



Cooperative Learning: A Way to Continuous Professional Development for the English Language Teacher

Anamika Shukla

Dept. Of Postgraduate Studies & Research in English, Govt. KRG Autonomous PG College, Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh India

Received: 28th-January-2015 Accepted on: 5th-March-2015 Published on: 12th-May-2015

ABSTRACT

Language educators need to take a wider approach to the changes in profession. Perhaps the best-known and most painful example of the failure to implement holistic change in English language teaching is that in many cases while teaching methodology has become more communicative, testing remains traditional, consisting of discrete items, lower-order thinking and a focus on form rather than meaning (Brown, 1994). This creates a backwash effect that tends to pull teaching back toward the traditional, even when teachers and others are striving to go toward the new. Cooperative learning (CL) connects with learner autonomy because group activities help English language students become less dependent on teachers. CL fits with an emphasis on meaning, as groups provide an excellent forum for students to engage in meaningful communication in their English language. Diversity is highlighted in CL when students form heterogeneous groups and use collaborative skills to bring out and value the ideas and experiences of all the group members. This paper suggests that professional development has been ignored in the field of English. It is must for a language teacher and can be achieved through means like cooperative learning etc.

Keywords: Cooperative learning (CL); Peer coaching; continuing professional development (CPD); Professionalism. Reflective and exploratory practice; Programmed or formally monitored Curriculum design

Introduction

The vision of high performing teaching and training professionals, self-regulating and self-improving through their commitment to Cooperative learning (CL) Cooperative learning (CL) continuing professional development (CPD), thus heralding an era of new professionalism, is seen as a paramount public service reforms. CPD gives the public, learners, the teaching community and the sector confidence that teachers, trainers, tutors and assessors are continuously improving their skills, knowledge and expertise. CPD is the hallmark of the professional

Lifelong learning and continuous professional development are much the same thing. Continuing Professional Development strives to push boundaries, actively create challenges, learning from experiences and adding to skills and

Self-knowledge. Teachers are willing to participate in events like conferences, seminars and workshops. It wouldn't be altogether wrong to say that teachers are now touching all those area. The crucial issues are:

- CPD is basically an issue of teacher motivation which is an ignored area in ELT,
- Teacher motivation is fundamentally an intrinsic issue,
- Needs to be addressed in informal mode, and for this
- "talk is the fuel of teacher development" (Wright: 2000)

Motivation is essential for CPD, and motivation comes from within. We cannot be developed, Development is something we do to ourselves. It is the teacher who will feel the need for development and will make whatever arrangements they can to ensure they have it. Training is something usually imposed from outside, it usually involves prescription, whereas development is something that comes from inside and it involves discovery and creation. Professional development through collaboration, & sharing leads path of self-development.

There is a lot to be learnt through taking advantage of all the experienced and expert practitioners in the field of ELT, by attending sessions they may give at conferences or, if teachers

Prof. Anamika Shukla
Dept. of Postgraduate Studies and Research in English, Govt.
KRG Autonomous PG College, Gwalior. Uttar Pradesh. India.
Email: anamikashukla10@gmail.com

Cite as: *Integr. J. Soc. Sci.*, 2015, 2(1), 28-32

©IS Publications

IJSS ISSN: 2348-0874

<http://pubs.iscience.in/ijss>

are lucky, talks that are available in their vicinity. Reading readily-available articles and books written by 'experts' and participating in online events or blogs with invited professionals is an alternative if 'experts' are not available in the flesh somewhere near you.

Strategies for CPD are:

Advancing the debate on teaching, training and learning, providing strong advocacy for teaching professionalism and encouraging employers and partner organizations to develop and sustain dual professionalism.

To promote the use of technology to support professional development:

Signposting opportunities and developing the knowledge and skills as reflective practitioners through the planning, recording and assessment of the impact of individual learning in CPD portfolios.

To add value to professional practice:

Advancing their teaching, training and learning expertise and offering opportunities for professional networking and discourse.

Awareness:

Ensuring that all members are well-informed about the policies and issues that affect them.

The definition of CPD for English Language Teacher is broader and should go beyond the conventional one that is often limited to attendance at courses, workshops or formal study. It is the critical reflection on learning experiences and activities that improve practice, and demonstrate continuous development as a teacher or trainer: Continuing professional development means maintaining, improving and broadening relevant knowledge and skills in your subject specialism and your teaching and training, so that it has a positive impact on practice and the learner experience.

