

## Appendix 2

### What research and practice tell us about effective CPD

Providing hard evidence about the impact of continuing professional development (CPD) on learning and teaching is challenging because of the number and range of variables involved. Reliable research is therefore scarce – but it does exist. The recent systematic review of research about the impact of collaborative CPD (EPPI, 2003) identified 15 studies which provided reliable evidence. This review (from the Evidence of Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre (EPPI)) is the first of a series of reviews which will consider different kinds of CPD. Subsequent reviews are exploring other approaches to try to establish whether the positive findings for collaborative CPD can also be found for other approaches. Until such reviews have been completed and/or new impact studies are published, this review represents the best available evidence. You can read the full EPPI report at: <http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/EPPIWeb/home.aspx>

### Outcomes of the EPPI research review into collaborative CPD

The positive outcomes (for both teachers and pupils) identified in these studies address issues of attainment and performance as well as broader aspects of learning. In brief, there were positive links between sustained, collaborative CPD and teachers':

- Self-confidence, for example in taking risks;
- Knowledge and understanding of their subject and of their students' learning;
- Capacity to draw upon and display a wide range of learning and teaching strategies to match students' needs;
- Willingness to continue professional learning;
- Willingness and ability to make changes in their practice;
- Self-efficacy – their belief in their ability to make a difference.

Positive links between collaborative and sustained CPD were also demonstrated with pupils':

- Motivation to learn;
- Performance as measured through test results and scrutiny of work;
- Responses to 'unpopular' subjects and curriculum;
- Questioning skills and responses;
- Organisation of work;
- Use of collaboration as a learning strategy;
- Skills in drawing on a range of learning strategies.

### Activities characterising the CPD programmes

There was a strong emphasis upon external, specialist expertise. This took the form of:

- Providing examples of relevant, existing research to inform teachers' choice about where to focus their development;
- Providing support in identifying manageable goals or (for those using action research) enquiry questions;
- Modelling new practices in classroom contexts;
- Monitoring and/or coaching teachers through their early efforts in tackling new approaches;
- Providing a focus for debate, encouraging professional reflection on what has and has not worked and revealing and exploring teachers' beliefs;
- Advice on collecting, analysing and interpreting evidence.

There was also a strong emphasis on professional peer support. Peer support was embedded in a range of activities including:

- Identifying participants as a project team exploring how to develop a particular aspect of pedagogy;
- Teachers observing each other's practice, exploring and interpreting it together and providing feedback – processes which were common and were sometimes described as peer coaching;
- Shared planning and development of materials within an explicit learning environment and extended professional discussion.

### **Engaging teachers**

Teachers gained a sense of control over their learning by being given choices about the pace and scope of the CPD programme. Seven studies reported that teachers were 'given a voice' in choosing their own focus, usually within a framework provided by the CPD programme.

More than half the studies involved opportunities for teachers to identify and build upon what they knew and could do already. Over half the studies reflected extensively on how to provide active learning experiences for teachers. Joint planning of teaching materials within a learning context was a common strategy that allowed teachers to make good use of existing skills and to integrate these with new approaches. Other activities that enabled teachers and external experts to build upon existing skills include:

- Activities that enabled teachers to explore their beliefs;
- Observation and coaching activities that provided direct information about 'where teachers were coming from';
- Action research;
- Establishing more than one cycle of action research.

Professional dialogue featured in all of the studies. The studies also highlighted the importance of strategies for involving *all* participating teachers in dialogue rather than allowing volunteers and enthusiasts to take over. This sometimes meant encouraging some to take a back seat and let others make decisions. The use of structured, shared experiences of learning and teaching in classrooms provided a stimulus to, and structure for, reflective professional dialogue.