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RESEARCH ARTICLE

CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR EFFECTIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT.

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Abstract

What makes a professional stand apart from others in his or her field? Of course, she has the educational chops and the hands-on experience that makes her well-rounded and widely respected in her field. But true professionals don't stop there. In fact, they never stop – especially when it comes to learning. After all, research is always discovering new things, and trends are always changing. Any good professional will be on top of – and responding to – these changes.

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Extension of CPD for effective school improvement:-

Teachers, researchers, policy analysts and politicians argue that teacher professionalism must increase if education is to improve. Educational reform, especially over the last 15 years, has made imperative the need for urgent and high-quality staff development and training. Of all the resources at the disposal of a person or an organisation it is only people who can grow and develop and be motivated to achieve certain desired ends.

People and their training and development – their continuing professional development – must be seen as an investment and it is therefore essential that each school establishes not only a CPD or HRD policy but also the means of its implementation through effective management and leadership... The Schools that do not look after their staff's professional development usually lose the best teachers.

The prime responsibility for securing individual professional development of teachers is not, however, the exclusive concern of the employer – teachers themselves must expect to play a key role – and professional development opportunities must be available for individuals to help them become better practitioners.

In their survey of continuing education for the professions, **Madden and Mitchell**

(1993) state that CPD can fulfill three functions:

updating and extending the professional's knowledge and skills on new developments and new areas of practice -to ensure continuing competence in the current job;

training for new responsibilities and for a changing role (for example, management, budgeting, teaching)-developing new areas of competence in preparation for a more senior post;
developing personal and professional effectiveness .

To summarize, CPD is an ongoing process of education, training, learning and support activities which is:

taking place in either external or work-based settings;

engaged in by qualified, educational professionals;

aimed mainly at promoting learning and development of their professional knowledge, skills and values;

to help decide and implement valued changes in their teaching and learning behaviour so that they can educate their students more effectively thus achieving an agreed balance between individual, school and national needs (based on **Bolam, 2002**).

Continuing professional development should ensure that individuals progress from 'novice' or 'advanced beginner' status to that of an 'expert'. However, expert status is not a once and for all achievement. It is ongoing – new demands, a changing curriculum and various other changes mean that learning and development is never ending.

Continuing Professional Development framework (Jones, 2003)

Individually focused – these activities should focus on a teacher's own needs. Appropriate CPD activities might include attending courses, mentoring, developing a new teaching activity, exchanging ideas and good practice with colleagues, and exchange visits.

School focused – these activities should primarily be targeted at the requirements of the school that currently employs the teacher. Relevant activities should largely be undertaken during the statutory non-pupil contact days, with any additional identified school focused activities financed from school budgets.

National/local focused – these CPD activities would meet the demands of national and local initiatives.

Policies and Conditions For CPD:-

It is important to have a policy on CPD that defines its aims and describes how these will be implemented. We need a good CPD culture. This includes several factors which emerged as important in establishing an environment favourable to CPD:-

1. the establishment of a positive CPD attitude by all parties and acceptance of the idea of CPD throughout the working life, i.e. lifelong learning.
2. to inculcate the need for continuous learning into new practitioners during their initial professional education and, ideally, to establish a synthesis of initial and continuing education;
3. to give practitioners the ability to learn effectively, i.e. by applying the knowledge of cognitive psychologists to the needs of the practitioner and CPD provision.
4. to provide expert support and guidance on CPD issues for all parties and especially for the practitioners.

Where school context is incorporated into professional development, the focus has been on how to enhance 'knowledge and develop new instructional practices' in recognition that ultimately school improvement and increased student achievement rely on teachers (**Starkey et al., 2009**).

