

Introduction

On 9 December 2014 the Department for Education launched a government [consultation](#) focused in its own words 'on the professional leadership and development of teaching' (p.5). The 16 page document in which the current government's proposals about this subject were contained, was entitled 'A World Class Teaching Profession'.

At the Eastern Leadership Centre, a not-for-profit charitable business supporting educational leadership and development [*NB this charity was dissolved in late 2016*] we think that a question mark would have improved this consultation's title. Carefully considered questions are one of the most powerful tools for any educator or leader: and since we believe that by definition all educators are leaders, we tend to take questions seriously. The term 'consultation' also implies a conversational sharing of knowledge and views. A consultation about subjects as important and contentious as 'the professional leadership and development of teaching' ought to prompt politicians, policy makers, leaders and teachers from across English education, not just schools, to contribute by questioning their own experiences and prejudices.

This [consultation](#) document does not, though, question or even doubt the assumptions on which government policy rests. All its questions are channelled through the particular questions which the DfE has chosen to ask, for its own ends. Is that because this document was launched a few months ahead of the 2015 general election? Or did it follow a pre-determined format of government consultations? Either way, the results are a mixed bag. The questions numbered 1-3 actually contain five open, hard and searching questions, answers to which deserve to be at the heart of any new policy for any new government. The questions numbered 4-6 (actually containing four questions) are far more closed and rest comparatively untested, on previous and current policy assumptions.

Q1. What are the greatest impediments teachers and schools face in regularly undertaking high-quality professional development?

Q2. To what extent, and how, do teachers currently evaluate their professional development? What would support more rigorous evaluation?

Q3. Where should the balance of responsibility lie between teachers, schools and Government for ensuring that appropriate professional development is undertaken? How, in the longer term, might responsibility sit with a new independent professional body?

Q4. Despite the growing reach of the Teaching Schools network, are there areas where coverage of schools would remain a concern?

Q5. What should the funding criteria be for teaching schools wishing to draw on the new funding pot for professional development? Should there, for example, be a requirement for Teaching Schools to work with a predetermined proportion of schools which are not already "good" or "outstanding"?

Q6. Will teachers benefit from an online platform that collates and presents evidence-based best practice?

Question 7 then opens wide the consultation's brief once more:

Q7. In addition to the proposals outlined here, what other approaches would help schools to remove barriers and incentivise effective professional development for teachers?

Confusingly too, although this consultation clearly argues that a new 'College of Teaching' (pp.4, 7-10) should be at the foundation of a fresh approach to the professional leadership and development of teaching (p.5), and prominently employs the term College of Teaching eleven times, none of the questions above uses that title. Question 3 simply assumes a 'new independent professional body' but does not call that a College of Teaching.

Because the Eastern Leadership Centre's charitable mission is to serve practitioners, 57 individual views offered online to us by teachers and leaders underpin our responses to questions 1 and 7. Questions 2-6 have been answered by pulling together contributions from ELC's Strategic Team, drawing on a broader variety of data, evidence and experience. We have not drawn from the wide range of existing published research on teachers' professional development for this particular exercise, knowing that this will be well represented in other responses from Professional Associations, Universities and others.

The results have been published in this report format because we believe that the professional leadership and development of teaching is absolutely crucial to the success of our education system: both during the remaining few months of this government and in the yet-to-be-developed policies of the new governments that lie ahead. We hope this report can make a modest contribution to developing those policies, as well as to improving our own practice.

Q1. What are the greatest impediments teachers and schools face in regularly undertaking high-quality professional development?

The Eastern Leadership Centre (hereafter ELC) asked teachers in schools to respond to this question directly via an online survey. As the consultation did not offer a definition of the term professional development neither did we. The 57 respondents tended to take a narrower view of that than we would aspire to and their answers focused upon four key themes:

- The most referenced impediment to teachers undertaking any professional development was time, with half of respondents citing this as the main factor. One respondent highlighted that *"It can be difficult justifying attending courses, meetings and networks if they seem to hit the same day(s) of the week. There is one class I teach where I have missed at least five double lessons this year."*
- The cost of, and difficulty in funding professional development was also seen as a major block towards taking part in professional development. The *"gradual erosion of local authorities"* (survey respondent) has resulted in the lack of an agency organising high quality support. Professional development, said one respondent, *"either comes at great expense through either publishing companies or ex-local authority employees who have become consultants."*
- Respondents noted that the quality of available professional development varied greatly and labelling them as *"poor, and even patronising."* Additionally, respondents bemoaned the worth of undertaking particular development sessions, noting that in some instances *"there is a feeling that a lot of the opportunities available are there to tick a box for Ofsted purposes."*
- In addition to the three factors above, respondents cited the distance required to travel to attend professional development sessions as a stumbling block. One respondent from Suffolk noted that in some instances they were expected to travel the length of the county in order to attend training.

