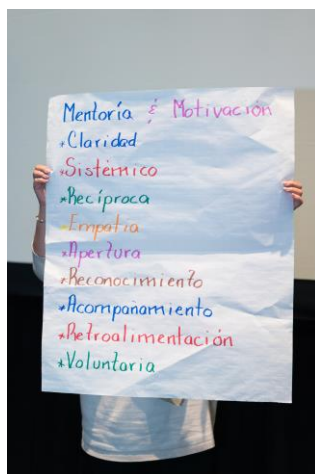




Continuing Professional Development in Basic Education

Workshop 3 – Mexico



6 February 2020

Report on the 3rd cpdBE workshop – Mexico City, 6 February 2020



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All the reports from the cpdBE workshops are available at

<https://americas.britishcouncil.org/services/schools/professional-development-basic-education/workshops>

Introduction

The *Continuing Professional Development in Basic Education* (cpdBE) project establishes a regional learning community of practice to enable connections between the UK and the Americas. It aims to influence thinking about Continuing Professional Development among policymakers, school leaders, teacher trainers and teachers. The main goal is to foster collaborative exchange and to promote an evidence-based approach to professional development in English Language Teaching (ELT) and other subjects in Basic (compulsory) Education in the Americas.

This report is the result of the third cpdBE workshop, held in Mexico in February 2020. During this workshop, teachers, teacher educators, researchers and school leaders came together to share best practice in CPD. This document summarizes the presentations and discussions that took place.



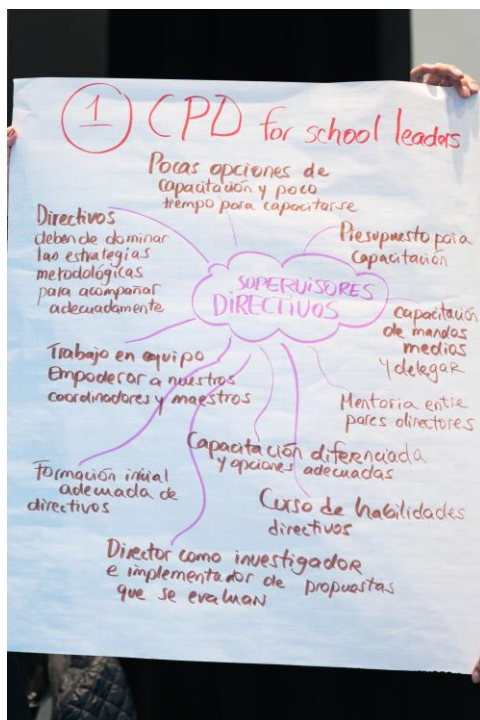
cpdBE Community of Practice

The cpdBE Community of Practice encourages wider online discussions and knowledge sharing on CPD. It provides a space for anyone interested in CPD to share articles, research, events, etc.

Join the cpdBE online community [here](#)

Third cpdBE workshop – Mexico City, Mexico.

The third cpdBE workshop was held in Mexico City (Mexico) on 6 February 2020, as one of the pre-conference events of [BBELT](#). The event had 27 participants from the public and private sectors, including school leaders, public administrators and publishers. The event consisted of three 30-minute presentations and an open space discussion.



In line with previous cpdBE events, one of the aims of the workshop in Mexico was to gain more understanding of the local context and to bring expertise from other countries in the region and the UK to contribute to it. A needs assessment prior to the event also identified the benefits of discussing a range of activities which deserve more recognition within professional development, especially by governments investing on it. The common thread throughout the workshop raising awareness that professional development in education goes far beyond teacher training. Accordingly, the line up of speakers of the third cpdBE workshop consisted of a representative of the Ministry of Education discussing the challenges and the actions planned to address them; and two CPD specialists, from the UK and Chile, sharing research, frameworks and practical ideas for CPD.

The presentation slides are available here

Summary of presentations

Presentation 1 – Teacher professional development in Mexico

The first session of the 3rd cpdBE workshop was dedicated to a conversation with Uladimir Valdez (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Mexico City), based on the following questions.

- Why do you think it is important for educators to participate in CPD?
- What are the key challenges in implementing CPD in Mexico?
- What needs to be done in the short, medium and long term to ensure the adoption of successful practice?

