Continuing Professional Development for Teachers

Liberal Democrat
Education, Families and Young People
Parliamentary Party Committee

Continuing Professional Development for Teachers

Final Report of the Working Group

January 2014
Background

This is the final report of the Working Group on Continuing Professional Development established by the Liberal Democrat Education, Families and Young People Parliamentary Party Committee and chaired by Lord Storey. It does not represent agreed Party policy.

Between June and July 2013, the Working Group heard from the following evidence-givers:

Sal Jarvis, Dean of Studies in the Department of Education at the University of Hertfordshire [SJ]
David Weston, Teacher Development Trust [TDT]
Stephen Tall, Education Endowment Foundation [ST] [EEF]
Rosamund McNeil, National Union of Teachers [RN] [NUT]
Brian Lightman, Association of School and College Leaders [BL] [ASCL]

The Working Group also received a briefing note from the Department for Education [DfE], and written evidence from the Geography Association [Geog Assn].

After the draft Report had been circulated to the membership of the Liberal Democrat Education Association, comments and briefings were received from Professor John Howson, Rebecca Hanson and Lee Dargue.

Members of the Working Group:

Lord Storey (Chair)
Baroness Walmsley
Dan Rogerson MP
James Kempton
Denys Robinson

Support staff:

Sarah Whitebread
Oliver Sidorczuk
John McGahon
CONCLUSIONS

The Working Group agreed that it was clear from the evidence received that most teachers would welcome better opportunities to enjoy engaging in collaborative work to improve their practice. It is equally clear that teachers have had quite enough of continual interference by Ministers, and ‘top-down’ initiatives. A structure is needed to enable the profession to develop its own learning, study and research, and this may best be achieved through the creation of a Royal College of Teaching.

The Working Group agreed that Continuing Professional Development [CPD] should be supported by well-evidenced research and best practice, sustained over time, properly funded, accredited where appropriate, and aimed at improving aspirations and outcomes for pupils.

It should be based on the needs teachers themselves perceive and build teachers’ sense of their own professionalism. It should not be directed or prescribed from Whitehall.

Effective approaches to CPD are likely to include collaborative enquiry, coaching and mentoring, networking, structured dialogue and group work, and may involve formal study towards an accredited outcome.
RECOMMENDATIONS

- The professional associations involved in developing plans for a Royal College of Teaching [RCOT] should consider the role it could play in professionalising teachers’ CPD and how quickly they could put such arrangements in place.

- These bodies should give urgent consideration to creating a National Framework for CPD with appropriate accreditation.

- All teachers should be enabled to build an Individual Professional Portfolio, populated by accreditation for CPD courses they have undertaken, and by additional qualifications (eg M.A. degrees).

- The DfE, working with the Education Endowment Foundation, should establish a database of research into best practice worldwide, in a form that can readily be accessed by schools and teachers.

- Every teacher should have access to a notional budget allocation for their CPD needs.

- All publicly-funded schools, be they maintained, ‘free’, or academy schools, should employ properly trained teachers. We recommend making QTS mandatory once more throughout the sector. Teachers in post should be qualified or working towards being qualified.

- The National Professional Qualification for Headteachers should once more become mandatory, and the future of the National College for Teaching and Leadership assured, so that it becomes an integral part of the RCOT.

- INSET (“Baker Days”) should be properly re-constituted for CPD and renamed Professional Development Days.

- Opportunities should be developed for teachers with several years’ experience to have dedicated time to research and ‘re-charge’.
The Problem

It is quite extraordinary that, for as long as any of us can remember, once a teacher has secured qualified teacher status, they are generally under no obligation to undertake any further training or to upgrade their qualifications during a career that may well last thirty to forty years.

Clearly most teachers do choose to go on courses, and all have to sit through sessions organised in-school, but there is no nationally agreed system, and no structure. Yet massive changes take place in almost every subject and are taught in schools over a much shorter period – Maths, Physics and climate change are obvious examples. Yet less than half our Maths teachers have a Maths degree. Teaching methods and styles of classroom practice, the impact of constantly-evolving ICT – all these would seem to require teachers to engage in continuing professional development.

Moreover, we need to assert very strongly our belief that all publicly-funded schools, be they maintained, ‘free’, or academy schools, should employ properly trained teachers. We recommend making QTS mandatory once more throughout the sector. Teachers employed in school who do not yet hold the qualification should be under an obligation to undertake it while remaining in post.

