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## Developing and Enhancing Professional Practice and Standards through Continuing Professional Development

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### 1 Background

#### The General Teaching Council

The General Teaching Council for Scotland (“the Council”) was set up under the Teaching Council (Scotland) Act 1965. It was the first such body for teachers in the United Kingdom and, indeed, one of the first teaching councils in the world. One of the fundamental principles underlying the work of the Council is that of professional self-government.

The principal aims of the General Teaching Council for Scotland are:

- ❖ To contribute to improving the quality of teaching and learning;
- ❖ To maintain and to enhance professional standards in schools and colleges in collaboration with partners including teachers, employing authorities, teacher education institutions, parents and the Scottish Executive Education Department;
- ❖ To be recognised as a voice and advocate for the teaching profession;
- ❖ To contribute to the development of a world-class educational system in Scotland.

#### Recent Developments in Scottish Education

*A Teaching Profession for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, the McCrone agreement, placed a new emphasis on Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for all teachers. For the first time, the Scottish education system acknowledged that teacher development, whether related to the development of pedagogy, the curriculum or leadership and management capabilities was a career-long process and not something that happened prior to entering the profession or at selected times throughout one’s career. The introduction of the new Teacher Induction Scheme which includes a well-structured CPD programme to support our new teachers has been an outstanding achievement. It highlights, probably more effectively than any other recent initiative introduced in Scotland, that the provision of a framework for the development of new teachers along with the resources and the commitment of all staff involved in the process, can result in our new teachers being confident professionals ready and able to embrace the challenges of the future.

It is only natural then to consider what happens to our teachers once they have been through the induction process. The Teacher Induction Scheme is an important part of a teacher’s development continuum, which in the process of preparing them to achieve the Standard for Full Registration (SFR) significantly develops their attitude towards personal reflection and career-long development. Hence it is vital that we consider how these standards and attitudes can be maintained and enhanced for the rest of a teacher’s career.

#### A Framework for CPD in Scotland

With the introduction of the McCrone agreement the teaching profession in Scotland has witnessed the introduction of a framework for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) that has impacted on the way in which the profession thinks about the professional learning and development of teachers and provides opportunities for teachers to develop and enhance their skills, interests and expertise.

Central to the introduction of this CPD framework has been:

- (i) the explicit recognition that a teacher's professional learning and development starts during initial teacher education, is developed during the induction year and further enhanced throughout the whole of a teacher's career;
- (ii) the role of Professional Review and Development;
- (iii) the realisation that Professional Standards (see 1.4 below) provide a framework that can be used to help focus teachers' learning and development and to identify areas of personal interest where a teacher may want to develop enhanced expertise;
- (iv) the importance of developing the potential of all teachers within our schools.

### **The Professional Standards**

The four Professional Standards outlined below were developed independently, however the general nature and structure of the Standards are similar, providing a coherent and consistent approach to describing the capabilities of teachers. These Standards provide a clear framework for the development of teachers' capabilities at different stages of their careers.

- (i) **The Standard for Initial Teacher Education (SITE)**  
This Standard identifies the core professional knowledge, skills and abilities and values student teachers have to demonstrate on completion of their programme of Initial Teacher Education.
- (ii) **The Standard for Full Registration (SFR)**  
This Standard builds on the SITE and identifies the qualities and capabilities new teachers are expected to demonstrate on completion of their Induction year. The SFR describes the basic level of competence expected of all fully registered teachers in Scotland.
- (iii) **The Standard for Chartered Teacher (SCT)**  
This Standard builds on then SFR and defines the capabilities Scotland's 'expert' teachers are expected to demonstrate.
- (iv) **The Standard for Headship (SfH)**  
This Standard identifies the leadership and management competences headteachers and aspiring headteachers are expected to demonstrate in leading their schools.

## **2 Developing Teachers : A Review of Early Professional Development**

Although CPD is now a statutory element of a teacher's working life, what constitutes appropriate development for all the various stages of a teacher's career is less well defined. Hence in 2004 the General Teaching Council for Scotland commissioned a systematic review of literature on early professional learning i.e. post probation and up to five years of professional practice. The overarching aim was to review literature published during the past ten years in Scotland, the rest of the UK and abroad, in order to inform policy development, share effective practices and underpin future research. The review covered both the content and the process of CPD and the balance between different types of CPD.

The review identified some key findings:

- ❖ researchers suggest that teachers pass through a number of developmental stages as they progress from beginner to expert practitioner;
- ❖ a number of studies identify factors that influence teachers' career decisions, e.g. that novice teachers who felt successful were more likely to remain in the profession;
- ❖ researchers offer a number of explanatory models of CPD e.g. collegiate/community of learners;
- ❖ there were few references that specifically referred to early professional development, but this stage of a teacher's career was discussed within various publications;

- ❖ a number of researchers have compared initial training and CPD for teachers with that offered to members of other professions. A part of this comparison involved detailing those for whom CPD is compulsory and the benefits/shortfalls of compulsory CPD;
- ❖ there was no evidence relating specifically to early professional learning amongst teachers in Scottish schools, although there are studies in progress.

