

V2

An English perspective on professional learning and development

Introduction

This chapter begins with an overview of the English context and then discusses key issues influencing the professional development landscape currently in England of learning versus development, professionalism through which themes of attrition, workload, standards, inspection, and wellbeing run. These issues are illustrated with examples of innovative reforms and practices.

Whilst England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are all part of the United Kingdom, each has its own education system and governance arrangements (Woods et al. , 2021). The result is complexity at every level and in every way. In England, there are different types of school, routes into teaching, providers of professional development and interpretations of professional development and learning. A confusing variety of terms is in use: professional development, CPD (continuing professional development), inset, training; professional learning and development, professional learning. Although there is similarity, there are subtle and sometimes significant differences between how people use these terms and this is significant because it can influence teachers' attitude, agency and understanding of its purpose. Some see it as activities that teachers do or which are 'delivered' to them in a transmissive model from expert to teacher; others see it as learning on the part of teachers with varying degrees of agency and others focus on the impact on pupils (Ovenden- Hope et al. 2018, Sims et al, 2021).

Complex context

There is a complex context for professional development in England. Maintained schools are those funded through taxes and under local government control, usually through Local Authorities, who used to provide many professional development opportunities. However, 44% of schools have become 'academies' which means that although government-funded

they are independent from local control, and 87% of these are in multi-academy trusts (MATs) which have become providers of professional development opportunities.

Academies were set up in England in 2000, initially as a means of improving failing schools (sponsored by business). The model was adopted voluntarily by other schools, including some strong and successful ones (converter academies), that saw it as a means to increase their autonomy, including in professional development. As the sector has grown, the DfE has encouraged academies to form multi-academy trusts (MATs), to bring economies of scale but they have developed with little strategic thought and most only have a few schools (Greany & McGinity, 2021). This has made professional development opportunities more disparate.

The inspection regime is another important issue in England. Led by Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills), it is seen as top down, technical and managerial in its pupil progress and achievement-led approaches and high stakes grading of schools (Robert-Holmes, 2020), which affects reputation, recruitment of both pupils and staff and thus has an impact on funding. What is inspected thus has high status. The fear of inspection creates in some a reductionist approach with a focus on compliance and what is required to avoid an unfavourable outcome (Munoz Chereau, et al, 2022). Part of the judgement on leadership and management refers to ensuring staff develop their subject and pedagogical knowledge and practice which might encourage creative approaches to professional learning.

The variety in types of school is indicative of the resulting complexity at every level and in every aspect with schools operating on a continuum from completely autonomous to highly controlled and this is also influenced by the lines of accountability, with schools deemed successful allowed more freedoms. Schools inspected and graded by Ofsted as Outstanding can apply to become 'Teaching Schools': providing school to school support, Initial Teacher Education (ITE), and professional development. There is a national network of Teaching School Hubs, which have taken over responsibilities from Local Authorities in many areas. Professional learning and ITE have been moved away from traditional providers such as local authorities and universities. The result has been greater variability, an increase in competition and a neo-liberal approach to the marketisation of professional development

for teachers with schools offering courses and competing with universities and other private providers, all contributing to further complexity (Armstrong and Ainscow, 2018).

England has a recruitment and retention crisis in education influenced by workload, well-being, status and an accountability and inspection agenda. One in five new teachers leave the profession after their first two years, while two in five leave after five years. Of great concern is that high exit rates are increasing for each successive teaching cohort of new teachers (Sibieta, 2020). The government response has been influenced by the conceptualisation of teaching as technical and craft-oriented, focussed on raising standards and pupil outcomes. One of its solutions is the introduction of a national teacher development framework and roll out of standardised programmes: 'Our vision is that a golden thread of evidence-informed training, support and professional development will run through each phase of every teacher's career' (DfE, 2022a, p5).

There has been a greater emphasis on the changes that take place as a result of teachers' learnings. Ensuring that professional development has a positive impact on pupils is a key feature in England. The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), an independent charity, is influential in evaluating teacher development initiatives strictly on their impact on pupils. Their guidance (EEF, 2021) recommends professional development activities that focus on the following mechanisms.

