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a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

How teachers evaluate the impact of GTCW continuing professional development projects



BUDDSODD WYR | INVESTORS
MEWN POBL | IN PEOPLE

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- ▲ secondary schools;
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- ▲ pupil referral units;
- ▲ independent schools;
- ▲ further education;
- ▲ adult community learning;
- ▲ youth support services;
- ▲ youth and community work training;
- ▲ Local authority education services for children and young people;
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- ▲ offender learning; and
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Publication Section

Estyn

Anchor Court

Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.uk

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: www.estyn.gov.uk

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Introduction

- 1 Estyn has been evaluating the impact of the GTCW continuing professional development programme on teachers, schools and pupils since 2001. In summer 2007, Estyn published 'The impact of the continuing professional development programme on teachers, schools and the raising of pupils' achievement', its most recent survey on GTCW continuing professional development programme. Even though many positive features were reported in the survey, inspectors noted that generally teachers do not measure the impact of continuing professional development activity on raising pupils' achievements effectively enough.
- 2 The present survey report, requested by the Welsh Assembly Government in the Minister's 2009-2010 remit letter to Estyn, is an evaluation of the strategies that teachers use to plan, monitor, evaluate and measure the impact of their continuing professional development projects. The report also includes case studies of best practice in the appendix.
- 3 To gather evidence for this survey, inspectors reviewed a sample of teachers' continuing professional development projects across the range of categories between October and December 2009. This included reviewing teachers' application forms and reports, and interviewing headteachers, senior staff and teachers who had received funding in 2007–2008, 2008–2009 and 2009–2010 in a range of primary and secondary schools across Wales.

Background

- 4 The General Teaching Council for Wales (GTCW) has administered a range of continuing professional development categories available for individual teachers since 2001 on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government. The GTCW has changed the continuing professional development categories over this period to try to make the best use of the funding and to meet teachers' needs better. The funding categories in 2009-2010 are as follows:

Professional Development Bursary	Up to £650 to be spent on a professional development activity of the teacher's choice, including visits within and outside the UK to observe good practice and exchange ideas.
Action Research Project	Up to £1,500 to undertake action research in an area relevant to individual's classroom practice.
Teacher Sabbatical	Up to £5,250 to enable an experienced teacher to undertake a prolonged period of study or to develop transferable skills in a different environment.
Professional Network	Up to £650 per member (non-transferable) to enable a group of teachers from different schools to work together on a regular basis over a period of time.

- 5 The GTCW's continuing professional development programme is used by teachers across Wales to access funding to up-date their knowledge and skills on a wide range of subjects. The GTCW has monitored the uptake of opportunities afforded by the categories since its introduction in 2001.
- 6 The most popular category is the professional development bursary. This is because it allows teachers to undertake short-term projects through which they can see results quickly. All categories allow individual teachers to undertake continuing professional development based on their personal preference and needs.
- 7 Action research projects and sabbaticals allow teachers to focus in depth on specific issues related to raising pupil achievement or school improvement.
- 8 The professional network category allows teachers to take part in learning communities, to learn from colleagues, share ideas and enhance their knowledge and understanding of classroom practices.

- 9 Most teachers have undertaken development activities in areas closely related to their everyday work in school. These areas include:
- early years;
 - ICT;
 - management skills;
 - science;
 - special educational needs;
 - thinking skills; and
 - teaching and learning methodologies.
- 10 The GTCW has recently revised the application process and documentation in response to feedback from teachers and Estyn. The application form allows the GTCW to make a judgement about the suitability of the teacher's application. Teachers can also use the form as a tool to track, monitor and evaluate progress towards achieving the stated intended outcomes. Teachers who take up a professional development bursary are not required to submit a final report to the GTCW, but must submit a report to their headteacher or another senior manager, who reviews the project and signs off the report. For all other categories, teachers submit a final report to the GTCW.

