Towards an improvisation based pedagogy: using a four phase framework for teacher development to identify individual staff training needs

Authors: Nick Sorensen
Independent education consultant
improvisingschool@yahoo.co.uk
http://www.improvisingschool.com

Dr Steven Coombs
Head of Continuing Professional Development
School of Education
Bath Spa University
s.coombs@bathspa.ac.uk

Abstract

Ofsted’s report on continuous professional development (Ofsted, 2006) recognised that CPD is most effective where senior managers use it as a key driver for school improvement. However the report was critical of subjective arrangements for identifying staff’s individual needs and the subsequent planning for their personal professional development.

This paper reports on a teacher professional development programme that has been developed over the past four years in schools in Buckinghamshire and Oxford. The programme is based around a four phase framework which begins with establishing good practice in a teacher centred classroom and then incrementally moves teachers towards creating a learner centred classroom.

This model for teacher development is implemented through lesson observations, coaching techniques, and a training programme that provides differentiated staff in-service education. The success of the programme has been that it motivates teachers to build on their strengths, identify the “next step” in their development and empowers them to change the culture in their classroom. In three schools this programme has made a significant contribution to taking them out of special measures.

This paper challenges the pedagogical role given to teachers in the current educational climate, seeing it to be subservient, and reactive, to the demands of curriculum and assessment. The paper concludes that schools with aspirations to be learning organisations should give greater attention to the pedagogy that supports the development of independent learners. If we...
recognise that learning is “knowing what to do when you don’t know what to do”, then an improvisation based pedagogy is essential to achieving significant and sustainable developments in learner centred curricular and assessment practices. The development of an improvisation based pedagogy ought to generate curriculum and assessment practices and not, as is the case, vice versa. Such an approach also fits into UK government educational policy on Assessment for Learning (AfL) that seeks to develop a more student-centred customised curriculum.

Introduction

We all live in a rapidly changing and complex world. In order to succeed and thrive in this environment we need to be adaptable and innovative. Learning has become a lifelong activity and, whatever we do, we all need to learn how to improvise.

Nick Sorensen (2003): the improvising school
website
http://www.improvisingschool.com

The professional development of teachers is contingent upon our understanding of the nature of learning and knowing how people learn. This has become a priority with educators across the world. The more we discover about the learning process, the more we are aware that the school curriculum and certain assessment practices are seriously out of step with what is needed by both present and future societies. In five years time many school students will be doing jobs that, as yet, have not been invented. Developing appropriate and effective approaches to CPD must begin with acknowledging the needs of learners.

David Hargreaves (2003) outlined the new knowledge and skills that are required by today’s students.

- The ability to learn and other meta-cognitive skills
- The ability to learn on the job and in teams
- The ability to cope with ambiguous situations and unpredictable problems
- The ability to communicate well verbally, not just in writing
- The ability to be creative, innovative and entrepreneurial.

These have clearly influenced the framework of personal, learning and thinking skills introduced by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) as part of the new national curriculum (QCA, 2007). Along with the functional skills of English, Maths and ICT the framework identifies the groups of skills that “are essential to success in learning, life and work”:

- Independent enquirers
• Creative thinking
• Reflective learners
• Team workers
• Self managers
• Effective participators.

The intention to introduce these skills to all secondary students will be a further incentive to change the culture of the classroom to become a learner centred, as opposed to a teacher centred, domain. This change will need to take into account the research that has taken place over the past decade. We have seen a radical change in the way that we conceptualise and talk about learning. Claxton (1999) has shown us that all human beings have the capacity to learning, a view that contradicts the work of the psychometric theorists. Our understanding of intelligence has been changed by Gardner (1999) with his work on “multiple intelligences” and Reisnik’ (intelligence is “the sum total of habits of mind”). Following the discreditation of psychometric practices attention has been given to the process of learning, recognising that in all human beings this process is similar. Claxton (2002) has identified the dispositions displayed by effective learners, the four Rs for the 21st century; resilience, resourcefulness, reflectiveness and reciprocity.

