



## Framework for the Continuing Professional Development of Art Teachers in Ireland

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### Abstract

*The desired outcome of this study was to develop, implement and evaluate a continuing professional development programme for second level art teachers at post-primary level in Ireland. The literature associated with the study involved an examination of continuing professional development (CPD) for second level teachers internationally with a specific focus on CPD for art teachers. The current forces shaping the provision of CPD in Ireland are examined as is CPD provision for second level teachers in Europe and internationally. Various research methodologies were examined and a rationale for choosing Action Research as a research strategy is outlined. A conceptual framework and research design are explained. The sample is described and related ethical concerns are highlighted. Validity and reliability issues are discussed. The various stages of the study are described and the modes of analysis are indicated. The development and implementation of a CPD programme for second level teachers of visual art is outlined. The rationale for and evaluation of the CPD programme by participants and collaborating partners is reported. The data are analysed and discussed. The main findings of the research are that a CPD programme for second level teachers of visual art is needed and that the CPD programme developed as part of this research was found to be effective. Further research into the perceived CPD needs of second level teachers of visual art in the area of ICT specifically is recommended. Recommendations for national CPD frameworks are made.*

### 1. Introduction

This study was undertaken (2008-2013) in an attempt to improve the quality and provision of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for second level art teachers in Ireland. The desired outcome of this study was to develop, implement and evaluate a continuing professional development programme for Art teachers at post-primary level in Ireland through the National College of Art and Design (NCAD).

#### 1.2 Continuing Professional Development- Irish and International issues and provision

Continuing Professional Development has been referred to as teacher development, in-service education and training (INSET), staff development, career development, human resource development, professional development, continuing education and lifelong learning [2]. Professional development, in a broad sense, refers to the development of a person in his or her professional role [20]. Professional development has to be considered within a framework of social, economic and political trends and events [14]. Professional development is considered to be a vague and disputed concept [9]. Continuing professional development provision is shaped by the nature of society at any given time. Globalisation, accountability, demographics, information and communication technologies (ICT's), growth and political stability all have an influence on government policies for education and CPD provision. Until the establishment of the *Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST)* in 2010, CPD was only provided by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) in Ireland when there was a change in the curriculum or a key national priority area was being introduced. Denmark, the UK, Sweden, Norway and Poland have a national strategy or plan for the future development needs of teacher training. The concept of an entitlement to CPD has been endorsed in England and Wales by the General Teaching Councils. In most of the replies from the 23 participant countries in a Eurydice project [8] the importance of CPD in all stages of teachers' careers was highlighted. A review of the literature for CPD for teachers of the visual arts in Europe proved inconclusive while in America and Australia it is highly structured and developed [16,17]. Mandatory CPD for teachers is the norm in most countries as part of teacher registration or teacher licensing. Subject-specific CPD for art teachers was widely available in the countries studied but it proved difficult to determine whether it was mandatory or not [1].

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## 2. Method

The basic beliefs of positivism, post positivism; critical theory; constructivism; pragmatism and the participatory/cooperative paradigm were deliberated upon before resolving that pragmatism was the paradigm most suited to this study as we acquire knowledge about the world based on our actions and the actions of others[1]. The most widely used research strategy in the area of CPD was action research [4,11,12]. The reflexive nature of action research ties in with the views of pragmatism. Action research was utilised as it is reflexive, collaborative, participatory and can be used to improve a situation and to produce practical knowledge that is useful to people in the everyday conduct of their lives [5,6,15,18]. Figure 1 shows how Coghlan and Brannick's model of action [6] research was adapted to include the research methods employed at the four stages of the research cycle in this study.

