

## From the Editorial Desk

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Tertiary education in India today is confronted with many challenges, some of which include empowerment, equity and employability. In addition, teachers also have to think about inculcating key competencies in the graduating students to equip them to become productive members of society and to help them to acquire the skills, both personal and professional, that will help them to achieve their life goals and fulfil their aspirations. In this context, it is apposite to introspect about the roles and responsibilities of the teachers who are the prime facilitators in this process. It is after all in the course of the teaching-learning process that scaffolds are erected, and then taken away when the student is ready to function independently and metacognitively. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is an opportunity to assist in this skill-building for teachers who require constant enrichment and upgradation of their skills and knowledge base in order to successfully negotiate the challenges they are faced with. Today, the classroom is a site of complex negotiations and diversity. It is a place where students and teachers together build the bridges that will assist the students to transition from the protected environs of their educational institution to the “real” world that is rife with challenges.

In the Indian context, CPD in the tertiary education sector is a neglected area in which research has been sparse and sporadic. Unlike other professions such as medicine, architecture and engineering, in the education sector, CPD is considered a peripheral concern. This is because the majority of tertiary level teachers participate in professional development programmes only if it is mandatory. These programmes (that go under the present moniker of Faculty Development Programmes, FDPs), however well intentioned, rarely address the core pedagogical issues of higher education, much less the actual teaching learning interaction in the college classrooms. For those largely intrinsically motivated teachers, who wish to upgrade their professional expertise, the opportunities to do so are few and far between. In fact, entering the teaching profession in the tertiary education sector does not at present, require the prospective teacher to have any formal teacher training, only a research degree in the concerned subject. This very often results in a situation where the teacher uses a combination of common sense and gut instincts to transact knowledge in the classroom. In the process, the handover of knowledge to the learner is a matter of chance rather than an outcome of careful planning and execution.

In order to equip teachers to meet the challenges of the 21st century classroom, CPD is of utmost significance. The dimensions of CPD include self-reflection, action-research, formation of teaching groups, discussions, pursuit of additional courses, finding out how teaching-learning happens in other contexts, attending participating in and organizing seminars/conferences, and publishing articles.

While individual motivation is a key driver here, institutional support plays an equally important role in creating an environment in which teachers have the opportunities and incentives to enhance their skills.

This special issue of *Fortell*, on the theme of *Continuing Professional Development for Tertiary Level Teachers* has been planned keeping in mind the imperatives of this burgeoning area of research and policy. The articles in this issue have been contributed by teachers, trainers, academics and research scholars working in the area of CPD, as well as those whose experiences in the ELT classroom inform their insights and concerns. Some of the key issues and concerns that have been addressed, include dimensions of CPD, an overview of methods and models, an insight into how CPD needs to stand up and be counted, the importance of reading for professional growth, an autoethnographic account of CPD in practice, the role of CPD with reference to the specific environment of English Language Teaching in India, the importance of peer mentoring and empowering teachers to take decisions, and the co-construction of knowledge and the importance of collaboration among its stake holders. The articles have been complemented with an interview with a practitioner and scholar of CPD, a very useful article describing various activities that can be used to enrich and enhance the teaching of English, and reviews of three books that will help to widen the horizons of our understanding in this important area of academic and professional concern.

We do hope you will enjoy reading this issue and find it useful in your quest for professional enrichment and empowerment. We look forward to continuing the dialogue on teaching and learning in the English language classroom in India.

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