The talk started by emphasizing that the teacher is the most important educational agent there is. Consequently, teacher development must be discussed, revised and improved not only when there is an educational reform but at all times.



CPD should have an impact on student learning, especially in reducing the gap between higher and lower achievers. However, up until now it hasn't been possible to link CPD to better student results in Mexico. The lesson learned from the 80s and 90s is that there was a lot of investment on the individual, e.g. on scholarships for masters and doctorate degrees, and not on developing the educational system as a whole. A focus on the individual is good as long as there is an impact on the system, which overall was not the case in the past, according to the speaker.

It was reported that the Ministry of Education in Mexico is working on promoting peer learning. For example, by pairing graduates with school teachers. The graduate will learn about classroom management and pedagogical knowledge, while the teacher will be able to improve or update their content knowledge. The Ministry of Education

is also designing modular courses which when combined can certify teachers at master's level.



Moreover, the system needs to work on strengthening the role of headmasters and supervisors as academic leaders, in order for teachers to have their support not only about administrative issues but also the academic ones. Teachers need support to better assess their CPD needs. This support should provide them with evidence of their strengths and areas of improvement. Following this, there has to be a permanent offer of CPD in place for immediate access once a need is identified. Consequently, teacher development cannot be seen as something teachers do during school breaks or in their free time, but as an integral part of their work.

Finally, the talk emphasized that an education system cannot develop if the teaching of new teachers does not improve. It was suggested that there is a lot of room for improvement in teacher education at university level, especially with regard to training student-teachers to become reflective life-long learners.



After this opening presentation, the next session took a more global perspective to discuss the differences between teacher training and teacher development. This is an area previously identified by the British Council in Mexico as key to improving CPD in the country.

Presentation 2 – Teacher training and continuing professional development



The second presentation was given by Tim Phillips (Head of Teacher Development, British Council). It discussed the objectives of teacher development and presented evidence about the characteristics of effective CPD and the types of activity which demonstrate those characteristics. It argued that education systems need to encourage and recognise a wider range of continuous professional development activities, if teachers are going to be fully encouraged to build on their potential. This is because “influence over their professional development goal setting is the area most associated (*by teachers*) with higher job satisfaction and a greater intention to stay in teaching.”¹

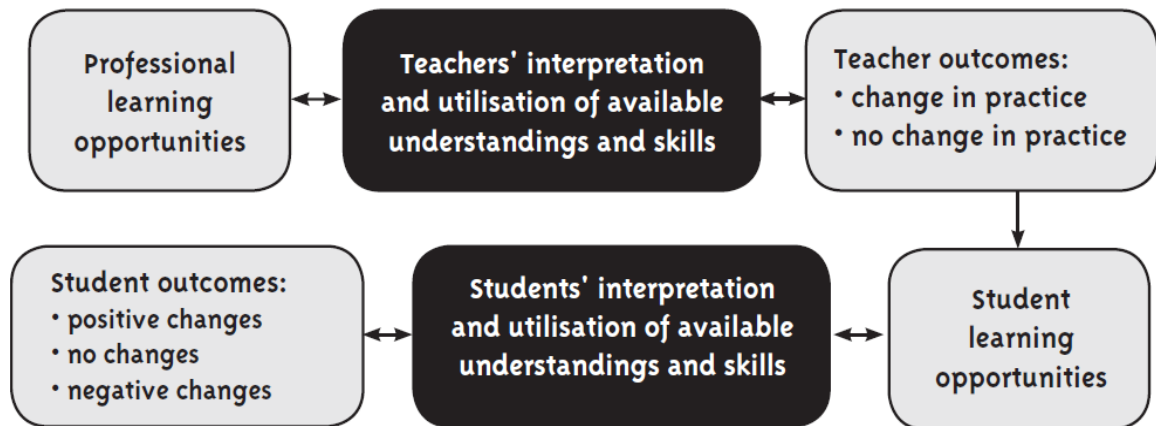


¹ https://www.nfer.ac.uk/teacher-autonomy-how-does-it-relate-to-job-satisfaction-and-retention/?dm_i=4R3K,ACJP,2INXMS,13YT0,1

It was shown that effective teacher development is not just about skills and knowledge but about thinking processes, attitudes and beliefs, which in turn are connected to wider education systems and issues.


