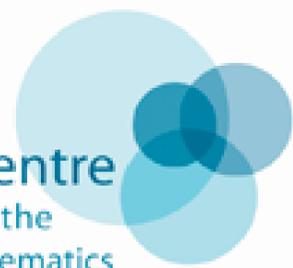


Researching Effective CPD in Mathematics Education (RECME)

National Centre
for Excellence in the
Teaching of Mathematics



Newsletter 1: January 2008

What is RECME setting out to do?

The NCETM's aim is to develop subject specific professional development for teachers of mathematics. This is seen as a vital part of strengthening the teaching and learning of mathematics. But what is CPD? What is effective CPD? What makes it effective? Is CPD special or different in mathematics education? The RECME project was set up to find this out and research the interrelated factors of effective CPD in mathematics education. In tackling this tricky task we would like your help as we believe that meaning and understanding should be co-constructed with our partners in the project. Our research design, and how we work with participants, is based on this belief. You will be able to tell us the story of your own CPD involvement. We will make our plans and approaches on data collection and analysis clear, understandable and open for critique. We are relying on you to help us.

What have we done so far?

We put a survey on the NCETM portal to find out what is meant by CPD for teachers of mathematics, and invited teachers to contribute their experiences and ideas. From this survey we also found out more about the CPD 'landscape' in mathematics education in England.

We invited about 30 ongoing CPD initiatives to become part of our 'research sample'. The sample was mainly chosen from the 183 entries of the survey. Eight selection criteria were used to obtain a cross-section of the existing landscape taking on board regional variations of geographical areas; criteria highlighted in the emerging literature review; organisational structure; subject knowledge of the teachers; how communication takes place within the initiative; educational sector. Above all the initiative had to be ongoing during the academic year 2007-2008 to allow for 'live' research to take place. Not all criteria could be fulfilled from the CPD initiatives that were identifiable through the online survey. Further CPD initiatives that satisfied these 'gaps' were sought by asking professionals in the field for suggestions.

We commissioned a literature review to explore the nature of CPD in mathematics education more generally and this has now been completed. The full review and a synopsis of it will shortly be published on the RECME pages of the NCETM portal; www.ncetm.org.uk

We appointed the RECME research team. Pen portraits can be found on the RECME webpage. The team is:



Dr Els De Geest



Dr Jenni Back



Dr Marie Joubert



Dr (nearly)
Christine Hirst



Professor Rosamund
Sutherland

We had the official launch event of the RECME project in October. We asked for your thoughts and ideas about what is effective CPD and what is student learning.

Here are some comments we have already received to inspire you to join in the discussion:

CPD is a team sport

CPD does not have to be delivered from outside

CPD is effective when

- the individual feels more passionate about what they are doing;
- it improves learners' understanding and experience
- it inspires the teacher to take a risk or to experiment
- it starts with identifying a need for you in your classroom.

Evidence of effective CPD can be found in classrooms:

- which inspire the children.....
- with passionate learners, deep learning.

What do you think?

You can add your comments and thoughts to these on the RECME webpage where the complete 'chimney' notes from the launch event are also posted. They can be mundane or controversial; whatever your view we want to hear it.

Where are we now?

We are thinking about what research instruments such as questionnaires, interviews and observations we should develop to find answers to our questions. We are also developing frameworks for analysis and trying to work out how we are going to make sense of all this data. To make sure this will work in practice, to trial some ideas of working and find out what and how you think about this, all members of the research team are visiting some of the sample initiatives.

The overarching research questions we are in the process of refining are:

Characteristics

What are the aims and expectations of participants and of the collective organisation?

What is the mathematical focus of the CPD?

What are the structures, relationships, roles and organisations involved in the CPD?

What forms of interaction are fostered by the CPD?

What is the role of research?

Evidence

What evidence is there of teacher learning?

What evidence is there of student learning?

What types of energy are generated?

What evidence is there of mathematical focus?

Portal

What influence does the NCETM portal have?

The RECME web page has become active and is regularly updated with news, and findings, and thoughts. This page is for all of you as well as us so please do join in with the discussion forum which has been set up - the link is on the portal.

What happens next?

Our next task will be collecting information from all the participating projects and will begin on February 1st 2008. The research team will visit everyone and develop plans for working with each initiative. We hope that the RECME web page will become the hub of communication for all of us about what is going on.

What about the summer residential?

At the launch we asked you whether you would like to attend a summer conference and when would be the best time to have this. The good news is you were all enthusiastic about this event, but there was no consensus about how and when. We decided the best option is to go for a 24-hour model, starting at 4pm and finishing the next day at 4pm, with dinner and overnight stay (paid for by RECME). The provisional date is 26 and 27 June 2008. Grace is searching for a venue in the Midlands to make it easily accessible to as many of you as possible.

What will we do at the summer residential? The intention is to share what has been happening within the initiatives and to find out whether the data and analysis make sense and are valid. We will be talking, thinking and discussing. Perhaps some writing for those we can inspire and encourage to join in.

And what happens next academic year?

Findings will be written up and shared with teachers as well as academics, policy makers, politicians and as many people interested in developing mathematics teaching and learning as we can reach. Some initiatives will be studied in depth, producing rich case studies. We also hope to have some PhD students working on specific research aspects through 'ESRC case-study studentships'.

Recommendations about what constitutes effective CPD for teachers of mathematics will be made.

Email us at recme@ncetm.org.uk

Visit the RECME webpage and forum on the NCETM portal www.ncetm.org.uk