

**POSTGRADUATE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN  
ENGLAND**

***A personal account of the background to the  
evaluation of its impact***

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## Preface

This paper contains some memories, views and interpretations of events that are personal and anecdotal and may, therefore, be disputed. Most of it was written just prior to the decision by Michael Gove, the secretary of state for education, to stop the funding of postgraduate professional development (PPD) for schoolteachers in England. I am also aware that it is not an exhaustive account of PPD. There is much more to be said and many more citations to be made. I may get round to doing this thoroughly. So might others.

The opinions that I express are sometimes derived from my memory of being closely involved in the creation of PPD in England. Other people may have different memories and mine must not be thought to represent an official position taken by the International Professional Development Association (ipda); nor must my recollection of how PPD was created be regarded as representing an official history endorsed by the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET). I do, however, want to make it clear that I am motivated to write by having, for decades, been witness to the work of very many schoolteachers and university tutors who have striven hard and long to make critical sense of education in order to enhance the learning of young people. It continues to disappoint me that policy-makers ignore or pervert what they say and that universities and schools must operate in an atmosphere of uncertainty, even of fear. I have, however, tried to curb a desire to produce too much polemic.

I have also tried not to write too much in a nostalgic tone because I am very aware of some deep and rapid changes that are about to take place that will have lasting social effects. We have to prepare for them. Nevertheless, we do keep encountering similar problems that emerge as policy is changed and initiatives are created and re-created; even if, from time to time they alter their sets of initials and, for a while, appear to be totally new. It seems to me that there are, therefore, benefits in pausing now and again to record what has been happening and to attempt to discern some significant features and factors that have been, and are likely still to be, at work even as the future emerges.

What may be happening, not only in England, is that as professional educators repeatedly roll up their sleeves to turn policy sow's ears into silk purses they fail to notice that the overall effect of some educational policies means the gradual loss of important values; yes we keep revolving but I am worried that the direction of the spiral in which we find ourselves is no longer upward towards a more equal and fulfilling society. Maybe it has not been like that for some time.

We are also seeing the school system following the changes that have taken place in the banking system over the last twenty years or so. At one time you could walk into your local bank and talk to the manager about your needs and get

a decision based upon the personal professional judgment of the manager who, like you, was a member of the local community. Banks now have hubs and satellites and someone who has never even met you now makes that decision based upon the operation of a formula that tells them if you match the required scores. What were once bank managers taking full professional responsibility are now more like assistant or deputy heads of satellite schools working to a superstar headteacher who is paid a salary so much higher than the people they manage that it would, a teaching generation ago, have been unimaginable. The cult of leadership and management has, I believe, damaged professionalism to the point where, rather than carefully constructing learning experiences and judgments based upon collective experience, expertise and professional values, teachers are required to measure performance according to formulae that tell them if they have reached the targets demanded of them.

It is not inevitable that this should happen; clustered schools still have the opportunity, if they choose, to work to collegial, professional, communal and democratic values. But to describe as 'modernisation' a process that can commodify education is insulting. I believe that schools should resist the urge to brand themselves. The brand of 'school' ought, itself, to be enough. Remember that the bank that branded itself as 'The Listening Bank' was taken over when it stopped listening to its local customers, leaving them behind in an attempt to become much bigger. The world of school branding and re-branding has been with us for a while, with much over use of the word 'excellence'; the world of school mergers and takeovers is well underway; local democratic control is fading fast; and it is already possible to buy shares in the companies that may soon be running our schools. The Department for Education may already see itself as Network Schools using our rail system as its model.