The role of the teacher in a learner centred classroom demands a radical shift in perception, understanding and pedagogy. This is especially the case if we consider learning as “knowing what to do when you don’t know what to do” (Piaget). Supporting the continuous professional development of teachers is a complex practice and begs the question “what is the direction and focus of CPD in schools?” The answer appears to be that CPD does not have a clear and common direction. Teacher development is often at the mercy of where and how the school needs to develop their teachers and as a consequence much school-based vocational CPD (unaccredited) is ad hoc and ineffective (Ofsted, 2004). Some of the main CPD pathways schools tend to follow are:

• Developing the quality of teaching by focussing on the Ofsted framework (moving teachers up the ladder from inadequate to satisfactory to good to outstanding).
• Moving teachers through career pathways as defined by the professional standards for teachers.
• Focussing on teaching strategies that are going to raise attainment and meet targets set for SATS, GCSEs or AS/A2 examinations.
• Supporting teachers to meet their performance management targets.

All of these approaches are the commonly found “drivers” for CPD in schools. Yet all of them are fundamentally flawed in that they are all concerned with the need for teacher accountability and they do not acknowledge the need to radically change the culture of the classroom in order to establish a sustainable learner-centred ethos. At a macro-level such approaches pander to a performance related culture as opposed to a learner centred culture. In simple terms the former does things to people whereas the latter does things by or with people.
In this paper we shall be arguing that the continuous professional development of teachers should have an explicit agenda that focuses on the need to develop learning whilst also attending to the demands of public accountability. We acknowledge the difficulties of creating a climate where self-evaluation is a meaningful activity for teachers and where it brings about continued and sustained development.

Two factors that have a significant influence on the CPD of teachers:

1. The impact of the new Ofsted framework
2. The culture and ethos of a school; the extent to which a school tends towards a “performance” or a “learning” orientation.

**An educational policy paradigm shift?**

The introduction of the new Ofsted framework in September 2005 was designed to create a new relationship between schools, the inspection service and the government. The new framework gives significant attention to self-evaluation and this is long overdue and is underpinned by new teacher reporting systems such as the self evaluation form (SEF) (Ofsted, 2005). However the way that schools respond to the implementation of the new framework is critical if we are to ensure that we make the most of the opportunities that are presented by this change.

The change from old to new is a big sea change. The motivation behind government thinking stems from the new educational agenda that seeks individuals to be smart critical thinkers in order to benefit from the fast changing knowledge-based economy. The emphasis is therefore upon transferable skills rather than volumes of curriculum content and the new QCA national curriculum underpins this new approach. Responsibility for learning is a learning-to-learn skill needed by the learner, hence, the new governmental emphasis upon personalised learning and the need to move from a teacher centred to student centred learning environment.

Ofsted policy is changing to be more in line with other public service regulatory bodies (e.g. Ofcom & Ofcare) where the regulator acts as a catalyst for quality assurance achieved through self-evaluation as the main moderator of public service quality.

At the time of writing schools and LEAs are looking at the ways in which they can develop and support robust and sustainable self evaluative practices. As they do this they are seeking to find answers to some important questions. To my mind there is one issue that is central to making sure that self-evaluation is a meaningful process. How can schools reconcile the desire to provide supportive and ongoing professional development alongside the need to provide quantitative judgements on the quality of teaching and learning? The impact of the latter could potentially run counter to the potential of the former. Put another way, can self-evaluation and performance management coexist?
with an inclusive non-judgmental approach to the development of teaching skills?

Learning organisations

To succeed in a world of rapid change and increased complexity, it is vital that schools can grow, develop, adapt creatively to change and take charge of change so they can create their own preferable future.

Stoll, Fink and Earl (2003) p131

According to Senge (1990) learning organizations are

…organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together. (p3)

The basic rationale for such organizations is that in situations of rapid change only those that are flexible, adaptive and productive will excel. The significant characteristics of a learning organization can be clearly seen if we compare them with organizations that focus on performance.

