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Kay Livingston & John Robertson
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The Coherent System and the Empowered Individual: continuing professional development for teachers in Scotland

KAY LIVINGSTON & JOHN ROBERTSON

SUMMARY In Scotland today, it has been recognised that the continuing professional development (CPD) of teachers is as important as initial teacher education. Consequently, new proposals call for a systematic framework approach to CPD. This paper provides a short summary of the forms of CPD in Scotland from 1970 to 2000, which indicate considerable variety and diversity in provision. It is this variety and diversity that has led to the call for a more coherent framework to be put in place. Decisions regarding the nature and composition of any framework for CPD are dependent on what one understands professional development to be and its underlying purpose. The rationale for CPD and the different perspectives that may be held by teachers, school managers, local education authority personnel and policy-makers are discussed. It is argued that a greater understanding of the characteristics of CPD is necessary and it is suggested that the ideal scenario is one that accommodates the needs of individual teachers and schools as well as local authority and national priorities. The paper emphasises that the nature and method of CPD should be decided in partnership between all the agents concerned and that it should leave the teacher feeling empowered by the process.

RÉSUMÉ En Écosse aujourd’hui on a reconnu que le développement professionnel continu (CPD) des professeurs est aussi important que la formation initiale. En conséquence, des propositions nouvelles font appel à une approche de cadre systématique au CPD. Cet article donne une résumé courte des types du développement professionnel en Écosse de 1970–2000 qui indique une variété et une diversité importante dans la provision. C’est cette variété et cette diversité qui ont mené à l’appel pour l’existence d’un cadre plus cohérent. Les décisions prises quant à la nature et à la composition de la structure des CPD dépendent de ce que l’on entend par développement professionnel et par les objectifs induits. L’exposé raisonné des tenants et aboutissants du CPD—ainsi que des perspectives qu’il offre—susceptible d’être fait par l’instituteur, le directeur d’école, le personnel des autorités éducatives locales et le législateur sont sujets à discussion. L’argument mis en avant est celui de la nécessité d’une meilleure compréhension des caractéristiques du CPD et il est suggéré que le scénario idéal est celui qui harmonise les besoins des enseignants individuels, des écoles et des autorités locales avec les priorités nationales. L’article insiste sur le fait que la nature et la méthode du CPD devraient être le fruit d’une décision partenariale entre tous les agents concernés et qu’elles devraient laisser à l’enseignant le sentiment qu’il est habilité à influer sur le procédé.
RESUMEN  Actualmente, se reconoce en Escocia que el desarrollo profesional continuo (CPD) de los profesores es tan importante como su formación inicial. Por ende, las nuevas propuestas exigen un esquema de enfoque sistemático al CPD. Este artículo resume las formas de CPD en Escocia desde 1970 hasta 2000, que indican gran variedad y diversidad. Son esta variedad y diversidad las que exigen la implementación de un marco más coherente. Las decisiones en relación con la naturaleza y la composición de cualquier esquema de CPD dependen de lo que se entiende por desarrollo profesional y sus objetivos subyacentes. Se discute la fundamentación del CPD y las perspectivas que se ofrecen a profesores, directores escolares, autoridades locales en educación y diseñadores de políticas educativas. Se postula la necesidad de una mayor comprensión de las características del CPD, lo que sugiere que el escenario ideal es aquel que satisfaga tanto las necesidades de profesores y escuelas como las de autoridades locales y nacionales. Se hace hincapié en que la naturaleza y el método del CPD deben decidirse conjuntamente entre todos los actores involucrados, y que deberían procurar al profesor un sentimiento positivo con respecto al proceso.


