

## **Who is the MTL for?**

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### **Abstract**

This paper considers the value of the new Masters in Teaching and Learning (MTL) for practitioners and participants (individual-led), participating schools (institution-led), the Government (system-led) and the teaching profession (profession-led). It concludes that the new qualification has the potential to service the full range of stakeholders, but that a balanced and considered approach to implementing it is necessary. The paper proceeds to present an implementation proposal designed to maximise the flexibility, yet to assure a degree of consistency

**Keywords:** MTL, CPD, CPD Leadership, performance management, strategic

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## **Introduction**

In some ways the Masters in Teaching and Learning (MTL) is a flagship programme in that it is the culmination of work on accredited Continuing Professional Development (CPD) since the first national strategy for CPD in 2001. There is a jargon attached to the concept of CPD, and a wide range of acronyms and different terminologies. Teachers may use the outmoded term INSET, often 'staff development' is deployed for internal development, Early Professional Development for teachers new to the profession 'Induction' for those not yet having completed the induction period and 'Continuing Professional Development' for the rest. One problem with the CPD agenda is that there is not an established discourse (Field, 2010), and it is therefore important to establish some parameters for the following discussion.

This paper is based upon the premise that CPD is the overarching term, the essence of which is that...

professional development for educators must surely involve the learning of an independent, evidence informed and constructively critical approach to practice within a public framework of professional values and accountability.... (Bolam, 2000, p. 272).

## **Context**

The Children's Plan outlined the Government's ambition to make teaching a Masters level profession (DCSF, 2007). The rationale relates improving teacher quality to raising standards and narrowing the achievement gap, giving children better life chances, and also suggests the need to further advance the status of the profession. CPD consists of four dimensions: individual-led, system-led, institution-led and profession-led. This paper investigates the purposes and value of the MTL in relation to each of these dimensions.

World-class education systems have a strong ethos of continual development and professional support. Subsequently 'Being the Best for Our Children' (DCSF, 2008) introduced the new qualification, the 'Masters in Teaching and

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Learning' (MTL) to take effect from April 2010, by working with 'social partnerships' to introduce a new qualification building on recently agreed performance management measures (DCSF, 2008).

Organised within Government regions, the first cohorts are newly qualified teachers (NQTs) completing their induction year in any school in the North West region and those working in schools facing challenging circumstances in other regions. Participants are not required to follow the programme, but the approach can be captured through the term 'encouraged entitlement'. Any eligible NQT wishing to participate must be enabled to do so. The programme is fully funded, and the majority of funding is 'passported' directly to schools to provide support for in-school learning and in-school coaching. Links with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are expected to support the development process and to enable Masters level accreditation.

### **MTL's contribution to System-led CPD**

Key features of system-led CPD are forms of development/training which enable the implementation of (government) policy and strategies. It consists, therefore, of updating and up-skilling.

MTL represents a new form of CPD and will operate in a new educational climate. It addresses several 'system' issues through a prescribed content. These include personalised learning, Assessment for Learning, subject knowledge enhancement, child development and inclusion, leadership, management and working with others in the wider workforce. All feature in policy documents and are key components of national strategies

### *New professionalism*

Introducing the MTL programme builds on the 'new professionalism' agenda developed with stakeholders. This respects teachers as highly skilled individuals who make judgements and exercise professional autonomy in the classroom with clear frameworks of accountability, as leaders of teaching and learning and as learners who engage in professional development throughout their careers. (TDA, 2009)

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The concept of the 'new professional', referred to here by the TDA (Training and Development Agency for Schools) has been used throughout the 2000s. Morris (2001) asserts that the need to re-professionalise teachers, in order to create 'new professionals' is urgent. For many, the idea is linked to the fulfilment of the five outcomes of Every Child Matters, embedded in the national standards for teachers, visible in school development plans, and is a focus for OfSTED inspections. The concept involves teachers being highly skilled and flexible, able to make judgments and decisions within clear frameworks of accountability. (TDA, 2009)

### *Reducing withdrawal of new teachers from the profession*

At the same time as attempting to 're-professionalise' teachers, the Government has had to address the issue of low rates of retention amongst teachers, particularly during the first few years of teaching. The advent of the new Masters in Teaching and Learning (MTL) marks a reconceptualising of what CPD means for early career teachers. It aims to target both individual and school needs and marks a continued commitment by the TDA to ensure that teachers have an entitlement to 'high quality' CPD for the first five years of their careers (DCSF, 2008), with the adage that it could be a way of addressing teacher retention.