The image below illustrates that the aim of teacher development is very much to get into the black box for teachers and help them understand the black box for learners.²

Figure 2.1. The black boxes of teacher and student learning



² Timperley, H., Wilson A., Barrar H. & Fung I. (2007) Teacher Professional Learning and Development: Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education <http://educationcounts.edcentre.govt.nz/goto/BES>

The presentation also included a framework from *Teaching for Success* for understanding and monitoring stages of development.

INTENDED CHANGE	STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT	STARTING POINT
Change in awareness, knowledge, motivation 	Awareness (A) you have heard of the particular professional practice	Beginning with little/no prior knowledge/skills, attitudes, beliefs
	Understanding (U) you know what the professional practice means and why it's important	Beginning with prior knowledge/skills, attitudes, beliefs
	Engagement (E) you demonstrate competency in this professional practice at work	Beginning to embed new ideas/practice, attitudes, beliefs in practice
	Integration (I) you demonstrate a high level of competency in this professional practice and it consistently informs what you do at work	Beginning to set an example in ideas/practice, attitudes, beliefs
Change in practice, habit, skills and belief		



The main takeaways from the presentation were:

- Professional development needs to help teachers improve specific areas of their practice and specific outcomes for students.
- Professional development should contribute to teacher agency, empowerment and professionalism.
- There should be evidence of change in professional development.
- Teachers need recognition and reward for their professional development.

In light of the above, the next presentation focused on a specific CPD strategy that has enabled positive change in many classrooms across the region by increasing teacher agency and empowerment.

Presentation 3 – Teacher Development through Exploratory Action Research

The third presentation was given by Paula Rebolledo (Educational Consultant, Chile). The premise was that teacher development should aim beyond changing teachers' behaviour, to also create cognitive change, which in turn influence beliefs and attitudes. One way to achieve this is through teacher research that is grounded on agency, transformation and empowerment.



The benefits of teacher research are:

- More commitment to one's classroom practice
- Informed solutions to problems related to teaching and learning
- Meaningful collaboration with other teachers to solve problems
- Personal and professional growth
- Increased self awareness
- Information on curriculum change
- Better understanding of the investigation
- Improvement in teaching practice

The main difference between academic action research and teacher-led exploratory action research is the inclusion of an exploration stage before any action is taken to change practice, as shown in the image below.³

³ Smith, R. & Rebolledo, P. (2018). *Handbook for Exploratory Action Research*. London: British Council.



Steps of Exploratory Action Research

The presentation raised participants' awareness of classroom research that starts from problem-setting, i.e. by digging deeper into a puzzle, intuition or problem that is not yet well defined. In sum, planning to explore before planning to change.



The presentation included stories from the [Champion Teachers](#) programme, a British Council CPD programme based on Exploratory Action Research which gives teachers research skills to understand their students' needs, identify solutions and implement change supported by informed decisions.

At the end of the presentation participants were invited to reflect on the following questions.

How can the vision of teacher as researcher be promoted in Mexico?

What can I do in my current role to facilitate classroom research?

What tools, resources and support do I need to generate classroom-based research projects in my school?

Open Space Technology – Round Tables

After looking at the Mexican context and CPD globally, participants had the opportunity to take the conversation forward by bringing their individual and institutional issues to discussion tables.