- A. Build knowledge — Managing cognitive load — Revisiting prior learning
- B. Motivate staff — Setting and agreeing on goals — Presenting information from a credible source — Providing affirmation and reinforcement after progress
- C. Develop teaching techniques — Instruction — Social support — Modelling — Monitoring and feedback — Rehearsal
- D. Embed practice — Providing prompts and cues — Prompting action planning — Encouraging monitoring — Prompting context specific repetition.

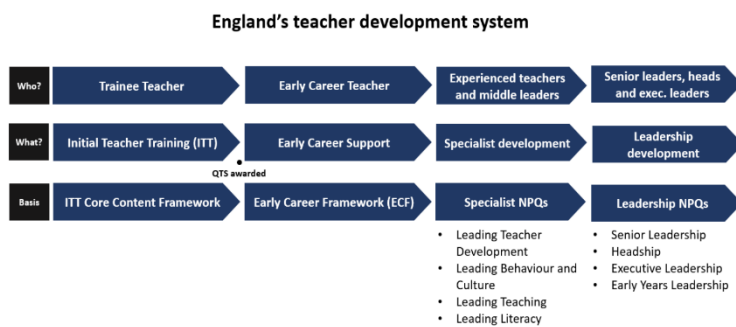
Understanding what makes professional development activities effective is critical but complex: 'exposure to and participation in staff development activities may or may not bring about change to individuals' beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviours. These changes to individuals may or may not lead to changes in the classroom and school practice. And

these changes may or may not lead to improvement in pupil outcomes’ (Bubb and Earley, 2010: p3). Within this complexity, both EEF and DfE are directing schools towards a “what works” framework with an emphasis on the impact of staff development activities on pupil outcomes based upon a perceived consensus on features of effective PD (DfE, 2016). This approach is critiqued by Sims & Fletcher-Wood (2020) who argue that careful consideration is required in identifying the effectiveness of professional development and learning approaches. Bubb & Earley (2010) and Margolis & Strom (2021) also critique linear models of PLD, emphasising the complexity.

Teacher development framework

The National Institute of Teaching run by the School-Led Development Trust, a charity, oversees the teacher development system, as shown in Figure 1, to provide teachers and school leaders with training and development throughout their career.

Figure 1: England’s teacher development system (DfE, 2022, p11)



Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in England is complex and beset by changes. Teaching is a graduate entry profession, with entrants required to have a Bachelor's degree, but not Master's like some other countries. There are multiple routes into teaching and the award of 'qualified teacher status' (QTS), which is required for those teaching in most schools. The independent sector does not necessarily require this, although it is preferred and is often used to assess the quality of the candidate. Since the development of academies, which can set their own terms and conditions the national pay scales and qualifications have lost some of their dominance. The official position is that: 'Qualified teacher status (QTS) is a legal requirement to teach in many English schools and is considered desirable for teachers in the majority of schools in England' (DfE, 2022b).

The routes into teaching include undergraduate degrees with QTS offered by universities such as three-year BA or B.Ed or four years with honours and the one year Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). Schools also provide qualification often via consortia of schools running training and placements for ITE or using the Schools Direct route (Ellis et al., 2019). The schools provide an apprenticeship type approach to training, and usually work in partnership with a university that provides more theoretical input. There are 240 ITE providers accredited by DfE. Three-quarters of new teachers come through universities and a quarter through school-based providers (DfE, 2021). The PGCE with a designation for age phase was seen as the preferred qualification and remains widely accepted abroad but remains under pressure since the 2015 Carter Independent review of initial teacher training which sought to resolve some of the issues in recruitment and quality of initial teacher training (Mutton, et al, 2017). It investigated what the various routes into teaching offered and access to courses. It also highlighted the importance of partnership between schools and universities and communities. Its findings supported a government preference for shifting initial teacher education away from universities and into schools: 'As centres of excellence for teacher development covering every region of the country, teaching school hubs are critical to our ambition of providing teachers with high-quality professional development at all stages of their career' (DfE 2021:20). This included alternative school-based routes, including Teach First, which recruits top graduates. The Teach First participants undertake an intensive five-week training period before being placed as teachers in schools in deprived areas or challenging circumstances. These different routes into teaching add to the complexity of the English education landscape and influence the subsequent provision for continuing professional development (CPD), the term which remains used by many teachers and government.

