School Improvement Through Professional Development

On Wednesday 18th November 2020 the Wellcome Trust and Teacher Development Trust (TDT) hosted a virtual summit that convened policy makers, school leaders and system-thinkers to discuss *School Improvement through Professional Development*. The event marked the official launch of the NAHT's *Improving Schools* report, which itself is grounded in the thinking that "if the teacher makes the weather, the school creates the climate" (Tim Brighouse). Using this report, as well as the TDT's working paper *A culture of improvement: reviewing the research on teacher working conditions* as stimulus, delegates were invited to consider the following questions:

- *What are the most effective policies to enable teachers in all subjects, contexts and phases to participate in high-quality CPD?*
- *What can system leaders and policy makers do to support all schools to create the conditions for professional learning?*

By exploring the findings of what has been learned so far about the teacher development landscape - in large part through research and projects led or funded by the Wellcome Trust since its CPD programme launched in 2017 - the aim was to give colleagues the space to have an open dialogue, and, in the words of Anita Krishnamurthi (Head of Education and Learning at Wellcome), to "understand the road we need to travel and develop a shared understanding of how we might get there".

Section 1: The Current Context

Teachers do not work in a vacuum, they work within a specific school culture and a broader education sector system which dictates and influences the extent to which they engage with high quality professional learning. Wellcome's CPD programme has presented the sector with many useful and important findings since launching in 2017, including that:

- Teacher workload is a key barrier to engaging with effective CPD, and interventions are more likely to be successful if they are perceived as attractive and unburdensome.
- Teachers in the UK are less likely to engage with subject-specific CPD than their international peers, but they do find it a more attractive prospect than generic programmes.
- School leaders are fundamental in driving effective implementation of CPD and creating the conditions in which it can be sustained.
- Professional development has been linked to increased teacher confidence and self-efficacy; and is therefore likely to play a key role in retention.

Chief Executive of TDT, David Weston, reflected on a shift in priority from the system. Through so many recent changes (including new frameworks, a sway towards knowledge-based curricula, changes to assessment requirements and greater awareness of evidence-based pedagogy), he reminded colleagues that ultimately the one thing that underpins all of this and enables such changes to take place successfully is the expertise and efficacy of staff. He emphasised the idea at the heart of the event; that **"it is through the development of the people in our schools that we unlock improvement".**

This requires a more holistic view of the leadership of CPD as central to improvement, and seeing CPD as far more than small mechanisms and systems:

A shift in priority	
From	**To**
Improvement as a series of initiatives to be implemented	*Building culture, systems and habits that foster improvement*
Culture as ingredients of effective implementation	*Implementation being an ingredient of effective culture*
CPD as a vehicle for getting ideas into a school	*CPD as a habit of effective teams*

TDT's working paper '*A culture of improvement: reviewing the research on teacher working conditions'* originated as a discussion piece for the virtual summit. It responds to the fact that existing reviews of professional development literature focus on the *content* and *process* of teacher development, therefore potentially neglecting important findings about the role of working conditions on teacher improvement and student attainment over time.

The paper reviews 30 papers on teacher working conditions and school leadership in order to explore the impact of teacher working conditions on student attainment, and finds evidence that:
- The quality of teachers' working conditions has a clear, consistent relationship with student attainment that tentatively suggests a causal impact;
- The role of the school leader in fostering these conditions appears to be crucial;
- There are five aspects of teachers' working conditions that appear most closely associated with increased student attainment:
    a. Creating opportunities for effective teacher collaboration to explore student data, plan and review lessons and curricula, and plan and moderate assessments,
    b. Involving teachers in whole school planning, decision-making and improvement,
    c. Creating a culture of mutual trust, respect, enthusiasm in which communication is open and honest,
    d. Build a sense of shared mission, with shared goals, clear priorities and high expectations of professional behaviours and of students' learning, and
    e. Facilitating classroom safety and behaviour, where disruption and bullying are very rare and teachers feel strongly supported by senior leaders in their efforts to maintain this classroom environment.
- Allocating teachers to the certain partners, mentors, subjects and classes and keeping this stable over time is associated with a positive impact on student attainment;
- The same working conditions appear to be associated with successful, sustainable school turnaround...
    … and with successful retention of teachers in the profession;
    … and with successfully navigating the complexities and uncertainties of COVID-19.