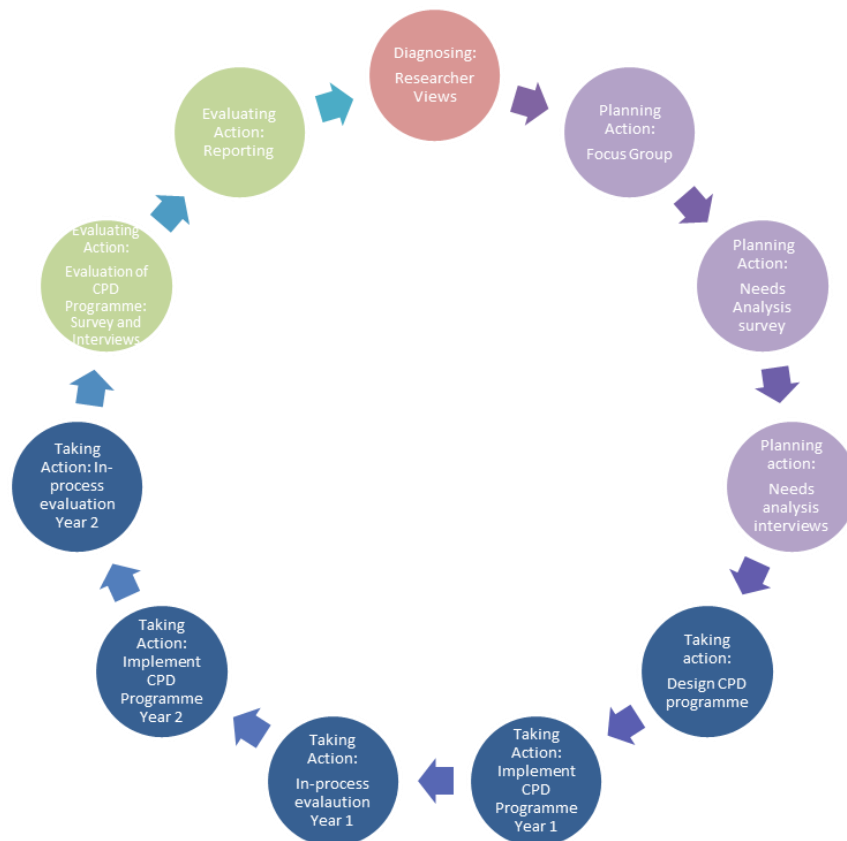


Fig.1. The Action Research Cycle for the Design, Implementation and Evaluation of a CPD programme for art teachers adapted from "The Action Research Cycle" by Coghlan and Brannick.

The research undertaken can be broken down into four distinct phases. In the first phase of the research, literature pertaining to CPD was interpreted and analysed and national and international models of practice in CPD for art teachers and other professions were examined. In the second phase of the research purposive and volunteer sampling were utilised [1]. Teachers in the Dublin region were determined to be representative of teachers in the rest of Ireland and became the main sample for the project [1]. Guarantees of confidentiality, anonymity and non-traceability were offered to participants and all interviewees declined the confidentiality offer [1,7]. A focus group of art teachers (n= 8) met and discussed their CPD needs and how those needs might be met. Individual interviews were conducted with education partners and key stakeholders to ascertain their views on CPD for art teachers: Director, Administrator and CPD coordinator of education centres (n=3), representatives from the Teaching Council of Ireland, Second Level Support Service (now PDST), Arts Council, National Centre for Technology in Education and the Crafts Council of Ireland and initial teacher education (Art and Design) (n=6). Interviews were also conducted with art teachers who were at various stages of their careers to ascertain the particular needs of a teacher at each stage of a teaching career (n= 6). Based on the results of the focus group and interviews, a needs analysis survey was created and piloted to a group of Art Teachers' Association of Ireland members outside



the Dublin region (n=12). Adjustments were made to the survey and the amended needs analysis survey was sent to 183 (refined to 178) secondary schools in the Dublin region. The online survey was set up in such a way that respondent details were not accessible. In the third phase of the research the data from the completed needs analysis survey (n=120) and the pre-intervention interviews were analyzed. Data reduction involving coding was utilised and data collected were analysed using ethnographic content analysis [1, 3, 19]. Initially a one year CPD programme (2009-10) was developed based on the needs identified (craft and ICT workshops and art history lectures) [1]. It was necessary to extend the programme into a second year (2010-11) so that identified CPD needs could be met. The CPD programme consisted of a series of practical Art, Craft or Design workshops (n=40), seminars (n=4), study tours (n=4) and lectures (n=21) based on teachers' preferences for CPD modes of delivery [1]. In the fourth phase of this research an online self-completion evaluation survey for participant art teachers was developed and circulated (n=206) based on Guskey's [10] five levels of evaluation namely: Education Stakeholder Reactions; Participants' Learning; Organization Support and Change; Participants' Use of New Knowledge and Skills and Student Learning Outcomes. Interviews were held with seven participant art teachers; six CPD workshop facilitators and three education stakeholders. The data produced were triangulated and the findings were documented [1]. By utilizing multiple methods to obtain data and provide multiple accounts of the social reality under investigation the researcher has attempted to elucidate findings that were credible. The credibility of these findings was also tested by submitting the findings for validation to the various education partners involved in the study. The researcher has endeavoured to provide a *thick description* of the methodology undertaken so that transferability can occur [1, 13].

