

A FRAMEWORK FOR MAKING CRITICAL SENSE OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

I want to begin by looking at the notion of a framework. I guess that most of us assume that frameworks are there to support something. It might be a set of arguments each relating logically to the other so that when combined they constitute a powerful and coherent school of thought. It could be plants that are trained to grow in particular directions. A frame can constrain as well as support. We also, for example, talk of 'framing' questions so that they elicit the desired response; and of 'framing' someone to take the blame for a crime that they did not commit. And what may be intended as a climbing frame may become a prison from which it is not easy to break out. The framework presented here is curved. It is not a loop as that would imply a single start and end point. It is a spiral that makes sense of and evaluates the impact of professional learning. It also continuously leads into further professional learning.

The origin of what follows is a paper that I prepared for the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET) setting out nine components for a thorough and well founded evaluation of the impact of CPD accredited at masters level; although elements of the framework can be traced back to a masters level assignment that I designed many years ago for the University of Liverpool called the Record of Continuing Professional Development (ROCPD). The research that I carried out on this underpinned a set of principles for incorporating portfolio work within masters degree programmes that were adopted by UCET.

You can see my report on the research by [clicking here](#) and a separate paper on the UCET principles [by clicking here](#). For a draft of the UCET paper outlining the components of evaluation of accredited CPD [click here](#). I believe that they remain useful and interesting but please be aware that much, especially government policy language, has changed since they were written.

The Framework also formed a basis for a series of articles in *CPD Update* on the subject of impact evaluation. Some of them can be viewed by visiting www.teachingexpertise.com.

What I want to do here is to show how the same nine components can be employed to underpin a more comprehensive approach to what I think of as *Critical Professional Learning*. I have been trying to develop this notion for some time because I see just how much we have needed to move from in-service training (INSET) to continuing professional development (CPD) and how pressures and/or opportunities such as the national standards and performance management present professionals in education with the chance to develop their ability to engage with and influence policy. Simple implementation of policy means developing into a box. The Training and Development Agency (TDA) for

schools in England hopes that the combination of standards and performance management will have a positive effect upon school improvement but I believe that it is wise to be wary of their tendency to narrow down professional learning.

This, then, is about more than just impact. Places of education require an overall, wide and institutional approach to professional learning and to see it as socially critical.

In what follows I have made use of both individual and collective personal pronouns. I hope this does not confuse because I believe that the framework can be made to work for institutions, institutions working in partnership, individuals and individuals also working in partnership. Read it, therefore, from your own perspective.

I have set out the Framework in nine numbered sections each of which is divided into **Rationale** explaining its purpose; **Action** outlining a useful way of proceeding; and followed by a supportive **Worked Example, Activity** or **Story**. To make use of these you will only have to click on them. Some of them have been specifically written for leaders of professional learning.

But first, a diagram to illustrate the spiral nature of the Framework.



The Framework, *please click the sub-headings to download it.*