Main findings

Planning intended outcomes

- 11 Most teachers plan their continuing professional development projects well. Plans include clear aims, interim targets, milestones and intended outcomes. However, teachers do not usually plan clearly enough how they will measure the impact of their project on pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching and learning, or on wider school development. The GTCW provides a range of information on its website about projects that other teachers have completed. However, too few teachers make use of this resource to improve their planning.

Monitoring progress

- 12 A few teachers monitor the progress of their continuing professional development projects at planned milestones. In most cases, these teachers are confident enough to adapt their initial plan, and, where appropriate, to set new interim targets. However, many teachers do not monitor their project effectively. Too few teachers ask colleagues to help them monitor pupils' progress at key points in the project. Very few senior managers take part in this monitoring process.

Evaluating outcomes

- 13 Where the intended outcomes of the continuing professional development project are linked to improving pupil knowledge and understanding of a subject, teachers usually collect a good range of quantitative and qualitative evidence of pupils' progress. They typically do this by monitoring and evaluating pupils' oral responses in class, written work and assessments. Where the intended outcomes of the project are linked to improving pupil motivation and enthusiasm, the evidence teachers collect is more impressionistic and the range of tools used to collect and analyse this qualitative evidence is more limited. Too few teachers ask pupils for feedback as a source of evidence.
- 14 In a few cases, the outcomes of the continuing professional development project do not match the intended outcomes. Teachers who are more confident in evaluation, learn from this experience and analyse why the outcomes do not match. Teachers who are less confident in evaluation, do not take this opportunity to reflect on the project, and they often do not complete the project.
- 15 Many teachers use ICT effectively as a tool to record and analyse quantitative and qualitative evidence on the outcomes of their continuing professional development project, but only a few teachers use electronic means to gain pupils' opinions, such as using on-line questionnaires. In most cases, this is because teachers do not have the necessary know-how.

Measuring impact

- 16 Most teachers' continuing professional development projects show some degree of positive impact on raising pupil achievement and contributing to wider school development. The impact of projects designed to improve pupil confidence and motivation is less clearly evidenced.
- 17 The majority of teachers reflect well on how their continuing professional development project has supported their personal development and on the new knowledge and skills they have acquired. These projects often serve as a springboard for further professional development. The development of individual teachers' continuing interests often provides a significant momentum in the school for informal and formal professional networking among teachers and for improving pupils' experiences and learning.
- 18 Most continuing professional development projects now link to personal and/or school development objectives. In this way, the outcomes of teachers' projects contribute coherently to improving school performance.
- 19 Teachers' continuing professional development projects have the most impact on raising pupil achievement and school performance when the headteacher or other senior staff clearly place a high value on teachers' professional development and recognise it as a means of developing improved pupil performance and school effectiveness.
- 20 Most headteachers provide good opportunities for teachers to disseminate the outcomes of their continuing professional development projects, for example through an agenda item at staff meetings or training workshops. The GTCW also provides good opportunities for dissemination through its website, conferences and journal, which showcase best-practice examples.

Recommendations

In order that teachers can better evaluate the impact of any new teaching and learning strategies that they introduce to the classroom:

The Welsh Assembly Government should:

R1 produce or commission materials to support the development of teachers' project evaluation skills.

Planning intended outcomes

- 21 Overall, teachers complete GTCW application forms properly and use them well to plan their continuing professional development projects. Most project plans include clear aims and intended outcomes. In most cases, the plans include milestones at which teachers plan to monitor progress.
- 22 Across all continuing professional development categories, most teachers choose to study aspects of teaching and learning or the school system that are directly related to their role in school. However, many teachers who apply for professional development bursaries and professional network bursaries do not always identify at the planning stage how they will gain the evidence they need to determine the success of the project in raising pupils' achievement or developing wider school activities. This is particularly the case in relation to collecting qualitative or 'soft' evidence that will show whether there has been an improvement in pupils' confidence and motivation.
- 23 Most teachers who undertake action research projects plan the methods by which they will gather evidence in great detail. They often focus their work tightly, choosing only one or two key objectives, and they apply research techniques well. Most teachers funded through a teacher research scholarship benefit from mentoring by university lecturers. University mentors have a good understanding of research methodologies which they help teachers to understand and apply.
- 24 In a few cases, teachers plan to do too much during their project and have too many intended learning outcomes to monitor. This means there is not a clear enough focus to the project. It becomes less easy to manage and it is less easy to determine the impact in raising pupil achievement or changing school systems.
- 25 The GTCW provides a range of information on its website about continuing professional development projects that other teachers across Wales have undertaken. However, many teachers do not make good use of this facility when planning their project. They are not aware of the outcomes of similar projects undertaken by colleagues in other schools. As a result, this information is under-used when teachers develop their own project plans and, in many cases, teachers cover the same ground and do not develop further or different knowledge about the area. However, in most cases, the outcomes of teachers' projects relate well to their particular interests and they improve their chosen aspects well.