Professional development must surely be vital for career progression. We have moved away from a situation where we thought learning to be a competent headteacher (in charge of a multi-million pound budget) could be learned ‘on the job’ as a subordinate. However, it is unclear what CPD is reliably available for teachers to learn how to run subject departments, or become effective pastoral heads.

There are no competent arrangements in place for school leaders or serving teachers to access up-to-date research on which classroom practice is most effective. Teachers lack a research data base they can readily turn to which would inform their performance day-to-day.

Politically, it is very odd that a Government that puts teaching at the heart of its reforms has so far done so little to reform the arrangements which could provide high-quality CPD. Introducing “teaching schools” is certainly a step forward. In general however, in so far as there is any direction, it is to be left to effective and inspirational school-leaders to decide what teachers need in each school. Liberal Democrats may reasonably suspect that top-down reformers (whether Labour or Conservative) have no enthusiasm for the teaching profession taking charge of its own learning, or indeed for a united and independent teaching profession at all.

The evidence we received from teacher unions, the Geography Association and others strongly suggests that teachers very much want to be part of a culture of lifelong learning and continuous improvement. The CPD currently arranged for them does not do enough to support this. Most of it is aimed at keeping up with Government initiatives, and the short-term priorities of each particular school. Teachers are also hampered by a lack of information which would help them identify clear high quality evidence-based interventions and courses.

For a conscientious and ambitious teacher, keen to develop their career, where are the training and qualifications that will develop them professionally? What actual evidence is there that current CPD provision, such as it is, improves the quality of any pupil’s learning, or experiences at school?

A report from the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) found that barely 1% of training they looked at was effectively transforming classroom practice. The NFER Teacher Voice Omnibus June 2009 Survey indicated that when teachers got back to classrooms only 7% of schools...
checked to see if there was any effect on student attainment. The most commonly booked courses tend to be in reaction to external threats and changes focused largely at the institutional level (e.g. OFSTED inspections, new regulations, changing exam syllabuses). Important though these matters can be, they do little or nothing to develop the career of a professional teacher.

The Teacher Development Trust [TDT] in its evidence drew our attention to another TDA report showing that the most common CPD involved sitting watching a PowerPoint presentation, while the most common reason for selecting a course was simply that ‘the teacher wanted to go’ rather than recourse to any more clearly articulated or assessed need. It’s clear that too much CPD involves passive listening rather than engaging in actual research, observing lessons, collaborative work with teachers from other schools, and learning using distance learning and social media.

It is remarkably difficult even to establish how much is spent to fund current CPD provision. The Education Select Committee of the House of Commons (then the CSF Select Committee) in 2010 found that schools’ estimate of money spent on CPD varied wildly between 0.25% and 15% of school budgets. They felt a reliable figure would be 2-3% (around £600-£900 million). Even this figure may over-estimate expenditure if it includes the cost of cover for teachers absent on CPD courses. Given the acute pressure on school budgets, spending on CPD will continue to be very modest and very vulnerable.

1. Professionalising CPD: the role of a Royal College of Teaching

The Working Group agreed on the need to focus on re-professionalising teachers. There was too much compliance, and teachers needed to take back control. But such moves need to be based on properly conducted research.

The Educational Endowment Foundation [EFF] receives government funding to research ‘what really works’ in the classroom. Teachers should take account of this valuable research and make their own use of it. They could (for example) choose between two or three well-evidenced routes, and their choice in a particular school would depend on local circumstances and their own inclinations.

EEF suggested ‘We need an evidence-informed and evidence-curious profession’. Indeed, all the evidence we received pointed to the need for the teaching profession itself to take the initiative in professionalising CPD. Currently there are a large number of organisations which have an interest in CPD, teacher unions, university education departments, subject associations and other interested bodies, but no over-arching body to take a lead.

The active proposals to set up a Royal College of Teaching [RCOT] would seem to be a way forward, as long as a way can be found for it to be ‘owned’ by teachers, and not be a mouthpiece for Secretaries of State. The same can be said for the National College of Teaching and Leadership [NCTL], which should surely become an integral part of any RCOT.

Both the NUT and ASCL had positive attitudes to the RCOT proposal. NUT evidence indicated it could help to professionalise CPD. Teachers wanted their profession to be in the same bracket as lawyers, doctors; a Royal College would give them a much greater status. ASCL evidence was that at the moment, the teaching profession feel they are not properly consulted. There was a lot of consensus over the RCOT proposal. It would be a win for everyone, including the government, because both teachers and ministers want a highly skilled profession.
2. Establishing a national CPD framework

There was concern that creating a national CPD framework was an urgent matter, a key policy that could not afford to wait for a Royal College to be established. It was unlikely that a College would really be successful from scratch unless some form of development work came from government first. The proposals needed to be inspiring and exciting so that a great majority of teachers see the value of a national CPD framework, and want to engage with it. Then a Royal College could take it forward and develop it in active collaboration with working teachers.