The consultation paper also makes reference to teachers in the early years. ELC has worked with a wide range of partners in the early years sector. Combining intelligence from those partnerships, these are some of the 'professional development barriers' typically faced by people working with pre-school children in the East of England:

- Most 'early years teachers' work outside of the maintained sector and face radically different financial and personal constraints to teachers in schools.
- Cost can make training for early years workers prohibitive. For example, conferences are often in excess of £300 per day and post graduate training is not funded.
- NVQ accredited training is no longer funded by the DfE.
- Salaries are low, limiting personal access to high cost training.
- Many early years settings have long working hours with people in day care often starting work at 7.30 or 8am and not finishing until 6.00pm.
- There is very limited accessibility to relevant training in rural areas particularly for lone workers (child minders) and rural sessional play-groups who make up a large proportion of the early years sector.

***Q2. To what extent, and how, do teachers currently evaluate their professional development?
What would support more rigorous evaluation?***

The means used by teachers to evaluate their professional development can be as varied as the methods used to make it happen, or the terms of engagement in continuing professional development itself (CPD). For example this ranges from teachers who are allowed release time for CPD but who fund the activity themselves (such as MA study); through to others who are fully or partially funded and directed towards particular external or in-house events or programmes (such as briefing sessions about OFSTED or curriculum changes). In addition numerous other creative variations and arrangements enrich or replace formally structured and accredited programmes or courses to include observations, lesson studies, visits, learning walks, exchanges, coaching, mentoring, 360 diagnostics, networks, social media, online events etc. Such diversity has a bearing on the attitudes and rigour with which CPD is evaluated. Just as importantly as creative variations in the CPD that is provided, significant other sectors of the schools workforce (e.g. cover supervisors, part time teachers, mid-career teachers, those on fixed term contracts) experience apparent paucity: and report that relevant CPD opportunities are either less readily available or a perception that they have little or no entitlement.

Despite the diversity above, many teachers tend to evaluate their CPD using some or all of the following criteria:

1. Relevance to current priorities in role
2. Quality of experience (which includes quality of facilitation, content, materials and venue)
3. Value in terms of learning credit (usually masters level) or a recognised programme (e.g. NPQH)
4. Value in terms of money spent and knowledge, new ideas gained
5. Opportunity to network

Leaders of CPD in schools wrestle with the difficulty of evaluating the impact of CPD activity and this is too often limited to short term measures of 'the experience' as outlined above. Others suggest that CPD may be planned from the wrong end, from what it is believed that a particular teacher 'needs'. However what learners (children or students) need to do better, or what the whole

organisation needs to be more effective at, are other starting points from which there can then be a needs analysis of staff. The results from that can then shape future CPD programmes, a process which also helps establish clearer indicators for a more rigorous evaluation.

Evaluation could also be improved if more teachers regarded themselves as researchers. Many established teachers are not confident in their skills as researchers. This is partly due to a lack of focus on research in initial teacher training in previous years and in part because of the scarcity of opportunities and encouragement to engage in enquiry and research once qualified. Page 5 of the proposals rightly cites Finland as a successful country in this regard but equally, it is hardly surprising that a Master's level degree is a requirement for attaining QTS in that country.

If we consider other professions in England, many require evidence of participation in and application of learning from structured CPD activities – often by means of a professional portfolio updated on a regular basis. More recent entrants to teaching are accustomed to this as an approach and it would streamline performance management and other processes in schools. It would be reasonable for this portfolio to provide evidence of CPD needs analysis and identification, implementation of learning and research outcomes, progress against standards for teachers and leaders, contribution to the planning for and achievement of development for others.

Given the significant commitment required to participate in external CPD which includes but is not limited to lesson preparation for cover, travel, childcare (if distance and times are out of the usual framework of their working day) and follow up on return to school, teachers are understandably unforgiving if they feel that their time has not been well spent. School leaders are also mindful of the financial resources invested in their staff's CPD and in a potentially risky decision to release a colleague from their usual class/subject teaching duties

Q3. Where should the balance of responsibility lie between teachers, schools and Government for ensuring that appropriate professional development is undertaken? How, in the longer term, might responsibility sit with a new independent professional body?