A growing body of research on CPD has shown that the kinds of professional development which make the most difference to practice are based on professional dialogue about teaching and learning, and the improvement of practice through a variety of activities, including coaching, mentoring, shadowing and peer support. Awareness-raising events are useful for absorbing information and updating knowledge, but are not likely to lead to skills development. Therefore, when deciding on your priorities for CPD, as a language teacher it is important to consider what kinds of CPD will be the most effective for developing your practice. This means that you will need to

show, year-on-year, which you are improving the relevant knowledge and skills in your area of subject expertise and in your teaching or training. In this sense CPD is personalized and any activities that are undertaken for the purposes of keeping up to date with the latest developments in a subject area and keeping abreast of changes in teaching methods will count as meaningful professional development.

CPD should consist of activities that are the most relevant to your development plan and could range from the formal such as workshops, conferences, courses or programs to the informal, self-directed kind such as reading journal articles or reviewing websites. The key thing to remember is that this is not just about completing a list of activities undertaken. The time spent can be meaningless unless it makes a difference and forces you to reflect on the learning you have gained from these activities, the impact it has made to learners, colleagues or the organization in which you work.

There are plenty of ways to keep up your continuous professional development in ELT. If a number of these activities are combined into a planned, interlinked program, with monitoring and evaluation, even if only by the teacher him or herself, there can be real, satisfying results for teachers wishing to keep up and improve their professional development. Often teachers get a lot more out of smaller, more intimate workshops where there is the opportunity to discuss and debate ideas and opinions and take away ideas for classroom activities and to reflect on.

CPD activities suggested for English Language Teacher

Approach to CPD as outlined will enhance professionalism. The expertise is used to establish meaningful, effective and leading practice. The type and nature of activities through which you can improve and broaden your knowledge and skills in English Language, subject specialism, in teaching, and in the context in which you work, are limitless. The following examples are offered only as suggestions for some of the activities through which one can develop professionalism.

Updating teaching and learning in English Language

- peer coaching (coaching others and being coached in your subject or vocational area)
- subject learning coach or advanced learning coach training
- mentoring new colleagues
- peer review
- peer observation
- Work shadowing
- Team-teaching
- Leading team/department self-assessment
- Carrying out and disseminating action research

- Designing innovative feedback mechanisms (learners and peers)
- Chairing team meetings
- Constructing professional dialogue/learning conversation opportunities
 - Being an active member of a committee, board, or steering groups related to teaching your subject area
- Peer visits to community organizations /partners
- Curriculum design/ development/validation
- Reading and reviewing books or journal articles
- Updating knowledge through the internet/TV/other media and reviewing these with a group of professional colleagues
- Sharing idea and resources with other teachers and trainers.

To update English specialism

- Gaining further qualifications in English subject or expertise through an accredited courses
- Updating through visits, and placements,
 - Being a member of a special interest group or another professional body
- Taking on examiner/verifier/assessor responsibilities
- Attending briefings by awarding bodies and disseminate to colleagues
 - giving a presentation at a conference in a subject area
 - supervising research
 - subject learning coaching training
- Leading project development in a subject area
- Writing reports/papers to inform colleagues
- Planning or running a staff development activity or event
- Organizing trips/ residential /work placements
- Reading the latest journal articles related to subject
- Reviewing books or articles for colleagues
- Updating knowledge through the internet/ TV/CD/other media
 - Public service/voluntary work
 - Networking with other subject specialists

An interactive virtual conference such as the annual IATEFL online conferences sponsored by the British Council, or the blogs on the Teaching English website, or other forums and discussion boards set up to encourage participation around ELT topics by teachers from all over the world .Joining other teachers in the staffroom discussing their next lesson or the materials they are using is one of the easiest and most effective ways of developing, especially if you borrow the ideas and try them out in your own classes. Another easy way to learn that can include internet materials and journals as well as actual

books, which can be expensive and difficult to obtain in some parts of the world.

While reading is done individually, what is learnt can be formalized in discussion in a reading group.Set a text to read and come together with colleagues a few weeks later to discuss its content. So much can be learnt through sharing of impressions and discussing issues the reading material raises.