The overall message to come from the review was that a great deal of effort is being put into developing frameworks for CPD for various stages of a teacher's career, however attention should be given to:

- ❖ identifying the CPD needs specifically associated with the transition from novice to experienced teacher and developing provision to meet these needs;
- ❖ evaluating the impact of CPD on teachers' personal and professional development, changes to their classroom practices and the subsequent effect on pupils.

It is in this context that the Council initiated a research project aimed at identifying teachers' understanding and perceptions of CPD.

### 3 The Research

In order to find out more about the above issues and to ensure that Council policy and actions were based on sound evidence a research project was initiated.

Further details regarding Council research initiatives can be found on the Council's website at [www.gtcs.org.uk/research](http://www.gtcs.org.uk/research).

#### 3.1 The Research Methodology

A two pronged research methodology was initiated, with the two approaches running in parallel and informing each other as the project progressed:

- ❖ School-based Teacher Focus Groups

Twelve teachers from Primary and Secondary schools across Scotland were appointed as GTC Teacher Researchers. As part of the development programme, each teacher researcher was trained in how to lead a focus group discussion and collate a transcript of the discussions for submission to the Council.

The focus groups consisted of six or seven teachers with varying years of teaching experience. Most of the focus group members were teaching in the school the Teacher Researcher taught in. Utilising teachers in this manner provided an opportunity to engage teachers in educational research thereby providing many with a new CPD experience and encouraging expansion of the community of GTC teacher researchers. The focus group discussions served to:

- inform the development of the questionnaire discussed below;
- provide initial feedback on the CPD issues affecting teachers.

- ❖ Questionnaire to a Sample of the Teaching Profession

A questionnaire was sent out to a sample of 8000 teachers (approximately 10% of teachers registered with GTC Scotland). Using the Council register of teachers the sample was firstly split 50/50 between Primary and Secondary teachers. Each of these two sections was then further sub-divided into four groupings by teaching service (in years): 0-10, 11-20, 21-30 and 31-40+.

The questionnaire was divided into four sections:

- Section 1: Personal Details

This section included information regarding teaching sector, the number of years teaching service (in 5 year blocks), gender, teaching post and school setting.

- Section 2: Planning and Undertaking CPD

This section sought comments on:

- the types of CPD teachers had undertaken (e.g. shadowing colleagues);
- the effectiveness of each type of CPD in developing their knowledge and skills;
- the CPD themes (e.g. behaviour management, ICT). The themes listed on the questionnaire closely match the key elements of the SFR; and
- how a teacher might plan to ensure a broad coverage of themes in the mid to long-term.

- Section 3: Evaluating, Recording and Sharing CPD

This section sought comments on how CPD experiences are recorded, the ways that short and long-term evaluations of CPD are carried out, and how teachers inform colleagues about the CPD experiences that they have undertaken.

- Section 4: CPD as a career-long process

This section sought comments on how the range of CPD activities a teacher undertakes might vary at different stages of his/her career.

This section concluded with an opportunity for teachers to suggest how the CPD process could be developed so that it would be:

- more valued by teachers;
- a more manageable part of their working life;
- more successful in creating enhancements to their professional practice.

The remainder of this paper focuses on the responses to sections 2 and 3 of the questionnaire.

## 3.2 The Findings from the Questionnaire

### Planning and Undertaking CPD

In this section of the questionnaire respondents were asked to identify the types of CPD they had experienced during the last two years, the key themes or topics addressed and how they planned their CPD.

#### ❖ Type of CPD Activities Undertaken

Figure 1 below, shows the types of CPD activities experienced by the respondents.

Most of these activities are undertaken either in the teachers own time or in school during the teachers' non class contact time. In other words these activities are easy to manage because they do not usually involve the need to arrange for the release of teachers from their teaching commitment. Face to face, collaborative work usually involves teachers working in team teaching situations.

The least common CPD experiences are teacher exchanges and secondments to the local authority, higher education or to one of the national bodies. One of the reasons for the low involvement in these types of activities is the non-availability of supply teachers to cover the teacher's post while they are out of school.

As can be seen from the figure below, the most common type of CPD activities undertaken by teachers are:

- non-award bearing short course (ie courses which do not form part of a post-graduate programme or qualification);
- face to face collaborative work;
- personal study;
- participating in an in-school or local authority working group; and
- attending a conference or exhibition.

