
Factors Contributing to Teachers' Non-participation in the General Teaching Council for Wales' Professional Development Pilot Projects

**A Consultation with Teachers, Headteachers
and LEA Officers**

2 0 0 3

Report of Findings

Section

1

Executive Summary

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Continuing Professional Development funding has been made available to eligible teachers in Wales since September 2001. Research commissioned by the GTCW demonstrated that there were noticeable inequalities in take-up rates amongst certain groups of teachers.

Opinion Research Services was commissioned by the GTCW to investigate factors which prevent teachers throughout Wales from participating in the GTCW's Professional Development Pilot Project.

The research focused on the following areas:

The marketing of the pilot projects

Factors which prevent teachers from applying for funding

Possible changes which could improve the take-up of funding

1.2 METHODOLOGY SUMMARY

There were four target groups of consultees: Participant Teachers, Non-participant Teachers, Headteachers and LEA Officers.

Participant teachers – included to provide a benchmark, so that differences between this group and non-participants could be identified. They were surveyed by postal questionnaire sent to



600 teachers. The target response rate of 150 completed forms was achieved.

Non-participant teachers – 156 teachers were interviewed face-to-face drawn from schools with a high rate of participation and ones with a low and/or nil rate of take-up (see Section 3 for sampling methodology). Each interview followed a semi-structured format.

Headteachers – 23 face-to-face interviews were undertaken in schools with a high rate of participation and ones with a low and/or nil rate of take-up

LEA Officers – 16 telephone interviews were undertaken with officers in different LEA areas.

1.3 MAIN THEMES

It should be noted that there were significant differences between the views of participating and non-participating teachers. However, where participants in the Professional Development Pilot Projects were asked for suggestions on improving the process or paperwork, they tended to highlight similar areas to those mentioned by non-participants. It would therefore be possible to surmise that areas which are of little significance if a teacher is motivated to apply become obstacles where the motivation is lower. The main findings identified below should be read in this context.

1. Overwhelmingly, teachers considered their Headteachers and managers to be supportive
2. Headteachers in low-participant schools were not as adept at sharing information and being pro-active in the approach to promoting the schemes, but high-participation schools had pro-active Heads or SMTs. The



information from the interviews suggested that in order to maximise take-up rates at schools, one of three things needed to be in place: a pro-active Head, a pro-active member of staff with responsibility for staff development / CPD, or good informal networks of supportive colleagues with experience of the schemes.

3. Many older members (50+) of staff saw the schemes as not being relevant to them, whereas some newly qualified teachers and teachers in the first year at a school stated that they had more pressing issues of establishing themselves.
4. Some teachers also expressed 'initiative fatigue', finding that the number of different ideas and opportunities was beginning to be overwhelming. They felt that they 'just want to get on with the job'
5. The activity or lack of activity at LEA level had no noticeable impact on take-up amongst individuals
6. LEA officers feel that they have been sidelined, and would welcome a dialogue with the GTCW
7. In some schools finding suitable supply teachers was seen as a problem, and hence this acted as a deterrent to teachers who were reluctant to take time out from the classroom
8. Teachers in smaller schools report difficulties in finding the time to put bids together given their lack of non-contact time in the school day.
9. Some staff and SMT members were unsure or unconvinced of the relevance of the schemes to things like existing CPD (INSET), Performance Management, and School Development Plans



10. The size of the booklets puts some individuals off. Some suggested this was to do with insisting on sending bilingual information to everybody, instead of asking people for their preferences – English, Welsh or Bilingual.

1.4 TEACHERS IDEAS FOR IMPROVING TAKEUP

2. Providing a named contact or a face-to-face briefing about the schemes
3. A member of staff from the GTCW could visit schools to promote the schemes. Contact could be made with colleges to promote CPD amongst soon to qualify teachers
4. Linking the funding to the academic year rather than the financial year, so that teachers can more easily take advantage of courses beginning in September.
5. A tutorial system on how to apply
6. More flexible budgets (within reason)
7. More examples in the literature of possible uses for funding.
8. More examples of successful bids and projects
9. Mock completed applications with booklets
10. Ring-fence the funding and allocate it to schools with an entitlement for every individual.
11. The option to apply online
12. A 'How-to' guide to applying (Flow-chart / Step 1 etc.)
13. Consider strengthening the relationship with the LEAs



14. Targeting Headteachers to improve their knowledge and understanding and encouraging them to promote applications

1.5 MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

1. For a fuller discussion see the concluding section. The main recurring themes identified are:
2. Face to face contact is the most effective means of communicating information. This could be achieved through a variety of means such as:
 - a. Facilitation of a network of teachers who have successfully applied for funding
 - b. Working more closely with LEA Officers who will have closer links with schools
 - c. Greater involvement of Headteachers in a support/facilitation role

There is probably some scope for simplifying the application form and associated literature. However, we understand that some changes have already been made which may well address this point.

