

# **TDA:**

## **A longitudinal review of the postgraduate professional development of teachers**

**February 2010**

### **Introduction**

1. This study seeks to review the available evidence about the effectiveness and impact on teachers, pupils and schools of 10 years of postgraduate professional development for teachers through schemes funded by the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA). The review covers:

- the historical context for award-bearing in-service education and training (INSET) and postgraduate professional development (PPD)
- the evolution in the nature and style of the postgraduate professional development of teachers
- a critical summary of the evidence of the impact of PPD
- issues and concerns raised by PPD provision, and
- an overview of the main evidence of the effectiveness of PPD and the messages that can be deduced for the Masters in Teaching and Learning (MTL) Programme.

2. The report is based on evidence from a wide range of sources. These sources include articles published in professional journals, Ofsted inspection reports, a comprehensive report of the award-bearing INSET scheme that preceded PPD, other small-scale studies (both published and unpublished) of various aspects of PPD provision, interviews with PPD tutors and students, and three sets of PPD impact reports submitted annually to the TDA by all PPD providers – which proved to be the richest source of evidence. Piecing together all the evidence enabled a comprehensive account of the development and effectiveness of PPD to be prepared. Sometimes, the available material comprised small fragments or derived from a few teacher participants. Also, some pieces of evidence were more robust and generalisable than others. However, taken as a whole, the evidence was rarely contradictory, and confirmed a beneficial and successful programme that everyone concerned had sought to improve and develop in the light of carefully evaluated experience.

## **The historical context for award-bearing INSET and postgraduate professional development**

### The quest for better qualified teachers

3. Government policy during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century led to growth in the number of qualified teachers and to establishing an all-graduate teaching profession. Teachers already in schools sought to upgrade their qualifications through part-time in-service BEd courses. Once the need for the in-service BEd had been satisfied, it was replaced by a steady but modest demand for other postgraduate professional courses at masters level (M-level). Initiatives and funding arrangements were geared predominantly to meeting the wishes of individual teachers, resulting in variable and haphazard opportunities. These arrangements continued until 1997, with higher education institutions receiving funding for award-bearing INSET through annual contracts from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) on the basis of requests for funding and projected recruitment. At that stage, there was no requirement for external quality assurance. However, in 1997 administration of award-bearing INSET funding for teachers in England passed to the Teacher Training Agency (TTA). Consultations with providers, local education authorities (LEAs) and other interested parties led to a triennial funding round, with bids set out against agreed criteria. For the first time, providers needed to demonstrate that (i) they were working in partnership with LEAs, schools and other stakeholders, and (ii) the effectiveness of the provision would be judged in terms of the impact on children and young people as well as having beneficial outcomes for the participating teachers. Although this development represented a natural progression for many providers, it introduced two key concepts that have now become central to the provision of postgraduate professional development for teachers: **partnership** and **impact**.

### New funding strategies for award-bearing INSET

4. The funding arrangements for the new award-bearing INSET Programme were phased in over the three academic years from 1998 to 2001. From 2001/02 onwards funding was allocated entirely according to whether providers' applications met the TTA criteria. Before agreeing to continue with a further triennial funding round in 2004, the then Department for Education and Skills (DfES) – later to become the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) – undertook a review of the scheme. Two independent consultants, David Soulsby and David Swain, prepared 'A report on the award-bearing INSET scheme' in March 2003, drawing on a wide range of available evidence. In 2004, the TTA invited applications from providers under the first triennial round of funding for the Postgraduate Professional Development (PPD) Programme beginning in 2005/06. Meanwhile, the brief of the TTA was extended and it became the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA).

5. Since there was much in common between the award-bearing INSET and the PPD Programmes, this review explores the evolution of postgraduate professional development for teachers over 10 years across both programmes.

## The evolution in the style and nature of the postgraduate professional development of teachers

### The funding criteria and assessment of applications

6. Although the award-bearing INSET Programme represented a comparatively small strand in the overall government policy for the continuing professional development (CPD) of teachers in England, it seems to have been both influential and effective in promoting change. Its inception in 1998 marked a radical departure from the former system, where the academic quality of postgraduate provision was the hallmark, towards one in which the impact of the provision also became a key benchmark. Many providers already recognised the crucial importance of impact. However, placing responsibility for allocating award-bearing INSET/PPD<sup>1</sup> funding in the hands of the TDA<sup>2</sup> made it possible to promote this developmental process. The bidding criteria placed expectations on providers, and the funding allocations gave the incentive, to increase the emphasis on impact in their course provision. In drawing up the bidding criteria, the TDA recognised that impact was inextricably linked with the identification of schools' and individual development needs and matching training to those needs. The TDA also recognised that 'barriers' significantly affected teachers' willingness and capacity to participate in PPD. These factors lay behind the emphasis on 'partnership', which has been at the heart of the PPD Programme from the outset.

7. The providers' applications for PPD funding were rigorously assessed<sup>3</sup> against the funding criteria. Applications that did not meet **all** the criteria received no funding. Within the award-bearing INSET Programme, unsuccessful applicants could only return with a new bid in a subsequent year. However, a two-stage scrutiny process was adopted for the PPD Programme, enabling TDA officers to seek supplementary information from providers at an intermediate stage in order to clarify intentions. This was not only more equitable but also resulted in a higher proportion of successful applications. The bidding process was never competitive but funding allocations were sometimes scaled down to keep within the overall budget. PPD funding was allocated on a per capita basis, though failure to recruit to target invariably resulted in 'clawback' by the TDA. In addition to the per capita allocation, from 2005 successful applicants also received a block grant<sup>4</sup> to support collaborative working through their partnerships.

8. The funding criteria have been modified regularly in the light of experience and government policy – such as the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda. However, the current criteria can be mapped against those originally set out in 1998. The chart on the following page summarises the criteria in order of presentation at three points in time. Recently, the TDA modified the wording and changed the order of the criteria to re-emphasise the crucial importance of the impact of PPD on teachers, children and young people, and schools more widely.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless there is a need to distinguish between them, the award-bearing INSET and PPD Programmes will be referred to as PPD throughout this review

<sup>2</sup> For simplicity, the TTA and TDA will be referred to throughout as the TDA

<sup>3</sup> Following detailed scrutiny by TDA officers, all applications were assessed (and moderated) against the funding criteria by an independent panel that recommended the allocation, or not, of funding for PPD

<sup>4</sup> Initially, 'collaborative funding' was in two bands (viz, below and above 500 part-time PPD students).

From 2007/08, more bands were introduced to reflect the circumstances of providers with large recruitment to PPD

Criterion	Award-bearing INSET (2000 onwards)	PPD 1 <sup>st</sup> Triennial Round (2005 onwards)	PPD 2 <sup>nd</sup> Triennial Round (2008 onwards)
	PROVISION SHOULD...	PROVISION SHOULD...	
		<i>List all organisations involved in planning and developing this provision Who is the lead applicant organisation?</i>	<i>List all organisations involved with this provision Who is the lead applicant organisation? Summarise in no more than 500 words, with diagrams if appropriate, the nature and structure of the partnership and provision</i>
1	have as its main objective the improvement of pupils' performance through the improvement of school teachers' or headteachers' professional knowledge, understanding and skills and their effectiveness in teaching and/or leadership and management	lead to recognised qualifications at M-level or above	The provision will have as its main objective the improvement of children and young people's outcomes through the improvement of participants' attributes, knowledge, understanding and skills
2	respond to identified training and development needs of individuals	have as its main objective the improvement of pupils' performance through the embedded improvement of teachers' knowledge, understanding and practice	[Explain] how the impact of the provision on children and young people and on participants will be evaluated and how it will be subject to rigorous internal and external quality assurance
3	be informed by the needs of schools or groups of schools	develop teachers' research and problem-solving skills through the critical evaluation of evidence and research from a range of sources, including academic research and other data available to schools	The provision will develop participants' research and problem-solving skills through the critical evaluation of evidence and research from a range of sources, including academic and other data
4	incorporate up-to-date research and inspection evidence and develop teachers' skills in using research and other evidence to inform their professional practice	directly involve teachers, schools and other local and regional stakeholders in planning, reviewing and developing provision to meet the identified needs of schools and teachers in the region(s) where it will be offered	Applications should make clear a. how the needs of schools and their workforce in the region(s) where the provision will be offered have been identified in the partnership b. how ongoing review and development of the provision and the continued involvement of stakeholders is ensured
5	involve teachers in planning, development and delivery	reduce identified barriers to teachers' participation in postgraduate professional development	[Show] how barriers to participation in postgraduate professional development have been identified and how the provision will address these barriers in order to improve access
6	be subject to internal and external quality control and assurance procedures, and include mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the impact of the provision on professional practice in schools	be subject to internal and external quality assurance procedures	Provision will lead to recognised qualifications at M-level or above and will relate to professional standards and, where appropriate, other national and local initiatives
7	respond to Ofsted <sup>5</sup> inspection of INSET	provide specified management information, and include an evaluation of the programme's impact on practice in school	[Show] how provision delivers postgraduate professional development that meets priority areas identified by the TDA

