



GENERAL TEACHING COUNCIL
for NORTHERN IRELAND

School-Based Professional Development

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School-Based Professional Development

A Report for the
General Teaching Council
for Northern Ireland

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Foreword

The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (the Council), has great pleasure in presenting Dr Despina Galanouli's report, 'School-Based Professional Development'. This report was commissioned in recognition of the importance of teachers' continuing professional development within the school context. The approaches reviewed, are very much in keeping with the Council's philosophy that professional empowerment, the nurturing and sustaining of communities of practice along with delegated autonomy, are all necessary conditions for effective school-based professional development.

The overview of established models of school-based professional development for example, coaching and mentoring, will hopefully enable schools to assess and apply these approaches more effectively and thereby provide important 'expert' to 'novice' support. Furthermore, the extensive overview of the Research Lesson Study (RLS) approach opens up innovative opportunities for teachers, as professionals, to undertake significant peer-based professional development in a structured and evidence-grounded manner. Moreover, the review of RLS will enable schools to consider this approach and its practical application as part of each school's approach to professional development. For its part, the Council takes the view that RLS is unique with its strong emphasis on peer-based collaborative practice. This is very much in keeping with the Council's advocacy of the importance of promoting and sustaining dynamic professional communities.

In conclusion, it is hoped that this publication will stimulate discussion on teachers' professional development and lead to innovative approaches that fully recognise the centrality of teacher professionalism.

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Contents

School-Based Professional Development	3
Introduction	6
Overview of content	7
Professional development for teachers	7
What is 'good' CPD?	8
Collaborative enquiry and communities of practice	9
Teachers as active participants in their CPD	10
Part 1 - Established Models of School-Based Professional Development	12
Coaching	12
Mentoring	13
How can coaching and mentoring be organised in a school?	15
Variants of mentoring: modelling and coteaching	17
Part 2 - Research Lesson Study, RLS	18
Where did RLS come from?	18
RLS in the West	19
Where does RLS fit in?	21
How does RLS work in a school?	22
Implications	27
Conclusion	28
References	30

“Would you tell me please, which way I ought to go?” said Alice.

“That depends on where you want to get to,” said the Cat.

“I don’t much care where-”, said Alice.

“Then it doesn’t matter which way you go,” said the Cat.

“-so long as I get somewhere.” said Alice

“Oh, you’re sure to do that,” said the Cat, “if you only keep walking.”

Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland

Introduction

Much like Alice in the quotation above, teachers will sometimes lack direction when considering their professional development activities. Just as the Cat suggests, what is on offer in the conventional menu of staff development will undoubtedly lead them somewhere but in many cases this may not be where they had intended to be. Sometimes teachers are torn between their school needs, their own development needs and those professional development activities suggested (or required) by their school management under the Performance Review and Staff Development Scheme¹ or the local education authority. Whatever the case, teachers may need some direction as to what their options are when it comes to their professional development.

For this reason, the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI) wishes to highlight school-based professional development as a particularly appropriate way of tailoring professional development both to the needs of the individual teacher

and of the school. In particular, the focus is on aspects of peer-to-peer professional development, enabling support for those who wish to initiate such activities in their own school context. This report, therefore, is intended for teachers and head teachers who wish to develop in-house and individualised professional development. It will also be of interest to those who manage teachers’ professional development in the education support services as it can offer insights into how school-based professional development can lead teachers to embrace collaborative and shared practice.

This report seeks to complement recent publications such as ‘Teaching: the Reflective Profession’ (GTCNI, 2007) and the ‘GTCNI Reviews of Teacher Competences and Continuing Professional Development’ (GTCNI, 2005). It is the view of the Council that ongoing professional development must be one of the core values underpinning teaching practice. In the Council’s own words, taken from the

¹ *“It shall be the duty of the Reviewing Body [Board of Governors] to ensure that training and development needs, which are identified through the Performance Review and Staff Development Scheme, are reflected in the school development plan and that corresponding opportunities for professional development are made available to the principal, vice-principal[s] and teachers in the school.” (DE, 2009, para 1.4)*

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development, the Research Lesson Study (RLS) – sometime known simply as Lesson Study. This section seeks to cover the origins of the method and how it fits within the framework of current developments such as the GTCNI policy to raise standards, the revised teacher competences and the current trends towards communities of practice and school collaboration. It concludes with guidance on how RLS could work in a school, including the roles of teachers and school management; and the various considerations that need to be taken into account such as time, training and resources.

Code of Values and Professional Practice, as part of the teachers' commitment to their profession they will: *'...in keeping with the concept of professional integrity, assume responsibility for their ongoing professional development needs as an essential expression of their professionalism.'* GTCNI, 2007 (p46)

This is consistent with all the recent calls for teachers to assume ownership of and responsibility for their own development, demanding more bottom-up initiatives with teachers at the centre of the process.

Overview of content

This report is structured in two main parts. Part 1 covers coaching and mentoring with reference to coteaching and modelling. An overview of these well-established approaches to professional development work is given along with brief guidance on how they might be planned in a school.

Part 2 introduces a relatively new (to the UK) approach to teacher professional

Professional development for teachers

This report is about continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers. Day and Sachs (2004) refer to CPD as *'a term used to describe all the activities in which teachers engage during the course of a career, which are designed to enhance their work'* (p3). However, as simple as this definition may sound, they argue that it encompasses hugely complex issues at both the emotional and intellectual levels for teachers working to raise standards. In a wide range of schools, these various factors include their own social histories and working contexts, as well as those of their students. For CPD to be effective it must take account of this complexity.

However, this has not always been the case when CPD programmes are being designed. Teacher professional development has become a contentious matter not least because of governmental interventions. Across the UK, these have been mainly

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skills, it failed to achieve what it set out to do, that is develop their pedagogical uses of ICT. Pickering and his colleagues (2007a) have described the top-down model of CPD delivery by experts as 'not best practice' (p4), arguing instead that shared practice and collaboration should be at the heart of any CPD approach. It is true that the NOF training did feature a strong element of self-direction and choice but the design of the programme, its almost compulsory nature and its squeezing into busy working schedules rendered it less effective than perhaps a less prescribed model might have been. The next section will give a brief overview of what many consider to be the more likely features of effective CPD.

performance-orientated and often consist of bursts of professional development activities, with little or no follow-up support to ensure impact and secure sustainability. In this form, CPD has been traditionally used to achieve broader education reform agendas (Day and Sachs, 2004) or to serve specific national priorities for teacher development such as those identified by the policy bodies funding these activities (Craft, 2000). As such, CPD has been to a large extent designed, planned and implemented following a top-down model where teachers are seen as 'the grateful recipients of CPD' (Day and Sachs 2004, p27), having no input or involvement in any stage of the process.