Monitoring progress

- 26 A few teachers monitor the progress of their project well. They develop clear interim targets for the intended outcomes against which they measure pupils' progress. As a result of monitoring progress, they judge what is working well and why, and what is not working. The teachers who are most confident in evaluation make changes to their overall plan, where appropriate, and try other strategies and methodologies to enhance learning and school development.
- 27 However, many teachers do not monitor the project effectively at planned milestones. This happens for a range of reasons. Reasons include that:
- there are changes in school timetables which disrupt the plan;
 - teachers prefer to assess the final outcomes;
 - teachers are not confident in monitoring methods; and
 - teachers are not confident enough to change the methodology, preferring to stick closely to their original plans.
- 28 The effect of not monitoring a project at the milestones means that teachers do not pick up the more subtle stages in pupils' learning. As a result, teachers do not extend their knowledge about pupils' learning as fully as they might otherwise do.
- 29 Monitoring the impact of GTCW continuing professional development projects on pupils' achievement is largely left to the discretion of individual teachers. Few teachers ask other staff to help them monitor their pupils' progress at strategic points in the project. In the cases where teachers ask others to help them, they usually ask teachers who teach similar groups, learning support assistants who work within their own class, or middle managers with responsibility for subject or year group co-ordination.
- 30 Teachers and learning support assistants help to monitor progress in pupils' achievement through:
- observing the progress made by pupils against specific criteria;
 - using their own classes as a benchmark;
 - discussing strategies the teacher employs in the class and their judgements about the effects that these have on pupils' learning; and
 - reflecting on developments of projects which involve the wider school.
- 31 In a small number of cases, senior managers help to monitor progress. This is helpful, as senior managers bring a whole-school perspective to the project. Senior managers also have a good understanding of how the continuing professional

development project contributes to overall pupil achievement and school development. Senior managers often facilitate good opportunities for the teacher to disseminate findings to the school staff.

- 32 In a few cases, local authority advisers work with teachers to monitor and discuss their projects. This too is helpful, as advisers have knowledge of similar initiatives across other schools in the authority in which they work. In bringing this knowledge to bear, they help the teacher to look at progress in a wider context.

Evaluating outcomes

- 33 Where teachers intend to improve pupils' achievements in a subject, they often have good access to a range of quantitative evidence about pupils' progress through oral responses in class, written work and assessments. For pupils working for an examination, teachers also have predicted and actual grades, as well as wider comparative information from the local authority and nationally. By measuring pupils' progress against these benchmarks, teachers have sound evidence to judge the effectiveness of new teaching and learning strategies that they introduce into the classroom.
- 34 Where intended outcomes are linked to raising pupil motivation and confidence, evidence of progress is often more impressionistic. Overall, the range of tools for analysing qualitative outcomes is more limited. As a result, many teachers find it difficult to point towards clear evidence of the strategies they introduced from their continuing professional development on pupils' attitudes and behaviours.
- 35 Few teachers ask pupils for feedback on the changes introduced to teaching or to wider school developments. Teachers who ask pupils for their opinions often rely on verbal responses only. A few teachers develop comprehensive questionnaires on which pupils can record their views. The responses to these questionnaires provide good recorded evidence which the teacher can use to compare pupils' reactions at different points in their project.
- 36 In a few cases, the outcomes of the teacher's continuing professional development project do not meet the intended outcomes. Teachers who are more confident in evaluation use this as a good learning experience and they analyse why the outcomes do not match the projected intended outcomes. In a small minority of cases where outcomes do not match intended outcomes well enough, teachers judge the outcomes invalid and the project to be a failure. They do not take the opportunity to learn from the experience and they often do not complete their projects.
- 37 Many teachers use ICT effectively as a tool to record quantitative and qualitative evidence. Only a very few teachers create opportunities for pupils to feed back their responses electronically, making the process of analysing evidence easier. In most cases, teachers do not do this, because they do not have the skills to create the electronic response sheets. The teachers who are funded for teacher research scholarships use ICT more frequently to collate and analyse results. This is often because they are introduced to appropriate software by their mentors.