From this, the authors suggest four key guiding principles for the way that we train school leaders for our schools and our system; the required skills, the necessity to focus on use of time including meetings, the importance of mentoring and coaching and the importance of an

open and communicative culture. All of these re-emerged as topics of discussion and debate throughout the *School Improvement Through Professional Development* event.

This conversation must acknowledge the key factor played by funding for CPD and the extent to which schools are able to protect sufficient proportions of their budget to invest in staff development. The [findings of recent SchoolDash analysis](#) of 2019 spending data offers a concerning picture of the current context:

- In 2019, reported staff-development spend at state schools in England amounted to just over £260m. In nominal terms, this has been flat since 2015. Allowing for inflation, it was lower in 2019 than in 2014.
- Staff-development spending was higher in 2018 and 2019 in secondary schools than in previous years, but this was offset by a decline in spending by primary schools.
- Only 14% of primary schools and 10% of secondary schools spent at least 1% of their budgets on staff development.
- More schools have been reducing their CPD budgets for the last three years than have been increasing them.
- Ironically, education may be spending much less than other industries on educating its own.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, budget and funding emerged several other times throughout the conversation of the day. Additional reflections from delegates included:

"One point that should not be missed is the issues around funding! The NFF [National Funding Formula] doesn't work for schools in areas of social deprivation. School improvement/professional development takes time and time costs money."

"It is not just about CPD budgets at school/trust level - it also about staff being given time out of classrooms and that has a significant cost."

"I see funding as less of a barrier than I did pre-covid. We have learned so much about the use of technology in the last few months."

"School budgets are devolved. It isn't that there isn't money, it's that people are choosing not to spend it in that way [on CPD]."

"We have seen in the CPD Challenge that budget doesn't have to be a major issue around quality/quantity of CPD…I suspect the bigger issue is not money per se but the ability to free up staff time for CPD. The shifts in the CPD Challenge schools appear to be much more about internal practices and structures than about "buying" CPD."

Why now?

Another recurring theme of the event was that we have a real moment in time - despite the backdrop of the pandemic and schools facing immense, unprecedented challenges. This is something that TDT have long been calling for; recognising a new consensus forming over the past few years.

David Weston urged that "**we must seize the initiative, learn from the work done by so many organisations, and say we must focus more on the conditions for improvement; creating learning institutions, teams, and professionals.**" One of the aims of this event was to generate a sense of collective urgency and feedback suggests that this was at least in part successfully realised:

- *"I think there is a genuine hope that we are getting some coherence to the system and CPD is critical in achieving that. The progression through ITT, ECF and NPQs will not work without a genuine commitment to CPD."*

- *"I believe it's the best time in my career to be able to do these things."*

- *"As a leader, I'm heartened by some of the things I'm hearing today in terms of what it means for schools. This message needs to go out to school leaders, because they are mediating the influence of the levers of government into schools, but they don't necessarily know that because they've only ever been told "this is how you're going to do it"."*

- *"Let the government step forward and convince those who are wavering with a compelling vision about how next year is going to be better for education than the last. It is absolutely right that the profession steps forward to frame and help shape that debate. Now is the time to set this vision."*

- *"If we're ever going to do this, we've got to do it now. This is absolutely the time. There are hurdles to overcome but if we don't do it now, we really are stuffed."*

End of day summation from Natalie Perera, Chief Executive of Education Policy Institute, Part 1 of 3:

"The good news is that - as we heard from James [Zuccollo] - CPD can have a positive impact on pupil outcomes, but quality, conditions and culture all matter. We can agree that a focus on CPD is important. We also agree that now is the moment for rethinking and being more ambitious about school improvement and professional development. It's the moment because:
1. We have the appetite.
2. Leading organisations including the Wellcome Trust, CCT, TDT, NAHT, EEF, NFER, EPI, DfE are all focussed on and committing to building the evidence and creating the conditions that enable schools to thrive.
3. We've heard from colleagues at DfE about how the evolution of the ECF and NPQs (including that on Teacher Development) is intended to further support PD.
4. We have the opportunity: Covid 19 has turned everything we thought we knew on its head. It took a global pandemic for schools to emerge as flagpoles in the community, and in turn the school workforce has shown that it can respond rapidly to changing and challenging circumstances."

Section 2: What needs to change?