A good example of this is the recent New Opportunities Fund ICT-training. A raft of evaluations (such as OFSTED, 2001; OFSTED, 2002; O'Mahony, 2003; Conlon, 2004; Rogers and Finlayson, 2004; Galanouli et al, 2004) reported that, although useful in providing many teachers with much needed baseline computer

What is 'good' CPD?

The literature suggests that successful models of professional development for teachers should include a variety of features:

- engaging in collaborative enquiry (Pickering et al, 2007a; Street and Temperley, 2005); it is important that teachers work in partnerships, supporting and learning from each other and in the process achieving ownership of any changes promoted by the PD activity which will lead to their commitment to adopt the changes;
- ensuring school leaders attach importance to the CPD activity and create the right conditions for CPD to flourish (Jackson and Street, 2005a). School management teams need to be committed to and must actively promote the aims of the professional development;

- involving all stakeholders in the process including teachers who should be active participants in their professional development (Day, 1999) and also who should provide input in the course content to ensure relevance to their teaching practices and
- involving pupils on occasion (Bragg and Fielding, 2005) for a more authentic school environment.
- clarity about the goals of the professional learning;
- opportunities for feedback on progress, through discussion and self-evaluation and
- a variety of different forms of input and professional learning experience with sufficient time overall so that change is well established.

Harlen (2009), in an analysis of key features of a number of major projects across the UK, has in turn identified the following more rounded key features of effective professional development:

- a structure of professional learning combining concentrated inputs with follow up discussion to enable teachers to try out new techniques, then report and review;
- encouragement for teachers to go beyond using techniques and to understand principles so that they can adapt and develop procedures to suit their working context;
- inclusion of head teachers and school management in professional learning about new approaches to assessment;
- time for teachers and others to reflect on new procedures;
- access to the experience of other teachers with whom they can identify;
- flexibility in provision to take account of teachers' different starting points and rates of progress;
- funding and other evidence of official support for making changes;

Collaborative enquiry and communities of practice

The first of the main categories above, collaborative enquiry based on shared practice, has featured strongly in the context of school improvement during the last two decades. Jackson and Street (2005b) discuss the impetus that was given to its emergence as school-based research in the 1990s when 'traditional' educational research was judged inadequate and the importance of bridging the gap between practice and research was recognised. In arguing why collaborative enquiry is important and timely they refer to the ineffectiveness of top-down reform initiatives to support school improvement and that 'informed professionalism' is an important factor in schools finding their own way in the information age. Effective CPD, they argue, is directly linked to school practice and priorities, and the benefits that accrue for teachers and their pupils include increased reflective practice, more professional dialogue on learning and teaching based on research evidence. They particularly emphasise the merits of school-based collaborative inquiry in building individual and organisational capacity.

However, collaborative enquiry has to be facilitated in order to be effective and

Jackson and Street (2005b) argue that school leaders have to create conditions in order to allow teachers to work collaboratively. Bolam and his colleagues (2005) also suggest that supportive leadership and school management is necessary for 'effective professional learning communities' (EPLC). They argue that there are eight key characteristics of an EPLC: shared values and vision; collective responsibility for pupils' learning; collaboration focused on learning; individual and collective professional learning; reflective professional enquiry; openness, networks and partnerships; inclusive membership; mutual trust, respect and support. They conclude that professional learning communities can promote school and system-wide capacity building for sustainable school improvement.

However, one cannot refer to collaborative enquiry and learning communities without also referring to communities of practice (CoPs). Wenger (1998) describes CoPs as *'groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly... because its constituent terms specify each other, the term "Community of practice" should be viewed as a unit'* (p72). Having examined the potential of CoP in fostering learning through talking within practice, he recognised that there was considerable interest in peer-to-peer professional development activities, reflecting the fact that teachers have embraced collaborative learning as opposed to earlier tendencies towards working in isolation.

Another term used for teachers working together is peer-networking and, as Rhodes and his colleagues (2004) argue, it not only covers staff learning and professional

development, it also facilitates leadership learning and leadership development, whole-school learning, school-to-school learning, network-to-network learning and pupil learning. Pupil learning through collaborative enquiry is explored further by Bragg and Fielding (2005). Through their 'Students as Researchers' work they make a case for pupils to have a central role in the enquiry process in school.

Teachers as active participants in their CPD

Other characteristics of successful professional development have been put forward by Day (1999), who examined teachers' lifelong learning and listed ten precepts upon which his theory of effectiveness is based. Grounded in the researched realities of teachers and teaching, and their professional learning and development, the two principles that are fundamental to teachers' professional development are outlined on p11:

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- teachers cannot be developed (passively). They develop (actively). It is vital, therefore, that they are centrally involved in decisions concerning the direction and processes of their own learning; and
- planning and supporting career-long development is the joint responsibility of teachers, schools and government (p2).

Day recommends the use of collaborative approaches in schools including action research, critical friendships and the creation of learning networks.

Dadds (1997) had earlier argued that most major educational initiatives in England have been based on the 'empty vessel' or 'delivery' model, where the teacher is required to be a participant to an activity with no input in a process that is imposed by outside policies. According to Dadds, this approach cannot be successful because teachers do not enter into their professional development as 'empty vessels'; instead, they bring with them experiences, beliefs, worries, uncertainties, all of which are useful in professional development settings. In her words: *'Tragically, however, many come with a convincing feeling that what is inside them is not valid because it is 'only personal' to them. Somewhere along the line, many have learnt to seek the 'expert' outside but deny that there may be a potential 'expert' within.'* (p33)

Finally, for a professional development activity to be effective, teachers have to be convinced it is going to benefit their pupils' learning. As Fink (2001) argues: *'... teachers, in particular, and heads tend to operate based on the 'practicality ethic' - does it work for my pupils in my classroom, or for my pupils in my school?'* (p228).

It would be interesting perhaps to conclude this section by giving voice to those at the centre of CPD, the teachers themselves. In a research study on professional learning, involving teachers on an MTeach course, Pickering (2007b) reported that the teachers described good and bad CPD in the following terms:

- good CPD: learning, co-constructing, internal, interactive, challenging, optional, ongoing, individual/group needs-based; and
- bad CPD: teaching, judging, external, passive (esp. PowerPoint), patronising, forced, mass needs-based, one-off (p200).