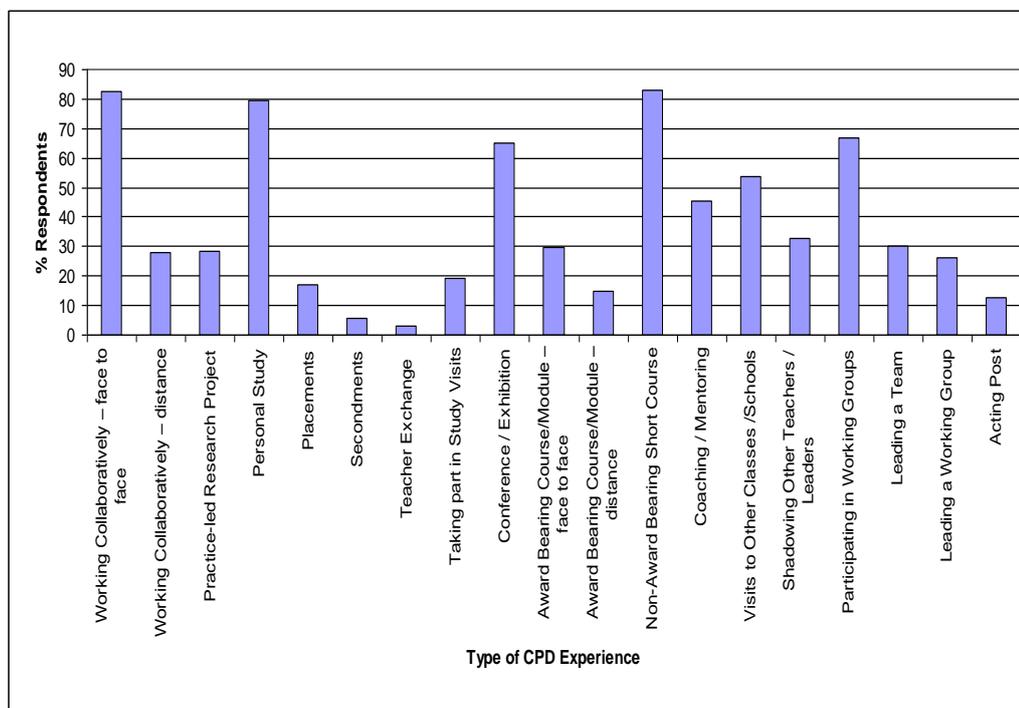


Figure 1 : Types of CPD experiences

Respondents were also asked to rate the effectiveness of each type of CPD using a 1 (very good) – 5 (very poor) scale. Almost all activities were rated between 1.5 and 2, with distance learning activities (courses and collaborative working) being considered least effective with ratings of 2.3 and 2.8 respectively. However, as can be seen from the comments below, in many instances the effectiveness of particular types of CPD have been directly linked to the quality of the experience:

*'CPD can be especially valuable if it is delivered by an expert who should be a practitioner teacher. An event which provides notes and research information to take away is valuable.'*

*'Best CPD experiences have involved observing good practice and being able to take ideas back to the classroom.'*

*'Practice led research is by far the most rewarding and helpful way to develop self evaluation and reflection in practice.'*

*'Workshops have ranged from excellent to very very poor.'*

*'Short courses are hit and miss; subject specific courses are excellent; generic courses are weaker.'*

*'Most experiences are poor because of poor quality material.'*

*'I feel many seminars have been created to satisfy the existence of CPD rather than a real need to share expertise in an area with benefit to the classroom.'*

It is also clear that many teachers experience a narrow range of CPD experiences/activities for the following reasons: poor availability of information on CPD opportunities, limited funding available to support CPD, lack of supply teachers to cover classes and, in a few cases, specific difficulties in the school:

*'Funds are limited for CPD and it can be difficult to source all opportunities available.'*

*'There is a lack of subject specific CPD in many of these types.'*

*'No visits to other classes/schools permitted by HT as no supply cover. Same reason given for shadowing ban.'*

The responses from primary and secondary teachers was also analysed separately in an attempt to identify any differences between the sectors. The findings are displayed in Figure 2 below.

The data confirms that in general terms, the same five CPD types highlighted in the general analysis above dominate in both sectors. While some subtle differences do exist between the sectors these tend to reflect the different nature of teaching in primary and secondary schools. For example, primary teachers appear to be involved in more face to face collaborative working and shadowing, whereas secondary teachers are undertaking more subject related activities such as study visits and exhibitions/conferences.