Measuring impact

- 38 Overall, the impact of teachers' continuing professional development projects on improving teaching and learning in subject areas and wider school developments are more clearly evidenced than in previous years of the GTCW continuing professional development programme. These projects have a demonstrably positive impact on raising pupil achievement or on contributing to wider school development. However, while pupils may be more confident and motivated by new teaching and learning strategies that teachers introduce, the evidence for this is often less robust.
- 39 The majority of teachers reflect well upon how the continuing professional development projects impact on the development of their own professional skills. In many cases, the initial development opportunity through GTCW- continuing professional development programme, serves as a good springboard to further professional development activity, as teachers identify new areas they would like to improve or develop from the work they have done. The enthusiasm that this generates has an impact on school effectiveness, as teachers become more engaged and motivated.
- 40 The development of individual teachers' professional development interests often provides a significant momentum in the school for informal and formal professional networking among teachers to the benefit of improving pupils' experiences and learning. This helps to create a vibrant and active learning community.
- 41 Many teachers who are funded through the GTCW programme link their continuing professional development project to personal and/or school development objectives. In this way, the teacher's work receives appropriate recognition in the school and the outcomes of the project contribute coherently to school performance and development objectives.
- 42 GTCW continuing professional development opportunities have the most impact on raising pupil achievement and school performance when the headteacher, or designated senior staff, provide clear leadership, place a high value on teachers' professional development as a means of developing improved pupil performance and school effectiveness, and oversee a co-ordinated approach to teachers' applications for funding.
- 43 Most headteachers ensure that there are good opportunities for teachers to disseminate the outcomes of their professional development activities to other staff, for example, as an agenda item at staff meetings or workshops on training days. Teachers funded through a GTCW teacher research scholarship who link their project to the dissertation for a master's degree, not only disseminate the outcomes of their research among staff in school, but also through publication of their dissertation.
- 44 The GTCW provides good opportunities through its website for teachers to disseminate the outcomes of continuing professional development projects across Wales and more widely. GTCW staff choose examples of best practice in terms of methodology and outcomes of projects which they showcase to other teachers and

education professionals through national conferences and the GTCW's journal. These forms of dissemination inform practitioners about different aspects of teaching and learning, and about school management and systems, and also model good methodology in planning, monitoring and evaluating continuing professional development projects.

Appendix: case studies

1 Monitoring the development of learners' critical thinking skills

Aberdare High School

This case study shows how teachers in a boys' secondary school used continuing professional development funding to improve their knowledge of innovative approaches to promoting learners' critical thinking skills.

The teachers attended a leading-edge conference on innovative learning. The teachers benefitted from first-hand experience of discussing with colleagues their whole-school approach to personalised learning across a range of subject areas. They gained insight into how to develop critical thinking skills with their pupils.

The findings were shared with the senior management team and other colleagues as part of the school's strategic planning for the development of thinking skills. The school used various forums to share good practice, including:

- presentations by individual teachers to senior management, academic and pastoral committees;
- notice board in the staffroom, celebrating examples of pupil work in subject areas;
- 'carousel' showcases in subject areas; and
- the school working with other schools to produce a DVD on critical thinking skills to share good practice to a wider audience.