<sup>5</sup> Ofsted carried out a programme of inspection of award-bearing INSET in 1999/2000 providing an assessment of 207 courses at 84 different providers, with follow-up inspections in 2002/03. There has been no corresponding inspection of the PPD Programme

## The changing nature of PPD partnerships

9. From the outset of the award-bearing INSET Programme in 1998, the TDA has required providers to develop their provision through regional partnerships. The PPD Programme is funded through the lead provider in the partnership. Initially, most partnerships were led by higher education institutions (HEIs) as the historical providers of award-bearing courses. Ten years later, most partnerships are still led by HEIs, though nearly a quarter are now led by local authorities (LAs), professional associations, schools and other bodies. In some cases, large regional consortia have been established to coordinate and rationalise provision, with the purpose of ensuring a wide and diverse offering while at the same time minimising duplication.

10. Soulsby and Swain<sup>6</sup> reported in 2003 ‘...the most striking feature of the provision is the widespread development of local and sub-regional partnership arrangements...’, adding examples of how partnerships enabled the HEI providers to match their programmes to the requirements of LAs and schools, and for other partners to commission PPD to fulfil policy and specific needs.

11. In the ensuing years, the concept of partnership has continued to evolve and develop. Providers reported giving high priority to ‘establishing new partnership work and ensuring that existing partnerships were running effectively and developing to meet new needs’. Providers that nurtured active PPD partnerships with schools, local authorities, professional bodies, etc, were most successful in recruiting and retaining PPD students. Evidence from interim reports of the CUREE evaluation<sup>7</sup> of PPD noted ‘the increasing maturity of partnerships’ and confirmed that ‘customer responsiveness emerged as a strong theme in partnership working’. Recently, many providers have increased their support for the partnerships as a result of the growth in school-based provision.

12. In order to keep the concept of ‘partnership’ at the heart of expanded and changing provision, many of the medium and large providers have begun to refer to ‘PPD partnerships’ in the plural. Most appear to have retained an overarching internal or regional partnership committee with oversight of policy, the range and relevance of provision, and impact evaluation. However, much of the dynamic of the individual PPD components derived from local or targeted partnerships, which focused on ensuring quality and relevance of specific provision. This new working level of partnership appears to have evolved naturally and is testament to the widespread recognition of the value and importance of a cooperative approach to the planning, delivery and evaluation of PPD. Consequently, providers often reported using PPD funding<sup>8</sup> beneficially to support the crucial work of these ‘second tier’ partnerships as well as providing for overall PPD partnership management – often by appointing one or more individuals to carry out the duties of partnership manager.

## Course-based provision – the most common form of PPD

13. Estimates suggest that at least two-thirds of PPD provision continues to be delivered through courses located in universities and other centres. The advent of the PPD partnerships encouraged HEIs to abandon old practices of providing modules that they thought were needed and replace them with others based on sound market intelligence acquired through effective, regular contact with local authorities, schools and teachers. Many buoyant PPD programmes rooted in strong partnerships bear witness to the value of

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<sup>6</sup> Soulsby, D. and Swain, D. (2003) *A report on the award-bearing INSET scheme*, London: DfES/TDA

<sup>7</sup> The TDA commissioned the Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education (CUREE) to conduct a three-year evaluation of the Postgraduate Professional Development (PPD) Programme, due for completion in late 2009

<sup>8</sup> Often drawing on the collaborative funding allocation provided by the TDA (see footnote p3)

effective dialogue. It has become common for providers to offer a selection of modules from which individual participants can create a programme of study that meets their personal needs and interests. Many also place great emphasis on the value of coherent programmes of study. They often identify named pathways<sup>9</sup>, with related modules coalescing to form an in-depth study at M-level.

14. Providers also take great care to match the content and study material of the modules to the identified needs of participants. Many use an initial needs analysis at the start of each module or phase of study to set target outcomes. The needs analysis can, in turn, form a basis for a periodic review of the targets and, ultimately, for evaluating outcomes. Almost all PPD programmes now involve teachers in some form of personalised enquiry within their classrooms or schools.

#### The growth of school-based and bespoke provision

15. As the confidence of teachers and schools in the value of HEIs' provision grew, this led first to interest in delivering versions of existing award-bearing courses in schools and, later, to bespoke PPD. The TDA criteria for award-bearing INSET favoured such developments, though progress was initially slow because university validation procedures also needed to evolve (see paragraph 27 below). In 2003, Soulsby and Swain<sup>10</sup> commented on these developments: 'Some of the courses are taught in school and, where appropriate, schools working on the same issue are brought together' ... 'Several [providers] have pioneered school-based masters programmes in which lecturers travel to the school to deliver taught units, and action research projects are tutored by a school-based mentor and an HEI tutor' ... '[Award-bearing provision] has been moving to become more flexible, more responsive to local need, more school-centred, and more accessible to teachers. It would be a mistake, however, to assume that all providers and all LAs have moved strongly enough in this direction'.

16. In the past five years, school-based and bespoke provision has become an increasingly popular and important version of PPD, particularly as the potential of PPD in aiding the achievement of school improvement priorities has been recognised. In each successive year, providers have placed increasing emphasis on these aspects of provision in their impact reports<sup>11</sup> to the TDA. By 2009, these reports can be summarised as follows:

17. School-based provision either comprised the delivery of tailored variants of established M-level modules locally or special bespoke provision negotiated to address identified needs and priorities. However, providers have noted difficulties in sustaining bespoke school-based PPD. At the very least, tutors needed travelling time to deliver sessions. But in many cases, much time was also spent in identifying and negotiating a suitable theme for collaborative enquiry and in setting up the provision. Several providers reported spending months<sup>12</sup> on these preparations as a necessary precursor to successful PPD. This had major resource implications. However, the opportunity to link a school-based PPD programme to school improvement priorities, and sometimes to the outcomes of an Ofsted inspection, imbued it with a high level of relevance. One provider seemed to speak for others in writing: 'School-based modules have been an exciting opportunity to provide whole school training in order to meet the identified needs of schools. Heads have been unanimous in their support for this work in that it has ensured appropriate and relevant professional development across whole school staffs.'

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<sup>9</sup> For example: special educational needs, leadership and management, or an area of the curriculum

<sup>10</sup> *ibid*

<sup>11</sup> One of TDA funding conditions requires providers to prepare an annual report on the impact of their PPD provision

<sup>12</sup> One college states 6-12 months

18. Even with the steady growth in school-based provision, it has still involved only a percentage of schools. However, there were plenty of accounts of schools with sustained and continuing commitment to school-based PPD – sometimes successive cohorts built on the work of their predecessors. The baton was not always carried forward with such enthusiasm. One provider spoke graphically about a first cohort of senior and middle managers strongly committed to the school-based PPD programme, a second cohort of teachers who seemed much less enthusiastic and hard-working, and a third cohort of young teachers whose commitment rivalled that of the initial cohort. It appears that many in the middle cohort did not have the career aspirations of their predecessors or the recognition of the long-term importance of masters level qualifications evident among the young teachers. Sometimes, when the school objectives of a PPD programme had been achieved, there appeared to be no immediate plans for continuation. In achieving the agreed outcomes for the school, teachers did not always submit work for accreditation, and in some cases there were insufficient numbers wishing to embark on or proceed further with their studies. Consequently, there remains a continuing need for alternative forms of PPD provision to enable teachers to pursue M-level studies regardless of whether or not their school is committed to school-based PPD.

