



Education and Training 2010 programme

Cluster 'Teachers and Trainers'

Report of a Peer Learning Activity
held in Dublin, 26 - 29 September 2005

CPD for teachers and trainers

This note summarises the main policy conclusions of a Peer Learning Activity, in which experts from several European countries exchange ideas on policy and practice on a key topic in Teacher Education. The ideas contained herein do not constitute EU policy.

Introduction

1. This report covers the discussions and deliberations during the teachers and trainers Cluster Group's visit to Ireland from 26 - 29 September 2005. The report focuses on the policy-related questions raised during the visit, rather than recording details of the discussions associated with the specific learning activities.
2. The visit focused on teachers' and trainers' continuing professional development, and was organised to help delegates from ten Member States learn from the examples provided by the hosts as well as from each other. To prompt the discussions on policy-related issues concerning CPD, the Irish hosts organised an extensive array of speakers who introduced ideas relating to induction, subject-based in-service training, leadership, qualifications reform, linking CPD to the national qualifications framework and mentorship training. These presentations, introduced and chaired by members of the Cluster Group, provided a stimulus to discuss policy-related issues of interest to the hosts and the visiting delegates.

Background

3. Prior to the start of the peer learning activities the Commission had organised a planning meeting for four members of the full Cluster Group to discuss the organisational arrangements for the visit. This meeting agreed that there were advantages in covering a wide range of CPD issues and that the focus should be on discussing the policy-related questions arising from the specific examples presented by the hosts. To support mutual learning, it was agreed to provide time to reflect on the examples presented in order for delegates to review the effectiveness of their country's policy in the same area.
4. At the planning meeting the objectives for the peer learning activities were confirmed as being to:

- strengthen mutual learning and deepen the exchange of good practice between Member States addressing similar issues, in order to develop a common understanding of success factors for the improvement of policy-making and the implementation of reform;
- provide participants with an opportunity to explore, evaluate and reflect on the experiences of other Member States;
- contribute to the further development of the European area of education and training through enhanced, practical cooperation, and by encouraging policy makers in participating countries to take full account of existing EU instruments in the development of national education and training policies and systems.

The peer learning activities

5. At the start of the four-day visit delegates set out their reasons for participating in this peer learning activity. While individuals' motivations differed, there was general consensus on trying to: identify ways to improve the links between initial teacher training, induction and CPD; encourage schools and teachers to take greater ownership of their own CPD; and develop schools as institutions which support and encourage lifelong learning for their staff and students.

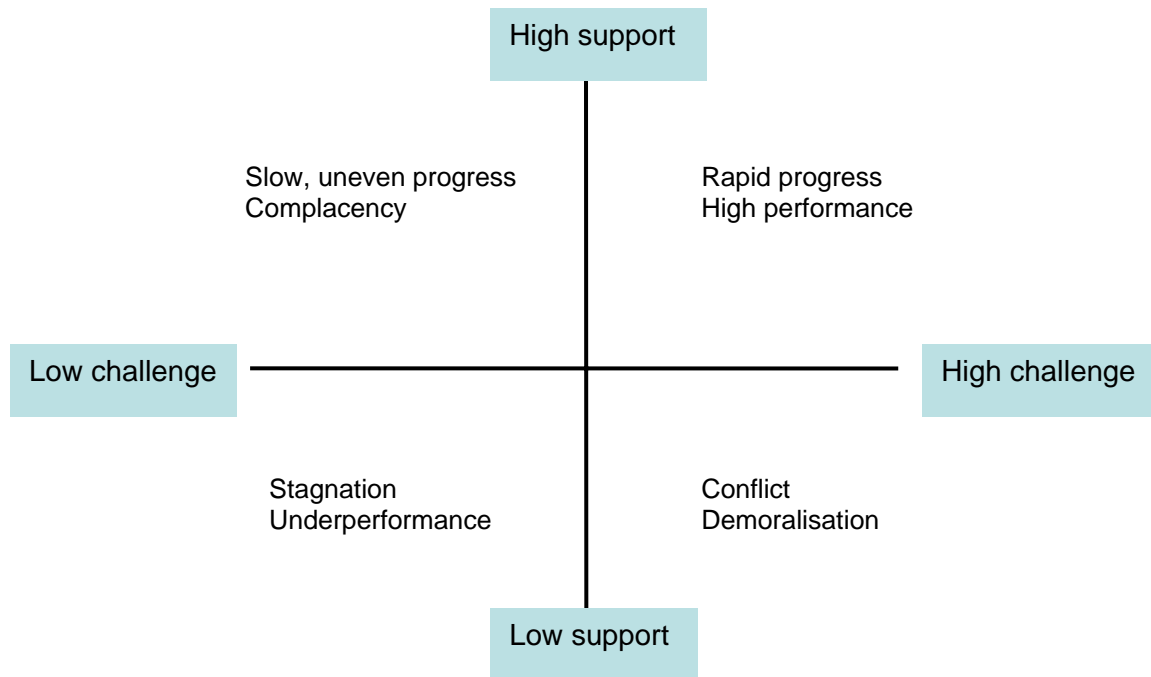
6. Member States had chosen to become involved in the teachers and trainers Cluster because of the specific issues and policy concerns they were addressing. At the start of the PLA, delegates set out some of these practical and policy-related issues which included:

- how to improve the quality of initial teacher education;
- what policy options exist for the reform of teachers' continuing professional development;
- how to encourage schools and training providers to work together on CPD and induction;
- how to encourage teachers' to take responsibility for their own CPD and lifelong learning;
- how to create a genuine continuum through initial teacher education, induction and CPD.