In search of the 'expert within', to which Dadds refers, this report focuses on school-based professional development for teachers and the two types of models that this could follow. The first covers the traditional one-to-one models of coaching and mentoring, with mention of the specialist cases of coteaching and modelling. Although these are sometimes mis-described as peer-to-peer forms of CPD, one of the two partners involved in the professional development activity is more experienced and an 'expert' while the other is considered to be a 'novice' or at least not equally experienced. The second, research lesson study (RLS), is a model that is based on collaboration and communities of practice, within one school or between schools. In this model, all participants are considered equal and experts and they all contribute to the planning, design and implementation of their own CPD. It is a relatively new approach and one that answers many of the recent calls for improved teacher professional development. It is teacher-centred, i.e. 'bottom-up' and has teachers participating in communities of practice as the driving force behind it.

Part 1

Established Models of School-Based Professional Development

Mentoring and coaching (and their specialist variants of modelling and coteaching) are approaches to professional development that are well-established and well-documented. First developed in the USA, coaching and mentoring have a long tradition as professional development methods in business contexts. In this section, these approaches will be briefly presented in the education context along with practical advice on how to introduce them into a school's development plan.

Coaching

As Simkins and his colleagues (2006) argue, coaching has emerged more recently as an approach to teacher professional development with mentoring traditionally being the most frequently used method. They describe coaching as a narrower concept compared to mentoring as it involves, in most cases, skills development or job-specific tasks rather than the broader career development. The Department for Education and Skills (DfES/CUREE, 2005) defines coaching as a structured process for enabling the development of a specific aspect of a professional learner's practice. While Rhodes and his colleagues (2004) emphasise that it is a short-term relationship, which can be used to help embed change, raise performance and assist in skill development. Coaching, therefore, may reasonably be argued to be a special case of mentoring.

Simkins and his colleagues have reviewed coaching as a method of school-based professional development in the context of a programme run by the National College for School Leadership, the 'Leading from the Middle' programme (2006). This work focused on developing leadership in school middle managers and the coaches were selected among senior staff in the school. Certain inhibiting factors for the success of the coaching relationship emerged through this study including a lack of commitment on the part of the coaches and the school, the need for coaches to be accountable and to fully understand their role, and the need for better training for the coaches. Two of the 'usual suspects' in limiting the effectiveness of any form of professional development activity, lack of time and the role of senior management, also featured in the participant teachers' comments.

Li and Chan (2007) describe a case in which coaching was employed in a Hong Kong school, this time involving external consultants coming into the school as coaches. The purpose of this professional development exercise was to support teachers as they were striving for effective implementation of a new English-language curriculum. Inhibiting factors in this particular setting included the realisation that the coach/teacher relationship was more complicated than expected. As a result of this 18 month project, Li and Chan developed a framework for the creation of a positive coaching environment based on the following elements.

1. The importance of allowing coaches and teachers to construct the teaching model together.
2. Constant adjustment of expectations and roles between coaches and teachers.

3. Setting common tasks to nurture trust and collegial relationships.
4. A combination of different professional development activities.
5. Providing non-judgemental feedback.
6. Starting with a smaller number of teachers to ensure time and involvement are adequate.
7. Constant reflection on professional growth and setting new achievement targets.

The above brief review of the most recent literature on coaching shows that it can be used in various contexts where a particular aspect of a teacher's job needs to be developed and it could involve either curriculum-related skills or leadership skills.

Mentoring

Mentoring is a longer term relationship and according to Rhodes and his colleagues (2004) it is an essentially supportive process; it can be used to support teachers through a combination of coaching and counselling. Kerry and Shelton-Mayes (1995) argue that since the introduction of an extensive school-based initial teacher education component in the early 1990s, school teachers' role as mentors to student teachers has become an important part of initial teacher education. Indeed Bryan and Carpenter (2008) argue that it can be traced back to 1987 when the Oxford University Department of Education introduced the 'internship scheme'.

Although there is extensive literature on using mentoring in initial teacher training courses or as part of a new teacher's induction, there is not much published work on using mentoring as part of a

school's professional development plan. For the purposes of this review, we will assume that the same principles that apply to mentoring students or newly qualified teachers, will also apply to serving teachers.

The origins of the term 'mentor' date back to the 8th century BC and Homer's epic tale *The Odyssey*. Odysseus, before leaving to fight in the Trojan War, entrusted his son Telemachus in the hands of his friend and advisor Mentor. When Telemachus grew up and his father Odysseus had still not returned from Troy, he set out to find him, with Mentor guiding him and helping him during the long journey. This metaphor of journey has remained with mentoring and signifies the mentee's development over time and a series of achievements, under the watchful eye of an experienced 'other'.

Anderson and Shannon (1995) conclude that, from the historical meaning of mentoring and also from the literature, the activity of mentoring is meant to be:

- an intentional process;
- a nurturing process;
- an insightful process;
- a supportive and protective process; and
- a role modelling process.

With this in mind, they adopt Anderson's definition of mentoring as

'... a nurturing process in which a more skilled or more experienced person, serving as a role model, teaches, sponsors, encourages, counsels, and befriends a less skilled or less experienced person for the purpose of promoting the latter's professional and/or personal development. Mentoring functions are carried out within the context of an ongoing, caring

relationship between the mentor and protégé.' (Anderson (1987), cited in Anderson and Shannon, 1995, (p29).) It is evident that those assuming the role of the mentor would need to possess a wide range of skills above and beyond competence and experience in teaching. Bleach (1999) puts emphasis on the importance of interpersonal skills and describes a mentor as someone who is 'people-orientated ... nurturing, insightful, protective and knowledgeable; a good role model with a sound subject knowledge, challenging teaching style, sympathetic but firm manner, high standards, loyalty, commitment in time and effort, and good communication and counselling skills' (p34). Field and Field (1994) add leadership and arbitration skills to the list, especially in the context of initial teacher training, as mentors often have to liaise with teams of subject tutors working with the student teacher. However, Forsbach-Rothman (2007) cautions that mentors are often selected solely on the basis of their teaching competence and may lack the skills above, which are necessary for effective mentoring. Her research shows that training for mentors is crucial for a good mentoring relationship as is time with the mentees.