#### Provision for newly qualified teachers

19. Until recently, it was rare for newly qualified teachers (NQTs) to be involved in PPD – indeed, regulations excluded them from the award-bearing INSET Programme because specific funding had been allocated for induction training. No such restrictions were applied to the PPD Programme from 2005 onwards, though the number of NQTs recruited in the first year was very small. When it became possible for postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE) students to gain M-level credits for aspects of their initial teacher training (ITT) there was growing interest from NQTs to continue with M-level study through PPD.

20. Initially, providers enrolled NQTs on courses designed for experienced teachers, but they soon devised new modules that were more suitable for new teachers. In the academic year 2007/08 over half the providers reported NQTs registered on their programmes. Increasingly, PPD providers have placed emphasis on a ‘continuum from ITT to PPD’. They reported that the opportunity for such ‘joined-up’ study had increased the motivation of PGCE trainees to complete ITT assignments to M-level standard and to continue quickly with PPD. Providers soon recognised the importance of consistency of approach and parity of M-level standards between the PGCE and PPD, so they began moderating assessments internally and externally across both programmes. Some enabled NQTs to accredit their induction year through a portfolio route, others had developed suitably focused 30-credit modules (for example, Critical Evaluation of the NQT year or Personal and Professional Development in the NQT year) that could be added to 30 M-level credits from the PGCE to create a postgraduate certificate as the first stage towards a masters degree. In some cases, this provision had been developed in partnership with the local authority induction programme.

21. However, this development has not found favour everywhere. Providers noted reluctance in some schools to support NQTs in continuing with masters level studies, claiming they had ‘good quality’ induction programmes that fully met NQTs’ needs. These schools were apparently concerned not to burden NQTs with extra work that might deflect them from the ‘real business of getting to grips with teaching’. In contrast, there were many good examples of the impact of PPD on NQTs in helping them prepare for a career in teaching, and particularly in helping them ‘to reach the NQT standards and encourage continued reflective practice’. Increasingly, schools have recognised the value of early postgraduate study in developing NQTs’ confidence, knowledge, understanding and insights in carrying out their professional duties, though the effectiveness of this depended on a study programme matched suitably to the early years of teaching.

## Links to school improvement plans and performance management objectives

22. While early award-bearing INSET may have contributed incidentally to school improvement, the main focus was on the personal and professional development of the individual teacher. However, from 1998 the TDA funding criteria required providers to give high priority to the impact of PPD on pupils, and the associated guidance encouraged partnerships to take account of school improvement plans (SIPs). In the ensuing years, it became increasingly common for providers to negotiate PPD that addressed specific school development priorities. Thus, senior managers in schools began incorporating PPD projects into their wider continuing professional development programmes and recognised PPD as a means of achieving school improvement objectives. Recently, there have been more examples of schools with a high take-up of collaborative school-based PPD projects, through which teachers investigated separate but related aspects of an agreed topic, discussing their progress and methodology, and sharing their findings. In some schools, this became a major plank in school improvement – not only for the PPD participants but also for other teachers who were keenly, but less formally, associated with the project. Its effectiveness depended on good planning, which took time, and a process of negotiation calling for skill and diplomacy to secure success.

23. Also, in meeting teachers' personal development needs, attention has turned (more slowly) to links with performance management. Initially, the link was often a simple goal of completing a PPD module. More recently, there has been increasing evidence of the tailoring of teachers' PPD studies to address particular performance management targets, and examples of teachers agreeing performance management objectives with their line managers that specified certain PPD outcomes. Providers also reported linking PPD directly to the various stages of the professional standards for teachers.

## Planning for impact from the outset

24. Initially, most providers were content to consider the impact of PPD retrospectively. However, within the last triennium of the PPD, planning for impact from the outset became more widespread, particularly where provision was linked to school improvement priorities or personal development targets. Some providers devised 'impact toolkits' to assist participants gather evidence of impact throughout their studies. Typically, participants on one PPD programme were required to complete a 'professional development plan right at the start of the course ... which ensures that they were aware of the potential impact and can build this into their early planning for assessed work'.

25. One experienced university provider outlined a comprehensive approach to PPD by bringing together planning, provision, impact and evaluation into a single statement. This provider stated confidently that its school-based PPD programme has impact on teachers, pupils and schools because:

- the programme is designed to provide a coherent structure from needs identification to impact evaluation
- provision is based on, and tailored around, the needs identified by each school
- projects are planned several months before delivery, allowing time for careful thought, discussion and preparation prior to commencement
- the project is organised for each school, ensuring that the five stages – arranging, planning, delivery, review and dissemination – are part of a coherent whole, each stage informing the next
- prior to a formal project planning meeting, the headteacher responds to questions about needs analysis and links with school improvement planning, inspection reports, etc
- at the project planning meeting stakeholders compose a project agreement, which forms the focus for the design and delivery of the project, and
- at the project planning meeting, means of monitoring impact are also anticipated.

### The validation of flexible PPD provision

26. The second CUREE interim report observed that 'most partnerships had expanded their provision to meet particular needs ... designing M-level modules which could be tailored and adapted to meet the rapidly changing and diverse learning needs of practitioners without compromising on quality'.

27. Responding to the various identified needs of schools (and of individual teachers) as well as the changing and emerging national and local priorities required flexible and adaptable PPD provision. In contrast, universities' traditional validation procedures, designed to ensure high academic standards appropriate to M-level awards, were often protracted and ill-suited to this new situation. However, it was much to the credit of the universities that many of them responded by setting up alternative rigorous validation procedures for a shell framework that identified the style, nature and success criteria for school-based PPD modules without specifying content. Where adopted, this approach has enabled PPD providers to negotiate suitable content with schools, while at the same time defining the academic standards to be achieved by participants.

28. Schools did not always anticipate the time needed to set up an effective school-based PPD programme. When the negotiations had been completed and everyone was eager to begin, the start often fell part-way through the university year or semester. In turn, this resulted in participants completing work for final assessment at times that did not mesh readily with the calendar of HEI examination board meetings. Providers reported 'delicate negotiations' to overcome this problem and avoid candidates waiting months for their results before they could proceed confidently with the next stage of their studies. Some providers commented that overcoming 'traditional university frameworks' for a relatively small programme could be difficult.

### The evolution of M-level assessment

29. Many providers have commented that while participants generally undertake school-based research work diligently, a significant number seem to balk at presenting their findings for assessment and accreditation. One provider noted 'the challenge of writing up has been problematic'. Participants often reported that the day-to-day demands of their home and professional lives left them unable to devote sufficient energy and attention to their studies, making it difficult for them to pace their work properly. Sometimes the desired 'goal' for the individual concerned had been achieved through the outcomes from the research fieldwork, so writing up their conclusions for accreditation seemed unnecessarily burdensome. In order to address this problem, several providers were planning more detailed support procedures to help teachers complete the written assignments, including more face-to-face sessions and tutorials as well as e-learning and online support. Elsewhere, providers had recognised the value of the support that could be offered by other teachers, acting as in-school tutors, and were aiming to promote this. A few said they were looking at ways of reducing the assessment burden or were considering alternatives to formal written assignments and essays 'that some find difficult to write', such as reflective portfolios and academic presentations. One provider wrote of a 'commitment to provide assessment tasks that are more appropriate to work-based/practitioner learning'.

## A summary of the evidence of the impact of PPD

### Nature of the impact of PPD

*'The provision will have as its main objective the improvement of children's and young people's outcomes through the improvement of participants' attributes, knowledge, understanding and skills.'* (TDA funding criteria for PPD)

30. A variant of this requirement has been the key funding criterion throughout the award-bearing INSET and PPD Programmes. However the wording of this criterion, which applied to the second triennium of PPD funding (2008 onwards), had substituted 'outcomes' for the earlier 'performance'.