Often so much can be learnt from studying your students or yourself in the classroom, and there is a huge range of aspects of teaching which you can put under an action research microscope. Through sessions that can range from a small in-school meeting where teaching ideas are shared right through to a session at a large international conference. This is a particularly effective way to develop due to the planning and research which takes place before the session as well as the discussion and feedback which it provokes.

Similar to the above, writing ranges from short articles right through to books. Keeping a diary and reflecting on your teaching is a good way to start and there are plenty of models out there to learn from, while the preparation and research necessary teaches you as much as the writing and rewriting itself .This is often the first thing people think of when they think about professional development. But it is often the most prohibitive due to time and expense, and often courses do not provide exactly what is needed. If you are lucky enough to be able to follow a course, however, make the most of the time you have laid aside for thinking and learning, because doing a course is a great way to develop.

Membership of professional bodies can provide opportunities and facilitation of many of the areas above, and although subscriptions can appear expensive, there is often so much offered by a professional body that it justifies the expense. Prepare to be active though, as so often you will get more out of it the more you put in yourself.

The following enhances professional development:

- Engaging in new professional activities, doing things for the first time
 - Peer observation
 - Trying out different methods/approaches in class (sort of like action research)
 - Reflective and exploratory practice, though not programmed or formally monitored
 - Being trained up as a teacher trainer
 - Completing an online course to be an e-tutor
 - Participating in projects in a group with fellow professionals
 - Forming a local group: to discuss issues and take turns to lead sessions.

Teachers as Co-Learners

The concept of teachers as co-learners involves teachers learning along with students. This relates to asking questions that have more than one good answer and doing complex real-

world tasks. Because the world is complex and constantly changing, lifelong learning is necessary. Teachers must take part in this never-ending quest and, indeed, model this process for their students. Teachers learn more about their subject areas as they teach, as well as learning about how to teach (Bailey & Nunan, 1996; Freeman & Richards, 1996). Teaching is seen as a skill that can be learned in discrete items from lesson planning to how to ask questions. When these skills have been learned, the teacher is qualified to teach. In English language teacher education this approach is seen as "training" (Freeman, 1989). However, the current need is to see teaching and learning as social processes where the students are active co-constructors of knowledge with their teachers. The teacher is more of a facilitator and fellow learner alongside the students. In the current scenario, the notions of qualitative, ethnographic research by and with teachers and self and peer assessment of teachers has unfolded (Fanselow , 1988).

English language teachers as fellow participants in learning takes many forms. For instance, when students are doing extensive reading, teachers do not patrol the classroom or use the time to catch up on paperwork. Instead, they do their own reading and share with students what ideas and feeling this reading sparked. Similarly, when students are writing, teachers can write in the same genre and then give feedback to and receive feedback from students.

Along with empirical formats and objective findings, more field-based methods of teacher research and assessment needs to be put forward. English language teachers as researchers employ methods such as conversations, interviews, case studies and these are written in narrative form (Gebhard & Oprandy, 1999). Assessment of second language teachers goes beyond what the teacher is doing and investigates what teachers are thinking from the teachers' perspective (Farrell, 1999).

Cooperative learning (CL)

Cooperative learning (CL) connects with learner autonomy because group activities help English language students become less dependent on teachers. Curriculum integration is facilitated by CL because language students can pool their energies and knowledge to take on cross-curricular projects. CL fits with an emphasis on meaning, as groups provide an excellent forum for students to engage in meaningful communication in their English language. Diversity is highlighted in CL when students form heterogeneous groups and use collaborative skills to bring out and value the ideas and experiences of all the group members.

Thinking skills are needed in groups as language students attempt to explain concepts and procedures to their group mates, as group mates give each other feedback and as they debate the proper course of action. Alternative assessment is fostered in several ways by the use of CL. For instance, CL provides scope for peer assessment and an emphasis on the development of collaborative skills calls for different methods to assess these skills. CL encourages teachers to be co-learners for at least two reasons. First, teachers often work with colleagues to learn more about education, e.g., by conducting research and otherwise discussing their classes. By collaborating with fellow teachers, teachers model collaboration for their students and convince themselves of its benefits. Second, because CL means less teacher talk, it allows teachers to get off the stage some of the time and spend more time facilitating student learning. One of the techniques for facilitating is to take part along with students, thus encouraging teachers to learn more. Though the change seems to be gradual, evolutionary and piecemeal

Conclusion

Language educators need to take a wider approach to the changes in profession. Most importantly, by attempting to implement change in a holistic way, the chances of success greatly increase. Perhaps the best-known and most painful example of the failure to implement holistic change in English language teaching is that in many cases while teaching methodology has become more communicative, testing remains traditional, consisting of discrete items, lower-order thinking and a focus on form rather than meaning (Brown, 1994). This creates a backwash effect that tends to pull teaching back toward the traditional, even when teachers and others are striving to go toward the new.