Another prerequisite for successful mentoring, as with any other form of professional development, is that the school's senior management takes it seriously. Stephens (1996), in his hands-on handbook on mentoring, argues that *'mentoring only flourishes when it's perceived by senior managers as an important aspect of staff development rather than a tiresome burden to be landed on unwilling and unprepared shoulders'* (p4).

Stephens's reference to some perceptions of mentoring as a 'tiresome burden' echoes in teacher comments in a research project on mentoring as a community of practice. In their 1998 study, Bryan and Carpenter examine mentor identities and a possible community of mentoring within the initial teacher education context. Starting from Wenger's (1998) premise that, *'we tend to identify most strongly with the communities in which we develop the most ownership of meaning'* (p207), Bryan and Carpenter gathered data from 65 teacher mentors and set out to identify if a community of mentoring can be developed through mentoring practice. They concluded that for those teachers participating in the study there was little evidence of a sense of community relating to mentoring practice. Very few of the participants even cited the mentoring group when invited to consider their 'allegiance' to various professional groups including subject groups, the General Teaching Council for England and others.

The participants of the Bryan and Carpenter study also referred to the process of mentoring as 'tiring' and 'time-consuming' and they did not seem to perceive this process as of benefit to them. This is in sharp contrast to the view expressed in Elliott and Calderhead's (1995) work that mentors themselves gain from the mentoring relationship and experience personal growth related to the development of the mentee. Kelly and his colleagues (1995) also argue that being a mentor is 'to contribute to one's own professional development' but, again, with the caveat that it all depends on how seriously the school management takes the notion of professional development (p257). This view that being a mentor can contribute to one's own professional development is shared by the GTCNI which

describes 'receiving and/or giving on-the-job coaching, mentoring or tutoring' part of the CPD repertoire (GTCNI, 2005, p28).

How can coaching and mentoring be organised in a school?

Mentoring and coaching have much in common and overlap is to be expected when planning either activity in a school. First, as it is the case for any professional development activity, a school has to consider why it needs to set up a programme. For example, Rhodes and his colleagues (2004) suggest mentoring has proved very effective in helping new staff in a school make sense of the new job and also settle into their new surroundings. Coaching is also particularly useful for developing specific skills or dealing with specific classroom problems.

Determining the aims of the proposed activity as clearly as possible will assist in the process of identifying who is to be approached to act as the coach or mentor. Who will act as mentor in each scheme depends on the expected outcomes and the needs of the mentee. Kelly and his colleagues (1995) describe the various mentoring situations, from staff development to an induction programme, and the different types of mentor needed whether for a new head teacher or a teacher in their first year.

Depending on the degree of formality that the school management team wants to attach to the programme they could either ask for volunteers, identify expert teachers or even write a 'job description' and interview formally for the role. Although it used to be the case that more senior or experienced members of staff would be considered to act as coaches and mentors, such hierarchical relationships have now given way to a buddy-type role involving all levels of staff. However, while informal coaching or mentoring activities can be beneficial at times, depending on the task at hand, whole-school professional development schemes usually demand a degree of structure in the process.

A typical framework for such a formal coaching or mentoring scheme can be adapted from the DfES/CUREE (2005)

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advice and from the work of Rhodes and his colleagues (2004). Such a framework would require the following.

1 The aims and objectives of the scheme to be set out.

These need to be related to the school's vision and must be clearly articulated. For example, what are the specific needs to be addressed through the scheme? Are there clear outcomes that are measurable within specified time frames? Have the outcomes been negotiated with the teachers, mentors and coaches so that they become full stakeholders in the process?

2 The roles, skills and responsibilities of the mentors and coaches to be well developed.

For example, it is crucial that the chosen mentors and coaches are able to relate well to their assigned colleagues, aiming to build trust and confidence. They should be experienced in setting learning objectives and supporting progression through them. Coaches in particular need to model the specific skills they are hoping to pass on. Crucially they should be able to relate the guidance they give to convincing evidence from practice and research, enabling the teachers concerned to grasp underlying meanings and not just the skill. Coaches and mentors have to be attentive listeners, ready to review needs and plan actions with the teachers concerned. Once the mentoring or coaching is underway, they need to observe carefully, and analyse and reflect upon their charges' progress. Crucially this has to be carried out with the teachers, providing them with guidance, feedback and direction when necessary.

3 Coaches and mentors to have training and professional support and development.

All coaches and mentors will benefit from appropriate training and professional development opportunities. They need to conceptualise their roles as being part of a mutual learning experience (Forsbach-Rothman, 2007). Bryan and Carpenter (2008) propose the benefits of establishing support communities within and across schools to share practice and experiences.

4 The elements of the mentoring process to be accepted.

According to the Anderson and Shannon (1995) model, there is an openness and an atmosphere of care and concern between mentor and mentee, in which the mentor provides leadership and direction. They argue that the main elements of the mentoring process include:

- a relationship where the mentor is a role model, a care giver and a nurturer for the mentee;
- the mentor teaching, sponsoring, encouraging, counselling and befriending the mentee; and
- demonstration of lessons, observations and feedback, and support meetings.

This latter element (demonstration of lessons etc) is the essence of the more hands-on coaching process, which includes ensuring that the teacher has a clear idea of the activities to be tried out. The coach has to be aware of the types of learning suitable for the teacher concerned and the teachers should be treated as equals in both mentoring and coaching, even when there

are significant differences in experience. A non-patronising and respectful relationship will always be the best approach.

5. The scheme to be properly managed and monitored.

If the coaching or monitoring process is seen by either party to be an add-on, to be taken or left, or if there is any hint from management that the scheme is unimportant, then it is likely to fail. It is imperative that the whole process is treated with the seriousness and importance it deserves. It should be driven from a senior management perspective with appropriate reviews, progress reports and resourcing.

6. A systematic review and evaluation of the whole-school scheme.

Appropriate monitoring of a whole-school scheme is fundamental to ensuring that it continues to meet individual and school professional development needs.

The six elements above, for the creation of a positive coaching or mentoring environment, should be taken into account when designing a programme of this type of professional development. It is very important for coaches and mentors to realise that there are benefits through this coaching process for them as well as for the participants. For example, Rhodes and his colleagues (2004) quote Ragins and Cotton (1999) and Butler and Chao (2001) in listing benefits that include the development of skills such as patience, appreciation of cultural differences, gaining respect in the eyes of their colleagues and developing effective learning strategies.