Table 1
The differences between a performance orientation and a learning orientation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance orientation</th>
<th>Learning orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Belief that ability leads to success</td>
<td>• Belief that effort leads to success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Concern to be judged as able and to perform</td>
<td>• Belief in one’s ability to improve and learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Satisfaction from doing better than others or succeeding with little effort</td>
<td>• Preference for challenging tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Emphasis on interpersonal competition and public evaluation</td>
<td>• Derives satisfaction from personal success at difficult tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Helplessness: evaluates self negatively when task is difficult</td>
<td>• Applies problem –solving and self-instruction when engaged in tasks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on Dweck (1986) taken from Stoll, Fink and Earl (2003) p35

A metaphor that is frequently used to describe a learning organisation is a “jazz ensemble”. ii

In such a group, each persons individuality is respected, each individuals talents are allowed to feature and plenty of experimentation and improvisation takes place as the group begins to come together to produce its music. Musical scores exist and guide the direction of the piece but participants are not limited to the printed page. The leader creates an
environment of safety, encouragement and mutual trust that sustains the
groups community spirit over time. A top flight jazz group can perform at a
high level even when the leader is not present because of its internal cohesion
and trust. Invitational leaders in school encourage this respect, mutuality and
self-sufficiency among staff members. They honour the uniqueness of each
group member and use their strengths and try to modify their weaknesses to
optimise the ultimate outcome – learning for pupils.

Stoll et al (2003) p113

The culture of an organisation will reflect what happens in the classroom. If a
learning centred school can be best described as an improvising school then
there needs to be appropriate teaching methods in the classroom, the location
of “the ultimate outcome”. If schools as learning organisations are serious
about consistently developing learner centred practices then there is a need to
develop an improvisation based pedagogy. Such creativity puts the learner in
charge of their own learning tasks, indeed, every person is a manager who is
in charge of and negotiates their organisational roles and responsibilities. This
view of learners operating in learning organisations is supported by Peter
Senge (1990 & 1991) who differentiates between adaptive (and reactive)
learning versus generative (and anticipatory) learning that he sees as a more
creative form of organisational change likely to lead to a new and sustainable
operational process. Learners in charge of their own learning tasks are more
likely to be generative in their approach towards problem solving and leading
work and thereby develop a disposition to become self-sufficient learners.

Thomas and Harri-Augstein (1995) propose a new pedagogical theory that
describes this kind of pedagogical approach to person-centred human
learning and describe this as self-organised learning (S-o-L).

Such an understanding of human learning puts the emphasis upon developing
individual critical and creative thinking learning skills. Improvisation pedagogy
is underpinned by critical and creative thinking and requires the individual to
self-experiment with knowledge transfer of prior learning experiences. Such a
pedagogical approach can be understood by Kelly’s (1955) Personal
Construct Theory (PCT) that links constructivist learning with prior experience.

Improvisation is not unique to arts; it is a feature of all aspects of our everyday
lives. Wherever or whenever it occurs it has the following qualities:

Improvisation is dependent on a context. That context defines the frame
within which intentional and creative activity takes place within “real time”.
An improvisation will be unpredictable and consequently every improvisation
will be unique. What happens in an improvisation is determined by intuition
and interaction (either with other performers, the environment, the audience,
the rules and structures).

(Sorensen, 2007)

A simpler view of improvisation is offered by Capra (2002) who sees it as the
interplay between two very different types of structure. Capra writes from a
scientific perspective, he has written extensively about the new understanding
of life that has emerged from complexity theory and applied it to the social domain. He sees nature as being spontaneously creative, essentially improvisatory, and his aim is to offer a conceptual framework that integrates biological, cognitive and social dimensions.

My intent is to go beyond the metaphorical level and see to what extent human organizations can literally be understood as living systems. (Capra, 2002, p 89)

His critique of organisations is that they do not recognise the improvisatory quality of life and rely on a mechanistic Cartesian world view. We can see this viewpoint clearly reflected in the differences between the performance and the learning orientation. He describes the improvisatory reality of life by examining the relationship between two different kinds of structures that exist within biological and social systems; design structures and emergent structures. Design structures are fixed; they are the formal aspects of the organisation. On the other hand emergent structures are created by the informal networks and communities of practice. These are the two types of structures that will determine an organisation's ability to be innovative and creative. All organisations are spontaneously creative to a lesser or greater degree and this degree of creativity is controlled by the relationship between the organisation's design structures and its emergent structures.

Design structures are those aspects of an organisation that are fixed and not open to negotiation, amendment or change. They would include, for example, vision and value statements, policies and procedures. They provide the fixed framework within which people work. They give an organisation stability.