Perhaps, teachers as co-learners, play the crucial role. Many people are drawn to work in English language education because they enjoy learning and want to share this joy with others. All the changes that have taken place in this field imposes a challenge to continue learning and to share what we learn with others, including our colleagues, so that we can continue to help our field develop. Please read these instructions carefully. When you use this template, a new document containing the instruction text will be created, which you can save in your hard disk for reference. Use the styles, fonts and point sizes as defined in this template, **but do not change or redefine** them in any way as this will lead to unpredictable results.

References

- Ausubel, D. P. (1968). *Educational psychology: A cognitive view*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.
- Ayaduray, J., & Jacobs, G. M. (1997). Can learner strategy instruction succeed? The case of higher order questions and elaborated responses. *System*.
- Bailey, K. M., & Nunan, D. (Eds). (1996). *Voices from the language classroom*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Bejarano, Y., Levine, T., Olshtain, E., & Steiner, J. (1997). The skilled use of interaction strategies: Creating a framework for improved small-group communicative interaction in the language classroom. *System*.
- Berman, M. (1981). *The reenchantment of the world*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Bloom, B. S. (Ed.). (1956). *Taxonomy of educational objectives: Classification of educational goals. Handbook 1. Cognitive domain*. New York: David McKay.
- Breen, M., & Candlin, C. N. (1980). *The essentials of a communicative curriculum in language teaching*. *Applied Linguistics*.
- Brinton, D. M., Snow, M. A., & Wesche, M. B. (1989). *Content-based second language instruction*. New York: Newbury House.
- Brown, H. D. (1994). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall Regents.
- Capra, F. (1983). *The turning point: Science, society, and the rising culture*. Toronto: Bantam Books.
- Cates, K. (1990). *Teaching for a better world: Global issues in language education*. *The Language Teacher*.
- Chamot, A. U., & O'Malley, J. M. (1994). *The CALLA Handbook: Implementing the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Cheng, W., & Warren, M. (1996). Hong Kong students' attitudes toward peer assessment in English language courses. *Asian Journal of English Language Teaching*.
- Christison, M. A. (1996). Teaching and learning languages through multiple intelligences. *TESOL Journal*, 6(1).
- Crandall, J. (Ed.). (1987). *ESL through content-area instruction*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Crookes, G., & Leher, A. (1998). Aspects of process in an ESL critical pedagogy teacher education course. *TESOL Quarterly*.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. New York: Harper & Row.

- Day, R. R., & Bamford, J. (1998). *Extensive reading in the second language classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Deller, S. (1990). *Lessons from the learner: Student-generated activities for the language classroom*. London: Longman.
- Fanselow, J., F (1988). "Let's see": Contrasting conversations about teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, 22, 113-130. [-14-]
- Farrell, T. S. C. (1999). *Teachers talking about teaching: Creating conditions for reflection*. Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language
- Freeman, D. (1989). *Teacher training, development, and decision making: A model of teaching and related strategies for language teacher education*. TESOL Quarterly, 23.
- Freeman, D., & Richards, J. C. (Eds.). (1996). *Teacher learning in language teaching*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Seabury.
- Fullan, M. G., Bennett, B., & Rolheiser-Bennett, C. (1990). *Linking classroom and school improvement*. Educational Leadership, 47(8).
- Fusco, E., Quinn, M. C., Hauck, M. (1994). *The portfolio assessment handbook*. Austin, TX: Steck-Vaughn.
- Gebhard, J. G., & Ophrandy, R. (1999). *Language Teaching Awareness*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Goodman, K., Goodman, Y., and Hood, W. (1989). *The Whole Language evaluation book*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann.
- Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. (1999). *Construing experience through meaning: A language-based approach to cognition*. London: Cassell.
- Halpern, D. F. (1997). *Critical thinking across the curriculum*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Harris, V., & