CPD THROUGH ICT

⬇ TECHNOLOGY CAN SUPPORT TEACHERS' DEVELOPMENT AS WELL AS STUDENTS' LEARNING – BRIDGET CLAY RUNS THROUGH THE PROS AND CONS OF FIVE EASY TO ACCESS OPTIONS...

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Great professional development can improve pupil outcomes and transform teachers' morale and confidence. In order to achieve this, effective CPD should focus specifically on pupils' learning and needs; be collaborative and driven by teachers; be a sustained process, not just one-off courses; involve challenge and support from expert external partners; and be built upon evidence of approaches that work well. Using these principles, technology can support CPD in a number of ways:

1. Twitter: Twitter can be a great way to hear about new ideas and network with other teachers. You can discover blogs and research and engage in discussion with teachers across the world.
Pros: Twitter is a free and easy way to access research and ideas that could otherwise be harder to find, with certain topics even attracting regular chats and events.
Cons: Whilst Twitter is great for finding new ideas and research, it will not support you to embed those ideas in practice. It can also be hard to find out what is evidence-based.

2. An Online Professional Learning Network: This can include Twitter, but also features other social media and online options such as forums, Skype, and resource-sharing on sites such as Pinterest.
Pros: These options allow for greater focus on particular topics or groups than Twitter alone. The resources are flexible and open for everyone to offer and receive help, bringing teachers out of isolation and into international collaboration.
Cons: Discussing and sharing with other teachers does not necessarily encourage you to embed and evaluate practice in your own classroom. Again, there is also a risk that the ideas shared are not evidence-informed.

3. Video for Observation: Video systems (e.g IRIS Connect) allow you to film your own lessons, capture and share best practice. You can view other people's practice as well as reflect closely on your own.
Pros: Observing classes via video offers flexibility and freedom. You can pause to analyse and reflect, and observe students' learning and interactions more closely than is possible while teaching.
Cons: There is a risk that video observation is used less rigorously and less effectively than is best practice; and it can shift the focus from student learning to teacher practice.

4. Video for Sharing: There are many professional learning videos available online. Teachers Media, for example, is a resource with thousands of examples of practice.
Pros: This is a quick, flexible and free way to see practice from all over the world. Videos can be paused, shared and discussed with colleagues allowing you to see new ideas in action and compare to your own practice.
Cons: Approaches from other schools cannot necessarily be easily or effectively embedded into your school.

5. Blogging: It is now free and easy to set up your own blog and share it with others. The very process of reflection when writing a blog can be a very useful tool for development.
Pros: Making yourself write regularly about your teaching and experiences in school is a good way to ensure deep reflection. By publicising your blog, you are forced to refine your thinking further and ensure that what you say is fair and robust. Sharing blogs also prompts further discussion and reflection through conversations with others.
Cons: It can be tempting to write blogs on too many topics, instead of taking time for deep reflection, supported with evaluation and evidence.

Of course this is just a snapshot of the possibilities for making CPD more effective using technology. As with every CPD opportunity you undertake, it is important to evaluate the impact and ensure it is focused on pupil learning outcomes. With these provisos in place, each of the above ideas can help effectively and enjoyably to transform the teaching approaches used by you and your colleagues.