

Cluster based CPD pilot project

Summary report



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Background

This project was set up by the Training and Development Agency (TDA) as a one-year project between September 2009 and August 2010. Its purpose was to explore the benefits of cluster-based CPD in a sample of clusters. The nature/purpose of the clusters varied, some had extensive experience of working together to deliver CPD, others had been formed or developed from networks set up for other purposes and were relatively new to cluster based CPD. Activity included benchmarking reviews, contributions from clusters at the two project meetings, and follow up calls/visits.

What are the perceived benefits of cluster based CPD?

- Supporting flexible and targeted provision to meet locally identified needs and priorities
- Improves the quality of teaching and learning and improved ability to recruit and retain staff
- Can be used to meet the needs of specialist staff, teaching or non-teaching, more effectively
- Expands the opportunities for staff at all levels to become involved in in-house delivery of training sessions
- Better planning, taking a more strategic overview of needs and value for money
- Creates sources of expertise to support other schools or groups of schools.

What are the features which promote/support effective cluster working?

- Open, honest and supportive relationships between partners
- Leadership of the cluster, often provided by a Training School, and leadership of CPD within each partner organisation
- Access to expertise in coordinating training courses and managing relationships between different organisations
- Clear robust governance arrangements that are appropriate for the scale of the cluster
- Sound leadership of CPD within each cluster partner and a shared understanding of the nature of effective CPD
- Access to expertise from outside the cluster
- Source of funding to support the work of the cluster and local partners for advice, guidance and expertise.

Are there particular barriers or challenges to establishing cluster based CPD?

- Lack of sustainability in funding
- Geographical spread of a cluster
- Over ambitious programmes
- Insufficient sharing of information
- Over emphasis on cluster processes
- Conflicting demands on managers and leaders and lack of strategic management

Can cluster development and performance be supported by the use of a self-evaluation process?

Clusters appear to have benefited from the use of the self-assessment framework (formally known as the benchmarking tool). The most common challenge for clusters was measuring the impact of CPD. A workshop session on the TDA Impact Evaluation Model (IEM) at the initial meeting for clusters gave them access to a resource which they could tailor. Almost all have now opted to include the IEM as part of their practice. The two cluster-wide meetings provided a forum and at the second meeting it was possible to disseminate some very recent development work carried out by clusters in response to benchmarking against the self-assessment framework.

The pilot created networking opportunities, to implement CPD initiatives that were not available before, and the chance to be innovative about provision. Project activities were seen as having had a positive impact on attitudes to collaborative work. Feedback from the pilot clusters indicated that their participation in this project had helped to move their practice forward and enabled them to make progress towards realising the full range of potential benefits offered by cluster based CPD. The use of the self-assessment framework has been a significant contributing factor to the success of the pilot.

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