Introduction
Before embarking on an analysis of the professional development of teachers in Scotland, it is necessary to explain the context in which teachers are educated and work. It is important to note that Scotland has its own education system, which is distinct from England. Since May 1999, the Scottish Executive is the government in Scotland for all devolved matters, including education. The Scottish Executive is accountable to the Scottish Parliament. The Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED), formerly the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department (SOEID), administers government policy for education. It has national oversight of education, advises on national policy and co-ordinates the activities of education authorities and others. The delivery of the school curriculum is the responsibility of the education authority and the individual school. Unlike England, there is no National Curriculum; instead there is a series of national guidelines on the content of the curriculum. In practice, the existence of guidelines and a programme of inspection leads to broad consensus on what is taught.
Scotland, in common with other countries, has recently undergone a period of substantial change in its educational provision. The thrust of these changes, which have manifested themselves in a series of government innovations, has been directed at enhancing the quality of education in the schools, securing greater value for money, making the educational system more responsive to the changing requirements of industry and commerce, raising the level of pupils’ achievements and improving the educational effectiveness of schools. Within the UK as a whole there has been a move toward a much more publicly accountable and structured view of education which places greater emphasis on outcomes and national standards of performance. This more managerial approach to education has resulted in increased codification of curricula, increased emphasis on outcomes and increased accountability for teachers (Adams, 1995). These changes have had a significant impact on teacher education and have highlighted the need for a systematic approach to the continuing professional development (CPD) of teachers. According to Kirk (1995) the changes that have occurred in teacher education have to be seen as integral to a wider restructuring of education and of curricular renewal, which have made new and increased demands on teachers.

To be eligible to teach in Scotland it is necessary to hold a teaching qualification awarded by a Scottish teacher education institution or an equivalent qualification approved by the General Teaching Council (GTC). Through the GTC, assurance is given that teacher education courses are in line with professional expectations as judged by teachers themselves. Newly qualified teachers must undertake a period of probation in schools before the GTC fully registers them.

The document Guidelines for Initial Teacher Education Courses in Scotland (SOEID, 1998b) sets out the policy on the content, nature and duration of courses leading to a teaching qualification. A major review of the guidelines has just taken place and the new requirements include a set of competences, which all courses must aim to develop in student teachers. These competences cover four broad categories: relating to subject and content of teaching; the classroom; the school and the education system and the values, attributes and abilities integral to professionalism. Each of these categories is subdivided and, in total, there are 48 separate competences which all teachers in Scotland must demonstrate in order to be successful in their courses. The guidelines are a way of reinforcing a national system of teacher education and of codifying the teaching task. In a recent study, Teacher Education and Training (1997), Sutherland says that the efficacy of the current arrangements for training and educating teachers can only be tested effectively if there is a clear understanding of what these arrangements should be seeking to achieve. According to him, the purpose of teacher education should be to produce professional teachers who have the theoretical knowledge and understanding, combined with practical skills, competences and commitment to teach to high national standards.

Initial teacher education, as the first stage of professional education, is the foundation on which all further professional development is built. The Guidelines for Initial Teacher Education Courses in Scotland (1998) point out that the competences expected of newly qualified teachers need to be developed and refined with successive years of classroom experience in order to lead to ‘proficient and advanced levels of professionalism’ (p. 2). The guidelines also state that teachers are expected to be committed to lifelong learning and to identifying their own professional development needs through a process of self-evaluation and appraisal.
Rationale for CPD

The social, political and technological context within which teachers operate is subject to continuous change. For example, it is recognised that easy access to information today impacts on the nature of teachers’ work. The amount of information available in any subject through technological means goes far beyond any textbook or the knowledge of one teacher. The role of the teacher has changed to one that is far more than a provider of information. Concepts such as active learning highlight the importance of pupils learning how to learn. Pupils need to know how to access, acquire and process information, how to reflect on the learning process and how to define their own learning goals, as well as social skills such as working and co-operating with others. In this scenario, teachers must act as facilitators, assisting pupils to learn for themselves. Consequently, work practices have changed and will continue to change.

Added to this, curriculum development is a constant factor in teachers’ lives. Developments in Scotland such as the 5–14 Programme [1] and Higher Still [2] highlight the need for teachers to continually update their own knowledge, skills and expertise to implement change. The SOEID (1998b) view is that teachers have a duty to maintain their professional learning and keep up to date with developments in the areas of the curriculum for which they are responsible.

As teachers gain experience, many seek new roles within schools and require opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills in order to take on these roles. Undoubtedly, some teachers perceive engagement in continuous development as a pathway to career advancement.