Meanwhile, throughout the World, professional educators endeavour, in many contexts, to make sense of their professional lives. Very often this sense-making process is confined to working out what is required of them and how to carry out their instructions as well as they can. There can be a tendency to overly respect, rather than reflect upon or challenge, both policy and theory. At times, however, teachers and teacher educators discover a voice of their own that emerges from their critical examination of policy, theory and, crucially, their own professional experience, expertise, values, concerns and anxieties. What we lack is a sufficiently systematic means of knowing what is out there in terms of what teachers and teacher educators say about their professional lives, particularly when they have been engaged either as students in, or as providers of, programmes of critical professional learning. We do, of course, learn from isolated, and sometimes from collaborative, instances of research but the dissemination tends to stay within a small circle and often only happens at events organised for that purpose, to be forgotten while travelling home to resume the day job. Even when professional voices are articulated, those that need to hear can be selectively deaf: policy-makers, in particular.

## Introduction

What follows is intended to contribute a sense-making background to the archive collection of impact self-evaluation reports from a number of universities in England. They are on this website. For this reason I have outlined in this paper some of the history and **key features** of this particular programme of postgraduate professional development for schoolteachers, now encompassing qualifications at masters and doctoral levels but subject to the recent decision of government to withdraw the tiny amount of funding that sustains it. I have also attempted to point out what I believe to be **key factors** affecting it. I am sure others have, and could add, their own views.

By no means do I possess an exhaustive knowledge of what lies behind each of the impact evaluation reports to be found on this website. As external examiner and member of validation panels for some of the programmes I am, however, aware of the considerable hinterland of research and reflection upon practice that they can represent.

## Early background to the impact evaluation reports on the postgraduate professional development (PPD) programme in England

Until the early 1990s universities and colleges of higher education in England subsidised their provision of M-level programmes for schoolteachers by allocating specifically chosen amounts from grants received from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). After the establishment of the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) they were asked to calculate a figure for how much of their total HEFCE grant they allocated for working towards master's degrees for schoolteachers and to transfer it to the TTA who would manage the fund. Most universities thought of this as a requirement, although some perceived it as a request to which they were not required to comply. The transfer process brought to the surface some very different priorities. The University of Liverpool where I worked had allocated £197 per year to support each schoolteacher on a master's programme (the second lowest figure). Manchester Metropolitan University had allocated £1,198. The highest figure was over £5,000. The average was approximately £750. These figures were apart from, and subsidised, any fees charged to individuals. While it was extremely difficult to survive at the lower end of the scale it is worth pausing to imagine the effect upon those at the higher end when they realised that in the future they faced a more equitable distribution of funds.

Eventually the TTA established what they called **The Award-Bearing INSET Scheme**, INSET being an abbreviation for In-Service Training.

### Key Features of The Award-Bearing INSET Scheme

- a) An equal unit of resource for all but much lower than the previous average.
- b) An open bidding procedure subject, for a while, to some uncertainty in its operation.
- c) The construction by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) of an inspection regime, to which some higher education institutions had contributed at the design stage. The subject of impact was discussed at the focus group helping to brainstorm the inspection framework. From memory the flip chart paper relating to impact had only two points on it: 'short term impact' and 'long term impact'. It was a relief to see the phrase 'long term'.
- d) A major inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) over twelve months but crossing two academic years. It is worth noting that the period of inspection was originally planned to cover two complete academic years. Finance was a factor in

reducing the time. I believe that we underestimate the extent to which the effectiveness and nature of inspection and quality assurance systems are affected by the financial priorities given to them. Less money lightens the touch but it may also narrow the perspective and diminish what is learned.

There were issues during the inspection and lessons were learned, at least for a while. My experience included what I still regard as two highly significant and chilling incidents.

In the first one I was discussing with an HMI the way that we in the University of Liverpool addressed the needs of participants (the word 'student' was falling into abeyance). I said that I thought that we did this very thoroughly but that when teachers looked closely at and analysed their needs as professionals what emerged was not the same as the list of government priorities set out for them to meet. 'Well', said the HMI, 'you must make them the same or you will fail your inspection'. After recovering my nerve I designed an activity for detailed identification and, more importantly, analysis of professional learning needs which seemed to satisfy what HMI were saying while protecting and promoting what I believed to be academic and professional values. The activity was called 'Relating Professional Needs to Professional Impact' and is included on this website among the PPD Guidance Notes. I made sure to obtain formal agreement from the HMI leading our inspection that this activity served its purpose.

