Professional Development

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) adopts a broad definition of teacher professional development (PD) as "activities that develop an individual's skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics as a teacher" (2009, p49).

At Cambridge Assessment International Education (Cambridge), we believe that PD should aim to develop teachers' professional thinking and practice, and enhance the quality of teaching and learning. This is achieved through a wide range of activities and practices that support on-going and evidence-based reflective practice. PD is sometimes narrowly used to refer to training provided for teachers to improve their practice, but training is just one of the wide range of activities teachers can undertake as part of their PD.

What other terms are associated with professional development?

- **Teacher practice** refers to the methods habitually adopted by teachers in the pursuit of their goal – to enable learners to succeed in specified learning outcomes.
- **Continuing professional development (CPD)** is often used to emphasise that learning never ceases.
- **Teacher** (or **professional**) **learning** is defined as processes that result in specific changes in the professional knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs or actions of teachers – the outcome of effective PD.
- A **professional learning community/network** is one in which colleagues are mutually supportive. Communities can be either online or offline.
- **Mentoring** and **coaching**. The purposes of mentoring and coaching are distinctive:
  - **Mentoring** involves a professional relationship with an identified colleague who is more experienced (a 'critical friend'). It supports practitioners whilst they make a significant career transition and/or encourages talents, facilitates development and challenges practitioners to stretch themselves.
  - **Coaching** is a technique used to support the process of reviewing established or emerging practice. It is focused on specific skills, innovation or change.
- **Action research** involves teachers using recognised research techniques to improve teaching practice.

What is the theory behind professional development?

- **The aim of PD is to change our professional thinking, knowing, feeling and doing**. Evans (2011) divided these goals into a taxonomy, featuring the following three main inter-related categories:
  - Behavioural component
  - Attitudinal component
  - Intellectual component.

Unless attitudes and ways of thinking are changed – that is, hearts and minds won over – the desired change in behaviour may not happen.

- **In order to develop as a teacher, it is necessary to learn from experience through reflection**. Teachers are always learning simply by doing their jobs. However, the process is significantly advanced by reflection, which is a fundamental part of teacher development theory (see, for example, the work of John Dewey, David Kolb and Donald Schön). This essentially involves **critical analysis** of one's practice, with the aim of reaching a new perspective with modified attitudes. Teachers must be careful to critically analyse their attitudes and actions, in order to improve – see Figure 1:

Figure 1: The reflective cycle
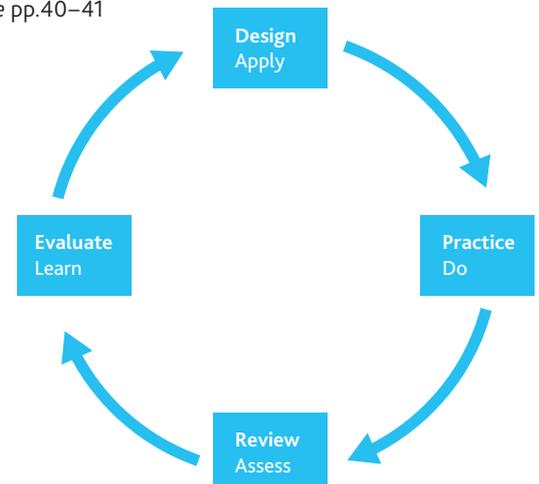Source: *Implementing the Curriculum with Cambridge* pp.40–41
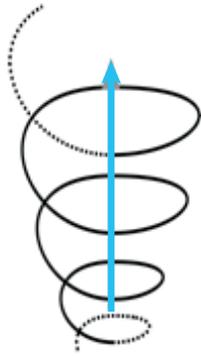
Figure 2: Spiral of professional learning

Figure 2 shows a spiral of learning – each stage is a cycle of experiential learning and reflective practice following from the previous cycle and leading to the next. Areas of learning are revisited in more depth.

- **Teachers do not learn in isolation, but develop by working together** to achieve common teaching goals (sometimes known as a 'community of practice'). This concept was inspired by social theories (see, for example, the work of Vygotsky).

What are the benefits of professional development?

- **Improved learning:** In principle, effective PD leads to improved teaching and, in turn, improved learning. According to Hattie (2009), out of 150 factors which influence learning, PD is ranked 19th. However, Hattie states that reviews of PD tend to look at impact on teachers rather than on learner outcomes, although he refers to a positive meta-study on learner outcomes by Timperley et al (2007).

- **Increased participation:** According to the 2008 *Teaching and Learning International Survey* (TALIS) from the OECD, the concept of a school as a learning organisation is gaining popularity in education. Teachers who use more diverse teaching practices and who participate more actively in professional learning communities also report higher levels of self-efficacy, receive more feedback and appraisal on their instruction, and report being more involved in PD activities outside of schools. However, it is not clear from these correlations what is cause and what is effect.

What are the challenges of professional development?

The challenges of PD depend on the guiding philosophy of particular PD programmes.

- PD often builds on the skills and knowledge which teachers acquired during initial teacher education (also known as 'pre-service training'). However, **not all teachers have received initial teacher education** and so PD sometimes functions as a way to complete basic gaps in knowledge or to confirm what they already know and do. Differentiating PD to account for variances in prior knowledge can be a challenge.