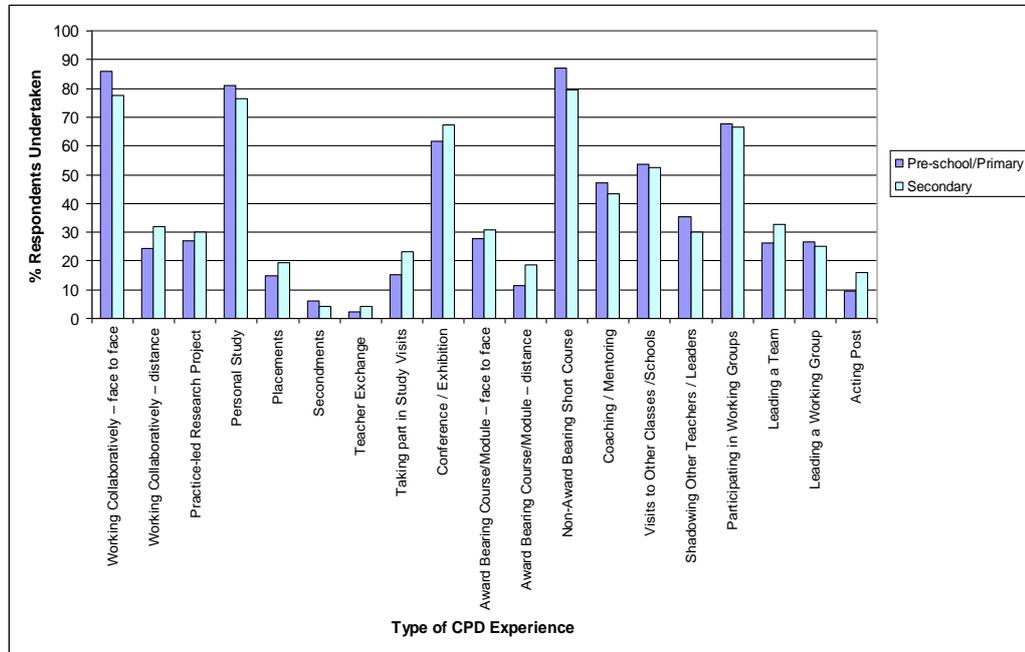


Figure 2: Types of CPD Experienced in Different Sectors

❖ CPD Themes

Figure 3 shows the percentages of respondents who have experienced CPD activities focussed on a range of specific themes. These were identified to reflect many of the key elements of the Standard for Full Registration and are linked to the enhancement of the teachers’ professional knowledge and understanding, skills and abilities and professional values.

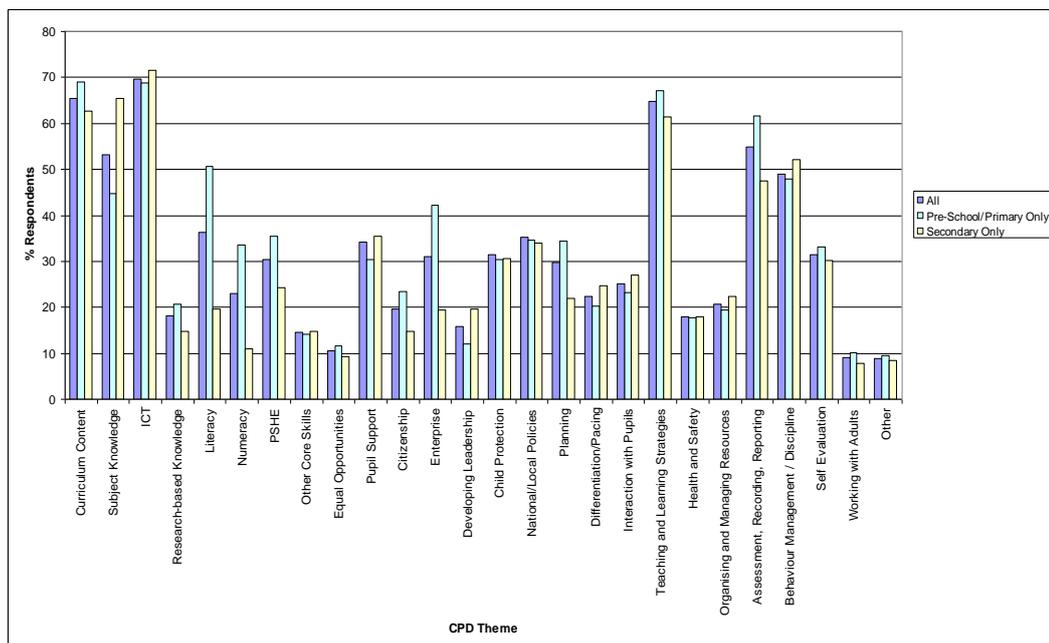


Figure 3: Theme of CPD Experienced in Different Sectors

The most common themes, Curriculum Content, Subject Knowledge, ICT, Teaching and Learning Strategies and Assessment reflect the local and national educational key priorities. Larger proportions of pre-school/primary teachers have undertaken CPD focussed on Literacy and Numeracy. Again, reflecting the emphasis on improving attainment and the CPD funding made available by government to support initiatives in these areas. Not surprisingly, secondary teachers have undertaken more CPD focussed on Subject Knowledge. Around 50% of all teachers have undertaken CPD related Behaviour Management/Discipline.

The most common themes identified as *Other* CPD activities include special educational needs, specific health information, career development, outdoor activities, eco-topics and science.

On average respondents identified that they had covered approximately 8 (out of a possible 25) themes during the course of their CPD over the last two years.

Given that the Standard for Full Registration identifies the capabilities all registered teachers in Scotland must demonstrate then it is important to ensure that teachers have opportunities to undertake CPD related to all of the elements defined within the Standard over an agreed period of time. Possible timescales suggested by respondents are shown in Figure 4.

While almost 40% of respondents indicated that 5 years would be an appropriate time period, the majority of respondents favoured the longer time period (eg. more than five years). For those specifying *Other*, a number of respondents indicated that a period of 5 to 10 years would be appropriate. Others suggested that the process should be a whole career continuous process and that the setting of a time period was artificial since CPD undertaken will link closely with career development and will evolve dependent on the needs of the individual.

Typical comments include:

*'Lifelong learning process.'*

*'Different areas will have different priorities for different people.'*

*'7-10 years to be done fully and well.'*

The evidence from this survey would seem to suggest that schools needs and local and national priorities dictate the range of CPD themes and not the personal professional needs of teachers.

