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## 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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# The Dimensions of Continuing Professional Development

*Rod Bolitho*

## ABSTRACT

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) as a term is now better understood than was the case a decade ago. However, in the field of education, it remains open to different interpretations by those who have a legitimate stake in it. In this article, I will attempt to clarify some of the aspects of CPD that are most important for teachers and managers in educational institutions and also for those who shape policy. I have also included examples from the field.

**Key Words:** continuing, professional, development, process, training, INSET, obstacles

## INTRODUCTION

The concept of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) has been around for a long time in a number of professions. However, it has only recently begun to take root in the field of education, and there is still no common, shared understanding of the term amongst the stakeholders involved in educational institutions and authorities. I will therefore start by exploring the concept of CPD with the help of some quotes from teachers.

“I feel as though I’m standing still. Since I came back to teaching three years ago, I’ve been using the same textbook with a class at the same level and I’m really getting bored with it. I really need some new ideas....”

For this teacher, there is no sense of progression in her career, and she is looking for ways of rediscovering her motivation and her commitment to her job. She has obviously lost the thread of her career to some extent when she dropped out of her job to raise her children.

“I worked hard to get my teaching qualification, but I don’t really feel respected. When I meet people socially and tell them I’m a teacher, I get comments like “Lucky you! All those long holidays!” or “Schools aren’t what they used to be.” Doctors and lawyers don’t have to listen to comments like that, so why should we, as teachers?”

This teacher feels that his professionalism is being questioned. It sometimes seems as though everyone is an “expert” on education, and has the right to comment critically on any aspect of what goes on in schools.

“Our head teacher used the school budget to buy computers and interactive whiteboards but we’ve had no chance to learn how to use them.”

Here, the teacher is pointing out that new technology is of little use if its introduction is not supported by training. Neither the teachers nor the school as a whole will be able to develop further or meet new challenges without some kind of commitment to professional development.

To look at the three parts of the term CPD, the first teacher has no real sense of *continuity* or development, the second teacher is annoyed that he is not seen as a *professional*, and the third teacher feels the need to *develop* professionally by engaging with new technology. These three cases remind us that CPD needs to be seen as integral to the life of teachers and institutions. In a fast-changing world, education, which is traditionally seen as a conservative area of activity, should not be seen to be falling behind, and CPD is an important means of guarding against that.

### CPD AS A PROCESS

The word “continuing” emphasizes the nature of CPD as a process. Ideally, it should be seen as a career-long process. Despite setbacks and breaks in our career, we can all get a sense of the professional development and where it has taken us when we think back to the way we taught and behaved at the start of our career and compare it with how we teach and behave now. There is bound to be a difference. This difference may be characterized by changes in any aspect of teaching: classroom practices, routines, beliefs, attitude towards the job or confidence levels. Not all the changes will be positive, but when we think about what has changed, we may also try to think back to why and how these changes have taken place. Positive changes in any of these aspects may have been triggered by a promotion, a salary increase, or a useful training course for example, whereas negative changes in attitude or confidence may be attributed to management decisions, additional workload, or poor pay and working conditions.

All of these changes represent steps or phases in our development, and taken together, they represent who we are as professionals. However, different people react in different ways to the events and personalities that shape their careers, and so professional development is first and foremost an individual process, but fortunately one over which we have a good measure of control.

The individual nature of development leads us to consider its relationship with training. In-service training (INSET) courses are sometimes termed “teacher development courses” and this can sometimes cause a misunderstanding. Indeed, Phil Riding (2001) has harsh words for the way some INSET courses are planned and delivered, describing them as “fragmented, unproductive, inefficient, unregulated ... and lacking in intensity and follow-up” (p. 283). From the course participants’ perspective, he is probably right. For them, a course is usually an isolated event, not an on-going process. While it may be seen as a development opportunity for the participants, there is no guarantee that all of them will see it as such and benefit from the experience. For those who do, it may be characterized as a milestone in the process of development. The relationship between training and development is therefore similar to that between teaching and learning. The decision to develop or learn rests with the participant or learner, not with the trainer or the teacher. As the proverb reminds us, “You can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make it drink”.

### CPD AND CHANGE

Michael Fullan very neatly related development to the way we are affected by change in our professional lives. He stated: “Change is mandatory; growth is optional” (1993, p. 135).

It is worth examining the complex links between change, development and INSET a little more closely with the help of a case study based on a real project.

The Ministry of Education in country X decides that new English textbooks are needed as the existing ones are out of date. They want the books to be written by local teachers and to be printed and published locally, as imported British or American books would be too expensive and would moreover not reflect the needs and realities of the school learners. The Ministry advertises for teachers to constitute a team to write the books under the guidance of an experienced consultant, and after a careful selection process, the team is put together. As few of the teachers have little experience in writing for publication, they are put through a training course by the consultant. After the training, they begin to write the new books, which are produced one by one, over a period of several years. For the writers, this turns into an immense process of development.

But that's not all. As each book is completed and published, it is made available to schools. Teachers of English are confronted by a need for a complete change in their practices as the new books are very different from the old ones. Regional training courses are organized to familiarize teachers with the working principles of the new books. These courses focus on the shift from grammar-based teaching, and emphasize on the importance of developing language skills and communication. Teachers are required to attend these courses, but they react in different ways. Some see the new course and books as a development opportunity, to be seized with both hands, while others grumble about the new materials and the training because, for them, it means moving out of their long-established comfort zones.

**Here are the voices of two professionals who experienced this change:**

“This was undoubtedly the turning point in my professional career. I learned so much, about methodology, about working in a team, about writing and rewriting, about managing my time, and so much more. I'm now a proud professional instead of a tired teacher.” (a member of the textbook writing team)

“I had been teaching from the same boring textbooks in a teacher-centred way for 11 years when these new books were introduced. At first I didn't understand how to use them, but a training course and the teacher's guide provided by the publisher really helped. Now I enjoy my English classes and I think my pupils enjoy them too.” (a practising teacher)

This case study and the results summed up by these two quotations demonstrate how a top-down decision to mandate change and an enlightened strategy to implement it, can lead to professional development in those who are involved both as innovators and as recipients of the innovation.

### **INDIVIDUAL AND INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVES**

CPD embraces the idea that individuals aim for continuous improvement in their professional skills and knowledge, beyond the basic training initially required to carry out the job. In teaching, such development used to be called “in-service training”, or INSET, with the emphasis on delivery rather than the outcome. Arguably, the change in terminology signifies a shift in emphasis away from the provider and/or employer, towards the individual. In other words, the individual is now responsible for his or her lifelong career development, under the umbrella of the school or schools that employ the teacher. (Leaton Gray, 2005, p.5)

In this quotation, Leaton Gray has captured the shift in thinking associated with current definitions of CPD, while at the same time reminding us that teachers work in institutions, not in isolation. However, both the individual teacher and the institution have a legitimate interest in CPD; indeed they should be seen as its primary stakeholders. The most positive view of CPD sees teachers benefiting from its opportunities by improving their professional skills and reflecting productively on their classroom practice, and institutions benefitting by having motivated and skilful teachers who contribute to the overall quality of its education. However, for this kind of optimum outcome to be achieved, there is a need for a commitment to CPD and a balanced and equitable CPD policy which both parties agree to and actively support. However, achieving this is often easier said than done. An institution's priorities may not always match those of its teachers. School-based development or training initiatives may focus on procedural issues and legal requirements that need to be fulfilled, such as health and safety requirements, open days and parents' meetings, cross-curricular issues, or examination results. Individual teachers are much more likely to see their needs in terms of teaching materials, subject-based methodology, syllabus content and what happens in their classrooms.

In order to ensure good practice at the whole school level, there should be a senior teacher or manager who would be responsible for looking into all aspects of CPD. This should ideally be someone who understands the priorities of the school as well as the individual teachers, and has the vision and skills to ensure that there is provision for both in the school's approach to CPD. Typically, the institution's concerns can be addressed through appropriately planned school-based events, while teachers' subject-related needs may better be met through training courses or conferences, or in some cases studying for higher qualifications such as a master's degree.

The interface between the two sets of priorities is often an annual appraisal meeting in which the individual teacher reviews her performance and her future plans with her line manager. Here is an extract from such a meeting:

Head of English: Thanks for coming along today. How do you feel things have gone for you over the last twelve months?

Teacher: Not too badly, I suppose, but there have been some difficult moments too.

Head of English: We'll come to that in a moment, but I wanted to start by saying how pleased I am that you have started to get to grips with new technology in the classroom.

Teacher: You mean in the class you observed?

Head of English: Yes, but not only. You had some really good feedback from students about your use of PowerPoint presentations.

Teacher: Yes, I feel quite proud of that. I even had Maria sitting in on one of my classes to find out how to use PowerPoint.

Head of English: I'm glad you were able to do that. I remember you used to be very wary of visitors to your classes.

Teacher: That's right, but I'm not so nervous now. But I'm still concerned that my classes' exam results are not as good as they should be.

Head of English: Why do you think that is?

Teacher: I'm not completely sure, but I'm still struggling a bit with the changes in the College English curriculum. I just can't get through all the units in the time I have with my classes.

Head of English: Yet there are other teachers who seem to be managing without difficulty.

Teacher: So maybe there's something I could learn from them....

Head of English: You might be right. Let's come back to that when we plan for the year ahead. Is there anything else from the last year that you'd like to discuss?

Teacher: Yes ...do you remember that I went to a conference about a month ago?

Head of English: The one in Bangalore?

Teacher: Yes.

Head of English: How did it go?

Teacher: It was really inspiring. We learned how to set up a Teacher Development Group in a school or college.

Head of English: Oh, what's that?

Teacher: It's a forum for discussing teaching and learning in an informal way, and a chance to share problems and ideas.

Head of English: That sounds good....

Teacher: Yes, but I don't know where to start here in the college. I'd like to share the experience with colleagues in the department. Do I need your permission ...?

(Source: Padwad & Bolitho, 2018)

This extract shows a middle manager (Head of English Department) leading the appraisal, but starting by putting the teacher at ease, and then working with her priorities and concerns, without losing sight of the school's priorities. This becomes more evident in the conclusion to the appraisal, as follows:

Head of English: I think we've covered a lot of useful ground in looking back over the year. Now let's set some goals for the year ahead. What would be your first priority?

Teacher: Well, as I said, I'd like to see if I can form an informal Teacher Development Group.

Head of English: That sounds good. Will you let me know how it goes? I might even come along if that's OK.

Teacher: Of course!

Head of English: And what about your problem with getting through the coursebook?

Teacher: I wondered about observing Padma's classes to see how she manages. She always seems to be on top of things.

Head of English: I think we could manage to arrange that, but I'll need to find a substitute for you as you and Padma both teach at the same time. If I can do that, please let me know what you gain from the experience and remember to make an entry in the peer observation log book in the staffroom.

Teacher: I will.

Head of English: Thanks a lot. I'll write notes on what we have covered and agreed for you to check; then we can both sign and we'll use that as a starting point for our next appraisal meeting.

It is clear from this extract that there is a balance between the school and the individual teachers' priorities, but there is also a clear focus on the teacher's CPD. This is evident from the willingness of the Head of the English department to find and pay for a substitute teacher, as she understands that this will be money well spent if the teacher learns from the experience and improves her performance. The Head is also wise to keep an eye on the teacher's plans for a Teacher Development group as she represents the school's interests as well as the teacher's.

An appraisal meeting therefore needs to be carefully planned and sensitively handled. It should be aimed at raising the teacher's awareness of the institutional needs as well as her own needs in relation to those of the institution. It is a chance for the teacher to articulate his/her needs to a line manager, who may otherwise

not be aware of them. Keeping a record of the meeting is a means for both teacher and the line manager to keep track of the teacher's developmental priorities and to assess her progress with regard to those priorities.

### PATHWAYS TO CPD

It has become clear that CPD is multidimensional and that training courses are just one aspect of development, albeit an important one. Here are some of the other possibilities for CPD:

- getting involved in projects
- learning from colleagues
- observing colleagues
- attending in-house seminars
- following an established individual or author in the domain of CPD
- writing materials
- taking on a new professional challenge (e.g. teaching at a different level or joining an in-house working party)
- taking on a training or mentoring role
- attending a conference
- presenting at a conference
- learning from one's students
- reading books and journals
- enrolling for a course leading to a higher qualification (Diploma, MA, PhD)
- joining a teachers' group, club or association
- being observed and getting feedback
- reading from English teaching websites and blogs, and attending webinars

Some of these activities can be undertaken autonomously by teachers, with little or no cost involved; others will require financial or organizational support from the school.

CPD is multidimensional in another sense, too. In their publication, which gives an account of some CPD activities in India (Bolitho & Padwad, 2013), there are reports on some of the tools and means that have been used in local and trans-regional CPD initiatives. These include:

- using school libraries as resources for CPD
- working with teacher portfolios
- using teacher diaries to document CPD
- harnessing the power of social networking for CPD
- using mobile devices to make materials available to teachers in remote areas

It is clear that professional development activities need to keep pace with modern developments in technology, without losing sight of the benefits of more traditional resources. The reports also draw attention to the need to find ways of reaching out to teachers in rural communities who often feel isolated and cut off from developments in mainstream education. For instance the English in Action project in Bangladesh (2009 – 2017) used multiple channels to reach out to teachers and learners of English, and promoted local and school-based CPD initiatives for English teachers in all parts of the country (Power, Shaheen, Solly, Woodward & Burton, 2012).

### **QUALIFICATIONS AND FRAMEWORKS**

In many countries, professional development is viewed wholly or partly in terms of the acquisition of formal qualifications by the teachers. These may include mandatory domestic qualifications bestowed by the Ministry, as in Romania; or higher degrees at the Diploma, Master's or PhD level, offered by a local or foreign university. A number of CPD frameworks have been drawn up in recent years, in which qualifications and advanced teaching skills are included side by side. The British Council has produced such a framework, available at [https://www.britishcouncil.in/sites/default/files/cpd\\_framework\\_for\\_teachers.pdf](https://www.britishcouncil.in/sites/default/files/cpd_framework_for_teachers.pdf). This framework postulates four stages of development during a teacher's career, and twelve areas of professional practice in which teachers can assess their strengths and weaknesses and plan for the next stage of their development. It also suggests that by gaining higher qualifications, right up to PhD level, the teachers will contribute positively to the quality of their teaching, which is at best a contentious claim. Experience shows that a teacher who acquires a PhD, or in some cases even an MA, is very likely to abandon classroom teaching in favour of a career in academia. However, there is no doubt that a higher qualification such as a Diploma or a master's degree in English Language Teaching will add to a teacher's professional understanding and knowledge. In fact, it may even allow him/her to step back from classroom realities for a while during the course, to reflect productively and to reassess his/her own teaching.

## OBSTACLES TO CPD

As the notion and characteristics of CPD become better known and more widely accepted, many of the obstacles to a teacher's professional development are beginning to melt away. However, some of them still remain, and these have been discussed here.

### Obstacle 1: Funding

Every country has to ensure that there is a regular supply of teachers to its schools and colleges, and so pre-service training is an absolute priority in funding terms. For this, the minimum quotas have to be met, otherwise the whole education system would be at risk. When a nation's economy hits a crisis, as has happened in a number of countries around the world in recent years, there is a trickle-down impact on education budgets, and schools have to rethink their own funding priorities. The following remarks by a college CPD coordinator, as reported by Leaton Gray, are typical of the problem:

“There's a big squeeze on in sixth form college funding (...) and CPD is the area that's been cut most. So my budget was cut this year by about 20%, and I'm told it will be cut by the same next year again. In a college budget, there's very little to play with, the staffing is most of it, and we abide by national agreements on staffing, on pay deals and so on. The college has very little leeway over that.” (Leaton Gray, 2005, p. 25)

In short, the CPD budget is one of the most vulnerable parts of the school budget, and when times are tough it is one of the first to be cut to finance other pressing needs.

### Obstacle 2: Management Decisions and Practices

Evidence from different sources suggests that not all managers in institutions recognize the need to prioritize CPD. They are too often preoccupied with “small stuff” concerned with their administrative role, such as the difficulty of finding a substitute for a teacher who wants to attend a course; and this may prevent them from properly understanding the benefits of CPD opportunities for their teachers. In best practice, a solid appraisal system should help the manager to rebalance priorities and the teacher to understand the manager's perspective on a request for a CPD opportunity.

### Obstacle 3: “Readiness” in Teachers

Teachers are sometimes required to attend training courses at times when they may be less open and receptive to professional learning. This kind of an imposed

decision may provoke defiance in the teacher concerned, and so the value of the training is immediately diminished. Research and literature on career cycles (Huberman, 1989; White, 2008) shows that teachers are likely to be more “ready” and open to ideas at certain stages in their careers than at others, and a wise line manager will take this into account when discussing possible CPD pathways with them.

#### **Obstacle 4: Time and Space**

Time needs to be set aside for CPD activity within an institution, and teachers need a physical space where they can safely and productively talk about teaching and learning. While both these considerations may appear to be self-evident, in practice they simply cannot be taken for granted. Most teachers work under a certain amount of pressure, and they need to be able to find time to attend to their own development, both within the institution and outside. One teacher I spoke to recently said, “I need to get out of school and go to meetings of our local English Teachers’ Association in order to find a forum to nurture myself professionally. School is too busy and everyone is just trying to survive” (personal conversation).

Having the right space in school is also important. For instance, a CPD-friendly staffroom is one in which talk about teaching is both encouraged by prevailing attitudes and made possible by the physical layout of the room. However, many staffrooms are furnished in ways that make talk difficult, and the recent prevalence of computers and mobile devices has militated sharply against face-to-face communication.

#### **Obstacle 5: Resources**

With the availability of widespread access to the Internet, most teachers can now find resources to support their teaching and professional learning. In spite of this, more traditional book resources remain important as they document the changes and innovations in methodology and materials design that teachers often want to keep up with. However, books are expensive and few school libraries, particularly those in developing countries, are able to purchase all the books the teachers might need or want in order to support their professional development. Therefore, the role of local or regional Teachers’ Centres becomes important here, as they can provide a place where teachers can access books, meet and discuss their professional concerns and interests.

### **CONCLUSIONS: POLICY AND THE BIG PICTURE**

Institutions that provide opportunities for teacher development have clear CPD

policies, set aside adequate funding, and organize seminars and workshops. They often have a designated staff member, who is responsible for identifying teachers' CPD needs and for co-ordinating all relevant activities. In the best case scenario, such CPD co-ordinators will have adequate time to support their work. They will also be responsible for reconciling the different understandings and expectations of CPD among its stakeholders. While this kind of work is best carried out at an institutional level, it needs to be recognized and backed by a policy that takes into account both regional and national perspectives, as this diagram illustrates:

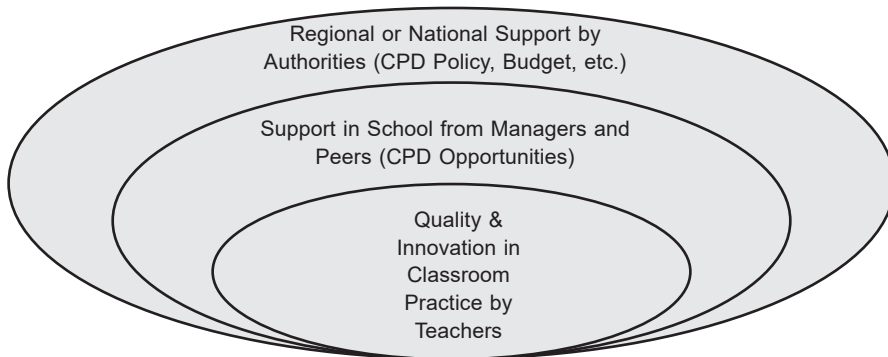


Figure 1. CPD: Policy and the Big Picture

If these relationships function well, there will be much better communication between the different stakeholders, as well as recognition of the positive impact of CPD on educational standards. Most importantly, there will be a healthy two-way flow of ideas and initiatives. In such a case, existing good classroom practice can be recognized and disseminated at the school level and beyond, while changes initiated by the government or school managers can be accompanied by appropriate CPD opportunities for teachers. The ultimate beneficiaries, of course, will be the learners, who will experience the impact of a developing teacher on their own learning and success.

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# Professional Development Models and Methods: An Overview

*Kirti Kapur*

Who dares to teach must never cease to learn.

— *John Cotton Dana*

## ABSTRACT

Professional Development is a standard term that holds value for all teaching professionals, irrespective of their teaching context or experience. While it may be mandatory or voluntary, professional development enhances teachers' skills and makes the teaching-learning process more reflective and transformative. Undertaking a needs-gap analysis is the first step in planned professional development. One may pursue one's professional development physically, in the form of workshops, seminars and mentoring sessions, or virtually using web 2.0 tools such as blogs, social networking sites, micro-sites, etc. These offer opportunities to form both private and public affiliations for formal training as well as for developing peer networks.

**Key words:** professional, activity, virtual, voluntary, needs-gap analysis, reflective, transformative

## INTRODUCTION

Teaching is a profession that is characterized by lifelong learning and continuous professional development (CPD). Professional development is a broad term that applies to all teaching professionals irrespective of their age or seniority. It may be understood as-

...a process by which individuals take control of their own learning and development, by engaging in an on-going process of reflection and action. This process is empowering and exciting and can stimulate people to achieve their aspirations and move towards their dreams.

*(Megginson & Whitaker, 2004, p. 1)*

Professional development can be categorized as “required” or “voluntary”. “Required” development includes activities that are prescribed by the institution and that mandate a requisite number of orientation and/or refresher courses. “Voluntary” professional development includes a gamut of activities such as attending seminars, conferences, courses and workshops etc. Both these types of professional development always overlap with and supplement each other and are successful when participants are able to articulate their own perception of teaching as well as select and justify appropriate modes of practice. Further, by linking their knowledge levels to outcomes such as students’ performance, such initiatives become more constructive and impactful.

As professional development of teachers is increasingly becoming an area of interest for both individuals and policy makers, it is necessary to understand the spectrum of professional development models holistically. Shifts in pedagogy, pace and thinking point to an evolutionary ethos in conversations of how professional learning communities can be built for teachers. In this paper, I will recommend a research-based schema to assess the purpose, the capacity for transformative practice and the professional autonomy for various models of professional development. In the first section, I will explore why structured and need-based professional development is effective for both teachers and learners, and the tools that may be used to implement it. In the second section, I will encapsulate the different models of professional development. In the third Section, I will focus on Web 2.0 as a tool for professional development.

### **NEED-BASED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Professional development can be structured and organized in a number of ways, depending upon the needs of the participants and the contexts they teach in. Eraut (1994, p. 20) identifies three major contexts in which professional knowledge can be acquired—academic context, through institutional discussion on policy and practice, and practice itself. Needs analysis involves inquiring about and analyzing the objective and subjective needs of the participants. Objective needs are needs that are easily measured or quantified by administrators and teachers, while subjective needs are “needs as seen through the eyes of the learners themselves” (Brown, 1995). Objective needs focus on the targets set by the government and/or policy makers. They also take into consideration the educational and socio-cultural contexts of the participants. Subjective needs on the other hand focus on learners’ knowledge, purpose, attitudes, interests, expectations, goals, strategies, etc.

### TOOLS TO ASSESS THE NEEDS OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Scientific methods and tools such as *surveys*, *interviews*, *observation* and *focus groups*, etc. may be used to gather information about the objective and subjective needs of the participants. For instance, the following survey is designed to acquire a demographic understanding of participants. An understanding of the diversity of the teaching contexts will allow the administrators to plan the course/training accordingly.

The survey should only take 2-5 minutes, and your responses are completely anonymous.

Thank you for your participation!

INSTRUCTIONS: Please mark your answer with an (X).

1. What is your current teaching assignment?
  - Full-time/adhoc/part-time English Teacher
  - Specialized area
  - Not currently teaching (skip to question 5)
2. What classes do you teach?
  - University (ages 21+)
  - College(ages 18+)
  - High School (ages 14+)
3. What type of college do you work in?
  - Government college
  - Government-aided college
  - Private college
4. Do you have an administrative role in the place where you teach?
  - yes
  - no
5. How many years of teaching experience do you have?
  - 0 to 2 years
  - 3 to 5 years
  - 6 to 10 years
  - more than 10 years

6. What is the highest level of education that you possess?
- Master's degree
  - Doctoral degree
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Figure 1. Sample Demographic Survey for the AE E-Teacher Program, sponsored by the U.S. © 2017 by Arizona Board of Regents.