The staff also benefitted from the critical skills programme provided by the local authority.

As a result of these professional development opportunities, a pilot programme was introduced to Year 7 pupils with a focus on improving speaking and listening, collaborative and problem-solving skills. Pupils develop personal and collective responsibilities to learning through drawing up 'full-value contracts' in which they agree on appropriate behaviour and targets to improve their learning. Teachers provide pupils with a framework through which to reflect on their learning. Pupils reflect in writing on their targets at regular intervals. Teachers analyse pupils' reflections regularly and take them into account in their teaching. As a result, teachers found that pupils' confidence, enthusiasm and attentiveness increased substantially.

Teachers have since developed the programme across the school with pupils taking a proactive approach to their learning. Evidence from observation and questionnaires show a measurable increase in pupil engagement, confidence and general enjoyment of lessons and a corresponding rise in GCSE results.

The good features of this case study are that:

- the professional development linked to personal interests of individual teachers and to a key development in the school;
- the involvement of senior management provided leadership and the resources for the teachers to put their learning into place;
- the improvement in pupils' confidence, enthusiasm and attentiveness demonstrated through pupils' own on-going reflections; and
- the teachers ran a pilot which they monitored and evaluated carefully before extending the programme successfully to the whole school.

2 Developing new techniques to extend the range of physical activity with pupils with special education needs

The Hollies Special School

Two teachers wanted to develop new knowledge and skills in engaging pupils with severe learning difficulties in more physical activity. The pupils had very low concentration spans and they did not always relate well to one another.

The teachers attended sessions on how to use music and dance to engage pupils with severe learning difficulties. On return to school, they began to design music and dance sessions which they could use with specific pupils. The teachers trained the learning support assistants in the methodology.

Before introducing the sessions to the pupils, the teachers decided on success criteria specific to each pupil's need. The teachers were not immediately successful, as it took the pupils a while to get used to different activities and techniques. The teachers asked the learning support assistants to provide written feedback against the success criteria. They also asked the pupils to provide feedback about their enjoyment levels by using a set of flashcards to which the pupils could point to show their level of enjoyment. This method was used to help pupils with limited ability to speak to be able to articulate their feelings about the activities.

Over time, the teachers have learned the aspects of music and dance that their pupils respond to best. They have increased the time that they engage pupils in these activities. The teachers have recorded improvement in pupils' concentration spans and in their ability to relate to one another and work together successfully.

The teachers' professional development has been very successful and they have added a more dynamic aspect to pupils' learning. The headteacher releases the teachers from their groups at different points in the week so that they can work alongside other teachers in the school so that other pupils can benefit from these methods.

The good features of this case study are that:

- the headteacher and teachers identified an area of personal interest and benefit to pupils closely linked to the school development plan;
- the teachers had a clear idea at the outset of what success and progress for different pupils would look like and, as a result of the activity, teachers have recorded improvement for individual pupils;
- the teachers asked the learning support assistants and pupils for their opinions about the new methods and, as a result, they refined the sessions they undertook with the pupils; and
- the headteacher played an active role in helping the teachers to develop the new methods throughout to the school for the benefit of all the pupils

3 Raising pupils' standards of literacy

Greenway Primary School

The standards of pupils' literacy at this large primary school in an urban setting were low. The headteacher and staff analysed why this might be. They found that a main cause was that many pupils experienced very little verbal interaction at home and, as a consequence, they were not exposed to a wide range of language.

As a staff, the teachers agreed that they needed to update their skills in teaching literacy so that they could motivate and excite children about language and, as a result, raise pupils' achievement in literacy.

The headteacher with her staff identified a suitable course for teachers to attend. Two members of staff attended the course. On their return they disseminated what they had learned to other staff in the school through school staff meetings.