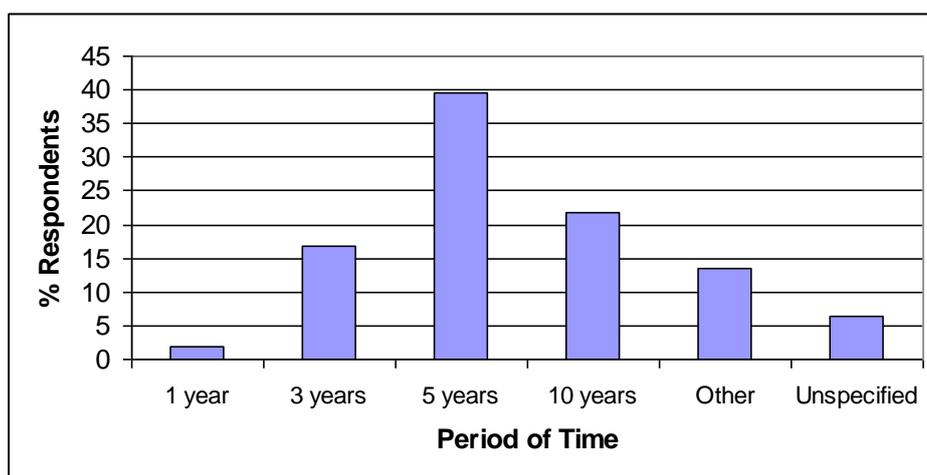


Figure 4 : Period of Time for Theme Coverage

### Evaluating, Recording and Sharing CPD

In this section of the questionnaire respondents were asked about:

- the factors used to identify effective CPD;
- the methods used to evaluate the quality and impact of CPD;
- the methods used to record the CPD undertaken; and
- the ways in which learning from CPD is shared with colleagues.

❖ Short Term Evaluation

Short term evaluation refers to the type of evaluation undertaken immediately following a CPD activity.

Figure 5 below indicates the percentage of teachers who evaluate CPD immediately on completion of a CPD activity and Figure 6 indicates the most common methods of evaluation.

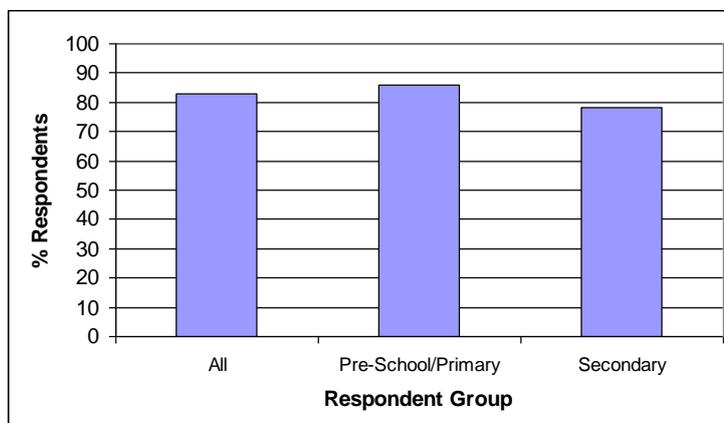


Figure 5 : Short Term Evaluation

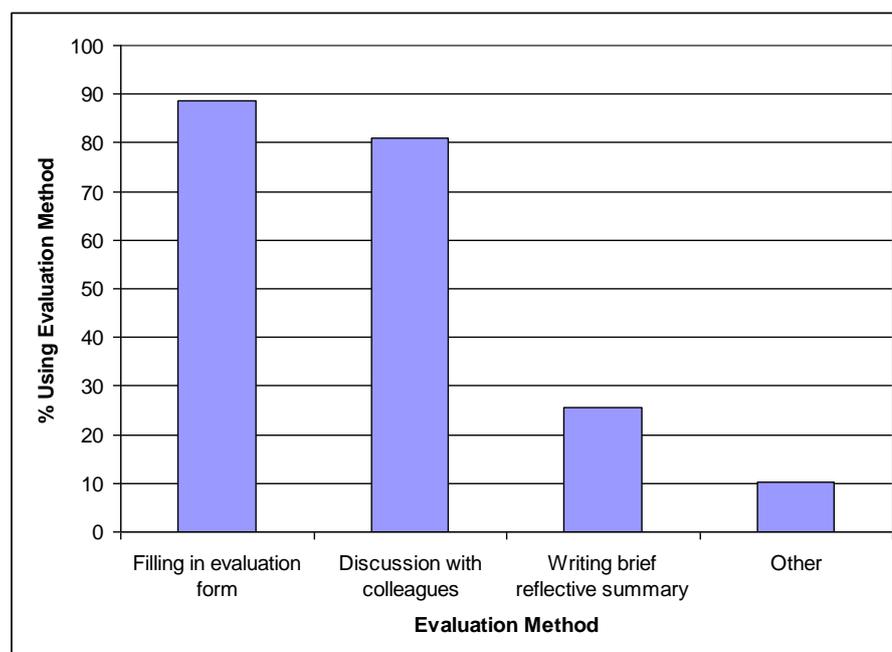


Figure 6 : Short Evaluation Methods

The high proportions of respondents carrying out some form of immediate evaluation of CPD reflects the policy of local authorities and higher education to gather immediate feedback from participants regarding the content and quality of the CPD activity. *Other* evaluation methods commonly referred to include discussion at staff meetings, on-line discussion forums and self reflection.

