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Communities of practice: what do teachers gain from collaborative curriculum development?

The University of York's Science Education Group (UYSEG) has a world-wide reputation for innovative curriculum development in science. Schemes such as Salters' Science, Salters' 'A'-level Chemistry, Salters'-Horners 'A'- level Physics and Salters-Nuffield 'A'- level Biology have been successfully implemented in secondary schools in the UK and elsewhere.

This paper reports research into what teachers and trainee teachers gain from being involved in curriculum development. The model we have developed is based on a 'community of practice' where the teacher, curriculum developer, policy adviser, researcher etc. work together towards a common goal, often trying to devise better teaching to addresses a particular problem in science teaching.

Outcomes from two examples, one from our work in the UK and one from work in South Africa are discussed. We consider the aspects of the model that have been most effective and to what extent this model of CPD might be used in other countries.

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