Both the national CPD framework and the RCOT will need funding. If they are to be independent of government, they will need to be funded by teachers, supported perhaps by charitable trusts. A way forward might be for Government to create a transition fund for subject associations to adopt Royal Charters and create Chartered and Fellowship level membership, which could then be incorporated to create a Royal College of Teaching (see section 5).

The Teachers’ Development Trust [TDT] was keen that the qualifications included in a national CPD framework needed to have a significant element of proven positive impact on pupil learning. TDT is concerned that CPD qualifications should above all be evidence-based.

In short, we believe a Royal College of Teaching is the necessary mechanism for developing a national CPD framework, and accrediting the qualifications that sit within it. While in the short term the bodies involved in setting up the RCOT will also need to collaborate on the framework, the Royal College will in the medium and long term be the guarantee of professional integrity and independence, and the right of every teacher to have access to worthwhile CPD.

3. Accreditation: building an Individual Professional Portfolio

Most evidence sessions concluded that it was important that CPD work should be accredited. It might lead to an additional qualification (at the high end, PhDs), but most work should at least be certificated. We discussed whether it was helpful to link this to pay scales, but the weight of evidence suggested that this would not be helpful, and might well lead to resentment and conflicts of interest.

All courses within the national CPD framework should be certificated. This would enable teachers to build an Individual Professional Portfolio reflecting how they had engaged with CPD to develop their careers. Certification would be issued by the CPD provider. More substantial courses or qualifications (for example those offered by university education departments) would be accredited within the national framework by RCOT. As the national framework gained in credibility, the Professional Portfolio would no doubt become an important factor when teachers sought promotion.

In view of the acute pressures on time during Initial Teaching Training [ITT], we considered whether it might be appropriate for teachers to be required to ‘populate’ their Portfolio with a number of required modules of certificated CPD; eg courses on dyslexia, SEN or internet safety.

Some members of the Working Group felt strongly that there were some areas that newly-qualified teachers really should know about. In that first year of teaching all new teachers should not only be getting their classroom practice, but also complete certain units as CPD before they are fully
qualified. Evidence from the NUT confirmed that teachers would very much welcome that first year entitlement and extra certification.

Although we have not listed this as a recommendation, such a proposal should be considered seriously in any future review of ITT. It seems sensible for ‘ITT plus’ to be rolled out beyond the initial course both before teachers are fully qualified and then over the following two or three years of teaching.

We took evidence on accredited routes by which teachers could gain further qualifications at the University of Hertfordshire. These included individual teachers taking MAIs, which can be very effective if they are education-based, and not simply enhancing subject knowledge. More innovative was a scheme through which a school with a particular issue that needs addressing works with the university to deal with it by involving many different members of staff (not just teachers). This led in some cases to some of the teachers taking an MA.

Another accredited qualification involved Government intervention schemes such as ‘Pastel’: Professional Award in Science Teaching and Learning and ‘Mast’: Maths Specialist Teachers where individual teachers are nominated by their schools to receive government funding to be part of a scheme, delivered by a university. The University of Hertfordshire had now been approached to run Mast schemes in schools.

All these models are predicated on the need for challenge from an outside source. This could be the university but could also be a different school or other organisation. We were advised that it was particularly effective that the CPD provided was bespoke to the school, or even the teacher(s), catering for their particular needs and drivers.

We discussed how teachers might judge the quality of CPD providers before embarking on a course. It was suggested that kitemarks might be used. Any such quality markers ought to be considered by those establishing the national CPD framework.

Working Group members noted that in their experience teachers felt a great deal of satisfaction in gaining a properly accredited qualification. However, evidence from ASCL urged the need for balance here. There was a danger of individuals becoming ‘over credited’. CPD should be an entitlement, and in some cases a requirement. All teachers should have a strong commitment to take a part in their own CPD and not be waiting for someone else to do it for them. As professionals they should have the drive to do it for themselves.
4. Evidence-based research: the need for a database

We heard evidence that strongly advocated that teachers should be able to access a database of research into best classroom practice worldwide. Several of our contributors stressed the importance of evidence-based research material, available in a form that could readily be accessed by school leaders and teachers.