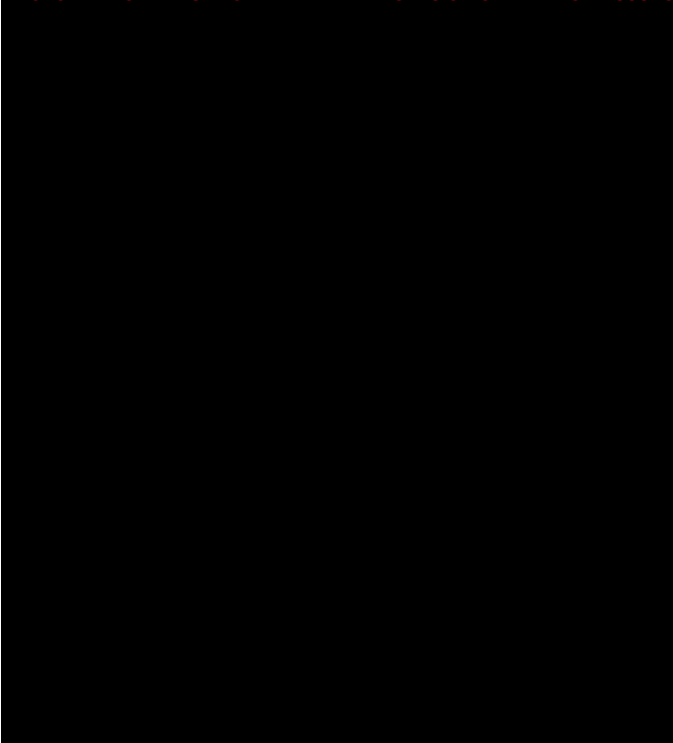
Variants of mentoring: modelling and coteaching

Modelling is a variant of mentoring but involves the inexperienced teacher going into an experienced teacher's classroom to observe how they use various techniques for classroom management or teaching processes, i.e. see 'how it is done'. Sometimes it involves experienced teachers, perhaps external consultants, coming in to the teacher's class to 'show how it is done'. It almost goes without saying that such an approach needs to be treated with the utmost sensitivity.

Coteaching involves two teachers delivering a lesson together. The underlying theory is that each person's contribution helps the other to improve their techniques.

Having developed from team-teaching approaches the focus is collaborative and reflective, and is generally considered to offer scope for experimentation in various sub-class contexts such as one-to-one tuition and group work.

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Part 2

Research Lesson Study, RLS

Research Lesson Study (RLS) is a relatively new approach to professional learning and focuses on collaboration among teachers and the creation of learning communities of practice. There are several perspectives from which to appreciate its purpose and process. For example, Stigler and Hiebert (1999) suggest that the concept of RLS is based on a simple principle: *'if you want to improve teaching, the most effective place to do so is in the context of the classroom'* (p111). Dudley (2005) describes RLS as an activity that is based *'upon cycles of highly structured group planning, observation and analysis of lessons which take place over periods of time between half a term and a year or more'* (p3) with the aim to improve pupil learning. Fernandez (2002) pinpoints the central activity as bringing together groups of teachers to 'discuss lessons that they have first jointly planned in great detail and then observed as they unfolded in actual classrooms' (p393). And Lewis and her colleagues (2006a) describe it as *'observation of live classroom lessons by a group of teachers who collect data on teaching and learning and collaboratively analyse it'* (p3).

From another perspective, Watanabe (2002) views RLS as a culture and not just another professional development activity. For a successful lesson study the development of a shared professional culture through collective participation is required. This notion of RLS as a culture is also supported by Fernandez (2002) who describes how both a group of pre-service teachers conducted RLS as part of their training and a group of first year

teachers were assigned an RLS mentor. This is consistent with research conducted on teacher development. For example, Fisher and his colleagues (2006) argue that the way forward with teacher development, in order to keep pace with the constant change in our education system, is not just about making a process more efficient but about enabling cultural change in the profession. Some would argue that RLS could be the cultural change needed to bring about an overhaul of professional development in the UK.

Where did RLS come from?

According to Fernandez (2002) RLS has existed in some form in Japan since the early 1900s. Stigler and Hiebert (1999) report that Japanese teachers are given primary responsibility for the improvement of their practice. Furthermore, as soon as they embark on their teaching career, they become engaged in the process of their school-based professional development as part of a professional development teacher group. This continuous professional development is considered part of a teacher's job in Japan. Watanabe (2002) in turn describes how these groups can operate either at school level, where teachers from a single school collaborate on lesson plans or at a system level, for example where some cities hold a citywide RLS day with different schools hosting special activities or RLS groups on different subjects. There are also national RLS groups with no school affiliation. These often have hundreds of members brought together by university educators or indeed by enthusiastic teachers. Often, schools affiliated with Japanese universities conduct an open house on RLS where they publicly perform RLS lessons, attracting wide audiences of teachers.

Importantly, it is not only Japanese teachers who are keen on RLS, as Fernandez (2002) discusses; their government seems to be in favour of this technique too. Although Japanese RLS groups started on a voluntary basis, they have been supported by the educational authorities. Funding is often made available to tackle specific lesson study goals which are of regional or national importance. Schools in receipt of such funding are described as 'designated research schools'. Fernandez (2002) argues that by funding these research schools the government is attempting to exert some influence on the RLS groups and their activities but the process goes both ways with the groups then having the opportunity to influence educational policy.

Arguably, RLS encompasses many of the features of effective CPD discussed earlier, features that have as yet proven largely elusive in the UK and other western teacher professional development systems. These include the fact that RLS is a 'true' bottom-up model with direct teacher involvement in the design, planning and delivery of the CPD activity. In other words, teachers are not the 'grateful recipients of CPD'; they are actively involved in the decisions concerning their own learning. At its essence, CPD in the form of RLS is the joint enterprise of a group of teachers, but it may also involve the participation of schools and government without them 'imposing' from above (Day and Sachs, 2004; Pickering et al, 2007; Day, 1999).

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Collaborative enquiry, which is a central process of RLS, has been shown to support school improvement by promoting reflective practice, pupil, staff and leadership development and both individual and organisational capacity building (Jackson and Street, 2005a; Rhodes et al, 2004). With the characteristics of professional learning communities (Bolam et al, 2005) and communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), RLS groups can promote whole-school capacity building and foster improved learning. There is no 'expert' brought in from outside in RLS, instead, as Dadds (1997) would advocate, all teachers participating in the activity are experts in their own right.