Emergent structures are very different. These allow, and encourage, individuals to make a contribution to the way the organisation operates. Emergent structures are those that utilise the formal and informal networks within schools – networks that are grounded in the relationships between people. They are adaptive, capable of changing and evolving.

In today’s complex business environment, purely designed structures do not have the necessary responsiveness and learning capacity. They may be capable of magnificent feats, but since they are not adaptive, they are deficient when it comes to learning and changing, and thus liable to be left behind.

Fritjof Capra (2003) p106

The balance between design structures and emergent structures is therefore critical and especially important when we are considering what we mean when we talk about improvisation. If we see improvisation as the interplay between design structures and the emergent structures we can begin to see the possibility of an improvisation based pedagogy. Furthermore we can see differences in the implications for CPD policy in a performance orientation and a learning orientation.
Tables 2 and 3 show the implications for CPD that are generated by a performance orientation and a learning orientation

Table 2
The performance orientation: implications for CPD.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance orientation</th>
<th>Implications for CPD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>· Belief that ability leads to success</td>
<td>· Focus on being a better teacher solely in terms of improved outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Concern to be judged as able and to perform</td>
<td>· Focussed on techniques: improving on what is already done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Satisfaction from doing better than others or succeeding with little effort</td>
<td>· Judgemental approach to lesson observations (based on Ofsted standards)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Emphasis on interpersonal competition and public evaluation</td>
<td>· Reactive: CPD driven by results / desire to improve on past performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Helplessness: evaluates self negatively when task is difficult</td>
<td>· Teachers told the “right way” to do things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· External “expert practitioners” brought in to tell staff what they should be doing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· Teaching is about “sticking to the script” e.g. the delivery of the NC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· CPD linked to performance management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3
The learning orientation: implications for CPD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning orientation</th>
<th>Implications for CPD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>· Belief that effort leads to success</td>
<td>· Sees the development of teaching skills as an ongoing process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Belief in one’s ability to improve and learn</td>
<td>· Encouraging trial and error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Preference for challenging tasks</td>
<td>· Teachers learning from each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· Leadership of learning a shared enterprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· Focus on teacher as learner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· Developing a new mind set (metanoia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· Coaching used to improve performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· Holistic view of learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· Teaching is improvisatory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Above all a learning organisation is not bounded by “the script”. Instead all teachers become active participants in creating their own reality. Collectively the staff are working to “continually expanding its capacity to create its future” (Senge, 1990 & 1991). This is particularly important in a world of constant change, where the only certainty is uncertainty. Covey (1989) points to the importance of self-renewal as one of the seven habits of highly effective people.

The pedagogy and value system of learning-to-learn

The main author is an independent educational consultant and has spent the past two years working in primary and secondary schools across the country. A significant amount of his time is spent observing teaching and learning and working with teachers to improve their performance in the classroom. One of the conclusions reached from empirical observation is that lesson observation combined with skilful feedback has a powerful impact upon improving the quality of teaching and learning. Coaching appears to be the most effective means of changing the way that teachers behave in the classroom. The skills used by a good coach include listening, giving non-judgemental feedback, asking questions and not ‘telling’.

Is it possible for a school to reconcile the value differences between a culture that promotes self-reflection and professional development alongside the demands to make judgements about the quality of teaching and learning?

This central issue leads to asking some key questions.

- How will schools approach the self-evaluation of teaching and learning?
- What values and principles will underpin this work?
- What enabling structures and practices can they put in place and how can they ensure that these will lead to sustainable good practice and not contribute to the demotivation of teachers?
- How will self-evaluation link with the programme of teacher development and in-service training that the school offers?
- How will schools maintain the motivation of teaching staff to want to improve their skills in the classroom?
- How will schools be able to challenge teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning and support their own professional development?

In short, what can schools do to create a culture that enables the continual self-development of teachers through trust and mutual support and also satisfies the demands of accountability through self-evaluation reporting?

The potential for conflict between professional development and public accountability lies in the fact that the former is ostensibly a “learning” activity and the latter stems from a “performance” management orientation.
Essentially the difference lies between the values of local trust versus external accountability. Many schools are now familiar with these two different approaches and, in developing themselves as ‘learning organisations’ they are consciously promoting the learning orientation.

