

Designing effective continuing professional development programmes

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At the BETT12 exhibition in London in January members of the [MirandaNet Fellowship](#) joined up with their colleagues in other countries to talk about the design of professional development programmes for teachers in the use of digital technologies. The MirandaNet Fellows run their own programme called iCatalyst (<http://www.mirandanet.ac.uk/consultancy/professional-development-programmes/>) at Bedfordshire University that majors on action research. This approach engages teachers in research in their classroom about challenges to learning. The teachers often with their pupils devise a project that supplies the evidence for effective classroom changes. This programme also invites teachers to explore their professional identity and to gain confidence in their ideas about learning. Sometimes the evidence can also be used to influence local, national and even international practice.

Ideas about educating for a deeper understanding of oneself are also evident in Jack Whitehead's work at the University of Bath. Through an action research approach based on Living Educational Theory, those involved examine their own values and emotional responses and how these impact upon their work. Through a variety of media they explore their fundamental beliefs, and their learning relationships, and through this understanding not only look to improve their practice, but also to gain insights into their own perceptions of the world and those around them.

As well as coming at the process and purpose of CPD from fresh perspectives, these approaches are also using new technologies to pursue their ends.

Whitehead's Actionresearch.net site encourages participants to post thoughts, feelings and responses in any format they feel is appropriate.

Dr Eva Dakich online from Melbourne, Australia talked about students being provided with iPods to learn on the move. They are also expected to contribute to Wikis and Blogs, and to use Facebook and Twitter to collaborate with each other. Colleagues with her raised the issue of teachers becoming, "champions in the struggle to create a just and equal society." The University has funding from the Federal Government to tackle racism, particularly towards the indigenous Aboriginal population. However her Aboriginal colleague's impassioned speech was also a reflection of those in education thinking quite deeply about what the fundamental purpose of schooling is. Eva Dakich, who is leading the programme talks of, "bridging the gap between those who have and those who have not."

Her colleagues and students talk of "challenging racism and chauvinism," and of the struggle to 'create peace and justice," of the need for a debate about, "fairness, justice, and a democratic society," and the link between "the spiritual and the material." The ultimate aim being that students will "engage with education with hope and faith," and become, "good citizens." These were issues that the audience in London were also committed to.

In Turkey working through online collaborative approaches has opened up CPD and answered a need that had long required addressing. The Teachers Academy Foundation, lead by Kayhan Karli, has developed the eKampus for teachers to connect with each other and to post materials they have created.

In 2007 about 50% of retiring teachers in Turkey had never had any training during their careers. By working online Karli now has 60 different courses, with over twenty thousand teachers writing blogs to share their learning with each other, as

well as to supplement and extend the face to face sessions that happen where possible.

Using social networking and mobile technologies is also proving valuable in the Achievement for All project which is a UK Government initiative intended to raise the sights of vulnerable, at-risk and special needs pupils. Garath Jackson, a former primary head teacher from Oldham, talked of using email, SMS and Parentmail, to keep parents updated on their child's progress. They've also found that computers can be a way for children to express themselves who may find it difficult to say aloud what they are thinking or feeling.

Rob Walker, an Oldham deputy head, also seconded to Achievement for All , has also used video-conferencing as a way of holding joint meetings with teachers in schools across the authority. A method of working that could also be used with parents.

Of course, for such approaches to work everyone needs to feel comfortable with them. We know that schools are a long way from embracing social networking as a way of working. Perhaps with more staff discovering the benefits for their own learning they will find a way to make it effective for their learners. World Ecitizens, with its strong practitioner emphasis will certainly be one way to exchange ideas and gaining knowledge about learning beyond our own backyards.

Resources from this MirandaNet event can be found at:

<http://www.mirandanet.ac.uk/mirandamods/mirandamods-at-bett/bett12/>