1. **Greater focus on quality**
   a. **For providers**

Recommendation: The system must offer greater stimulus and incentive to the CPD marketplace to raise standards of external provision. As Wellcome's CPD Quality Assurance project comes to a close, in light of its findings the system should **plan to revisit the question of a CPD quality mark** which helps schools to commission more effectively according to their specific needs.

In his introduction to the day, David Weston described how there still continues to be a highly fragmented CPD marketplace. As well as the continued prevalence of traditional providers, there has been a sharp increase in school-led provision, online or remote learning as a result of the pandemic and an explosion in teachers accessing expertise through books, blogs or Twitter, "**it is still so challenging to understand where quality lies".**

Professor Rob Coe picked this up later, making reference to Sturgeon's Law in suggesting that the problem isn't that the general quality of CPD is low (because "that's universal"), but that "we need to find ways of filtering and incentivising the general bits of quality that are good".

This is a key driver behind [Wellcome's CPD QA](#) project, which - in response to a lack of regulation of the marketplace - has just completed two cycles of testing the viability of a system that quality assures teachers' professional development and allows schools to better commission CPD. Chartered College of Teaching's Katy Chedzey presented findings to delegates and pinpointed three main challenges which the project is seeking to address:
1. How do we define 'high quality' CPD?
2. How can we quality assure a broad and varied CPD marketplace?
3. How can we ensure the CPD QA system supports improvement?

"There is a problem - I think - with both supply and demand. It isn't just that there isn't high quality out there; there isn't really a demand for high quality CPD. There aren't incentives in the system for providers to go high on quality, but even consumers who want to go for quality will find that that's quite hard to find in the marketplace." *Professor Rob Coe*

   b. **For schools**

Recommendation: **Every school should prioritise the leadership of staff development.** With funded support from government, they should designate a senior leader as the professional development lead who is responsible for overseeing, coordinating and championing high-quality teacher professional development, that includes subject-specific development.

This policy recommendation garnered considerable support on the day. For instance, when asked about her one priority for the foreseeable future, Carole Willis of NFER referred to recent research which found a strong correlation between teachers autonomy over professional development goals and their likelihood to stay in the profession. She said therefore that in alignment with the *Improving Schools* paper, "it is really important that there are… **school professional development leads**… **champions** who can identify what are the real development areas and helping [teachers] identify where they can have most impact."

One school leader added "I would go further than the CPD champion to suggest **we redefine the role of the Principal to include an expectation of leadership of staff professional learning. Lead Learner**." Many also commented about how the role of governing boards is key and that their responsibility could be more explicit in the policy asks for "championing CPD and helping them move away from old-style 'send me a list of courses they've been on' requests," as suggested by National Governance Association's CEO, Emma Knights who has since written this piece for the NGA blog.

There was a fairly unanimous agreement that the current landscape reveals a huge variation of understanding and expertise around effective CPD within schools across the country. Professor Emily Perry of Sheffield Hallam Institute of Education reflected that schools traditionally have a "closed view" of what CPD actually is, and often see it as something "done to" them. She explained that "many schools couldn't move on in the [Wellcome] CPD Challenge until **they defined 'what CPD means for us and what it can do for us in our context'**. The need to support people who lead, design, facilitate, evaluate CPD is crucial." A school leader and CPD Challenge champion in one of the Sheffield schools participating in the project, reflected on how "defining what high quality CPD meant as a team" had been fundamental for her school before embarking on any change.

When considering possible risks or threats to this policy ask, colleagues at the DfE pointed out that it's not just school leaders who lack understanding; reflecting on the "**relative immaturity of the evidence base about what really good CPD looks like and really good culture looks like.**" It was acknowledged that this understandably makes it challenging for schools, but numerous delegates fed back that "for that reason it is very helpful to hear about projects going on like the Wellcome CPD Challenge and TDT's work."

Recommendation: There should be **an entitlement to high-quality professional learning for every teacher** in the UK that includes subject-specific development and an established system by the end of 2025.

Providing enough time for CPD is critical if the aspiration of school improvement through professional development is to be realised. Headteachers described their own school improvement journeys, insisting that "it's about capacity to actually do the CPD. **Without that capacity it just isn't possible.** Teachers need time to be professionally developed and they don't get enough time in most school structures." Discussion through the virtual chat box referred to the "farcical" difference between the basic five INSET days a year in the UK and the time teachers receive in other countries such as Finland.