Respondents were also asked to identify the factors they used to identify a successful or high quality CPD experience.

The most common factors identified included:

- the (positive) impact on professional practice;
- practical solutions;
- the relevance and currency of topic;
- the provision of quality materials;
- the provision of information encouraging reflection and the development of ideas;

- quality delivery;
- inspiring, interactive sessions incorporating a variety of activities and opportunities for dialogue/sharing with other teachers;
- follow-up sessions or materials.

Some typical comments made by the respondents were:

*'One where there is a sharing of views and experience. One which follows different formats through the day. One leaves inspired to put ideas into practice.'*

*'Relevant to classroom practice. Useful strategies to take away. Opportunities to discuss with other colleagues.'*

*'Experiences which promote thinking, reassure or incite change.'*

*'Something that is of direct relevance to teaching and learning. Useful materials for immediate use or adaptation.'*

*'Good quality launch with follow-up.'*

*'Something inspirational with a motivating (expert) presenter.'*

*'A course which encourages reflective thinking and strengthens your teaching skills.'*

*'Any experience which makes you a better teacher.'*

#### ❖ Evaluating the Impact of CPD on Professional Practice

Figure 7 indicates the percentages of respondents who evaluate the impact of ideas gathered from a CPD experience on their teaching practice. While these percentages are less than the percentages of teachers who carry out an evaluation on the quality of a CPD experience, it is nonetheless important to note that a significant number of teachers do reflect on the impact of their CPD.

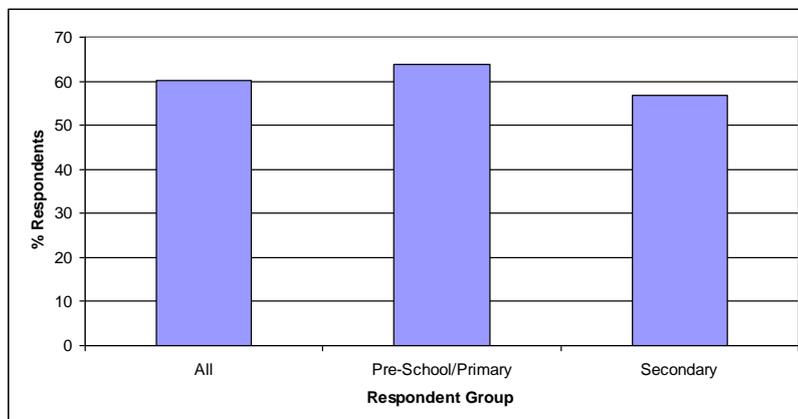


Figure 7 : Respondents Carrying Out Impact Evaluation

Teachers in all sections recorded a range of formal and informal methods for evaluating impact. These were carried out on a daily, monthly, termly or sessional basis and include:

- a self evaluation and reflection focussed on the impact on teaching and learning practice and/or pupil attainment and/or behaviour;
- gathering the views of parents, colleagues and children;
- discussion during professional development and review procedures;
- as part of the review of school development plan or departmental reviews of good practice;
- using provided (on-line) CPD evaluation forms.

Some respondents indicated that they did not evaluate their CPD experiences. The reasons cited for this included a lack of time, lack of awareness of the requirement to evaluate CPD and the low value placed on evaluation. A number indicated that the provision of a nationally approved, structured and easy to use template for CPD evaluation would be helpful.

❖ Recording CPD

It is now a requirement for teachers in Scotland to maintain a CPD profile. This profile includes a copy of the teacher's CPD Action Plan and a record of the CPD undertaken. The format for this profile is determined by the local authorities. Figure 8 indicates how respondents typically record their CPD experiences.

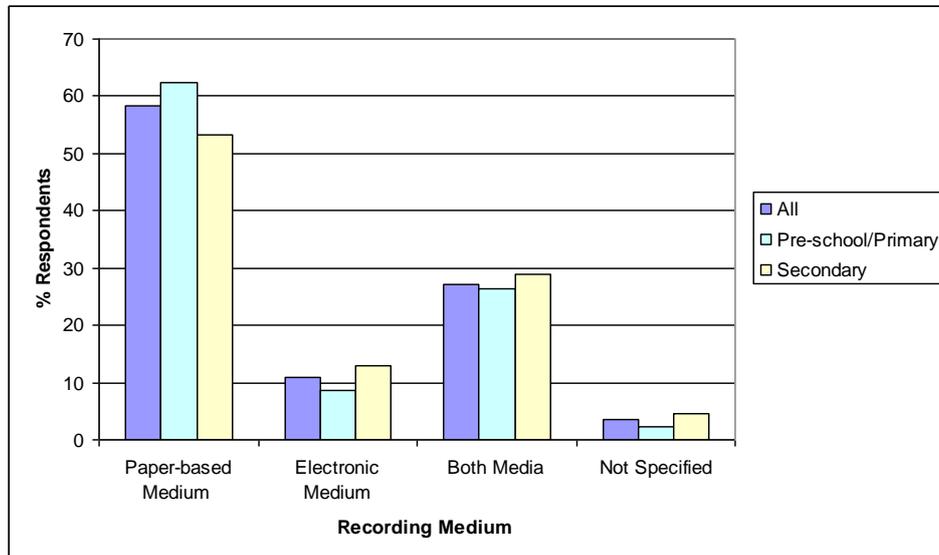


Figure 8 : Recording CPD

As can be clearly seen, although the majority of respondents maintain a paper CPD record there appears to be no consistent method of recording CPD.