Comments from the LDEA were a reminder that professional teachers are never likely to subscribe to any one orthodoxy, and that even the most rigorously researched evidence will be open to challenge.

Evidence from the NUT asserted that teachers found the prospect of accessing research that could help them very exciting. Constraints of time meant that it was very challenging to wade through academic journals. Competent and referenced summaries needed to be made available. There was a case for surveying teachers to test what areas of research would be of most interest to them.

We heard from the Educational Endowment Foundation [EFF] which conducts funded research into “what works” in teaching. The Government has invested £135 million in setting up EEF as an independent grant-making charity dedicated to breaking the link between family income and educational achievement. Their work was highly commended by ASCL.

“We must spend intelligently on what we can prove has an impact.” EFF’s Annual Report for 2011/12 states that by the end of their first full year they will have awarded over £12M to 21 projects working in over 940 schools and with over 245,000 children. Examples include how teaching assistants (who make up 25% of the school workforce) can be more effectively deployed; whether the approach to teaching Maths used successfully in Singapore can be successfully implemented in England; whether US-style summer camps can help to bridge the crucial primary-secondary transition.

Mechanisms for communicating successful practice and research outcomes were considered. There should perhaps be a DfE database of such research outcomes, with details of schools that had completed successful projects, and of accredited external expert providers (perhaps with an appropriate kitemark rating).

Schools can not only access research, they can carry it out. CPD can readily involve research (whether by individual teachers or by groups) and outcomes could be usefully shared across schools. There may be a case for ‘seed-corn’ funding: eg a two year limited grant. The recipient researcher(s) would then look for further funding elsewhere if the research work required it.

The EEF spokesman believed that the best route for CPD would be teachers choosing from within a well-evidenced menu. They should be offered incentives rather than punitive control. CPD needed serious investment over quite a long time. Outstanding schools should help failing schools.

The Teacher Development Trust [TDT] believed that the evidence base for what makes effective and ineffective teaching is growing but is inaccessible to most teachers. Teachers must gain access to research journals and build a culture where innovation is based on plausible research.

TDT believes that an EEF additional role should be to produce frequent reviews of practice, in association with subject associations, so that teachers will always have access to a guide to the latest pedagogical practice. This should be supplemented by a regular magazine/newsletter of latest research, accessible to all teachers and including contributions from practitioner-researchers.
5. Funding CPD: an entitlement to a notional budget allocation

It is very clear that funding for CPD in schools is inadequate and patchy, and at risk as a relatively low priority for many headteachers. The Working Group considers that an important move to put professional development back into the hands of teachers would be to devolve to them the resources to meet their needs for CPD. Each teacher could be given a notional budget allocation from their school’s overall CPD budget to fund their CPD costs. It is important that teachers should have considerable flexibility in using their allocation. For example, they should be enabled to ‘save up’ their personal budget to fund significant projects and courses.

However, schools’ CPD budget allocations vary alarmingly. ASCL pointed out that because the allocations were part of local management, school leaders will make their different decisions about that. As a result certain schools will get more access to CPD than others. The risk is that CPD is a sitting target when budget cuts come along. It’s easier to cut than to lose staff.

Accordingly, it is desirable for there to be an additional and discrete funding stream for CPD. Teachers could be entitled to access an external national fund, perhaps in due course devolved to the Royal College of Teaching as a proportion of the DfE’s teacher training budget. This might sit more neatly with the idea of a national CPD framework. The TDT believed it would be appropriate to demand higher standards of impact evaluation as part of accountability. The national framework should be rigorous about this so that CPD funding is seen as worthwhile and accountable.

We agreed it was important to establish cost-benefit. This might best be done by individual case studies. It was very hard to prove cause and effect as all kinds of factors might bear upon improvements that appeared to be the result of CPD. However, evidence-based work by the EEF was a good example of how CPD could come to be seen as good value for money.

The TDT asserted that when the focus moves to improving specific pupil learning then it becomes possible to evaluate the process of professional development, with quantitative and qualitative measures used to judge impact and refine the process.

Written evidence from the Department for Education [DfE] set out the CPD programmes for teachers that are currently funded centrally.