Similarly, a *survey* can be developed to ask participants which skills they would like to improve and how they think they learn best. For example, would they like to focus on learning English for a specific purpose, or linguistics, or world Englishes, or any aspect of literature? Since surveys can include different types of questions (multiple choice, ranking/scales, and open-ended), one must choose the question type that works best for collecting the information. There are advantages and disadvantages to all the types.

Another tool that can be used to ascertain the objective and subjective needs of the participants is an *interview schedule*. Interviews may be conducted in person, by email, or through a video chat service. Interviews help to get an idea about the language proficiency of the participants and therefore enable the trainer to pitch the course/training accordingly. Interview schedules may include open as well as closed ended questions in order to enable the trainer to assess the participants' attitudes, experience, interests, goals, and opinions, in other words their objective and subjective needs. A sample interview has been given as follows:

In preparation for our training session, I would like to know more about your experience, interests, and goals as a teacher. This information will help me to design the training to best meet your needs and interests. The interview should only take 10-20 minutes. Thank you for your participation!

1. Where are you currently teaching?
2. Tell me about your teaching position. What type of organization do you teach in?

What level are the students, UG/PG? How many classes do you have per week?

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3. How long have you been teaching (less than 1 year, 3 years, 15 years,...)? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is the highest level of education that you possess?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What do you think are some of the biggest challenges to teaching in your context?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Have you attended any professional development seminars, conferences or workshops recently?
7. What were the topics of the conference sessions or workshops? Which sessions did you like best, and why? Which did you like least, and why?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. What professional development topics interest you the most? What is a challenge, skill, or aspect of teaching that you would like to work on?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. What other goals do you have for improving your teaching?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Figure 2. Interview schedule developed by the AE E-Teacher Program, sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, administered by FHI 360, and delivered by ASU.

An *observation schedule* may be used to observe a class and give feedback. The observation form can be created specific to an area/topic so as to facilitate note-taking and documentation for analysis and planning. The form of participation may be participatory or non-participatory. This would work well for individual feedback and progress.

*Focus Groups* are used to address groups. As guided discussions on probable topics for professional development, they enable collaborative analysis of needs and interests as well as peer-to-peer linkage and learning. Focus Group discussions should not have more than 5-10 participants so as to prevent dominant speakers from drowning diverse opinions. Further, the deliberations may not always be theoretical or conceptual, but could include printed materials, collaborative review of student work, etc. For larger groups group discussions can be used as they are more comprehensive as compared to written responses because they include facial expressions and body language, which also convey meaning. Once the time and target have been set, it is easier to coordinate such a group discussion.

In case, such formal tools are difficult to access or design, there are always informal ways of gathering information about the needs of the participants during tea/coffee breaks, lunch, etc. This kind of *spot survey/interview* may not be structured, but by taking notes one can supplement and add nuances to the points waiting to be addressed in the discussion scheduled for later. The next steps include analysis of the information gathered, and reflection and prioritization of the topics for further planning. All this invokes the core competencies of teaching—setting course goals and objectives, designing activities and materials, and selecting the assessment techniques.

Despite the needs-analysis, conducting a course for professional development of teachers and galvanizing institutional support may not be easy. However, as one analyzes and documents the needs of the learners, it will be easier to build a case using one's knowledge base to pitch the course to the authorities.

### MODELS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Some common models for professional development include *cascade, training, workshop, reflective diary entry, teacher forum and blog, social networking, mentoring/coaching* programmes, etc. This list is not exhaustive or exclusive, but it illustrates that professional development comprises a diverse range of practices which enable individuals to develop their skills, share their experiences and bring up-to-date their knowledge of innovations in their field. This may happen through seminars or conferences, teacher exchange programmes, in-service training events, etc. Professional development also entails providing or creating the space

and scope for individual evaluation of approaches, experiences and interactions.

In this section, I will give an overview of the means through which professional development can be organized and structured. I will attempt to identify the key characteristics of different types of professional development routes with the aim of getting a deeper understanding of policies and practices.

In the field of education, the *cascade* model involves the participation of key resource persons in training/workshops, so that they can then cascade or disseminate information to their colleagues. Mentioned in all the policy documents in India (from school to tertiary level), it is likely to be useful where resources are limited. However, it is often criticized because there is a lot of dissemination loss in this model. According to Solomon & Tresman (1999), another drawback of this model is that what is passed on in the cascading process is generally skills-focused, sometimes knowledge-focused, but rarely value-focused. This is an argument that is also articulated by Nieto (2003), when she claims that teacher education needs to shift from a focus on questions of ‘what’ and ‘how’ to also consider questions of “why”.

With regard to the model of *mentoring*, it must be said that there is no single method of going about mentoring. Most scholars and researchers agree that mentoring cannot be defined in absolute terms. This is because the mentor-mentee association depends on various factors such as the institutional culture, time available and the context. However, some common approaches include encouraging mentees to articulate their expectations and goals, and identifying constraints and barriers to innovation with the aim of overall improvement.

A mentor can also take on the roles of teacher, friend, counsellor, motivator, role model, advisor or facilitator. Whatever be the role however, first and foremost, the mentor must understand the needs of the mentee. Once that has been achieved, then he/she can then facilitate analysis, reflection, capacity building and qualitative enhancement in the teaching-learning process. Generally, it is assumed that a mentor is a person who is a senior in the organization/field and has more experience. While this may be true in many cases, there is also scope for mentoring among colleagues where the mentor plays the role of a “critical friend” (Kapur, 2013, p.98). As Murry points out, “peer mentoring has benefits for both the mentor and the mentee. As they are answering questions from their mentees, mentors have an opportunity to reflect on and improve their own lessons through the mentoring process” (2010, p.6).

In peer mentoring, observation of the mentee plays a key role. Both the mentor and the mentee together decide the topic, day and time for the observation. The

mentor must be in the class before it begins so that the class is not disturbed. Also, she/he should ideally not participate in the class activities unless decided beforehand. Most importantly, the mentor must go for observation equipped with a teacher observation form in order to note down constructive discussion points. After the class, both the mentor and the mentee should meet for a feedback. It is imperative for the feedback to be supportive and helpful. Remember, the observer's role is not to judge or evaluate the observed teacher but to encourage him/her to develop himself/herself.

*Reflective diaries* and *collaborative journals* are effective tools for sharing innovations and success stories between teachers. They also help to identify problematic issues, find solutions to, ask questions about and gather ideas pertaining to individual teaching contexts. The digital era further enables engagement with long distance and diverse stakeholders, thereby encouraging collaborative growth. **Teacher support groups or study circles, and Teachers' associations are some examples of social networking for professional development.** Teachers may form a small group to discuss and share materials, ideas and classroom issues. **Study circles** that discuss a teaching-related topic or a book can encourage scholarship and sharing of case studies and even undertake panel-based action research. Within such small groups, informal support flows easily even if one person from the group takes the lead.

The model *Communities of practice* works exactly as the name suggests. Teachers form a group and share their work and their CV's. Such groups may be formed across cities or even across countries. However, the efficiency of this model may be limited because of conflicting time zones, and unbalanced participation and access to resources such as the Internet.

*Teachers' associations* provide opportunities for teachers to meet and participate in local, national, and international seminars and conferences. This allows them to develop professional contacts in the field. Moreover, the teachers can collaborate to present or share ideas, or mentor or coach each other even after the conference is over. However one needs to be clear of one's needs and time constraints before either forming or joining a group.

## WEB 2.0 AS MEDIA FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

*Web 2.0* has opened up a new window of opportunities for professional development of teachers. The read-only Internet has evolved into its read-and-write version, which is commonly referred to as Web 2.0. This advancement has made the Internet interactive and has given users the power to generate and upload content. Many professionals have started exploiting this potential

extensively through blogs, micro blogs, and social networking sites, where they share their ideas and reflections with regard to the teaching profession. It has, in turn, empowered everyone with a world of knowledge.

Today, there is no dearth of opportunities available for community engagement. It can be face-to-face or virtual or a combination of both! Social networking sites, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Pinterest and Twitter, give teachers an opportunity to write about their opinions and ideas, share links to resources, and form connections with other teachers. On some social networking sites, users can even form public or private groups and conduct virtual trainings through the site.

*Blogs*, i.e. websites or webpages that provide information about a topic, are usually written in a more informal style than a journal article and invite reader comments and inputs. Teachers can create their own blogs to share information about teaching topics they are interested in, or reflections on their lessons. They can also follow or read other teachers' blogs. Participants at training sessions may also be encouraged to write blog posts during the training to share their experiences, teaching tips or lesson plan ideas.

*Webinars* are web-based seminars. Through webinar platforms, it is possible to transmit video, audio as well as images. A lot of webinar platforms even allow users to share applications and use a whiteboard. The objective of webinar platforms is to facilitate the exchange of information in real-time and in a two-way format. Through webinar platforms, participants are able to experience different levels of online interaction. This is not possible on other online communication platforms such as discussion boards, emails, etc.

Wang and Hsu (2008), list five distinct advantages of using webinar tools:

1. Affordability
2. Synchronous communication
3. Multimedia demonstrations
4. Multi-level interaction
5. Recording and archiving of session

Some important advantages of webinars include immediate feedback and clearing of doubts; an input rich and attractive environment for learners in the form of lectures, real time interaction with audiences across the globe and scope for group-based collaborations and review at leisure.

### SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

Earley and Bubb (2004), view professional development as “all formal and informal learning that enables individuals to improve their own practice” (p.3). Further, they consider professional development to be an integral aspect of personal development and add that, wherever possible, the two should interact and complement each other. They link professional development with occupational role development, and view personal development as the development of the person, often the “whole” person, which almost always involves changes in self-awareness. According to Waters (1998): “It is the development that can occur when teachers are constructed first and foremost as people, and is predicted on the premise that people are always much more than the roles they play” (p.30). Waters therefore places personal development on a higher pedestal than professional development.

According to Saunders (2014), studies of effective CPD reveal that professional development has a transformative impact on teachers. In fact their beliefs, practices and experiences prior to their development undergo a complete change. Finally, any type of professional development provides opportunities for active experiential teacher learning and should be seen by teachers to be relevant to their needs. “Outsiders can help, advise, support and even engage dialogically, but the learning can only come from the active inner life, motivation and resources of the learner” (Dadds, 2006, p. 36). Furthermore, professional development promotes collaborative learning which is inquiry-based. Therefore it is absolutely essential that administrators support teachers in their professional development. By positioning it as an iterative process, they can further empower teachers to plan, receive feedback and improve their practice. This makes professional development a sustainable paradigm rather than a finite event. It also makes it an act of agency.

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# Can CPD in Tertiary Education Stand Up and be Counted?

*Sabina Pillai*

## ABSTRACT

Almost every profession prides itself on incorporating CPD initiatives for growth in individuals' careers. Professionals also pursue higher knowledge and new techniques in their domains in order to improve on their quality of service. However, in the field of English teaching in tertiary education, most CPD courses seem to be a formality, indicative of an eco-system that is not professionally demanding. Teaching does not seem to incorporate the important aspect of making students employable. The writing on the wall is clear—to be treated with respect like other professionals, we need to deliver effectively on our remit. This paper stems from a research project on CPD in India that I conducted as a member of the British Council English Think Tank in 2011-2012. The objective of the project was to understand the status of CPD amongst tertiary level teachers of English. Through this paper, I will attempt to investigate their perception and practice of CPD, besides making some suggestions towards its implementation.

**Key Words:** CPD in Tertiary Education, Personal Development Plan, Teacher Narratives, Reflective Practice

## INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I will attempt to understand CPD in the context of English language teaching in tertiary education in India. My paper is based on qualitative data collected in early to mid-2012. CPD, in this case, is assumed to be an entirely self-initiated and on-going activity undertaken by college and university teachers. It is based on informal self-development processes such as reflective practice and the agency of the individual teacher, and excludes participation in formal, mandated courses or activities. For the purposes of my research, I focused on the

sensibilities of a small cross-section of tertiary level teachers. I asked them what they thought about CPD, and whether they had considered using tools such as a Personal Development Plan (PDP) to further their CPD. A PDP may be defined as a portfolio, which could be online or offline that helps a teacher to initiate or sustain CPD by recording and reflecting on his/her performance, learning and achievements. It could also serve as a planner for his/her future professional development. The following triangulation method was used to increase the reliability of the findings:

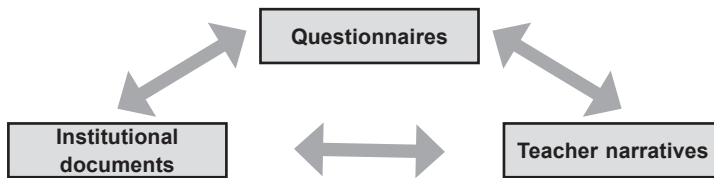


Figure 1: Triangulation of Data Collected

To collect data for the research, fifty teachers across the country, from both government-aided and privately-funded institutions were approached with a Summary of Intent. Out of fifty, thirty-two teachers agreed to participate, and asked for the questionnaire to be sent to them. However, only fifteen teachers returned completed questionnaires from the states of Kashmir, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, establishing a response rate of approximately thirty percent.

In the second method of recording evidence, informal narratives were gathered from five teachers in Delhi who are personally known to me, which increased the total responses to twenty, thereby raising the overall response rate to forty percent. The Summary of Intent was not shared with these teachers. Lastly, relevant institutional documents from two leading universities—Delhi University and Mumbai University—were examined to locate CPD and PDP in their official statements. The respondents included senior professors, one retired professor, associate professors and young assistant professors.

There were two underlying factors that determined the quality of responses. Firstly, the ethical position of complete transparency about purpose was maintained by invoking the goodwill and cooperation of the respondents. This worked both ways as the transparency about the purpose generated confidence and goodwill among the participants. Secondly, the challenge of remaining objective as an outsider while researching a cohort of which one is also a member, was also kept in mind. The comments and responses gathered from the teachers have been presented under the sub-heading “Results”.

## BACKGROUND

According to Blackwell and Blackmore (2003), most higher education systems “have very low entry requirements for teaching expertise” (p. 25). Also, teachers continue to prefer teacher-centric classes based on what Lortie (1975, p. 61) calls, the 13000 hours of “apprenticeship of observation” of their own days as students observing their teachers. Given that “staff expertise is the most important asset in a university; without it literally nothing can be achieved” (Blackwell and Blackmore, 2003, p. 23), the rationale behind my research was to gauge how teachers were dealing with the twin challenges of assimilating new knowledge and technology in their practice and facilitating optimal learning in students for their gainful employment. Further, it has been argued that “faculty, as scholars, are also learners ... While well prepared lectures surely have a place, teaching, at its best, means not only transmitting knowledge, but transforming and extending it as well. Through reading, through classroom discussion, and surely through comments and questions posed by students, professors themselves will be pushed in creative new directions.” (Boyer, 1990,p. 24)

It is clear that for teachers, the need for scholarship of teaching and learning has become as important as domain expertise. The importance of such “quality teaching” and the need to “enhance” it (Henard & Leprince-Ringuet, 2008, p. 3) can evolve only when teachers are made aware of the importance of CPD and they accept it as part of their profession. In my research, I validated the contention that CPD is an ill-defined term, especially in the field of tertiary education. This is unlike its wider acceptance in professions such as engineering, medicine and law (Glazer, 1974). I also observed that school education frameworks cater for formal teacher training, even though such one-off training sessions are known to deal largely with matters of curricula and school policies, and rarely focus on reflective practice. In fact, school teachers equate CPD to formal pre-service training, random courses or conferences and mandated in-service training.

The status of CPD in tertiary education appears to be even more flimsy. This is ironic because these teachers, being the arbiters of knowledge for every other profession, are found wanting in this critical area of professional advancement. They seem to be less aware of the power of CPD in their praxis. Some of the respondents scoffed at the idea of CPD and considered it inconsequential to their work which exalts research and publication. They also talked about attending indifferently conducted Orientation and Refresher courses as a testimony to having done some CPD and argued how little they had gained from it.

Clearly, CPD as a term is undergoing a crisis of identity. Almost two decades ago,

Day (1999, p. 4) defined it in the following manner:

Professional development consists of all natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school, which contribute, through these, to the quality of education in the classroom. It is the process by which, alone and with others, teachers review, renew and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purpose of teaching; and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence essential to good professional thinking, planning and practice with children, young people and colleagues throughout each phase of their teaching lives.

His definition remains as valid today.

## RESULTS

### CPD and PDP Dimensions

The questionnaire with twenty-five questions was sent to the respondents along with a Summary of Intent to help demystify terms such as CPD and PDP. The first set of questions was designed to probe their vision and mission regarding their practice. As Chen (2008) posits, these kinds of questions help the respondents describe their feelings, attitudes or preferences regarding their work, well-being and satisfaction with life. Here are some responses, quoted verbatim:

“No vision as such. But sure, I want our students (most of whom belong to rural areas) to be communicatively competent to get success in today’s global world. I try my best to let my students ‘speak’ in the class. Have seen the difference in the confidence level of the students.”

—Respondent No. 14, female, Associate Professor, Government College, over 24 years of service.

“Yes, like all thinking people in this world, I too have a mission for my life. My aim is to achieve the [*sic*] sense of harmony in human relationships through [*sic*] improving our ways of teaching and learning and I think I have been counseling my students accordingly, apart from their academic syllabus.”

—Respondent No. 11, female, Associate Professor, Government College, over 18 years of service

“My mission has been by and large accomplished. I hope that I am a good teacher, good father and good husband.”

—Respondent No. 6, male, Professor, Government University, over 30 years of service

When asked about their job satisfaction, it was found that most respondents had merged their personal and professional identities, thus displaying “emotional attachment to and engagement in their work” that Hargreaves (as cited in Day and Sachs 2004, p. 34) posits. Research tells us that this attachment is vital for good performance and productivity. According to Price (2001), it underlines the affective orientation that employees have towards their work. Here are some representative answers that bear testimony to this attachment:

“Personal satisfaction means contented, peaceful and serene life with family. It also means delivering a thorough and substantial lecture when I am in the classroom. It makes my day.”

—Respondent No.10, female, Assistant Professor, Private University, over 6 years of service

“Thorough preparation for the classes; manifestation of excitement among students in different forms; giving much more than is expected; professional position and responsibility; self-esteem; sense of autonomy.”

—Respondent No.12, female, Associate Professor, over 16 years of service

“The sense that I have served society faithfully and well. Monetarily little [*sic*], but the rich friendships I have with my students is proof enough. My Facebook page is like an alumni association and I continue to read and discuss ideas with my students, who are studying abroad or working.”

—Respondent No.13, female, Professor, retired, now consulting, Private University, over 37 years of service

“Yes, teaching was my first and last choice for [*sic*] career, as my father was a teacher of English and I desired to become just like him.”

—Respondent No.11, female, Associate Professor, Government College, over 18 years of service

“Yes, because it gives me the opportunity to continuously update my knowledge of the subject and explore new arenas. It also gives me the opportunity to balance work and life.”

—Respondent No.2, male, Assistant Professor, Private College, over 4 years of service

“My career is both profession and vocation for me[*sic*]. I am passionate about my subject, Linguistics and ELT, and am contented while teaching postgraduates, guiding doctoral research and training teachers.”

—Respondent No.3, female, Professor, Government college, over 24 years of service

Some of the factors that made the respondents aware about the quality of their teaching included:

“When I am able to inspire and excite the curiosity of my students so that not only does the class become enjoyable but the depth of understanding is also enhanced.”

—Respondent No.7, female, Associate Professor, Government College, over 30 years of service

“I take tremendous satisfaction in two things: getting students from a vernacular background to be successful in their communicative use of the English language, and helping students from English medium backgrounds to improve upon their writing skills.”

—Respondent No.5, female, Associate Professor, now freelancing ELT consultant, over 18 years of service

The third set of questions dealt specifically with CPD, the proverbial fourth leg of the well-known three-legged stool of academic life—teaching, research and service, as Altany (2012) states. The responses of the respondents indicated that they were intuitively drawn towards CPD, even though they did not really think about it much. Some of their responses are as follows:

“I believe in continuous learning. Everyone concerned with my life and profession should know about it.”

—Respondent No.4, female, Assistant Professor, Private University, over 12 years of service

“Teaching as an adjunct has helped me clarify and improve my methods of teaching to a large extent. I have definitely grown as a professional during the past three-odd years.☺”

—Respondent No.1, female, Assistant Professor, Government College, over 3 years of service

“Yes, a lot. Through the courses that I have studied, and my experiences as a teacher and a teacher educator.”

—Respondent No.9, female, Assistant Professor, Government University, over 30 years of service

“Yes, there has been a great development since I joined this profession. I have grown in my teaching, research and administrative capabilities, which are being appreciated by all.”

—Respondent No.6, male, Professor, Government University, over 30 years of service

However, there was a general reluctance to doing a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis. One voice of dissonance with regard to the question of goal-setting for the future stated:

“To be brutally honest it just happened (without any goal setting).”

—Respondent No.15, female, Assistant Professor, Government College, over 2 years of service

The answers to questions on lifelong learning indicated that the respondents were in favour of it:

“I always keep my mind open. Therefore, I am ready to acquire any skill. I have a fair knowledge of the subject but I want to have more. I want to know, learn new things in teaching/learning.”

—Respondent No.6, male, Professor, Government University, over 30 years of service

“Yes—Leadership, motivating, decision-making, pedagogy, technology especially internet usage.”

—Respondent No.4, female, Assistant Professor, Private University, over 12 years of service

“Yes. Learning never ends as long as one lives [*sic*].”

—Respondent No.15, female, Assistant Professor, Government College, over 2 years of service

“Definitely. (i) Knowledge in any field keeps growing so staying updated on subject knowledge is necessary; (ii) Teaching is a skill which improves with time, so pedagogically one has to keep improving; (iii) Need to update myself more on technology. Use of technology for language teaching.”

—Respondent No.9, female, Assistant Professor, Government University, over 30 years of service

The last three questions in the questionnaire dealt explicitly with Personal Development Plans (PDPs). Responses ranged from gratitude about learning about such a tool for development, to alacrity in supporting it. The first question had as many as eleven respondents affirming the value they could see in a PDP; three were skeptical of PDP as a tool; and one was dismissive of it:

“I cannot comment upon this right now. I have no idea whether this will work for me or not.”

—Respondent No.10, female, Assistant Professor, Private University, over 6 years of service

“It might, if I had CPD in mind, which I don’t.”

—Respondent No.5, female, Associate Professor, formerly permanent, now freelancing ELT consultant, over 18 years of service

“I do not think maintaining a bundle of papers will anyway[sic] help me. That will only be an exhibitionist collection which I cannot use but to[sic] show others. I do not believe in showing what I do till I am satisfied with my work. People automatically know one’s value through his or her work rather than through the papers you maintain.”

—Respondent No.11, female, Associate Professor, Government College, over 18 years of service

### Teacher Narratives

The informal interviews with the five fellow teachers, who were not given the Summary of Intent revealed:

- lack of clarity around CPD; no engagement with the “accelerating pace of economic, social and technological change” as observed by Woodward (cited in Crawford, 2009, p. 11); challenges of shifting demographics and an increased demand for accountability (Goertz & Duffy, 2001)
- lack of institutional support or encouragement
- no understanding of peer support and mentoring

Four out of the five teachers interviewed had never considered that CPD was integral to their professional growth. As respondent 16, with 30 years of experience said, she was content to bank on her “rich experience of teaching degree classes”, and did not wish to focus on any kind of professional development. Respondent 17 was dismissive of formative assessments, and convinced that the poor

performance of her students in the summative exams was because of the “riff-raff students” that were being allowed into the system. Respondent 18 revealed that because of her two young children, she did not have any time for “extra” work. Respondent 19, who was physically challenged, was too preoccupied with finding a tenured position to consider CPD. Respondent 20, who was from a newly established private university, was interested and proactive in finding out more about CPD.

### INSTITUTIONAL DOCUMENTS

The websites of the two leading universities in the country, Delhi and Mumbai, revealed a complete lack of focus with regard to CPD initiatives. This was despite the fact that the University Grants Commission (UGC) had established 48 Academic Staff Colleges (ASC) in 1987 to provide adequate opportunities for professional development by “an inbuilt mechanism to provide opportunities for teachers within the framework of the knowledge society”.

