

How getting professional development right can boost teacher retention



**Veema
Paper**

**September
2017**

Teaching has always been demanding.

When I first entered the profession in 2002, I remember thinking that my own teachers surely couldn't have worked this hard, or spent so long marking my tests. Clearly they had because I did quite well, and as we know, students don't get good results without the hard work of effective, passionate teachers. Yet it's this very workload that leads some [10% of teachers in the UK to leave the profession each year](#). In the last two years, 90% have thought about getting out, according to a survey of over 16,000 members of the National Union of Teachers' (NUT).

Research by the Institute of Fiscal Studies (Allen et al, 2016) also shows that around 40% of teachers leave the profession just five years after starting teacher training. So, of the 40,000 trainee teachers who will enter the profession this year and next, more than 16,000 will have left by 2023.

The road to retention

It seems that far more teachers than ever before are choosing to say goodbye to classroom life and what would once have been a life-long career.

[A 2016 report by the National College for Teaching and Leadership](#) suggests that those in ethnic minorities are often the first to go. According to research by the Runnymede Trust for the NUT, that may be because they often feel they face 'an invisible glass ceiling' that stops them being considered for more senior staff jobs. Or, because through racial stereotyping they are given classes exhibiting the most challenging behaviour.

Of course, teaching isn't for everyone and many graduates of all descriptions will naturally choose to explore alternative career paths.

However, we cannot hide from what such statistics tell us. Nor can we ignore the negative impact this has on the profession, or the barriers it creates to improving teaching standards in our schools.

So, what can we do to improve teacher retention?

Effective CPD works

For me, the answer lies in helping teachers acquire the knowledge and skills they need to become confident and reflective practitioners through better professional development.

Research by Ofsted and others has shown that effective CPD increases morale and enthusiasm for teaching by helping ensure staff feel valued and fulfilled on daily basis. They also become motivated by their own ongoing improvement, irrespective of their experience.

So, how can this be achieved?

- Encourage teachers to attend collaborative CPD events like [TeachMeet](#), or the free events put on by [ResearchEd](#) as well as joining the Chartered College of Teaching and connecting with others in the profession through social media. These are all ways to boost morale, build supportive professional networks and stay better informed.
- Taking a bottom-up approach to professional development enables teachers need to get involved in planning the professional development offered within their schools. Engage teachers in talking about the professional development opportunities they would like to see on offer, and what will have the most impact on their practice.

- Provide teachers with regular weekly opportunities to engage in professional development. These learning experiences will be more meaningful if staff are given the chance to feedback and reflect on events they've attended.
- Ensure that professional development is informed by high quality educational research. If we want to grow great teachers who are expert classroom practitioners, we must ensure that what they do is evidence informed.
- Give teachers the time needed to implement and embed new knowledge, learning and skills. This doesn't happen overnight.
- Move away from mock Ofsted lesson observations. These give little meaningful feedback and are often judgemental. Evidence also suggests that they do very little to improve the quality of education students receive.
- Make departmental and whole school meetings real opportunities for teachers to come together to learn, share successes, collaborate and reflect. Using meeting time to work through a tick-list of 'to dos' will not have a meaningful impact on pupils and staff.
- Introduce robust CPD evaluation. Knowing what works and what doesn't is vital for ensuring our teachers have access to the right tools and latest thinking. The most effective teachers generate learning in their students at four times the rate of novice teachers (William, 2011). This means it's imperative that more inexperienced staff are helped to bridge that gap as quickly as possible.

Review your CPD model

Creating a supportive environment is crucial in helping those in their first years of teaching to feel valued. So, when reviewing your CPD model, you need to think about how to develop a culture that helps retain teachers in your school.

A CPD programme that allows teachers to shadow and learn from colleagues, and where time is given over to regular dialogues about best practice and to coaching conversations on evidence-based approaches, will make a real difference to the well-being and longevity of teachers.

As school leaders, we all have a responsibility towards those new to the profession to provide professional development opportunities that actually help them improve.

If that's not what's happening, we need to make changes, because if we continue to get this wrong, our children's learning will suffer, something that none of us want.

C. Constantinou

Mr Costa Constantinou (BA, MA, PGCE)
Director of Educational Services
Veema Education

c.constantinou@veema.co.uk
www.veema.co.uk

References:

- Schools Week. (2017) (<http://schoolsweek.co.uk/highest-teacher-leaving-rate-in-a-decade-and-6-other-things-we-learned-about-the-school-workforce/>)
- Department of Education. (2016). School Workforce in England. (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/school-workforce-in-england-november-2015>)
- Ofsted. (2006) The logical chain: continuing professional development in effective schools. (Ofsted)
- Runnymede Trust. (2017) *Visible and Invisible Barriers: the impact of racism on BME teachers*. (<https://www.teachers.org.uk/equality/equality-matters/barriers-report>)
- Allen, R et al (2016). *The Longer-Term Costs and Benefits of Different Initial Teacher Training Routes*. (Institute for Fiscal Studies).
- National College Teaching and Leadership (2016) *Linking ITT and workforce data: (Initial Teacher Training Performance Profiles and School Workforce Census)*.
- NUT (2017) <http://www.ictforeducation.co.uk/news/the-national-union-of-teachers-nut-conducted-a-survey-of-over-16-000-teachers-in-september-last-year-and-found-that.html>
- William, D. (2001). *Embedded Formative Assessment*. (Perfect Paperback).

To discuss anything covered in this paper or for any other queries, please call us on **+44 (0) 20 3637 4232** or email info@veema.co.uk.