Early Career Framework

The Early Career Framework (ECF) was introduced in January 2019. It has statutory status and was rolled out nationally in September 2022. The ECF is part of the government's 'golden thread' to address the variety in quality of experience for new teachers in their first two years, and to aid the teacher recruitment and retention crisis.

The Early Career Framework (ECF) is an example of the complexity and tensions within the English education system in relation to professional development and learning. Since 1999 all newly qualified teachers (NQT) regardless of qualification or route, have had an induction year with a 10% reduced teaching workload and support from a mentor in their school. Accompanying this period were locally organised professional development sessions linked to local priorities and the individual needs of NQT. The ECF renames NQTs as Early Career Teachers (ECTs) and is a standardised framework rolled out as a programme through delivery partners across the country. It aims to ensure that all ECTs receive the same quality of support and mentoring in their first two years of teaching.

It provides a blended learning approach for all ECTs, irrespective of their age phase or subject taught. The content and assessments are organised under a series of *Learn that...* and *Learn how to...* statements (DfE, 2019) that form the curriculum for all ECTs. The programme is supported by a teacher within schools with a slightly reduced timetable to provide mentoring for a two-year period. The framework aligns with and builds upon the government-published Standards for Teachers, and for Teachers' Professional Development. These two documents set out a series of expectations that teachers are assessed against. The initial award of QTS is predicated upon successful sign off a year later against the Teacher's Standards linked to the ECF.

Underpinning expectations and forming the bedrock of the subsequent initiatives for professional development is the Standard for Teachers' Professional Development (DfE, 2016). This sets out advice about what effective PD looks like and the actions to be taken by those organisations involved in professional development and learning, school leaders, and teachers to ensure that there is a benefit for pupils' education. It is structured around five pillars of effective professional development:

1. Professional development should have a focus on improving and evaluating pupil outcomes.
2. Professional development should be underpinned by robust evidence and expertise.
3. Professional development should include collaboration and expert challenge.
4. Professional development programmes should be sustained over time.
5. Professional development must be prioritised by school leadership. (DfE 2016)

These standards are in evidence throughout the government approach to teaching and their centrally designed and implemented programmes.

National Professional Qualifications (NPQs)

As a continuation of the “golden thread” of teacher development, there are government organised National Professional Qualifications (NPQs). Originally set up to support new headteachers they have been expanded and there are now many specialist and leadership NPQs. These provide training and support for teachers and school leaders at all levels, from those who want to develop expertise in high-quality teaching practice to those leading multiple schools (see Figure 1). The most recent additions to the NPQs are those in Leading Literacy and Early Years Leadership. The Early Years Leadership NPQ expands the opportunity for professional development of this type to those working the Early years sector which traditionally has had a lower status and a lower minimum qualification requirement than for teachers in schools (Social Mobility Report, 2020) There is also a NPQ in leading professional development. This leads to a further issue this chapter discusses - development or learning?

Professional development or professional learning

The term “Professional learning and development” has been adopted (Alexandrou, 2021; Ostinelli and Crescentini, 2021) and in many ways this is a helpful solution to the tensions and debates between development and learning. Kennedy (2014) provides a framework of types and purposes of professional development and we have added a mapping of the situation in England against this in Table 1.

