

## **“Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in the continuum of EU teacher education**

– individual participation, partnerships and systemic approaches.”

### **1. Background**

CPD has been a working theme for quite some time in the European Network for Teacher Education Policy (ENTEP) and its various implications and components have implicitly been connected with ENTEP’s vision of a European Teacher and with issues like the new role of School Leaders and the lifelong process of professionalization including a systemic induction phase and continuing phases on the job.

For several years now studies on the improvement of students’ / pupils’ performance, the so called ‘outcome discussion’, have come up with findings that leave no doubt about the close correlation between teacher ‘quality’ and increased student achievement. For example, the difference between having a ‘very effective’ and having a ‘very ineffective’ teacher is estimated to equal a full year’s learning growth for students (Hanushek, 1992).

Thus, as Gassner, Kerger and Schratz (2010) point out: “The growing awareness that all European citizens should benefit from an increasing quality of education and thus be able to become active members of the knowledge society requires a profile of teachers who have the skills and competences to accompany future citizens in this process of education, evolving new skills and the expected mobility.”

#### ***The EU policy context***

The importance of the teaching profession was highlighted at an Informal Ministerial Meeting in Gothenburg in September 2009 under the Swedish Presidency of the EU and this was followed by the adoption of new Council Conclusions on the professional development of teachers and school leaders.

These Conclusions further develop and extend the European agenda for improving the quality of teaching and teacher education that was set out in Conclusions of November 2007 and developed in the Conclusions of 2008. The fact that teachers have been the subject of Council Conclusions in three consecutive years highlights the growing importance that Ministers attach to improving Teacher Education systems. (Council of the EU, 2007; 2008; 2009)

Taking these Council Conclusions together, we now have a fairly comprehensive understanding of Ministers’ priorities for improving Teacher Education. They want to:

1. Promote professional values and attitudes in the teaching profession (including a culture of reflective practice, autonomous learning, engagement with research, and collaboration with colleagues).

2. Improve teacher competencies, making sure that they possess the necessary pedagogical skills to teach their own subjects and the transversal key competences, including in heterogeneous classes and making the best use of ICT.
3. Make recruitment and selection more effective, to attract and retain the best candidates for an attractive teaching profession.
4. Improve the quality of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) which should provide a Higher Education qualification and should balance research-based studies and teaching practice.
5. Introduce Induction programmes to provide professional and personal support ('induction') for all beginning teachers, during their first years in the profession.
6. Provide teachers throughout the career with enough support to be effective.
7. Improve the quality and quantity of teachers' CPD by enabling teachers to undertake regular reviews of their individual development needs and providing CPD that responds to those needs and is quality assured.
8. Improve recruitment to School Leadership posts; improve the training and development of school leaders, and lighten their administrative load so that they focus their attention on improving the quality of teaching and learning in their schools.
9. Ensure the quality of Teacher Educators (Teacher Trainers) who should have solid practical teaching experience, good teaching competences and be of a high academic standard.
10. Improve Teacher Education systems so that Initial Teacher Education, Induction and CPD are organised as a coordinated and coherent continuum, are adequately resourced and quality assured and respond to evolving needs. Educational mobility will be the rule, rather than the exception, for all teachers.

Given their relevance for policy review in general and as a constructive basis to intensify our further work under this topic, the new Council Conclusions provide us with a good opportunity to review the present situation in our Member States.

In addition to the central place that continuing professional development is given in this list of priorities, it will be noticed that almost every one of the priorities has a connection with CPD. For example, CPD is where professional values and competences are strengthened and developed beyond the base laid during Initial Teacher Education; better quality CPD - and proper induction - will make the profession more attractive; and CPD can help teachers develop their leadership skills to the point where they may decide to become school leaders or Teacher Educators.

According to Ministers, to achieve a high level of quality in teaching it is "essential not only to ensure that those recruited to teaching and school leadership posts are of the highest calibre and well-suited to the tasks they have to fulfil, but also to provide the highest standard of initial education and continuing professional development for teaching staff at all levels. This in turn will contribute to enhancing both the status and attractiveness of the profession." (Council of the EU, 2009).

Furthermore "it is essential that initial teacher education, early career support ('induction') and continuous professional education are treated as a coherent whole".