The second incident was when an HMI was considering assignments from two teachers. These days I would call the assignments Critical Professional Learning Journals accompanied by Portfolios of Evidence for Impact or some such titles. 'This one', said the HMI picking it up, 'is very strong but the other one', weighing them both in his hands, 'is weak'. The problem for me was that I had judged them the other way round. In discussion it turned out that for the HMI strength was denoted by unproblematised evidence presented by one teacher relating to the examination results of children and weakness was denoted by the fact that the other schoolteacher had discussed early professional uncertainty, lack of confidence and the eventual acquisition of professional self-belief, evidence for which had, necessarily, to be somewhat intangible and problematic.

Discussion with inspectors who have the power to destroy professional lives has to be conducted with care. I took the risk of asserting that because this was an M-level programme we challenged teachers to explore the parts of professional life in which the evidence might be difficult to gather, question, present and explain but which might, nevertheless, have significance. I then asked the inspector if this kind of challenge was appropriate for a master's programme. Fortunately, I received a positive response. It was, however, a heart-stopping moment.

The particular assignment that was the cause of this fuss became the subject of an ESCalate research project that led to the adoption of UCET Principles for the Use of Portfolio Evidence in Masters Programmes. You can see the Principles in the Guidance Notes on this website.

I guess these are not issues that are confined to one country.

In the next four paragraphs I spend some time commenting on features that I believe have never gone away and can still be encountered.

### **Captured concepts**

Concepts such as 'improvement' and 'effectiveness' have long been the subject of academic discourse. They are, however, easily captured by governments who set the agenda and pay the bills and by their agents to whom such concepts can appear to be unproblematic and beyond dispute. At issue is the ability of higher education to convince authorities that there is much to be gained from critical examination of these concepts over a long timescale and in varying contexts. Sometimes we seem to win that argument. Nevertheless, tension remains between those who feel that the completion of a master's degree ought to lead to an immediate, measurable improvement in the performance of children and those who believe that the value of educational life is not so simple or to be demonstrated only over the short-term. I have often caricatured the 'short-termers' as wanting 'Finished course on Friday: better results on Monday'. Maybe I could in turn be caricatured as 'Come back in twenty years and I will show you some serious impact'.

It seems to me that just when we feel that we have convinced authorities to allow a more sophisticated approach to making sense of learning and professional life there will be a change of personnel at the top and a new secretary of state or minister is appointed who wants quick results. The process of having to convince and re-convince the wielders of power never ends. I guess that this ought to be the subject of a separate international study. How do we engage with policy-makers? Does the idea of engagement with us ever enter their heads?

We now have increased internationalisation of yardsticks such as the OECD's PISA programme. The issue here may be the extent to which postgraduate programmes for schoolteachers and the way that they work become affected by the selective use of such results by the authorities in pursuit of short-term goals. If I am right how widespread is this? Is the provision of masters and doctorates for schoolteachers to be concentrated upon the achievement of high league table position? What could be lost if this is so? If we believe that this is unwise how can we obtain a hearing for our views? If you are researching or interested in this will you please let ipda know?



And if there are questions to be asked about officially approved yardsticks should we not devise something that allows us to make critical but sharable sense of our business in a way that does not bestow blame or determine position? I am reminded of politicians who advocate competitive games in schools rather than the physical education of all young people; and I believe that our purpose is about fulfilment for all rather than climbing above others by disadvantaging them.

## **Key factors affecting The Award-Bearing INSET Scheme**

### **Improved sector knowledge and self-confidence**

At first I thought that ignorance of the financial basis for this kind of work was confined to me but attending my first UCET CPD Committee soon revealed that I was not the only one. HE finance could, particularly in an older university in those days, be a Byzantine maze. The Scheme gave many of us for the first time the knowledge to track money; to relate income and expenditure; and the consequent confidence to plan.