- Brown and McIntyre (1993) suggest that problems arise when PD focuses on overcoming teachers' perceived weaknesses (often referred to as the 'deficit approach'). This involves a **demoralising focus on inadequacies**, a lack of developing teachers' present strengths, discouragement for teachers' self-analysis, and a tendency to foster an atmosphere of secrecy.

- A criticism of PD programmes has been the attempt to develop teachers behaviourally and intellectually without any focus on attitudinal or emotional development. **Top down approaches** which focus on problems to be fixed, especially if linked to compliance with school or national agendas, and which do not empower teachers to develop as learners, erode teacher autonomy and are often ineffective.

Practical tips:

How can schools support professional development?
Thoughtful, well-designed teacher evaluation and PD, in a culture where it is valued and understood, is the best way to improve teaching practice. Research indicates that excellent teacher PD:

- is integrated into the everyday life of the school and teacher
- offers opportunities for reflection and learning from experience
- encourages and supports innovation and collaboration
- helps teachers to develop, and critically engage with, their own theories of learning
- enriches teachers' learning through critical engagement with the theories of others
- is sustained over time and supported by people with expertise.

Therefore, schools leaders should recognise PD as an integral part of school improvement, with PD planned and provided systematically according to teachers' needs and appropriate to the school's ethos and objectives.

How can teachers make the best of use of professional development?
- **Get involved in a professional learning community/ network** and work with peers to share ideas and to observe, record and give feedback to one another on classroom experiences.
- **Reflect** on current practice to identify where their PD priorities are.
- **Plan**, **trial**, **evaluate** and **modify** new practices and resources.

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- **Be proactive** in accessing local, national or international expertise to enhance understanding.

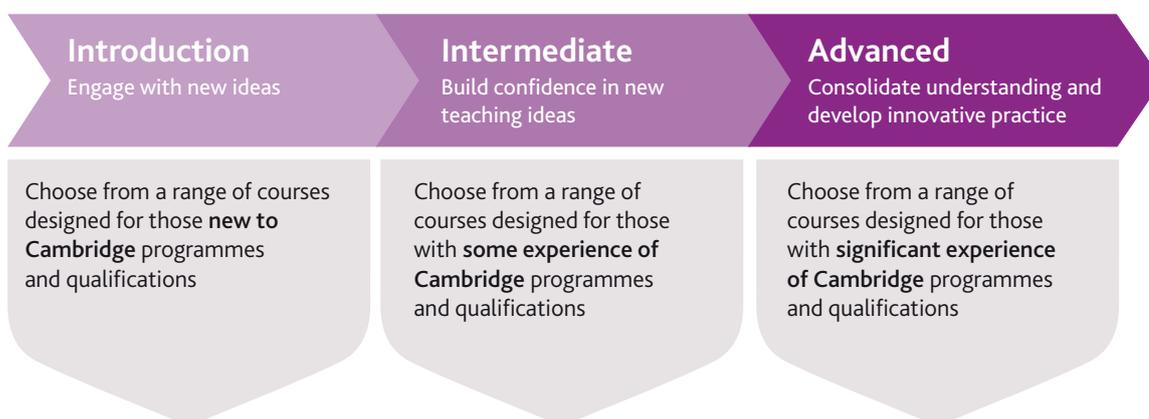## Why is professional development relevant to Cambridge?

We believe that supporting teachers in their PD leads to improved outcomes for learners. Good-quality training and reflective PD are essential parts of a teacher's professional life.

How is Cambridge supporting schools with professional development?

- We offer a **framework** of PD training and qualifications according to teachers' experience and needs:

- Our approach to PD supports teachers to become **confident**, **responsible**, **reflective**, **innovative** and **engaged** (see separate Education Brief on *Cambridge learner and teacher attributes*).

- Three times a year we hold **Cambridge Schools Conferences** for principals and teachers, which include keynote addresses and interactive workshops.

- Our framework reflects the principles and practice outlined in this document, and will help schools and school leaders to **plan and provide for their teachers' varying PD needs**.

Training and professional development

Introduction Engage with new ideas	Intermediate Build confidence in new teaching ideas	Advanced Consolidate understanding and develop innovative practice
Choose from a range of courses designed for those **new to Cambridge** programmes and qualifications	Choose from a range of courses designed for those with **some experience of Cambridge** programmes and qualifications	Choose from a range of courses designed for those with **significant experience of Cambridge** programmes and qualifications

Methods of delivery include: face-to-face/onsite courses, online course, and blended courses (a blend of face-face/onsite and online delivery)

Professional Development Qualifications

Orientation	Certificate	Diploma
Developing professional knowledge by reviewing key principles, concepts and approaches. Unit 1 of each Certificate	Teaching & Learning Teaching Bilingual Learners Teaching with Digital Technologies Educational Leadership	Teaching & Learning Teaching Bilingual Learners Teaching with Digital Technologies Educational Leadership

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Where can you find more information?

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- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. USA
- More information on professional development offered by Cambridge can be found on our website at:
  www.cambridgeinternational.org/cambridge-professional-development

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