RLS in the West

According to Lewis and her colleagues, RLS has been widespread in Japan for many decades and has spread rapidly in the USA since 1999 thanks to Stigler and Hiebert's (1999) book *The Teaching Gap*.

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In this book, the high quality teaching of mathematics in Japan, as reported in the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (IEA, 1999), was attributed to the widespread use of RLS by the Japanese teachers. Indeed, Lewis and her colleagues (2006a) describe how in the space of these few years, more than 335 USA schools had been using RLS across 32 states and it had become the focus of countless conferences, reports and articles. The same authors argue that RLS practitioners in the US are adapting key features of the Japanese model and creating a home-grown version of it.

RLS, it has been suggested, has the potential to help overhaul the US teaching force. According to Lieberman (2009), in one case study school, RLS helped develop a teacher learning community, in which teachers were able to develop *'a professional identity that includes learning from one another, and continually improving their practice'* (p97) overcoming the traditional norms of 'individualism,

conservatism and presentism' (p84) that had constrained teachers from learning from one another (Lieberman, 2009).

Lewis and her colleagues (2006b) describe how one US elementary school integrated RLS so well into its culture that *'... it is not one more demand on teachers but the primary means of addressing the many demands they face'* (p278). Their study was one of six RLS projects funded by the National Science Foundation in US schools. The recent National Science Foundation (NSF, 2007) IMPACT report mentions the learning community approach for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) teaching, where they describe such communities as embracing *'... variants of the Japanese lesson study model, as well as other operational models in which teachers examine student data, strategically address their content and pedagogical means, and devise new strategies to improve student achievement'* (p5).

Although RLS has been used in the USA primarily to improve pupil learning, Lewis and her colleagues (2006b) reported that there have also been instances where RLS has replaced evaluations of teacher performance. As it involves experienced and new teachers participating in the same RLS groups it has also acted as a vehicle for mentoring. This is an example of the wide-ranging potential the RLS model has and how powerful it can be for professional development, given its unique features of teacher active involvement, collaborative enquiry and classroom relevance.

Most recently, in the UK, the RLS approach featured in an ESRC/TLRP Research

Training Fellowship project (papers on the project and related materials were also published by the National College for School Leadership - Dudley, 2005). Dudley's (2008) research involved over 100 research lessons at 11 secondary and three primary schools. The learning context was English and the topic focused on how practice in Assessment for Learning could be developed and transferred between teachers and schools. This pilot project concluded that RLS could work in England where certain pre-conditions existed, for example, a culture of collaborative enquiry in the school (Dudley, 2008).

In another setting in England, Davies and Dunhill (2008) have used a combination of the Japanese model of RLS, which they termed 'Learning Study' with a focus on learning outcomes. This was developed in order to answer criticisms of the RLS model presenting a small body of evidence on how it could be used in western settings, the lack of evidence to explain how the effects reported by participants come about and for 'a lack of attention to a theory of learning' (p5).

Davies and Dunhill introduced this 'Learning Study' model over a two year period as an integral element within a programme for initial teacher education. They concluded that for the participating trainee teachers the benefits were evident. However, there were also several difficulties in practical terms that needed to be overcome. These included larger groups of trainee teachers as well as having to identify the focus for lessons several weeks in advance for the preparations to take place. This is an interesting effort to adapt and adjust the Japanese RLS model in a different cultural setting and shows that there has been a lot

of interest in RLS in the UK, not only in in-service but also in initial teacher education.

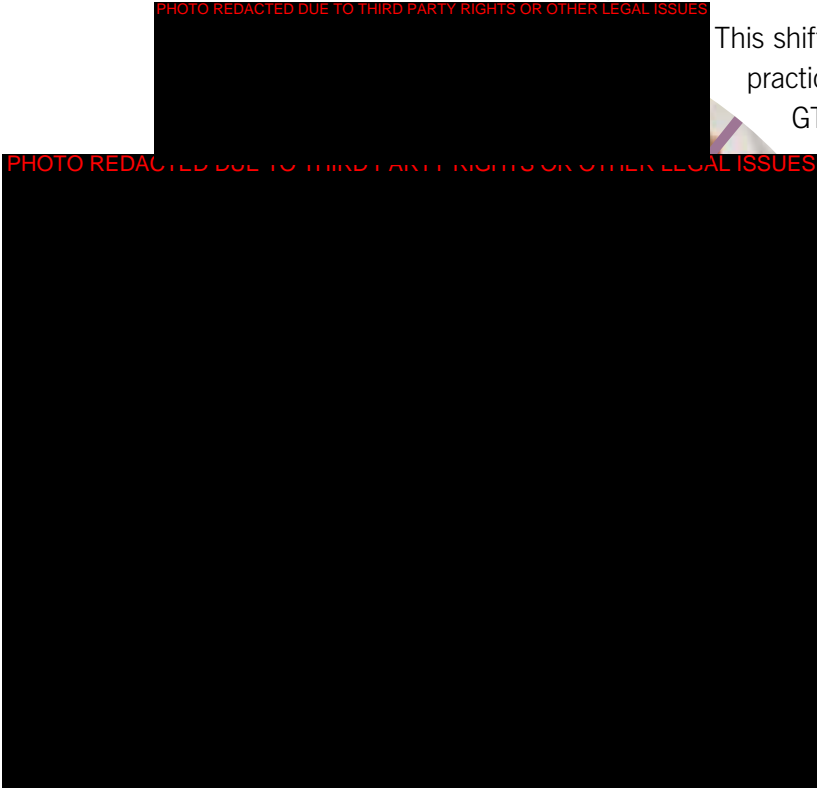
The importance RLS has assumed in the UK is also evident in the fact that currently all primary schools in England have access to training in RLS. RLS also features along with coaching in several national publications (Dudley, 2008). One of these publications '*Improving practice and progression through Lesson Study: a handbook for headteachers, leading teachers and subject leaders*' (DCSF, 2009) provides all of the information needed to use RLS to improve teaching techniques.

Where does RLS fit in?

As mentioned in the Introduction, the GTCNI has at the centre of its Code of Values and Professional Practice the belief that ongoing professional development is necessary for improved practice. Furthermore, when the Council engages in discussion relating to teacher competences it is made clear that the emphasis is on concepts such as:

- '*competence developed through reflection on practice and through dialogue with colleagues*' (GTCNI, 2007; p12);
- teachers engaging '*in action research within their own classroom, school or institution*' (GTCNI, 2007; p12); and
- teachers working '*with colleagues and others to create professional community... and be prepared to offer advice and share professional practice with colleagues*' (GTCNI, 2007; p45).