### **Slow but uncertain growth of in-sector trust**

I think it is fair to say that one effect of government policy to that point had been the encouragement of competition. Sometimes the effect of this had been to put pressure upon our ability to maintain high levels of quality. I remember having to say to a school that if I lowered the price of a programme to match that of a competitor I would have insufficient resource to work at the level of quality that we both wished to maintain. On that occasion the argument worked but I believe that the sector has never been good at convincing schools, teachers and government that lowering income and undercutting is bad for quality. We ought to have worked harder to show that the value of what we were doing was worth paying for; instead we often worked hard to get our price down. We still do.

I do believe, however, that the Scheme helped to counter the corrosive effects of competition and from its introduction co-operation became more possible. In some cases HEIs began to co-ordinate their bids for funding. This was encouraged by the TTA.

### **Partnerships and Venn diagrams**

Partnership was also encouraged by the Scheme, although this was not a new idea. In the days when Local Education Authorities (LEAs) exercised more control over school finances and were responsible for both Further and Higher Education (polytechnics) it had been easier to create links across sectors and institutions.

A problem, certainly for me but maybe also for others in HE, was, however, that it was easier to conceptualise the notion of CPD partnerships with schools that were contiguous with Initial Teacher Training (ITT) partnerships than it was to make it happen. One reason for this was the sheer effort that had to go into ITT, which also carried a huge risk factor in the shape of almost constant inspection. It may have made sense to create a seamless garment from ITT to CPD, or a one-stop-shop that would have been welcomed by schools, but I believe that it needed a more strategic lead on this from the TTA.

Creating a Venn-like overlap of research, ITT and CPD was also an attractive idea but each of those areas of activity tended to concentrate upon responding to their own imperatives and perceived interests. Back in the early 1990s I felt that because I thought this was a good idea for my place of work it would simply happen without much effort: all I had to do was express the idea, people would want to do it and, hey presto, it would materialise. Not only was this not the case but also I totally, not for the first time, underestimated the extent to which people working in education had learned to wait for a lead from the top. Despite managing the fund for The Award-Bearing INSET Scheme the TTA had, in those days, no remit from government for CPD, let alone research. There was no such lead.

We may hope that out of the current government obsession in England with *teaching schools* something of the Venn-like approach to professional formation and continuing, research based, learning may develop where headteachers recognise the value of working with HE.

I write about principles for partnership in a series of essays and activities to be found at [www.criticalprofessionallearning.co.uk](http://www.criticalprofessionallearning.co.uk).

### **Inspections and horoscopes**

Inspection results can be like horoscopes: when they seem to produce a result that pleases we tell the World that they are infallible; and when they produce a result that displeases we make sure that everyone knows what a load of old rubbish it all is.

The outcome of this inspection was excellent for the sector and encouraged us to believe that we had a future. It was followed by what the TTA called a 'survey' that also provided good news. Members of the UCET CPD Committee attending the national conference after the inspection were, therefore, somewhat shocked to hear from the civil servant at the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) who led on CPD that the sector had yet to provide sufficiently convincing evidence of impact.

What was at work here might be described as ***The Sisyphus Factor***: having pushed the boulder of credibility up the hill, believing that at the top we can have a well-deserved rest, we are ordered to repeat the process, again and again.

### **The slipper fits and we go to the ball!**

In 2003 the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) published its *Report on The Award Bearing Inset Scheme*, written by Soulsby and Swain. In brief, this report appeared to us as a game changer. When it appeared Mary Russell, then Chief Executive of UCET and I, as chair of the UCET CPD Committee at that time, began reading at almost the same minute. She was in London and I was in Liverpool. From time-to-time we would phone each other to read out yet more lovely phrases and conclusions. At one point we had to pause because highlighter pens had run out. It was like receiving a long yearned for love letter; the Valentine Card that Prince Charming would send; the Oscar for a Lifetime's Achievement. We would, I felt, live happily ever after.

It did lead to official belief in what universities could do to improve the professional learning of schoolteachers. It even led, I would say, to improved self-belief by HE. There are, however, few politicians that are capable of accepting evidence that contradicts their prejudices. I guess that we rode this winner longer than most. It is inevitable that you eventually encounter a politician who simply does not care to listen. Such is now the case.

### **Knowledge, values and 'they know what they are doing'**

Eventually we got a letter from David Miliband who, at the time was Schools Minister. He said that he was 'minded' to accept the recommendations in the report. UCET went to see him. Briefly, this was close to being another ***Sisyphus Moment***. It was a very pleasant meeting but when we said that we assumed that because he was 'minded' to accept the recommendations this would mean a certain course of action he looked puzzled. Although we had gone to the meeting believing that we would, at his invitation, be discussing the report he was not quite sure what we were talking about and I had to give him my own copy.

I guess that the factor at work here could be described as:

***the over estimation of the knowledge of a government minister factor***, or

***the misplaced assumption that they share your values factor***, or

***the silly belief that those at the top really know what they are doing factor***.

Before we left the meeting I asked David Miliband if he would fund us to draft principles for PPD partnerships. He asked for a written proposal. He got one. He then told us to ask the TTA. They said no. Serves me right I suppose as I had already written them and thought I could box clever.

Then all that we had been doing turned into postgraduate professional development (PPD).

## **Key Features of the postgraduate professional development (PPD) programme**

### **Perspectives**

I have found it useful to make use of the interplay of three major perspectives, each of which is a fruitful area for exploration: **the regulatory/inspection perspective; the academic/theoretical perspective; and the personal/professional perspective.** This interplay has, I believe, been encouraged by PPD.

What is now proposed as educational policy for England may mean that we will soon have to add a fourth: **the politico/ideological perspective.** I say this because, admitted and declared or not, it is very clear that government has an intention to use the school system to reshape society in England.

I began developing this notion of three key perspectives during my own experience of being inspected for the Award-Bearing INSET Scheme. It was part of the language that I used in order to engage with HMI hoping, thereby, to gain recognition for what the academic/theoretical perspective had to offer. At times it felt that it was being ignored: as though the official view was that, rather than contributing to improved professionalism it was, at best, a distraction and, at worst, inimical to it. I later pushed the notion of three perspectives when developing links between PPD and other non-HEI programmes; and as an external examiner I believe that I see that interplay all the time in the way that participants engage with their assignments and approach literature. Certainly there are other perspectives and the ones I talk about here are only a starting point but, as such, I have found them very useful when both teaching and examining.

**Provision of earmarked funds for the administration and management of PPD and the partnerships with schools and local government that it encouraged**

Dedicated support of this kind is, I believe, very useful and during the PPD negotiations with the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) I felt that they were happy to accept my proposal to set aside money for this because it directly impacted upon the effectiveness of a programme that they managed. It is my belief that directors of PPD programmes in universities can lose out if administration is generalised and they have to compete for attention with what is often seen as more mainstream university business.

### **Bridging and linking**

These are 'bridging' assignments and protocols between PPD and other programmes provided by, for example, the National College for School Leadership, the General Teaching Council for England and various subject associations.

I felt that such arrangements not only brought coherence to disparate provision but also added critical reflection and knowledge of literature to programmes that might otherwise have lacked academic/theoretical perspective. In those days the National College felt the same.

The intention was that the bridging assignments could be used either after the event in an AP(E)L process or, more effectively, they could be tackled during such programmes which would, thereby, benefit from a parallel critical sense-making process. In my view, problems emerged when some universities unilaterally allowed applicants to import credit without having to attempt bridging assignments. Pressure to recruit was probably a factor. So may have been a mistake often made by applicants that to import credit from another programme in order to pay less and spend a shorter time studying must be a good thing. In the process they end up with less knowledge of what they wanted to study and can be much less well prepared for writing dissertations. For universities, while it can be exciting to be entrepreneurial and competitive, they have to be alert to what this can do to the levels of quality at which they collectively wish and claim to work; and the import of too much credit can also add to an un-costed remediation workload.