### **ENTEP discussions**

This is one of the very important systemic views we have highlighted in our ENTEP paper on CPD (Uzerli, Kerger in Gassner, Kerger, Schratz, 2010), and have discussed in depth in several conferences.

The text also states that ‘teachers themselves must become aware of and reflect on their own needs for further professional expertise’, in the context of their specific school environment; this is another issue pointed out in the above mentioned ENTEP paper on CPD.

In their preliminary contributions to this CPD topic, all ENTEP members involved had stressed the fact that teachers should take greater responsibility for their own continuous professional learning. At the same time, concern had been articulated about there being too few opportunities to participate in CPD programmes as well as the question of the relevance of these offers to individual needs.

The effective cooperation of teacher education institutions with the sector of pedagogical research in higher education institutions and with schools is seen as another condition for successful CPD; in particular the vision of schools as learning organisations or communities was generally agreed upon.

The discussion of ENTEP members during the conference in Madrid, 2010 centred on the following questions:

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|---|--|
| 1 | Is there a shared mental picture of CPD across Europe?   |
| 2 | How are teachers encouraged to review and/or reflect upon their work continuously? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Are they encouraged at all?</li><li>- If so, how...by whom?</li><li>- If not, who could or should take the lead for such action in your country? (Self-evaluation / external evaluation / school leader...)</li></ul>   |
| 3 | Do these reflections and possible actions lead to any increase in the awareness of the needs for CPD among <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- teachers,</li><li>- school leaders,</li><li>- supervision bodies and others?</li></ul>  |
| 4 | Do school leaders have opportunities to develop new competences in the area of detecting needs for CPD in their staff (CPD for school leaders in this respect?)  |
| 5 | Are all actors in the participating institutions of TE encouraged to cooperate to share knowledge about the latest developments in the field of TE? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- to create transparency for a functioning continuum from Initial Teacher Education (ITE), through early career support (Induction) (IND), to Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and</li><li>- to give opportunities for feedback between each phase of TE, to promote further systemic improvements.</li></ul> |
| 6 | Is there awareness among policy makers, teacher educators and schools that all these efforts contribute to mobility within the EU? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- for the exchange of staff</li><li>- to cover shortages of teachers within the EU.</li></ul>   |

- 7 In your national context, what can be done at no additional cost, to initiate these changes?
- 8 Do you have experiences and examples of CPD capacities in 'schools as learning organisations'?

## 2. Evidence

### ***Evidence from research about CPD***

Research about CPD highlights the importance of issues such as teacher agency, reflexivity and collaborative approaches.

Various international research findings about the modes for Professional Development and further learning of teachers stress the fact "(...) that teachers have not generally taken an active part in the production of knowledge about their own teaching" (Gassner, Kerger, Schratz, 2010).

Indeed, it is noteworthy that teacher involvement in knowledge production does not figure as one of the four factors that inspire teachers to change their classroom practices (Eastron and Carbone, 2008) which are:

- collaboration with other teachers
- reflection on their beliefs and behaviours
- teacher educators modelling the new teaching practices and encouraging teachers to implement them
- CPD courses being directly connected to the secondary classroom.

Reflexivity and collaboration do, however, seem to be key issues. Garet, et al. (2001) note that teachers learn more:

- in teacher networks and study groups than with mentoring,
- when there is collective participation;
- in professional development programmes that are longer, sustained and intensive than shorter ones; and
- when CPD is part of a coherent professional development programme.

The importance of CPD being a collaborative effort is highlighted also by a meta-survey undertaken by the General Teaching Council for England (2005) who note that collaborative CPD is more effective than individual CPD. All the studies reviewed showed that collaborative CPD brought positive changes in teachers' practice, attitudes or beliefs (whereas there was only some evidence of this for individual CPD); almost all studies found that it brought improvements in pupils' learning, behaviour or attitudes (whereas there was only some evidence of this for individual CPD); and half of the studies found that, unlike individual CPD, it brought changes in teachers' classroom behaviours and positive changes in their attitude to professional development.

Other aspects of CPD are also important in determining its efficacy. Snow-Renner and Lauer (2005) note that the kind of CPD most likely to affect teaching positively is:

- delivered to a team of teachers (same age group, subject, school...),

- of considerable duration,
- based on active learning (not a lecture), and
- focused on specific content / strategies (not general).