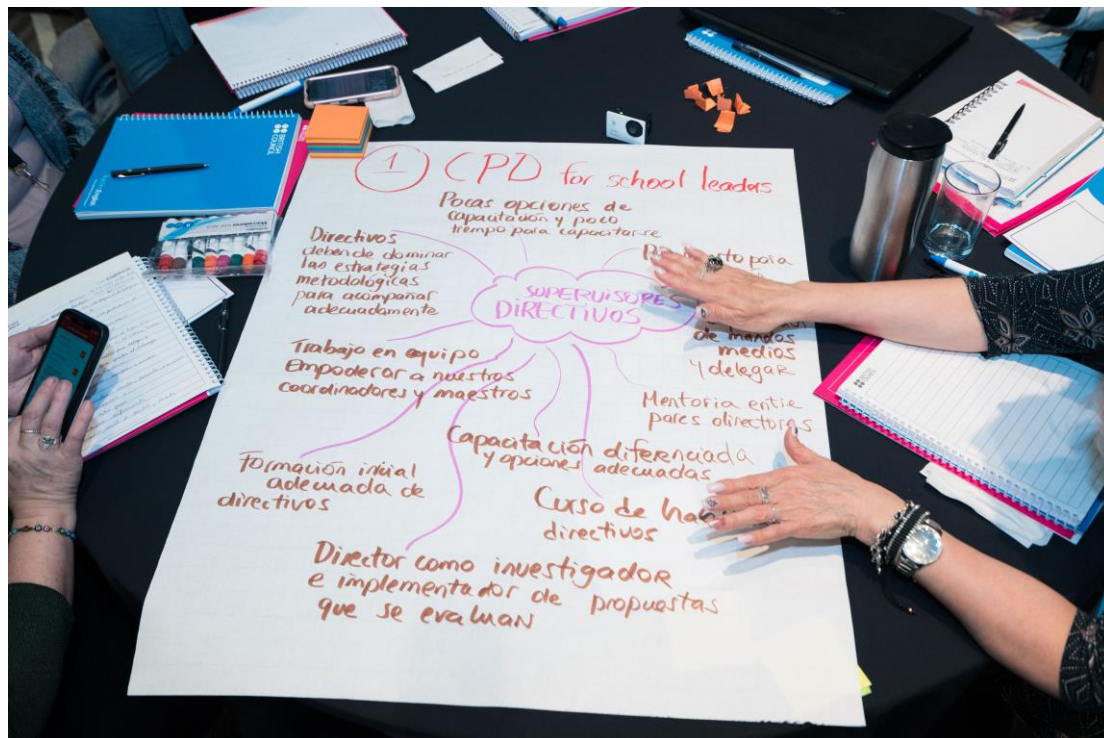
The session started by asking participants to consider the conditions for successful CPD, and then to narrow them down to more specific areas. Their ideas were then collected by the moderators and grouped to form discussion tables. As the examples below illustrate, the questions raised were varied.

- In what ways do technology and social media have a role in CPD?
- What kind of recognition and incentives can be given to teachers who engage in CPD?
- What can be done to raise awareness of CPD in a culture where many teachers think they do not need support?
- Why does teacher development not always have an impact in the classroom?
- What strategies can be used to motivate teachers and school leaders?



From the material recorded the following two themes are highlighted in this report.

CPD for School Leaders



Following up from one of the points raised in the first presentation, the group discussed the need to train and develop school leaders (headmasters, coordinators, supervisors). It was argued that leaders should be the first ones to engage in CPD for many reasons. For example, so that they are better able to identify the CPD needs of their own teaching staff. Also because some leaders were teachers at some point but when transitioning to a management role they did not receive appropriate training.

It was also discussed how school leadership is affected when education authorities demand prompt actions from leaders which are not seen as relevant to school improvement. Participants shared the concern that a lot of time is spent on administrative tasks at the expense of focusing on actions that contribute to teaching quality.



It was also discussed that leaders should ensure external CPD is relevant to the teaching staff, that there is appropriate time allocated for it within teachers' working hours, and that the environment is appropriate to the development activity.

In order to improve school management and leadership, school leaders can develop the following professional practices and enabling skills.⁴

Professional practices	Enabling skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creating strategic direction• Leading teaching and learning• Developing and working with others• Managing resources• Working in partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communicating effectively• Thinking critically and creatively• Team working• Effective organisational skills• Increasing motivation• Decision making



⁴ <https://americas.britishcouncil.org/products/training-development/school-leaders/leadership-training>

Conditions for Successful Mentoring

As a response to the previous presentations highlighting the importance of collaborative peer-to-peer support, some participants decided to zoom into the conditions for successful mentoring. The group started the conversation by identifying the lack of understanding in their context of what mentoring is and how it works. This is mainly due to the fact that *Mentor*, as a job title, does not exist in the public education system in Mexico. The *role* of mentor then is often taken up by coordinators, supervisors and senior teachers.



Different people might mean different things when they talk about mentoring. It can be sometimes confused with coaching, for example. The group felt it is important to define more precisely what a mentor does and how s/he can contribute to someone's development. It was agreed that a mentor needs to be an insider in the field with vast knowledge and experience in it. For example, a mentor can show a newly qualified teacher the 'tricks of the trade' or guide someone going through a career transition. A coach, however, does not necessarily need to come from the same field as the coachee, given the coach's main aim is to help the coachee establish clear goals and a growth mindset. The group also agreed that a mentor is someone who is where you want to be, and who can guide you towards that direction. A mentor has to be a role model to the mentee, someone who is empathic, non-judgmental and reliable. A mentoring relationship has the potential to:

- Increase teacher motivation and confidence by creating an environment of trust.
- Encourage teachers to assess their progress and development in relation to student attainment and their own professional satisfaction.