Research (Hobson et al, 2008) into the reasons why new teachers leave the profession reveals, amongst others, the following:

- the behaviour of pupils/pupil discipline,
- a belief that they (teachers) would not be able to manage the workload'
- plans to be 'in a career with a better work-life balance and better pay'.

The same report presents strategies which have been viewed as positive ways of retaining teachers: the provision of a school based mentor, the opportunity to develop leadership and management skills and a continued drive to improve knowledge about teaching subjects

The MTL does address these issues; through its content; behaviour management, subject pedagogy, leadership and management issues are all

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covered. Improved qualifications linked to national standards offer promotion opportunities. The MTL also requires the allocation of a school based coach, following on from the mentoring and induction tutor roles deployed during initial training and induction periods.

### *Updating strategies and meeting standards*

Strenuous efforts have been made to link CPD with Performance Management procedures; Bubb and Earley (2009) note the effectiveness of such procedures. The starting point for the MTL is the (near) completion of induction processes, which are very closely linked to national standards. Such an approach does demand visible outcomes as a means of assessing impact. Ironically, Whitty (2000) sees the approach as a way of specifying outputs, and of defining the content of what teachers should do. This, he sees, represents reductionism, and a potentially over managerial approach, running the risk of causing feelings of de-professionalisation through a restriction of autonomy and self-direction.

That said, others do see the value of sets of occupational standards, and propose their use to inform professional development and learning. The National Standards, Blandford (2000) notes, can be used directly to assist the raising of pupil standards, and CPD can be structured around them to promote targeted development. She lists the purposes of the standards:

- to establish clear and explicit expectations of teachers
- to help set targets for professional development and career progression
- to help to focus and improve training and staff development at national, local and school levels
- to ensure that the focus at every point is on improving pupil achievement
- to recognise the expertise required of effective headteachers and teachers in school.

(Blandford, 2000, p.66).

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### *Performativity and performance management*

The close relationship between the MTL and performance management is noted in “Being the Best for Our Children” (DCSF, 2008) stating that the MTL would take effect from April 2010. (DCSF, 2008) In turn, performance management is closely linked to school improvement. School improvement plans must be designed to assist in meeting specified performance targets/levels – all of which reflect a climate of performativity. MTL is, therefore, a part of this process.

### *International comparisons*

Much of the justification for the introduction of the MTL is that it will contribute to a world class education system. International comparisons lead to the conclusion that the most successful countries do have a Masters level teaching workforce. Indeed, the English Postgraduate Professional Development (PPD) programme has enjoyed considerable success and positive outcomes. Successive EPPI (Evidence for Policy and Practice Information) Reviews show the positive effects on teachers’ attitudes and behaviour, motivation and morale, and also on pupil learning outcomes. These relate closely to the evaluation of work conducted in the USA, largely by Guskey (2000).

### **MTL’s contribution to Individual-led CPD**

The key characteristics of individual-led CPD are that it is designed to support individual needs and wants. These include affective factors (motivation, enjoyment, well-being) as well as providing levels of support and guidance for teachers at different stages of development.

### *Stages and links to standards*

Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) suggest there are five levels of professionalism, each with a different level of capacity for involvement. A ‘novice’, for example, is concerned with adhering to rules and routines, whereas an advanced beginner is able to recognise and respond to success. ‘Competent’ professionals are prepared, to work towards the fulfilment of long term aims, but essentially enjoy the establishment of routines and ways of working.

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'Proficient' practitioners and 'experts' are more capable of analysing new situations and recognise the value of continuously re-assessing the value and purpose of maxims. For the CPD provider, consideration should be given to the potential and level of expertise of teachers as practitioners and as researchers. This clearly does relate to the more pragmatic 'stages' as presented by DfES (2005, p.44):

- Newly Qualified Teachers
- 2-4<sup>th</sup> year of teaching
- Middle Leadership
- Advanced Skills Teacher
- Leadership Team
- New Head
- Experienced Head

The MTL is designed for teachers about to complete their induction year, and entering the second of the above stages. In this sense it is bespoke, addressing the needs of a particular group of teachers, with particular needs.