Similar findings are reached by Cohen and Hill (2000) who note that, in order to improve classroom practice, CPD should be:

- extended over time,
- include time for practice, coaching, and follow-up,
- grounded in the students' curriculum and
- connected to several elements of instruction (e.g., assessments, curriculum...).

### ***Evidence from TALIS about CPD***

The OECD TALIS (teaching and learning in schools) survey (2009) provides valuable information about the current state of CPD in participating countries, thereby enabling us to compare the actual situation in European schools with that suggested by the research.

### **Teachers are undertaking professional development**

Nearly 90% of teachers reported taking part in some professional development activity during the 18 months preceding the survey. This is generally a high participation rate, but there is considerable variation in:

- the proportion of teachers participating: in DK, SK and TU, one in four reported no professional development in 18 months;
- the intensity of participation: in some countries teachers' average participation is a handful of days a year, while in Mexico and Korea it is 30 days or more; and
- equity: older teachers are under-represented; within-country variation is greatest in IT, PO and ES, and
- the type of professional development activities.

### **CPD is beneficial**

The great majority of teachers reported that the professional development they take part in, across a range of activities, had a moderate or high impact. The greatest perceived impact is in teacher research and qualification programmes.

In around half of countries (inc. DK, EE, ISL, IT, LT, MT, PT, SI), teachers who had received more professional development reported significantly higher levels of self-efficacy.

Teachers' participation in professional development goes hand in hand with their mastery of a wider array of methods to use in the classroom, (though it is not clear to what extent professional development triggers or responds to the adoption of new techniques).

### **Teachers need learning that responds to their individual needs**

TALIS further suggests that interventions for teachers (like interventions for pupils) need to focus more on the responding to the specific needs of individuals rather than

on schools or school systems because most variation is found between teachers (rather than between schools or countries); this applies to such key factors as how teachers' rating of 'self-efficacy', teaching beliefs, co-operation between teachers, job satisfaction, professional development, and the adoption of different teaching techniques.

Despite the proven benefits of collaborative CPD, both for the teacher and for the learner, however, TALIS (OECD, 2009) found that cooperation by teachers largely takes the form of exchanging and coordinating ideas and information rather than direct professional collaboration. There are big differences among countries, with professional collaboration relatively more common in PO, SK and TU, and much less common in BE (Fl.), SI and ES.

There is thus much scope for teachers to increase the extent to which they learn from, and teach, each other. Improving this will require adequate instructional leadership and effective human resource development policies in schools.

A further general conclusion that can be drawn seems to be that European teachers' real experience of CPD falls somewhat short of the ideal; there is room for improvement in CPD systems.

The following sections explore some of these themes in more detail, based upon ENTEP members' assessments of their own countries' CPD systems.

### **3. Teacher reflexivity**

How to motivate teachers to become active in reflecting on their own work, their classroom actions and their roles in the school setting is still a live issue in teacher education and CPD specifically.

Because professionalization should also respond to the evolution of content and process, it is indeed necessary to provide enough time and space for teachers to deepen their understanding of their personal beliefs and schemata and the effects of these on their practice.

In this respect, the most sensitive, and at the same time most challenging, aspect of CPD seems to be making the connection between internalised self images and concepts and new experiences; it raises the question of how to free up the energy to make this process coherent and sustainable.

Teachers' personal theories and approaches, for instance their ways of defining and solving problems, their mindsets, their conceptions of what it is to be an effective teacher, can inspire debate within a system like a school community. Such debates can be indicators of a lively learning organisation or of the obstacles to a cooperation process for the 'child's best'.

At the level of decision makers and policy actors there still seems to be consensus in many countries that the systemic inspection of teachers, with or without counselling, is still an instrument to be used for assessment and selection rather than as an opportunity for providing the teacher with encouragement, advice or coaching (e.g. in some countries the inspection may result in the teacher being removed, rather than being offered support or further training). Such inspection often has consequences for the individual teacher and her/his career path but also for whole school

communities; in many cases it deals with subject matter rather more than with teachers' expertise in didactics and pedagogy.

Accordingly, teachers' awareness of being 'experts in learning' seems to be higher in primary than in secondary education, where the focus is obviously still much more on the subject than on 'learning to learn'. Studies are rare in these fields; strengthening the self concept of teachers as experts of learning both generally and in their specific subject fields must remain a key objective.

