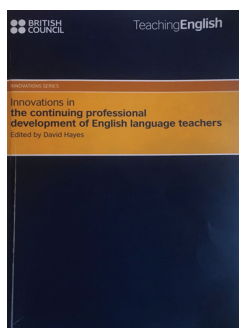


Book Reviews



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)

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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) first introduced in 2006, which offer tutorials on using technology and tools in education. Further, the creation of multimedia training courses (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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