



PPTA TE WEHENGARUA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2021

THE PLD WE NEED



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RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 That the report be received.
- 2 That this conference supports the development of the Curriculum Centre as proposed by the Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce
- 3 That this conference urges the ministry to adhere to the timeframe of 18-24 months for the development of the Curriculum Centre
- 4 That this conference recommends that Curriculum Centre be guided by the Best Evidence Synthesis contexts for effective PLD
- 5 That this conference calls on schools to respect teachers' rights to identify their own areas of professional development.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. At last year's annual conference, policy was passed about the amount of professional learning and development (PLD) teachers should be entitled to, i.e. 20 hours, 10 hours of which are teacher self-identified. But the quantum of PLD is only part of the story; the other two parts are access and quality. This paper addresses these.

2. ACCESS

- 2.1. Teaching is not a skill that, once learnt in initial teacher education, is there for life. An effective teacher's career requires ongoing professional development to hone skills and learn new ones. Each year teachers face new groups of students with unique needs, some which require additional skills. Teachers teach different subjects, levels and standards. Government and school priorities change. New research reveals new and more effective ways to engage students and foster learning. Teacher professional development is a key component of a successful career and as such is enshrined in the Standards of the Teaching Profession.
- 2.2. The devolved education system has treated teacher professional development poorly. For two years after the introduction of Tomorrow's Schools the Ministry continued to fund the Advisory Services through the universities and Colleges of Education. After that time the funding went directly to schools that then prioritised the funding as they felt fit. From that time teacher professional development became haphazard. Some schools gave it high priority, others did not. To compound matters, schools had to seek professional development from approved facilitators. There was no longer a prospectus detailing an array of courses available throughout the year.
- 2.3. At a recent Peak Bodies meeting a principal shared his experience of spending 30 hours of staff time to access 50 hours of centrally funded PLD. At another meeting of principals there was a request for PLD to be able to be organised through a single phone call.
- 2.4. In addition, the designers of Tomorrow's Schools assumed that the informal connections between schools would continue once things were decentralised. This did not happen. Competition exacerbated the problem. Schools became isolated from each other. Teachers lost track of subject clusters and regional associations. Ironically it was the lack of support for the introduction of NCEA and the upheaval of the new curriculum that briefly forced teachers together and there was a time where collaboration flourished, where resources and ideas were shared – but through adversity.
- 2.5. The Tomorrow's Schools Review (TSR) criticised the provision of PLD to schools and teachers. In its Educational Conversations the Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce (TSIT) heard that the "current procurement model is over-regulated, bureaucratic, and time-consuming for both schools and the PLD providers" and principals called for less time consuming and drawn-out processes to apply for and access Ministry-funded PLD.¹
- 2.6. In its final report the TSIT recommended a Curriculum Centre be set up, complemented by co-ordinated national and local delivery of professional learning and development. The Centre would be centrally

¹ Draft Tomorrow's Schools Report

funded and focus on the National Education Learning Priorities so that the system as a whole would be engaged in learning how to improve itself.

- 2.7. The intention was to provide greater coherence to what is presently a fragmented system of support for teachers. At the national level, the Centre would provide teachers with high quality nationally-led curriculum, assessment, learning and pedagogy guidance and practical support developed collaboratively with the sector, including a well-resourced, searchable database of quality curriculum resources. It would be staffed by experts who would provide advice, resources and support in curriculum design, learning, assessment, and pedagogy - a flexible mix of seconded teachers, tertiary teacher educators and researchers, and accredited private providers.
- 2.8. At the local level there would be branches called Education Support Learning Networks (ESLN) which would have flexibility and discretion over the use of funding to support teachers and schools. The ESLNs would be staffed by advisors and specialist professionals, again often seconded teachers.
- 2.9. The Ministry has accepted the recommendations of the TSR and will establish Te Mahau (Education Service Agency). This will be a separate unit within the Ministry and will house the Curriculum Centre and the Education Support Learning Networks.
- 2.10. The Curriculum Centre as set out in the TSR would address many of PPTA Te Wehengarua's concerns about access to PLD. It is gratifying that cabinet² approved the Curriculum Centre and made it a high priority to be progressed within 18-24 months.
- 2.11. It was noticeable from the Ministry of Education's COVID-19 response that it lacked any expertise in curriculum matters. This will mean that it will have to build the Curriculum Centre from scratch. This has pros and cons. On the positive side this means that the structure and personnel can be purpose-built. On the negative, it will take time to recruit and second people with the necessary skills and experience. Many of these will need to come from schools and this will exacerbate teacher supply, especially in hard to staff areas.
- 2.12. The Ministry of Education has begun to appoint curriculum leads. It is unclear what their roles will be. PPTA Te Wehengarua would like to see them as similar to the Senior Subject Advisors (SSAs) that were established in 2006, albeit only funded for one year. SSAs were "experienced practitioners, seconded from the classroom to support other teachers in the same senior subject. Many had facilitation and/or moderation experience in NCEA. The initiative was designed to offer these experienced teachers the opportunity to increase their own skill set and professional attributes which may help support leadership on their return to their schools. Simultaneously, the one-year secondment was an opportunity for senior subject teachers around the country to benefit from the experience of the SSAs through a range of professional development and learning opportunities".³
- 2.13. In the evaluation of the SSAs, teachers "were effusive in their praise for support they received, some indicating that it was the first time they had been exposed to specific senior subject support. Many SSAs suggested that while there was other subject support available in advisory services, their presence was more keenly felt by teachers, because their role was completely dedicated to a senior subject".

² Cabinet Paper – Reform of the Tomorrow's Schools system (November, 2019)

³ Evaluation of the Senior Subject Adviser Pilot Initiative (2007)

3. QUALITY

- 3.1. Research is clear about the requirements for effective PLD. The Iterative Best Evidence Synthesis (BES) on Teacher Professional Learning and Development sets out seven contexts for effective teacher learning:
- Extended time for opportunities to learn
 - External expertise
 - Teachers' engagement in the learning
 - Prevailing discourses challenged
 - Opportunities to participate in a professional community
 - Consistency with wider trends in policy and research
 - Active school leadership.
- 3.2. It will be important that the Curriculum Centre fashions courses and resources that align with these requirements. PLD that is mainly about content can be delivered in conferences, jumbo days or even online. However, PLD that challenges current practices and deals with the complexities of teaching and learning will need to take place over a period of time and will generally use a mix of external input and knowledgeable teachers from within the school or from the network of schools.
- 3.3. School leaders need to strike the balance between focusing on national and school priorities and those that individual teachers identify. It is important that a school recognises a teacher's personal rangatiratanga. Reflective teachers involved in a professional growth cycle are often best placed to know the areas that they need to develop.