

Effective Continuing Professional Development

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1. What is Continuing Professional Development?

1.1. Definitions

Task:

1. What is CPD according to you?
2. Come to a joint definition.

CPD is:

“Any professional development activities engaged in by teachers which enhance their knowledge, skills, and enable them to consider their attitudes and approaches to the education of children, with a view to improve the quality of the teaching and learning process” (*Bolam, 1993*).

“An on-going process encompassing all formal and informal learning experiences that enable all staff in schools, individually and with others, to think about what they are doing, enhance their knowledge and skills and improve ways of working so that pupil learning and wellbeing are enhanced as a result. It should achieve a balance between individual, group, school, and national needs; encourage a commitment to professional and personal growth, and increase resilience, self-confidence, job satisfaction and enthusiasm for working with children and colleagues” (*Bubb & Early, 2005*).

In short, CPD is any form of capacitation (skills, knowledge, values) in which professionals engage - after they have obtained initial training and/or qualifications as well as induction- with the specific goal of improvement, both of the individual and the institution. In this guide we have applied general ideas on what constitutes effective CPD to the specifics of education.

1.2. Forms and functions

CPD can come in three different forms:

- Professional training, which refers to a formal form of capacity development, but which doesn't lead to a qualification: e.g. short courses, a workshop on environmental education, ICT, gender, action research,...
- Professional education, which refers to formal forms of capacity development which lead to a qualification: e.g. BEd, Masters, PGCE, ...
- Professional support, which refers to a more informal capacity development via e.g. mentorship, exposure, subject association, shadowing, observing and copying from colleagues...

CPD fulfils three functions:

- Updating and extending the professional's knowledge and skills on new developments and new areas of practice (e.g. learner centred approaches, ICDL, Edu Toys,...)
- Training for new responsibilities and for a changing role (e.g. teacher becomes HOD, ...)
- Developing personal and professional effectiveness and increasing satisfaction

Task:

1. What CPD initiatives are organised by you and your district?
2. How do you go about this? How is alignment with other initiatives? How do you identify needs?
3. What areas for improvement do you see?

2. What is effective CPD?

2.1. Introduction

2.1.1. Effective CPD

Effective CPD results in demonstrable, desirable and sustained changes in the knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes, behaviour and competences among school staff:

- **Demonstrable change:** What has changed? Demonstrable change can be a change in behaviour, but can also be changes in thinking/ knowledge (cognitive) and attitudes (affective change).
- **How can we tell?** Do we see changes in classroom practice and at school level? This implies the need for monitoring and evaluation.
- **Sustained change:** Integrated and anchored in school culture and organisation. There is a need for a strong supportive environment for teachers to be able and to be encouraged to try out new practices in their classrooms.
- **Desirable change:** Who wants the change: teachers, SMT, SGB, FSDOE, DBE, ... Each of these stakeholders might have good reasons to want to see the change. There is a need for proper planning and needs analysis.

2.1.2. Lifelong learning for teachers

The ultimate goal of CPD in education is to improve teaching and learning.

CPD is lifelong learning for teachers. It is important to remember that teachers are expert learners, as learning is their trade. As learners do, they need diverse approaches. Not one size fits all. They need to learn on the job, where learning and working comes together, based on reflection and need.

Learning is an active process of relevant knowledge construction and acquisition, where meaning is created by the learner (in this the teacher). It is not filling empty vessels or passing on knowledge in a standard way.

People who make CPD their trade, should therefore facilitate learning. They need to create a powerful learning environment with learning content (rather conceptual than factual), attention to learning processes (rather constructive than passive reproduction), a rich learning climate (safety and experimenting) and learning comfort (infrastructure and materials).

2.1.3. Internal conditions

For CPD to be effective, there are some internal conditions that need to be in place:

- **Empowerment**
- **Shared leadership:** let teachers take the lead in the topics they have expertise
- **Cooperative culture:** learn and change collaboratively, rather than as an individual
- **Connectedness and positive interdependence:** all team members need each other to get to the intended outcome
- **Trust, respect and a safe environment:** give space to try out, mistakes are allowed.
- **Shared meaning of vision and mission:** all teachers have the same understanding on where the school is going and why.
- **System thinking and structural anchoring:** changes are embedded in systems at the institution
- **Integrated approach:** having a clear understanding of the envisaged change and build pathways to reach this. This will need continued support and longer learning trajectories (not one off sessions).

- Whole school policy
- Breaking down barriers: deal with perceived barriers; allocate time in the time table
- Clear communication
- Clear procedures

“Be the change you want to see in the world”.

Mahatma Gandhi

2.1.4. CPD strategies

When we think of professional development, we tend to think in terms of courses, trainings and workshops. CPD specialists need to be aware of the fact that the above are the more traditional approaches, when connections were few and information was scarce.

CPD can be:

- On-site or off-site; School based or out of school (incl. online)
- Formal (accredited) or informal (e.g. learning from a colleague)
- Individual or collaborative

There are many different CPD strategies:

- participating and contributing to workshops/seminars/conferences (in-house/outdoors),
- short courses and award-bearing programmes (distance, online, face-to-face),
- study tours,
- specialist expertise or consultancies,
- partnerships,
- networks,
- professional development meetings and professional development items in meetings,
- Professional Learning Communities,
- (informal) discussions with colleagues or students to reflect on practices,
- action research,
- action learning,
- case discussion,
- study groups,
- lesson study,
- reflective diaries and keeping professional portfolio's,
- (research) projects,
- coaching,
- mentoring,
- critical friendships,
- team teaching,
- job shadowing,
- peer observation,
- developing and adapting new instructional/learning materials,
- rotating roles/jobs,
- structured feedback from students,
- sabbaticals,
- self study (Internet, books, journals, magazines, CD-ROMs, video's, DVDs),
- appraisal,

- staff exchange.

2.2. Criteria of effective CPD

Task:

- Think about one of the following criteria. Try to explain in your own words.
- Translate the concept into your own context. What would that mean for your context and for you?
 1. Team and school focused
 2. Process oriented
 3. Rooted in reflection
 4. Experiential
 5. Focused
 6. Collaborative
 7. Differentiated
 8. Involves producing and constructing
 9. Requires ownership
 10. Integrated

2.2.1. Team and school focused

Professional development and school development go hand in hand. Professional development might be initiated by individual needs and by institutional needs, but always with the intention to improve teaching and learning. A school could for instance request certain teachers to learn more about questioning techniques to reach higher cognitive levels because the school intends to become the market leader in bring Bloom's taxonomy to the classroom.

Professional development might also be initiated by needs that are identified in policy documents and strategic plans from national or provincial departments.

Needs analysis must therefore go beyond asking individual teachers "what they need". Also note that "you don't know what you don't know."

2.2.2. Process oriented

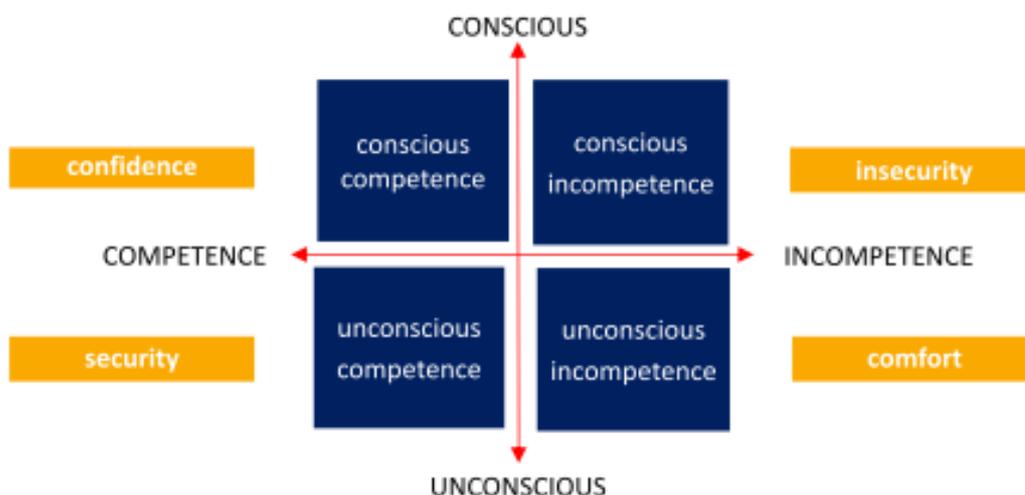
Learning is a process, not a once off event. Effective CPD will create opportunities for try-out (safe environment, time,...) and for reporting, feedback and reflection. The learning activities are staggered in time to allow the learning to take ground and grow.