Though initial teacher education provides a sound basis for the teaching task, the dynamic nature of society, together with new ideas and thinking about the learning and teaching process, means that teacher education must be a continuous process throughout a teacher’s career. Fullan (1991) emphasises that continuous development of all teachers is the cornerstone for meaning, improvement and reforms. He points out that professional development and school development are inextricably linked. According to him there is no single strategy that can contribute more to meaning and improvement than ongoing professional development.

The report, Teacher Education and Training (Sutherland, 1997), points out that much of the discussion about higher education’s contribution to teacher education has focused on initial teacher education, while little attention has been given to the role of CPD. A SOEID consultation document, Proposals for Developing a Framework for Continuing Professional Development for the Teaching Profession in Scotland (1998a) points out that, beyond initial teacher education, there are no statements of additional competences and standards to inform development, no overall framework to give coherence to teachers’ development and no structure of qualifications to work towards that give recognition to teachers’ increased remits and professional skills. According to Sutherland, CPD should be regarded as being as important as initial teacher education in the development of teachers and that it requires a systematic framework approach. His vision of teacher education is of a continuum, beginning with initial teacher education through to induction and CPD.

Sutherland argues that a more coherent framework should have a positive impact on the wastage rates of serving teachers and contribute to improvements in the quality of teaching in schools and consequently levels of pupil attainment. Similarly, the SOEID (1998a) consultative document argues that a framework for CPD would serve to raise the status and morale of teachers by increasing their professionalism and help every teacher to become as effective as possible. It suggests that a framework for CPD would
address the need to encourage good teachers to develop their careers in the classroom. Furthermore, it states that a framework approach would be a valuable aid to local authorities and schools in taking decisions on the allocation of resources for development and training and would help provide more information on development activities and qualifications.

Definition of CPD

The professional development of teachers implies a process whereby teachers may be helped to become more professional. CPD is about teachers learning to improve their expertise in what they already do or about developing new knowledge and skills and/or new learning and teaching strategies. Undoubtedly, CPD seen as a career-long process is related to a wider set of concepts. Decisions regarding the nature and composition of any framework for CPD are dependent on what one understands professional development to be and on its underlying purpose. Different teachers will have different needs. In addition, different needs will be evident at different points in teachers’ careers. Some teachers will be motivated and able and willing to seek staff development to address their needs; others may suffer a loss of confidence or feel alienated by any process that involves change.

Teachers may view the CPD process from a different perspective from school managers, local authority personnel and policy-makers. While raising the quality of education may be a goal that is shared by all, differences may occur in perceived needs and priorities for the provision of quality education, as well as in the choice of the best methodology to achieve the goal. Identification of needs and priorities requires careful handling but it is the starting point for professional development and must be undertaken by all the agents involved in the process of CPD.

According to Joyce (1980), professional development must fulfil three needs: the social need for an efficient education system capable of adapting to evolving social needs; the need to find ways of helping teachers to improve the wider personal, social and academic potential of young people; and the need to develop and encourage the teacher’s desire to live a satisfying and stimulating life. Joyce points out that the first need concerns the society in which the teacher is functioning; the second, the spirit and morale of the school in which the teacher is employed; and the third concerns the calibre of teacher selected for training and employment. Joyce’s comments highlight the multi-dimensional nature of CPD. However, the key person in the system is the teacher: ‘whether we approach professional development from the orientation of society, school or individual, the focus of activity is on the lives of teachers’ (Joyce, 1980, p. 21).

The issue of who identifies teachers’ needs is controversial and relates to the view taken of the role of the teacher in the educational process. There are differing views concerning the extent of freedom or power that teachers have to take decisions regarding any form of educational change. Vonk (1991) identifies two extremes in terms of approaches to education and the teachers’ role. One model adopts a bureaucratic–managerial approach to education. In this model, Vonk considers education as an arbitrary, imposed, pedagogically designed and bureaucratically structured delivery system that results from political and economic debates rather than dialogues between interested parties about educational policies and practices. The teacher is regarded as a technician responsible for implementing a curriculum whose parameters are defined by an external body. Decisions about what should be taught and how it should be taught are taken at management level above the classroom and the school. This
approach to education has implications for CPD in that staff development needs are likely to be identified by someone other than the teacher himself. In this approach, teachers have little say either in their pre- and in-service training or in the composition of the curriculum content they teach. This view relates to a deficit model, whereby people outside school identify a weakness or a need in teachers and use staff development as the means to plug the gap. Carr (1989) points out that standards, professional competence, accreditation, accountability and appraisal are part of the rhetoric employed to define the problem of teaching quality and to promote certain practical proposals for its solution. The discourse does not equate with teachers as professionals able to make decisions about their own personal development and the needs of their pupils. It implies a relationship to the specific needs of the school and society determined from above the level of classroom teacher.