The entitlement was also discussed explicitly by the School Improvement Commission, as their report explicitly recommends working towards a firm deadline for providing an entitlement for CPD. Nick Brook, Deputy General Secretary at NAHT offered rationale behind the date of 2025, recognising that "there is considerable work to be done before then." The main challenge posed to this recommendation was that nominating leaders and setting entitlements (such as a minimum 35 hours per year) can easily result in minimalistic compliance, as member of the commission Toby Greany urged, "please, let's not forget the importance of quality, and avoiding 35 hours becoming a box ticking exercise."

The key here is to focus not on the **what**, but the **how.** Toby explained in greater detail:

> *"we need to learn from international systems about what works in terms of quality and equity. I was worried initially about commitment to 35 hours being too low... But we've seen that if you give schools a bit of resource, you dedicate some leadership capacity, and **it's making sure that those 35 hours are focussed on quality with enough focus on subject-specific CPD**, this has proven to move schools' thinking on. Getting that right and being more confident at system level that putting in place some of those core expectations is the way to move forward post pandemic."*

This discussion continued in breakout rooms, with colleagues largely agreeing on the importance of schools and leaders understanding *how* to achieve high-quality leadership and culture of CPD before mandating it. Some questioned the wording of the recommendation:

> *"My issue is, what does entitlement mean? In teaching unions it means "X days". From my experience it leads to compliance rather than accepting principles. I know what it isn't, but what in reality is it? It's the culture and engagement of the organisation that will make the difference."*

Representatives from subject associations picked up on the subject-specific element of this recommendation and asked for school leaders' views of including an entitlement for subject-specific CPD. Headteachers at the meeting tended to feel this was incredibly important, suggesting **around 50% of a teacher's CPD time be spent on subject-specific development** (coincidentally, the same suggestion made in the Wellcome CPD Challenge). Importantly though, the system should be aware that the notion of "subject" needs defining, particularly in primary or special schools. Learning taken from the Wellcome Challenge suggests that a successful way of framing it had been to talk about **CPD that is "contextualised within your classroom practice" and "not generic", but instead applied to one's own 'subject'.**

2. Reframing accountability

Recommendation: Schools must be supported to overcome the barriers to dedicating sufficient time and space to CPD preparation, activities, follow-up and evaluation.

When thinking ahead about what needs to change in order for schools to be able to achieve school improvement through professional development, performance and inspection-based **accountability culture** was particularly highlighted by school leaders as a key barrier that needs to first be shifted:

- *"In 23 years as a Headteacher, I have never been asked to reflect on culture. **Our system doesn't ask us in any shape or form to think about it**.... It needs to come across lots more strongly alongside moral purpose."*

- *"The current accountability system can sometimes be a distraction. Often as a Headteacher **the thing holding you back is the inspection framework under which you are being assessed**. Understanding that you can be released from that takes a bit of courage, particularly for new school leaders."*

- *"It would be unfair to say that CPD isn't a high priority for any headteacher across the country - the reality is time, resources and other **competing factors such as constant worry about next time Ofsted are going to visit**. "*

- *I've pushed back against high-stakes measures but been discouraged by local authorities and school improvement advisors. **It takes courage to follow the research**. If the kind of rhetoric you're getting is "your job will be on the line if this school doesn't turn around in 16 months…"*

The Improving Schools panel, chaired by Nick Brook and featuring members of the School Improvement Commission (Carole Willis, Sir Toby Greany, Dr Kate Chhatwal and Chris Kirkham-Knowles) spoke in depth about how this "golden opportunity" to rethink the education system's approach to accountability sits at the heart of their [newly launched report](#). Nick highlighted that a fundamental challenge will be **moving away from high-stakes assessment of teachers** and observations being seen as a threat, while Toby Greany explicitly spoke to the research around how a more centralised system which relies heavily on accountability and Ofsted is creating **"winners and losers, which is overall problematic**... You can mandate adequacy but you have to unleash greatness."

Breakout rooms throughout the day repeatedly came back to the importance of the sector collectively moving this obstacle. Suggestions included that "we need to focus on making moral and professional accountability so powerful that the external accountability system becomes less dominant." Examples were given of schools who are pushing back against external, top-down measures of performance and growing this culture of development upwards, starting with their approach to staff CPD and appraisal. One Multi Academy Trust CEO shared how its schools are renewing the meaning of performance management so the focus is on development; "We are moving appraisal towards focusing upon 'engagement in learning' through accountability "dialogues" and away from SMART targets".