Ofsted’s report on continuous professional development (2006) recognised that CPD is most effective where senior managers use it as a key driver for school improvement. However the report was critical of subjective arrangements for identifying staff’s individual needs and the subsequent planning for their personal professional development.

School leaders need to: identifying individual staff needs; plan for their personal professional development; monitor the quality of teaching and learning across the whole school; link teacher development to whole school improvement targets; and, maintain a year round self-evaluation agenda. In order to achieve all of this school leaders’ need to develop a systemic approach to school improvement.

How do we develop systemic approaches to school improvement in a manner that avoids the potential conflict between learning and performance orientations? We have to identify our priorities. This is a crucial question. If we solely focus on improved SATS and GCSE results then this could mean that more teachers simply default to teaching the syllabus, which is hardly a step forward in teacher development. The key priority is the development of learning in the classroom, which includes the explicit development of “learning to learn” strategies. How this is achieved is of considerable importance. The important argument is that schools need to develop approaches to school improvement and self-evaluation that are based in a learning orientation that comfortably co-exists alongside the practices that are used to develop students as independent learners (Boud, 1981). Above all we need to examine the principles and values that underpin all aspects of learning and development.

We are stating that the purpose of teacher development is simple: it is to change the behaviour of teacher in the classroom so that they can progress from managing a teacher centred-classroom to facilitating a learner centred environment.

The model of teacher development that we propose is based on the relationship between certain design structures and emergent “activity”.

**The Four stage model of teacher development**

Teaching is a complex activity and is dependent upon building and developing a range of skills. Teaching and learning is at the heart of school improvement and therefore I feel that it is crucial to have a clear model for staff development that recognises that the craft of teaching is an ongoing learning activity.
From the principal author's experience of observing, literally, hundreds of lessons he has come to the view that, like all crafts, the development of teaching skills is incremental and determined by the experience of the teacher. The acquisition of skills as a teacher needs to be carefully planned, as certain approaches to teaching and learning are dependent on other skills being firmly in place. For example, no matter how committed a teacher is to group work they will be unable to introduce this effectively unless they have secured a good relationship with the class through establishing classroom management strategies and the ability to plan and deliver a well structured lesson.

The model of teacher development identifies four stages that move from a teacher centred classroom to a learner centred classroom. The first level has been constructed around the criteria for a satisfactory lesson according to the existing Ofsted framework. Subsequent levels move the teacher progressively towards leading learning in a learner centred classroom. At each level there are clusters of skills and competencies that can be addressed separately – as we will see later.

Bruner (in Leach and Moon 1999 p10) describes four dominant models, descriptions of the four different ways in which teachers view the minds of learners. These can be linked to the four phases of teacher development and emphasise the changes in attitude that are required in order to establish of learner-centred practice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4</th>
<th>The four-stage model of teacher development.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 1</strong></td>
<td>Teacher perception of learners:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Classroom management – including behaviour management</td>
<td>Students seen as imitative learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Lesson planning – preparing a 3 part lesson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Creating effective learning objectives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Starting your lesson - the first ten minutes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Partnerships in practice – working with LSAs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Creating the learning environment – room layout, seating plans, displays to support learning, displaying students’ work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 2</strong></td>
<td>Teacher perception of learners:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Using questions to develop thinking skills</td>
<td>Students seen as learning from didactic exposure: the acquisition of propositional knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Assessment for learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Using data to identify individual learning needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Differentiation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The self reflective teacher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Using active learning strategies and group work</td>
<td>• The learner centred classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Using ‘learning to learn’ strategies</td>
<td>• Teaching creatively and teaching creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Coaching in the classroom</td>
<td>• Developing creativity in students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teacher perception of learners:

Students seen as thinkers:
The development of intersubjective interchange and focus on students perspective on learning

Students as knowledgable:
The management of “objective” knowledge

Teachers help students to grasp the distinction between personal knowledge and “what is to taken to be known” by the culture

The four stage model of teacher development

Copyright Nick Sorensen 2005

The potential for using the framework

Having outlined the framework and identified the skills that can be located in each phase this model has the potential to be used in a number of different ways. The most obvious benefit of using the framework is that the development of teaching skills is detached from issues of competency (and incompetency). Schools have an explicit agenda and purpose for teacher development which can be expressed as a systematic and continual move towards changing the culture of the classroom from being teacher centred to becoming learner centred. Every small step by an individual teacher contributes to the developing the school as a learning organization.