The second model that Vonk highlights implies participant-involved planning, collaborative efforts, shared authority and responsibility among various educational bodies as a prerequisite for meaningful developments in education. In this model, emphasis is placed on self-determining teachers who have a central role in decision-making: ‘this approach places the teacher at the centre of the process of improving the quality of education’ (Vonk, 1991, p. 119). Also in this model, teacher are seen as innovative leaders, capable of reflecting on their own actions and able to identify their own needs for CPD. They have ownership of the process and are able to evaluate its effectiveness.

The ideal scenario is one that accommodates both the needs of the teacher and the school as well as local authority and national priorities and where the nature and method of CPD is decided in partnership between them and leaves the teacher feeling empowered by the process. Whether this ideal is achievable in reality is a matter for debate, but it is an ideal worth striving for. The SOEID consultation document (Proposals for Developing a Framework for Continuing Professional Development for the Teaching Profession in Scotland, 1998a) recognises the issue of identification of priorities. It argues that the effectiveness of CPD programmes will depend on teachers and schools regularly identifying targets for development and establishing priorities. The document suggests that targets need to achieve a balance between the needs of the school and the aspirations of the individual teacher. Sutherland (1997) emphasises this point saying that CPD ‘should be flexible enough to operate at various levels with, for example, programmes which address the needs of individual teachers, but also programmes which address the needs of a school, or regional or national priorities’ (p. 15). This is a key point and one that must remain at the forefront if CPD is to be successfully implemented.

**Forms of CPD in Scotland: 1970–2000**

Diversity in rationales, complexity and a lack of articulation in the relationships between individual teachers, schools, education authorities, higher education and central government, have produced diverse, unsystematic and disjointed forms of CPD in Scotland at the turn of the 20th century.

Seven main forms of CPD can be identified, each of which will be discussed briefly below:

- Teacher Education Institution Postgraduate Courses;
- Teacher Education Institution Short Courses;
- Teacher Education Institution School-based Consultancy;
• Education Authority Staff Development Programmes;
• Traditional University Masters Programmes;
• Open University Undergraduate Courses;
• Open University Postgraduate Courses in Education.

Teacher Education Institution Postgraduate Courses

Developing out of collaborative arrangements in the early 1980s, teacher education institutes (TEIs) offered a range of modular courses designed to prepare practising teachers for the demands of government initiatives, to enable the acquisition of further qualifications in pursuit of promotion and, by the 1990s, to give credit towards a Masters award.

TEI modules, based on notional student effort of 150 hours, tend to be organised in groups of four leading to the award of a postgraduate certificate, or of eight leading to the award of a postgraduate diploma. Typical postgraduate certificate/diploma courses have included generic fields such as Special Educational Needs, Early Education and Educational Computing, along with disciplines characterised by rapidly changing curricula such as Mathematics and Environmental Studies. Though explicitly postgraduate in philosophy, these courses have been heavily influenced by the competence-based philosophy favoured by politicians, civil servants and the course validation agencies. TEI Masters programmes build four further modules (research methods and dissertation) onto the foundation of a postgraduate diploma. Forms of delivery vary from module to module, but a mix of evening, weekend, summer-school block and distance learning units is common.

While course members pay a registration fee for each module, the main cost of provision is met by a central government grant to the TEIs. The level of funding is relatively generous to encourage part-time study and TEIs have a recruitment target to meet. In some cases, where school or local authority priorities are involved, registration fees are paid by employers.