Because teaching is a job and teachers are employees, as the employing organisation schools or trusts have a clear and statutory responsibility to ensure that their whole workforce (not just teachers) are sufficiently well-trained to meet not just minimum legal requirements, but to create the conditions where the whole of the organisation can succeed.

Because teaching is also a profession, some of the responsibility for active participation in high quality professional development must lie with individual teachers and any professional associations or bodies to which they belong. By definition 'professions' influence the setting and monitoring of standards of professional knowledge, behaviour and development. Such influence cannot replace the ultimate responsibility that schools as employers bear for the classroom knowledge and behaviour of the teachers they employ; but it does have to be shared with the individual.

Because the great majority of teaching occurs in state schools and is therefore funded by taxpayers, any government must also share some responsibility for ensuring that the professional development of public service employees is sufficiently regular, of high quality and adequately resourced. Unless that happens teachers will be unable to meet the ambitions that the electorate, via any particular elected government, quite properly places upon them. What is under discussion in these and previous proposals for a College of Teaching is the *extent* to which some responsibilities can be devolved to individual teachers; and the *ways* in which a College could be structured, funded and managed to ensure that other responsibilities are influenced by teachers themselves.

It is necessary to re-iterate these points because the second sentence of the question asked above does not envisage the kind of balance just sketched. Instead it asks 'how in the longer term might responsibility [*singular*] sit with a new independent professional body?' Sole responsibility is not practical and 'any' responsibility could only sit with an independent professional body if a legislative framework existed setting agreed minimum national expectations about teachers' regular and active participation in high quality professional development. Having clarified expectations at a national and legislative level, the government could then devolve aspects of its management to a 'new independent professional body'.

Equally, as employing organisations schools, whatever sort of independent body is set up, would still retain significant responsibility for ensuring that the individual people they employ are sufficiently well trained to meet their organisation's ambitions. Ultimate responsibility for the personal and unique link between performance management of individual employees, and the resourcing and management of their individualised continual professional development, cannot be devolved beyond the employing organisation. The most that can reasonably be expected of any 'new independent professional body' is that they play an active role in helping teachers as employees and schools as employers to participate in regular high quality professional development, by providing an ambitious framework and evidence base to inform it.

Page 6 of the consultation paper also refers to 'early years teachers' and claims that '*our proposals will help to ensure that a more coherent approach can be taken across the piece*'. It is not clear how this would or could work. The proposals do not mention early years again and only a very small minority of the early years workforce is either a teacher or employed by schools.

Q4. Despite the growing reach of the Teaching Schools network, are there areas where coverage of schools would remain a concern?

Yes, there are areas where coverage remains a grave concern. The Teaching Schools network within the Eastern Region, for example, varies dramatically between geographical areas and between types of schools. Essex is a good example with one of the largest percentages of Teaching Schools compared to other local authorities, but no current provision within Nursery or Special schools.

In early years the private, voluntary and independent sector ('PVI') is mostly excluded from the teaching schools networks. Where they are included, the sharing of pedagogy is usually one way due to a lack of respect for PVI practice in general. The recent award of teaching school status to Bright Horizons (a major private sector day care provider) is welcome; but still does little to address a fundamental lack of incentive for the Private sector to share best practice, due to the pressures that commercial competition places them under. Addressing such wide gaps will be dependent not just upon radically rethinking the way that 'teaching schools' have been envisaged, but ultimately upon raising the status of Early Years Teachers by granting *and funding* full equity with qualified teacher status in the school sector.

The 2015 figures below also indicate there is no geographical locality or area in the Eastern Region that has a comfortable coverage in all phases or specialisms to provide the support needed. Online training and support can play a part but to establish the 'world class teaching profession' envisaged in the title of this consultation, schools and individual teachers need to be able to access high quality professional development, training, coaching, mentoring and school to school support within reasonable travelling distance. At the moment this is not possible for the majority of schools and teachers across the east. Rural areas such as Norfolk and Suffolk are the most disadvantaged due to the nature of their transport networks.

The number and percentage of Teaching Schools in the Eastern Region February 2015										
LA or area	Number of TS		Secondary Schools		Primary Schools		Nursery Schools		Special Schools	
Norfolk	5	1%	2	3%	1	0.3%	0	0%	2	11%
Suffolk	5	0.8%	3	3.9%	2	0.75%	0		0	
Essex	20	3.4%	10	10.9%	9	1.9%	1.9%		1	4%
Herts	10	1.9%	7	6%	3	0.7%				
Cambs	14	4.7%	6	13%	5	2.3%	2	28%	1	8.3%
P'boro	1	1.2%							1	
Central Beds	2	4%	1		1					
Bedford	3	3.75%	2				1			
Luton	3	3.1%	2	2.5%	1	1.8%				

Q5. What should the funding criteria be for teaching schools wishing to draw on the new funding pot for professional development? Should there, for example, be a requirement for Teaching Schools to work with a predetermined proportion of schools which are not already “good” or “outstanding”?