Table 1: Kennedy’s model of purposes and types of CPD (2014) adapted to include examples from England

<i>Model of CPD</i>	<i>Purpose of Model</i>	<i>English examples</i>
Training	Transactional	Usually mandatory and legally required e.g.: health and safety
Award-bearing		Certificated courses e.g: First aid
Deficit		Staff performance review / appraisal identifies area for development

Cascade		External training, one member of staff attends and then returns to share the content through a staff meeting or briefing
Standards based	Transitional	Teachers Standards, national professional qualifications e.g. NPQH
Coaching and Mentoring		Included in new ECF
Community of Practice (CoP)		CoP, AR and Transformative professional learning are being adopted by research schools and seen as requiring more active engagement by participants and perceived as more valuable
Action Research (AR)	Transformative	

In England, much professional learning and development is conceived of as being training oriented. This aligns with the Kennedy model in that it is seen as transactional in nature, as opposed to professional development and learning which is transitional moving, in the best scenarios, to transformative. There are five days of in-service training for all schools but these are often used as compliance training opportunities to fulfil legal and Ofsted requirements (Ince and Kitto, 2020). They are often in addition to weekly hour-long staff meetings which usually occur after school. These meetings may focus on school development priorities and management issues. For example, staff meetings might provide training on a new marking policy which is then monitored through book scrutiny or provide cascade training from an external course. This aligns with the more managerialist and technical approach to education (Ball, 2009). Teaching Schools have exacerbated this in some ways as their funding is set up as pump-priming with an expectation that they become self-funding and profit making from their endeavours across these performance indicators, including professional development (Mutton et al., 2017). The result has been a reduction in Local Authority funded professional development and an increase in competition with a neoliberal approach to the marketisation of professional development for teachers (Armstrong & Ainscow, 2018). Schools act as private training providers competing for participants with organisations including universities and this has implications for school to school support.

Professional learning

Some schools have moved away from traditional professional development courses and instead have formed professional learning communities or professional learning networks (Stoll, 2020). In doing so they recognise their knowledge of their context and professional expertise in mediating research-informed and evidence-informed approaches for sustained change and improvement. Linked to policies for school improvement and system change, funding has been available in some places, and this has allowed schools and universities to research together in partnership. Building on such initiatives and their popularity with experienced teachers in creating development opportunities without necessarily following the traditional senior management routes of promotion. Schools have become research hubs, linked to another teaching school key performance indicator, Research and Development. An added benefit has been the attraction for teachers of working in schools with research opportunities and this has been adopted as a recruitment and retention strategy with senior roles advertised with a specific space for research as well as the more usual teaching responsibilities. The next sections discuss two examples of professional learning networks and communities leading research for sustained improvement as examples of professional learning. These are offered as alternatives to the centrally designed and implemented offer, which is often presented as scripted and prescriptive, which may be seen as a backwards step (Ovenden-Hope, 2022).

Example 1: Science project

A model of professional development was used in an 8-month project, funded and evaluated by the London Schools Excellence Fund that aimed to enhance primary school teachers' subject and pedagogical knowledge of the science curriculum and practice. It used an impact cycle with ten stages organised into three sections – preparation, learning and improvement (Bubb, 2018).

- A. Preparation: identify needs, baseline picture, set a goal and plan how to achieve it
- B. Learning: the development activity and the new learning (skills, knowledge and attitudes) that result
- C. Improvement: putting learning into practice, with impact on pupil learning and improved staff self-efficacy.

Preparation

Baseline data showed that few of the teachers studied science beyond the age of 16 and that there were particular insecurities around teaching certain topics such as electricity. The participants were given a science test paper aimed at 14 year olds to evaluate their knowledge at the beginning and end of the project. This gave clear benchmarking and showed how deep gaps in knowledge were, which enabled sessions to be tailored to meet areas of misunderstanding. All participants wrote a few points about their baseline starting point, which allowed them to set realistic goals for their understanding and the impact they wanted for their pupils and as leaders of science in their school. Thus, the focus on impact was clear from the start and participants monitored their own progress.

Learning

There were 11 three-hour practical sessions every three weeks with an expectation of putting things into practice in between and reporting back. Participants discussed and were focused on their learning, whether it was knowledge, skills, understanding, attitudes, networks, confidence, or enthusiasm. Each session was evaluated after the day and asked what ideas they would try out or share with colleagues at school. Evaluations fed into the planning of the subsequent sessions.

