

**TITLE**      **AN EVALUATION OF THE GTC-DFES-LEA CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP PROJECT: EXAMINING THE PROGRESS AND LASTING IMPACTS OF THE PARTNERSHIP PROJECT (REPORT 2)**

**AUTHORS**      **Jennie Harland, Karen Halsey and Dick Downing**

**SPONSOR**      **GTC**

## INTRODUCTION

During 2004–2005 the General Teaching Council for England (GTC) and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) worked in partnership with 26 local authorities (LAs) to advance work in supporting teachers' continuing professional development (CPD). This work was part of a national agenda to build schools' capacity for effective CPD.

As part of its commitment to assess the impact of its own policies, the GTC commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) to undertake an independent evaluation of the GTC-DfES-LEA CPD Partnership Project. The first report to arise from the evaluation (Moor et al, 2005) documented the experiences of those involved in the partnership project during its operational year. In order to add to the evidence base for 'transporting' the GTC model of working and to inform the national CPD policy agenda, the evaluation was extended to track the progress of project work in the following academic year 2005–2006.

## KEY FINDINGS

### Progress of the partnership projects

Overall, the degree of the progress of the partnership projects had been quite extensive at LA and school level. At LA level all of the LA advisors interviewed in the 15 authorities felt they had developed the partnership work in some form. At school level two thirds of schools originally involved and three quarters of schools not originally involved had developed the partnership outcomes. However, the third of schools involved in the original partnership that did not feel they had developed the work may present a significant minority and illuminate the needs for ongoing support and impetus in building capacity work.

The foci of the work in the follow up year covered the following:

- expansion of the focus to a new sector (for example, from primary to secondary)
- designing CPD for impact
- development of the role of (school) CPD leaders
- developing a more consistent and coherent approach across schools to CPD

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- schools self-evaluating CPD
- developing the role of mentors and coaches
- developing schools working collaboratively to provide CPD
- engagement in the Teacher Learning Academy (TLA)
- changing the culture of CPD
- identifying and meeting CPD needs
- improving LA–school communication
- promoting the links between CPD, performance management and school improvement.

There was a range of processes and strategies put in place to develop and extend the work through different initiatives and activities. These were, in order of frequency, as follows:

- dissemination
- establishment of and/or formalization of forums for CPD
- linking the work with other agendas/initiatives
- extending the LA CPD team
- developing/expanding frameworks
- developing tools and guidance documents for schools
- discussion and planning
- LA working in partnership with schools
- consultation with schools
- frameworks/documents in use in schools
- lead schools model/champions/ambassadors of good practice in CPD
- putting the CPD strategy into action
- inviting schools to take part
- regional working/working with other authorities.

## **Lasting impacts of the partnership project**

Some felt that lasting, far reaching impacts had not yet surfaced because the local authority was in the process of disseminating or had not undertaken official launches (for example, of frameworks, CPD toolkits, and so on). Where networks or channels for dissemination had been established there was evidence to suggest that the outcomes of the project had reached a wider audience, with schools revising their thinking about CPD or even implementing new systems.

There were also indications that the impacts instigated during the operational phase of the project had continued to develop and in some cases, new approaches to CPD were now embedded within the working

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life of schools and local authorities. The contribution of the GTC was deemed instrumental in generating the outcomes of the partnership project.

Overall a diverse range of lasting impacts were nominated by interviewees as follows

## **For the LA**

- a more coherent approach to CPD
- an enhanced CPD offer
- a wider perspective of CPD
- heightened profile for CPD
- increased networking opportunities
- changes to the working practices of LA personnel
- renewed enthusiasm.

## **For schools**

- informed schools approach to CPD
- enhanced CPD offer
- informed schools thinking/attitudes and awareness of CPD
- improved staff wellbeing.

It is striking that when interviewees were invited to describe the impacts of the partnership project, their responses were overwhelmingly positive. No interviewees chose to highlight any negative repercussions. Thus, we can conclude that a year on from the original project, impacts continue to reverberate across the authority and the signs are that the capacity for CPD, at both LA and school level, has continued to grow.