31. In 2003, Soulsby and Swain<sup>13</sup> reported 'evidence gathered for the review strongly points to the conclusion that the investment in award-bearing INSET over the last few years has had a positive impact on teachers' effectiveness in the areas identified as priorities for funding', adding later in the report that 'it is less clear that award-bearing INSET has a direct and demonstrable impact on **pupils'** standards'.

32. In the early days of the award-bearing INSET Programme, a substantial minority of providers appeared content to presume that developing the teachers' knowledge, skills and understanding would automatically improve the learning experiences and performance of their pupils. The fallacy of this presumption is now commonly accepted. The widespread practice of 'planning for impact from the outset', linked with requiring candidates to report on the impact of their interventions and changes of practice as part of the assessment criteria for PPD projects and assignments, have together sharpened the focus on the impact on children and young people. In turn, this has improved the range and quality of PPD impact evidence. To aid providers in thinking about and carrying forward their evaluations, the Universities' Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET) prepared useful guidance<sup>14</sup> on PPD impact evaluation.

33. When presenting their evidence annually to the TDA, providers have explained the problematic nature of judging the impact of PPD in schools and the difficulty of establishing a causal link between the provision and improvements in pupils' attainment.

34. Several providers have also formulated typologies of the impact of PPD that gave 'shape' to their evaluation processes. The typologies have much in common. For example, one university identified:

- changes in subject/process knowledge base of participants
- changes in confidence and self-esteem of participants – increased sense of mission that an improvement in their practice/teaching can have a positive impact on pupils and staff
- changes in classroom practice of participants and/or the practice of colleagues – planning, organisation, coaching, mentoring, and changes to practice based on new knowledge
- improved reflection on practice
- improved motivation of pupils, and
- improved achievement of pupils.

35. The university goes on to observe that 'one of the striking features of this typology is the further down the list, the greater the distance between the PPD activity and the impact, and the greater number of other variables come into play'. Providers also point out that

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<sup>13</sup> *ibid*

<sup>14</sup> Universities' Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET) *Postgraduate Professional Development Annual Impact Evaluation: UCET Guidance* (undated)

changes in teachers' knowledge, skills and behaviour are more likely to be evident during or soon after the PPD, whereas substantive impact on pupils' achievements might not be evident for months or years, by which time other factors may also have had an effect.

36. However, as the PPD Programme became well established and longer periods of study allowed for more follow-through, providers displayed more confidence in the validity of the beneficial outcomes reported by participants and senior staff in the schools. In citing examples of improvements in pupils' attainment and achievement, one provider suggested a consensus view that many of these outcomes would be difficult to account for other than as a consequence of the PPD. Another provider emphasised that 'effective well-planned PPD contributes to other improvement and development activities that can, collectively, improve pupils' experience, thereby producing higher levels of pupil achievement'.

#### Corroboration and triangulation of impact evidence

37. In the absence of any recent comprehensive Ofsted inspections of PPD, and with only a limited number of independent evaluations of PPD programmes, much of the impact evidence begins with the reports of participants themselves. Early in the programme, a lot of this evidence was superficial and impressionistic. However, over the 10 years since the award-bearing INSET Programme began, providers have developed more sophisticated procedures for gathering evidence and assessing its reliability. The bulk of the evidence submitted to the TDA has been qualitative, though some providers incorporated basic statistical data derived from the analysis of questionnaires with Likert<sup>15</sup> scale responses, and from GCSE examination results, etc.

38. Providers paid considerable attention to seeking corroboration of impact through reports from participants, their senior managers, evidence from assignments and portfolios, setting impact targets at the outset of the PPD, post-course follow-up evaluation and, more recently, the evidence and opinions of the children and young people ('pupil voice') in the classes taught by participants. In some cases, providers have offered triangulated evidence derived from several sources. There is clearly a cost factor in adopting such procedures, particularly for small providers who may have no tutors for whom PPD is their primary concern and have minimal administrative support. Nevertheless, the large majority of providers take great care to verify the impact evidence they present to the TDA and have been scrupulous in not claiming outcomes that cannot be substantiated. Suffice it to say that all the published (and unpublished) evidence consulted in preparing this report pointed to similar conclusions about the benefits of PPD.

39. The following paragraphs summarise the most recent available evidence of the impact of PPD. Some authors have suggested the possibility that some beneficial outcomes from PPD might be a consequence of the 'Hawthorne Effect'<sup>16</sup> but similar evidence of benefit was often found in different places. Thus, it seems reasonable to regard this effect as minimal.

#### Summary of impact on teacher participants

40. Providers explained that the impact of PPD on teacher participants often became evident quite quickly. From the beginning of the PPD Programme, one of the most frequently noted benefits has been the impact on participants' personal qualities, attributes and capabilities. Providers have frequently reported specific evidence showing that participants'

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<sup>15</sup> A scale that enables respondents to grade the strength of a positive or negative answer.

<sup>16</sup> "An attempt was made to measure the difference between two methods of management during the 1930s at the Hawthorne plant (Chicago). The attempt failed because the workers improved their efforts immensely for both methods. This was because they knew they were being watched carefully. Since then, the term 'Hawthorne Effect' has been used to describe the improvement in a situation that occurs just because an experiment is being run." Source: Wikipedia

increased self-confidence, raised self-esteem and greater capacity for reflection were having a very marked impact on their professional capability. Most striking were the many references to what teachers felt more able to do as a consequence of the increased confidence gained through their PPD studies. For example, being more prepared to speak out at meetings, having the knowledge to challenge the opinions of colleagues, thinking more deeply about their professional practice, having the confidence to innovate and take calculated risks, and feeling that they were more highly regarded by fellow teachers.

41. Often, the increased confidence derived from a deeper subject and professional knowledge. Teachers wrote about how fresh subject content knowledge, and improved understanding of subject pedagogy and subject leadership, had not only enabled them to develop their own teaching but also to take a lead in the department or school. However, some recent impact reports suggested that it was also a fresh understanding of educational and learning theory and context that had equipped many participants with the capacity to reflect on and evaluate their practice. Providers included comments from teachers showing that the capacity for effective reflection had a deep impact on their professional work and lives. Another recurring theme was participants' greater awareness and recognition of the role of research in educational development and school improvement. Engaging in M-level study had moved many teachers away from pragmatism to basing key decisions on evidence. The combination of greater self-confidence and new knowledge seems to have re-energised some teachers who had fallen into a rut. For others there was not only a feeling of being more confident but also an increased capacity to advise and influence others. However, there were occasional accounts of teachers reporting frustration that their new expertise was not recognised or was dismissed by their colleagues.

42. Over the past three years, providers have reported a steadily increasing emphasis on aspects of behaviour and classroom management, both in the number of applications for taught modules and also in teachers' small-scale research projects. Participants often explained that their new knowledge, skills and understanding of behaviour and classroom management had not only improved pupils' learning experiences but also their own quality of life. However, there were also references to significant changes in teachers' behaviours arising from PPD – for example, moving away from punitive approaches towards restorative justice systems and increased mentoring work.

43. Throughout the PPD Programme, teachers have often commented about beneficial outcomes in the form of promotion or change of role. It is difficult to link cause and effect as many factors influence a teacher's promotion prospects. Nevertheless, some providers recorded a large proportion of participants on some courses gaining promotion during or soon after completing their PPD studies, particularly where these involved specialist training (eg, in special educational needs, educational management). Sometimes teachers reported increased job mobility, or using material from their PPD studies as part of the evidence towards gaining advanced skills teacher (AST) status. There was also some evidence to indicate that the availability of M-level study in schools has aided both recruitment and retention, with examples of better fields of applicants for vacancies and teachers remaining in a school because of vibrant professional learning communities.

#### Summary of impact on children and young people

44. The majority of PPD providers judge the ultimate success of their provision in terms of its impact on children and young people, in accordance with the Every Child Matters agenda. The most recent impact reports<sup>17</sup> to the TDA revealed growing confidence among providers in testifying to the multitude of ways in which children and young people benefit directly and indirectly from their teachers' involvement in M-level study.