Reflecting a widespread image of education in Europe, many teachers still see themselves primarily as transmitting knowledge rather than supporting the construction of knowledge and creating an interesting and effective learning environment for individual learners (OECD 2009). In this context, reflecting on their work may perhaps seem less attractive and be less of a professional habit; learning to learn and accompanying a learning process often still seem more or less marginal.

But there is movement in the landscape, as the discussions with ENTEP members in Madrid brought to light.

- Reflection is a new element that is very strongly implemented for instance in primary education in **Luxemburg**. Teachers there are prepared to review and reflect on their individual work, while in the teacher training programmes teachers' reflection was introduced already in 1997.
- In **Sweden**, as another example, a new educational reform is being implemented. Teacher Education there follows an integrative approach and scientific subject studies, pedagogy and didactics form a coherent curriculum (as also in **Germany** and in Austrian University Colleges of Teacher Education - UCTEs). Therefore it is easier to introduce elements of reflection from a very early stage in the studies, understanding professionalisation as research based in all these fields.
- In **Cyprus** an education reform is in process, with teachers being encouraged to reflect on their work; one outstanding example is the Induction Programme for Novice teachers where reflective and retrospective elements are important stages in the overall teacher education; a similar programme exists in **Estonia**. In this concept, self-reflection is an important part within a framework, mainly focusing on the interaction between Novice Teacher and Mentor.
- In **Portugal**, the new teachers' statute and consequent teacher evaluation policy are the tools used to promote CPD, self evaluation, and peer evaluation among teachers. The new legislation on teaching stipulates that teacher evaluation is a tool for both professional development and the improvement of teaching practice, as well as a regulator for career advancement (as the main accountability element).
- The **Irish** Teaching Council policy document on the continuum of Teacher Education places a strong emphasis on the need to promote the development of a reflective, enquiry-oriented, lifelong-learner approach to teacher education. Since the Education Act, 1998, self-evaluation and review are compulsory as part of the school development planning process in Ireland. Inherent in the review process is an evaluation by the school itself of its own performance.
- From the point of view of teacher education policies, encouragement for reflection and review might be better initiated by implementing transversal competences in the curriculum for student teachers and teachers in CPD, so that they are inspired to link their classroom practices with conceptual thinking and reflection on their

work from the very beginning (**Romania**). In the same context, **Denmark** also stresses the integration of subject studies, pedagogical studies and the key role of practice. In the educational reform of 2006 the focus is on teachers' reflection on their own practice as a condition for change and improvement in CPD as well.

- In **Austrian** UCTEs (self-) reflection is a central element in school practice, in which individual lessons by student teachers are reflected on and discussed critically in a small group led by a mentor. The reflective component can be strengthened if the face-to-face setting is changed to an e-learning platform with individual reflective statements by the student teachers, the class teacher and the mentor as a starting point for discussion (Gassner and Mallaun 2004).
- Another way might be to have teachers work in teams or in tandems (**Germany**), or to encourage open schools with the participation and co-operation of the main stakeholders: parents, teachers and pupils (**Netherlands**). Such collaborative learning teams may work according to many different models.
- In **Slovenia**, the idea of 'reflective practitioners' is a part of all teacher-study programmes (undergraduate, postgraduate and in-service) programmes. Most CPD courses include some practical work and written report about the teacher's experience, in which reflection is an obligatory part. Portfolio work is used as documentation of reflection also in seminars in some programmes.
- **Spain's** approach targets serving teachers, based upon the observation that in-school training seems to be the most effective method of encouraging teachers' reflection on their practice. It is fostered by Teacher CPD Units which are responsible for helping schools to assess their development needs, organising tailored courses or supplying information for self-directed learning. Other learning modalities are seminars or working groups with staff from other schools (networking); and pedagogic circles, which involve initial teacher training colleges and other stakeholders such as families, inspectors, and CPD trainers to boost innovative pedagogic processes and help practitioners to construct knowledge collectively.

It seems from the current discussion and papers (including the ENTEP CPD paper) that intensifying teachers' ownership might be easier if they were increasingly included and involved in policy decisions and processes, rather than being excluded from the overall Gestalt Process in education reform: seeing them as subjects of change, action and creativity, rather than merely as objects; expecting them to become agents and actors in a reform process and anticipating their ability and willingness to engage in this and to enlighten it with their personal skills while they experience 'that they can do it'. This point is reiterated by the OECD (2011).

