially when you consider that this is precisely the sort of learning that we know is ineffective for pupils. Similarly, CPD has most commonly been one-off, with no opportunities for the formative feedback that we now use in our classrooms as a matter of course. Perhaps most sadly, some of the most common reasons for choosing CPD seemed to be in reaction to Ofsted, new exam syllabuses and new legislation, rather than basing decisions on what would help pupils the most.

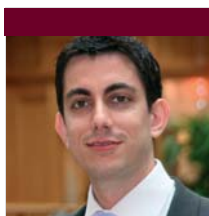
Room to improve

There are some key principles that schools can use to follow to improve their professional development. Firstly, the process of training must start with a clear identification of need. Pupils work better knowing the purpose of learning, and so do teachers. The best CPD identifies a specific cohort of pupils who have not yet reached their potential, and sets out to help the teachers support these pupils to learn more effectively.

The second key factor is that great professional learning requires an outside expert to support, challenge and advise – i.e. to avoid group think and false glass ceilings, and to make sure precious development time is focused on genuinely effective approaches. This expertise needs to be quality-assured and peer-reviewed – there is no point paying good money for training that others have already found lacking, or which fails to live up to its promises.

Thirdly, training has to be sustained. You wouldn't expect a pupil to clear up misconceptions, grasp a new theory, and learn how to apply it in one session, and once again the same is absolutely true of teachers. Great training challenges teachers' practical theories about learning, enables them to learn and practise new approaches, and helps them experiment with and refine these ideas over time while continually supported by an expert.

Lastly, professional development has to be active and collaborative. New ideas need to be put into practice, observed, discussed and re-evaluated. Teachers need to work in groups to share ideas, breakthroughs and problems. If one person is going off at a tangent then



ABOUT THE EXPERT

DAVID WESTON IS THE FOUNDER AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF THE TEACHER DEVELOPMENT TRUST AND A FORMER SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHER. FOLLOW HIM ON TWITTER: @TEACHERDEVTRUST AND @INFORMED_EDU.

a group is more likely to bring him or her back to the core principles. Where an individual is having a bad week and tempted to discard the new approach in the face of particularly recalcitrant pupils, the others can offer ideas and support.

Reciprocal vulnerability builds teamwork – if I risk looking silly by trying something new and you do the same we won't want to let each other down so we keep on going in the face of distractions. Peer observations, focused on the new approach and its effect on the target groups of pupils, become a helpful and welcome way of learning rather than part of an imposed accountability system.

All for one...

It's a big cultural shift, but endless reports and international comparisons have shown us that teacher professional development is one of the cornerstones to improve education for our pupils. Not only does it improve learning but it increases teacher retention and morale and raises the status of the profession.

The Teacher Development

Trust aims to help everyone in education to use these ideas in their own work. One of the available tools, GoodCPDGuide (goodcpdguide.com) is a free national database of CPD where teachers can review each course, consultant, or event for impact on their own practice, and where providers can apply for quality marks from the Centre for the Use of Research in Education (curee.co.uk) to prove that their training really makes a difference.

The Teacher Development Trust is also creating a new programme, the Teacher Enquiry Network, to provide the support and advice that schools need to carry out CPD in the most effective ways within their schools – find out more at teacherdevelopmenttrust.org.