A panel featuring school leaders participating in the Wellcome CPD Challenge and TDT's CPD Excellence Hubs projects offered insights around how barriers have been successfully overcome in reality, and emphasised how they too had reframed performance management:

- *"We have tied CPD in a very positive way to our appraisal process to give staff about 10 hours of directed time to focus on an enquiry question related to a specific area of need...and line managers providing ongoing support"*. Rachel Hobkirk, All Saints School

- *"All my staff get an additional period of non-contact time per fortnight and discuss with their appraiser what they will work on for the year, within some groups of areas that the school is interested in which people then go on and research… **It seems to have developed a culture or ethos of people being really interested in that.**"* Simon Eccles, St Mary's Catholic Academy

3. Policies and structures to encourage school collaboration

Recommendation: Building on the work of the Chartered College of Teaching, all schools and professional development leads should have access to external support networks, research and case studies, to provide opportunities for them to develop their own understanding of, and expertise in, effective CPD.

Members of the School Improvement Commission felt that schools being able to access external network support was critical to their future vision. Dr Kate Chhatwal of Challenge Partners encouraged that "school improvement should be a collaborative and collective endeavour. It's about acknowledging the importance of place and locality but not being constrained or bound by it, and avoiding entrenching regional inequalities." while Carole Willis added "it is important that schools are able to identify what's going to have the greatest impact and stop doing things that don't - external support and challenge can help to achieve this and it links to accountability. **Ofsted inspection should provide greater diagnostic insights** and all schools should consider the role of peer-review".

Peer review was mentioned numerous times as a solution to schools becoming too "inward-looking" or isolated, though a note of caution was offered by some. Rob Coe reminded colleagues that "peer review can work well, but very often doesn't. **It only works well when there's a really solid body of strong knowledge and expertise within the system,** and I would say we don't have that currently. We need to first build capacity and expertise to make that an effective process."

Founder Trustee of the Chartered College of Teaching, Dr Jonathan Shepherd, reflected on what might be learned from other professions, recalling that *"One of the things that helped us a lot at the ground level in the field of surgery was integrating clinical audits with professional development. One session a month everybody downs tools to audit their practice against the exciting, up-to-date evidence base; collaboratively. Could this be replicated in schools?"*

4. Scrapping one-size-fits-all, "flat-pack" school improvement solutions

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Recommendation: Government, system leaders and school leaders must work together to ensure that teachers and leaders in all settings can **engage with evidence and expertise** to inform better CPD.

This recommendation encapsulates two main threads of conversation throughout the day; the first being the undeniable agreement around how what works in one context won't work in another. As Emily Perry advised, "One size does not fit all and we have learned in the CPD Challenge that that is certainly the case."

Towards the start of the day, Headteacher Chris Kirkham-Knowles coined an analogy which appeared to stick well with other delegates who continued to use the same reference throughout the event. Chris said that the biggest challenge for leaders is avoiding buying into a "flat pack" mentality of school improvement interventions, i.e. companies or individuals offering a "ready made kit", with a few tools needed to implement structures that gives you immediate reward, but might not be quite the right size, shape or stand test of time.

When it comes to school improvement through professional development, it is therefore vital that we take a "master craftsperson approach to building", taking time to build a culture and ensuring that the craftspeople involved feel valued for expertise and help to shape their work. The rallying call this recommendation makes for sector coherence resonated strongly with delegates, who collectively agreed on the importance of system wide support for schools to be able to collaborate better and share the resources to ensure that a "master-craftsperson" approach is in place.

School Improvement Commission member Stephen Fraser, Deputy Chief Executive of EEF added that "the day-to-day behaviours and practices that are expected, supported and rewarded need to be aligned within each school, but it's not reasonable or realistic to expect each school to construct these for themselves. Success is undermined if those expectations, supports and rewards aren't reinforced throughout system structures and policy settings."

Delegates agreed that the key ingredients must be people who know the context, and removing the quest for quick fixes. This aligns closely with the findings of TDT's working paper and the role of leadership in creating the right conditions. Some suggested funding more support for particularly new leaders and CPD leaders in better understanding this research themselves. Colleagues were also challenged to consider that "where research does exist, it's not shared well across the system".