- Help teachers to reflect on their attitudes to the change process.⁵



The group then suggested that before implementing mentoring programmes education authorities need to implement strategies which can help the educational community to first understand what mentoring is and how it can be developed in different contexts taking into account the human resources available. Moreover, because there is resistance on the part of some teachers to collaborate with others, it is important that they identify themselves with their mentors, and that this relationship is voluntary. It was also pointed out that a mentor does not need to work in the same school as the mentee, it can be someone external.

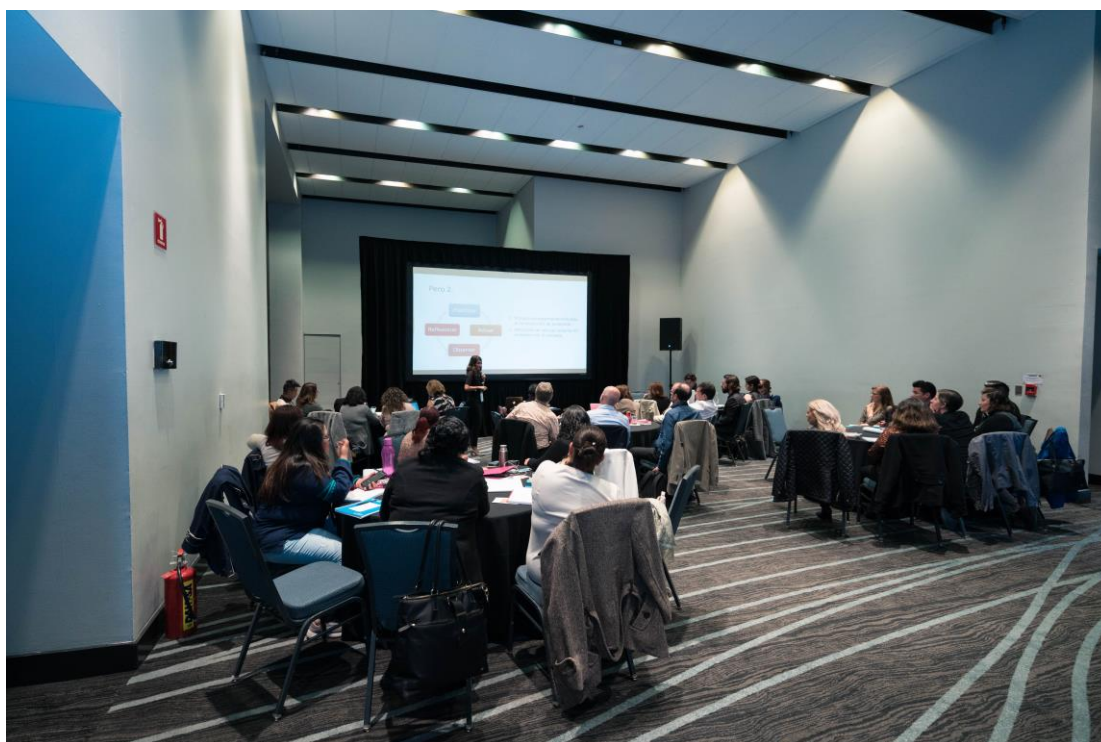
The group concluded that mentoring should be a voluntary activity based on clarity, openness, mutual engagement, empathy, recognition, accompaniment and feedback.



⁵ <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/cpd-framework-teacher-educators>

Conclusions

Mexico needs to approach CPD as an integral aspect of any efforts to create a systemic change in education, with strategies that speaks to the educational community and are aligned with contextual needs. This involves updating teacher education programmes so that new teachers start their careers more prepared to face the reality of the classroom and with strategies to explore and understand it. Overall, teachers need to be supported and empowered to make informed decisions which can improve their students' learning. One such strategy promoted in the workshop is Exploratory Action Research, which has recently provided strong evidence of teacher development.