In conversation between UCET and Charles Clarke, the then Secretary of State, the point was made that by establishing such bridging assignments and protocols the relatively small amount of money devoted to PPD could multiply the impact of money devoted to other programmes. He accepted that argument. I think that it remains a good one. Politicians used to like to like to hear the phrase 'multiplication factor'.

## **Accreditation as a commodity**

This *feature* of making links between programmes also becomes a *factor* when the dominant culture of education perceives accreditation as a commodity. Some people and organisations regard a degree as a product that can be subject to deal making: the object being to acquire the qualification at the lowest price for the lowest effort. The culture does not have to be like this. What HE is or should be marketing is the opportunity to work at a high level of critical sense making. Unfortunately Gresham's law sometimes applies here. Gresham stated that *Bad money drives out good*. In other words, once one university, possibly imagining that it is being very creative in cutting costs, reduces its quality requirements others may find that they have to do the same to stay in business. I hope that will never be the case but I believe that government pressure will, unless resisted, lead to what will have to be described as 'dumbing down'. I say this because there is a tendency for governments and their agents to want quick results from HE; to get HE to do things cheaply (often called 'value for money'); to discourage HE from any problematising or challenge to policy; to impose upon HE simplifications of concepts such as 'improvement'; and generally to distrust academics unless they have signed up to the official line.

I have included bridging assignments and a copy of the agreement with the National College for School Leadership in the PPD Guidance Notes on this website.

You can see more on commodification among the series of essays for critical conversations at [www.criticalprofessionallearning.co.uk](http://www.criticalprofessionallearning.co.uk).

## **Inspection morphing into evaluation**

A key element of the PPD negotiations (I am not sure if the TTA would have chosen the 'n' word but it sometimes felt like that to me) was the need to establish the kind of inspection regime universities would be bringing down upon their heads if they chose to take part in, and devote considerable resource to, PPD. In my experience governments and their agents can be guilty of requiring/persuading people to bid to run programmes before telling them to what sanctions they will be subject should things not go according to plan.

Quite fortuitously I met the senior HMI who would have been in charge of any such inspection. She told me that no one had asked her to think about it and if they did there was no way she could do it because there was no money. This emboldened me to write, on behalf of UCET, a paper on the self-evaluation of impact. This was accepted by the group assembled by the TTA to work on PPD and became the basis for the proforma that, with a few changes, has been used for the self-evaluation of the impact of PPD until recently. You can see the

original paper among the PPD Guidance Notes on this website. It is worth pointing out that a purpose of the original paper was to prevent the discourse of impact evaluation being captured, narrowed and simplified by government and its agents.

## Key Factors affecting PPD

### Policy imperatives

The effect of education policy in England has, certainly following the 1988 Act, been to concentrate the minds of schools and schoolteachers upon the need to implement government initiatives and to do what it takes to get officially approved results, irrespective of wider and deeper social considerations, let alone the faults in our chosen ways of measuring performance.

As an external examiner I have seen the work of teachers in fourteen UK universities other than my own, from which I am now retired, and have also seen work from a large number of HE franchises, including overseas. I talk to and mix with teachers in all sectors and carry out lots of university reviews and validations (more than thirty in the last few years). Although my views are based upon no more than the observations of an experienced participant I have also, however, worked with many overseas students and colleagues, sometimes in their countries and this experience provides, I believe, some comparative perspective. Had I considered from the outset that in this kind of role I might be seeing significant factors at work I might have been more systematic about the collection of evidence. Perhaps, somewhere, someone has been.

### Genuflecting

To adapt a phrase from David Hamilton, I think that, although it may not trip off the tongue, it is best to describe this powerful factor as ***induced professional genuflection before orthodoxy***.