The funding pot for teaching schools has to link with the quality of professional development offered and as Question 4 indicates, the reach that teaching schools are able or unable to provide in a locality through face to face, online or other provision. Such a funding pot for the early years is also based upon insecure foundations, given the current disparity between the PVI and maintained sectors. This is not just in terms of imbalances in teaching school alliances that are led by early years, primary or secondary providers, but in the working conditions and professional support for the employees within them. Working with a predetermined number of schools would not address this. They would need to work with predetermined numbers of schools and settings for provision to be equitable; the criteria for becoming a teaching school should be extended to make it easier for PVI settings to be awarded that status.

Whilst it is always attractive to provide incentives for schools that are struggling to escape or aspire to a particular OFSTED status, it creates its own problems. Small rural schools in particular may be left vulnerable and coasting at a “good” judgement attained several years ago. If teachers as a profession are to take ownership of any new professional body there has to be criteria within the funding that allows all individuals, uninfluenced by their school’s current Ofsted ‘rank’, to access affordable, high quality professional development. Indeed the offer of universal high quality professional development would be a major factor in improving the profession’s “buy in” to new recruits, and in retaining recent recruits. Too often teachers find that professional development is not easily available in their area, or if it is their school’s Ofsted ranking means they are less able to access this. If good quality professional development was available to all, then teachers would no longer be advantaged or disadvantaged by working in areas of the country with a high proportion of

'RI' or 'outstanding' schools. They would be able to work on an equal basis in low or high performing rural, coastal or urban localities knowing they could still advance in their profession.

Q6. Will teachers benefit from an online platform that collates and presents evidence-based best practice?

In theory the answer to this question is 'yes' which is why sites like bera.ac.uk, nfer.ac.uk and [the EEF](http://the-eef.org) already exist, to disseminate evidence-based best practice in the education sector. However the important question posed above needs more than a yes/no answer. In practice any 'benefits for teachers' professional development' from a new website depends upon a range of factors:

1. How effective is the CPD needs analysis process which teachers or schools have undertaken before they arrive at the website? If CPD does not meet an identified and strategically significant need for an individual or a group, it either will not help achieve the goals it has set itself or it will be seen as superficial to the needs of participants.
2. Benefits will also only materialise if careful consideration is given to website content and design and content factors such as:
 - How will research findings of the type envisaged be moderated to ensure quality, and consistently mediated to ensure applicability?
 - How long-term is this resource going to be? Continuing professional development is career-long and teacher careers are varied in pattern and pass through many phases.
 - What prompts would drive individual teachers or schools to use the website?
 - How accessible will the content be to users searching with a particular need in mind?
3. 'Evidence-based best practice' means different things to different people, especially when it is about individuals' practice in highly variable and locally-constructed settings such as schools and classrooms. Although randomised, controlled research trials are being promoted in education they are comparatively rare and often disputed. The majority of educational research is still qualitative and small-scale and nearly all research undertaken by teaching school alliances or other teacher researchers fits that description. Who will decide which qualitative research studies about CPD are valid and reliable, or significant and authentic, and how? Or will the envisaged website contain links to all evidence-based studies of CPD without any editorial control?

The 'what works clearing house' ([WWC](http://www.whatworks.org)) website from the USA cited in the consultation document is a powerful and admirable resource. It also reinforces many of the points made above about an English equivalent or similar. It may be useful to bear in mind:

- WWC dates from 2002 and so draws from 13 years of practice and content, which as a political timespan means at least three different UK governments. Beneficial relationships between educational research and practice can only be established in the long term. They will rely upon political consensus and minimal, non-political management by particular secretaries of state via the DFE.
- Equally a website (and organisation) such as WWC is not a light touch option for the American government and requires considerable investment and longer term management. As the organisation says of itself *'The work of the WWC is conducted under a set of contracts held by several leading firms with expertise in education and research methodology, and managed by IES on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education.'*