Delhi University also has the Institute of Life Long Learning (ILLL) with a Centre for Professional Development in Higher Education (CPDHE). The aim of this Centre is to provide “strategies for professional development of teachers and prepare modules of training and organize programmes for various groups of teachers as per their requirements and levels of development” (<http://cpdhe.du.ac.in/home.php>). Mumbai University established its Academic Staff College (ASC) in 1987, with the lofty vision “to transform the teachers into inspirational role models for the young and impressionable students, who in turn will create a just and equitable society that will be progressive and secular”, and a mission to “strive continuously to achieve academic excellence through its programmes—equip the teachers with the necessary skills to meet the ever mounting challenges of higher education and inculcate in them the pride of belonging to this noble profession and become role models for generations to come.” (<http://hrdc.mu.ac.in/>). However, according to Yadav (2011), ASCs and University departments organize the orientation and refresher courses in an ad hoc manner for promotional purposes, and not on the basis of the needs and requirements of the teachers.

### CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions one can draw from this triangulated baseline inquiry into the status of CPD amongst English teachers in tertiary education can be summarized thus:

- there was a lack of understanding with regard to CPD as a tool for self-development;

- the resistance to SWOT analysis was indicative of the need to build awareness about self-reflective practices and their importance;
- participating in the research cleared ambiguity around CPD for the respondents;
- the implications of CPD in the context of increasing professional accountability was clarified;
- the majority of the 15 respondents responded positively towards CPD and showed a keenness towards charting individual CPD roadmaps with the help of strategies such as PDP;
- respondents seemed to be open to the idea of subscribing to new concepts such as PDPs and e-portfolios;
- the teachers who did not respond to the questionnaire (70 percent of the 50 teachers approached) revealed considerable apathy towards CPD;
- teachers' lack of awareness with regard to reflective practice is detrimental to higher education, especially in an era of growing accountability;
- these results could help institutions and policy makers to incorporate and embed CPD in tertiary education so that it is not considered as "extra work" by teachers;
- all of the above signal an urgent need for more detailed research in this area.

The findings reported in this paper could contribute to reducing the paucity of research in this area. It is argued that the ontological and epistemological basis of the conclusions of this research has to be viewed as subscribing to the humanistic sciences model of interpretivism/constructivism, which is internalized knowledge based on personal experience and insight (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, as cited in Dieronitou, 2014, p. 5). It cannot be seen through the lens of knowledge that subscribes to "positivism" that emerges out of an "objective epistemology and realist ontology". To get a holistic understanding of its significance, Usher (1996, p. 18) explains that in social research of this type, "knowledge is concerned not with generalization, prediction and control but with interpretation, meaning and illumination."

In conclusion, henceforward CPD has to be understood as an organically developed and sustained activity with the practitioner's agency at the forefront, with or without official support. For the teacher, this involves strategies such as those of Schön (1983), which involve the concepts of "reflection-in-action" and "reflection-on-action" that will result in more purposeful practice. As Megginson

and Whitaker (2007, p. 3) assert, it would be, “different” from “other types of training and development” as it would “not be a panacea ... but looked at in relation to the rest of the individual’s life, the organizational context and the wider work environment”.

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# **Are we Reading Enough for our Professional Growth? From Research Insights to Classroom Practices**

*Anju Sahgal Gupta*

## **ABSTRACT**

A true professional should have the right attitude, leadership qualities, good knowledge of her/his subject and be ready to be a continuous learner in this rapidly changing world. In the area of language teaching, unfortunately, it is the researchers and academics who have taken on the role of the professional, while the teacher is a mere implementer of their thoughts and ideas. Mercifully, in the post-method era (Kumaravadivelu, 2006), the role of the teacher and the teaching context has been acknowledged, allowing her/him to reflect, analyse, research and theorize from the classroom. My paper makes a case for a teacher who is aware of the research happening around her/him, and is therefore able to make considered choices of what she/he wants or does not want to use in the classroom. Only when teachers take on such a role, would they be true professionals.

**Key words:** Professional, continuous learner, post-method era, considered choices

## **INTRODUCTION**

These are really exciting times for all language teachers. The shackles of communicative language teaching (CLT) are being removed, albeit slowly, and we are entering a new world, where newer thoughts prevail, allowing us to deal with and understand the teaching learning situation in more meaningful and creative ways. Fortunately, there is no longer a search for another method to replace CLT. Instead, we are in the post-method era (Kumaravadivelu, 2006), where the concept of “method” as a panacea for the evils of all that the learner did not learn has receded (Hall, 2011). Further, there is a quest not for an alternative

method, but respect for the teacher and the learner in their differential contexts.

Actually several years ago, Prabhu (1990) suggested that any attempt to find a *best* method was illogical given that teachers quite reasonably adapted and combined individual methods to accommodate contextual influences and their own personal beliefs. Also these top-down methods/ideas rammed down the teachers' throats left them feeling inadequate, because their reality was quite different, and neither the grammar drills nor the reading method or CLT alone would work in totality in their context. Pennycook (1989) argued that the traditional view of "method" frustrated teachers, who in the real world were unable to implement it fully and consistently. She further argued that the search for a "best method" maintained unequal power relationships within ELT between academics and researchers on the one hand, and teachers in language classrooms on the other.

This dissatisfaction with method has revolutionized ELT, because for the first time it has privileged the teacher and her/his context and allowed the teacher to theorize from her/his classroom. This in turn has encouraged teacher reflection and helped the teacher to conduct bits of action research to enhance the teaching-learning process. In other words, it has encouraged teachers to be professionals instead of merely following the dictates of researchers and professors in universities.

In fact looking back, now I wonder how we could have been so seduced by the idea of the best method. Perhaps we did not realize that it is primarily concerned with narrow classroom interactional strategies. Further, it ignores the fact that the success or failure of classroom instruction depends to a large extent on the unstated and unstable interaction of multiple factors such as teacher cognition, learner perception, societal needs, cultural contexts, political exigencies, economic imperatives, and institutional constraints, all of which are inextricably interwoven (Hall, 2011). The post-method era is particularly stimulating also because of "The Parameter of Possibility", where the socio-political consciousness of learners is addressed in the classroom as a catalyst for learner autonomy, identity formation and social transformation (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). This is something that the world so desperately needs!

The question that I wish to pose is, that as ordinary teachers, whether at the school or college level, how many of us are still aware of the world beyond CLT; and what's more important, do we really want to know about this world? We seem to be so satisfied with the whole spate of textbooks which use buzz words such as communicative approach, constructivism, critical thinking and of course the smart classroom. However, it is pertinent for us to be aware of the theory behind the

important inputs that we keep getting from different spaces. We have so much to choose from, but in order to make considered choices; we must first enhance our knowledge base and then attempt to see the linkages amongst the disparate ideas. In this paper, I will deal with perhaps two or three insights, which I think will help us to truly engage with the learners in their contexts. I will concentrate on multiple intelligence, critical pedagogy, and neurolinguistic programming (NLP). Using these concepts I also will suggest activities that can be carried out in the classroom.

### **MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES**

The term “learner-centred” is used so glibly in most text books, with nothing to show for it in actual practice. However, except for studies conducted by Lukmani (1972), Khanna (1984), Sahgal (1992), and more recently Miranda (2014), Polist (2015), Neyer (2015), hardly any attempt has been made to systematically understand learner factors in second language acquisition. Perhaps we need to go back to these studies to understand what motivates L2 learners, and what are the social psychological features which help them to be good language learners.

In recent years, one of the variables that has been looked at afresh is intelligence. Gardner (1999), proposed an alternative definition of intelligence based on a radically different view of the mind. He puts forward “...a pluralistic view of the mind, recognizing many different and discrete facets of cognition and acknowledging that people have different cognitive strengths and contrasting cognitive styles” (p.6). In other words, he celebrates the diversity of the learners. He suggests that each person possesses all eight intelligences in different degrees; that intelligences can be developed; and that they work in complex ways. The eight intelligences proposed by Gardner are: Linguistic Intelligence, Logical-Mathematical Intelligence, Spatial Intelligence, Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence, Musical Intelligence, Interpersonal Intelligence, Intra-personal Intelligence and Naturalist Intelligence.

We decided to create an interesting activity for the festival of Holi for Class 6 students to explore how the different intelligences work differently in learning. This activity was carried out in a large classroom of 50 students, managed by a teacher who was sensitive to her learners and wanted every one of her students to participate. The class was divided into several groups according to the preferred intelligence of the students. This helped in creating a positive, anxiety-free atmosphere in the class as the affective-filter was lowered (Krashen, 1982), and language learning was at its optimum.

Students with high linguistic intelligence have an affinity for words and language.

They like to read, write, tell stories and play word games. A group of such students was asked to research and present the different stories related to the festival of Holi, and how this festival is celebrated in various parts of India.

Learners with a higher degree of Spatial Intelligence are often sensitive to colours, shapes, form, space and the relationships that exist between these elements. They like designing, drawing and visualization. Such students were asked to make posters about prevention of misbehaviour by unruly elements during Holi. These posters could be pasted all around school. These learners also enjoy taking photographs, creating videos and slide shows, and could provide such inputs to the linguistic group. Since the Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence learners enjoy movement and actions, and are often skilled in dance, such students were asked to enact the different versions of the Holika story or create a dance drama on the subject.

Learners with musical intelligence are more perceptive to sounds, rhythms, tones and music. They were asked to sing folk songs from their cultures, thereby giving a multilingual hue to the Holi atmosphere. They were also asked to create the background music for the presentation by the linguistic group. Similarly, learners who are adept at playing a musical instrument could be encouraged to give a live performance. Naturalistic Intelligence is extremely important these days. Learners belonging to this group were asked to find out about the process of making colours from natural resources. These colours were subsequently put up for sale in the school. This varied activity involved the whole class and also helped in showcasing the best of each student. Moreover it fulfilled three objectives: celebrating the festival of Holi in class, making each child feel valued and learning a language seamlessly.

### CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

Critical pedagogy concentrates on another dimension of identity formation of the learner. It is concerned with empowering students, so that they can think and act critically in order to transform their lives and the society around them (Arora, 2012). This approach “looks at the classroom essentially as part of the wider social context and is based on the argument that discrimination and marginalization prevalent in the social systems will be reflected in the education systems” (ibid, p.70). It encourages students to analyse social wrongs such as unequal access to power, privileges and material resources, and attempts to demystify texts that have been shaped ideologically by relations of power. Using this broad framework, we did an activity for the Kerala teachers under the “*Sarva Siksha Abhiyaan*”. It involved a reading of “The Thakur’s Well” by Premchand.

The activity began with the facilitator interacting with the learners in an informal way in order to instil communication expectancy in them so that they were psychologically ready for the activity that would follow. Following this, some cues were given to the learners in the form of a photograph, a visual clipping, a news report, etc., to sensitize the learners about the theme around which the classroom tasks would be woven. The facilitator asked a few analytical questions that elicited individual perceptions and views on whether the participants had come across any instances of casteism in their State, and if they had, how they had tried to combat it. For example:

“Do you feel from time to time that society is unequal? That even basic necessities like water, air, right to live become a privilege of a few? List out five incidents in your life where you felt that somebody was denied equal treatment.”

After this, the story was read in class; each student was asked to read out a part of the story. The participants were asked to reflect on the following questions:

1. Jokhu was thirsty. Why did he not drink the water his wife had brought?
2. What was the “harsh truth” Jokhu pointed out to his wife?
3. Why was the Thakur not convicted in a certain case even though he was guilty?
4. What trait of the Thakur’s character does this bring out?
5. Why did Gangi go to the Thakur’s well at night?

This was followed by collaborative reading, where the participants sat in groups and shared their reading experiences, especially in terms of their understanding of the passage and the issues involved in it. This stage was very important as it involved a lot of peer discussion.

When collaborative reading was over, the facilitator asked a few questions related to the passage. These were not meant for checking comprehension. Instead, they were questions of analytical nature and included reflective questions, inferential questions, cause-consequence questions, and so on. These questions helped the participants to assimilate the text by virtue of localizing and personalizing it. Some examples of such questions are given here:

1. Why did the women consider themselves to be slaves? What do you think was the position of women at that point of time? Do you think it is very different now?
2. Gangi faces “double discrimination”. Discuss.
3. What do you think happened to Jokhu after he drank the stinking water?

4. Should everyone in society be treated as equal? What do you do in your life to bring this about?

The best part of the activity was the post-reading session, which involved the construction of different discourses by the participants as well as the facilitator. By virtue of the inputs they had received while reading the story, the participants were in a position to construct diverse discourses. One very interesting and memorable discourse was a short film showed by one of the groups. It was a bleak film on how water scarcity would impact the human race physically and psychologically in the year 2070 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ReVrONNvoQ>). In their presentation, the group admitted that while the film did not apparently seem to immediately gel with the theme of casteism, it did show the consequences of ill-treatment—in this case of nature. We may treat our fellow human beings shabbily and hope to get away with it, but if we go too far in treating our environment badly, we could end up in a very bleak situation, as shown in the film. This film was watched with great interest as well as horror, and while it stretched the topic too far, it did speak of denial of water—in the first instance the upper caste denied the lower caste water; in the second instance the earth denied us water.

### **NEUROLINGUISTIC PROGRAMMING (NLP)**

While Critical Pedagogy is concerned with the learner forming her/his identity by engaging with the social world, NLP is more about learning about ourselves and others, and using this knowledge and understanding to improve our lives and that of others. NLP begins with the question: Why is it that some of us are successful learners while others cannot cope as well? An American Professor of Linguistics by the name of John Grinder and a psychology student named Richard Bandler wanted to find out that “special something” that separated people who excelled from those who did not. They studied the amazing successes of three therapists and found that they all related to their patients in similar ways, held similar belief about themselves and even their language followed similar patterns. This in a sense was the start of NLP. Similarly, teachers seeking ways to reach out to their students may find that a number of NLP techniques could help them to improve communication, establish and maintain rapport and create an anxiety-free atmosphere in the classroom. Based on the idea that we all perceive the world around us in different ways, teachers could get an insight into the “territories” inhabited by their learners (Rosenberg, 2015), much like multiple intelligences.

NLP has continued to develop far beyond the field of psychotherapy where it originated, and has influenced approaches to communication, personal development and teaching-learning. This has led to new insights in education,

management, sales, marketing and ELT. Further, ELT materials using NLP are now getting increasingly popular. Jane Revell's and Susan Norman's books *In Your Hands* (1997) and *Handing Over* (1999) are perhaps pioneering books in this area. In 2005, Baker and Rinvoluceri published a book *Unlocking Self-Expression Through NLP*, which is aimed at intermediate to advanced learners. While there is no simple definition of NLP, it is more about an "attitude to life" which is based on a series of underlying assumptions about how the mind works and how people act and react (Revell & Norman, 1997). "Neuro" refers to the nervous system where our experiences are received and processed through our five senses. "Linguistic" represents the language that we use—both verbal and non-verbal—that shapes and reflects our experience of the world. "Programming" describes training ourselves to think, speak and act in new ways (Winch, 2005).

According to Revell and Norman (1997), the fundamental concept of NLP rests on four main pillars—outcomes, rapport, sensory acuity and flexibility.

**Outcomes:** NLP is goal-oriented and is based on the belief that if you are clear about what you want, you are more likely to achieve it.

**Rapport:** This is the fundamental concept in NLP, where successful communication implies maximizing similarities and minimizing differences at a conscious as well as sub-conscious level. Communication should attempt to be positive and harmonious, only then one is likely to achieve his or her outcomes.

**Sensory Acuity:** This suggests being aware of being sensitive to other people at a non-conscious and non-verbal level.

**Flexibility:** If we change our behaviour, we are more likely to be successful. In fact, we cannot change others, we can only change ourselves.

According to NLP, the world that exists around us is made up of our perceptions and memories. Further, each person has a representational system whereby she/he processes and stores information differently. These representational systems also reveal how people experience the world through their five senses: Visual, Auditory, Kinaesthetic, Olfactory and Gustatory (VAKOG). Most people have a 'preference' for one of the senses which then becomes their preferred learning style. Therefore, it becomes important for teachers to prepare and use materials which appeal to the different learning styles of the students.

Although we all have a preferred learning style, in order to achieve our goals we often have to change our behaviour. Revell and Norman (1997) suggest that we use "new" metaphors to change the way we think and behave. Since metaphors shape the way we think about the world and the way we behave in relation to

it, exploring new metaphors enables us to understand and appreciate things in new ways, and if we change our metaphors, we change the way we think and behave (Revell and Norman, 1997). Using this philosophy, I have suggested some activities that could be tried out with Classes 7 and 8. Not only do these activities encourage communication and creativity, they also build positive feelings and empathy in the learners.

### Activity 1

- Ask the students to think of a story from their childhood.
- Get the students to work in pairs. Ask them to narrate the story to their partner and then talk about what they liked about the story the most. It could be the circumstances in which it was read, the story itself, the telling or reading of it, and so on.
- Ask students to discuss the impact the story had on their life—large or small, positive or negative.
- Put the following question to the students and ask them to think about it: “If you could change any parts of the story to make it an even better story and to enhance its positive impact on you and minimize any negative impact, what bits would you change. Partners can suggest ideas too.
- Get the students to write a synopsis of their enhanced story.

### Activity 2

- Ask the students to narrate a short anecdote to their partner. The anecdote should not be more than two minutes long and should be related to something that they have experienced.
- Divide the students into pairs. Ask student A to narrate the anecdote to student B. Student B must make note of not only the anecdote itself, but also how it is being narrated.
- Now student B has to sit in student A’s chair and pretend to be student A. Student B has to retell student A’s story back to him/her, matching student A’s voice in terms of speed, tone and pitch.

*(adapted from Revell & Norman, 1997)*

## CONCLUSIONS

I have just touched the tip of the iceberg of language teaching in India. As language professionals, we need to be aware of the research that is happening in

the area of language teaching-learning, especially in a multilingual framework. We must, for instance, be aware of the principles of Constructivism and Critical thinking, and apply them in the teaching learning process. Similarly, ideas from Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) must also be understood and practiced in the classroom.

Again in the multilingual framework of India, the concept of “translanguaging” also needs to be better understood and implemented in the broad education system and in the classrooms. This would privilege the languages of the children, even those who speak minority languages and enable the teachers to use the multilingual resource of the classroom (Agnihotri, 1995). For this, the Critical Age hypothesis should be understood so that learning multiple languages is not considered a burden but something which students can enjoy if viewed in the right way.

We also need to be aware of Vygotsky’s Social Development Theory. According to Vygotsky (1978), social interaction plays an important role in the cognitive development of a child and even precedes cognitive development. Therefore, when it comes to language learning, the authenticity of the environment and the affinity between its participants are essential elements to make the learner feel part of this environment. These elements are not taken into consideration in conventional classrooms.

Finally, one common thread seems to emerge from all the various views that have been touched upon in this article: (i) that the learner is at the centre of the teaching-learning process, whether in terms of understanding the factors that lead to better L2 learning, or in celebrating the multiple intelligences and learning styles, or in interacting with her/his peers in a social context; (ii) the social context is very important both for the learner and the teacher because it gives them both an opportunity to look critically at society; (iii) the multilingual context is a boon as it allows teachers to use the multilingual resource of the classroom; (iv) any teaching-learning of language must be in the context of language across the curriculum.

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## **Using the Objective Eye of the Camera for Continuing Professional Development: An Autoethnographic Account**

*Mala Palani*

### **ABSTRACT**

With increasing access to smart phones, it has become easy to record oneself while teaching. By using this inexpensive method, teachers can develop insights into their teaching. In this paper, I will report on an autoethnographic study that I conducted as a teacher educator. I examined twelve of my lessons over a span of one academic year. By looking at my teaching objectively through the lens of the camera, I was able to critically examine the rationale behind my pedagogic choices and also study their impact on the learners. This, in turn, helped me explore more effective teaching practices. The results of the study suggest that video recordings of their teaching can be used by teachers for the purposes of continuing professional development.

**Keywords:** Reflective practice, teacher education, video, autoethnography, CPD

### **INTRODUCTION**

The National Policy on Education recognizes the criticality of education by stating: “education will amalgamate globalization with localization, enabling our children and youth to become world citizens.” (NEP, 2016, p.1). Needless to say, it is only through effective teaching that these goals can be achieved. Teachers, thus play a vital role in realizing these goals. While teachers at the primary, and secondary levels of education also have a pivotal role to play, it is teachers at the tertiary level, by virtue of being in a position to influence the youth of a nation, who can be more instrumental in shaping the future world citizens. However, the NEP Committee has observed that the Gross Employability Ratio

of our graduates is less than 20 per cent (NEP, 2016, p. 125). It is therefore important for tertiary teachers to reflect on whether they are employing their instructional time optimally to intensify learning in their adult learners. Given the characteristics of adult learners (Knowles, 1970)—they are autonomous, self-directed, goal-oriented, and relevancy-oriented—it is important for tertiary level teachers to constantly upgrade their teaching techniques in order to remain relevant and useful. Continuing professional development (CPD) is therefore an unceasing attempt to seek this information with the view to improve one's ability to be agents of influence.

In this paper, I will present my case as a teacher who is self-initiated with regard to her professional development, and has taken charge of it by engaging in reflective practice, aided by data gathered from her video recordings. I am a teacher educator in a private teacher education institution where I train pre-service teachers. Since the paper reports an autoethnographic study concerning myself, the use of first person pronoun becomes necessary.

### **REFLECTIVE PRACTICE AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Reflective practice is an integral component of professional development. For the purpose of this paper I will use the following definition of reflection by Boud, Keogh, & Walker (1985, p. 3): “[reflection is] a generic term for those intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciation.” Professional development in case of teachers requires engaging in reflection about one's teaching and seeking ways to improve it. While attending conferences and writing papers are integral to building academic knowledge, reflecting on one's ability to teach effectively is a self-initiated activity for CPD.

Reflective practice manifests in various forms, such as writing a journal, having a dialogue with colleagues or reviewing one's lesson plans. While each of these methods of reflection is very effective, one must take cognizance of the fact that they are often based on the teachers' recollection of the lesson, and can be subjective. Moreover, these methods preclude an objective analysis of one's teaching, and therefore may potentially become defensive attempts to explain one's choice of classroom decisions. Additionally, dependence on the memory of teaching decisions may not always lead to an accurate analysis of pedagogical decisions, and may therefore lead to ineffective influences on teacher development. Eldridge, Lamming, and Flynn (1992), compare the impact of using memory to record one's experience with that of using video technology for the purpose. In their findings they state that using video technology can undoubtedly help people

better "...recall activities in their working lives. It is also useful in confirming and disconfirming what people think might have happened" (p. 268). Therefore, it is not surprising to see many professionals use video recordings of their work to deepen reflection and improve their practice. Medical practitioners (Yoo, Son, Kim & Park, 2009), athletes, sports coaches (Wilson, 2008), teacher trainees also use data from video recordings for self and professional development. According to Rosaen, Lundeberg, Cooper, Fritzen & Terpstra (2008, p. 348), "teacher change is made possible when practitioners value uncertainties and disruptions as rich sites for learning and when they make connections between their experiences and practical knowledge." Thus, scrutinizing the rich dynamics of one's own classroom and implementing ways to address learning are important for teacher development. Paley (1986, p. 123) observed that "real change comes about only through the painful recognition of one's own vulnerability." In this paper, I will investigate how studying video-recordings of my own classroom was effective in improving my ability to reflect on significant teaching-learning moments and exploit them suitably.

### RELATED LITERATURE

One of the early proponents of reflective practice, Dewey describes reflection as the "sole method of escape from the purely impulsive or purely routine action" (1933, p. 15). Brookfield elaborates the role of reflection as: thinking that enables recognizing the difference between "what is and what should be..."; it involves "... seeing our practice in new ways by standing outside and viewing what we do" (Brookfield 1995, p. 28).

Studies have lauded the affordances of video recordings in aiding reflection. According to Spiro, Collins & Ramachandran (2007), video recordings have the potential to capture reality in a way that is useful for reflection and thereby professional development. They provide affordances that allow teachers to "learn to notice" the impact of their teaching behaviour on their students' learning. "... because of its vividness, video can focus teachers' attention on the complex interactions between the content of learning, their learners' (re)actions and teachers' own (re)actions" (Brouwer, Besselink & Oosterheert, 2017, p. 61).