£6.6 million has been made available between 2012-14 for the Further Mathematics Support Programme (FMSP), which aims to encourage more students to study A-level Mathematics and Further Mathematics. A tender process is underway for an enhanced FMSP contract with a total value of £25m over 5 years, starting in 2014. A further £3.7 million is being provided (between 2013-15) to the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics (NCETM) to coordinate and quality assure mathematics professional development for primary, secondary and post-16 teachers, with an explicit focus on new curriculum implementation. NCETM are also developing and trialling a CPD programme for Key Stage 3 mathematics teachers around multiplicative reasoning which is being run as a randomised control trial to inform a possible future large scale roll out. The Department is also providing £130,000 to Imperial College to develop a one year Advanced Mathematics course for teachers of A-level Mathematics. The first summer school for 40 teachers will take place in August 2013.

We received evidence which commented on work being undertaken to train CPD providers. Not all those involved in such training are apparently comfortable with what they see as undue compliance
with the current agenda of those at the DfE. This is yet again a reminder that the teaching profession needs to be actively engaged in developing a ‘curriculum’ for CPD.

In science, the DfE is providing joint funding with the Wellcome Trust and industry partners to support a network of Science Learning Centres. These provide high-quality professional development opportunities for around 15,000 teachers a year. The Department will be providing funding of £10 million over the period 2013-15. It is also providing £6.9 million of funding to the Cambridge Physics Project (over the period 2013-19), of which £2.2 million will go to supporting high-quality professional development for teachers. The Triple Science Support Programme, designed to support teachers in schools which have low uptake of triple science, has already engaged with 450 schools and provided 1,800 training days for teachers. £9 million of funding supports the programme in 2011-14, of which around £1.6 million will be devoted to teachers’ professional development, including sharing good practice and providing peer-to-peer support.

To support teachers teaching computer science, the Department is providing £2 million to the Network of Teaching Excellence. Established by the British Computer Society (BCS) in 2012-13, the Network is now being expanded so that it provides more comprehensive coverage nationally. The funding will build a network of 400 ‘Master Teachers’ over the next two years, which schools can then commission to provide training for their teachers. This Network has forged links between schools, universities and employers and BCS has harnessed pro bono support from world-leading organisations such as Microsoft and Google.

The Department is also funding programmes to help primary teachers support children who are struggling with reading and writing. They are funding £744,000 in 2013-5 for Every Child Counts to enable teachers to provide intensive one-to-one and small group support to the lowest attaining children who are struggling with numeracy. The Reading Support and Reading Recovery programmes are funded £794,000 in 2013-15 to support children to achieve age-related expectations in English and in particular, reading at the end of KS1, including one-to-one support.

A competitive National Scholarship Fund for teachers was introduced in June 2011 for teachers who wished to deepen their subject knowledge. Through this scheme, teachers can apply for awards of up to £3,500 to support Masters-level study in the key areas of English, mathematics, science and Special Educational Needs. The Department has made up to £2 million per year available for this scheme, and the first two rounds of applications resulted in awards being made to over 1,000 teachers. Successful applications to the scheme have seen individuals pursuing masters and doctoral level work at leading universities.

The Department has invested £135 million in the Education Endowment Foundation, part of the ‘what works’ network, to help ensure schools and teachers have access to robust evidence about effective educational strategies and interventions. Over time this will support heads and teachers to make effective decisions about approaches to take in their schools and encourage reflection and understanding of the wider evidence base as part of their professional development.

The Working Group commends the financial support the DfE, under the Coalition Government, is making to a quite wide-ranging variety of very worthwhile CPD projects. This budget (and/or the teaching training budget) would seem the appropriate source of finance to support a notional CPD funding allocation for each teacher.

The WG discussed whether there was a merit in the Government setting up a transition fund for subject associations to adopt Royal Charters and create Chartered and Fellowship level membership. There was significant disagreement over this. An alternative would be for another body to accredit.
the subject associations’ exams as happens with medical royal colleges until the point that subject associations grow up and become colleges of their own.

The subject associations are likely to become significant players among bodies involved in establishing a Royal College of Teachers. Creating Chartered and Fellowship level membership of such associations could be one way to develop the RCOT.

It was agreed that there can often be a need for teachers to improve their subject knowledge, or evidence-based research on how children and young people learn most effectively. Given the advances in knowledge (e.g., in science, technology but also in new perceptions about history or the arts) teachers need to keep up. At present almost all learning of this kind is done (if at all) in the individual teacher’s own time. The evidence we received from the DfE confirms that some schemes for enhancing subject knowledge are already receiving central funding.

We received written evidence from the Geography Association [GA]. The GA is a source of the high quality professional debate, support, ideas and materials teachers need. Their own CPD offer promotes leading edge practice and takes many and varied forms. Members make use of the extensive website and up to three professional journals plus a termly magazine. More than 1,000 geography teachers each year take part in a national programme of face-to-face or CPD opportunities located around the country. These include an annual conference (three days around Easter each year) and one day regional events.