A diagnostic tool – at an individual level

The use of the framework as a diagnostic tool can be applied to supporting the development of individual teachers. The “next step” for each teacher can be easily identified. For example, a teacher might well be struggling to provide differentiation in their lessons. This could be due to many reasons but the framework might help to identify that they need to improve their ability to write an effective learning objective. Once this issue has been addressed then they will be in a better position to provide differentiated challenges for their students.

A diagnostic tool – at a whole school level
Many schools embark on developing whole school strategies for developing teaching and learning, approaches to assessment or curriculum innovations. Examples might include introducing “learning to learn” strategies across the school, introduce assessment for learning or replace subject based learning with a cross-curricular project in Key Stage 3. The driving force behind these initiatives is often the headteacher or a member of the senior management team who quite probably has attended a conference and or undertaken some wider reading and decided that a certain initiative would be right for the school. The initiative might well be expressed as a target in the School Improvement Plan and subsequently appear as targets in departmental action plans.

The development and dissemination of the initiative will be dependent on the leadership and commitment of the middle managers and the ability of teachers to bring about the change in the classroom. Some teachers will wholeheartedly embrace the initiative while others will ignore it or be unable to take it further because they are not sufficiently motivated or because of their lack of skills. Hearts and minds may well have been won but the ability to turn ideas into practice might not be possible. How could the framework help a school that has decided to introduce learning to learn strategies across the whole school?

In my four-stage model we have identified ‘learning to learn’ strategies as part of phase 3. Using the model it is possible to identify the number of teachers at each level and in the light of this data begin to plan an appropriate programme to introduce the new initiative. The long-term aspirations for the school can be related to the ability of the staff to deliver the proposed initiative. Decisions could be made as to what INSET would be appropriate for the whole staff and what would be appropriate for targeted groups according to the phase that they are in.

As a result of this analysis the ‘big picture’ could be presented to all the staff and a small cadre of sufficiently skilled teachers could begin to explore ways in which they could introduce ‘learning to learn’ in the classroom. Meanwhile a skills based development programme could be used with the remainder of the staff, who are in phases 1 and 2, giving them the required skill level to be able to introduce ‘learning to learn’ at a later date.

What we are actually talking about is differentiated teacher development based on an audit of skill level of the staff. Schools therefore will have an evidence base to determine their future action and, more importantly, to target their school development budget more effectively.

However such an audit can be undertaken on a regular basis and respond to the immediate needs with a bespoke inset programme. Staff who have been identified as having particular strengths at the different levels could provide coaching and mentoring to other members of staff.

**Using the framework – a case study of The Grange School, Aylesbury**
**Context**

The Grange is a large, co-educational Upper School in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire. It is a community school which takes children from the age of 11 through to 18 with approximately 1400 students on roll.

In September 2003 the school was in very difficult circumstances. The school had seen a large turnover of staff (50% in three years), low staff morale, difficulty in recruiting teachers, a decline in student behaviour and a period of time without a headteacher. The LEA put together a comprehensive package to support the school that included an interim senior management team, LEA advisory teachers and independent consultants specializing in teaching and learning. It was at this point that the main author of this paper began working at the school as part of a LIG collaborative scheme involving the Grange and five other Upper Schools in Buckinghamshire. His contract was for 10 days a month and extended from October 2003 to March 2006. This allowed a considerable amount of time to be spent working with key members of staff to bring about significant and sustainable improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. In May 2004 the school had an Ofsted inspection was judged to have Serious Weaknesses and these included the quality of teaching and learning.

With the reorganisation of the senior management within the school in September 2003 a deputy head was given the responsibility to lead a programme to improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Staff were trained to use a detailed lesson observation form in a constructive and supportive way in order to recognise individual and collective strengths. Staff built positive working relationships based on trust and respect. The lesson observation form was a key document. It was designed to identify all the skills that were expected to be seen on the basis that such a document has to define good practice in detail. The use of the form therefore was in itself a staff development activity because it gave attention to practices that were essential to moving the school forward. The form refers to all the four phases of the teacher development model.