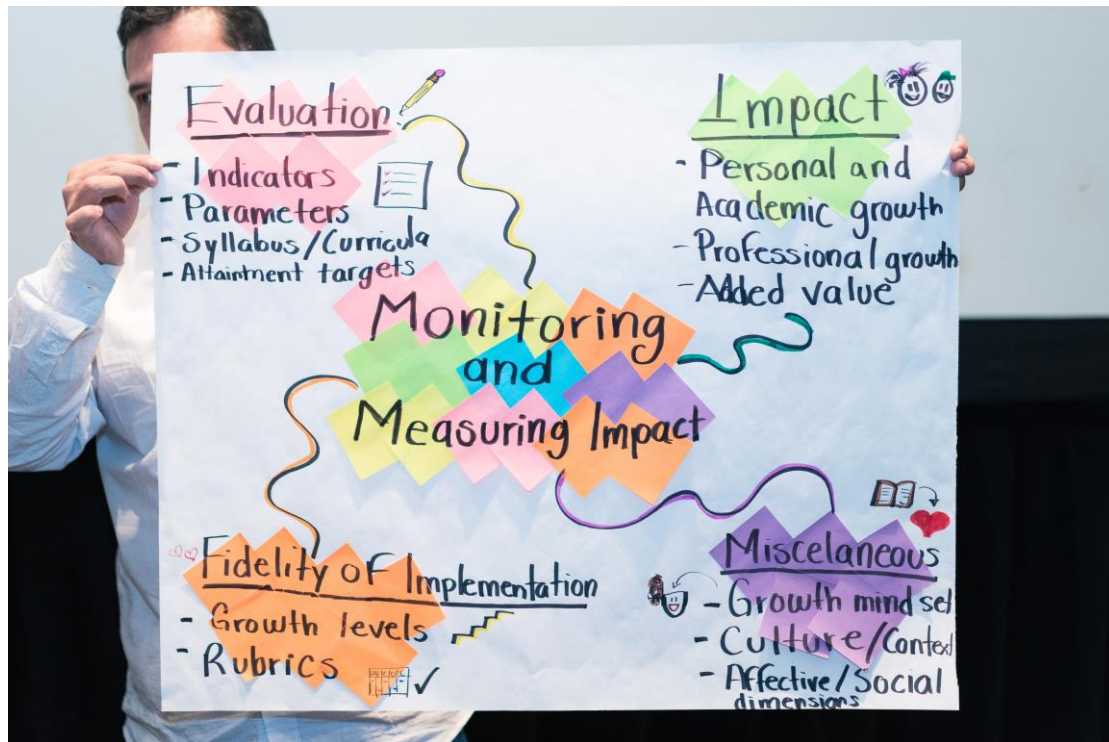


In the 3rd cpdBE workshop, participants took the Open Space discussion as an opportunity to arrive at a joint and contextualized understanding of key points presented earlier in the workshop such as, mentoring, evaluation and classroom research. In this workshop, perhaps more than in previous ones, the issues participants raised were very personal and had to do with how they manage their emotions when facing of a multitude of challenges. For this reason, forming theme-specific tables was less straightforward, resulting in each group going through a variety of questions in a flexible participant-oriented fashion.

Participants in the 3rd cpdBE workshop agreed that teachers in Latin America share many common needs and challenges, and that in general these can be problematized at a regional level; hence the importance of making connections and sharing experiences with teachers from other countries.

It was also agreed that it is necessary for schools to develop a sense of belonging among teachers through more recognition of their engagement. This would help retain teachers who believe in the educational project and who can contribute to its development. The group recommended that there should be financial incentives or

rewards for teachers who engage in CPD and that school leaders should seek this recognition from government authorities in order to promote CPD in their institutions.



A recurrent issue throughout the workshop was the importance of developing teachers' socioemotional skills and of triggering cognitive change at the level of beliefs and values. As a way forward, it was strongly recommended that education systems recognise the validity of a wider range of development activities which go beyond *teacher training*, e.g. Exploratory Action Research, Mentoring and Communities of Practice.

Following the 3rd cpdBE workshop, a few questions remain open for further discussions.

- How to best evaluate CPD's impact on student learning and give teachers' appropriate recognition for it?
- How can CPD strategies help develop teachers' socio-emotional skills?
- How can less visible activities such as reflective practice gain more recognition as valid CPD?
 - How can school leaders give better academic support to teachers?