#### **4. The crucial role of School Leaders**

Alongside the necessary policy conditions and frameworks for lifelong professionalisation opportunities, head teachers have an important and skilful role to play in this whole endeavour.

It no longer seems appropriate in today's reality for school leaders to limit their interventions to merely making final recommendations as to whether a teacher has met or not met the core standards within a specific local or national qualification system. It does not seem a sufficient condition for successful learning for school



leaders to merely inform teachers what requirements they should meet; rather, it is more effective to offer structured and progressively more challenging continuing professional development, based on each individual's needs.

However, whether and how school leaders are equipped to identify their staff's individual learning needs in the light of school profiles, school development plans and individual development plans for teachers, still remains a critical question.

Head teachers today are expected to possess an increasingly long list of competences, in comparison with former requirements for administrative or even management skills. Especially leaders of autonomous school environments are challenged to continuously develop competences during their career. Member States have adopted various approaches to help develop the skills of their current – and future – School Leaders.

- Some have established School Leadership academies (**UK, Slovakia, Cyprus**) or networks (**Austria, Ireland**); others have established post-graduate programmes for their training (**Sweden, Portugal** and **Ireland**), or professional development (**Norway, Denmark, Ireland, Latvia** and **Portugal**) or coaching (**Netherlands, UK**).
- Some countries (**UK** and **Estonia**) have defined national professional standards for school leadership.
- The **Netherlands** has adopted a professional registration approach.
- A national programme for aspiring leaders is provided in **Ireland** by the national support service in partnership with a University. An induction programme for all newly appointed principals together with a range of other needs-based customised CPD courses are also provided for principals. The move to a model of more distributed leadership within schools is promoted by the Irish Teaching Council.
- Some countries have projects that conceive of School Leaders (**Germany** - Hessen), or Educational leaders more widely (**Austria, Portugal** and **Ireland**), as agents for systemic change.
- In **Belgium** (Flanders) and **UK**, excellent school leaders are coaching and mentoring other school leaders. Mentoring practices are also encouraged in Ireland.
- In **Slovenia**, a special CPD programme is obligatory as a precondition for applying for a school leader post.
- **Spain** organises five-day summer courses for school leadership teams, which are complemented by an on line follow-up period. National conferences are organised to supplement these courses.

During a Peer Learning Activity on 'School Leadership for Learning' (European Commission 2010) it was highlighted that "(...) education systems will be more effective in promoting high quality learning if they prioritise school leader CPD as part of a systematic - and system-wide – process that aligns the development of school leaders with the development of the system as a whole".

The PLA also concluded that pre-conditions for effective school leader CPD are that it should be:

- Linked into the wider provision of CPD;

- Organised as a group activity in which school leaders interact with peers;
- Relevant to the development needs of the individual school leader and the school;
- Founded upon critical reflection of self, practice and organisation;
- Focused on the school's improvement agenda; and
- Valued and recognised.

CPD may be constructed around on different pathways. The CPD process itself should be subject to continuous evaluation. Relevant authorities should support and evaluate the outcomes of the CPD undertaken by school leaders. In some contexts there is a need to stimulate school leaders who have been in post for some time to further develop their competences.

These reflections highlight the fact that the professional development needs of School Leaders need to receive as much attention from policy makers as the needs of the teachers they lead.

## 5. The contribution of Schools as Learning Organisations

It seems likely that neither self-reflection nor the encouragement of a good school leader can guarantee that an individual teacher will become sufficiently aware of his or her needs for professional development, and motivated to take action.

The results of peer learning (European Commission, 2006) suggest that it is helpful if reflection takes place in the context of a school which operates as a learning organisation (Senge 1990) or learning community. Teams of teachers who learn together in a context of ongoing mutual support, which may include personal coaching and classroom-practice reviews, can open up new dimensions in updating ways of learning and teaching.