The above are all elements present in or developed through the RLS activity, which is based on school-based reflective practice, collaborative enquiry and communities



This shift from individual to collaborative practice is also supported by the GTCNI as it seeks to promote the development of professional communities of practice, with schools at the forefront of the development (GTCNI, 2005). Specifically relating to CPD, this document calls for:

'new, innovative ways of co-operating to be found to ensure that the expertise of individual teachers and schools is shared as widely as possible'. (p34)

Could an RLS model be the answer to the calls for a new, innovative form of CPD where teachers engage in reflective and shared practice, within and between schools?

of practice through clusters of teachers in the same school or across schools.

Particularly in the Northern Ireland context, the concepts of communities of practice and collaborative enquiry are very timely, not least because of major events in the Northern Ireland education scene such as the conclusion of the Review of Public Administration in 2006 (see RPA, 2009), the Education (NI) Order 2006 (TSO, 2006), the Independent Strategic Review of Education (Bain, 2006) and the revised Northern Ireland Curriculum (see NIC, 2009), which began to roll out in schools in 2008. Donnelly and Gallagher (2008) argue that these events emphasised the need for greater co-operation and collaboration between schools and had ultimately led to the creation of the School Collaboration Programme which focuses on supporting collaboration between schools (DE, 2007).

How does RLS work in a school?

The coaching and mentoring models of school-based CPD, and their variants modelling and coteaching, have one thing in common: peer support between teachers in order to improve aspects of their teaching, promote their career and so on. However, one of the teachers is usually more experienced and provides support and guidance to inexperienced colleagues. In the case of RLS all teachers involved in the process are at the same level, they all work together, sharing ownership and responsibility for the process and the end result. They also share the risks associated with this activity – for example feeling exposed to the group – as they all 'own' the lesson. This allows them to feel more confident while experimenting in lesson delivery methods as both 'successes'

and 'failures' may be attributed to the group and not to individuals.

There are various models of RLS but the planning template described here is adapted from the successful work of Dudley (2005). In essence the important steps are: creating a lesson study group; planning a research lesson; observing the research lesson; and disseminating lessons learnt from the research lesson. Although RLS has so far been used with learning improvement as its main aim, its action as a professional learning tool is what improves the pedagogy and ultimately learning, through the teachers working in partnership and collaborative enquiry. However, teachers and schools working in partnership present certain challenges such as, in the Northern Ireland context for example, teachers being reluctant to share practice or lacking in self-confidence (Galanouli, 2008). Therefore, the model suggested by Dudley (2005), i.e. with a focus on pupils' learning needs and outcomes, needs to be adjusted to focus on teacher professional development. The activities, as they have been adapted from Dudley's (2005) work on RLS for assessment for learning, are set out stepwise below.

1. *Identify the research group, usually three to five teachers in a network of (up to five) schools with dedicated time and support for the Research Lesson Study programme.* The arrangements must be logistically feasible in terms of distance, ease of getting together and appropriate classes. Commitment to

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the programme is also a must and the teachers should have the opportunity to hear about the proposed professional development activity before being asked to participate.

RLS should be optional and by its nature will take place during school hours and not on teachers' own time. To enable the group to come together, teacher substitute cover should be built into the funding as not only will the observing group of teachers need their own classes looked after, time is also needed for individual and group reflection, and the absorption of new learning (Fullan, 2000). This is consistent with GTCNI guidance regarding teachers engaging in CPD in which a reduction in class contact time should be considered in order to facilitate professional development

activities. Sabbatical leave should also be considered for those teachers engaging in CPD (GTCNI, 2005).

2. *Set ground rules for joint ownership of the research lessons so that the risks of experimenting are shared* (reducing potential embarrassing episodes, the unsettling sense of being watched in a fishbowl-type context etc). One way to achieve this would be to use videos of sample RLS lessons from other projects so that teachers become familiar with the concept and they know what they are expected to do, reducing any feelings of stress that this procedure may cause them to experience (Haydn and Barton, 2007). RLS is an innovative approach to professional development and, as such, joint ownership on the part of teachers is important and necessary for the proposed activity to succeed (Morrish, 1976). Pupil learning must be the main priority and their participation in the process should be discussed and agreed with them. Generally speaking, it is good practice to ensure the programme is also explained to and approved by parents.
3. *Identify what is to be researched and why*: the research question. Clearly this is crucial and must involve learning content and objectives appropriate to the pupils and the stage of their learning.
4. *Connect with what is known about the focus before starting work*. Groundwork is very important and a good way to do this is to review the relevant literature as part of the initial planning stage.
5. Steps 3 and 4 are closely linked to the concept of relevance of the training to the interests of the teachers, in other words relevance to teaching and learning and having as the focus their classroom needs. RLS should therefore take as its focus a topic which needs to be developed further by the group of teachers involved. In this way, the teachers will develop skills relevant to their experiences, which they will be able to use immediately in their classrooms.
6. *Jointly plan a research lesson based on the proposed professional learning activity*. This is a mixture of lesson planning in its traditional sense and a type of 'choreography' of the lesson process – what the pupils will be doing and when in the lesson, etc. Every teacher must have a clear input to and ownership of the final plan.

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7. *Plan joint observation and data capture: plan how the data will be observed and captured, and who is doing what.* This requires considerable thought to identify what observation data is to be collected e.g. teacher talk, teacher action, pupil-teacher and pupil-pupil interactions, pupil work etc, and the whole lesson should be videoed. It may take a few trial lessons to get this working effectively to ensure that the post-lesson discussions can be as fruitful as possible to each member of the group.
8. *Plan joint analysis and deconstruction of the research lesson.* This is the crucial element of the action research process, with the teachers individually and collectively identifying what has worked well and what has not, planning a revised strategy to consolidate the good aspects of the lesson and to improve the not so good.
9. *Analysis and discussion of the process needs to be consistent.* For example, the videoed teaching sessions should ensure that both the teacher who delivers the lesson and the group of observers can engage in the post-lesson discussion with the same recording as the basic data source.