### 3. Results and Discussion

Data on 5 central issues: (1) Stakeholders' understanding of CPD, (2) The need for CPD for art teachers; (3) CPD content for art teachers; (4) Organization of CPD for art teachers and (5) CPD Accreditation and Mandatory requirement issues were collected in phase 2 of the study. Many art teachers' understanding of CPD included more than one of the 12 categories that emerged (Fig.2). This relates to the contention that CPD is a vague and disputed concept [9]. The education partners were of the opinion that CPD was an opportunity to extend personal and professional development over a teaching career. The researcher suggests that it is more prudent to have a flexible view of what CPD *could be* and not *should be*. The majority of art teachers 95.9% (n=93) expressed a need for subject-specific CPD and all the education stakeholders concurred. In March 2016, the Teaching Council of Ireland launched the first national Framework for Teachers' Learning. The author contends that the Teaching Council of Ireland's policy on CPD does not take enough cognizance of the importance of subject-specific CPD as much of its emphasis is on school based CPD. The value of CPD as a means to improving one's professional practice or development was recognised. The need to "change" (professional practice, teaching methods, keep up with developments in technology and education etc.) emerged as a distinct theme along with theme of "learning". With regards to CPD content, art teachers preferences were for syllabus related CPD, particularly in ICT, art history and crafts. A combination of art teachers, professional artists, craftspeople and designers as facilitators of CPD was called for. The preferred mode of CPD delivery was through practical workshops and demonstrations. The preferred teaching style was *demonstration* closely followed by *guided discovery* and *experiential*. There was no consensus on how accreditation of CPD should be acknowledged.

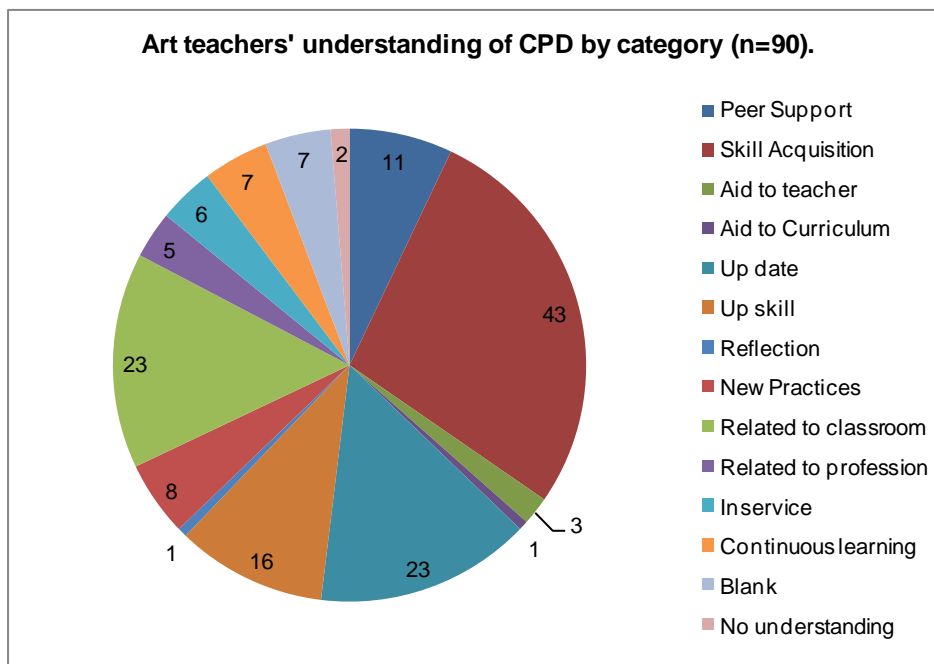


Fig.2. Art teachers' understanding of CPD

A positive finding that emerged from the evaluation of the CPD programme in the fourth phase is that 62% (n=206) of art teachers in the Dublin region participated in the CPD programme between 2009 and 2011. Participants stated that they had reflected on their own practice (88%, n=97) as well as acting critically as a professional (81%, n=86). Whilst 88% (n=95) of participants modified and adapted learning content for use in a classroom it should be noted that 43% (n=46) stated that they did not integrate ICT into their lesson planning. The majority of respondent programme participants (82%, n=89) contend that their involvement in the CPD programme had a direct influence on their classroom or personal practice.

#### 4. Conclusion

This paper details the development, execution and evaluation of a continuing professional development programme for art teachers based on their perceived CPD needs. The findings in phase 2 and phase 4 of this study illustrate the merit and value of subject-specific CPD for art teachers. It is hoped that CPD programmes similar to the one described in this paper might be developed and run in art colleges both in and outside Ireland to enhance the continuing professional development of art teachers and influence the future of education for art teachers and ultimately their students. It is recommended that any national framework for CPD should include a component for subject-specific CPD.

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