Together the staff planned a pilot activity in the school. The staff agreed success criteria relating to an improvement in pupils' motivation and enjoyment and a raise in pupils' standards of literacy. They decided how they would monitor and evaluate the success criteria. This involved observations and assessments carried by learning support assistants and other teachers in the school and recording pupils' responses to different activities. In this way, the teachers found out which activities motivated pupils most and whether this correlated to an improvement in pupils' achievement in literacy.

Teachers found that the new methods were very successful in gaining the pilot group of pupils' enthusiasm and in improving their standards of literacy.

The headteacher arranged for the programme to be rolled out through the school by enabling other teachers to have observation time in the pilot classes and organising for the 'expert' teachers to be able to work alongside teachers working with year groups outside of the pilot groups. As a staff, the teachers and learning support assistants have developed the scheme appropriately for different age groups. Through careful monitoring of the project and tracking of pupils' individual targets teachers found that there was a substantial improvement in pupils' literacy skills, particularly in relation to speaking skills.

As a further step, the staff invited parents to come into school and learn about the methods they use to support the development of pupils' literacy. In this way, they give the parents an insight in how they can support and encourage their child's literacy at home.

The good features of this case study are that:

- the teachers identified an area of personal interest that was also an area of development for the school;

- the headteacher and the teachers who did the original training engaged the other staff in the school in the development from the outset so that it became a whole school activity;
- the headteacher and the teachers set clear success criteria at the beginning and planned carefully how they would monitor and evaluate the pilot activity so that they had clear evidence of success or otherwise;
- the headteacher ensured that the new methods were rolled out to other staff and classes in a supported and measured way;
- demonstrable evidence that pupils' standards of literacy, particularly speaking, improved:
- the headteacher and staff showed parents the methods that they were using so that pupils could be better supported in their literacy at home; and
- the initial funding was used very effectively to prime more extensive staff development and a learning community amongst the school staff.

4 Development of on-line syllabus, resource and assessment materials

Ogmore High School

A newly-appointed head of department in a secondary school wanted to develop his understanding of how to draw up a departmental scheme of work. He attended a course put on by the local authority which, as well as helping him to consider the key elements to be included in a scheme of work, introduced him to the benefits of putting the scheme of work on-line.

Over the course of a year, the head of department developed an on-line scheme of work for different aspects of PE accompanied by teaching and assessment materials for pupils, teaching notes for staff and an area to record assessment outcomes on-line. Both pupil and staff teaching materials are closely linked to the National Curriculum and the expected outcomes at a given level. At the outset of the design, the head of department set success criteria for the on-line package.

This work has had the benefit of easy access to the scheme of work for staff and a central point which all staff teaching in the department can access to check programmes and record assessment outcomes. The head of department has asked teachers in his department who have a particular specialism to contribute to the teaching notes.

Pupils can access the on-line teaching resources from school and from home to remind themselves of the skills involved in a particular game or sport at a particular National Curriculum level. Pupils can self-assess their knowledge through activities in the package. Pupils like the on-line resource. The evidence collected shows that they make good use of it and they are improving their knowledge and skills.

The head of department has asked teachers in the department and pupils for feedback on the accessibility and usefulness of the various sections and resources. As a result of the feedback from teachers and pupils he has refined the materials.

The head of department has demonstrated the on-line package at a staff meeting. He has created enthusiasm for the package among other staff in the school with the result that several other departments have expressed an interest in developing a similar tool for their departments. The head of department is now working with other heads of department to develop similar packages for other subject areas.

The good features of this case study are that:

- the head of department identified a skill he needed to improve and has learned an efficient and effective way of sharing the scheme of work with other teachers and pupils taking PE;
- the head of department tested the accessibility and usefulness of the package with other teachers and pupils;
- as a result of the feedback, the head of department has refined the package to make it more user-friendly;

- monitoring and tracking against criteria show that pupils make good use of the tool and improve their knowledge and skills; and
- the head of department is contributing to making school systems more efficient by working alongside other heads of department who want to develop a similar tool for their subject areas.

The remit author and survey team

Penny Lewis	HMI
Russell Grigg	Additional Inspector