

# Development plans

If you're not already using the internet for CPD, you're missing out on some fantastic collaborative opportunities, says **Dr Nicola Davies...**

**T**o fulfil their role as educators, teachers are being encouraged to enhance their professional development by accessing internet-based knowledge and expanding their online network. Social media such as Twitter, blogging, and online communities, in particular, are valuable resources for CPD. They encourage discussion and provide teachers with access to resources and contacts they wouldn't otherwise be able to utilise.

"The best teacher CPD comes from learning communities," says @MyPEExam, Assistant Principal and PE teacher, "and Twitter is, perhaps, the best current example of this. I have received more CPD in the past year on Twitter than I have during my entire sixteen year teaching career via any formal development sessions."

Simon Warburton, Deputy Head Teacher at Hitchin Boys' School, concurs. "I use Twitter daily," he observes. "I can use the #SLTChat to communicate with UK-based school leaders, #Scichat to communicate with science teachers and a whole host of other hashtags such as #edchat and #ukedchat." In the Twitter world, hashtags are keywords or phrases prefixed by a # that allow users to group messages according to topic. "From the comfort of my own desktop/phone/tablet," elaborates Warburton, "I can develop a thought with tens of thousands of experts into a kernel of a great idea, or I can repay the favour by developing someone else's thoughts."

Rachel Jones, an e-learning coordinator and teacher of classical civilisation and computing at King Edward VI School in Southampton, even found her current job on Twitter. She says, "I have no doubt that my CPD activities online have made it possible for me to pursue new opportunities in teaching. I have built my confidence to speak at events, and to be a much more active participant as part of a reflective community."

Thomas Bennett, who teaches philosophy and religious studies at Raine's Foundation School, East London, adds, "Twitter has been a platform that has enabled me to reach an online community of thousands, most of whom I would never have the chance to meet in real life. It also allows instant outreach to people in high status roles in a



way that breaks down traditional avenues of access."

Like Jones and Bennett, Warburton credits Twitter for many of his recent achievements, including writing his own blog and getting involved with Google Apps as a learning environment. "This led me to becoming a Google Certified Teacher with the Google Teacher Academy," he explains. The Google Teacher Academy is a free global professional development event for educators, where teachers gain experience with Google tools, instructional strategies, resources, and access to a supportive community.

If all of this doesn't tempt you to embrace online CPD, maybe this will. "My blog and Twitter resulted in an invitation to write for the Guardian Network," says Warburton. "I have also presented and attended teachmeets – informal gatherings where teachers can share their insights and innovations – and I have taken part on an advisory panel for teacher recruitment."

## What next?

While social media is currently the most popular technology-based CPD, more formal CPD portals are the next step towards online professional development. The Open University (OU) is at the forefront of developing such online portals, providing specialist-led learning platforms that allow flexibility for busy teachers.

One example of an online portal set up by the OU to aid teachers in their CPD is the Vital project – a portal on the OU network through which teachers from subscribed

schools can learn a range of IT skills. Additionally, in collaboration with Trinity College London, the SoundEd CPD Programme has been created. Here, music teachers can join interactive workshops and other e-learning courses. The program also provides access to a number of forums, articles, and music resources.

Technology-based CPD is here to stay and is likely to become a vital part of teachers' personal and professional development. As Bennett says, "Technology can potentially revolutionise CPD, as long as the personal, face-to-face element of learning isn't ignored."

"Teaching is like having two separate careers," points out @MyPEExam. "First you learn to cope and then excel in the classroom before leaving the classroom behind and learning to manage. IT allows us to blur the lines of this transition, making CPD resources available to everyone at every stage of their career."

## ONLINE CPD RESOURCES

Edutait – an education/CPD blog: [edutait.co.uk/education-blog](http://edutait.co.uk/education-blog)  
 Teacher Toolkit blog – CPD webinars and other resources: [teachertoolkit.me](http://teachertoolkit.me)  
 Going beyond CPD, LinkedIn group: [linkedin.com/groups/Going-Beyond-CPD-Developing-outstanding-4316385](http://linkedin.com/groups/Going-Beyond-CPD-Developing-outstanding-4316385)  
 The Guardian Teacher Network – resources, CPD opportunities and blogs: [theguardian.com/teacher-network](http://theguardian.com/teacher-network)  
 Pedagogoo – an online community for teachers: [pedagogoo.org](http://pedagogoo.org)

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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