Teacher Education Institution Short Courses

Recognising the needs of teachers and schools for shorter courses focusing on topics within major subject or generic domains, TEIs have offered a considerable range of courses, sometimes as short as 2 or 3 hours in length, and certainly shorter than a postgraduate module. Such provision is rarely credit-rated.

Typical short-course provision has been designed to meet new and high priority developments in schools, deriving from school development planning or from local authority and central government policy initiatives.

Courses were often based on stage-related curriculum components, sometimes specified by local authorities. For example, Information Handling in Mathematics at Attainment Levels D and E (10–14 years), The Use of Calculators with P6/7 (10–12 years) or the Assessment of Reading at Attainment Levels A and B (5–8 years).

While funding was provided in direct grant form from central government to TEIs in the 1980s, by the 1990s, grants were redirected to local authorities and full costs had to be recovered from them, teachers or schools.

Teacher Education School-based Consultancy

Throughout the 1970s and the early 1980s, TEIs were partly staffed on the assumption that they would provide, at no additional cost to schools, in-service training in their
geographical area. Though an educational rationale for school-based consultancy was developed, the staffing for such work had been made available by reductions in the central government initial teacher training quotas and the retention of otherwise surplus staff.

While TEIs had targets to meet and a record of activity was audited annually, no attempt was made to control its form. Typically, head teachers contacted the TEIs and requested the training. TEIs judged the feasibility of the work and provided consultancy locally in the schools. The services ranged widely from involvement in team teaching with teachers to working with promoted school staff to develop policies.

The high cost of school-base consultancy and concerns about its effectiveness led to its phasing out by the end of the 1980s and replacement by a full-cost service on a reduced scale.

**Education Authority Staff Development Programmes**

Restructured into nine large mainland units and three small island clusters in the mid-1970s, Scotland’s local education authorities played the major role, at least in quantitative terms, in initiating and co-ordinating staff development programmes for their teachers. The largest authority—Strathclyde—with a population of 2.5 million was able to concentrate significant resources in priority areas, to benefit from economies of scale, to defend its political priorities against central government action and to extract reduced prices from suppliers.

Education authority programmes, while varied, tended to be short (1 or 2 days in length), to be delivered to large subsets of the teaching professions and to be focused on immediate or short-term needs. Despite some attempts to have such courses credit-rated by higher education institutions, little progress was made.

Commonly, the cascade model for delivery was adopted. This involved the production of support material by commissioned writers from within the authority’s own teaching staff pool or from higher education. These materials would then be used to train the authority’s advisory staff. They, in turn, would train key school staff who, on return to school, would train their colleagues. While the cascade model of staff development produced little supporting evidence for its effectiveness, the authorities’ commitment to mass training led to its retention.

Driven by central government desire to disempower local government which, in the 1980s and early 1990s, had often sought to counter central policies, further restructuring of local government into thirty small units, in the mid-1990s, radically altered the role of the education authorities. While some of the larger urban units have been able to retain sufficient advisory staff to plan and to co-ordinate substantial programmes of staff development, the majority were too small to be able to resource significant programmes across all priority areas for development. Partnership arrangements may offer a solution but new political systems such as these have an in-built pressure to demonstrate that they have the independent competence that justifies their existence. Though the current situation is in flux, it seems likely that the reduced size of the education authorities, combined with the difficulty of creating and maintaining partnership, has resulted in increased influence for central government. The devolution of political control over affairs including education, from the UK to the Scottish parliament in 1999, may further weaken the local authority role as the new parliament seeks opportunities to assert itself and to demonstrate its capabilities to the electorate.
University Masters Programmes

Amongst the earliest avenues to personal development available to teachers were the Master of Education (MEd) programmes taught by Scotland’s older universities—Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen. These traditional programmes, in marked contrast to TEI or education authority programmes, were self-consciously academic rather than vocational in emphasis.

Entry was initially only available to graduates, so until the late 1980s, there would have been few course members from primary schools: degree-level as opposed to diploma-level training for primary teachers did not become the norm until the mid-1980s. For many secondary school teachers, the MEd qualification was seen as a way of improving their chances of promotion to headship.

Content tended to focus on areas such as the philosophy and history of education, educational management and research methods. Direct relevance to classroom practice resulted, where it did, from students’ attempts to apply academic ideas to their own professional context.

Latterly, under pressure from the courses offered by TEIs and the Open University (see below), with their greater vocational relevance, accreditation of prior learning and continuous, criterion-referenced assessment procedures, the traditional MEd programmes are changing. Most notable since 1998 has been the Scottish Qualification for Headship (SQH; SOEID, 1998c), a postgraduate diploma-level programme with high levels of workplace-based learning and education authority involvement in assessment procedures.

Open University Undergraduate Courses

For many years, primary teachers and other diploma-holders, such as teachers of Physical Education, Art, Drama and Technical Education, found the Open University’s modular programme, with its well-established accreditation of prior learning, an effective route to graduate status. Course members were able to study education courses of direct relevance to their profession or to pursue other areas of interest. Given the diversity of routes and content, no easy correlation between this kind of development and practice can be made.

With the gradual emergence of an all-graduate teaching profession, demand for this kind of provision, by teachers, may diminish.

Open University Postgraduate Courses in Education

With a greater emphasis on flexible delivery, the Open University’s postgraduate education courses are high quality, lead to various postgraduate diploma awards, MA Education and the Doctor of Education, and provide access for students who cannot attend courses in TEIs or universities. Though popular with students living in urban areas, these courses have obvious advantages for those living in Scotland’s extensive rural areas. Perhaps the greatest disadvantage lies in the emphasis on English exemplars in course materials. The distinctive history and contemporary policy differences in Scotland make it difficult for the Open University’s programmes to offer relevant content.

A Framework for CPD in Scotland from 2001

This short summary of the provision of CPD in Scotland indicates considerable variety
in the nature of delivery, length and composition. Sutherland (1997) argues that while
the current variety and diversity is commendable, greater coherence is required: hence
his proposal that CPD should be structured within a national framework in which all
 provision is accredited and in which there is an agreement on the range and level of
CPD that should be undertaken by teachers at different stages of their careers. In
Scotland, up until now, there has not been any general obligation on teachers to
undertake professional development or training leading to further qualifications. The
Government accords with Sutherland and believes that arrangements for CPD would
be improved if development and training were to be underpinned by a formal structure
of competences and standards, which are clearly stated and made widely available.
According to Sutherland, the accreditation of most CPD within a national framework
would make it possible to develop proposals for Individual Records of Staff Develop-
ment or career profiles which provide a cumulative record of teachers’ involvement in
professional development and training, as well as to create a more flexible learning
environment in which it would be easier for teachers to gain postgraduate qualifica-
tions based on study in a variety of contexts or settings.

The SOEID consultation document, *Proposals for Developing a Framework for Con-
tinuing Professional Development for the Teaching Profession in Scotland* (1998a), points out
that once a framework for CPD has been developed, quality assurance mechanisms
would be required to underpin the standards. This may be an issue of controversy
among teachers as it is likely both to put more pressure on teachers to perform and to
lead to increased accountability. The question of who would monitor CPD standards
also arises. At present the GTC has no locus in professional development beyond initial
teacher education and probation. It does not require CPD activity on the part of its
members. However, for some time the GTC has sought to have its remit extended to
encompass this area, and a recent government White Paper, *Targeting Excellence—
Modernising Scotland’s Schools* (1999), indicated that there would be new tasks in CPD
for the GTC including advising Scottish Ministers on a framework of standards and
how they should be implemented and monitored.

The White Paper states that responses to the SOEID consultation document
concerning the development of a framework for CPD suggest that there is general
support in Scotland for a coherent framework. However, it also states that the responses
indicate there is some concern about what such a framework would mean in practice.
A framework for CPD is not yet in place in Scotland, but a Ministerial Strategy
Committee has been established. It is chaired by the Deputy Minister for Children and
Education and is charged with drawing up a strategy for CPD. It is almost certain that
a more systematic structure will be put in place similar to the proposals set out in the
SOEID consultation document, namely:

- the development of a statement of standards teachers must reach by the end of
  their period of probation in order to be granted full registration by the GTC;
- the development of a statement of the standards for very good teachers who wish
to develop their careers in the classroom;
- the development of a statements of standards for teachers who wish to develop
  their careers in leading and managing an aspect of the school or an area of the
curriculum;
- the development of a statement of standards for teachers who wish to undertake
  leadership and management responsibilities at senior management level;
the identification of the development and training required in order to support these developments. (SOEID, 1998, Proposal for Developing a Framework for Continuing Professional Development for the Teaching Profession in Scotland, p. 6).