Making creating a culture of CPD a school improvement priority: Is it realistic?

Some examples of responses shared in breakout rooms:

- *"It's fundamental, if we see schools and colleges as learning institutions, they should be learning places for colleagues and staff. We have been driven by compliance for too long. If we want to lead as a profession, we need to improve professional knowledge and agency"*

- *"There's no discussion or debate about it, how can you move schools forward without that culture?"*

- *"It's really hard sometimes to get people to want to engage with CPD. It needs to be established as a culture."*

- *"Where it works well, CPD is not an addition or an add-on. Teachers need to develop their skills in the classroom. Professional development of staff needs to take place during the time that you are doing your job."*

- *"Yes and no depending on context. Those who are prepared to commit are likely to be the ones performing well. The question for me is "can you see this as a school improvement vehicle in really high pressure, challenging situations where it requires bravery of leadership to say we're going to take a longer, more sustained route that takes time? It feels harder, and less realistic, for those schools who need it the most"*

- *"I do see a lot of training regimes rather than a culture - we need to move schools away from that thinking."*

End of day summation from Natalie Perera, Chief Executive of Education Policy Institute, Part 2 of 3:

"We all agree we need to create the conditions; we cannot talk about CPD in isolation. Ability to foster CPD policies and practice relies heavily on the wider school and education system more widely. This means creating a culture of improvement, not a series of disparate interventions or a "flat-pack mentality" to school improvement. Such approaches might appear tempting, but are often a poor fit and unsustainable.

It's not surprising that schools look to quick fixes - creating sustainable change is hard. We keep coming back to this idea of accountability. Earlier today we heard the quote "the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting the same results." The role of Ofsted is key. Schools serving disadvantaged communities continue to be penalised under the Ofsted framework. There have also been real term funding cuts since 2010. International benchmarking data also shows our teachers work longer hours than other countries, and we've also heard from Alison [Peacock] that teacher attrition in this country is high, while morale is low."

Section 3: How do we enable change?

In his presentation, Professor Rob Coe of Evidence Based Education referred back to the DfE Standards for Teachers' Professional Development - "Probably has been helpful… Has it raised standards? Almost certainly no. Could it have? Not really no, because it's a document and a document doesn't change people's behaviour - it doesn't give people new skills or new knowledge." Rob suggested four practical action steps for what more needs to be done:

- Map a clear, evidence-based curriculum for teacher development
- Actively promote a culture of investment in teacher learning
- Explicitly build capacity and expertise
- Create metrics/evaluation/incentives for quality and impact

Yet this does not seem to fully cover the less tangible topic of culture, which throughout the day was noted as particularly complex because it is harder to measure. One key challenge to the system was that perhaps **we tend towards the measurable by finding the things that are easy to measure**, and in doing so overlook the key points in a school ethos and culture which are fundamental to improvement. The following question was asked to breakout rooms:

What could drive change-readiness across the sector?

- *"Cultures are influenced by structures - **that might be an easier way to introduce it to schools leaders**. If you introduce structures like collaborative professional learning, coaching, some of the subtle but powerful informal professional learning, it might be understood better. Those are concrete and substantive ways to influence informal culture for ongoing professional learning. But there are other structures like accountability, performance that will need to be broken down in order for that to be sustained."*

- *"Building on work of the Chartered College of Teaching and **raising the status of professional learning**. Galvanising the energy of moving from expectation to "you've trained as a teacher so should know what you're doing", through building on ECF to being a career-long learner. That feels fundamental moving forwards - we need to own it as a profession as opposed to someone coming in to blame, shame us or give us a sticker/badge!"*

- *"Many schools don't actually understand what culture means. Opening up this discourse, developing an understanding of what it actually means in school to have this culture… It needs to be pushed forwards - it's difficult in the current climate to do strategic thinking, but it's an opportunity to think about what we want, and also how this relates to appraisal as a professional development process."*

- *"So much of this relies on a change in beliefs. We know what the messages are, but **as a sector we need to communicate that consistently**, establish a professional voice and amplify each others' messages more than we currently do."*

- *"It would help to distinguish between what is sustainable and what is expedient. Teachers need to recognise that they are the essential components rather than the receivers."*
- *"We spend a lot of time thinking about how to measure success. Are we hijacked by the notion of X causes Y? We need to **spend more time focussing on stories and narratives**, because success looks different for every individual or school."*
- *"Focus on things that are harder to measure and evidence, but that we know are important 'softer' things."*