Videos can capture the complex and ever-changing contexts in which teachers make numerous on-the-spot pedagogic decisions (Hewitt, Pedretti, Bencze, Vaillancourt & Yoon, 2003). When teachers study video recordings of their classroom, they come face-to-face with the complex interplay of the social, cultural, situational, and psychological factors that form their classroom (Wong et al., 2006).

Thus videos play an important role in shaping teachers' "professional vision" (Sherin & Van Es, 2005). "Professional vision" is a term borrowed by researchers from Goodwin (1994) to refer to the type of perception that is characteristic of experts in a specific professional domain. In the context of teaching, this refers to developing the ability to notice and develop strong rationales for the chosen actions. Video viewing offers "considerable potential for developing professional vision" (Brouwer et al. 2017, p. 61).

## METHODS

As a teacher educator, I have rigorously sought feedback from my learners, my colleagues and more experienced practitioners. I have also studied the manner in which my learner-teachers teach, to understand the influence of my teaching on their practice. Reflecting critically based on feedback from these sources has definitely improved my self-efficacy. However, I have realized over the years that all these sources of feedback have their limitations. Firstly, my peers or learners may withhold information from me because of politeness-related reasons. Secondly, they may not have perceptive knowledge about my learners, my lesson objectives, my long-term teacher training aims etc. These factors can potentially limit the information that I can gather from their feedback. Therefore, I decided to complement the feedback from my peers and learners with feedback from an unbiased source—video recordings of my lesson. This is what motivated the current research.

## AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

Autoethnography is a "form or method of research that involves self-observation and reflexive investigation" (Maréchal, 2010, p. 43). Often used in disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, and education, it involves the researcher to critically inquire a phenomenon concerning the self; and analyse and write about the self as a researcher-practitioner. Ellis and Adams (2014, p. 271) state that this powerful qualitative research

...is not simply a way of knowing about the world; it has become a way of being in the world, one that requires living consciously, emotionally, reflexively. It asks that we not only examine our lives but also consider how and why we think, act, and feel as we do.

Given these inherent qualities of autoethnography, I thought it was best suited for my work. However, it is important to note that unlike certain autoethnographers whose research runs over a long duration of time, my study is situated over one academic year. Additionally, it is important to note that though my study is limited

in its scale and has limited scope with regard to broad social experiences, the results offer key insights into how video-based data-led reflection can lead to keener pedagogical awareness and CPD.

### **DATA COLLECTION**

Since I was both practitioner and the researcher, I generated data through my observation and analysis of my video-based data. I recorded 12 routine lessons of one hour each over a period of one academic year. Since a teacher educator plays multiple roles in a teacher education class, I tried to record a range of lessons. In each one I play a different role by design. For example, the data covered classes where I was presenting an idea or concept; monitoring and scaffolding learners during collaborative lesson planning and discussion sessions; observing learner-teachers' classroom teaching skills; and giving feedback. This choice was deliberate as I wanted to gain an insight into the efficacy with which I played my various roles, and study the impact on my learners.

I used my smart phone for the purpose of recording. The phone was mounted on an inexpensive tripod stand procured for this purpose. I placed the tripod at an appropriate spot in the class at an angle where it could capture the maximum action without impeding movement in the class. I ensured that all incoming calls on the phone were blocked. Lastly, I sought permission from all my learners before recording the class. I attempted to be as natural as I could as the idea was to collect authentic data.

After each recording, I carefully transferred the footage to my computer and saved it chronologically. I mostly studied the footage at home the same evening and took notes simultaneously. I concluded each viewing of a recording with a reflective journal entry. I attempted to answer any questions that came up in my journal by reading, or watching another teaching footage, or talking to another practitioner. I remembered to always write these "answers" accompanied by attributions to source. Often, I revisited past videos and compared them with my performance in a more recent video. Such reviews helped me to study the progress in my teaching practice. I used three key questions repeatedly as I watched each video:

- What role am I playing at this point?
- Why am I playing this role at this point? Is it appropriate?
- What is the impact of my action on my learners' learning?

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

I collected data largely for the four prominent roles that I played in the classroom. These are discussed as follows:

### **Role 1: Presenter**

Of the 12 lessons recorded, I prominently played the role of a presenter in 5 lessons. In my first two lessons, I noticed that my 70 learner-teachers were seated in a theatre arrangement in the mini auditorium facility in the institution, and I was standing in front of them. The white board and the projector screen were behind me. I was introducing the concept of assessment for learning (AfL). As I watched my video, I asked myself a question that I had never asked before: it was related to the role of a teacher in facilitating active learning in the classroom. How can a teacher-to-be best learn AfL? If I present to them what AfL is using a PowerPoint presentation and chalk-and-talk, will they become better users of AfL? Will they learn the skill of offering effective feedback to their learners as a way of effectively scaffolding learning? Will they learn to build criterion-based assessment simply because I had shown them a few such assessments? I realized I was not very efficient with regard to developing their skills. My adult learners could have learnt all that I had taught in these two sessions simply by going through the PowerPoint presentation and the necessary readings at home, had I sent them before the class. The difficult skill of constructing a benchmark for a criterion-based assessment, or the skill of writing/giving relevant feedback based on a child's work should be built in the class. Wasn't that the purpose of teacher education?

Working on the realization that had dawned on me after watching my video footage, I changed my lesson methodology. Not only did I bring case study based worksheets for the learners to work on, I even changed my position so that I was among the learners, working with them, rather than in front of them.

As I viewed more recent videos where I had to present information to my learners, I noticed that I chose this approach only when it was absolutely essential. I increasingly only presented information to my learners that required them to debate, evaluate or create further information. I had started using my presentation classes to challenge higher order thinking. I noticed that my learner-teachers were more involved in the learning, as compared to my initial presentation lessons. In the latter lessons, I noticed that all the learners were working in groups and developing products (like assessment tasks, and criteria for marking) – through which they could make their learning visible.

### **Role 2: Monitor**

In 3 out of the 12 recordings, I prominently played the role of a monitor. I noticed that to monitor the group activities, I either stood around watching the learners work, or moved about in the class to check if everyone was doing their task.

Watching these recordings gave me a new perspective. By closely watching the physical response of the learners, I noticed that the group I was standing closest to was very conscious of my presence, and their actions seemed contrived. I wondered why. On the other hand, the groups that were farthest from me seemed to have a confident pattern of behaviour and this was reflected in their level of engagement with the task.

As I watched the video again, I asked myself what purpose I was serving by walking around. While I had learnt in my own teacher training days that the purpose of monitoring (as I interpreted that as walking about the class) was to ensure that everyone was on task, I questioned it now. It looked more like policing to me. I realized that by policing the learners, I could not ensure a deeper engagement with the task. This review of the video made me question the whole pertinence of the task itself. Was the task meaningful and comprehensible, and did it have the right challenge? Were the groups I had planned aiding learning in any way? This reflective questioning fed into my next lesson.

The influence of these reflections was strong: I reviewed and reworked the tasks carefully. I also reviewed the group composition. Most importantly, I realized that by walking about, I was conveying a negative message to my adult learners. They did not want supervision, they wanted to be scaffolded. In my latter monitoring-prominent lessons, I made sure I was seated with the groups, and working with them. I noticed that more careful planning of the tasks and placement of group members in each group led to keener participation and improved learning.

### **Role 3: Observer**

In 3 of my recorded lessons, I played the role of an observer. In my first recording, as my learner-teachers taught, I sat as usual at the back of the class to write down my observations. When I carefully looked at the video, I noticed that what I could see from my position at the back of the room was limited. The camera, due to its position at eye level with the person, captured far more action. The children in my learner-teacher's class actually showed much more evidence of learning (or not-learning) than I had captured in my notes. So then why was I always seated at the back of the room? I wondered how the children would be impacted if I took up a position somewhere close to the wall in middle of the room. In the next two recorded sessions, I made sure I was in the classroom well before the children arrived; I greeted them if they noticed me, but otherwise I continued to do some work on my laptop. As the children settled down for the learner-teacher's lessons, they increasingly forgot about my existence—I became a fly-on-the-wall observer! This way I could gather very rich data about the children's learning, and in turn offer a richer feedback to the learner-teacher.

#### **Role 4: Giving Feedback**

In almost all of my video lessons I was offering feedback to my learner-teachers, either during a presentation, or during a group task, or after the learner-teacher's lessons. It was very important for me to study how my feedback was perceived and used.

I noticed that I tended to usually look at the person who I was giving the feedback to even when the discussion involved the whole class. The video allowed me to view the impact of this action on some learner-teachers seated at the far end of the room. Often, they seemed uninvolved in the discussion. I wondered how I could involve them. While I believed that the feedback I was offering to one person was relevant to the entire class, why did they not share this belief? As I reviewed the videos, I tried out newer strategies. One of the methods that seemed to bear better results was this: as a learner asked a question or created an opportunity for me to offer feedback, I checked my distance from the learner. If I was standing too close, I started inconspicuously stepping away from the learner while at the same time engaging the learner in a preliminary conversation. With each step away from the learner, I improved my vantage of the class. I moved to a position from where I could get a good view of my entire class and then engaged the whole class in the discussion by throwing back the question or situation at them, or by offering a possible solution and seeking their views on it. I noticed that this created greater engagement with the learners.

Observing videos of myself giving feedback to my learners after their teaching episode revealed that I always offered them an opportunity to first comment on what worked well in their lesson. This enabled the learners to explore the positive moments in the class when learning occurred. This approach motivated the learners and prepared them to explore opportunities where they could have maximized learning. Using feedback sessions as a dialogic reflection enabled learner-teachers to see the experience as a learning opportunity rather than a ritual where judgments were passed. They were therefore more open to learning and less defensive about the feedback. Thus the review of the videos showed not only areas that needed further attention, but also pointed to certain actions that were aiding learning and could be further strengthened.

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

On three occasions, I managed to get my colleagues to comment on the observations I had made on the basis my recordings. This feedback from my colleagues also helped me in my professional development. However, it is not always possible to seek the assistance of busy peers and this can be a limitation. Unless this method of CPD is formally scheduled in an institution's calendar, it is easy to lose oneself in the daily routine of teaching.

Another limitation of this study is that the realizations and improvements that occurred as a result of critically viewing my own lessons possibly happened because I am an experienced teacher-educator myself—I could “see” what was ineffective. Will a less experienced tertiary level teacher with no formal introduction to education and principles of learning, be able to reflect as effectively? This reinforces my previous suggestion that such CPD activities need to become more formal. When institutions put aside resources for teachers to become reflective practitioners who constantly strive to discover effective ways to make learning more meaningful for the future world citizens, they will always be able to come up with ways to address any possible issues. In the meanwhile, I will continue with my research on how to impact the scholarship of my tertiary learners. CPD can begin small—with oneself.

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# Exploring Continuing Professional Development in ELT Classrooms in India

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## ABSTRACT

Internationally, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) has gained prominence through the activities of professional associations and networks of teaching communities where professional development programmes are recognized and valued. It is clear that CPD needs to develop as a key feature in all professional work. However, in the context of Indian teacher education, CPD is a neglected area, with most of the teaching professionals participating in professional development only if it is mandatory. In this paper, we will explore CPD in the context of language teaching in Indian education. As this area is being revisited and restructured in order to foster higher levels of quality, CPD too is evolving. Educating our students to meet the challenges of the world requires that they be constantly engaged in self growth and development. We share their understanding and experiences in this regard, as they form a community of practice based on professional collaboration.

**Key Words:** Collaboration, professional development, professional collaboration

## INTRODUCTION

The area of teachers' continuing professional development (CPD) is gaining prominence through policies and programmes of professional associations worldwide. However, as a concept it remains ambiguous, with confusion regarding its definition and purpose in both academic and practitioner literature (Friedman & Phillips, 2000). Professionals themselves have a limited view of CPD—they see it as training, a means of keeping up to date, or a platform to build one's career (Friedman & Phillips, 2000). However, its importance lies in its close link with the ideals of professionalism. CPD has become synonymous with

formal courses or events that provide some form of training. Though there is a tendency to regard formal courses as the most appropriate mode of giving teaching instruction, professional learning takes many forms. Becher (1999) has identified seven categories or modes of continuing professional learning: attending courses and conferences; engaging in professional interactions; networking; consulting experts; doing personal research; learning by doing and learning by teaching. CPD needs to support the teaching faculty in enhancing their understanding of their preferred learning styles by making available opportunities for developing their practice. There is a growing recognition of the need to develop such frameworks of professional development that make the process self-directed.

In this paper, we have discussed “Mentoring” and “Lesson Study” models under the wider ambit of communities of practice. This is a forum for bringing together expertise in the field, knowledge exchange and innovation through professional exchange. It involves more than two people, who are not necessarily in a hierarchical relationship. Wenger (as cited in Kennedy, 2005, p.244), contends that learning within these communities, involves three essential processes—evolving forms of mutual engagement; understanding and tuning [their] enterprise; and developing [their] repertoire, styles and discourses. In our community of practice comprising two teacher educators and one higher secondary school teacher, we are attempting to adapt these processes to our needs. We conduct frequent meetings where we share our experiences and concerns in order to evolve and implement enhanced pedagogical strategies. This mutual engagement is aimed at building bridges between two disparate yet synergetic institutions of education. Writing this paper jointly is our effort to share our insights and endeavours with regard to our own development as ELT professionals.

### **CONCEPTUALIZING CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

CPD incorporates activities that focus on enhancing the knowledge and skills of teaching professionals through orientation, training and support programmes designed to encourage professional development by providing the space and opportunity for applying the newly acquired knowledge in practice (Coetzer, 2001). Professionally, it is essential to guide teachers to develop their own ideas and to experiment with them in order to determine their viability. In addition, teachers must be encouraged to discuss their ideas with their peers, as their support and guidance is also integral to individual growth. Such interactions have an impact on the attitudes and approaches adopted by teachers and consequently contribute to the improvement in the quality of the teaching and learning process (Day & Sachs, 2004).

Another important aspect of CPD is to identify and address the specific needs of teachers. Once these have been identified, activities need to be planned to support teaching professionals in applying this knowledge and methodology creatively (Bredeson, 2002). Collinson (2000), states that the best results are obtained if the programme is formally and systematically planned and presented with a focus on the enhancement of professional growth achieved by broadening knowledge, skills and positive attitudes. Professional development requires not only informal and spontaneous learning from one another (Bunting, 1997; Kagaan, 2004) but also relies on prior knowledge (Bredeson, 2002), experience and the potential of each participant, which can be built upon and incorporated into further initiatives (Earley & Bubb, 2004; Greenberg, 1998). Acquiring new knowledge and sharing existing knowledge and skills with others are hence valuable tools for development and professional engagement.

### **CPD IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT**

Bolitho & Padwad (2013), state that the strength and quality of any profession largely depends upon how it manages the three stages of preparation, induction and ongoing development of its members. The scope and the pressure to keep developing professionally are at the core of most professions. For instance, in the case of medical and legal education in India, there is a combination of theoretical and practical learning bolstered by on-the-job training, followed by systemic induction and CPD. In India, teaching is a popular option even though it is not considered as prestigious as other professions. While, there is no formal system of induction, usually a teacher is expected to teach and handle responsibility independently and autonomously from the very first day of teaching. There are limited opportunities for CPD for serving teachers beyond participating in workshops that are mandatory for promotion. Administrators equate CPD with in-service programmes, which are often held in isolation, and are short term and infrequent. At the tertiary level, the status is no better as novice teacher educators do not undergo any pre-service courses. In India, the broader notion of CPD as life-long learning—a process by which teachers review and extend their commitment to their profession by acquiring and critically developing knowledge and skills—is conspicuous by its absence (Bolitho & Padwad, 2013).

As the world around us is experiencing tumultuous change, the role and functioning of teachers and educational institutions, have also been affected. Teachers are expected to teach in classrooms that are increasingly multicultural and multilingual. They are required to place greater emphasis on integrating students with special learning needs into the mainstream, effectively use information and

communication technologies for teaching and most importantly, plan lessons with evaluative and accountability frameworks firmly in place. This holds even truer for pre-service teacher education programmes. No matter how good pre-service teacher education is, it cannot be expected to prepare teachers for all the challenges they will face throughout their careers. Education systems, therefore, need to provide teachers and teacher educators with opportunities for in-service professional development that is ongoing, and that involves updating knowledge of their subject area to incorporate recent advances in order to maintain a high standard of teaching while retaining a high quality teacher workforce in schools and in teacher education programmes. It is important to create spaces for exchange of information and expertise in schools as well as teacher education programmes. With this objective, there is a need to adopt teaching strategies that can help us in providing sustained support and development. These can be provided through mentoring, collaborative planning and teaching and reflective practice. In the next two sections, we will describe in detail the two-pronged approach towards CPD—Mentoring and Lesson Study.

### **MENTORING AS CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Mentoring is a process through which teachers are supported in their learning and development through individual support from a more experienced colleague with whom they develop a relationship of trust over a period of time (Asención; Hargraves as cited in Corrigan & Loughran, 2008, p.1). Mentoring embodies many features which are considered to be important in promoting effective professional development. It is based on and feeds back into classroom discourse and stimulates reflection, thereby encouraging a positive, collegial and collaborative relationship between mentors and teachers. Mentors fulfil many roles including acting as models to inspire and demonstrate expected professional behaviours, while showing the novice teacher the proverbial ropes (Malderez & Bodoczky, 1999). Moreover, mentors act as cathartic sounding boards for the mentees as well as create learning opportunities for their mentees, a mutually beneficial situation for both as both mentor and mentee can arrive at viable solutions to the challenges they face in the classroom. As part of CPD, the teacher mentors assist teachers with lesson planning, conduct weekly/monthly department meetings, collaborate during professional trainings, learn and share resources, observe teachers' classes, and give them feedback on their practice.

The objective of mentoring is to strengthen the teachers' content knowledge and planning skills, with a focus on instructional implementation and classroom management. The discussion that follows post class observation builds the

teacher's understanding of how to handle himself/herself in challenging situations, make decisions based on acquired knowledge, work within given timelines and deal with parents and administrators. Mentoring exposes teachers to authentic teaching experiences and rich reflection daily from the mentors. It is most effective when undertaken in a non-threatening context, with the basic premise that a process that stresses on interactive learning is truly effective.

It is important to understand that in a vast country such as India, with so many students and teachers, the mentorship programme helps to support and foster the growth of ELT teachers. Buoyed by these examples of CPD through mentoring, we conducted various ELT training programmes for in-service teachers. The programmes involved a collaborative effort between the teacher educators and teacher practitioners, hence juxtaposing theory with informed practice. One such example of CPD was "Activity Based Teaching through Collaborative Learning", which was undertaken for a group of ten English language teachers (primary and middle) of a premier Delhi school. We first discussed the plan for initiating CPD, taking into consideration the problem areas identified on the basis of a needs analysis. The problem areas mainly involved issues pertaining to group and collaborative activities and their integration into regular classroom teaching.

In the workshop, we presented well-structured activities that the participants could relate to, resulting in a positive response. The feedback comprised reflective journals written by the participants sharing their learning experiences. The effectiveness of the workshop was evaluated after one month, in which the mentor observed the classes of the mentees to study the impact of CPD. The self-assessment proforma filled by the mentor and the mentees revealed the following benefits: increased confidence in teaching, improved communication and reflection skills and better understanding of the linkages between educational theories and classroom practices. The mentees added that because of the mentoring programme, they were more motivated and interested in their professional development, which in turn would improve the learning experience of the children in their schools.

Reflecting on the feedback of the workshop, we considered various other interactions which could also fall under the ambit of CPD. For instance, we looked at conversations between teachers about the effectiveness of an activity or strategy they had used in the classroom, and how it could be improved upon. We also discussed how observing their peers' classes, or inviting other teachers to observe their own lessons was also part of CPD.

Many of the teachers we met in the course of these workshops have become friends. We are connected with them on social media platforms, where we

exchange ideas, activities and web links of teaching resources. This reciprocity of interaction has helped us gain an insight into the nuances of the ELT classroom.

The second model which we will examine now is the Lesson Study approach.

### **LESSON STUDY FOR CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

The Lesson Study approach has its roots in social constructivism, and combines the benefits of both action research and community of practice. It is indigenous to the Japanese education system since the nineteenth century, and was introduced in the United States by Stigler and Hiebert in the late 1990s. Since then, it has been adapted to suit the instructional needs of students across schools as well as colleges. “Lesson study is a process in which a team of instructors jointly design, teach, observe, analyse and revise a single lesson, called a research lesson” (Lewis & Hurdas cited in Demir, Czerniak, & Hart, 2013, p. 23). Lesson Study can therefore play an important role in fostering teacher professional development. This is especially true of the Indian scenario, where there is a lag between research and practice, or an inability to apply the learning from teacher development workshops in the classroom. Hence, the need for an approach that evolves out of partnership and mutual engagement among practitioners rather than one controlled and dictated by “experts”.

The Lesson Study cycle implemented in this study has been drawn from the work of Demir, Czerniak, & Hart (2013). The Lesson Study Process has four stages, which are as follows: setting up a goal and planning activities, research lesson, lesson discussion and consolidation of learning. We will take up each of these.

### **SETTING UP A GOAL AND PLANNING ACTIVITIES**

The Lesson Study process begins with setting a goal and planning activities for students which the teachers aim to address through their instruction. According to Ertle, Chokshi, & Fernandez (as cited in Rock & Wilson, 2005, p. 80), “These goal statements are constructed based on a gap that the teachers perceive between their aspirations for their students and how students are actually developing in their school.” In the context of our study, the goal was formulated as an outcome of our discussion on the pedagogy of newly appointed school teachers. We had observed a lack of critical thinking amongst the newly appointed school teachers, especially in the context of formulating questions. This in turn would have an impact on the development of critical thinking among high school students. Therefore, based on inputs or feedback from the field (here school), we planned our lesson.

We asked the teachers to design a set of activities that would help to achieve

the stated goals. We decided to select the activities that involved individual free writing and collaborative planning of higher order thinking questions based on the text “Sultana’s Dream” by Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain. The activities were decided keeping in mind the needs and abilities of the learners, and thinking about their expected responses. At this stage, teachers were asked to decide on the method of data collection to assess student learning; we selected observation, self-assessment rubric and reflective journal. It may be noted that the students are familiar with both having encountered them in earlier assignments.

### **RESEARCH LESSON**

In this stage of the Lesson Study cycle, one of the members (in this case a teacher) volunteers to teach the lesson as other members observe the class and make field notes, or use other tools of observation. Students were asked to read the story at home a day before the lesson. The warm-up activity was a free writing task. Following this, the students were divided into groups and were given the task of framing critical thinking questions based on the story they had read the previous day. The students were provided with sample questions from the text to help them compare and analyze the level of the questions. It may be noted that students have read about the different levels of questions before this class. The questions framed by one group were answered by another group. Since, it was a text on a feminist utopia, students were given charts to draw their own versions of utopias (not necessarily feminist). Lastly, students were asked to fill a feedback form in the class. They were assigned the task of writing a reader response journal at home.

### **LESSON DISCUSSION**

The third stage of Lesson Study entails a discussion among the team members wherein they examine their observations and experience of the lesson. The focus of this discussion was on gauging the success of the lesson in achieving its prescribed goals. At this stage, the field notes, self-assessment rubrics, feedback forms and reflective journals of the students were shared and discussed. The data collected from these sources indicated that the activities evoked critical thinking among the students, especially when it came to analysing and critiquing the questions they had formulated. However, the transaction also brought to light the scope for improvement. It is precisely the provision of this space for reflection that is the strength of the Lesson Study approach.

### **CONSOLIDATION OF LEARNING**

This is the stage where, based on the discussions held, changes are made to the lesson either in terms of changing the goals, or the teaching-learning activities or

the assessment tools. In our case, we decided to do away with prior reading of the text as students reported that they found it difficult to restrict themselves to the assigned sections of the texts while formulating questions. We also found that the discussions based on the sample questions did not provide sufficient support to the students, and they faced difficulties in formulating questions of their own. We decided that in the revised plan, the volunteer teacher would take up an excerpt from the text and brainstorm with the students to demonstrate the formulation of higher order thinking questions before asking the students to work in groups. We also decided to ask the students to not only answer the questions, but also give feedback on the questions formulated by their peers stating whether the framed questions required critical thinking or not. Lastly, bearing all these changes, the time allotted to the lessons was also increased.