- The inclusion of student teachers during their practicum in such teams may have the additional effect of bringing new knowledge into the school which serves as an inspiration for all participants. The **Netherlands** have reported several examples of such experiences.
- In **Ireland**, cross-sectoral CPD support and Teacher Professional Networks are provided regionally by multi-disciplinary teams who work in close co-operation with the Education Centre Network in responding to needs identified by teachers and schools. Education Centres are an integral part in the delivery of CPD for teachers and the wider school learning community.
- In **Portugal**, the Masters in teaching offered by some universities include a curriculum area - introduction to professional practice - that spans the four semesters. It is an area of direct contact between the future teacher and the school, offering the opportunity to examine, reflect, challenge and intervene in school situations, from a professional perspective.

The Portuguese and Dutch models show that teachers' professional development is more effective if there are systematic opportunities and the appropriate conditions that allow change to happen with the involvement of all partners in the field of TE; this also raises awareness of the need for responsibility at each stage of teacher education to be shared, and supports an approach based on cooperation among the

institutions involved, with the possible positive effect that all partners in the school sector will value the establishment of a new learning culture and be encouraged.

## 6. Cooperation among Teacher Education Institutions

Teachers' professional development is more effective where there are systematic opportunities, and where all partners in the field of TE are involved in making change happen; this also raises the awareness of shared responsibility at each stage of teacher education and supports the approach of cooperation among the institutions involved, with the effect that all partners value the establishment of a new learning culture.

Recent discussions in ENTEP on the issue of cooperation between Teacher Education Institutions and schools have shown that in some countries, those University staff who teach subject disciplines are not interested in such cooperation, largely because they do not identify themselves primarily or even partially as teacher educators. By contrast, those University teachers who are experts in learning (for example in didactics, pedagogy or pedagogical psychology) seem to accept more readily such a vision of sharing knowledge and reflecting on practice. The message perhaps needs to be conveyed within Higher Education that reflecting on practice is an activity of considerable academic rigour, requiring a high level of metacognitive engagement and challenge in practice oriented research.

A cooperative approach in learning and learning to learn may "develop best when there are *systematic* opportunities for teachers to develop and learn. One-off activities have their place in tackling specific problems or issues but they are unlikely to lead to the development of a culture of learning" (European Commission 2006).

- In **Sweden** the concept of cooperation and sharing is well defined in the sense that universities' role should be to do research on the one hand and to share research with society on the other.
- In **Denmark** cooperation between Ministries and Universities is strengthened where there are contracts between the Universities and schools on how CPD is to be offered and organised.
- In **Portugal** and **Ireland**, initial teacher training institutions develop partnership protocols with the institutions (schools) where teacher students complete their professional training, thus linking academic and professional knowledge. A partnership and collaboration model between schools and teacher education providers is promoted in **Ireland's** Draft Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education. A joint literacy initiative between a College of Education and a number of targeted urban schools with a high level of disadvantage is currently underway and has been reported to have had successful outcomes.
- In **Germany** it is mandatory to open so called Centres of Teacher Education at Universities where all regional partners in Teacher Education from all three phases cooperate on specific projects; in some Länder this even involves the exchange of staff in modules for teachers in CPD as well as student teachers in ITE and IND.
- In **Slovenia** a number of ESS (European Social Structure Funds) projects deal with CPD activities through collaboration between Teacher Education Institutions

(TEIs), schools and kindergartens. One such project at the Faculty of Education, Ljubljana called “Social and Citizenship Competencies”, started in 2009, and included more than 4.300 participants from schools and kindergartens all over Slovenia. Within the project, common research work is undertaken jointly by a group of CPD participants (teachers) with students from initial teacher education.

“It is important to recognize that changing school cultures and systems takes *time*; consequently there is a need to systematically *build capacity* in the system rather than assuming that everything can be achieved easily and quickly; e.g. setting out a three or five year plan for teachers’ continuing professional development which is linked to the school’s objectives” (Gassner, Kerger, Schratz 2010). As we are dealing with a change of philosophy, actually creating a cultural change in the field of teacher education one very critical question still remains: “how we can really make change happen?”.

## **7. Cost-effective solutions and provision for continuous professional development**

This brings us to the last question addressed during ENTEP discussions: how can effective reforms of teacher CPD systems be made in times of an ageing teaching workforce, the increased levels of early retirement, the risk of teacher shortages in most countries, and the general lack of resources? In other words, what can be done at no additional cost, to initiate improvement? The group discussion offered various ideas about activities involving no extra cost, but taking the advantage of local skills and competences and the personnel resources available.