The Effectiveness of CPD

The government’s desire for a framework for CPD has the underlying implication that the professional development of teachers is not functioning effectively at present. However, this conclusion appears to be based largely on anecdotal evidence. While Higher Education and Local Authority providers of CPD regularly evaluate the quality of their courses, there is surprisingly little evidence of the impact of such provision on practice in classrooms or upon the quality of learning there. A degree of cynicism about the usefulness of CPD for teachers features regularly in the Scottish educational media, but official sources are largely silent. For example, the web site of the Scottish Council for Research in Education lists 91 research reports dating back to 1987 but none on this issue. Similarly, the Scottish Executive (government and schools inspectorate) and Learning and Teaching Scotland formerly the Scottish Consultative Council of the Curriculum (advisory body) maintain web sites with extensive document listings, but no reference to the effectiveness of CPD programmes.

Yet knowledge and understanding of the characteristics which lead to effective professional development of teachers is essential if the implementation of a framework approach is to be successful. As Fullan (1991) points out, ‘... the general endorsement of in-service education means nothing without an accompanying understanding of the characteristics of effective as compared with ineffective in-service education efforts’ (p. 315). He emphasises that workshops, conferences and in-service programmes that do not lead to significant change in practice when the teachers return to their classrooms are frustratingly wasteful for teachers and course providers. In other words, the implementation of a CPD framework alone will not necessarily improve professional development. The key is the articulation of the effectiveness of the inputs with a systematic structure, as well as an appropriate method of monitoring the process. The successful inter-relationship of all the elements is crucial to the overall development. Unquestionably a greater understanding of what makes for effective professional development is needed.

According to Fullan, CPD must be understood in relation to the process of change. As he notes, ‘the majority of staff development experiences do not work because they fail to incorporate the characteristics of effective change processes. Staff and professional development is change—in learning materials, in skills and practices, in thinking and understanding’ (p. 318).

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, CPD in Scotland is on the verge of radical change. Whether a framework approach will have a positive impact on professional development remains to be seen. However, what is clear is that a greater understanding of the characteristics of effective CPD is necessary.

What is essential is that teachers have the opportunity to have a central role in making decisions about their own professional development. CPD must not be something that is ‘done’ to teachers: they must feel ownership of it. Loucks-Horsley et al., cited in Fullan (1991), argue that ‘when staff development emphasises an idea or an approach without considering the person(s) who will implement it, the design and
results are weakened’ (p. 319). The reality is that school, local and national priorities do have to be taken into account and the majority of teachers accept and understand this. However, the individual needs of teachers should not be forgotten or lost in an overly systematic structure. Just as pupils learn in different ways, so do teachers. An in-service programme that is effective for one teacher may not be so for another. A place must be secured for individual teacher-reflection and development. There needs to be flexibility within the framework so as to allow teachers to feel able to plan their own development in partnership with other agents.

The professional development of teachers is a complex process. To be successful it must be understood as part of the process of educational change that will in turn lead to a quality education for all Scottish pupils and to motivated and empowered teachers.

NOTES

[1] The curriculum for children between ages 5 and 14 is not determined by statute or regulation but by advice from SEED in various publications under the general title of The 5–14 Programme.

[2] Higher Still, a new unified system of post-16 National Qualifications, is being gradually introduced in schools, further education colleges and training centres. These courses are based on proposals set out in the document Higher Still—Opportunities for All (SOEID, 1994).

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Correspondence: Kay Livingston, Director of the Quality in Education Centre, University of Strathclyde, Jordanhill Campus, 76 Southbra Drive, Glasgow G13 1PP, Scotland. E-mail: <kay.Livingston@strath.ac.uk > John Robertson, Faculty of Education and Media, University of Paisley, Craigie Campus, Ayr, Scotland.