Since learning is a process, CPD should cater for all steps (see Figure 1). Traditional ways of professional development often focus merely on creating awareness and building some knowledge and understanding. But by the time the workshop is over, the knowledge has not yet been translated into practice, nor have teachers had the opportunity to practice new knowledge and to reflect on the learning. Instead we often ask trainees to "go and cascade" what they have learnt. Since they themselves haven't gone further than just understanding the new knowledge, the cascading is unlikely to raise any enthusiasm in the schools, nor trigger any change at all. On the contrary, it will lead to confusion, bad practices and resistance.



Figure 1 Change and learning are processes

Effective professional development takes the learner from a stage of unconscious incompetence (“I wasn’t aware that I could not do this”, first to a level of conscious incompetence (“I know I should do this, but I can’t”), then to the level of conscious competence (“When I pay attention, I can actually do it”) to ultimately reach the level of unconscious competence (“I do this right, almost automatically”) (see Figure 2).



cf. Howell & Fleischman, 1982

Figure 2 From unconscious to conscious learning

2.2.3. Rooted in reflection

CPD is more than training of skills, it is practice informed by theory and evidence and vice versa. The starting point of professional development is individual, institutional (school) and/or systemic (province, national) self-evaluation. A needs analysis is a good starting point, but this goes beyond a survey. The following could be useful sources of information: existing tools such as IQMS, error analysis of national or provincial tests, reports by educational stakeholders, research findings, evaluation of teaching and learning by parents and learners ...

As a learner once said: “when we all stop running around doing what we are doing and begin to think about it together we could make a better school.”

2.2.4. Experiential

Effective CPD takes the context of the individual participant into account. It builds on participants’ experience and addresses the actual problems that participants experience in the classroom. It creates opportunities to immediately try out what has been learnt. It is important to give participants hands-on experiences.

2.2.5. Focused

Effective CPD implies specific objectives and content. Not only the facilitator but also participants need to know exactly where they are going and why. They have an idea of the desired future (what do we want to reach?) and this future is clearly linked to improved teaching and learning and the impact on students.

Time is created to allow the changes to take place.

2.2.6. Collaborative

CPD is more effective when it is done in a collaborative way. A facilitator should not bring the topics to the participants, but engage with them. Participants actively engage together in the learning (not: “we need to be workshopped”).

The learning is a shared responsibility between provider and participant. The provider will encourage collaboration among peers. Research by OECD (see Figure 3) finds that teachers who collaborate more with their colleagues – teaching jointly in the same class, observing and providing feedback on each other’s classes, engaging in joint activities across different classes and age groups, and taking part in collaborative professional learning – report a greater sense of self-efficacy.

A great deal of learning takes place outside the ‘course’ sessions.



Figure 3: Teacher's self-efficacy and professional collaboration.

2.2.7. Differentiated

Effective CPD takes into account a variety of styles, contexts (such rural vs. urban), needs and mental models. Effective CPD uses a wide variety of CPD strategies (see 2.1.4.)

"Learning is the most personal thing in the world. It is as peculiar as a face or like a finger print. Even more individual than love life."

Heinz von Forster (1999)

2.2.8. Involves producing and constructing

It is important to realise that knowledge and skills are not passed on, they are acquired by participants. No one can do their learning for them. Participants have to actively work on a product to ground the learning. Learning takes place through a production process. This provides motivation.

There are individual differences in learning gains: how much is being learnt and what is being learnt. What you teach is not what is learnt.

Give lecturing its due place, but not more than that. Provide ample opportunities to actively engage with content and construct own understanding.

2.2.9. Requires ownership

Effective CPD involves participants in such way that they take charge of one's own learning. Participants develop and implement because they are owners of the process.

It is important to link this energy with a vision and strategic plan as this will further motivate participants.

2.2.10. Integrated

Effective CPD links with existing knowledge, skills and structures. It provides transferable knowledge, skills and structures and is embedded in the school development plan and personal professional development plan.

3. Conclusion

Effective CPD focuses on improving teaching and learning and is based on the best available evidence. It is driven by a shared vision of the effective or improved practice being sought. It is owned (professional responsibility; take ownership and control of own learning) by all and accessible for all. It is differentiated, recognising different learning styles, educators' life stage and career aspirations

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