The Lesson Study approach, with its emphasis on teachers as researchers who work collaboratively to share the efforts and results of their teaching in their respective communities of practice, helps to overcome the lacunae of fragmented and occasional learning events that is generally characteristic of CPD programmes. The cyclical nature of the Lesson Study approach might seem daunting at first. However, it can be adopted for one lesson at a time, and not necessarily for all the lessons taught during an academic year. The protracted nature of the Lesson Study process is a blessing in disguise, for it provides ample time for the teacher to reflect on his/her action. It is rather like a case of educational reform at a micro level, where the teacher is the researcher and in charge of enhancing her competence through collaboration and reflection.

### CONCLUSIONS

“The primary theoretical principle of social constructivism asserts the social nature of knowledge and the belief that knowledge is constructed through social interaction and is a shared rather than an individual experience” (Gergen; Vygotsky as cited in Rock & Wilson, 2005, p. 79). Mentoring and Lesson Study approaches provide avenues to teachers and educators to work in socially collaborative environments, which is vital for successful CPD. Teaching professionals need to be supported in these collaborations, enabling them to build insights and thereby inform their practice. Although organizing effective CPD in schools and teacher education programmes is not an easy process, it is worthwhile to overcome the barriers and facilitate the good practices that it generates.

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## **Acceleration of Agency Though Conscious Decision-Making in the ESL Classroom: A Study of In-Service Teachers**

*Ipshita Hajra Sasmal*

### **ABSTRACT**

In this study, I started out with the aim of examining the relationship between teachers' decision-making processes and the interactional choices available to them in the classroom at the tertiary level. I would like to argue that awareness of this relationship will enable teachers to build theories and engage in continuous professional development (CPD). I made an attempt to examine the initial beliefs and assumptions of the teachers by reflecting on critical incidents from their teaching experience. I then identified their dominant interactional patterns, following which teachers justified and reflected on the interactional choices available to them using the Self Evaluation of Teacher Talk (SETT) tool (Walsh, 2006). This allowed me to identify the dominant or fundamental assumptions. At the next stage of reflection, the dominant theory of practice was reframed as the desired theory of practice in the form of simple statements indicating the macro principles on which teachers base their teaching. The desired theory of practice was implemented in the classroom and teachers initiated the change process. Finally, teachers reflected on means to sustain the changes.

**Key words:** CPD, critical reflection, decision-making, choices, theory of practice

### **INTRODUCTION**

In a language classroom, the dynamics of interaction depend on the teacher's decisions and the interactional choices available to her/him. These decisions and subsequent actions also reflect how her/his beliefs operate in practice. Thus, the teacher's belief system is a powerful tool, which directly influences her/his decision-making process. In this paper, I will attempt to study ESL teachers' classroom discourse and argue that most often, teachers are unaware of the

interactional choices available to them. I will further argue that acceleration of agency in making conscious decisions with regard to classroom interaction can remarkably change the ESL classroom discourse. This can be done in the context of CPD in the form of mini-action research projects.

The study was conducted within the action research paradigm with six in-service teachers of English at the tertiary level. The objective of the study was to explore questions about classroom interaction, and how teachers could find solutions by reflecting on the interactional choices available to them. Such projects serve as a link between theory and practice of critical reflection in ELT, where “teacher agency” is the primary focus and enables teachers to question their existing beliefs and assumptions.

### ASPECTS OF CLASSROOM INTERACTION

In this section, I will present some of the features of second language classroom communication that are *controlled* by the English language teacher. These include the IRF (Initiation-response-feedback) sequence, elicitation techniques, repair or feedback mechanisms and adapting speech for student needs. All of these aspects of classroom communication were taken up for investigation in the present study.

I studied communication or interaction in the L2 classroom within the IRF/E structure, where I is the teacher initiation, R is the student’s response and F/E is the feedback, follow-up or evaluation (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1997; Johnson, 1995; Ellis, 1998; Walsh, 2002). The L2 classroom discourse has been found to present a structure where the teacher controls the topic as well as turn-taking. The teacher can thus “restrict or allow learners’ interaction”. Even in the most “decentralized” classrooms, it is “the teacher who orchestrates the interaction” (Breen, 1998, p. 119).

An extract of the interaction has been given as follows:

- (I) T Can anyone tell me who is Sam Pitroda ... without opening your books? Yes, Pratik?
- (R) S He is an IT professional
- (F) T He is an IT professional.
- (I) T What is he known for?
- (R) S2 He gave new [sic] direction to IT.
- (F) T Okay. He gave a new direction to Information Technology in India.

In the above extract, for every response of the student, the teacher has two responses (initiation and feedback). Chaudron (1988) observes that “teacher talk” represents approximately two thirds of classroom speech.

In ESL classrooms, classroom discourse is dominated by teachers asking questions and students responding to those questions. Such *elicitation techniques* are also how teachers control classroom communication. Teachers typically use “closed” questions, which elicit short responses from the students. Other studies argue that referential questions produce more spontaneous responses than display questions (Brock, 1986 & Nunan, 1987).

Repair, like other classroom practices, is a ritual for teachers. They never question it as it is not intended as criticism. This ritual, which typically occurs in the feedback move (of the IRE sequence), however, impacts learning in a big way (Jarvis & Robinson, 1997). Teachers may correct errors directly or indirectly, overtly or covertly; they have many options. During the flow of a lesson, teachers must make split second decisions, which have consequences for the learning opportunities they present to their students. Feedback is generally considered to be evaluative (Allwright & Bailey, 1991). However, appropriate repair strategies which are related to the pedagogic goals of the lesson must be preferred over randomly selected choices. These strategies can be “language centered” or “content centered”.

Teachers often modify their speech to suit student needs. Chaudron (1988), lists four aspects of teacher speech which are adapted to help student comprehension in the L2 classroom. Firstly, teachers use simplified vocabulary and avoid idiomatic expressions. Secondly, they use simplified grammar and short sentences. Pronunciation is also modified by using slower, clearer speech. Finally, teachers use a lot of facial expressions and gestures. Lynch’s (1996) taxonomy discusses ways in which teachers adapt their speech to improve student comprehension. These include confirmation checks, comprehension checks, repetition, clarification requests, reformulation, completion and backtracking. However, these strategies can benefit students only when teachers make a conscious effort to keep in mind the intended learning outcomes while using them.

I would like to argue that teachers are not consciously aware of these aspects of classroom communication and the choices available to them. Their decisions are thus not based on conscious judgements but “routines” formed over years of teaching.

### **Choices and Decisions**

Researchers have studied choices and decisions within the objective/behaviourist and subjective/cognitive paradigms. However, when these approaches to decision-making came under severe criticism, choice was considered from the socialist perspective. According to this view, choice is controlled and constrained by social

institutions. Social psychologists argue that an individual’s cultural upbringing determines his/her choice preferences. Cultures can be either “*individualist*” or “*collectivist*”. Harry Trandis, in his book *Individualism and Collectivism*, notes that “individualists are primarily motivated by their own needs, rights, and the contracts they have established with others and give priority to their personal goals over the goals of others” (Trandis as cited in Iyengar, 2011, p.31). Collectivist societies (such as that of Japan) are taught to privilege the “we” in their choices, and so they see themselves primarily in terms of the groups to which they belong, such as family, coworkers, village or nation.

**Theoretical Framework for the Study**

The following framework shows how beliefs are related to choices. All information is interpreted through an individual’s system of beliefs and perception. Since beliefs are considered a “latent construct”, a framework of reflection is proposed which “uncovers” these beliefs by understanding the choice process. Such an understanding, it is argued, will assist the teacher to “unearth” those beliefs which are otherwise difficult to articulate.

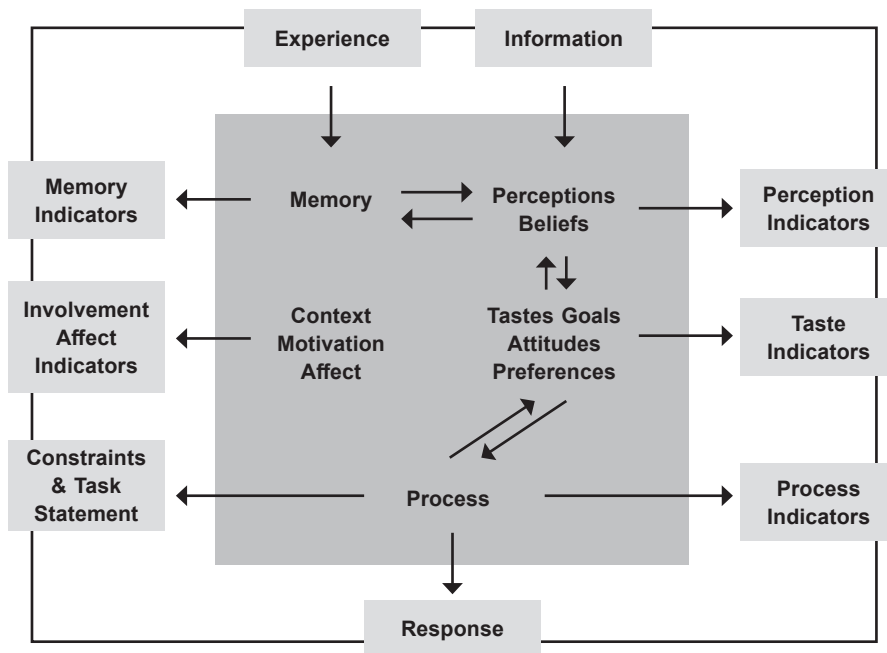


Figure 1. Theoretical framework for modeling choice behaviour. Reprinted from Ben-Akiva et al. (1999, p. 192)

This discussion on decision and choice is advanced further through the description and characterization of a framework (Reflection on choices or RC), designed to help English language teachers critically reflect on their classroom interactional processes by understanding their “latent” beliefs. An attempt to study critical reflection of the individual teacher within the social context can provide a platform for “transformative action” within the classroom. These links provide an understanding of how teachers engage with their social worlds (at the level of the organization and communities of practice) and construct their professional identity (Fook & Gardner, 2007). However, in order to explore these links, a framework of critical reflection that is “neither purely individualistic nor essentially collective” is required.

### REFLECTION ON CHOICES FRAMEWORK

Adapting from the models of Fook (2010), Fook & Gardner (2007), and Cottrell (2011), I present a *three stage* framework of critical reflection (Reflection on Choices) to study the behaviour of teacher choice as follows. The three stages of the framework are:

1. Awareness building
2. Theory building
3. Sustained growth

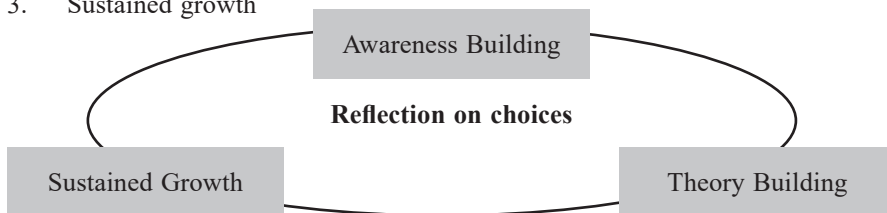


Figure 2. The reflection on choices framework (Sasmal, 2014)

Each stage in the framework represents different levels of “changed awareness” and “changed practice”. The entire process reflects how these levels are linked and how the learning from each stage is transferable. The levels in each stage are given as follows:

#### Stage 1: Awareness Building

##### *Step1: Unearthing of initial assumptions and beliefs*

*Level 1:* Experience sharing

*Level 2:* Narrating critical incidents

*Level 3:* Identifying initial assumptions and beliefs

***Step 2: Moving to a deeper level through reflection on choices***

*Level 1:* Evaluation of teacher talk

*Level 2:* Identifying choices

*Level 3:* Justifying choices to understand the dominant/fundamental assumptions and beliefs

**Stage 2: Theory Building**

*Level 1:* Dominant/fundamental assumptions and beliefs against present (desired) experiences/values/assumptions/beliefs

*Level 2:* Analysis of the gap between espoused theory of practice and actual practice

*Level 3:* Dominant assumptions and beliefs are reframed as desired theory of practice

**Stage 3: Sustained Growth**

*Level 1:* Desired theory of practice is implemented in class

*Level 2:* Initiating the change process

*Level 3:* Taking steps towards sustaining the changes

In the following sections, I have closely examined ESL teachers' decision-making process in the classroom using the above framework of Reflection on Choice (RC).

**METHODOLOGY**

The case studies reported in this paper are part of a more detailed research on critical reflection and teachers' beliefs. Six teachers from three engineering colleges in Hyderabad, all with roughly five to ten years of teaching experience, participated in this research. At the time of the research, three out of six teachers were doing a PGCTE course at EFL University through distance learning. The data reported in this paper pertains to the responses of these three teachers. The responses of two teachers are discussed in greater detail.

The process of critical reflection was studied over two semesters (roughly one year). The study was qualitative in nature and included classroom observations (both audio and video), reflective grids, workshops, informal discussions and interviews as data collection tools. During this time, the six teachers met the researcher every two weeks, and as a group we conducted the first and second stages of critical reflection. In addition to this, formal workshops were

conducted every month during the first semester, where we discussed skill-based teaching versus content-based teaching, aspects of second language classroom communication and professional development. In the second semester, we studied the third stage in the framework on reflective choices, that of sustained growth through classroom observations, after-class interviews, discussions and teachers' log books. Teachers also wrote a reflective essay discussing some of the "critical incidents" from their experience.

As part of the compulsory English course, in the first year engineering curriculum, "speaking" is one of the skills that teachers need to focus on. This skill is taught through activities specified at the end of each unit of the text book. Presentations, group discussions, telephonic conversations, role plays and other speaking activities are also a part of the course.

During the pilot study, most of the teachers expressed concern with regard to the "teaching of speaking". The critical reflection incidents discussed in this paper are an attempt to "unearth" teachers' assumptions about their decision-making process in the classroom while teaching speaking skills. This has been done with a view to move from a reflective "awareness stage" to "a linking with practice" stage. This critical reflection by the teachers on their dominant assumptions allowed them to come up with some "changed practices". To conclude, the teachers were asked to develop a "theory of practice directly from experience", and consciously include in it their desired values/beliefs/perspectives rather than the dominant ones. We were aware that this process could function in several ways depending upon "the meaning of the incident for the individual teacher, how it was theorized and understood and what kind of assumptions were 'unearthed' or 'shaken up' for each teacher" Fook (2010, p.42).

In the first stage (awareness building), the teachers began by analyzing a "critical incident" from their experience. Within a group, each teacher was helped by others to reflect on the incident by being asking a set of questions that derived from the RC framework. Some of these questions were: what does your practice imply...?; what were you assuming when...?; how did you influence the situation through your presence, perceptions, interpretations and assumptions?; what were your beliefs about teaching speaking/communication/classroom interaction and where did they come from?; what perspectives are missing?; what are your own constructions (specially binary categories)?; what language patterns have you used and what do they imply?; what is your own thinking? An attempt was made to maintain a "reflective group culture" called "critical acceptance" (Fook, 2010, p. 42). This was thus an environment which provides optimum challenge as well as security. The aim of this environment was to encourage participants to find out for

themselves what kind of thinking and practices they wished to develop instead of teaching them a pre-determined framework.

### HYPOTHESIS

The following hypotheses were formulated for the purpose of the study:

1. Teacher's interactional choices reflect their beliefs and assumptions about classroom communication.
2. Reflection on choices (RC) is an effective tool to uncover teacher's dominant/fundamental assumptions and beliefs.
3. The RC framework enables teachers to link their awareness about dominant assumptions and beliefs with their classroom practice, resulting in changed awareness and practice.

### DATA ANALYSIS

The six teachers (Deepa, Jayashree, Lakshmi, Sirisha, Sunita and Kadambari) who participated in the study were at different levels of their professional development cycle, as discussed in Tsui (2003).

In the first case study, Deepa experienced tensions in her beliefs and assumptions. She articulated them as follows:

- Encouraging student participation while teaching from the textbook
- Involving students while teaching vocabulary items
- Decreasing teacher talk and encouraging more student interaction
- Allowing students to manage topics of discussion
- Ensuring that students understood explanations, instructions and feedback

She then analyzed her classroom discourse through a process of collaborative critical reflection within the RC framework. The following patterns emerged from her analysis:

Table 1. *Reflection on choices: Identifying choices*

<b>Present pattern of classroom interaction</b>	<b>Other interactional choices available</b>
Display/product/choice questions	Referential questions/process questions/meta process questions
Direct repair	Scaffolding/Seeking clarifications/Confirmation checks

Content feedback Form-focused feedback	Scaffolding
Teacher echo	Asking students to speak loudly/ asking another student to repeat
Extended teacher turn	Extended learner turn

Deepa reflected on her interactional choices, matching them with her pedagogic goals as shown in table 1. She found a gap between her espoused beliefs and actual practice. In the process of justifying her practice, she discovered how she could attain her pedagogic goals by using other interactional choices (for example using referential questions rather than too many display questions). This helped her to re-frame her theory of practice. Deepa reached the “awareness stage” which was linked with “practice” through the process of theory building.

Table 2. *Identifying dominant assumptions and beliefs*

<b>Dominant interactional feature</b>	<b>Dominant/fundamental belief/assumption</b>
Display/product/choice questions	Classroom interaction must be strictly controlled by the teacher
Direct repair	Mistakes should be directly pointed out
Content feedback Form-focused feedback	Students' should be told directly what is the correct answer
Teacher echo	Teacher must repeat every student utterance so that everybody in the class can hear
Extended teacher turn	Teachers need to explain the content and thus need to speak more
IRF sequence	Classroom discourse must be strictly structured

In the second case study, Jayashree went through the same cycle of critical reflection as discussed earlier to arrive at her espoused beliefs and assumptions. However, when she analyzed her classroom discourse, very different patterns of interaction emerged. The glaring gap between her espoused beliefs and actual practice was so difficult for her to accept that she decided to discontinue the RC sessions and opt out of the study. However, after extensive discussions with her friends she joined back to complete the RC cycle.

The following were Jayashree’s initial beliefs and assumptions:

- Relying only on textbooks to teach English is not enough; additional material helps students to learn the language through interesting activities.
- Students must be encouraged to speak in the classroom even if they resist.
- The teacher can provide a “good model” for students when they read the text aloud.

Students must take feedback seriously.

These beliefs and assumptions were then evaluated against her classroom discourse and interactional choices. The following table shows Jayashree’s dominant pattern of classroom interaction and her interactional choices:

Table 3. *Reflection on choices: Identifying choices*

<b>Present pattern of classroom interaction</b>	<b>Other interactional choices available</b>
Display/product/choice questions	Referential questions/process questions/meta process questions
Direct repair/corrective repair	Scaffolding/Seeking clarifications/Confirmation checks
Summarizing by the teacher	Summarizing by students
Completing student turn	Allowing student to complete turn, scaffolding
Extended teacher turn	Extended learner turn
Topic management by the teacher	Topic selection by students
Strict IRF pattern	Authentic interactional patterns
Predominance of Managerial and Materials mode	Including skills and classroom context modes

As Jayashree justified her interactional choices in various sessions of RC, she identified her dominant assumptions:

Table 4. *Identifying dominant assumptions and beliefs*

<b>Dominant interactional choices</b>	<b>Dominant beliefs and assumptions</b>
Display/product/choice questions	Classroom discourse must be controlled by the teacher
Direct repair/corrective repair	Students’ mistakes need to be pointed out so that they can correct them

Summarizing by the teacher	The students did not understand the content of the text. The teacher's summary will help to "explain" the text in a simplified language
Completing student turn	Students need help from the teacher to complete a turn
Extended teacher turn	Teachers need to speak more than the students in the class
Topic management by the teacher	The teacher knows what topic will work in the class
Strict IRF pattern	Teacher controls the classroom interaction pattern
Elaborate critical feedback on students' public speaking skills	Elaborate feedback will help students to improve their speaking skills

After the dominant/fundamental beliefs were identified, Jayashree tried to articulate her dominant theory of practice and reframe it as her desired theory of practice. This level of critical reflection proved to be the most enriching for all the teachers. Once the desired theory of practice was framed, Jayashree worked on implementing it in her classroom. This initiated the "change process". Finally, Jayashree engaged in critical reflection on how to sustain the changes in her teaching context.

The case studies of four other teachers validated the findings of the first two case studies.

Steps 1 and 2 of Stage 1 of the RC cycle showed how reflection on critical incidents and experience sharing could be used as a tool to uncover teachers' initial beliefs and assumptions about classroom communication. *This validates the first research hypothesis.* Stage 2 of the RC cycle allowed teachers to analyze their classroom discourse and identify patterns in their interactional choices. This analysis helped teachers to uncover their dominant or fundamental assumptions and beliefs (*hypothesis 1 and 2*). Finally, Stage 3 of the RC cycle in the case studies showed how the teachers' personal "theory building" helped to link the "awareness stage" with the "practice stage". (*hypothesis 3*)

The study clearly shows how teachers' beliefs about classroom communication are reflected in their interactional choices. Six different teachers teaching the same course ended up having very different classroom interactional patterns because of the interactional choices they made. The findings of the study point towards the

fact that teachers' decision-making process can be a more conscious activity when they explore their available choices in the classroom and reflect on them. Such acceleration of agency leads to professional development which can be sustained even in difficult teaching learning contexts.

### CONCLUSIONS

The RC framework described and evaluated in this study has the potential to initiate and sustain teacher learning and change within the CPD model. This framework can be used in in-service teacher training programs to raise awareness about classroom interactional patterns. As they reflect on their espoused beliefs and match them with transcripts of their classroom teaching, teachers can identify dominant patterns in their discourse. This will enable them to articulate their desired theory of practice and link it with their actual classroom contexts. However, teachers in the Indian context will benefit from the process only when it is included as a "compulsory" assignment during the in-service teacher training programs, or in collaborative reflection groups of like-minded teachers. Alternatively, workshops using RC as a tool for critical reflection can also benefit intrinsically motivated teachers to reflect on their choices and engage in personal theory building. Such an intensive activity will empower them to engage with CPD.

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# **An Action Research Project to Explore Peer Mentoring to Enable CPD**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Action research allows teachers to explore their immediate contexts and make on the spot modifications to address pedagogic issues. It is one of the ways to assist the teacher to engage with Continuing Professional Development (CPD). In this paper, I will discuss an action research project undertaken over a span of four semesters to assist students to increase their proficiency in English in order to improve their reading and writing skills. This project was implemented by student mentors, who worked with the students to create a space of mutual trust, where peer learning was encouraged to help them cope with their English language needs. This is in line with Vygotsky's idea of sociocultural theory, Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and more-enabled peers, which proposes to maximize learning through collaboration and social relationships. In this article, I will report on the "Language Buddy Scheme" launched by Ambedkar University, Delhi (AUD), to support this exploration and discuss how it has triggered initiatives at the institutional level to support the teachers' CPD activities.

**Key words:** Action research, CPD, peer learning, peer mentoring, ZPD

## **INTRODUCTION**

Action research is a powerful tool which allows teachers to engage in questions emerging from their everyday practice. Reflective practices allow teachers to systematically evaluate and reconsider their actions in light of classroom events, which are dynamic and ever-changing. Action research allows teachers to engage in CPD activities within their own micro-contexts, and has the potential to bring about changes in institutional and classroom practices.

As an undergraduate English language teacher at AUD, I had minimal opportunities for discussions around language pedagogy and practices. However, my classroom concerns made me stop and reflect on what I was doing and I realized that I needed to take charge of improving my classroom practices.

Although AUD is an English medium university, the administration acknowledges the need to put certain enabling mechanisms in place to assist students struggling with language to smoothly make a transition to the English medium of instruction. Students entering the university at the undergraduate level (UG) have to take an English Proficiency Test (EPT), and based on their performance, they are assigned English language courses to address their language needs. The students identified as basic users of English are part of the English Proficiency Course (EPC).

While these students begin to familiarize themselves with English through a wide range of activities and tasks in their EPC class, the language demands of other courses keep growing exponentially. The course transaction in their discipline areas takes place in English, where they have to deal with complex texts and are expected to write term papers and reports which require academic writing skills of a higher order.

### CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

As a teacher of EPC, I faced a number of challenges. The large class size made it difficult for me to focus on a process approach to writing and to provide individual attention to students struggling with English across the curriculum. I managed to do speaking and listening activities in my class through pair and group work, but reading and writing suffered. As part of the EPC course, students worked on a writing portfolio, in which they were encouraged to work on multiple drafts and engage in discussions and feedback. To make this more effective, I realized that I needed to adopt a different strategy as it became impossible for one teacher to work on multiple drafts of 50 students in a semester which is essentially only 14 weeks long. Adding to this, were the students' concerns relating to their other course assignments and reading texts.

