

# Teachers taking control: a new vision for professional development

Giving teachers the tools, support and budget to take ownership of their professional development is the way to raise educational standards

Teachers should be able to expect high levels of professional autonomy, in return for delivering high quality teaching and learning.

Giving teachers access to career-long learning is the missing piece of the jigsaw as far as education reform is concerned. Investing in a formal system of [professional development](#) for classroom teachers, and asking them to take responsibility for running it, would be a highly effective and non-confrontational way to improve school standards.

Support that enables qualified teachers to enhance their pedagogical skills, their understanding of learning and child development and their subject knowledge within a culture of continuous improvement will raise the quality of [teaching](#) and pupil outcomes, and is common to the great education systems of the world. This includes Singapore where teachers are expected to engage in [100 hours of professional development](#) every year.

In England, the picture is very different. In contrast to other professions, like law, accountancy and medicine, there is currently no expectation that teachers should undertake a structured programme of certified and accredited career-long continuous professional development or CPD.

Looking at the state of teacher CPD in England can be a depressing experience. The most ubiquitous CPD activity across English schools continues to be the five contractual Inset (in-service training) whole-school training days. These were introduced in 1988 as part of Kenneth Baker's school reforms and they are probably the last remaining unreformed element of that early package of changes.

[Research](#) shows however that when teachers return to their classrooms after an Inset day only 7% of schools check to see if there is any effect on student attainment. It is not surprising, then, that barely 1% of training has been found to be transforming classroom practice.

It is strange that the government has paid so little attention to reforming this area. It has chosen instead to focus on raising the quality of the 37,000 new teachers that enter the profession each year and on dealing with the lowest performing teachers through performance management and capability arrangements. These are important initiatives, but are dwarfed by the impact that a more coherent strategy for constantly improving the other talented 400,000 teachers could have in our schools.

But actually the government's approach presents a tremendous opportunity for the teaching profession to take this challenge on and for individual teachers to take more personal responsibility as professionals, for undertaking the professional development they require.

As we argue in a new [CentreForum report](#), the first step here will be getting the teaching profession to sign up to the aim of developing its own system of post initial [teacher training](#) qualifications, CPD obligations and revalidation or recertification processes.

A [Royal College of Teaching](#) is not essential for this to happen but would be the most obvious body to oversee the process. Every teacher should have a their own bespoke individual CPD plan. But so that this was not seen as part of performance management, schools would need to satisfy themselves that such a plan existed for each of their employees while stepping back from approving the plan's content.

A Royal College of Teaching, subject associations, teaching school alliances and universities could all provide support for teachers in understanding their training needs and how best to meet them. The introduction of specialist school-based teaching and learning staff and departments is also worthy of further investigation. Another body with a key role is the [Education Endowment Fund](#), which alongside funding and publishing high-quality research, could take on the role of supporting teachers in the application of research into classroom practice. To support this new CPD regime, schools should pilot a system where teachers have access to a budget to contribute towards the training costs involved and an allocation of time in which to undertake this training.

In the same way that the education system has been reformed over recent years to give schools high levels of autonomy within which to deliver the high standards of pupil outcomes, so teachers should equally be able to expect high levels of professional autonomy, including over their professional development, in return for delivering high quality of teaching and learning in the classroom.

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