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<sup>17</sup> Submitted to the TDA in November 2008, based on the evaluation of provision in the academic year 2007/08

45 Three years ago, one university commented that ‘it is easier to achieve objectives in relation to pupils’ experiences than pupils’ academic achievement’. Since then, other responses have included a lot of substantive evidence of how pupils’ learning environment had been improved through changes in the working practices of their teachers. There were many examples of PPD helping ‘teachers to create learning contexts for pupils that were richer, more flexible and more adaptive to their needs and situations’. There were frequent references to pupils benefiting from teachers’ understanding of how to deploy interventions more effectively. Some striking changes in the learning environment derived not only from participants’ fresh approaches to teaching but also from more informed and skilful classroom and behaviour management techniques. Several providers reported that as teachers gained in confidence through their studies, they often became more enthused in their teaching, and they not only created a better and more productive learning environment but their enhanced confidence was also translated to pupils.

46. Evidence from recent classroom-based PPD projects and studies linked pupils’ better engagement in their work and consequent improved attainment with their increased motivation, enjoyment, raised self-esteem and sense of well-being, and improved behaviour. These outcomes were often linked to teachers’ improved ability to create learning situations that allowed pupils to be effective independent learners, to have more autonomy, and to judge their own progress through assessment for learning (AfL). Notwithstanding the attendant difficulties, the evidence from teachers and schools that attributes improvements in pupils’ achievements<sup>18</sup> to PPD should not be dismissed lightly. Providers’ thoughtful comments on this evidence suggest that causal links between PPD and better academic results often had a lot to do with teachers’ ability to reflect on their professional practice, and the increased confidence that came with greater knowledge, and enhanced pedagogical and class management skills. This appears to have been particularly significant when the PPD required teachers to address issues and concerns from their own classrooms and schools, with this effect being multiplied when several teachers undertook related school-based PPD together.

47. In carrying out their classroom-based research, participants recognised the importance of using pupil voice to determine their classroom needs. One provider explained that many teachers found ‘pupils’ views often not to be what they expected, leading to a reassessment of widely held assumptions on a number of issues’.

48. Although rarely noted five years ago, there has been a significant rise in the number of reports in the last triennium of PPD funding of the beneficial effects of involving pupils overtly in the teachers’ PPD research and sharing progress with them. Sometimes this involved seeking the views of pupils about new or innovative approaches and practices. However, a growing number of teachers seemed to have involved pupils more actively in the research, sometimes as co-researchers. One participant wrote confidently that undertaking research with the pupils was ‘giving them more skills for life’. The providers have also commented on the value of children and young people seeing their teachers as learners. Teachers report that sharing their experiences of studying on an award-bearing programme has led to discussions of ‘ourselves as learners’ and ‘what lifelong learning actually means’. Increasingly, providers have recognised the importance of high ethical standards in respect of the differences between teachers’ normal professional responsibilities and their obligations and responsibilities to pupils and their

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<sup>18</sup> For example:

- *“There was a dramatic increase in marks from D to C grade after completing the scheme of work written as part of my enquiry.”*
- *...the group of students involved in this study did amazingly well in their GCSE. They got almost 40 per cent A\*-A and 80 per cent A\*-C, and were collectively quite shocked at this...*

parents or guardians when undertaking classroom-based research. Transparency of the processes of classroom-based research seemed generally to have improved relationships between teacher-researchers and their pupils, who often displayed respect for what the teachers were seeking to achieve.

#### Other manifestations of impact within and beyond the school

49. In their early responses to the TDA, providers quickly began to note outcomes from PPD that extended beyond the participants and the pupils they taught. Although never explicitly included in the funding criteria, the associated guidance placed considerable emphasis on the impact and effectiveness of the programme in schools, and on embedding improved practice in schools. Recently, these aspects have gained greater prominence with the rapid growth of school-based PPD projects, particularly those involving groups of teacher-participants in studying different but related aspects of an agreed topic. In some cases, these projects have drawn in teachers from a cluster of schools, or the outcomes of a project have attracted wider interest from other schools. These factors have given rise to providers reporting more frequently on the impact of the provision 'on the wider life of the school [and] other schools'<sup>19</sup>.

50. Throughout the PPD Programme there have been reports of participants making an impact outside their own classrooms and departments. Studies concerned with aspects of school management or with cross-curricular topics such as special educational needs have been commonly cited. However, there have recently been more examples of something that began in a single classroom or department spreading across the school. Furthermore, it seems that the greater personal confidence and self-esteem engendered by PPD has enabled teachers to share their new expertise with others in the school, and sometimes in a wider network of schools. There were accounts of teachers supporting colleagues through coaching and mentoring, or presenting their findings at in-service training days and conferences – local, national and international. Several participants also wrote about improved relationships with parents, more constructive discussion with colleagues, and more effective, functional dialogue within the wider workforce. Sometimes, teachers were invited to report their PPD findings to the governing body.

51. As indicated above, another recent development has been the increasing number of school-based programmes linked to school improvement priorities and purposely designed to impact on the whole school: for example, improving the motivation, participation and achievement of pupils from a socially and economically deprived area. Such themes create a group synergy and enable individuals to undertake a personal study related to their own classroom, level of responsibility and role within the school which, when combined with the work of colleagues, has a multiplier effect benefiting the department or school more widely. Sometimes the enquiry process itself began to affect others beyond the participants. Providers wrote about the wider school being involved in research fieldwork, perhaps through other teachers contributing evidence from their classrooms, or teaching assistants undertaking limited specific studies with pupils. Collaborative PPD enquiries also brought to light existing good practice that could be shared with others. Providers often reported that M-level study had resulted in the formation of robust learning communities and learning sets, sometimes 'kick-starting' a process of change across the school. Over the past two years, there has been some evidence to indicate that school-based PPD can be an effective means of supporting schools placed in Ofsted 'special measures' by addressing concerns raised by the inspection and building the knowledge, skills and confidence of the teachers.

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<sup>19</sup> Question 1(c) in 'PPD Impact Summary Report Form' issued annually by the TDA to all PPD providers

## Other issues and concerns raised by PPD provision

### Recruitment

52. In 2001/02<sup>20</sup>, there were almost 24,500 module registrations<sup>21</sup> on the award-bearing INSET Programme. This dipped considerably in subsequent years, but recent statistical returns indicate that providers achieved more than 25,000 registrations for 60-credit M-level PPD modules during the academic year 2007/08<sup>22</sup>. It is difficult to estimate the number of individual teachers involved in 2007/08 because although many took only one module per year, a few register for two or more, including a tiny proportion of full-time PPD students.

53. However, the current data clearly indicate an increase in the proportion of the total workforce that engaged in PPD study in 2007/08, probably about one in 15 full-time teachers<sup>23</sup>. Overall, about 23 per cent of registrations were men, slightly below the proportion of male serving teachers. As indicated above, there was a significant increase in the number of NQTs registering for PPD and also an apparent increase in the proportion of older teachers with more than 15 years' service.

54. One of the mysteries of the PPD Programme is the huge variation in recruitment between PPD providers, which seems to be unrelated to the size of the provision. While 25 per cent of providers recruited close to or above their allocation of places, sometimes with very large cohorts, a similar proportion achieved less than a quarter of their target numbers. Sometimes high recruitment seemed to be linked to a long-standing reputation for postgraduate study for teachers or niche provision. Those providers that nurtured active PPD partnerships with schools, local authorities, professional bodies, etc, were most successful in registering and retaining PPD students.

### Overcoming barriers to participation, withdrawal from and non-completion of PPD studies

55. Much has been written in the last 25 years about the barriers that prevent or discourage participation in study at the postgraduate professional development level. The TDA PPD criteria require providers to identify and tackle barriers to teachers' participation when setting up their programmes. These barriers fall into two main categories: 'physical' and 'personal/emotional'. Physical constraints can be broadly divided into:

- **Time** – finding enough time to study, family circumstances (for example, child care, caring for other family members who need support by reason of age, illness or disability), pressures from work (for example, demands of the job, new to teaching, post of responsibility, out-of-school activities such as sports, drama, clubs, etc) and the difficulty of attending twilight sessions.
- **Cost** – finding the money to pay tuition fees, etc, from constrained personal budgets.
- **Access** – the availability of suitable PPD provision nearby that did not exacerbate the problems of time and cost.