#### *Emotional intelligence and personal growth*

Masters-level, accredited CPD does have a positive impact on teachers. The third review (Cordingley et al., 2005) noted the positive affect of PPD engagement on at least one of the following affective aspects of professional learning:

- Motivation;
- Confidence;
- Attitudes and beliefs

The MTL is intended to be, at least in part, driven by the individual teachers' needs, with localised support and guidance. The final outcomes are to be acknowledged through the award of academic credits and, eventually, a recognised academic qualification. These features relate to Herzberg et al's (1959) hygiene and motivational factors, including achievement, recognition, interest, responsibility and advancement'

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### *Negotiation*

Negotiation of assessment tasks, and indeed learning processes, enable personalisation within the MTL. There are, clearly, defined topics. Four key strands will serve as the core of the programme. These are:

- i) teaching and learning AND assessment for learning
- ii) subject knowledge for teaching AND curriculum development
- iii) how children and young people develop, how they learn and management of their behaviour AND inclusion, including SEN (Special Educational Needs), EAL (English as an additional language)
- iv) leadership and management AND working collaboratively, in and beyond the classroom

Each provider has been able to develop a range of less traditional assessment methods, enabling the tailoring of assignments to individual teachers' and schools' priorities. Assessment tasks will include contributions to BLOGs, portfolios, narratives, teacher enquiries and action research. As Bryan et al (2010) suggest, the precise nature of tasks associated with Masters level work can be negotiated according to need and relevance.

Negotiation in the context of the MTL extends beyond the fixing of assessment tasks. The deployment of a local coach, the use of online learning techniques (using virtual learning environments and electronic portfolios), access to local and regional HEIs, and the networks of social partners (e.g. subject associations) all assist the MTL 'associate' (the term given for teacher following an MTL programme) to access knowledge and understanding from a range of sources to suit particular learning styles and needs. Negotiation is core to a personalised curriculum.

### **MTL's contribution to Institutional-led CPD**

Institution-led CPD is linked to school improvement. It is concerned with supporting teachers to make a contribution to the attainment of school targets and objectives. Development is therefore school focused, dealing with local issues and the venue for CPD is therefore most often the school.

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### *Impact on classroom*

Masters level work, through the PPD programme has been seen to have a very positive impact. The EPPI review (Cordingley et al, 2005) concludes that impact studies provide evidence of positive benefits of CPD which blend peer support and specialist expertise. The studies commend involving teachers in applying and refining new knowledge and skills and experimenting with ways of integrating them in their day to day practice.

The MTL is drawing on these successes through the deployment of a coach, an academic tutor and an action research approach to learning.

### *Locating the development in school*

Institution-led CPD not only focuses on the priorities contained within the school development/improvement plan, but also on the resources offered by the school.

The structure of the MTL, builds on the factors perceived through impact studies as key to success. The belief that school, classroom-based CPD may be more effective than off-site CPD due to an inevitable collaboration between teachers promotes active experimentation, as a means of changing practice.

### *Drawing on institutional expertise – coaches*

The MTL places the 'associate's' needs at the heart of the MTL, and offers support from a school based coach. The programme is to be practice/school-based, with experienced and able teachers acting as coaches. Some delivery of content will take place by external providers, although the impact is intended to be visible within teachers' classrooms. Homer et al's research (2008) clearly indicates that new, post-induction teachers benefit from having a coach. Indeed, 94% reported positive relationships and positive outcomes in terms of the motivational effect.

Also key to the programme is that provision be tailored to address individuals' and school needs. Through the close association between coach, associate,

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and the external provider, the multiple foci can be continuously addressed at practical and theoretical levels.

### **MTL's contribution to Profession-led CPD**

The Children's Plan (DCSF, 2007) demonstrates how the MTL is linked to policy.

To help fulfil our ambitions for all children, and to boost the status of teaching still further, we now want it to become a masters-level profession.....Our new goal will be for all teachers to achieve a Masters qualification as a result over the course of their career. (p.24)

#### *Common currency – an imposed curriculum*

The need to re-inspire teachers is not a new idea. Morris (2001) urged the 're-professionalisation' of teachers, and the subsequent national strategy recognises these demands, claiming that the extension of a pilot to fund CPD for teachers in their second and third years of teaching will help to motivate young and ambitious teachers. Puttnam (2001) expresses the view that professional development serves to lift morale and that it encourages recruitment and retention. The building of a collective professional confidence and a renewed sense of self-belief and enriched personal satisfaction, he claims, will serve to make the teaching profession attractive to ambitious young graduates.