Steps 5 to 8 recognise that teachers are the most important agents in the RLS approach to professional development and it is vital to have their cooperation for this to be successful. Somekh (2007a) speaks of the key concept of partnership for successful innovation and teacher partnerships and ownership of the activities are undoubtedly crucial to the success of RLS. Teachers collaborating in planning a Research Lesson Study will

ensure that the activities are relevant to them and that their own individual needs are taken into account (Day, 1999). The teachers' experiences, beliefs, worries and uncertainties (Dadds, 1997) in combination with the stages of their careers, their knowledge and understanding of the training topic, their own learning style and commitment to change (Holmes and her colleagues, 2007) will all also play a role. In particular, they will ensure that the activities are consistent with the teachers' experiences and personal theories of what constitutes effective training. For these reasons RLS should be successful with these groups of teachers.

10. *Finding ways of helping others learn from what has been learned through RLS in the school and across schools.* Teachers will talk to other teachers about what they can achieve through the RLS model. These communities of practice are known to motivate teachers to try otherwise potentially risky activities for themselves while practical suggestions from peers often make a difference to those who are reluctant to adopt change on the say-so of management or external authorities. Additionally, there could be benefits for those who will disseminate their work. They may attract the interest of other teachers making them feel their work is valued, boosting their self-esteem and professional status (Hayward, 2009).

All activities are directly linked to an important characteristic of effective professional development, which is that planning and supporting teachers' professional development should be the joint responsibility of the teachers and

schools, and supported appropriately by government (Day, 1999; Fullan, 2000, Condie et al, 2007; Somekh, 2007b).

It is clear that teachers and school management teams, who will have to approve the above activities and support the staff, should be involved from the start and throughout the development and implementation stages. Teachers within the same schools or across schools need to be able to form a community of practice, a point emphasised by Preston and Cuthell (2007) who have argued that this social networking is important for supporting professionalism and for keeping up with new developments in knowledge.

It is evident that the RLS model includes most of the elements which constitute good practice in a bottom-up approach to professional development where partnerships of teachers:

- ensure relevance to their teaching and their pupils through a classroom-based focus;
 - provide good support through networks of learning; and
 - promote sustainable practice through dissemination within and across schools.
- take the initiative and the responsibility for their professional development;
 - are involved in the planning, development and implementation of the activity;

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Implications

While the RLS approach appears to tick many of the boxes of good professional development, several factors need to be considered to ensure that it is successful. These are time, training and resources.

Time is perhaps the first and most important factor. With all the demands placed on them, which often encroach on their personal time, teachers need proper release time for their professional development. Recent initiatives such as the New Opportunities Fund ICT training for teachers have shown that when teachers are expected to use their own time for their training, both their professional development and personal lives suffer (Galanouli et al, 2004).

The Northern Ireland Teachers' Health and Wellbeing Survey (PWC, 2001) found that, according to one third of the nearly 12,000 teachers surveyed, 'lack of time for training' was a key cause of stress (p60). It is not surprising that lack

of time for training was within the top 20 causes of unwanted stress at work.

Training should also be taken into account when planning school-based CPD activities. It was mentioned above that mentors and coaches should be trained to perform their duties as these involve expertise in various skills such as communication, time management and support mechanisms for teachers. In the case of RLS, training could also involve showing teachers video material taken from RLS classrooms and perhaps research/academic support during the initial stages of the activity, with subsequent input as and when requested. It is important though to ensure that teachers are being supported as opposed to being told what to do since it is imperative that they should have responsibility and ownership of the professional development offered by RLS.

Resources are another consideration to be taken into account when planning for RLS. Teacher release from classroom duties while the RLS group meets to plan and review the research lessons is necessary if teachers are to engage in this professional development activity. Therefore teacher cover should be factored in the school budget for those teachers participating in RLS. Other expenses that should be considered include the need for video recording equipment.

Conclusion

'Without guaranteed time to engage meaningfully it is unlikely that any professional development programmes will produce more than a superficial knowledge and compliance' (GTCNI 2005, p33).

The new policy for school improvement from the Department of Education *'Every School a Good School'* (DE, 2009) stresses the need for good professional development opportunities for teachers. This review aimed to provide an overview of school-based models of teacher professional development. In the first part, it focused on mentoring and coaching as the two most common types of school-based CPD. The second part introduced a method new to Northern Ireland, the Japanese model of Research Lesson Study, a purely peer-to-peer model of CPD where all involved share practice and jointly reflect, plan and deliver lessons. It is proposed that this powerful professional development model could provide the answer to some of the problems faced by those who wish to improve classroom practice.

Recently, the then Permanent Secretary at the Department of Education in Northern Ireland, Will Haire, rightly placed the development of the education workforce very high on the list of strategic priorities². However, he also placed the need to raise standards, including numeracy and literacy, high on the same list. Evidence from international studies, such as the TIMSS 2007 study (IEA, 2007), has shown that countries such as Hong Kong, Singapore and Japan, which have traditionally used

'Teachers are the midwives of the knowledge society. Without them, or their competence, the future will be malformed and stillborn'. (Hargreaves and Goodson, 2002)

This review was commissioned by the GTCNI in order to supplement the range of publications that focuses on teacher competences and professional development (GTCNI, 2005) and more recently on teaching as a reflective profession (GTCNI, 2007). Recognising that every school is as good as its teachers (McKinsey and Co, 2007) the Council strongly believes that teacher professional development should be at the centre of any reform agenda.

The Council also recognises that good professional development needs time and has made calls for reduction in class contact time for teachers in order to engage in CPD:

² Northern Ireland Education Research Forum, First Symposium Event 30 April 2009, Stranmillis University College

the RLS model of professional development, are the top performing countries in mathematics. There are, of course, many factors which may explain such performance. However, it can reasonably be assumed that improving teaching would not be among the least important.

The new policy for school improvement states that schools and teachers are expected to identify their own training and support needs through self-evaluation and self-assessment (DE, 2009). This implies that we are moving towards a new culture of CPD. It is hoped that this new culture will

involve teachers taking responsibility and accepting ownership for their professional learning; that it will involve shared practice and collaboration between teachers and schools. The RLS model could help teachers build the self-confidence needed to achieve this and also to improve their practice. However, this cannot happen unless teachers are provided with the necessary time, support and resources. The last word may be left to the Chief Inspector of the Education and Training Inspectorate, Stanley Goudie (ETI, 2009):

'There is proportionately insufficient investment in the development of the teachers and the educational workforce compared with that invested in changing structures and systems. The need to ensure a range of continuing professional development for those who lead, manage and teach has never been greater. There is a need for more multi-disciplinary, continuing professional development for the staff working across the education, training and youth services to provide more adequate and holistic support for our children and young people' (p67).

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