56. Closely linked with these are more personal and emotional reasons for non-participation:

- **Lack of family support** – participants sometimes spoke of having to overcome lack of support or even hostility from spouse or partner. Indeed, on completion, PPD students frequently express gratitude for family support, emphasising how important this was for their success.

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<sup>20</sup> The first year when funding was solely for provision meeting the TTA criteria

<sup>21</sup> Each representing a part-time student the equivalent of 0.4 full-time equivalent (fte)

<sup>22</sup> This was an 11 per cent increase on registrations in 2006/07, and 34 per cent above those in 2005/06

<sup>23</sup> Compared with less than one in 20 in 2005/06

- **Lack of support in the workplace** – participants have reported that some schools are unsupportive of, apathetic about, or even hostile towards award-bearing professional development.
- **Perceptions of relevance** – some teachers have indicated that the provision on offer, although well conceived, did not seem to them to be directly relevant to their needs, interests or career aspirations.
- **Personal insecurity** – there was also evidence to suggest that some teachers use the explanations above to cover for personal insecurity, particularly among mid-career and older teachers, doubting their capacity to succeed in postgraduate study and worrying about exposing potential intellectual inadequacy. For those who did take the 'risk' and succeeded, it is not surprising that growth in confidence and self-esteem were often given as major beneficial PPD outcomes.

57. Since the inception of PPD, providers have devoted attention to overcoming these barriers. Much has been achieved by ameliorating the effects of time and access by reducing attendance at distant HEI centres, through locating provision in schools or local centres, arranging intensive block study periods (weekends or vacations) at a university or residential centre, and giving accreditation for prior experience and learning (APEL), etc. The majority of providers have been developing distance or web-based learning packages to support their PPD provision. Some explained that e-learning and online versions of PPD helped to ensure that all participants received parity of support wherever their study base. Others pointed to the need to ensure that individuals did not feel isolated as a result of the distance learning element of the course. Although many teachers responded well to online support, a minority reported frustration with web-based discussions, which they perceived as a poor substitute for face-to-face interaction with tutors and other students.

58. The rapid growth of school-based and school-initiated PPD has been seen by many as an effective means of addressing a lot of the barriers identified. As indicated elsewhere in this report, providers have given evidence of the success of school-based PPD programmes directly related to teachers' professional concerns and addressing school improvement priorities. Not only were the physical constraints minimised but personal and emotional factors could also be addressed and individuals supported by a caring learning community within their school.

59. Reducing overheads to lower tuition costs and deploying TDA funding to the maximum benefit of students has enabled some providers to charge subsidised fees or even allow a first module free to encourage PPD participation<sup>24</sup>. Evidence suggests that when tuition fees are reduced by subsidy from TDA PPD funding, teachers find it less of a burden to pay the lower fee. Indeed, recent reports indicate a continuing trend for increasing numbers of PPD students to fund their own professional development. There are no reliable figures for the number who do so, but estimates based on relatively small samples suggest that less than a quarter are funded totally by their employers, about half are entirely self-funded, and the rest pay part of the tuition fees with the balance from their employers. This not only indicates that financial support is difficult to obtain but also that teachers value M-level study. Even so, providers reported concerns that many teachers would find it difficult to pay full cost fees for PPD without an element of subsidy from the TDA. Sometimes, locating PPD in school and offering a cost-free first module merely staved off the problem of genuine long-term barriers. In one recent study<sup>25</sup>, some teachers who had participated enthusiastically in school-based low-cost PPD for their initial 60-credit module said they

<sup>24</sup> The third-year report from CUREE indicates that providers reported finance as a major barrier to participation more often than teachers did. This seems to be a consequence of participants judging fee levels by what they pay and providers setting the course fees as low as possible in order to minimise the potential impact as a barrier to participation. Nevertheless, some teachers report difficulties in paying even the lower levels of subsidised fees

<sup>25</sup> A small-scale study of one provider's school-based provision in the South West and London areas carried out in 2007/08

would find it difficult to continue with the masters degree unless the barriers of time, cost and access could also be overcome in subsequent years.

60. Since the introduction of the PPD Programme, providers have noted a step-change in teachers' perceptions of the benefits of academic professional courses, said to be a consequence of tailoring award-bearing courses to enable teachers to research their own areas of interest, in their classroom, with academic support. Nevertheless, others pointed to the continuing need to change teachers' attitudes towards PPD, since many still believed that this level of continuing professional development to be beyond their capability, inaccessible, and over-intellectual. A few providers offered pre-course study skills programmes or customised support programmes for those whose backgrounds made it more difficult for them to study and write at M-level. In striving to promote and develop school-based PPD and stimulate recruitment, one provider devised a new introductory programme for schools designed to help convince potential students who would not otherwise consider PPD that this programme is accessible and rewarding, and to give them the knowledge and skills to undertake collaborative enquiry.

61. Notwithstanding providers' efforts to make the design and mode of delivery 'teacher friendly', some participants have been defeated by these impediments during their period of study. Even with local or school-based provision, personal circumstances change or individuals did not anticipate the time needed for study. Consequently, some took a major break before resuming their studies by intercalating for one or more years, or withdrew completely. In addition, a proportion of teachers seemed to be content to engage in the fieldwork aspects of a collaborative school-based PPD project, and were stimulated by working with colleagues on an issue of common concern, but did not have the time or inclination to complete the assignments that would have given credits towards a masters degree.

#### School-based advocates, champions, tutors and mentors of PPD

62. Reports from providers frequently commented on the pivotal role of a senior manager in school who can act as a champion and advocate for PPD. Without such influential support, it appears difficult for school-based PPD to make headway. Providers also reported that significant changes in senior management staff sometimes caused a drop in levels of participation and commitment to PPD. Recently, there has been an increasing number of accounts of the importance of a good internal tutor and PPD coordinator whose role goes beyond that of champion and advocate. Some providers have recognised this by formally establishing the post of school-based associate tutor. These individuals were often instrumental in making this form of PPD available in the school, establishing it as part of the broader professional and curriculum development programme of the school, fostering the formation of professional learning communities, encouraging PPD participation, enabling the various research activities to prosper within the constraints of the school, and maintaining momentum and bridging the gap between the visits and training sessions provided by external tutors. Such individuals also seem valuable in encouraging participants to continue when they feel under pressure to withdraw. Their impact on teachers' professional development was so significant that some providers could not imagine effective provision without a good internal tutor in the school. In 2007, one university provider with a strong school-based PPD programme wrote: 'We have observed that continuation rates (to achieve the full certificate) are higher where there is a member of school staff supporting and encouraging personal study, and where there is an articulated link between study and performance management targets. In the long term we will try to ensure that these supporting mechanisms are available to all our participants'.

63. When, in the past, PPD activities mainly comprised taught modules followed by assessed assignments, it was straightforward for university tutors to provide regular guidance, support and encouragement. With the increased emphasis on school-based PPD,

it became more difficult for university tutors to watch over participants in this way, but associate tutors in the schools were now filling this role admirably. Providers have also begun to use suitably qualified associate tutors, some of whom have themselves excelled in their own M-level study, to provide academic and professional guidance by mentoring PPD participants.