The GA’s Primary and Secondary Geography Quality Marks (GQMs) are awards which recognise quality and progress in geography leadership, curriculum development, learning and teaching in school. The GA also provides localised services to address specific school or network needs, such as ideas and techniques to increase professional capacity to develop exciting and stimulating lessons. Local ‘curriculum making’ approaches help teachers make sense of key issues in geography within their own school contexts.

ASCL’s evidence pointed to the danger of subject associations seeing things only from their own perspective. A RCOT and a national CPD framework could take a much wider view, setting the standards of accreditation. Certainly the subject associations could and should have a very significant input into both the RCOT and the national framework.
6. NQPH and the future of the National College for Teaching and Leadership

The Working Group believes that alongside a Royal College, and working ever more closely with it, the National College for Teaching and Leadership [NCTL] must have a crucial role. ASCL (representing school and college leaders) advised us that making the National Professional Qualification for Headteachers [NQPH] non-mandatory was a mistake. NQPH has acquired a valued status; many job advertisements describe it as desirable. We believe the NCTL’s future should be firmly underwritten by central government. We recommend that Liberal Democrats in any future government should press for the NQPH to be made mandatory once again.

7. Making time available: Professional Development Days

INSET days (popularly known as ‘Baker Days’) have been set aside so that the school is closed to pupils but open for teacher meetings and CPD sessions. We share the concern expressed to us that these days could be used more effectively to improve the amount and quality of teacher CPD being undertaken.

The Working Group believes that INSET days should be properly re-constituted for CPD and renamed Professional Development Days. It may well be that in order to dispel parent resentment about children being ‘off school’ because of teacher training, that such days are designated as part of the pupils’ school holidays, rather than as Term-time days when the school is closed.

Schools should still have the freedom to decide when such Professional Development Days take place, but the dates must be included on the School Calendar, so parents and teachers know these dates well in advance.

A significant proportion of the contracted hours represented by five Professional Development Days should be made available to teachers to use to undertake their Individual CPD Plan. Otherwise there is a danger that short-term school priorities and the need to address top-down policy initiatives from central government will take precedence.

Even with Professional Development Days, there is clearly a very serious issue about how teachers are to find time for CPD in very crowded Term time. There can be downsides to doing CPD in twilight sessions or at weekends. Teachers need CPD Training where they don’t end up feeling exhausted or anxious about who is taking their class – so classes and children are not disrupted by yet another supply teacher.

It is interesting to note that in a high-achieving jurisdiction – Finland – teaching time during each day is reduced to allow teachers more time to reflect, discuss and prepare for lessons.

Timetablers should take account of the need for teachers to undertake CPD. Time allocation is essential if we are to make a reality of each teacher’s entitlement to a notional budget allocation.

The TDT recommended that we should encourage the allocation of staff time for collaboration through teaching school networks, best practice case studies/networks, accountability mechanisms, as a condition of other funding.
Online learning offers exciting opportunities for teachers to learn and engage with others both in school and in their own time while working round family responsibilities. The development of the MOOC [Massive Open Online Course] where learners can access and engage with a whole course of university lectures was the subject of a recent report from the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills [BIS].

8. Opportunities to research and ‘re-charge’

The Working Group believes that access to dedicated time for experienced teachers to research and study would benefit the quality of teaching and learning. It would represent a major step forward for CPD and each teacher’s professional renewal if, for those teachers with several years’ experience, opportunities could be created for them to undertake research in their chosen area, and generally to have time to ‘re-charge their batteries’.

‘Teachers’ Study Leave’ could be used for a whole host of educational projects from individual research work to various subject diplomas. It could be used to work and understand industry or for teachers to be seconded to an educational organisation – even to OFSTED!

There are many precedents for such Study Leave and individuals who have undertaken it or been seconded outside teaching testify to their sense of renewal and a widening of perspectives.

The whole tenor of this report has been to champion the development of such initiatives by the teaching profession itself, not to dictate a prescriptive plan from on high. If Teachers’ Study Leave is ever to become an ordinary part of teachers’ professional life, it will have to be planned by the profession. How time can be allocated, how it can be funded, how headteachers persuaded that it is necessary, are all challenges for the profession. But the Working Group recommends that they should try, and that the best vehicle for such developments is a Royal College of Teachers, sooner rather than later.

[END]