My initial exploration began with a simple question arising from my classroom experience: "how can I help my students to read and write better and continue with a process writing approach despite the large class size?"

In order to address this problem, I experimented with peer mentoring for two semesters by engaging post graduate (PG) students to work closely with the UG students. While this worked to some extent, it became difficult to sustain primarily for two reasons. Firstly, PG students had demanding schedules which kept them

busy with assignments, dissertations, field work and internships. Secondly, they felt distanced from first year UG students and the interaction was hierarchy-driven and not a friendly space for peer support.

Based on the feedback received from the students, I tried to make changes in the interaction to make it more effective. In the third semester, I identified student volunteers from second year UG courses to do the mentoring. At this stage, the student volunteers were not selected on the basis of any specific criteria, nor were they briefed for this type of work. However, I had made the following observations based on the first three semesters of informal peer mentoring:

The pairing of second or third year UG students with first year UG students seemed to work better than with PG students as they have similar time tables. More importantly, there is better collaboration between the two due to a smaller age gap. Further, there is also a possibility of friendship and mutual learning as compared to a teacher-student relationship.

Pairing a second/third year UG student (mentor) with a group of first year students (who are transitioning from Hindi to English), belonging to the same discipline major, works better due to similar interests in terms of their subject content.

Initially, this peer mentoring needs to be part of EPC so that students begin to explore this way of learning. Gradually it needs to be a voluntary choice to encourage learner autonomy and to allow the peer mentoring space to evolve on its own.

Formalizing this form of peer mentoring may allow better monitoring, place a greater degree of accountability; incentivising this by giving the mentors a certificate, a short training and a token amount of money may be a way to strengthen this.

There is a need to explore what goes on in these peer learning sessions. What strategies do the students use? How do they negotiate this space for peer learning? What kind of support do they need to make their learning better?

In July 2017, after receiving feedback from the students, the university made the first formal attempt to explore this form of peer mentoring. Based on the experiences of the first three semesters, the university agreed to formalize this mentoring in the form of “Language Buddy Scheme”. This formalization has helped me immensely in my efforts to continue my questioning and learning about the peer mentoring model. It has even helped my own learning about the processes involved in reading and writing by engaging with questions around writing pedagogy and reading strategies. In this paper, I will report on the action

research project that was initiated to assess the “Language Buddy Scheme” launched in July 2017 at AUD and which has also contributed to my CPD.

### **ACTION RESEARCH AND CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD)**

Action research, also termed as Participatory Action Research (PAR), is an approach which is used for improving conditions and practices in a variety of professional spheres. The main aim of action research is to bring about a change in specific contexts. Meyer (2000), comments that the strength of action research lies in the fact that it is geared to find solutions to practical problems, and has the ability to empower practitioners, as it encourages them to engage with research and subsequent development or implementation activities.

Action research enables practitioners to seek ways in which they can improve classroom practices. To quote Koshy (2010),

Action research is a method used for improving practice. It involves action, evaluation, and critical reflection and—based on the evidence gathered—changes in practice are then implemented. It is participative and collaborative, situation and context specific, develops reflection based on interpretations made by the participants. It results in creation of knowledge through problem solving, if the solution to the problem leads to the improvement of practice. In action research, findings will emerge as action develops but these are not conclusive or absolute (p.1).

Action research generates knowledge based on enquiries carried out within specific and often practical contexts. It aims at creating situations to learn through action, which then leads to personal or professional development. Kemmis and McTaggart (2000) state that action research involves a spiral of self-reflective cycles of: planning a change, acting and observing the process and consequences of the change, reflecting on these processes and consequences and then replanning, acting and observing, reflecting and this goes on in a cyclic fashion.

Day and Sachs (2004) define Continuing Professional Development as “all the activities in which teachers engage during the course of a career which are designed to enhance their work” (p.3). Moreover, CPD can be employer driven (planned and designed to implement specific programmes to increase accountability), or profession-generated which focuses on more immediate, specific and localized concerns emerging from the teachers’ classroom situations (Bolam & McMahon, 2004). Fullan (2007) argues that professional learning has the potential to address teachers’ everyday working conditions, and can also have implications on more

generalizable standards of practice in the institution.

Drawing from the principles of action research and the features of CPD activities, I will attempt to demonstrate how an action research project can lead to deliberations on institutional practices and create opportunities for CPD. AUD took the initiative to offer a faculty development programme of 16 hours duration on reading strategies and writing pedagogy under the title “Practical Pedagogies”. These workshops were conducted by Dr. Ananya Dasgupta, a practitioner of CPD, who engages with questions of reading and writing in higher education—a domain which needs to be investigated by teachers across disciplines. As part of this CPD initiative, 14 teachers took part in these workshops (February to March 2017 and July to August 2017), where they shared ideas on task creation and elicitation strategies to engage students with texts, and gave feedback on writing drafts. My experiences in these workshops strongly influenced my own teaching of reading and writing, and preparing the student-mentors for the same.

While the initial exploration began with a simple question arising from my classroom experience, it led to an institutional level initiative to facilitate CPD activities. As pointed out earlier, CPD activities can be employer driven or profession-generated and these two do not necessarily oppose each other.

### **UNDERLYING THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS**

The idea of involving more-enabled peers for learning is drawn from Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theory. While the mentors working with first year students have better English language proficiency, they may also have something to learn from their peers (1st year students) who have ideas in another language. Vygotsky (1978) highlights the importance of “mediated activity” (p.1), in the development of higher psychological functions. Although he identifies both physical and psychological tools as mediational means, for him psychological tools, particularly language, are of primary concern (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). De Valenzuela (2006) writes that the main aspect of socio-cultural theory is its emphasis on social processes (rather than individual) as being primary in the development of higher mental functions. Vygotsky (1962) comments that it is not possible to separate development from its social and cultural contexts.

#### **Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)**

Vygotsky (1962) defined ZPD as “the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peer” (p. 86). In other words, ZPD describes the

current level of development of the learner as well as the next level attainable through mediational tools in the presence of a more capable adult or peer facilitation. It promotes the idea of learning together in collaboration, and that collaborative effort helps learners to learn new concepts and skills.

### **SCAFFOLDING AND ZPD**

Theorists and researchers claim that socio-cultural theory of the mind and the concept of ZPD form the basis of the idea of scaffolding (Berk, 2002; Wells, 1998). Lave and Wenger (1991) emphasize that ZPD views teacher/more-enabled peer and learner collaboration as a bilateral process which is different from the term “scaffolding”. It fails to capture a two-way interaction and refers to a one-way construction of scaffolding by the more-enabled peer/teacher (Daniels 2001). Stone (1998) argues that the metaphor of “scaffolding” may suggest that teacher-learner interaction is one-sided or adult-driven, and points out that a number of theorists have questioned it.

In this study, I found that the peer-mentoring model promotes a bilateral exchange of ideas and learning and is not one-sided in nature. The more-enabled peer (or mentor) has more English language proficiency but the peer learning space throws up opportunities for exchange of knowledge and ideas supporting a bilingual/multilingual atmosphere. Language learning happens as part of this exchange. The name “Language Buddy Scheme” reflects this idea that it aims at promoting bilateral exchange and learning by breaking hierarchies and power relations.

### **PHASES OF THE ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT**

#### **Preliminary Exploration (2015-2017)**

In this phase, I tried to experiment with peer mentoring informally by getting senior students to mentor first year undergraduate students. These experiments were followed by getting the mentors to reflect, collect feedback, and write reports for institutional level discussions to raise awareness.

#### **Formal Exploration through Action Research Project**

##### **a) Selection of Mentors**

In July 2017, AUD announced the “Language Buddy Scheme” in which second and third year UG students had to work collaboratively with first year UG students on reading and writing assignments. At this stage, new members joined the English language team at AUD and so I could work with two of my colleagues on this project. We received 75 applications

out of which 45 students were interviewed. Their English language skills, motivation, attitude towards language learning, experiences in learning English were taken into consideration in the interview process. Finally, 25 students were selected for the programme and they attended a one-week orientation programme in the last week of July 2017.

### **b) Preparation to take up Peer Mentoring**

An orientation programme was carried out which focused on understanding the participants' beliefs, assumptions and attitudes about learning English. Questions were also raised around language learning and the sensitivities involved in working on English language skills in a country such as India. Activities were conducted to discuss ways to break stereotypes and to celebrate multicultural environment.

The orientation also focused on discussions around reading and writing strategies in a workshop mode in which students reflected on their own writing assignments to explore writing skills and strategies. The sessions focused on grammar, error correction, giving feedback and the use of technology to facilitate independent learning. At the end of each day of the five-day orientation programme, participants filled a reflective grid which generated discussions and ideas for subsequent peer mentoring sessions.

The sessions were planned in a way which demonstrated what the student-mentors are expected to do in their peer mentoring. The sessions included activities, learning by doing, pair and group work, how to break the ice, and arriving at commonly agreed principles. All of this was expected to have direct implications on peer mentoring.

This orientation programme was a team effort and allowed us to reflect on our own expectations from our students and course objectives.

### **c) Planning Activities for the Semester**

After the orientation week, we planned activities for the upcoming semester (August-November 2017). Out of the 25 mentors, I worked closely with 10 mentors (second year UG students) and 40 first year UG students. Each mentor was assigned 4 mentees, preferably from their own major discipline. The mentors were expected to:

- work on writing a portfolio, which is an integral part of the EPC course;
- discuss reading texts and assignments from other courses;

- try to inculcate the habit of leisure reading, explain how to learn using smart phones, watch videos and movies together;
- screen movies and conduct language game sessions to bring students together and make language learning fun.

#### **d) Monitoring Progress throughout the Semester**

I monitored the peer mentoring sessions closely throughout the semester (July-November 2017). I used the following methods to collect data:

- the mentor and the mentees were asked to maintain a record of each session; students were encouraged to engage in reflective writing using a grid;
- informal discussions and interviews were held with both mentors and mentees;
- drafts of writing assignments as well as exam papers of the mentees were discussed;
- a questionnaire was designed to probe into the processes involved in the peer mentoring sessions;
- group meetings were held with mentors throughout the semester to collect feedback and engage in reflective conversations;
- a reflective journal was maintained to record my experience of working with students on writing a portfolio.

#### **DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND IMPLICATIONS**

The reflective grids, informal discussions and group meetings threw up interesting things for discussion. Some mentors found it challenging to engage in reflective writing, which led to verbal interactions and probing. The grids also highlighted other challenges faced by the mentors. For instance, some mentees were not regular or motivated and this had implications on their engagement in the classroom. We tried to explore different ways to motivate them.

In some cases, the mentors did not engage in discussions around writing assignments; instead it was more of “correcting” mistakes and returning the drafts. This led to discussions around how this strategy does not promote learning and thinking. Such mentors were encouraged to use strategies such as brainstorming, pre-writing, questioning, etc. This allowed me to reflect on how the dialogic nature of a discussion helps to create knowledge and hence promotes learning. This also allowed me to examine my own elicitation and questioning strategies.

In a few reading sessions, simple translation activity was carried out. This resulted in a discussion around translation as a strategy and how it should be used judiciously. This prompted me to reflect on the bilingual strategies that I use in my class. Some mentees felt that they now had a friend with whom they could discuss their language problems without feeling scared, self-conscious or ashamed. They added that the mentoring sessions had done much more than simply providing assistance with English; they had also helped them in dealing with the overwhelming challenges of university life. All of this gave me valuable insights into the problems faced by my students in the language classroom.

The drafts of the writing assignments were also an indicator of what kind of feedback transpired in these sessions. While some mentors asked open-ended, probing questions, a few others failed to do so. These mentors were asked to reflect on their strategies of giving feedback. I was also motivated to work on my strategies to give learner feedback. Writing portfolio grades and performance in writing tasks for summative exams had a positive correlation. Students who got high grades on writing portfolio did better in the writing task in the final exam than the ones who did poorly on the writing portfolio. This allowed me to work closely with students who had performed poorly in the writing task.

The questionnaire probed into the strategies used by the students during the mentoring sessions. Some of these strategies were as follows:

- Watching online videos/tutorials on a topic before reading a difficult text;
- Reading the title, sub-headings, topic sentences and key words before a detailed reading;
- Guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words using a range of strategies;
- Identifying sections of a text that need to be focused on for a writing task;
- Looking at the organization of paragraphs; reflecting on the main ideas and supporting details;
- Understanding the question given in the writing assignment by listing possible topics and sub-topics;
- Brainstorming for ideas first in Hindi, then writing them down using both Hindi and English and then working on a draft in English;
- Making a personal list of technical words with meanings in Hindi/English.

These strategies allowed me to reflect on the question of learner autonomy. When students are allowed to learn together, they explore interesting ways to learn. This has led me to make space in my course to promote independent learning

and learner autonomy by encouraging students to use technology to manage their learning.

This action research project on peer mentoring has led me to work on a course titled “Approaches and Theories of Language Learning”, for the final year UG students pursuing B.A. English. This course aims to introduce students to theories and approaches to language teaching and learning, and involve them in micro teaching situations where they can explore different pedagogic strategies. The students of this course will be expected to be involved in a practicum in which they will be part of the EPC course and classroom teaching. This will prepare them for school teaching as many of our UG students enter the school system after completing their degree. These students will also be a potential target group for professional courses aimed at training teachers in English Language Teaching (ELT). AUD is also planning to launch a three month certificate course on the teaching of English.

### CONCLUSIONS

While this action research project has thrown light on the peer mentoring initiative formalized by AUD, it has also led to my own professional development. It has allowed me to reflect on my teaching as well as identify my areas of improvement. On the one hand, peer mentoring has maximized peer support and promoted students from different socio-economic backgrounds to come together in a non-threatening space of mutual trust and respect. A lot of things explored in this project have informed my own classroom practices. It is clear that CPD is most effective when initiated by the teacher as motivation plays an important role. This project demonstrates how teacher-initiated action research can lead to interventions at the institutional level and enhance classroom practices emerging from on the spot evaluation and reflection.

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## Learn to Teach: A Shared Process

*Hema.V.Raghavan*

### ABSTRACT

A lot of debate is on among all the stake holders – students, teachers, parents, society at large and the government, to improve quality in Higher education. However, of primary importance is faculty training in new models of teaching and their endeavour to keep pace with the phenomenal knowledge explosion that is taking place all over the world. A teacher cannot be a teacher if she/he does not have the professional gene of a learner. In this article, I will explore the shared process of teaching and learning. I will also look at how one can keep pace with the knowledge explosion, improvise new pedagogy such as preparing lecture video capsules and train in wholesome learning through inter- disciplinary studies.

**Key Words:** CPD for college teachers, Research, Interdisciplinarity, Technology as an Empowering Tool in Pedagogic Practices

Almost all professions demand a minimum apprenticeship of one to two years to get hands-on training before the trainee graduates start their careers as professionals. The professional courses in medicine, law, accountancy and management, to name a few, mandate the graduate students to go through training programs to supplement their academic learning. These internship programs provide for all students, an opportunity to enhance their academic learning with field experience related to their career, in a variety of settings. A school teacher is also mandated to get practical training in a school as a part of the eligibility requirements to be a teacher. The only field that is out of this mandatory professional apprenticeship is teaching in a university or a college. In fact, to date, there is no pre-training programme available for university and college teachers.

The minimum eligibility requirement for college teaching, as laid out by the University Grants Commission (2018), is a high second class Master's degree in the required discipline and a pass in the National Eligibility Test (NET). Thus

the question arises: What is special about college teaching that it is exempt from any kind of prior training? Can we presume that rigorous academic learning for two years at the Master's level is enough to teach graduate students in colleges? Why does a school teacher have to go through a teacher training programme and not a college teacher? The simple and straight answer lies in the difference in the principles and methods of teaching, namely the pedagogy. The art and science of teaching school students is different from that of college students. In school, the emphasis is on making students learn facts and skills, while a college provides a learning environment where the student is required to think through and apply what she/he has learned. School teachers are therefore trained how to impart knowledge to students, and teach them the step-by-step process to arrive at a solution. Whether it is mathematics or science or language, it is the process that helps to answer the problems based on the prescribed texts. College teachers on the other hand do not follow any one textbook. In fact, even the prescribed literary texts are not read line by line in the class. Instead, teachers are expected to lecture on topics, provide background information on them, identify cross-disciplinary connections related to them, discuss available research on them, and finally it is the students who have to relate the lectures to the recommended reference books. College lectures are meant to be in capsule form, presenting in a summarized form the main points of the topics of discourse. College teachers expect students to do self-study, reflect on different viewpoints of the topic and synthesize them. Hence, college teachers must have adequate scholarship and expertise in the area they have specialized in at the Master's level. They do not follow a prescribed pedagogy; they formulate their own pedagogy to create in students a keen interest in the topics they lecture on, and leave ample scope for the students to think, analyze, deduce and reach a conclusion based on their reasoning. That is one of the reasons why college teaching does not insist on pre-training.

However, what college faculty is required to attend is post-job or on-the-job training, which goes by the name of Orientation and Refresher Courses. As per the guidelines for the Academic Staff Colleges prescribed by the UGC (2007-2012), promotions from one grade to another or for that matter any vertical professional movement requires the faculty member to attend a minimum of one orientation and two refresher courses. Further, the current UGC Regulations on Minimum Qualifications for Appointment of Teachers and Other Academic Staff in Universities and Colleges and Measures for the Maintenance of Standards in Higher Education (2018) even prescribe the number of lectures per week of specified duration, which have taken away the remaining sheen of creativity from these lectures. The UGC quantification of lectures has changed colleges into

schools, with their insistence upon attendance and textbook-based teaching that extends from morning till late afternoon. Also, the tutorials are neither challenging nor intellectual, but useful only for students' internal grades and to bolster the not too flattering marks they get in the semester-end examinations. The teachers suffer from professional ennui resulting from lack of intellectual challenge, mental stimulation and professional excitement; the students suffer from boredom, lethargy and lassitude of a passive mind. It is no surprise that higher education in India does not have a glorious record and is not even close to the top ranking universities and colleges in the world.

This brings us to the oft-repeated and seldom answered question as to how to improve the quality of education in our colleges and universities? The constant refrain we hear from teachers is that the quality of students has gone down, and that they come to the university just to get a paper degree. All they want is instant enjoyment with their belief in YOLO (you only live once). This complaint from the teachers who themselves belong to Gen X (early-to-mid 1960s to the early 1980s), is an attempt to pass the buck to the students, without acknowledging the fact that there is something wrong with the state of the teaching today. The tightening of the noose around the teachers' neck through UGC regimentation that equates the work of an academic with that of an office administrator by specifying the number of hours and classes per day overlooks both the role and the special needs of the college faculty. In this age of incredible knowledge explosion, the present day education does not give the time or the incentive to the lecturer to pursue research in his/her discipline. To keep up-to-date with new concepts, new thoughts, new ideas, discoveries and innovations is far more demanding than pushing files in an office. It is not that one form of work is superior to the other, but it is a fact that office work and academic work make unique and distinctive demands on one's time, cognition and responsibility.

A teacher is also a learner. Although this sounds clichéd, a good teacher is one who keeps learning, not only to gain expertise and the latest knowledge, but also how to impart it to students who are on the threshold of a new phase of learning. Things are changing rapidly and what is new today becomes obsolete tomorrow. This is the challenge faced by the college and university teachers today. Any academic worthy of being called an academic will not rest content with what she/he learnt as a graduate student. With the rapid advances in knowledge and the use of technology in learning and imparting knowledge, academics are under constant pressure to keep abreast with the latest developments in theories and concepts in their discipline, besides a technological approach to teaching. Raising the quality of education requires raising the intellectual caliber of teachers, both in colleges

and in universities. It is said that the last quarter of the previous century was a post-idea period, where our universities abdicated their primary responsibility of generating new ideas to meet the demands of a technology-driven society, with its extended reach through mobile phones, television and new modes of transport. As a result, old values have become suspect, and new values have not emerged to replace them. The new gadget-oriented generation, without sufficient knowledge of the advantages and disadvantages of technology, has fallen between the two schools of thought—the old and the new. Research and guidance in research are therefore even more essential at all stages of higher education.

If quality improvement is the goal, it can be bolstered by making research mandatory for all faculty members. This can be achieved by improving the infrastructure necessary for research and reducing the teaching hours currently stipulated at 14-16 hours per week to half the number, so that the teacher functions mainly as a catalyst and gives a capsule of what is to be taught. This will also encourage self-study in the students who will be forced to become independent thinkers and not just passive recipients of knowledge and information.

The teacher's role is three-in-one—that of a researcher, a learner and a teacher. There can be no distinction between a college teacher and a university teacher. At the moment there is a hierarchy not only in terms of professional opportunities of pursuing research but also in promotion avenues between teachers who teach in a college and those who teach in university departments. This bias is exacerbated by the practice of the former being rarely involved in decision making even about issues like syllabi that directly impact their lives. This bias against college teachers in the university academia has to be removed.

At the cost of being charged with indulging in personal reminiscence, I would like to cite the example of Gargi College, University of Delhi. I had the privilege and good fortune to preside over Gargi College that had a host of brilliant researchers in Physics and Chemistry, Humanities and Social Sciences. As a result of the research work undertaken by the faculty across almost all departments, UGC bestowed the distinction “College with a Potential for Excellence” on Gargi College. The college also got a special grant from UGC for its faculty to undertake research and community service projects. The Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science & Technology, Government of India awarded Gargi College the STAR College Grant. The college serves as an illustrious example of how research in colleges nourishes both intellectual and self development.

Another aspect that is of prime importance in CPD is to train teachers to prepare lectures that challenge and stimulate young minds so that they learn to question,

analyze, discuss and understand new perspectives to meet the changing world order. The lectures should be designed to give the students a broad exposure to knowledge. They should have the potential to pique the students' interest and galvanize them to think and learn through self study. To use the analogy of the spoon-feeding system followed in schools, higher education has to lay down the meals and make the students taste, choose and enjoy what they like and what suits their intellectual palate. Refresher courses for teachers should therefore pay special attention to training teachers to prepare capsule lectures that cover the entire course in a succinct manner.

With the availability of technology, teachers should also get training in preparing lecture video capsules with quality content and visual presentation. Lecture video capsules have three segments—delivering the lecture, writing on the smart board, and making a slide show. While the content of the lecture is based on academic knowledge which the teacher has to constantly upgrade, writing on the smart board and making the slide show is equally crucial in a lecture video. Hence the teacher must get training in these as well. Our faculty has to be trained in using the classroom lecture as the base and imaginatively creating a video presentation around it to make a video lecture capsule or at least using smart technology as smartly as possible to achieve a host of desirable pedagogical aims. Let me illustrate with examples. I had the good fortune of attending a lecture in the US by a Professor of Philosophy on Euthanasia. This was nearly twenty-two years back, when I had gone to Carnegie Mellon University to learn about leadership training. The professor spoke eloquently on the topic of Euthanasia and wrote the salient points on the board; he also showed a video clip of a man severely burnt in a car crash. This man was going through multiple painful surgeries and treatment, only to be told that he would be confined to a wheel chair permanently, and would have only partial sight in both his eyes. Thankfully, he had not suffered any brain damage. It was difficult for the man to start a new innings suffused with pain beyond threshold endurance, negligible vision and paralyzed movement. He asked for mercy killing. The video presented interviews with six people—the man, his wife, his son, his attending doctor, a priest, and a psychologist. The video interviews showed discussions on the right to take one's life, the doctor's dilemma, the priest's faith in divine dispensation, the psychologist's attempt to infuse positive thinking and the concerns of his wife and son. The professor ended the lecture and assigned a term paper for the students on euthanasia. He also wrote a list of reference books for consultation. The dramatic enactment of the euthanasia problem had an impact on the students and made them think about this medico-legal-religious issue. On another occasion, I had to deliver a lecture at

the University of Malaga on Beckett's mime, *Act Without Words I*. I used a series of eight cartoons featuring a cockroach trying to climb up a dustbin and being repulsed by a broom in every one of its three attempts. The last cartoon showed the cockroach lying flattened on the floor near the bin. I was astonished at the full throated response of the students to this visual stimulation; I had not spoken a word. The cartoon sketches did all the talking.