7. Throughout the visit discussions centred on a series of key issues relating to challenging and supporting the school sector. Arising from these twin themes of challenge and support, delegates discussed the importance of centralised policy-making in education systems, the importance of placing learners central to the process of CPD, and how to ensure that all pupils benefited from a high quality education system.

8. Barber¹ argues that these choices can be represented on the following diagram where the level of challenge indicates how content a ministry of education is with the current system and how much it expects the system to improve. In this model, a country's national system can be identified as belonging to one of the four quadrants.

¹ Barber, M. (2002), "From Good to Great: Large-scale Education Reform in England, Futures of Education", Arbeit, Bildung und Beruf Conference, Zurich, Cabinet Office, London.



9. For a national education system to succeed, Barber argues that challenge has to be combined with support. Challenge without support leads to demoralised staff and conflict between schools, the education ministry and wider society. Support without challenge leads to an unclear national vision and a complacent approach where only some schools make steady progress. In many situations the task for policy makers to help their system move from its current position to one where there is high challenge and support based on a clear vision.

10. During the discussions it became clear that there were a wide range of ways to challenge a national system to improve practice. Examples from the Irish hosts and the delegates identified ways in which the ministry, schools and teachers could each challenge the system to improve. Some delegates thought CPD could be used to challenge and support teachers and schools to identify ways to improve pupils' experiences so that they could gain more from their education. The Irish hosts offered many examples (e.g. the ministry's introduction of the school development plan, the school leadership programme, the reform of the examination system, and the encouragement of teachers to undertake personal and professional development) of how they have challenged staff within their own education system.

11. Delegates identified that support for the education system could come from various sources; the ministry, the higher education system, schools, teachers or any combination of these. In the discussions delegates identified examples from the hosts and other Member States where different approaches taken by ministries of education to supporting schools and teachers had been successful.

12. Barber's quadrant diagram offers Member States one way of locating their education system with regard to challenge and support. In the PLA, the discussions considered how CPD could be used to improve practice, support teachers and schools, and help to create a high performing national education system. Each country's context and traditions are important in deciding who offers the support and challenge, and delegates were keen to emphasise that there could be no universal solution as each country's education system had to reflect the national needs of

society.

Emerging policy issues

13. During the PLA there were many questions relating to teachers' CPD and how best to ensure teachers commit themselves to lifelong learning. The key questions related to:

- teachers' motivation and their rewards for participation;
- how much of the content of any CPD programme should be determined by the central authorities;
- how to improve schools knowledge of human resource practices;
- which aspects of school life are most valued;
- how best to organise induction for those new to the profession.

Teachers' motivation and reward

14. There were extensive discussions around about the type of incentive to provide for teachers (e.g. credit towards qualifications within the national qualifications framework, promotion, status, additional pay) and the levels of expectation within the system (e.g. part of the performance management and appraisal system, an entitlement for all, a statutory part of new teachers' induction or probation). Delegates, reflecting different traditions, had a range of views relating to the levels of compulsion surrounding CPD and how, if at all, individual teachers should be rewarded.

The role of the central authorities

15. One of the key questions which continued to emerge throughout the PLA was the extent to which the content and structure of CPD should be centrally determined and controlled. For some delegates a centralised system reflected their traditional approach and allowed the ministry of education to influence directly the school system. For other delegates a decentralised system which gave power, finance and responsibility to individual schools was seen as more likely to meet their system's needs. Despite the different approaches, most delegates were keen to ensure there was an appropriate balance which met their own requirements.

16. A related policy question arose from delegates' interest in moving towards a more decentralised system where schools are more responsible for self-evaluation and improvement. This created risks, particularly when schools' priorities were not aligned with the vision associated with the national system. Delegates favoured approaches which helped policy makers learn from small-scale pilots (like the Irish hosts' induction and probation system) before rolling out national programmes.

Human resource issues

17. As policy makers considered ways of empowering schools so that they can be expected to become more responsible for improving teachers' performance and pupils' achievements, there was a concern over the level of teachers' training in human resource issues. Delegates considered how best to help schools to maintain teachers' interest and motivation throughout their careers in order that schools can become learning communities which support lifelong learning. This human resource issue was thought to have a large impact on school leadership teams which may need extra skills in order to support the training and development of their staff.

What is valued?

18. Many delegates commented on the observation that the issue most valued by any national system is the one that receives the most attention and CPD, e.g. the

importance of school-leavers examination results in Ireland had a significant impact on the CPD offered and taken up by schools and teachers. In other systems different issues are seen as most important by society; as such other systems' CPD focuses on other areas.

Induction

19. The final policy issue related to the value and importance of a period of induction for teachers entering the profession. There was widespread support for requiring new teachers to embark on training programmes which supported their entry into the work of a specific school. Delegates also recognised that induction can help to provide support for teachers returning to the profession after a break in their career, teachers moving from one school to another, and for newly-promoted head teachers. Mentors and coaches from within the school were thought to offer a valuable resource which could aid mutual learning and assist a large range of staff within the school.

Next steps

20. During the PLA a number of issues arose which included:

- how to integrate policies for teachers' CPD with the wider issues facing the school workforce e.g. improving leadership skills and developing the whole school commitment to lifelong learning;
- how to develop schools' expertise in human resource issues;
- how to encourage schools and local communities to work collaboratively on common issues;
- how to encourage, train and motivate teachers to become mentors for new staff, serving teachers and school leaders.

21. The PLA finished by discussing the following policy-related questions which had arisen from the discussions and deliberations:

- how do you develop a shared vision by the ministry, schools and teachers?
- does the vision reflect the needs of the wider society?
- how do you change policy to improve performance?
- how do you support the whole education system?
- how do you ensure every child has access to high quality education?
- how do you help schools become learning communities?
- do we have a vision of the role of teachers?
- what is valued by the school system?