Supporting a range of CPD activities for school improvement:-

The school and its staff will support a wide portfolio of CPD approaches in an effort to match preferred learning styles of staff and to maximise the impact on school improvement. These CPD approaches will include:

attendance at a course or conference;

in-school training using the expertise available within the school, eg. team teaching, skills in classroom observation, sharing existing expertise;

school-based work through accessing an external consultant/adviser or relevant expert such as an advanced skills or lead teacher, master classes, model and demonstration lessons;

school visit to observe or participate in good and successful practice, eg. visit to a school or subject area with similar circumstances, a beacon school;

research opportunities, eg. a best practice research scholarship;

distance learning, eg. relevant resources, training videos, reflection, imulation;

practical experience, eg. national test or exam marking experience, opportunities to present a paper, contribute to a training programme, co-ordinating or supporting a learning forum or network, involvement in local and national networks;

job enrichment/enlargement, eg. a higher level of responsibility, front lining working in someone else's job, job sharing, acting roles, job rotation, shadowing;

producing documentation or resources such as a personal development plan, teaching materials, assessment package, ICT or video programme;

coaching and mentoring – receiving or acting in these roles, acting as or receiving the support of a critical friend, team building activity;

partnerships, eg. with a □ colleague, group, subject, phase, activity or school-based; team meetings and activities such as joint planning, observation or standardisation, special project working group, involvement in school partnership clusters

More recently, a study of the common characteristics of the most successful school systems highlights the central role of teachers, asserting that “the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers” and that “the only way to improve outcomes is to improve instruction” (**Barber and Mourshed, 2007**).

So there is a need for greater incentives for teachers to update their skills throughout their professional lives, and for efforts to ensure that in-service education is responsive to teaching needs in terms of both quality and quantity. Further we need not only to attract new people – including suitably qualified people with experience from other professions – into the teaching profession, but also to persuade experienced teachers to remain in the profession rather than retiring early or moving to other professions. Some of the important considerations can be:

1. A continuum of teacher education: ensuring that provision for teachers’ initial education, early career support and further professional development is co-ordinated, coherent, adequately resourced and quality assured.
2. Professional values: encouraging all teachers to be reflective practitioners, to be autonomous learners in their own career-long professional development, to engage in research, to develop new knowledge and be innovative.
3. An attractive profession: making the teaching profession a more attractive career choice and ensuring that teacher recruitment, placement, retention and mobility policies maximise the quality of school education.
4. Qualifications for teaching: ensuring that teachers hold a qualification from a higher education institution which strikes a suitable balance between research-based studies and teaching practice, possess specialist knowledge of their subjects, and the pedagogical skills required.
5. Supporting teachers: ensuring that teachers have access to effective early career support (induction) programmes at the start of their career, and adequate mentoring support throughout their careers.
6. School leadership: ensuring that teachers with leadership functions, in addition to possessing teaching skills and experience, have access to quality training in school management and leadership.

Implications for CPD:-

The classroom should be the focus and the primary site for improving teaching and learning. CPD will involve both enquiry into and reflection on classroom practice, and opportunities to learn from good practice. Professional development needs should be identified at three levels: school, team and personal. School and team development needs should be identified through whole school review; personal needs should be identified through performance management.

In a world where changes in education systems are frequent, teachers also need to be able to adapt to these changes rapidly. This is where CPD is vital for teachers so that they can perform as highly as expected by society and pupils. The importance of CPD for staff and teachers cannot be over emphasised.

Barber and Mourshed (2007) The problem in developing countries is that teacher CPD is either absent or happens rarely and in an ad hoc way. Managers do not usually have budgets to implement CPD and it is not planned in the school calendar.

Barber and Mourshed (2007) argue that most reforms that have failed, have failed because they did not have any impact on teaching and learning experienced by children in the classroom.

‘One of the main recommendations is that the teacher education system needs to be unified and co-ordinated, ensuring that pre- and in-service education is seen as one single process.’ CPD can play an integral part in school improvement. Principles of school improvement Focus systematically on teaching and learning.

A systematic and integrated approach to staff development, that focuses on the professional learning of teachers and establishes the classroom as an important centre for teacher development, is central to successful school improvement.

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