Technology has opened many new doors for education in a plethora of ways. The hope of 400 million students, seeking a bright future for themselves and for the nation cannot be realized through the existing colleges where the intake capacity is limited. Their future lies with digitization of education. Writing lessons is different from classroom teaching and requires a different orientation. Since this is a new pedagogy, it is of cardinal importance to train teachers in the art of writing digital lessons and using multimedia technology. Just as only the wearer knows where the shoe pinches, the writer alone knows where the difficulty arises in comprehension, and accordingly makes the necessary changes. Teachers need to develop the ability to see knowledge as a whole and not in compartments. They also need special training in digital lesson writing. Those who write for an Open University or for MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses) will testify that both teaching orally and teaching through writing demand clear, unambiguous, succinct and straightforward communication. The refresher courses must orient teachers to the twin dimensions of communication—oral and written—and give them training in writing as well as speaking.

The other major training required for a college teacher is that of inter-disciplinary teaching. Stand-alone courses are a thing of the past and integrative learning is not only the most valued today, but is also the need of the hour. Teachers therefore need to prepare for the new age students who prefer linked courses, team taught lectures, discussions and debates, and combo learning. In fact, they learn more from teachers who share their knowledge and perspectives from different points of view. For example, how can a 20th century post-Modern drama be taught without referring to the two World Wars, Existential Philosophy from Nietzsche to Camus to Sartre, the Grotesque and the *Commedia dell'arte* of the 16th-18th century, the Behaviorist Psychology of Skinner, and the Psychology of Jokes by Freud? The teacher has to hence draw references from History, Philosophy, Theatre, Arts and Psychology. Similarly, when we teach Modernism, it cannot be taught without a concerted reference to Literature, Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, Music and Dance. Also, Economics is closely allied to Mathematics, Statistics, Sociology and Political Ideology. This is equally true of sciences, where stand-alone science courses have given way to the inter weaving of Physical Sciences

with Biosciences. The best example of a research involving Computer Science, Engineering and Biological Science is the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Awardee for 2010, Dr. Sangamitra Mukhopadhyaya. She was bestowed this honour for her work on algorithmic optimization in biological data analysis involving pattern recognition using machine learning in large datasets. She has also identified a genetic marker for breast cancer, determined the co-occurrence of HIV and cancers, and helped understand the significance of the brain's white matter in Alzheimer's disease.

It is evident that the interdisciplinarity of teaching involving multiple disciplines adds a new dimension to the teaching-learning process. Therefore, teachers have to be trained to make cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary references. This can perhaps be done by giving them a three-to-six-week course on seminal books in the fields of Humanities, Sciences, Social Sciences and Arts can be discussed. These could be books that interweave different disciplines to give a wholesome perspective of great thoughts that transcend narrow stratification and categorization.

Since most universities and the affiliated colleges have shifted to the semester mode, every teacher must be mandated to take a year off after teaching for 10 semesters (five years). Alternately, they could take one semester off after nine semesters, to work on research papers/books for publication. This has to be treated as a part of the teaching workload so that it encourages the teachers to also be learners. It can also meet the rising problem of unemployment among eligible graduates seeking an academic job as they can get ad-hoc jobs that give them an exposure to teaching in colleges. Teachers should be given allowances for computer use and books so that they can access paid international journals and purchase the latest books on the subjects they teach.

Lastly, policy makers as well as the teachers must remember that no college is small or big, or qualitatively strong or weak. It is the teachers and the students who make a college what it is. The effort should therefore be on raising the bar and motivating the students to attend classes and writing assignments. The motto of the teachers should be "I learn, you learn, together we learn". In the pursuit of this motto, both the institution and all its stakeholders will gain credibility.

The suggestions related to CPD of tertiary teachers mentioned in this paper should not be dismissed as messianic utopianism. They are practical and implementable. As stated earlier, a lot of discussions are going on for reforming the higher education sector, but the more we contemplate the change, the more we are imprisoned within the status quo. However, we know that as human beings,

we are pessimistic by experience and optimistic by intuition. Not all is lost with higher education; the academic stars shine still.

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## Interview

### CPD for Teacher Empowerment

*Prachi Kalra in conversation with Professor Shobha Sinha*

*Dr Shobha Sinha, is Associate Professor in the Department of Education (CIE). She is a leading expert in the area of literacy and has been instrumental in shaping the emerging field of reading, and children struggling with reading and writing in Indian schools. Her other interests include multiculturalism in children's literature and assessment issues in language teaching. In this interview, she talks about how continuous development can be made truly empowering for school and university teachers.*

*Prachi Kalra (PK): Let me begin by formally thanking you for agreeing to talk to Fortell about Continuous Professional Development (CPD), and how it takes shape in both the school as well as the university context, and to see if there are connections between the two. Let me begin by asking you a very general question. How do you envision continuous professional development and what value do you see for it in the teaching profession?*

Shobha Sinha (SS): See, if you don't develop professionally, what happens in teaching? I mean, when we talk about the teaching profession, we are conscious that after a while staleness can come into your teaching. I always say to my students that the punishment that you have of poor teaching is right there—you can see it in the faces of your students. So there is really no choice, you have to develop professionally. The other thing is that in the field of education and pedagogy, or even a subject area that you are teaching [in], there is a lot of growth which you should know about and which you should contribute to. Otherwise you would be teaching yesterday's content and knowledge. So for very obvious reasons it is not a matter of choice, you really have to keep going with CPD.

But I just want to share a personal story with you. One of the areas I teach is a course in literacy, which I am absolutely passionately interested in. In spite of that, about 10 years back, one year I just felt that I don't even want to go to class and it's just repetitive and I said "My goodness! Is something wrong with me that I don't even care about class?" And then, just after that I went on

study leave where I was doing research on early literacy in Jharkhand. When I came back, and I had to start teaching again, I noticed that my class [dynamics] dramatically changed. There was a lot of energy and excitement in the class. There were things to talk about, and I was willing to listen much more. This is just a small example to show that if you really want to teach effectively, there is no choice about professional development.

*PK: My next question is that you have been a school teacher; you teach at the university now. You have taught courses in Literacy, in Reading and Writing. Do you feel that there is a difference between say teaching at the school level and teaching at the university level, and would you say that continuous professional development in both these contexts would therefore be different or should take a different shape?*

SS: The demands sometimes can be different. I mean, again for very obvious reasons, there are differences in the volume of teaching that you do in school and in college. [Also] how much responsibility the student takes and how much responsibility you take, those things differ. But I don't think that we differ very much in terms of the need to keep up with the development of ideas or the need for freshness of ideas. I think CPD is equally important for both the fields.

*PK: Talking about freshness of ideas, how do you think CPD could engage with that? Very often, when we talk about CPD, it takes the form of training, inviting experts and then training teachers. Do you think that that's a very good way of looking at CPD? What could be other ways of bringing in freshness of ideas, of empowering teachers, giving them the ability to look at their own classrooms and learn from that?*

SS: See when you started interviewing me, I wanted to tell you, that the most important question is just how much do we understand the nature of our profession itself. We may understand it from our own experiences, but how much is it a part of the discourse? If you understand the nature of the profession, there are many things you will understand. What does the teaching hour mean? During that one hour, you might be teaching or you might be engaged in some serious intellectual conversation. So there are many aspects of the teaching hour. It's only when you teach, that you really understand how staleness comes in when you look at the teaching hour only in one way. I don't know if we have done enough of a job to make people and the bureaucracy understand this. At one level, we protest against rules and notifications, but at another level we just go along instead of really questioning bureaucratic perceptions of teaching.

I'll give an example from our own profession. For example, as teacher educators we make school visits to observe students. That's also a form of teaching. It's just that you are not giving a lecture, but you are sitting at the back of the classroom and observing student-teachers teach. Now you have done it, so you do realise that when you go and observe a certain number of students, it's a very draining experience; and we keep on doing it year after year. Now if you understood the nature of the teaching profession, you would realize that it is very important to give a break in between and then to go back refreshed. If you don't, you destroy the teacher; you destroy the programme and most importantly hurt the students. So the growth and the well-being of the teacher is very important because your programme is only as good as that. You can't worry about students independently of worrying about teachers. I think we lack in our concern for teachers.

Also, empowerment is not something which we can offer to someone on a platter. You can just create an enabling environment. A few years back, I had gone for a training programme where people did care about it [creating an enabling environment], but the policies were very top-down. The organizers wanted us to train teachers in early language and literacy in three days. I have taught that for years and, tell me, what do you achieve in three days? I find this whole cramming thing very problematic. Just because all the topics have been covered, does not mean everyone has understood.

The other thing is, why aren't we asking the teachers about their point of view, their learning? Do they have something to share? And it's the same with refresher courses. Even if it's a good programme for three weeks, we could envision it differently so that there is empowerment and people bring their own ideas to share. It should be interactive in nature, more of a dialogue. Of course, we can invite experts, but the need should be dictated by teachers, not top down. Let me tell you a funny incident. At a three-day CPD programme, where from morning to evening somebody came and talked about something or the other, a colleague kept writing furiously. So, I asked her, "What were you taking notes about?" She said, "You know I have finally caught up with all the letters that I had to write to relatives!" So something in me just rebels at the thought of people coming in and just dictating things to you.

I am not saying that all of us can't learn; and, that's another aspect of the teacher which is very important, that you should be willing to learn, but I think that at some point we should start talking about an enabling context for CPD. Development doesn't take place in three weeks, [or] three days, it happens only through [a] dialogue. Have a dialogue! Teachers should be on the panel, talking about their experiences. One thing that I have been recommending at different

forums is that there should be a research component in each college, research not to get 10 or 15 points for publishing, but to engage with ideas and to talk to other scholars. It is in the corridors when you regroup while having coffee, when you talk about a book you might have read, that dialogue happens. But, first of all, you should have that book to read! There should be an inclination and availability and mingling, and an environment where you can talk about it.

*PK: So, taking off from there, would you say that one very important aspect of CPD might be enabling teachers to form their own professional networks. All CPD seems to happen in the form of 'top-down' training modules, as you said, which happen sporadically over a certain number of days and then we are done with them. How do you think teacher networks can be built, where teachers can support each other and engage either in doing collaborative research together or in getting together and discussing issues that they feel concerned about?*

SS: See, there are again two sides to it. You might have been teaching for a long time, there have been many developments in your field, so I am not saying that you don't have new things to learn. But I object just to the fixed structuring of that. With new ideas, initially, there is a lot of resistance. Unless you are willing to listen and talk about the different ideas, you will not learn. Teachers also need to be open to new ideas. It needs to be a true dialogue and not a fake one. Again, whatever CPD model you choose, don't try to do everything, as a banking model of teaching. You could talk about one point, and let people try it out and come back and discuss what happened when they tried to implement it, and critique it. Then there is much more investment in that CPD programme. Otherwise, you can get a lot of resistance. Just because teachers were physically present over there and nodded their heads doesn't lead to continuous professional development.

Empowerment has to be enabled, there has to be a dialogue; and, you're right, we do not have strong enough networks. When we do organize conferences for CPD at the university level, we just drain our energy in figuring out all the details, from the quality of the academic papers, to thinking about what kind of food you are going to order, to every other practical thing. And that is quite draining! In the US, for example, professional networks are very strong and I know that it's unfair to compare our country to theirs, but we can take some lessons from them. Their organizational networks are fairly big and they have funding for conferences, and arrangements are made so that you are not dealing with all the details, but only with the academic part. Here, it has all become very mechanical, if you ask me. So, I think that networks need to be strengthened so that members have space to go and discuss things. That kind of dialogue among teachers is very important where you can just meet to talk about your difficulties, or even know that others

are in the same boat.

*PK: Since I am a university teacher, I know that most of my colleagues in the other departments do not really come with an understanding of pedagogy and that's the way it is at the university level. What could be some important elements of CPD that need to be addressed for teachers at the university level?*

SS: This point is very valid I think, because teaching is teaching, no matter at what level you are doing it. However, in education, while we do talk about pedagogy and assessment, but when it comes to applying it to our students fully, we are unable to do it. During our moderation meetings, I remember, one faculty had given six assignments for 15 points. So if you have 15 points for your internal assessment out of a fifty-mark paper, (remember the student has way more papers), and yours is just a part of it. Because we like to be a busy department, we like to give a lot of assignments, but that is totally against the whole principle of assessment. Merely knowing about assessment doesn't mean it translates into your teaching.

However, as far as other departments are concerned, I think your point is very valid. There should be discussions on assessment and pedagogy. What form it should take, I really don't know. Like other countries, for example, we need to have a course on composition. So, for instance, you might have a refresher course on teaching clarity in writing, instead of a refresher course where you are being refreshed with almost everything! A more focused course where a group meets to discuss about teaching and then reads certain things together and talks about them; maybe that could work. I remember when I was a beginning faculty in the US, we used to have a lunch meeting once every week about different aspects of undergraduate teaching. Sometimes, you might have very rebellious undergraduates and you may not be sure how to assess them or how they might respond to their assessment. So, we would talk about that or about what we could read, but it [the meeting] grew out of our needs. Throughout the term we had these meetings and we could mention them in our annual report. We had the freedom to talk, sometimes even complain, but we also actually learnt from each other and also from students. I think that every model doesn't have to be very rigid. As I said, corridors are the best places for growth.

*PK: One thing that I feel is very important at the university level now, is the ability of the teachers to understand the diversity in their classrooms. So, do you think that there is some way CPD could address this issue?*

SS: That is very important, but again if you had, let's say, a three-day workshop and somebody came and told you about [its] various components, would it help?

See, one thing is just acknowledging a field of study and getting some terms which you can glibly use, and it is completely another thing to transform your pedagogy. If you want to focus more on impact, then again it has to be more interactive, it has to be spread over time. And it does not need to be very focused or intense. Maybe you can meet over two days and talk about ideas, read together, but I think it needs to be a little bit spread out to sink in.

And I think the point you raise is very valid, because when I started teaching in CIE, many a times in my tutorial class or in my school visits, I would have visually-challenged students and I really didn't know exactly what to do. I needed a more in-depth understanding of those issues, but also about various kinds of diversities that you have in your classroom and how you deal with them to develop that level of sensitivity. I think that applies to all departments; they should be thinking and talking about diversity; there should be an environment for it. Of course, we must have access to lectures and scholars coming in, and they are important, but training courses or workshops are often just so spread out and ritualistic. I do have a problem with them because people attend them for commercial purposes and that should not be the spirit.

*PK: Do you think it's a good idea for, say the Department of Education and its various pedagogy experts to have that kind of synergy with the other departments at the university and therefore to form an exchange where pedagogical ideas get addressed and then feed into classroom teaching? Do you think that is a feasible idea?*

SS: Can the other departments accept that? I'm not sure. But I think the first challenge is to understand that there is much more to classroom teaching than just going in and delivering the lecture. So, those are the things that we need to think about. As I said earlier, just knowing about pedagogical topics doesn't mean that we do implement them in our classrooms. I gave you that example of assessment. But the awareness that there are lots of issues to think about, I think that is very important. Teacher empowerment is not just a nice fashionable word to use, because teachers can have their own ways of resistance, and in a way I sympathize with that because of the way teachers get treated. But if the need for learning new ideas comes more from within and there is more dialogue, it's not as if we can't share materials and ideas. And it's not like the Department of Education alone has experts.

*PK: Ok, one last question! This is a question that is close to my heart. I have, in my readings, come across what are called 'Reading Experts', especially in the US, through the continuous professional development that they have. So, teachers*

*who become Reading Experts very often work more with struggling readers and writers in schools, and are seen as reading specialists. Do you think that that is something that we could learn from [the US] and develop further?*

SS: First of all do we even recognize “reading” as an area of expertise? Actually, in the Master’s programme in the US, Reading Specialists study a certain number of courses to become that. It is not as simple as a few hours of CPD. I recall that teachers used to come back to the university to take a full course. Like I remember once I taught a course in the Foundations of Reading and there were many teachers who had years of experience and they took the full course. I think that is more effective than taking a three-day workshop on reading. It’s so counter-intuitive to people. Whatever professional development we do, we should do it with a more sustained engagement. Another thing I want to say is that no development can take place without real space and real time. That enabling context—we really need to think about that. And we are very careless about protecting our time.

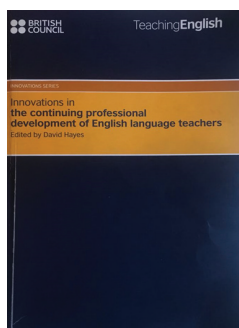
One more thing now I will say without you asking. I had read about a leading college in Delhi University, and there was this scathing piece by the Principal where he gave this caricature of a university professor who dashes off to this conference and then to another and writes a paper and isn’t worried about the students. Let me tell you, that without your own growth and learning and also, being in the position to produce knowledge, you are not going to be a very good teacher. What spaces are we providing for that? For instance, if you are teaching English, let’s say in school, and you never get a chance to read a book, how effective are you going to be? Maybe you won’t teach that very book. And so it’s tough to put your finger on it. I might read a book for another purpose and because I really enjoyed it, I might use it for teaching “Marginalization”. If I hadn’t read it I couldn’t have used it. So, to be on the cutting edge of research and knowledge-building, you have to actually engage with new ideas and you can’t do that without having the time for it. Especially for us teachers, we need to realize that space and time need to be protected.

*PK: Thank you very much Professor Sinha for sparing your valuable time for this conversation and sharing your views on this significant area of CPD for teachers.*

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## Book Reviews



### **Innovations in the Continuing Professional Development of English language teachers**

Hayes, David (Ed.). (2014). *Innovations in the Continuing Professional Development of English language teachers*. London: British Council (316 pages)

ISBN 978-0-86355-741-5

*Reviewed by Chhaya Sawhney*

All practicing teachers experience Continuing Professional Development (CPD) training in some form or the other during their teaching careers. While CPD programmes aim to make teachers reflective about their practice and help them develop both professionally and personally, stories of dissatisfaction can often be heard. What does it take to make CPD effective? The book, *Innovations in the Continuing Professional Development of English Language Teachers*, edited by an experienced teacher trainer David Hayes, digs deep into the world of CPD. A collection of thirteen articles offer a glimpse into the nature and scope of CPD innovations and changes from diverse educational and geographical contexts. Besides recognizing the teacher as “the central stakeholder in all CPD” (p.24) with their own agency, these CPD accounts reflect the need to involve all the stakeholders who “might man the travel desk” (p.7) in a teacher’s CPD journey. The articles also offer insights into particular ways in which ICT and technology can benefit teachers. A key learning that emerges is that the informal aspects of CPD also help teachers develop and hence impact student achievement. For instance, sharing resources and videos of classrooms, mentoring and supporting each other through examples of practice can set lifelong learning into motion.

Two studies from India indicate how in-service English language teacher education projects across different states adopted common design features with top-down and bottom-up synergy to bring about micro innovations in CPD framework. These included going beyond traditional face-to-face training, to including activities, such as reflecting, self-evaluating, action research, and peer coaching. In addition, Teaching English Radio programs weekly broadcast supported teachers functioning in poor-resourced classrooms with linguistically challenging books. In Uzbekistan, experienced teachers and project participants

were successful in bringing about a gradual incremental curriculum reform in 18 pre-service institutes. In these institutes, project work, portfolios, action research and discussions replaced dated teaching methodology and assessment techniques, bringing about a change in “CPD attitude” (p. 57) and commitment to career long professional development. In Australia, collaborative action research as a form of CPD led to innovations in practice as teachers connected deeply to their students’ needs, and helped them to acquire self-study skills and improve their writing abilities. In this case, the combination of what Schon (1983) calls “reflection-in-practice” (thinking-while-doing) and “reflection-on-practice” (after-the-event-thinking) was the catalyst for the teachers’ growth. Skype calls, wiki and mails helped them stay connected to share resources and reflections. Senior teachers in Brazil at a private institute took ownership of the teaching learning process and moved away from “one-size-fits-all” prescriptive form of CPD towards teacher-centered projects. They launched weekly workshops, peer mentoring, mini courses for novice teachers and opportunities for blogging and presenting at a seminar, thereby building their capacity and agency. The introduction of voluntary teacher research as a mode of inquiry in overcrowded classrooms; and in Ethiopia and Afghanistan, the changing attitudes of the key gatekeepers in self-access centers proved that “innovation depends on people and not things” (p.10).

The two chapters by Russell Stannard and Savraj Matharau are the highlight of this book as they help to establish the transformative power of unconventional approach to CPD through technology-enabled open learning. These chapters talk about the free, open-access teacher training videos ([www.teachertrainingvideos.com](http://www.teachertrainingvideos.com)) first introduced in 2006, which offer tutorials on using technology and tools in education. Further, the creation of multimedia training courses ([www.multimediatrainingvideos.com](http://www.multimediatrainingvideos.com)) by using screen capturing/casting as an effective learning tool at WestMinster University for “flipped” classes, has resulted in a fine balance between the oral and visual mediums. This resonates with Mayer’s (2001) work on multimedia learning as an option to reduce the cognitive load of learning.

The use of technology was also adopted in Greece for developing communities of practice (CoPs). This resulted in closer cooperation between teachers and allowed them to respond to each other more effectively. Similarly, the delivery of online CPD modules to teachers in Oman for international certification led to collaboration and training of teachers with videos on low-cost mobile phones in Bangladesh. Teacher educators and officials in South Korea also pursued CPD to improve their effectiveness and prepare them for future education in a rapidly changing society. An analysis of the impact of CPD programmes in Bulgaria after 12 years reflected a change in the pedagogic beliefs of teacher trainers,

besides helping them develop a professional identity. This study establishes the fact that “innovation needs time” (p. 147), and that it is possible to sustain CPD activities provided all the teachers are in it together and have the support of the stakeholders.

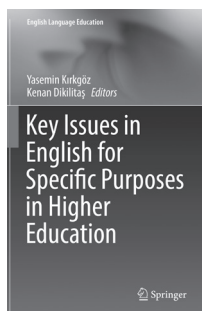
This is a book with a global perspective and is highly recommended for all the stakeholders involved in CPD. It shows that CPD can take many forms and as evidence suggests, the most popular forms of CPD include “sharing practice” (Boyle et al., 2005) and “reflective practice for professional development” (Farrell, 2007). However, there is a need to move beyond the traditional confines of CPD in the form of face-to-face training to include non-training forms of CPD. In this, technology can play a greater role than ever before to create global communities of practice that are collaborative, promote shared inquiry and help in bringing about organic change that is most suited to each context.

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## Key issues in English for specific purposes in higher education

Kirkgoz, Yasemin, & Dikilitas, Kenan (Eds.) (2018). *Key issues in English for specific purposes in higher education*. Switzerland: Springer. (353 pages)

ISBN 978-3-319-70213-1

*Reviewed by Jaspal Singh*

Increasing globalization and the widespread acceptance of English as the lingua franca of international politics, business and technology have led higher education institutions in many non-English speaking parts of the world to embrace English as the medium of instruction (EMI). Since language use in any domain is characterized by its distinctive vocabulary, genre, register and discourse, there has been a corresponding growth in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses to equip learners with the English they need to function in their particular context. However, there are concerns regarding the state of ESP instruction—the quality of the programmes on offer, their implementation, the availability of suitable materials, teacher competence, etc.

The volume under review is a collection of eighteen essays on key issues and challenges in ESP. The three dozen contributors are drawn primarily from the fields of applied linguistics, ELT, foreign languages, teacher training and the education departments of universities from around ten countries, mostly European. Over a third of them, including the two editors, are based in Turkey. Many of the essays in the volume are small scale research studies based on the surveys of students and teachers. Some contributors have described their approach and experiences in dealing with particular challenges and elaborate how these can be of use in other settings. The essays have been divided into four sections.

Section I has four essays on “Materials design and development in ESP”. On the basis of their interviews with seventeen ESP/EAP (English for Academic Purposes) teachers at two Spanish universities, Basturkmen and Bocanegra-Valle conclude that ESP courses need to focus on specialist vocabulary and discourse features of language use in the specific discipline, and incorporate authentic texts and tasks. Stoller and Robinson demonstrate how this has been done in their ESP course for chemistry students at Northern Arizona University, USA. Quero and Coxhead, through their work on the undergraduate “English for Medical Purposes” course at Spanish medium universities in Venezuela, use a corpus-based approach

to show how high frequency discipline-specific word lists can be incorporated in ESP courses. Using the same approach, Farhady et al. discover—contrary to common perception—a significant commonality of grammatical structures across a broad range of disciplines, at least in the initial stages of ESP instruction. This leads them to propose a list of sixteen structures that can be introduced at the start of these courses.