Improvement

Teachers put their new learning into practice in the weeks between sessions and each session started with a sharing of what people had tried out. Visits from the trainer helped them improve their practice through team-teaching and addressing any problems, such as with resources. Participants audited the science resources in the school to identify whether there were enough to teach all aspects and topics in the national curriculum.

The improvement in the teachers' confidence and self-efficacy was clear: all said they were more confident as a result of the project and half said they were 'much more'. The impact on pupils was clear, as judged by questionnaires, book scrutiny and focus groups. There was much more science work in their books, covering more topics and being responded to with

more enthusiasm. There was school-wide impact because the teachers shared ideas with colleagues; one headteacher said, “Science has been reenergised in the school”.

Example 2: Facilitated Action Research (FAR)

Action research (AR) is an established research tradition and in England it also forms part of most ITE programmes, where trainee teachers undertake small scale projects in schools and settings under the guidance of tutors and these feed into their overall assessment. It is usually seen as a positive and rewarding part of the ITE process with students able to take a personal area of interest and develop it in a school for mutual benefit. It also supports the ambition of many teachers for making a difference. As a response to a need for professional development for teachers and linked to the needs of the school rather than externally driven, AR has been adopted as a strategy by research schools and professional learning networks (Godfrey, 2020). However, the reality of teaching means that for many, once qualified and working, the opportunities for AR seem to slip away under workload and lack of confidence without support from a tutor to scaffold the process can make undertaking such projects daunting. This lack of confidence may be further exacerbated by a frequent critique of AR as carried out in schools, that it lacks rigour and is project work rather than research and therefore not worth doing (Wyse et al, 2018). To address these concerns, Facilitated Action Research (FAR) is designed to support individual professionals and schools or settings to carry a version of AR independently and rigorously. Originally devised in response to a request for tailored professional learning for a teaching school in a deprived area (Ince and Kitto 2020), FAR is research underpinned and based on key principles of professional learning. It provides a modified AR cycle based on the work of Carr and Kemmis (2003) to create a scaffolded approach with an emphasis on devising a robust research question as the focus (Ince and Kitto, 2020; Ince, 2018) and meets the British Education Research Association (BERA) definition of high quality close to practice research (Wyse et al., 2018). It also adopts an impact evaluation framework (Earley and Porritt, 2010) which focuses attention and prompts critical reflection at every stage. The outcomes appear consistently positive with schools reporting benefits through addressing school issues through FAR, with sustained benefits in building capacity of teachers and motivating them to be agents of change through the outcomes from their research. These play into the wider

agenda of well-being, attrition and workload. Teachers are reluctant to take on additional commitments as they feel under pressure, have heavy workloads and risk burn out (Bingham & Bubbs, 2021). An advantage of FAR is that it is linked very closely to teachers' normal responsibilities and in being focussed on their area of interest linked to a concern or issue they have already identified, validates their professional judgement and offers a possible solution which can act as a powerful PLD opportunity. Successful FAR projects cover a range of topics from literacy and numeracy to well-being, transition, yoga, policy making and were voluntarily continued throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. They engage a range of education professionals including play workers, speech and language therapists and local authority advisors as well as teachers and support staff. Participants commented on its benefits:

“It has had a great impact to actually be more reflective on our practice and exchange ideas with the team. We have been more co-operative and ultimately effective.”

“When you do something like that, it makes you think how you can just change and make changes, self- reflection on how you can improve, where do you go from here.... how fun it was.”

FAR is now being adopted by an increasing number of teaching school hubs as an effective professional learning approach which creates sustained change and benefits for children and teachers.

Summary

The complex context in England creates specific challenges in professional learning but it is reassuring to note that there are creative and innovative approaches being taken. These are both at government level through the adoption of a 'golden thread' to teacher professional development and at more local levels. At the local level, it is through professional learning communities and research hubs actively exploring and implementing how professional learning can enhance and develop teachers and teaching to benefit children. This offers opportunities for optimism for professional learning in England.

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