Many schoolteachers in England embark upon M-level programmes having deeply internalised official definitions of, and formulae for working out, 'success' and 'failure', 'effectiveness' and 'improvement' and 'gifted and talented' and even the national standards that are supposed to define them as professionals. Inspectors heavily reinforce these definitions and formulae. Some teachers have gone so far as to adopt an unquestioning approach to theoretical concepts such as learning styles and multiple and emotional intelligence because at one time they appeared to fit government belief in the importance of personalised learning. To be able to deploy knowledge of a theory in support of practice can appear to be like playing a winning card. This is why learning styles, for example, were

often seized upon as a seemingly research-based answer to a teacher's prayer. I also believe that fear of seeming to be guilty of professional apostasy: of appearing to be unorthodox or to doubt official and received wisdom can inhibit the intellect.

The need to persuade students that critical reflection, problematising and trying other perspectives bring professional positives recurs throughout the provision of PPD. I claim that this need to persuade is part of a factor rather than a feature because it shapes and constantly acts upon the approach of academic tutors and providers. Schoolteachers often use the word 'transforming' when they evaluate their experience of working towards and completing a master's programme, particularly when they realise that they are allowed and encouraged to make use of their professional experience to engage with both theory and policy rather than to simply learn what they must accept and do. In recent years educational policy has created a more reactive profession. Postgraduate professional development programmes confront and challenge this and, I believe, help to generate a higher level of professionalism as a result.

My experience was that if you took part in a validation process for PPD you would see a strong critical framework provided by the assessment criteria and intended learning outcomes. If you are an external examiner you will also see professionally appropriate assignments that enable students to work at their optimum; and insightful formative feedback and feedforward that not only demonstrates knowledge, understanding and well-constructed judgment but also shows that tutors in higher education connect with, support and value their fellow professionals working in schools and colleges. Comments on assignments are usually written directly to the student and every effort is made to provide support and a good student experience.

It is within this kind of framework that participants in PPD not only engage with and make sense of the imperatives of professional life but also deploy their experience to use and challenge both theory and policy. Participants who do not challenge will under perform.

### **Staying in business**

The need to stay in business does not, however, go away. This can create pressure from university senior managers to recruit very high numbers of schoolteachers in order to maximise the grant, which, in turn, creates pressure on the team providing PPD because many universities are now also very anxious to achieve high completion rates. Attempting to respond to these pressures with cohorts of schoolteachers almost all of who, these days, are full time workers also doing their best to be part time students, is not easy. We should add to this the natural diffidence of people who may not have done any academic enquiry and writing for quite some time.



The recent decision to remove the funding for PPD will now place great pressure upon those universities that went all out to maximise their grant income. Perhaps smaller and slower growth that developed closer and more easily sustainable relationships with schools was the better option. We shall see.

### **Bronze geese laying golden eggs**

I would also add that no matter how clever on-line ways of working or how marvellous can be virtual learning environments the kind of work in which we are engaged is always going to be labour intensive. I have never forgotten a chat with the Academic Secretary of the University of Liverpool in which I was, once again, complaining about the perverseness of decision-making by senior management. 'You want', I said, 'bronze geese to lay golden eggs'. In other words, I felt that far too little recognition and resource was given to support the effort it took to work at the level of quality that we had set for ourselves. I recommend, however, not attempting to win too many such frank exchanges with clever phrases as they do not always please the interlocutor and can fail to pay off. Senior management closed us.

To deal with these pressures some universities have created two classifications of PPD participants. One group will have opted for accreditation and the other for participation without submitting any work for examination. The latter group does, however, participate in the evaluation of the impact of the taught programme. In my view the non-submission group can also be seen as an impact evaluation research population. I guess that you can imagine the positives, negatives, issues and difficulties arising from this way of working; but, whatever the model of PPD participation chosen, I believe that it is important both to know why it has been chosen and to be able to explain clearly and honestly the reasons for doing so.

### **Ducks in a row**

In *The Future of Masters in Education*, a paper commissioned by ESCalate in 2003, I listed nine components of successful masters level CPD in education. You can see the paper at [www.criticalprofessionallearning.co.uk](http://www.criticalprofessionallearning.co.uk). It is included as part of the Making Sense of Masters series.