### Workload

64. Reports from providers and participants suggest that it was the completion of the assessed tasks that caused the biggest difficulties for participants. It is not uncommon for these tasks to require 7,000-9,000 words in total. Sometimes, breaking courses into shorter modules increased the workload further because each module had its own assignments. Participants interviewed in a recent study of school-based PPD recognised the importance of maintaining high academic standards. They were also very conscientious. Even so, many teachers – especially those for whom a long time has elapsed since their previous academic study – found the rigour demanding, reporting significant and disruptive impact on their personal lives in meeting these standards. Tutors had rightly explained that phasing the writing across the module diminished the final burden. Those participants who were able to follow this advice concurred. However, the constraints of many teachers' personal and professional lives simply made this impossible to achieve. Consequently, they often spoke about working late at night, devoting half-term holidays to writing, and feeling exhausted by the process. Teachers who had completed their written reports often displayed both relief and euphoria. Even so, one teacher in a school where most of the cohort had completed very successful projects described writing up as 'a killer'. Another said: 'I do not know that I could give up my holidays again' because she faced each new half-term exhausted, and a third said that writing up was 'worse than I expected and was led to believe', leading to a conflict with 'my priority of teaching'.

65. To offset some of these pressures, providers have begun to explore the potential of assessment through presentations, portfolios and working diaries. Some of these alternatives can prove beguiling. But providers have reported that other problems of managing the workload and assessment came to the fore. For example, candidates can come under new pressures in attempting to adhere to the rigid 'rules' for formal assessed presentations that are necessary to ensure fairness for all.

### The paucity of reliable data linking registrations and successful completion of PPD

66. Although providers make annual returns to the TDA covering registrations, withdrawals, completion of modules, achievement of awards and progression to further PPD study, many returns have been incomplete. Also, the returns do not collect data in a form that enables connections to be established and conclusions arrived at. As indicated previously, the starting and completion dates and duration of PPD study vary considerably, and flexibility of provision often results in some candidates taking longer than others to complete the modules. This makes it impossible to relate the number of registrations with the number of staged completions. Furthermore, some of those who successfully complete a 60-credit module take an award immediately; others 'bank' the credit towards a masters degree or other award at some future date. Thus, the effectiveness of PPD is very well documented in terms of qualitative accounts of its beneficial impact on teachers, pupils and schools more widely but is deficient in reliable national data on the proportion of those registering for PPD study who ultimately gain M-level qualifications. The observation, in 2006, by a group of PPD tutors<sup>26</sup> from four HEIs that 'many more teachers begin studying for masters level awards than complete them' probably remains true today. There would be merit in revising the data

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<sup>26</sup> Arthur, L., Marland, H., Pill, A. and Rea, T (2006) 'PPD for teachers: motivational and inhibiting factors affecting completion of awards', *Journal of In-service Education* 32(2): 201-219

collection processes to make connections between enrolment and completion more transparent.

### The issue of depth

67. In an attempt to engage more teachers in PPD and avoid the daunting prospect of a long period of study, some providers have constructed programmes comprising small modules, worth 30, 20 or occasionally 10 M-level credits each. Recently, some providers have voiced concern about this. For example: 'The link between enhanced teacher practice and pupil learning is not always explicit in a 30-credit module that necessarily takes place over a relatively short period of time'.

68. As indicated above (see paragraph 13), many providers encourage or require participants to follow a named pathway that secures breadth, depth and progression. There seems to be widespread acknowledgment (often noted in the comments from participants) that it is the deep engagement with classroom related issues supported by pertinent academic and theoretical study that makes the PPD effective and personally satisfying – 'mind-broadening and stimulating'. Some NQTs said they welcomed participation in PPD because they feared disengagement from academic study. There is good evidence to indicate that the perception of PPD courses as 'too academic' has been broken down through newer delivery methods, including school-based PPD. One provider observed that 'the longer period of study required to complete major projects/dissertations enables teachers to follow through initiatives and interventions and to evaluate evidence of improvements over time'.

69. Related to this problem is an issue raised by Soulsby and Swain<sup>27</sup> in their 2003 report on the award-bearing INSET scheme: '... since the real strength of award-bearing INSET is its depth, and this is what contributes so strongly to its impact, caution needs to be exercised in seeking to accredit short course attendance within the award-bearing framework'. A caution that remains appropriate seven years later.

### Insularity

70. There have been many recorded beneficial outcomes from school-based delivery of PPD. However, in 2001 Ofsted noted weaknesses in some of this provision, for example, where the perspective does not take account of what is done in other schools, and where the participants' ideas and proposed projects are not challenged sufficiently at a level appropriate to a postgraduate award. This issue resurfaced as a minor concern in 2008 when a few providers began to identify a tension to be resolved between specific PPD activities based on a single school, which work well in themselves, and others that are more successful because participants come from different schools and, therefore, can share a range of experience, perspectives and practice from different contexts.

71. In developing an individualised approach to PPD, many providers initially proposed to teach course components, such as research and enquiry techniques, on a 'need to know' basis. Later, some providers reported two major disadvantages in this approach:

- i. It was an inefficient use of tutors' time, and
- ii. It deprived students of the opportunity:
  - o to gain an overview of research methodology
  - o to make informed choices about the approaches to research they might adopt, and
  - o to engage in meaningful discussion with peers about their projects.

Consequently, these providers reintroduced research methods and enquiry modules.

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<sup>27</sup> ibid

### Professional standards for teachers and career stages

72. Many of the current PPD programmes were planned and funded by the TDA before the professional standards for teachers came into effect in September 2007. Nevertheless, providers have been quick to recognise the value and importance of these standards in underpinning their PPD provision. That year, several began by mapping their provision against the relevant professional standards in order to assist schools and participants in the performance management process. By the end of 2008, a number had incorporated the standards structurally into the provision, for example, by organising their courses into a progressive core curriculum that matched the hierarchy of the standards, or by linking assessment portfolios to the criteria in the standards in order to contribute to performance management and professional development objectives. In some cases, providers redesigned PPD provision to help, support and prepare teachers to match the various levels of the professional standards for teachers in order to assist in their career progression.

73. Whilst it is clear that not all teachers see promotion as a key objective in undertaking PPD study, it is important for providers to ensure that future PPD provision takes account of the professional standards for teachers and assists them in reaching the higher career stages.

### Conflict between individual professional development needs and school improvement priorities

74. A few providers and other writers<sup>28</sup> have raised a concern that the growth of school-based PPD might unduly influence individual teachers' choice of M-level study. Where the school-based programme is linked to school improvement priorities teachers may feel coerced into joining in. Indeed, these pressures can be very strong and teachers are often compliant in allowing this to happen. They may also recognise the advantages of pursuing common goals as part of a professional learning community. Nevertheless, some teachers feel guilty about having different goals and ambitions. This tension seems to be resolved better where the PPD programme takes account of performance management targets and personal interests, as well as the development goals of the school.

### The future of PPD

75. In the past two years, providers have been working on plans for the Masters in Teaching and Learning (MTL) qualification. The majority welcomed the opportunities offered by the MTL, reporting that they planned to build on their successful PPD experience in developing this new provision. At the same time, many providers expressed concern that valuable and important features of PPD should not be lost, stating that they hoped to be able to continue offering TDA-funded PPD to experienced teachers who would not be the initial focus of the MTL. Providers anticipate increasing demand for PPD from teachers who wish to improve their qualifications and not be left behind in career progression as teaching qualifications begin to move up to a new level. Furthermore, there is much evidence to show that TDA funding for PPD, which often enabled providers to set low tuition fees, has been crucial in achieving the high take-up of M-level study by experienced teachers, particularly through the growing number of school-based and school-initiated programmes. As noted above, the cost of postgraduate study often features prominently in lists of barriers to teachers' participation. Recently, increasing numbers of providers have voiced serious

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<sup>28</sup> For example: see Burns, C (2005) 'Tensions between national, school and teacher development needs: a survey of teachers' views about CPD within a group of rural primary schools', *Journal of In-service Education* 31(2): 353-372

concerns that, without TDA funding, PPD programmes would cease to be viable in terms of cost and take-up. In turn, providers might then be unwilling and unable to absorb some of the extra costs associated with school-based PPD provision.

### **A summary of the main evidence of the effectiveness of PPD and the messages that can be deduced for the MTL Programme**

76. The PPD Programme has been remarkably successful in providing high-quality, professionally oriented M-level study for teachers, which resulted in good outcomes for their pupils. While providers are keen to support the development of the MTL qualification, many have repeatedly expressed concern that this should not be at the expense of the PPD Programme, which has enabled experienced teachers to engage in professionally relevant M-level study at convenient locations and with manageable costs. Many providers believe that PPD provision would shrink rapidly without the support of TDA funding.

