This article focuses on early professional development (EPD) and continuing professional development (CPD).

EPD and CPD form two of the four stages in Northern Ireland’s integrated, competence-based approach to training and developing teachers. The other two stages are initial teacher education (ITE), which is covered in the article on ‘Initial Education for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education’ [1]’, and induction, which is covered in the article on ‘Conditions of Service for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education’ [2]’.

The continuum of career-long teacher education and professional development is underpinned by the following key documents:

- The Teacher Education Partnership Handbook [3] (Northern Ireland Teacher Education Committee et al., 2010), which draws together guidance for student teachers, beginning teachers, and teacher tutors.
- Teaching: the Reflective Profession [4] (General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI) [5], 2011), which sets out the requirements and competences expected of teachers during all phases of development.
- Learning Leaders: a Strategy for Teacher Professional Learning [6], was launched [7] in March 2016 by the Education Minister. This strategy [8] aims to aid the development of a structured Teacher Professional Learning Framework based on revised teaching and leadership competences and linked to improved outcomes for pupils, while promoting collaboration and sharing of best practice through professional learning communities and strengthening leadership capacity in schools.

The introduction of the strategy follows a review of the initial teacher education (ITE) infrastructure which took place between 2011 and 2014. It is addressed in the article on ‘Initial Education’ [1’]. Aspiring to Excellence [9], the final report of the review which was published in 2014, reiterated that there should be strong links between initial teacher education and continuing professional development. It also made a case for a substantial investment in CPD for teachers leading to master’s level awards endorsed by General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI) [5].

EPD and CPD can involve a wide range of staff development activities, both formal and informal, designed to improve teachers’ practice. In-school activities include: induction, mentoring, sharing good practice, lesson observation and feedback, and whole school development activities. External activities include courses of varying length provided by a range of providers (see below). Courses may be held during school hours, in ‘twilight’ sessions after school or at weekends or during holidays. Conferences, industrial placement or work shadowing, international study visits and exchanges are also considered to be CPD activities.
Organisational aspects

Legal framework

It is obligatory for beginning teachers to complete both induction and the early professional development (EPD) stage of development. Both induction and EPD are documented with: a Career Entry Profile (CEP) [10] for completion at the commencement of induction; an induction action plan which is monitored by means of an interim review and a summative report; and the planning and evaluation of two Professional Development Activities (PDAs) during EPD. Templates for these documents are included in the Teacher Education Partnership Handbook [3] (Northern Ireland Teacher Education Committee et al., 2010).

Teachers’ statutory conditions of service require them to review their methods of teaching and programmes of work, and to participate in arrangements for their further training as teachers. There is no legal minimum requirement stated for the length of time to be spent on CPD. However, conditions of service require teachers to be available for work under the direction of the principal for five days when the school is not open to pupils and these days are often spent on whole-school in-service training activities. While CPD is not a legal requirement for promotion, keeping up-to-date with new developments would normally be considered necessary for teachers seeking new posts or moving across the threshold to the upper pay scale.

Boards of governors [11] have a responsibility to promote the personal and collective professional development of school staff. They must develop and implement a training and development policy linked to the outcomes of the performance review scheme (see below), and produce a costed training and development plan appropriate to the needs of the school. The policy must provide clear guidance for staff in relation, for example, to secondments, attendance at courses during the school day and any opportunity for teachers to undertake further professional qualifications during school time. Beyond the early professional development (EPD) programme, each school determines its own continuing professional development (CPD) needs depending on the requirements of the school development plan, the professional needs of the teacher concerned and the availability of resources in the school to meet them.

Performance management

Performance management is the system of annual performance review which involves professional dialogue about aims and achievements between teachers and their team leaders and headteachers and their governing body. Performance management sets a framework to agree and review priorities and objectives and to identify professional development needs in the context of schools’ development plans.

Common arrangements for reviewing the performance of teachers and school principals were phased into all schools between 1995 and 2000. The arrangements were last reviewed in February 2014, giving rise to the Performance Review and Staff Development Scheme (PRSD) [12]. One of the aims of PRSD is to ‘identify the professional needs and necessary resources to support teachers in their professional development and career progression’.

Teachers’ performance is reviewed on an annual basis. The reviewer is normally the teacher’s line manager. Before or at the start of the review cycle, the reviewer and reviewee meet to agree three personal/shared objectives, covering the areas of professional practice, pupil and curriculum development and the personal and professional development of the teacher and which relate to the school development plan. Two classroom observations, of a maximum period of one hour, take place
as a prelude to the review discussion. At the review discussion the reviewer and reviewee establish the reviewee’s performance and identify any personal and professional development needs in relation to the agreed objectives, and agree an action plan and objectives for the coming year. Since September 2007, procedures for determining threshold progression (that is moving from the main pay scale to the upper pay scale) are on the basis of the principal’s professional judgement.

Providers

Providers of EPD and CPD are numerous and varied. They include:

1. **Senior staff within schools** who provide ongoing professional guidance and development for their colleagues, either as part of their day-to-day monitoring or as special, focused training.
2. **The Education Authority (EA)** provides EPD support for beginning teachers. The EA is a non-departmental body sponsored by the Department of Education. The EA runs a dedicated Induction and Early Professional Development website [13] providing information and support materials.
3. **The Department of Education (DE)** provides the Literacy and Numeracy Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 CPD Project [14], which is aimed at encouraging teachers of English and Mathematics to deliver high-quality teaching and learning. Opportunities have also been developed as part of the Success through STEM [15] strategy (2011), which recommended the development of a STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) CPD framework for teachers to help them better contextualise their subjects.
4. **Higher Education institutions**
5. **Further education colleges**.
6. **Independent providers**.

Incentives, supporting measures and funding for participation in continuing professional development (CPD) activities

Apart from a few specific initiatives which receive government funding (see examples which follow) schools decide for themselves how much of their budgets to allocate to CPD based on their specific areas for development as set out in their school development plan (SDP). Each individual teacher’s development is planned for in the context of the SDP and monitored by the performance management system. CPD is thus integrated with teacher performance management and school self-evaluation into a coherent cycle of planning.

For teachers, effective professional development is beneficial because it enhances job satisfaction and career opportunities. There is no automatic link between participating in CPD and increased pay, nor is there any entitlement to training leave. However, in practice, learning through CPD will help teachers demonstrate in their performance review that their performance is satisfactory and deserving of pay progression and promotion.

Some formal CPD activities may also attract academic accreditation at master’s level (Level 7 of The Frameworks for HE Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies [16], (table 1, pg17)) leading to awards including: postgraduate certificate (PG Cert – 60 credits); postgraduate diploma (PG Dip – 120 credits); master’s (MA – 180 credits); doctorate (PhD – 360 credits).

Although there is no automatic entitlement to payment for participation in CPD, there is discretion for schools to make a payment to any teacher who undertakes CPD over and above the contractual requirement of 1,265 annual ‘directed hours’. It is for individual schools to decide whether teachers
are allowed to attend CPD activities in school time. If the training corresponds to needs identified as part of the review process and is in line with the School Development Plan, attendance in school time would normally be allowed and the cost of the training activity would be covered by the school.

The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI) has previously provided bursaries to individual teachers who wish to carry out a professional development activity and also to teachers who wish to work with colleagues on an inter-school basis, but no such funding streams are operating currently. Case study reports on how teachers used the bursaries are available from GTCNI.

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[17] https://www.gtcni.org.uk/