Comments on the recording of CPD activities reflect the perceived benefits and actual limits of electronic recording, emphasise the need to develop and provide standardised recording procedures and highlight common criticisms of the recording process.

*'A logbook type system (one format) for all teachers would be useful.'*

*'I would like GTCS to give practical solutions as to how a record might be kept, especially in anticipation of CT status.'*

*'Current on-line system is laborious and unclear.'*

*'I don't want my CPD record to impact further on time management – it must be quick and simple.'*

*'It is a paper exercise.'*

*'Keeping a CPD record is a very useful tool for further reflection.'*

*'The process is heavily bureaucratic and my experience suggests that no one every reads the record I keep. It takes hours that could add up to days each year – a distraction from the business of teaching.'*

*'The region have a CPD website but is surprisingly time consuming to use and this puts people off using it.'*

*'On-line is good if the system is working.'*

In general, those teachers using a paper based method of recording perceive a benefit in using an electronic format and those using an electronic format seem to find it limiting.

❖ Sharing Learning from a CPD Experience

Almost 90% of respondents share their learning from a CPD experience with their colleagues. Figure 9 below shows the methods they use.

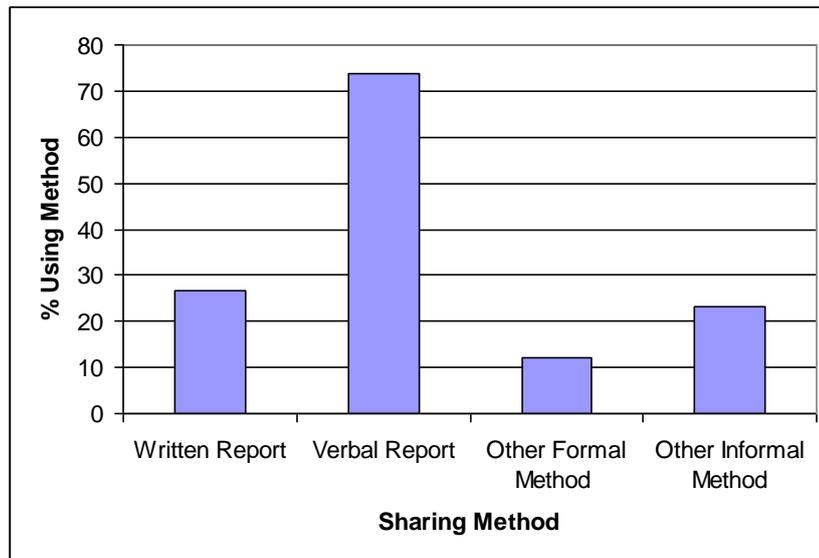


Figure 9 : Methods for Sharing Learning

Commonly reported *Other Formal Methods* include presentations/discussions at staff meetings, dissemination of handout materials, practical demonstrations and during staff review meetings. Informal sharing typically involves discussions with colleagues and electronic forums.

❖ Sharing the Impact of CPD

Figure 10 indicates the percentages of respondents who share the impact of their CPD experiences on their teaching practice using one method or another. Figure 11 shows the percentages of all respondents who share using a particular method.