The contributors in the second section of this volume are concerned with the low profile of ESP teachers in academia (since ESP is seen as merely serving other subjects), the absence of avenues for their professional development, and the challenge posed by their lack of in-depth knowledge of the disciplines their students belong to. The contributors suggest collaboration with the subject teachers as a way to redress some of these problems. Norton advocates an approach called “Lesson Study” while Stewart recommends a model titled “Collaborative Interdisciplinary Team Teaching” to facilitate such collaboration. Mede et al., on the basis of their research on a Civil Aviation Cabin Services programme of a private university in Turkey, emphasize that ESP teachers should be given professional knowledge through training programmes.

Er and Kirkgoz, in the first essay in the next section of the book titled “Curricular Issues in ESP”, also advocate continuous teacher education to deal with the lack of subject matter expertise which is a major challenge for ESP instructors teaching the “Aviation English for Cadets” course at the Turkish Air Force Academy. Through their own experiments in two Japanese universities, Fujimoto-Adamson and Adamson describe how teachers have negotiated government policies that promote EMI in universities in ways that are practically aligned with the realities of student and teacher language proficiencies through the use of “translanguaging”. Translanguaging involves the use of two languages (in their case, English and Japanese) in pedagogic contexts. A survey of ESP courses at two state run universities in Turkey and Latvia, leads Celik et al. to the dismal conclusion that little more than basic English instruction is being delivered in these settings.

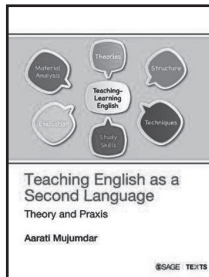
In the final section of the volume—“ESP, CLIL & EMI”—the opening essay by O’Dwyer and Atli similarly casts doubts on the EMI policy in Turkey because the authors find teacher training, curriculum development, course delivery and assessment in Turkish universities to be riddled with problems. On a different note, Dearden disputes the view that EMI has made English language teachers redundant. She contends that these teachers are needed for the successful delivery of EMI because they can support students with EAP and ESP, monitor and communicate students’ language levels to EMI academics, provide language

support to these subject specialists and share interactive pedagogy skills with them. The volume concludes with Staub's essay, in which he asserts that the crowding of the marketplace of EMI higher education has made quality assurance of EAP programs a necessity. He also demonstrates how a reduced structure of the widely accepted Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA) can be used for the evaluation of an EAP program.

This volume has much to offer, not just to ESP practitioners but also to teachers of general English in India. In fact, we can readily identify with many of the problems highlighted by the contributors in ESP settings in places such as Turkey – poor institutional planning and management, overcrowded classrooms, students' lack of basic English skills, mixed ability classes, lack of appropriate materials, inadequate teacher training etc. The introduction of papers such as "Academic Writing", "Business Communication" and "Technical Writing" at the undergraduate level in general degree programmes in our universities shows the influence of ESP. However, this volume leads us to reflect that much needs to be done in the area of course design, material development and teacher training if our ESP courses are to do justice to their names.

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## Teaching English as a Second Language: Theory and Praxis

Mujumdar, Aarati (2017). *Teaching English as a Second Language: Theory and Praxis*. New Delhi: Sage. (Rs 350/-)

ISBN 978-93-864-4661-9

*Reviewed by Kalyanee Rajan*

The discourse surrounding English Language Teaching has been evolving by leaps and bounds in the last several decades—from English as a foreign language, English as a second language, English as Lingua Franca to teaching English for various specific purposes including academia, corporate training, soft skills, general communication, and so on. It is with a critical eye therefore, that one approaches a new addition to the corpus titled “Teaching English as a Second Language: Theory and Praxis”. For such an endeavour to succeed, the challenge will be to strike a balance between existing scholarship and fresh insights into the evolving ramifications of the aspects being examined. With over thirty years of teaching experience behind her, Aarati Mujumdar takes the challenge head on and strives to share her personal experience of teaching English to students spread across India and Muscat, where she is currently based.

Speaking about her motivation for writing this book, Mujumdar writes in the Preface how she was perplexed by the contrasting responses she received from different students in the same class in Nasik, Maharashtra. Comprehension dawned some time later, when as an MPhil student at the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, she learnt “why language behaviour was differential among students though input remained the same”. This prompted her foray into analysing what she calls “numerous socio-economic and intellectual factors”, and the “different way of processing information” that is unique to every student. Mujumdar spreads the fare lavishly; the book is divided into five broad sections and fourteen chapters therein.

The first section titled “Theoretical Underpinnings” includes three foundational chapters which survey English in the world and India, methods and approaches employed, and the basics of language learning. Mujumdar offers an exhaustive discussion on various critical views regarding L1 and L2 acquisition, including the Behaviourist view, the Mentalist theory of SLA and the social and Interactionist theories of SLA. The second section titled “Elements of Language” presents the features of language such as Phonology and Morphology, with liberal use of apt

examples. The third section titled “Instructional Practices” should interest teachers greatly, as it delves in detail into classroom practices, and focuses on developing the four pillars of language acquisition LSRW (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing) as well as Grammar, Vocabulary and Study skills. It is in this third section that Mujumdar traverses familiar territory, and by means of some very useful, practical examples drawn from her own teaching experience, Mujumdar provides ready reckoners and solutions to tackle the tricky terrains of developing LSRW-GVS skills. It is remarkable that Mujumdar also covers the burning issue of plagiarism in the chapter on study skills, thereby mapping the discourse in its entirety.

The last two sections titled “Evaluation” and “Classroom Resources” are somewhat shorter than expected, given the large amount of space accorded to the third section, and also given that the field of evaluation and assessment is being held to sustained development and rethinking in the current pedagogical discourse. Overall, though some of the research and insights employed in the first and second sections may sound somewhat dated, teachers of English can benefit from the application-based examples and questions provided within each chapter. The first two units would benefit mainly researchers working in the field of ELT. The book is amply supplemented by an exhaustive bibliography and a useful index at the end. The book would have benefitted from better typesetting and a more user-friendly layout; the dark monochrome pictures take away the dynamism of many prescribed activities. The unimaginative book cover also does not compliment the significant area under study. With the volume hitting a whopping 350 plus pages, one is left wishing for a more interactive (perhaps accompanied by audio-visual material) and attractive edition which would do better justice to the author’s erudition and enriching insights.

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## Language Activities

### Pronunciation Activities

*Shruti Pal*

Pronunciation is an often overlooked aspect in language learning as it is not considered to be significant enough. This may be true to a certain extent, but minor variations in the pronunciation of certain sounds may change the entire meaning of a word, thereby hampering communication. This is especially evident in the case of minimal pairs. Given here are a few language activities that require very little preparation and that can be easily conducted in the classroom to help learners distinguish between various sounds.

The examples in the activities mostly have fricative sounds as learners in Indian classrooms tend to make more mistakes in the pronunciation of fricatives. The activities can be easily adapted to another sound by changing the word base.

#### General Objectives

To enable learners to:

1. Enhance their pronunciation skills;
2. Overcome certain common pronunciation-related errors that occur due to the impact of their mother tongue;
3. Differentiate between similar sounds and develop an understanding of sound contrasts;
4. Understand certain sounds which are not a part of their mother tongue sound system;
5. Practice and develop their pronunciation skills.

#### ACTIVITY ONE: HOPPING SOUNDS

Level: Beginner

Time required: 10-15 minutes

Material required: Phonic cards

Student group size: Entire class

#### Methodology:

- Select two sounds that you want to practice in the class; for example, the initial sounds in the words 'ship' and 'sip'.

- Cut out a pair of cards for each learner that is big enough to be tied to their shoes. Write one sound on each card. Help the learners tie or paste the cards on their shoes. You could attach the 'sh' card on the right foot and the 's' card on the left foot of each learner.
- Discuss the two sounds using different words. Ask the learners to identify the sounds by lifting the foot which has the corresponding sound attached to it.
- Start the activity. Call out a word and ask the learners to analyse the sounds in that word. If the word contains any of the sounds on the card tied to their shoe, they have to hop on that foot.
- Multiple sounds or words with multiple target sounds can be used to increase the difficulty level of the activity.
- Target sounds: /s/, /z/, /ch/, /dz/, /sh/, /j/
- Sample Words:

Zoo	Shirt	Vision	Sip	Jug	Chips
Zero	Bush	Measure	Cast	Jam	Chair
Music	Shop	Treasure	Caps	Jar	Cheese
Puzzle	Ocean	Casual	Silly	Cage	Chest
Desert	Show	Decision	Soap	Adjust	Inch
Cousin	Cushion	Division	Cinema	Badge	Beach
Laser	Fresh	Explosion	Books	Joker	Lunch
Bees	Shine	Television	Safe	Juice	Chase
Prize	Punish	Pleasure	Bus	Age	Speech

### ACTIVITY TWO: FINDING PATTERNS

Level: Beginner

Time required: 15 minutes

Material required: Worksheet/Blackboard

Student group size: Entire class

#### Methodology:

- You may ask the learners to work individually or in pairs.
- Explain the task before distributing the worksheet to the learners.

- Write the following example on the blackboard: Sip : Seep :: Sit : ? Answer: Seat
- Ask the learners to analyse the first pair of words in the example by identifying the difference in the /i/sounds of the two. This pair demonstrates short and long variations of the /i/ sound. Guide the learners if they are facing a problem.
- Ask the learners to make the same change to the word of the second set to complete the set and form an analogy. In this example they will have to change the short /i/ in the word 'sit', to a long /i/ and form the word "seat".
- Take up more such examples if needed.
- Learners must be encouraged to speak the words aloud to understand how they sound.
- Distribute the worksheet and sort out the problems individually with the learners.

### Sound Analogy worksheet

Identify the sound relation between the first two words. Follow the same sound pattern to complete the second pair of words.

- |                                 |                                 |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| a. Bat: Bait :: Pant: _____     | i. Beg : Bug :: Bed : _____     |
| b. Race: Rice :: Bake : _____   | j. Hat : Hut :: _____ : Cub     |
| c. Near : Knee :: _____ : Bee   | k. Fit : Feet :: Hit : _____    |
| d. Boy : Buy :: Toy : _____     | l. Man : Mine :: Back : _____   |
| e. Cat : Cart :: Pack : _____   | m. Sheep : Ship :: _____ : Pick |
| f. Oil : All :: _____ : Ball    | n. Tin : Ten :: _____ : Pen     |
| g. Soil : Seal :: Noise : _____ | o. Mad : Maid :: Plan : _____   |
| h. Bat : Bite :: Cat : _____    | p. Hat :Heart :: _____ : March  |

Answers to the worksheet:

- |          |          |         |          |
|----------|----------|---------|----------|
| a. Paint | e. Park  | i. Bud  | m. Peak  |
| b. Bike  | f. Boil  | j. Cab  | n. Pin   |
| c. Bear  | g. Knees | k. Heat | o. Plain |
| d. Tie   | h. Kite  | l. Bike | p. Match |

### ACTIVITY THREE: CROCODILE RIVER

Level: Intermediate

Time required: 30 minutes

Material required: Coloured chalk to draw the game and sound cards.

Student group size: Between 6-8 students at a time

#### Methodology:

- Target sounds: /s/, /sh/, /z/, /dz/. Write the target sounds on small chits or cards. Make multiple cards for each sound, mix all the chits well and put them in a bowl.
- Draw the game on the floor using chalk. Draw two parallel lines 10-15 feet apart. These represent the banks of a river. Randomly chalk out stones that will help the learners cross from one side of the river to the other.
- Write words corresponding to the selected target sound on the chalked stones. Each stone should have only one word. You may include a few distracters to increase the difficulty level.

For example:



- Put the sound cards' bowl on one of the two banks.
- Ask one or two students to play the role of the crocodiles. They have to stand in the middle of the river.
- The objective of the game is to cross the river. Learners have to pick out a sound card from the bowl and read it aloud to recognise the sound they have

- picked. They have to then cross the river by stepping on the stones which have the word containing the sound written on their sound card.
- For example, if a learner picks up the /sh/ sound, he/she has to cross the river from one bank to the other by stepping on the stones that have words with the /sh/ sound.
  - If a person steps on the wrong stone, the crocodile has to catch them. The learner who gets caught then becomes the crocodile.
  - Sample Words:  
 /s/: soap, sister, case, cast, cups, juice, pants, bus, office, horse,  
 /sh/: shape, shirt, chef, shy, tissue, dish, lotion, ocean, polish, fresh  
 /z/: easy, cosy, nose, zebra, zipper, dogs, music, bees, cheese, rose  
 /j/: germs, jeans, cage, magic, age, bridge, jump, joke, page, subject  
 Distracters: cup, book, touch, Asia, chair azure, measure, vision, usual,

#### ACTIVITY FOUR: CHINESE WHISPERS

Level: Beginner-Intermediate

Time required: 15 minutes

Material required: None

Student group size: 10-15 students in a group

##### Methodology:

- This game is based on the lines of the traditional game of Chinese Whispers.
- Explain the rules of Chinese Whispers to the learners and then explain the modification that needs to be made for this game.
- The teacher has to whisper a word to the first student. The student has to change any one sound in that word to make a new word and whisper it to the next student. For example, in the following chain of words, the sounds that can be changed to form new words have been underlined.
- Example: ship – sip – sit – knit – nib – bib – bob – mob – moth – math, etc.
- The game continues in this manner until all learners get a turn. The last student calls out the word aloud.
- The teacher traces the changes that the learners have made. (certain words may be repeated)

### ACTIVITY FIVE: WORD SNAKES AND LADDERS

Level: Intermediate-Advanced

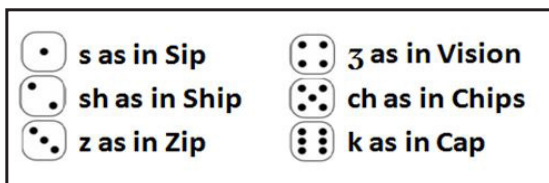
Time required: 30 minutes

Material required: For each group - Customized game board, dice, and game men.

Student group size: Four- six students in a group

#### Methodology:

- Ask the learners to sit in groups which are convenient as per the class size.
- Revise the target sounds using a few examples. Ask the learners to identify words containing particular sounds. For example: Ask them to identify words that contain the /ch/ sound.
- Explain the game before distributing the game boards to the learners.
- Show to the class, the modified Snake and Ladders board game. Each of the words on the board have a few underlined alphabets that correspond to a sound in the word. Highlight that only six types of sounds have been underlined. Using a few examples, demonstrate that the sound may be at the start, middle or end of a word.
- Explain the dice and the sound key. Each number on the dice represents a sound that the words on the board contain.



- Learners have to roll the dice, identify the sound on the top face of the dice and move to the next word containing that sound. Ask them to pronounce the words aloud to do so.

For example: If the dice reads /z/ the student would have to move to the next underlined /z/ sound.

- The game would follow normal Snakes and Ladders rules. The only exception being- There would be no second chance at throwing the dice if one gets a six.
- Target sounds: /z/ /ʒ/ /Z/ /s/ /c&/ /k/

- Game board:

**Word Snakes and Ladders**

Finish	V <u>ision</u>	<u>K</u> itchen	Use	Branch
<u>C</u> inema	<u>S</u> ocks	<u>M</u> ea <u>s</u> ure	B <u>u</u> sh	No <u>is</u> y
<u>I</u> nches	D <u>o</u> gs	<u>S</u> ugar	Tre <u>a</u> s <u>u</u> re	Ch <u>i</u> cken
<u>T</u> aps	F <u>r</u> esh	Do <u>z</u> en	<u>P</u> ict <u>u</u> re	<u>U</u> sual
<u>D</u> ivision	<u>C</u> orner	<u>T</u> ouch	<u>Z</u> ebra	<u>C</u> ase
<u>B</u> us	<u>C</u> hocolate	<u>T</u> ask	<u>P</u> le <u>a</u> s <u>u</u> re	<u>W</u> ash <u>i</u> ng
<u>T</u> issue	<u>N</u> ose	<u>T</u> elevision	<u>K</u> eep	<u>S</u> he
<u>S</u> oap	<u>D</u> ecision	<u>L</u> aser	<u>S</u> hine	<u>T</u> eacher
<u>R</u> azor	<u>M</u> atch	<u>M</u> ash	<u>C</u> atch	<u>S</u> afe
<u>C</u> ast	<u>S</u> hirt	<u>Z</u> ero	<u>C</u> asual	<u>C</u> hair

s as in Sip	Cas in Vision
sh as in Ship	ch as in Chips
z as in Zip	k as in Cap

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## Report

# **Anchoring at the Brighton Pier: A Report on the 52<sup>nd</sup> IATEFL Conference**

*Kirti Kapur*

The Brighton pier and its neighbouring city Hove in the United Kingdom are known for their creative and artistic atmosphere. So it came as no surprise to me that many famous people were drawn to this city by the sea. My favourite among them is Charles Dickens. The opportunity to represent *Fortell* India, an associate of IATEFL at the 52nd IATEFL Conference held at Brighton, from 9 to 13 April 2018 was indeed fulfilling.

The conference began with Associates' Day on 9 April in which representatives of different associates across the world were invited to interact and network with their global counterparts. The day began with a warm welcome by Lou Mc Laughlin, Chair of IATEFL associates. This was followed by the report for the year 2017-2018, highlighting the role of project awards. Attending associates were also encouraged to apply for these awards. In addition, IATEFL's online events were highlighted and members were told to ask other members to participate in them. In the afternoon session, the representatives displayed their posters, interactive materials, activities, games and books etc., and engaged in lively discussions on initiatives from across the globe. *Fortell* was hugely appreciated by the representatives. Attendees were very keen to learn about ELT in India and enquired about *Fortell's* contribution to the professional and academic development of its members. It was a proud moment for me to be an ambassador for *Fortell* (India), and to speak about the work done by our members. In the evening there was a presentation on the Hornby scholarship, and the day came to a close with a vote of thanks.

The conference provided space for exchange of ideas, approaches and strategies. It was indeed enriching to hear about the experiences of my peers and also to share perspectives from India. It was equally enriching to engage in dialogues on comparative frameworks in ELT. Learner-centred designs and methods to address grassroots needs were the common themes in these discussions. Future trends that emerged in the field of teacher training included innovations in curriculum design

and cultural adaptation.

It is noteworthy that the conference included all aspects of ELT, ranging from teaching English to young learners, to Business English as well as approaches to assessment. In addition to world class plenaries, there were about five hundred sessions to choose from, including signature events, talks, workshops, forums, presentations and an interactive language fair. I too spoke at and facilitated the proceedings of the *Forum on EAP Writing* on the topic “Developing Writing across the Disciplines”.

The aims of the conference—forging connections and supporting English Language Teaching professionals—were realized in the eyes of all who attended.

*Kirti Kapur is Professor of English at NCERT. She is an ELT expert and a teacher trainer. Her core areas of expertise include curriculum design, materials development, pedagogy, assessment and comparative research.*

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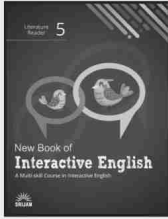
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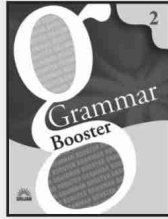
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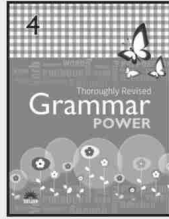
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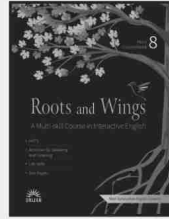
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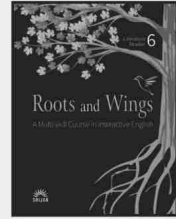
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Classes 1 to 8



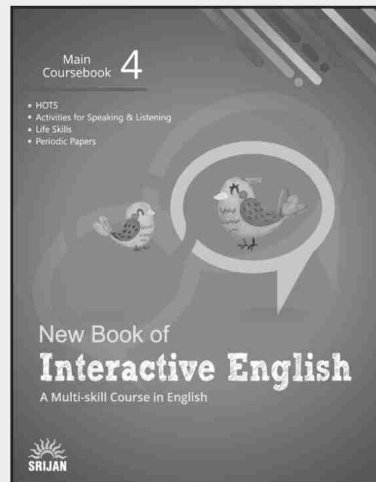
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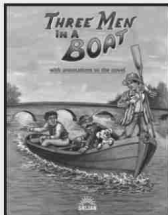
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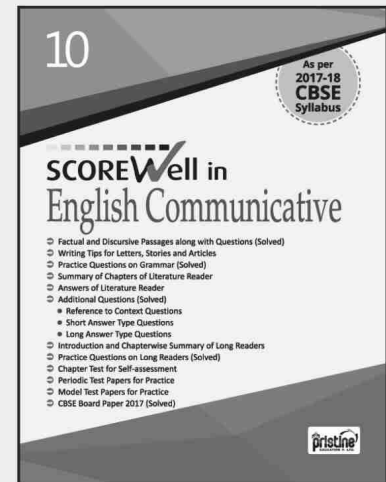
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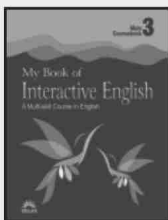
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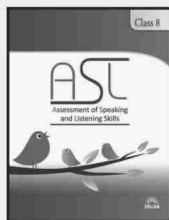
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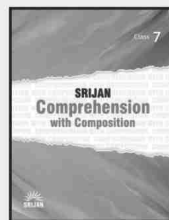
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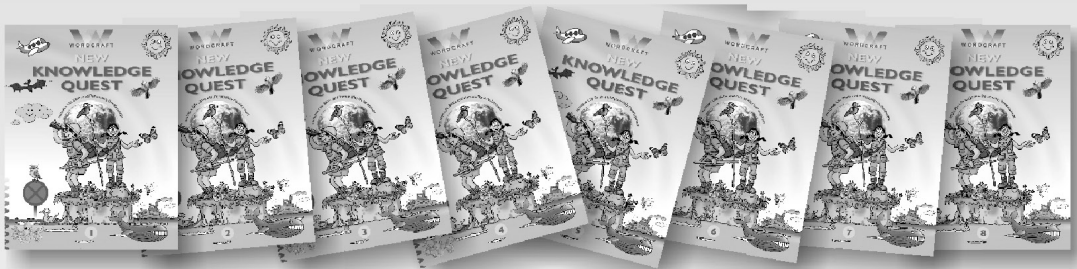
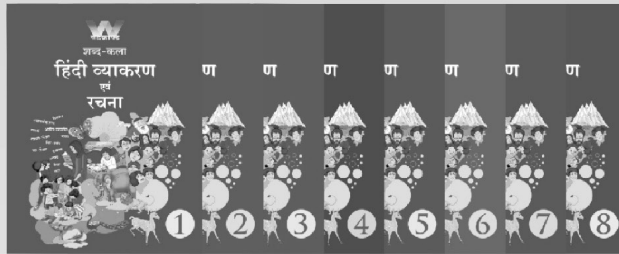
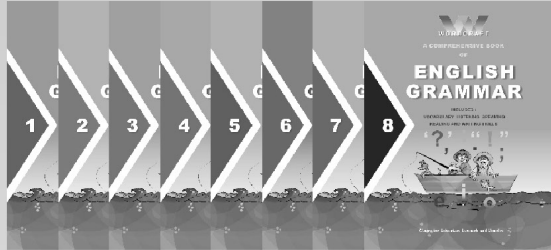
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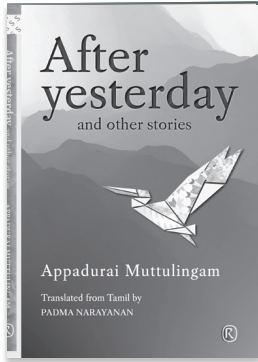


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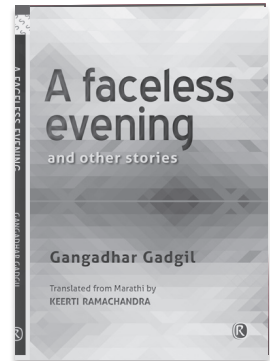
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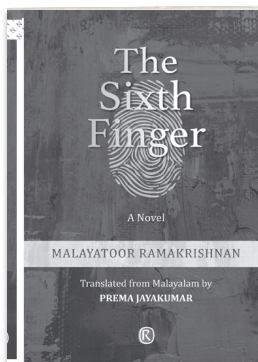
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