77. The national framework for MTL outlines the principles behind a new scheme that is palpably a natural evolution from the good practice in school-based PPD. Consequently, the MTL framework offers an excellent opportunity to draw upon and synthesise the collective experience of providing effective M-level professional development for NQTs, and those in the early years of their teaching careers, through the PPD Programme.

78. There is ample evidence from PPD that well-designed M-level study, which is carefully matched to individual needs, almost invariably leads to improvements in teachers' professional confidence, competence, knowledge, skills and understanding. Furthermore, participation in PPD tends to increase teachers' hunger for continued study and learning.

79. It is now widely acknowledged that these improvements in teachers' capabilities are not automatically translated into beneficial impact on pupils. However, when the personal study programme also sets objectives for **how** these improvements in teachers' capabilities will affect the learning experiences of pupils, the impact on pupils' attitudes, engagement, behaviour and attainment can be significant. The experience of successfully achieving this 'bridge' through the PPD Programme should inform MTL developments.

80. Another particular strength of many PPD programmes has been the focus on developing reflexive teachers capable of

- understanding and analysing their own practice
- making informed decisions about modifying it, and
- identifying pupils' needs accurately and meeting these needs appropriately.

This emphasis on reflexivity seems to be at the core of the MTL.

81. As more PPD providers have become expert in tailoring programmes to address the development needs of schools, bespoke school-based PPD has increased and prospered. Recently, greater attention has been paid to matching PPD provision to teachers' performance management targets, and many providers now plan provision in accordance with the professional standards for teachers. However, there is sometimes a tension between school needs on one hand and individual needs on the other (see paragraph 74). MTL providers need to be aware of this tension and seek to minimise it.

82. In the last two years, some of the most effective PPD for NQTs has provided a seamless progression of M-level study from ITT into the induction year and beyond. There have been numerous reports from providers and teachers that well designed M-level induction provision, matched to individuals' development needs, has helped NQTs to meet the standards and to settle well into the early years of teaching. However, PPD providers have also noted apathy and sometimes hostility from schools that see M-level study as

distracting NQTs from the 'real business of getting to grips with teaching' (see paragraph 21). Such opposition may be widespread, even with the advent of MTL.

83. Many providers have focused on providing induction year PPD for their own former trainees, making continuity of progression relatively straightforward. There is growing evidence to show the success of this seamless approach. Even so, transfer of credit is vital in a national programme, which enables teachers to continue study when they move.

84. However, experience from award-bearing INSET and PPD suggests that 'portability', which opens up MTL access to any teacher regardless of their ITT institution and enables them to transfer to another provider part-way through their studies, is unlikely to be best served by over-prescriptive common provision. In contrast, the most effective PPD provision begins with an initial needs analysis, which not only assesses the individual's prior experience and learning but also identifies personal strengths, interests and aspirations. The analysis is used to define outcome and impact objectives, and provides the starting point for a personal study programme. Thereafter, the objectives and the individual study programme can be reviewed and amended regularly. Personalisation in this way appears to be integral to the MTL scheme.

85. Identifying personal needs, setting and reviewing objectives, and matching study and learning experiences to evolving circumstances calls for a well-trained coach and mentor. In school-based PPD, this role is often fulfilled by an associate tutor, who provides a bridge between the academic tutor from the HEI and the practicalities of conducting fieldwork in the participant's classroom and school. These individuals are not only mentors and guides but also play a key role in facilitating and coordinating training, accessing resources, acting as advocates for the PPD and the participants, and providing succour and encouragement at times of despondency. Not only have they driven the PPD Programme forward in schools but they have also reduced the burden on HEI tutors. Many of the most effective associate tutors were chosen initially because they held senior positions in the school and often had masters degrees or doctorates (though not necessarily in the field of education). Some universities have deemed these to be necessary qualifications for an associate tutor to take responsibility for teaching and assessing at M-level. However, the number of individuals qualified in this way that also have the aptitude and inclination to act as mentor and coach is currently limited. There has been little written to date about the effectiveness of mentors without higher qualifications in supporting M-level work, so PPD can offer no evidence for MTL in this matter.

86. Since 2006, PPD providers have begun to identify some unanticipated negative features of individualised and bespoke study programmes. Several have reintroduced collective course components or group seminars because:

- a needs driven 'just in time' approach to teaching enquiry and research techniques proved inefficient and repetitive for tutors, restricted students' knowledge and ability to choose between alternative approaches, and reduced their capacity to discuss their research with their peers
- participants based their understanding too narrowly on the experiences and circumstances in their own school, leaving them unable to evaluate objectively alternative teaching strategies and curriculum approaches, and
- the lack of regular seminar discussions deprived participants of the need to explain their work clearly to others and to defend their methodology and conclusions to their peers. Attempts to address this through internet-based discussion boards have not always provided an entirely satisfactory substitute for the cut and thrust of face-to-face academic debate, because evidence suggests that some individuals have the fluency to dominate electronic discussions while others remain largely silent.

87. For many years, reports on award-bearing INSET and PPD have drawn attention to the barriers that adversely affect teachers' participation in M-level study. In summary, these

include time needed to undertake M-level study, access to provision, cost, and support in the workplace, plus a range of personal and emotional factors. The specification set out in the national framework for MTL recognises these barriers. It also emphasises the importance of preserving a satisfactory work/life balance for participants. However, evidence from PPD clearly shows that school-based provision can do much to overcome these barriers but they cannot be entirely eliminated while at the same time preserving the academic integrity of M-level study.

88. It may sometimes be helpful to participants to offer a variety of short modules in the PPD programme, but providers have recently expressed concern about the fragmenting effect of short modules that can err towards superficiality. To address this problem, providers often identify named pathways, which increase cohesion and depth of study by assembling related modules together. The phased structure of MTL indicates that the programme should facilitate the cohesion that characterises the best practice in PPD courses.

89. Studies of the PPD Programme have shown that teachers value the academic standing of masters degrees and would strongly resist any devaluation of standards. Those holding masters degrees were concerned that the standing of their degrees should not be diminished, and those working towards a masters degree wished their efforts to be rewarded with an esteemed qualification. Even so, there is much evidence to indicate that many (and perhaps the majority) of participants find the PPD assignments and project reports burdensome, often adversely affecting the work/life balance. Few teachers seem able to complete more than 60 credits of M-level study per year alongside other professional duties and personal commitments. Most also recognise the inevitability of this if they are to invest in their own professional development through in-depth academic study.

90. HEIs have begun to explore alternatives to major written assignments. Portfolios of evidence from school-based enquiry accompanied by an interpretive commentary have been effective in the induction year, and beyond. Fewer providers seem to have tried using presentations for anything more than part of an assessment package. Although some participants clearly enjoy the opportunity of presenting their findings, others report assessed presentations stressful, both in anticipation and delivery. It is also difficult to create a level playing field and to moderate standards when some candidates may misjudge their use of the allocated time. It may be that presentations also need to be accompanied by a short analytical follow-up report in which the candidate reflects on the study, their presentation, and the discussion that it generated.

91. The difficulties of assessing PPD at M-level will inevitably be transferred to MTL. These are inherent problems that can be mitigated somewhat by flexibility in the pace and duration of the study programme and by imaginative assignments related closely to the teacher's own professional concerns and interests. But it is demonstrating academic rigour and M-level scholarship that saps the time and energy of participants. Each year, a significant number of teachers complete the fieldwork associated with their PPD projects but fail to submit any work for accreditation. Often they justify this decision by citing constraints on their personal and professional lives and explaining that, for them, the desired professional development has been achieved by completing the fieldwork alone. Universities and PPD providers have been striving for many years to address this problem and to make assessment tasks more manageable while retaining high academic standards. Journal articles and evidence submitted by providers to the TDA point to some success as represented by (slowly) improving completion rates. However, the advent of MTL and the growing recognition by teachers that career progression will be increasingly influenced by M-level qualifications may well drive up completion rates in both the MTL and PPD Programmes.

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