

**0354**

## **Schools and Teachers' CPD in England State of the Nation research study: a literature review**

Robert McCormick

*Open University, Milton Keynes, United Kingdom*

### **Background**

This study is based on, and a development of, a literature review in support of the State of the Nation (SoN) investigation into CPD in England (McCormick et al. 2008). The SoN review was conducted in the period late 2007 to early 2008, but subsequently updated during 2009, to form the basis of this paper. The initial review focused only on the UK literature and was confined to the period 2004-2007; essentially an update on a number of other major studies that had included literature reviews prior to that period. In particular it considered the TTA (2005) advice to the Secretary of State, which included a literature base for the policy advice, to see in what ways the evidence had changed. Although the focus was the UK, there was a considerable amount of international literature collected at the time and subsequently to place this picture in a broader perspective.

### **Research Questions**

This review addresses the two general questions asked by the TDA, drawing particularly on qualitative studies to update previous work, since 2004. It therefore sought evidence from empirical studies on the views of teachers on:

1. the benefits, status and effectiveness of CPD they experience and provide;
2. the planning and organisation of CPD provided in and for schools.

However, in the extension of the review subsequent to the TDA study, the focus also considered teacher learning and the limitations evident in the way professional development was conceptualised, including the idea of teacher networks. This paper therefore explored the theoretical approaches taken by the literature to CPD in general and to teacher networks in particular.

### **Methods**

In the initial SoN study, the process was: criteria for inclusion were drawn up; a search (both opportunistic and systematic) was conducted using the criteria; a selection from the searches was made; finally reviewing of the chosen items was carried out. This process, while rigorous was not of the exhaustive and often circumscribed approach of EPPI reviews (though it drew on them). The selection process resulted in 28 reports and 33 articles and conference papers being retrieved for review. A set of 'record cards' were then produced as the basis of this review. Subsequent to this study, an interpretative review was conducted focusing on views of teacher learning, and the various kinds of networks that make up professional development. The focus in this was in how to create and share teacher professional knowledge.

### **Frame**

The TDA review used the two questions above, both of which implied an approach to CPD focused on school and teacher needs, and an understanding that the school should be in control of the agenda, though not always the provision, of CPD. The second question concerned mainly practical issues within this orientation. The first question was conceptualised thus:

- the impact of CPD;
- effective CPD forms or activities;
- features of effective CPD;

- conditions for effective CPD.

CPD itself is often devoid of any explicit theory, though ideas of teacher ownership and collaboration, including ideas on communities of practice, dominate. These are rarely posed in terms of teacher learning as such. For example, the use of communities of practice does not necessarily imply the adoption of Wenger's (1998) socio-cultural view of learning. The subsequent investigation of the literature in fact used a socio-cultural view of teacher learning to interpret the literature. In exploring networks, a wide range of theoretical bases (including such diverse approaches as social network analysis and actor-network theory) was considered to investigate the way that teacher learning can result in the creation and sharing of professional knowledge.

### **Research findings**

This paper will not repeat the findings addressing the questions of the TDA (see McCormick et al. 2008), but reflect on how the literature has served the needs of understanding CPD in schools and teacher learning. In particular, many studies repeated well understood findings (e.g. the role of collaboration). Further where, for example, they evaluate a particular form of CPD, there is little insight about what happens in schools. Indeed there were in that period few empirical studies of the situation of CPD in schools. Many past studies indicated that teachers view CPD in formal terms (e.g. Hustler, McNamara, Jarvis, Londra and Campbell 2003), but apart from the advocacy of teachers involved in collaborative research and inquiry, few alternative ideas of teacher learning are considered even by researchers. For example, workplace learning is often ignored and seldom employed in relation to how teachers might improve (apart from well know exceptions such as Hodkinson and Hodkinson 2004). Taking a network perspective can extend workplace learning further by considering in a different way ideas on CPD based on collaboration and classroom inquiry, and the view based on events (e.g. courses) and conferences outside of the school.