

Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation was to investigate effective models of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) amongst the staffs of four rural primary schools in East Cork. It looked at the historical background of CPD which created the basis for existing practices. It drew upon current national and international literature on the topic and sought paradigms of best practice in CPD that may suit these contexts. Throughout the study, there was a focus on the development of collaborative cultures within schools so as to positively influence professional development amongst the staffs and strengthen professional relationships. Different approaches to research were analysed and suitable methods chosen for this project. Ethical protocols in research were followed and consent sought from the school authorities and all participants. Four primary schools in rural East Cork were chosen for this study and they varied in size from 12 to 30 teachers. The 81 teachers of the four primary schools were given a questionnaire to complete regarding their perceptions towards CPD and their views on the strengths and shortcomings of the current system of CPD. A senior member of the teaching staff of each school engaged in a follow-up interview so that staff views could be clarified. The subsequent results were presented and analysed. This dissertation has found that the staffs of these schools are positively disposed towards CPD and are motivated professionally. There is a desire for CPD that is more targeted to the needs of the individual teacher and school. The respondents have also shown an inclination towards developing CPD collaboratively and a desire to improve cohesively as a professional team. It was also made clear that whatever model of CPD is implemented, it needs to be flexible to allow for individual's varying personal and professional circumstances.