- *All of us at the system level working together to find a coherent offer is a useful starting point. **This conference today shows we've got people who are able to lead the system and work together in a powerful way to make the difference for our teachers.** There's a lot that's coming into the system that could very genuinely make a difference.*

The role of the Department for Education

There was a general consensus that the evolution of the CPD Standards, Early Career Framework, new Headteacher Standards and updated NPQ Frameworks is a welcome move from the Department for Education (DfE) to further support professional development in our schools, though there were additional suggestions around how these can be utilised to full effect. One suggestion was that *"the new NPQs could do more to ensure that leaders understand their role in relation to some of the aspects which are not easy to research, but doesn't mean they are not important ...we can't do a RCT on culture!"*

Further reflections on the role of national qualifications and the role of the DfE were:

"We definitely shouldn't be seeing the NPQ in Teacher Development as replacement for ML, but instead a specialist role for a senior leader to develop PD amongst staff rather than a traditional middle leadership role, linked with a CPD Champion approach. My worry about NPQs is that the funding will be limited and that will restrict its success/impact."

"What is going to happen with Teaching School Hubs? There's an element of risk that if the hub gets the impression that they're there to provide - schools will run to them. The role of them understanding how CPD needs to work in practice to develop teachers individually (and focussing on meeting needs of school) is critical. It's a real opportunity going forward but a risk sitting within that."

"The DfE has quite a big communications challenge with lots of funded, high-quality stuff coming, but partly (because of Covid) there is a challenge of how we get that message to schools in an efficient, non-distracting, helpful way. Not just to those who know what's coming and are good at taking advantage of what's coming."

School leaders' advice to others embarking on a programme of CPD change

- Flexibility built in to respond to pressing issues of the moment, so teachers and TAs can access things depending on their professional journeys. Online and remote opportunities have been particularly helpful to drive this during the pandemic.
- Involving staff voice when defining and evaluating quality, and working out how well things are currently going e.g. whether they feel their CPD is sustained or one-off.
- Gaining staff buy-in to a long-term, sustained approach
- Taking the opportunities of the "Covid classroom" to explore CPD in a more departmental way. For instance, instead of sending individuals "out on expensive courses" and expecting them to disseminate back, engaging in online expertise collectively as a department.
- The role of the CPD champion (and them being developed to understand content *and* processes) is crucial - with the Headteacher and senior leadership team fundamental to supporting that individual to lead change.
- Safeguarding enough time and capacity to deliver. "It's challenging because it costs money, but critical to getting it right."
- School leaders finding ways to really understand teachers' individual development needs and helping them to engage and evaluate against those.

- The key is that changes don't have to be big to be powerful. Emily Perry said "we've seen in the Challenge some small changes that have made a really big difference", e.g. defining high-quality CPD or finding ways of reconfiguring department meetings. "It isn't necessarily about spending lots of money or making big structural changes."

End of day summation from Natalie Perera, Chief Executive of Education Policy Institute, Part 3 of 3:

So the question for us in this room is: *what can we do to create a culture of improvement within the current conditions?*

The sector needs to create ownership of this improvement journey, and school leaders (including governors) are key. This involves all school leaders, not just those in challenging schools or those in highest performing schools. As well as strong leadership, the key ingredients that seem to be emerging today are:

1. **Setting a clear mission and purpose** - articulating shared goals but also involving teachers in setting and framing those goals. It's important to have a clear definition of CPD; in the context of individual school or trust and not just "going on a course".
2. **Collaboration and sharing of ideas** - continued focus on peer-to-peer support. Often more powerful to allow colleagues to hear from those in similar circumstances or facing similar challenges rather than just top down support, but also need to allow genuine time for this too.
3. **Autonomy and mutual trust** - creating a culture where concerns can be highlighted in a safe environment is key. Challenge here is supporting staff to feel protected and empowered
4. **Focus on design and delivery** - adopting processes rooted in evidence and again in context of school. Identifying good CPD matters the most. Also important to put into place effective processes for delivery, e.g. online in current context
5. **Finally, embedding learning.** CPD doesn't just end at the end of a training course. Building knowledge is key, and making time to reflect as well as to measure and evaluate impact is crucial.