- Schools (as learning organizations) could encourage members of their staff to share their expertise by offering CPD opportunities within the school or the region.
- Students could offer ICT courses to teachers or within their peer groups to less skilled students.
- There might be partnerships with economic actors not only for practice placements, but also for sharing knowledge in innovative projects and practice oriented programmes within the school curriculum.
- Schools could also invite experts from different fields in society as authentic contributors on certain thematic issues in class and share ‘results’ and insights among “need clusters” within the school.
- An exchange of competences between teachers and internal trainers in firms etc. could intensify mutual understanding of each others’ needs and objectives and promote reflection on each other’s work conditions.
- Such activities could also be included in teachers’ or even student teachers’ portfolios and thus contribute to a more practice relevant profile.
- Strengthening the use and availability of ICT offers in the “management” of CPD as well as the actual course design.

But all these initiatives and possible benefits will not lead to fundamental improvement for all participants unless provision for continuing professional development is reviewed.

According to TALIS, nearly half of the teachers are prevented from undertaking CPD by conflict with their work schedule or a lack of suitable professional development.

- In the attempt to avoid work schedule obstacles **Ireland**, for instance, is making an effort to build capacity and expertise on a regional basis by providing CPD for teachers after school hours and at weekends in order to reduce the cost of substitution cover. Funding is provided to employ practising teachers as 'Associates' and 'Facilitators'; these are released from school for 20 and six days per year, respectively and substitute cover is provided for them.

Furthermore, teachers often do not feel sufficiently prepared to meet the challenges they face. Teachers' say they require more professional development on such key issues as:

- teaching heterogeneous learning groups;
- skills at using ICT effectively in teaching; and
- dealing with student behaviour.

In the above mentioned EU documents as well as in the outcomes of PLAs in recent years there is a consensus that teachers should take more ownership and initiative to find and take part in relevant CPD opportunities which will meet their individual needs and help them acquire new competences or to develop existing ones.

In this context it is meaningful to note that 42% of teachers say that their CPD needs are not met because of a lack of suitable professional development opportunities on offer (OECD 2009).

This suggests that a sound comparison of provision against teachers' development needs should be a priority in many countries.

## **8. Conclusion**

In today's world, no teacher can stand still. Teachers need to be continually engaged in a self-directed, reflective and collaborative process of developing and extending their competences as professionals.

The phase of in-service professional development is, of course, part of a career long continuum of professional education and development, and it is encouraging to note that some countries are explicitly acknowledging this fact, and seeking to integrate and coordinate more closely all the phases and the actors involved. Much more needs to be done, however, if the message is to be fully understood that a first teaching qualification is only the beginning of learning to be a teacher and that an effective system of induction into the profession can serve as an initiation phase for a lifelong process of learning and professionalisation.

Research suggests that the majority of teachers in Europe are involved in 'some professional development activity' and that they find it beneficial. But it also suggests that the kinds of activities that most teachers undertake are not necessarily the kinds that have been shown to be the most effective in improving teaching and learning.

It is both desirable and possible to encourage teachers to adopt a reflective approach to their work and to collaborate with other teachers - in their school and locality - to share and extend knowledge about effective teaching. Effective practice of CPD is more likely to take place when professional development is considered as a crucial task at a school with all actors involved and when it is regarded as the important key strength in planning for improvement of the school, of the education system and of course for the learners' future.

Teachers themselves have said that their development needs are not being met; so the task of improving provision for their continuing professional development is urgent; it needs to be carried on, even in times of tight public finances.

But the impact of CPD on the quality of teaching cannot be regarded as an isolated phenomenon based only on teachers' own perception of their individual needs. It cannot be separated from pupil achievement, school development or the specific profile and standards of the school in which the teacher works and the community it serves. School leaders and those responsible for specific subjects have a role to play in helping to identify each teacher's development needs – and development potential – in this wider context.

If provision is reviewed and renewed in this way, the effective professional development of teachers has the potential to create a situation of positive change and improvement in the quality of staff, to the benefit of learners.

The examples we have highlighted here show that improvements can start being made right now, within existing resources and structures. Many countries have started to enhance the professional development of school leaders, so that they can more effectively play their key role of creating school environments in which it is normal for teachers to reflect on their daily professional practice and to learn one from another – true communities of learning and collective creativity.

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