I paraphrase and slightly update the components here in the form of questions.

- 1. Are you clear about your values and purpose and who subscribes to them?**
- 2. How accessible to all educational professionals is what you do?**

3. **Have you either persuaded participants to pay a fair price or persuaded senior management to allow you to work with a lower level of income?**
4. **Can you persuade people that collaborative professional sense making is an exciting thing to do?**
5. **Do you engage with policy makers or does somebody do that on your behalf?**
6. **Do you engage with other educational stakeholders?**
7. **Does the administrative system of your university serve you or you it?**
8. **If you are expanding can you maintain your standards of enquiry and scholarship?**
9. **How cohesive is your team, including administrators?**

I doubt that anyone ever gets every one of those ducks in a row but in the introduction to the paper I wrote

*'...the masters degree for the education profession of the future can and must be assembled from, and to a degree legitimated by, the combined efforts and shared values of a wide and assorted number of stakeholders.'*

I also wrote

*'Despite strong evidence that many key players have become convinced of the value that is added to the teaching profession by the masters degree, it has, I believe, a fragile grip on life.'*

I think I can say that both statements remain true.

Other features and factors included what I took to be a growing self-confidence in the sector. Every year the TDA collected the PPD impact evaluation reports and wrote an overall report on them. Each time the news was good. The TDA also commissioned an independent report from Curee for which all providers were interviewed. Again the news was good. All of these reports are available at [www.tda.gov.uk](http://www.tda.gov.uk).

Having reached a recruitment figure of thirty five thousand teachers a year the average for the last three years is still almost twenty nine thousand. This is, I believe, vastly more than anything achieved by, for example, any programme

provided by the National College for School Leadership. If you add on the numbers recruited during the brief and unfulfilled life of the Masters in Teaching and Learning (MTL) the dedication of higher education teams and tutors working to support school colleagues is plain to see. They have done so much to authenticate the professional experience of schoolteachers.

### **Last words for now**

I have raised a number of times the issue of collegiality versus competition and the potential damage to the maintenance of quality if corners are cut while seeking an advantage. When governments introduce competition into the provision of CPD by universities and at the same time abolish the small amount of funding for it the results are likely to include trying to deliver the same as before while charging less. The shortfall is often taken up by academics working harder to fill the gap between the level of quality at which they wish to work and the resources provided for them to do so. In my view this is what happened when the last government introduced its official Masters in Teaching and Learning (MTL). Academics could not bring themselves to lower their standards and so they put in the extra un-funded effort needed to maintain them.

Damage is done to society itself when governments either, as with the later New Labour government, concentrate upon targets so much that they try to develop an official masters degree to hit those targets but expect HE to put in unpaid work to make it happen or, as with the Conservative dominated Coalition government, declare that they want a teaching profession with the highest possible qualifications while removing the funding that makes this happen.

It is my belief that while we should avoid uniformity we must retain, promote and continually examine common values that encourage challenge to educational theory, practice and policy. We simply cannot afford to set aside such values while we simplistically and simplemindedly pursue high numbers in order to generate high income. Yes, those that are engaged in accredited CPD need more income but only because they need to invest in furthering their purpose; and for me that purpose is not just to make money or to build brand. PPD has helped teachers to improve the learning of young people. Society benefits from that. The unquestioning implementation of orthodoxies, no matter their source, is not what PPD has been about.

I do not want to end with 'PPD, requiescat in pace'. Nor do I want to have the last word on the subject: only to tell you my own, as it stands right now. And my own almost last word is that I am incredibly proud of having worked with and observed the work of so many brilliant people in schools and universities as they engaged in serious critical professional learning in order to enhance the lives of young people.

I have also not quite given up on the notion that politicians might eventually come to believe that professional educators who do this should be celebrated and listened to. This is not, however, a bet upon which I would stake the farm.