Whilst the lesson observation proforma was a very detailed document, covering a wide range of skills it was not expected that every teacher will display all the skills in every lesson. However the breadth of the skills being looked for ensured that all teachers can display some evidence of good practice that can be fed back to them. Following this the observer can discuss with the teacher the “next steps” that they can take with their development. The protocol for giving feedback ensured that teachers were first asked for their view of the lesson observed, aspects of good practice were given to them (between 6 to 8 points) and areas for development were identified (up to 3 points)
Having introduced regular lesson observations for all members of staff the deputy head produced a database recording information derived from the lesson observation forms. This database recorded:

- When lesson observations took place
- The areas of good practice that had been observed
- The areas for development.

Every six weeks the database was analysed and the common areas for development were identified. Individual members of staff were then approached and invited to attend inset sessions that respond directly to the areas of development that had been identified through lesson observation. Whilst there will be an expectation that these members of staff would attend the sessions they were also open to other interested teachers.

The issue of what was meant by ‘expectation’ is a sensitive one but given the level of trust that developed in the school staff perceived the INSET session to be supportive. A workbook was produced for each of the inset sessions and the mode of delivery encouraged the sharing of good practice within the group. Teachers therefore saw that they had a responsibility for the continuous professional development of both themselves and their colleagues. The teachers that attended these sessions were given a certificate for their professional development portfolio. Teachers on the Graduate Teacher Programme and the Overseas Teacher Training programme found these certificates particularly useful in demonstrating their use of professional development opportunities to meet the required standards. The training materials for the course included space for teachers to record their ideas and demonstrate their active engagement with that particular issue. All the training sessions included a plenary session where teachers could create their own action plan identifying the next steps they will be taking. This document can also be included in their professional development portfolio.

**Auditing the self-evaluation of teaching and learning**

This systemic approach to developing teaching and learning is based around four key components:

- The four phase model of teacher development
- The lesson observation form
- The data-base for recording data derived from lesson observations
- An INSET programme based on the four phase model
- Professional development portfolios for individual members of staff.

The whole system can be used as an audit trail, for example during an Ofsted inspection. This is how the audit trail works.

The inspection team could begin by asking about what the school knows about the quality of teaching and learning. The records of lesson observations will show the strengths of teaching within the schools and the areas for...
development. The **database** of observations will show the trends that have emerged over, say, a six-week period and the school can show how it has responded to those trends through the **INSET programme** that has been provided to staff. Next the audit trail can lead to sampling the **professional development portfolios** of individual teachers. Lesson observations and interviews with these teachers will determine the impact that the system has had and can verify the judgements that the school is making about teaching and learning. Above all the audit trail can show the development that teachers have made over a period of time. An overview of the percentage of teaching staff at each phase of the **4 phase development model** will show the extent to which the school is creating a culture of learner centred practice.

**Impact evaluation – case study of The Grange School, Aylesbury**

To what extent did this approach to improving teaching and learning have an impact upon The Grange School? Whilst it is difficult to determine the impact of any single initiative it might be possible to argue that this approach was a significant factor in the changes that have occurred to the school over the past four years. The coordination of the support that the school received internally (sharing good practice, the introduction of ASTs) and externally (both the LEA and LIG consultants) was essential and this was supported by six principles that guided and focussed the improvement agenda:

1. student achievement is dependent on high quality teaching and learning
2. support and challenge must exist at every level in the school with the aim to remove barriers to learning
3. effective learning can only happen if there is good behaviour management
4. if students are to be successful they need to have access to a well planned, interesting and relevant curriculum
5. if all staff are to be successful they need to have access to a well planned, interesting and relevant professional development programme
6. the quality of leadership is crucial to the sustained success of a school and all staff have a role to play as leaders of learning.

These principles articulated the intention of the school to become a learning organisation and the learning needs of staff were recognised as being equally important as the learning needs of students.

The impact of this approach to CPD can be seen through the following data:

- internal and external judgements on the quality of teaching and learning
- student attainment
- staff morale (as shown by the reduction in staff turnover).