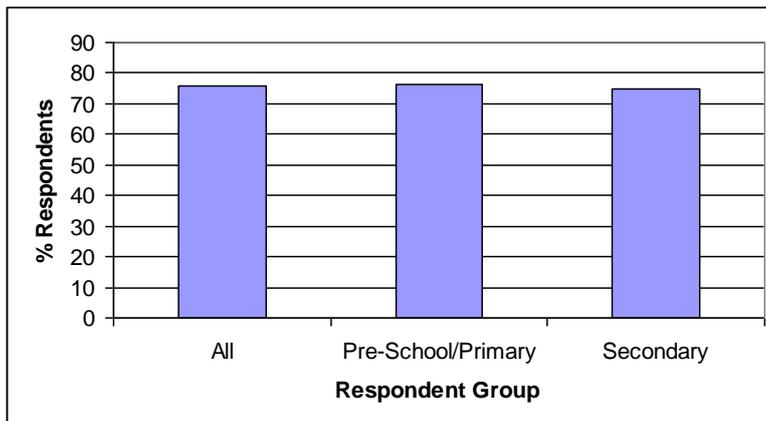


Figure 10 : Respondents Sharing Impact on Practice

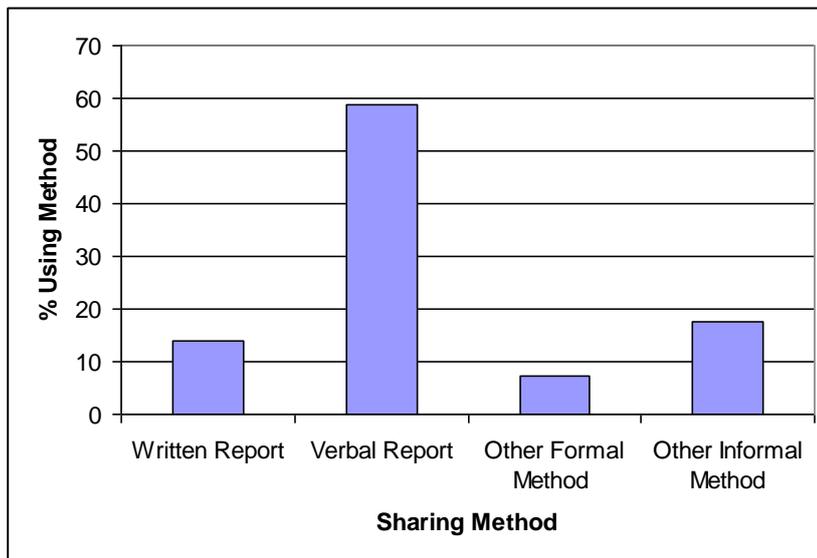


Figure 11 : Sharing the Impact of Learning

The figures for sharing the impact of learning from CPD are generally lower than sharing content, with a greater emphasis on formal review procedures and lesson plan evaluations.

Many respondents commented on the potential benefits of sharing information, but also highlighted the limited opportunities. Respondents viewed sharing as a cost effective and time effective way of informing colleagues of good practices, new methods and resources and providing a forum for collegiate discussion. Many felt that talking with colleagues about CPD learning can encourage positive developments in departments and in the whole school and can enable the individual to reflect on CPD activities prior to sharing.

On the negative side, many respondents indicated that they have limited opportunities for sharing CPD with colleagues due to the restrictions of a school management culture which places limited value on the process. There is however a need to ensure that contributions to the sharing process are equitable among staff members.

*'Gives teacher the opportunity to clarify any concepts and ideas initially difficult to comprehend.'*

*'Allows you to focus on yourself rather than your pupils. This is a bit of an alien approach to teachers.'*

*'Much more ground can be covered. Access to new sources.'*

*'By sharing your experiences it forces you to think more deeply about any CPD done and pushes the individual to use it more in practice.'*

*'Contributes to 'whole school' approaches to specific fields with working groups etc. Raising standards throughout school, team building, inherent critical discussion and reflection.'*

*'Enhances whole school improvement and new initiatives. Discussion with colleagues generates new learning.'*

*'Any sharing is done informally – no time is ever set aside for sharing.'*

*'Can be very useful indeed, not nearly enough done. Told in theory that time and opportunities will be given – never materialises in practice.'*

*'Burden of sharing is not equal amongst all staff members.'*

*'When information is linked to a priority in school development plan, it can then be used to formulate a whole school team approach to developments.'*

*'It is an essential component of the cycle of CPD.'*

*'The sharing of information leads to a collegiate, professional ethos of learning that is extremely healthy for the school and its community.'*

*'Can help others to identify their own CPD needs.'*

## **4 Conclusions**

The questionnaire responses and focus group transcripts have provided a rich source of data regarding teachers' views of CPD and the CPD process. The data also highlights inconsistencies, limitations and a variable understanding of the potential benefits and value of all aspects of the process. The analysis has enabled a number of areas to be identified upon which teachers would benefit from further guidance:

What CPD is:

- (i) A detailed explanation of what particular types of CPD are and how they could be used to undertake CPD experiences in particular themes. For example providing an exemplar that defines what practice-led research is and how it could be carried out in practical terms as a part of ones working life.
- (ii) A list of themes that would enable teachers to plan their CPD so as to ensure coverage of the different areas of their professional practice. However, it would need to still enable flexibility in terms of how the themes were covered.
- (iii) There were also concerns raised about how teachers' personal (35 hours) CPD is used. This was mainly focused on receiving clear definitions as to what constitutes personal CPD and how to protect their personal CPD from being engulfed by National Priorities etc.

How best to manage the CPD process:

- (iv) Detailed advice on how to compile and maintain a CPD portfolio. However, concern was expressed that any paperwork associated with CPD was not excessive, but was necessary, meaningful and had a direct purpose.
- (v) In terms of developing teachers' career-long perspective of CPD, provide exemplification of how the themes that make up the different areas of professional practice could be covered and maintained in a cyclical manner.

How to ensure that CPD has an impact:

- (vi) Teachers recognised that there was a CPD process, which not only involves participating in a CPD experience but also includes evaluating, sharing and considering next steps within a career plan, but realised that they were not consistently engaging in the whole process. They stated that time constraints and an unsupportive ethos were factors affecting their engagement in the whole process. However, requests were also made for advice on how to evaluate (including a list of evaluation criteria) and on ways to share CPD experiences.
- (vii) Many responses also highlighted that the provision of CPD was not suitably varied or of consistent quality.

## **5 Recommendations**

This research project is incomplete in that analysis by sub-division such as number of years since qualifying has not yet been carried out. This should produce further important findings and is vital when considering CPD as a career long process. It is also essential that following this further analysis any guidance on CPD produced for teachers is first trialled by teachers and subsequently monitored, evaluated and revised as necessary.