Professional development is also a means of acknowledging what teachers have to do, and recognising their commitment to the task (Morris, 2001). The collective responsibility of the profession, and the individual's commitment to teaching and learning are ongoing. Teachers need to be helped to "accommodate new initiatives and requirements" (Pollard, 2002 p.404), but also need to drive the process themselves.

The MTL is more than a programme. It is the enablement of a group of teachers previously left unsupported. The insistence on a single qualification, through a differentiated curriculum gives early professional development a

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nationally recognised status. The qualification offers an opportunity for participants to be recognised for professional engagement. Theoretical understanding is generated by engagement in real work based situations.

### *Social respect for teachers*

As Ranson (2003) concludes, a loss of faith in teachers as professionals has resulted in the belief that societal matters, including education and well-being, are too important for the profession to address and, therefore, they have been subjected to central interference. In short, centrally-led CPD can lead to de-professionalisation.

The introduction of the MTL assessed by Universities provides a sense of credibility. As Whitty (2000) points out, adherence to the national standards alone represents a process of de-professionalisation. The academic criteria, which constitute 'Masterliness', provide the link with theory, thereby transcending the immediacy and confines of a single working environment. University systems provide an element of rigorous independence and externality. This provides a basis for social respect for the profession.

### *Collective*

As Eraut (1994, p107) points out, teachers need to be able to:

- access and acquire information
- be skilled to apply a full range of competences
- have the deliberative skills and processes to enable informed decision making
- be able to provide information and ideas to others
- be intellectually able to generalise and make meaningful conclusions.

It is clear that CPD has a hard edge, and that aspects can be assessed (information, competence, skills), yet their full use is dependant upon less quantifiable factors (e.g. generalising, communicating).

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collective responsibility of the profession and the individual's commitment to teaching and learning are ongoing learning and development experiences. The 'collective' for many teachers is the staff within the school where they work. The challenge is to extend beyond the confines of the single school. Local findings and ideas need to be tested and scrutinised beyond the locality, to identify key principles, rather than simply features of good practice. In this way, the outcomes of professional development may become transferable and transposable.

The MTL has, to a degree, a prescribed curriculum. As a consequence teachers all over the country will be examining common themes in a range of different, but relatable, contexts. The combined efforts of teachers from all Government regions could be researched and 'banked'. Teacher outcomes in relation to the MTL have the potential to become a professional resource.

#### *Evidence-base to replace educational –ologies*

Hargreaves' (1998) concept of an evidence-based profession supports the view that the outcomes of the MTL can be put to professional use. The discredited educational 'ologies' (psychology, sociology, history of education) have not been replaced by a secure and respected knowledge base. Evidence-based practice involves converting information needs into answerable questions, researching to generate evidence to answer the questions, a critique of the validity and reliability of the evidence, the application of justifiable theories and the measurement and evaluation of performance. In these ways, teachers seize control of development and are able to base development work on real practice.

The benefits of a learning community also, according to Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), enable new knowledge to be converted into professional development and action. Again, the challenge for the MTL is to collate and make usable the findings and outcomes of teachers' studies. As yet there is no clear dissemination strategy.

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## Conclusions

The flexibility of the MTL should be of benefit to all. It also means there is a risk of different groups exercising excessive influence to create an imbalance, in terms of the four dimensions of CPD. On the other hand, it may be that the MTL should be used to address particular issues, at different times, in different locations.

Key stakeholders must be represented in order to assure a balanced approach and a positive impact at local level. Such stakeholders are:

- the MTL Associate
- the MTL Coach
- the School CPD leader.

The role of the associate is obvious – to weave a path through the MTL which addresses individualised needs and wants. The ‘Coach’ has a crucial role to support and challenge the associate. Less obvious, but equally important is the role of the School CPD Leader. His/her role is to represent the school, and, indeed, policy requirements. The argument is that these three stakeholders, with external support (MTL providers in the form of HEI tutors and Local Authority partners) cover the four dimensions of CPD.