There were no significant differences between the types of activities and outcomes in schools that had been involved in the original partnership, compared to those who had not. This might suggest that with effective strategies for progressing work of this nature, involvement in the original work need not necessarily be a prerequisite for building capacity in schools.

## **Challenges in developing and continuing the work**

In the original year of the partnership projects, challenges commonly related to the activity and logistics of partnership working, such as, clarifying roles and responsibilities, defining focus and overcoming disparate priorities. In addition, challenges were raised regarding time and funding, as well as issues relating to making cultural change and overcoming negative attitudes. In the follow-up year, although the latter challenges were evident, a group of distinctive challenges had emerged. These related specifically to how to extend the work and take it forward. For instance, how to maintain the profile and priority of the work, communicate the work to a wider audience and support the implementation of models and frameworks within schools. These challenges would suggest that the structures and support required for developing capacity building work long term are subtly distinctive to those needed in the original year of input.

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## Key factors in sustaining the work

The follow up evaluation sought to examine the factors that had helped in the development and alignment of the working within different LAs. Interviewees were asked to identify what they felt were the key factors contributing to the sustainability of the partnership work and its lasting impacts.

The key factors that appear to be necessary to build sustainable capacity for CPD are as follows:

- expertise and continuous support
- customization of outcomes
- infrastructures for dissemination and sharing good practice
- strategic management
- continued opportunities to work in partnership, consultation and discussion
- linking the work with other initiatives and agendas
- resources.

Interviewees felt the critical features that contributed to the sustainability of the project were the opportunity to collaborate and work in partnership, expertise, the opportunity to customise, take ownership and design outcomes around need. It would thus appear that the model of partnership working contains a number of key elements that are conducive to sustainable capacity building if continuous. In addition to these more process-oriented features, interviewees made recommendations for the structural necessities for sustainability. The work requires infrastructure, strategic management, links with other agendas and resources in order to be sustainable and have lasting impacts.

## CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

The following themes would appear to require consideration in future partnership working and in attempting to build schools capacity for CPD in the longer term.

- Future policy may need to take account of the interplay between activities that function to deepen developments (through LA–school partnership working) or spread developments (through dissemination). It is suggested that capacity for CPD in schools is more likely to be achieved and sustained by a combination of these methods.
- Schools would benefit from continuous support (including time, funding, or support from experts) in order to engage the whole school community in developing practices as well as the individual's capacity to improve his/her own CPD practices.
- Similarly, it is recommended that long term development of the work involves continued support from, and contact with, external experts who can offer a sustained injection of new knowledge and thinking.
- Partnerships and forums should aim to include multi-layered participation. The opportunity to learn about different people's experiences and perspectives through the process of collaborative working was clearly a key feature of the sustainability of the projects and provided a crucial site for learning and developing thinking.

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- It is recommended that long term CPD capacity building work involves the planning of activities and processes that allow for customization and ownership.
- It is recommended that information and guidance is provided to LAs and schools regarding how the CPD partnership agenda fits and links with other agendas and how other LAs and schools are developing CPD practices. Having the knowledge to make such links aids the sustainability of CPD as a priority and the manageability of engaging with new initiatives.

## ABOUT THE STUDY

The follow up evaluation work sought to examine:

- the diverse ways in which, and the extent to which, the work had developed over the course of the school year 2005–06
- the processes/strategies that were put in place to develop the work through different initiatives and activities
- a sense of any impact on the LA, schools and pupils
- any challenges faced and solutions adopted
- any factors that had helped in the development and alignment of working with different LAs.

The follow-up evaluation involved telephone interviews with 43 representatives from 15 local authorities. Interviews were undertaken with both LA based (25) and school based (18) personnel in order to determine to what extent the work of the project had disseminated outwards across the authorities.

## PUBLICATION AND DISSEMINATION

To download the report, use the download link: .....

### CONTACT DETAILS

For further details about this research project, please contact:

**Karen Halsey**

**E-mail:** [k.halsey@nfer.ac.uk](mailto:k.halsey@nfer.ac.uk)

**Tel:** 01904 433435