- WWC considers carefully how readers can use what it publishes e.g. by signposting whether the evidence about research-led recommendations for certain practices are strong, moderate, minimal etc. This can be invaluable in helping teachers draw upon research to inform pedagogy, particularly when the focus is defined and specific as in the case of 'Assisting Students Struggling with Mathematics: Response to Intervention for Elementary and Middle Schools' ([WWC](#)).
- Some of the studies on the website also illustrate the dangers of making over-simplified decisions about professional development and practice, based upon any one piece of research. For example, a [2008 Practice Guide](#) on 'turning around chronically low-performing schools' makes a series of recommendations under four headings. Many of these American conclusions are still echoed in current DFE and NCTL policies and advice for English schools; and in varied training and development programmes accessible via open markets. These recommendations (slightly simplified) are for:
 - strong leadership
 - a focus on improving teaching
 - achieving visible results early in change processes
 - building a committed staff.

Unfortunately the WWC was of the opinion that the research evidence around such leadership approaches in struggling schools, approaches to be found in its own [Practice Guide](#) was 'minimal'. As the authors themselves say in their introduction '*We could not find any studies that fit the high-quality experimental and quasi-experimental study standards of the [What Works](#) and that would provide the strongest evidence of causal validity.*'

- The four recommendations in the Practice Guide cited above are helpfully then boiled down for readers into a checklist offering 17 key points for a leader to consider. What is not and cannot be contained in such a checklist, is any meaningful detailed guidance for a leader on how then to make those things happen in their particular context or locality. A Practice Guide may or may not be very helpful in informing the design and delivery of CPD to achieve particular goals; ultimately successful change programmes rely heavily upon local leadership and interpretations to make them effective. That necessitates considerable and careful local thought and investment from the particular leaders of particular organisations: the best-designed websites or Colleges, even if given considerable resource, will only be able do a small proportion of the work necessary to make those things happen across the approximately 25,000 schools constituting England's highly autonomous and ever-diversifying school system.

Q7. In addition to the proposals outlined here, what other approaches would help schools to remove barriers and incentivise effective professional development for teachers?

If these proposals were serious about improving the training and development of staff and volunteers in the early years sector, they should include 'settings' in this question and not simply entitle all educational organisations as 'schools'. There would also need to be a consensus on how to work with the many different types of organisation in the early years sector, led by the government, establishing how to fund professional development across the PVI and make it more accessible and relevant to its continuous improvement.

Teachers working within schools in the eastern region have also offered suggestions about how best to remove barriers to their professional development. Theirs will be the last words, in this consultation response:

- *"Finances - to have high quality training in school and with local delivery groups."*
- *"Finding ways to deliver CPD without impeding on teaching time i.e. time in front of pupils ensuring CPD has an impact - i.e. more in depth training rather than a one off."*
- *"Local venue, credibility of trainers, bespoke training that is valuable to whole school, effective on line options."*
- *"I think the cost of external CPD makes some courses prohibitive. Teachers are less likely to apply for a course if they know it will cost £300, plus travel plus a supply teacher. This can push courses up to £700 or even £800. It would be good if the LIS [sic. Reference to a LA advisory service] were to put on a co-ordinated programme of events on PD Days."*
- *"A ring-fenced grant from the Government as we used to have as Grant maintained schools."*
- *"There is a focused need for Primary schools/Head teachers to understand the strength of Research and Development in embedding and sustaining good practice and motivating staff."*
- *"There needs to be proper coordination of opportunities from properly accredited bodies so that both the quality and the cost of such training can be monitored effectively. This could be a job for the proposed council."*
- *"Time off in lieu, payment for CPD attendance, credit given within school, CPD to be favourably considered for promotion."*

Respondents also offered a range of suggestions for how teachers could be incentivised to undertake professional development on a more regular basis:

- *"Knowing that when they leave their class, progress is still made."*
- *"Linked to their appraisals so not sure I feel they need incentivised."*
- *"Timing, free materials i.e. book from trainer."*
- *"If there was a cash back incentive, for example, attend a course and you will get X amount of money to spend on resources in school. The National Science Learning Centre use Impact Awards through the Wellcome Trust to offer these kind of incentives. Courses through the NSLC have always been excellent in my experience as well."*
- *"Yes, by allocating quality time and resources to their development."*
- *"As the market for CPD is very competitive, offering 'free' taster sessions for specific activity would encourage people to take part i.e. try before you buy?"*
- *"I don't think that there is a problem getting teachers to attend good quality professional development - the issue is that there is not a lot out there! I, for one, don't need any encouragement - if there is good professional development out there I will go. I am very fortunate that my school does provide superb opportunities and there is no issue in encouraging staff to attend. The issue is finding such resources in the first place."*