## Proposal for implementation

The following represents an approach to planning, providing and evaluating CPD in line with both the demands of the MTL. It consists of an approach driven by the individual, supported by a coach and led by a CPD leader. Figure 1 provides a summary of the recommended process. An explanation of each of the ten stages for the associate (thereby accounting for the individual-led dimension) demonstrates how the mentor/coach and CPD leader support and co-ordinate in a way that addresses the institution-, system- and profession-led dimensions.

It is important to note that the coach is a fellow professional, and that the CPD leader is a senior leader within the school. There is an assumption too, that the leader, through affiliation to the MTL regional planning groups, is up-to-

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date with policy and statutory requirements. As the diagram points out, mentors/coaches will be carefully selected, and will, as the TDA points out, be trained.

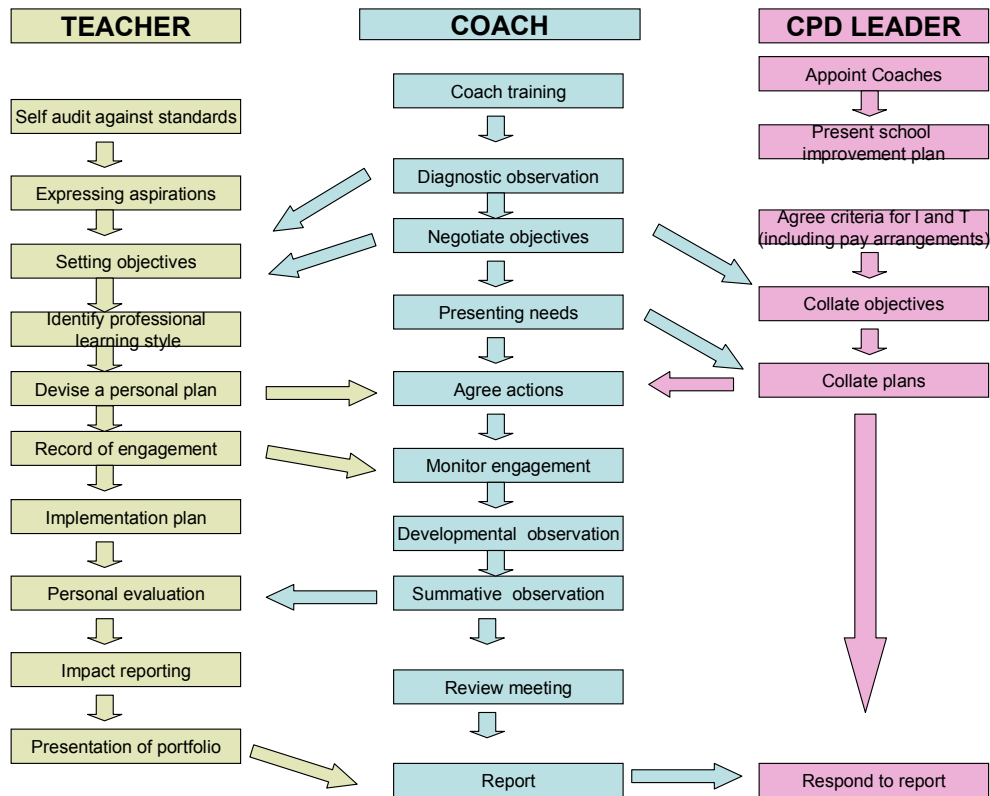


Figure 1: A portfolio approach to CPD

### Self Audit against standards

Prior to the self audit, coaches should be identified and trained. This assures consistency, and a common understanding of the overarching school plan. The associate should receive guidance in self-auditing against appropriate national standards – indicating areas of strength, areas in need of development and issues which may relate to the school itself. This approach begins a process of **institution-led development**, in that coaches provide guidance and support. **Individual-led** CPD begins with a self-audit, promoting personal engagement, but also proceeds into the subsequent stage.

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### **Expressing personal aspirations**

Designing CPD around the outcomes of audits runs the risk of becoming a deficit model, focusing overly on school and system needs. By enabling teachers to consider their strengths, ambitions and aspirations, a greater sense of personal ownership and commitment is encouraged. The process is equally concerned with teachers looking to the future, as with reviewing past performance and present status. The MTL must support **individual-led** improvement and opportunities for promotion. Through the coach's support, individual goals can be aligned more to perceived needs of the school, which are informed by policy and statutory obligations.