**Quality of teaching – school judgements**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% lessons satisfactory or better</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004 – post Ofsted</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Quality of teaching - external judgements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ofsted</td>
<td>May 2004</td>
<td>“Many weaknesses” in teaching and learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMI</td>
<td>January 2005</td>
<td>90% lessons satisfactory or better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nearly 50% good or better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEA review</td>
<td>May 2005</td>
<td>85% lessons satisfactory of better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>48% good or better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ofsted 2006</td>
<td>April</td>
<td>Teaching and learning graded at 3 – team stated school was “close” to a grade 2 but this was not given as exam results for that year was not out.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Staff turnover

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% staff leaving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### GCSE results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% achieving 5+ A* - C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004 / 05</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005 / 06</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006 / 07</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most important impact has been on the staff with an increased motivation to explore new approaches to teaching and learning and recognising the value of engaging in professional development activities. In October 2007 the main author returned to the school for further consultancy work and to offer teacher’s the opportunity of a programme of INSET with the possibility of gaining MA accreditation through Bath Spa University. 18 members of staff have signed up for this opportunity which perhaps indicates what a mature stage of CPD might be – when CPD becomes PPD.
Conclusions

Key points

In order to achieve a holistic, sustainable approach to the self-evaluation of teaching and learning we have seen that the following issues need to be carefully thought through:

i. Vision and principles
ii. Systems and structures
iii. Approaches – policies and protocols

Schools that approach the self-evaluation of teaching and learning in this fashion can achieve the seemingly paradoxical situation of matching the ongoing personal needs for professional development with the demands for performance management and the self-evaluation agenda as articulated by Ofsted.

The demands of a performance based culture are not allowed to override the principles of a learning organisation. In the latter case, learning is placed at the centre of all that it does and this work is guided by the definition that learning is “knowing what to do when you don’t know what to do”. Accountability for the evaluation and development of teaching skills is lodged with the individual teacher. The structures and systems outlined above proved the context in which individuals can meaningfully look at the reality of their professional practice in a non-threatening way and share in their own development and the development of others through being a coaching partner.

The four phase model of teacher development therefore gives all teachers a framework and direction for their development. It provides a diagnostic tool for looking at areas of development and is linked to a skills development programme with the explicit intention of moving the individuals from managing a teacher centre classroom to facilitating a learner centred environment. Within this framework the individual needs of all teachers can be identified and plans for their personal professional development can be made.

Broader issues

Reflecting on this case study has emphasised the essentially reactive nature of CPD programmes in schools. The professional development of staff is determined by external issues that in the main come from a performance orientation. The 4 phase model for teacher development offers a response to Ofsted’s criticism of the essentially subjective arrangements for identifying staffs individual needs. This framework however has the added potential to provide a shared goal in the development of teaching skills; the development of an improvisation based pedagogy suited to our learner centred education system.
Our education system has shown comparatively little interest in pedagogy as Brian Simon points out in his article “Why No Pedagogy in England?”

The existing workforce of half a million have, no doubts, many talents, but they need assistance in the pursuit of their common objective, the education of new generations of pupils. The new pedagogy requires carefully defined goals, structure and adult guidance.

Pedagogy seems to have taken second place to curriculum, assessment and performance issues in our education system. Yet without a pedagogy that reflects the advances that have been made in our understanding of learning we shall be unable to ensure that all the teaching workforce have the ability to manage the change in culture that is demanded by the learner centred classroom. Perhaps by putting pedagogy first we could be in a better position to develop new curricula and assessment practices.

If we are led to recognise that “pedagogy is never innocent. It is a medium that carries its own message” (ed Leach and Moon, 1999, p1) then we cannot allow the move towards learner centred practices to be deprived of an appropriate pedagogy. I argue that an improvisation based pedagogy is essential in creating the learner-centred practices appropriate to schools at the outset of the 21st century. A CPD programme based around the four phase model of teacher development provides a starting point for a systematic and coherent development of future educational practice. As Vygotsky said:

**Pedagogy must be orientated not towards the yesterday of development but towards its tomorrow.**

*Quoted by Simon in “Why No Pedagogy in England?” From Leach and Moon, 1999, p43*

**References**


Ofsted (2006) *The logical chain: CPD in effective schools*. HMI 2639. (http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/portal/site/Internet/menuitem.eace3f09a603f6d9c3172a8a08c08a0c/?vgnextoid=86988f564353d010VgnVCM1000003507640aR CRD).

Senge, P. (1990) *The leader’s new work*. Sloan School of Management, MIT.


http://curriculum.qca.org.uk/