

News Release
2 July 2012

English UK plans to support teachers' development with a professional association

Plans to create a professional association for language teachers have been outlined by English UK.

The organisation would be closely tied in to teachers' continuing professional development, providing a framework for progress. Ultimately, it might underpin a chartered status for EL teachers, with the possibility of having different grades of membership to recognise those with a greater commitment to professional development.

Huan Japes, the association's new deputy chief executive for professional services, told members at its annual general meeting of the plan, which was first outlined during English UK's creation in 2004.

"One of the aims of the organisation in our initial articles was to create a language teachers' association, but it has always proved too difficult to get it off the ground. Anything we do would need to be carefully researched with both teachers and organisations. But I'd like to have something in place by this time next year," he said.

Initially, the association would act as a central information point for CPD opportunities, making it easier for teachers to identify courses at all levels being provided by different organisations such as English UK, the British Council, latefl or others.

"Anyone could then look at the CPD calendar and find out what was on in their region," said Mr Japes, adding: "The huge thing would be to see how we could provide a descriptive framework for CPD to benchmark teachers' continuing professional development. They would get some sort of credit for each piece of CPD, and understand what it was equivalent to, relating it to other skills.

"It would also need to explain whether each course or piece of CPD was suitable for teachers at a particular level of development: a lot of work would need to be done here." Mr Japes said this would include looking at whether a certificate of attendance was enough for some courses, or whether the teacher would have to provide some evidence of reflective benefit.

A steering group for the project would also need to consider whether there might be specific courses aimed at helping members to progress, and whether full membership status might be conferred only once teachers had a diploma or level 7 qualification. Much further down the line, said Mr Japes, there might be the possibility of chartered status for suitably qualified teachers.

"Teachers would need to want to do it want to develop themselves, and we'd be looking at self-directed activities such as reading books as well as training and group activities. Obviously CPD needs to be inclusive in that sense, needs to be something which fundamentally comes from the teacher. They've got to want to develop themselves, and if

they do we're rewarding them with full membership or associated membership of the association."

An association would be for teachers from both the state and private sectors, and would probably be open only to those working in the UK. The steering group would have to define what minimum level of qualification was acceptable. Funding will also be an issue, although Mr Japes is hopeful that some money might be available through the European Social Fund.

He said: "We need to break this down into stages. We need a way to register and record all the CPD which is going on, and enable people to find it online, in one place. That would be the starting point. Then we'd think about putting some kind of framework on that so people can get recognised for the CPD they do, and that obviously leads into a teacher association with various member benefits which we could have to define. And it will be interesting to see how much demand there is for this."

English UK is keen to hear from anyone with ideas about a central register of industry CPD or how a teacher association might work. Contact Mr Japes via training@englishuk.com.