### **Setting objectives**

This stage of the process is, for the individual, informed through a diagnostic observation. This activity will address agreed foci, and assist the individual teacher to identify issues which relate to the school improvement plan, to agreed criteria for effective learning and teaching (part of the performance management requirements), and to the personal needs and aspirations of the teacher. This combination of **individual-, institutional- and system-led** dimensions enables a degree of flexibility. Objectives negotiated and set may emphasise, in each case, different dimensions according to particular circumstances.

### **Identifying personal learning styles**

Several factors need to be taken into account. The nature of the objectives may pre-determine an appropriate style. The context in which each teacher works may also determine how objectives are best addressed, (e.g. 'in-house' or through an external provider). Personal preferences are also paramount. The associate must arrive at a view on how s/he would best achieve stated objectives. Through liaison with the coach, and his/her support for the individual with the CPD leader, needs and wants can be collated and analysed in a way that will optimise the use of resources to support development. The CPD leader's role is also, in part, to promote cross fertilisation, thereby addressing **institution-led** CPD needs.

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### **Devise a personal plan**

**Individual-led** CPD demands a personal commitment to a process of learning and development. **Institution-led** CPD must be responsive to, and supportive of, individual teachers' needs, but also requires that a co-ordinated approach leads to whole school improvement. The CPD leader can therefore be simultaneously supportive of the individual (by making accessible different learning opportunities), but also proactive on behalf of the school (in developing opportunities for groups of teachers in relation to corporate needs).

### **Record of engagement**

Accountability is an assurance that all engage in what they have committed themselves to. CPD takes many forms, and too often the 'soft forms' (reading, reflection, dialogue, taking on new responsibilities, project management) are neglected. On the other hand, course attendance and official qualifications are often recorded. Individual teachers must log *all* MTL activity, as part of the learning and development process. A reflective log/personal narrative enables evaluative reflection at a later date, and the recall of which elements of the MTL were most effective. It also assists the coach to monitor progress and to provide support as and when most needed.

### **Implementation plan**

A common criticism of CPD by teachers is that too often, despite possibly inspiring events, teachers return to practising in their usual manner. For the MTL to have an impact, learning must be converted into action. Ideas have to be realised in the context of the teacher's own area of influence, demanding a change in practice. For the coach to engage in 'developmental observation' is a means of supporting, providing critical friendship. The recommendation of other forms of support – such as others working in similar areas, texts to read and the provision of real observational evidence of improvement, not only promote individual progress, but also reflect co-professional involvement.

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### **Personal evaluation**

Personal evaluation is more than describing what has been undertaken. It accounts for affective factors and teachers' own sense of pride and achievement. Teachers as lifelong learners need to recognise learning and development that have taken place. Acknowledgement requires an appreciation of individual contribution to development – an **institution-led** feature. The motivational effect is personal and part of the **individual-led** approach. Working alongside coaches provides **profession-led** dimension. The coach, through a 'summative' observation, is able to assist in the identification of how professional learning and development have followed through to classroom practice.

### **Impact reporting**

Impact reporting involves consideration of the effects of professional development on others. Teachers are required to relate their performance to evidence and the agreed objectives stated early in the process. The forms of evidence of success may depend on the nature of the development undertaken, but should relate directly to the initial objectives. In this way, the teacher is responsible for the generation and use of data and evidence, and is free to draw on external sources too. It is accepted that impact evaluation is not an exact science, but teachers themselves are best placed to identify the impact of their own development. Impact reporting is fast becoming a key component of CPD and such **system-led** processes need to be tempered with the flavour of **individual-led** CPD. Review meetings with the coach add an objective and perspective, giving the teacher's own interpretation authority.

### **Presentation of the portfolio**

All of the above stages generate evidence and data. The collation of artefacts is in itself an evaluative process. The collection of evidence can be submitted for accreditation. The content of the portfolio is a chronicle of development activities, which can be used to acknowledge and reward individual efforts. Collectively, a range of portfolios provide an excellent account of the corporate CPD policy over a year. The CPD leader should have access to

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selected parts of the portfolio to inform a whole school evaluation report.  
**Institution-led** and **individual-led** dimensions are addressed in this way.

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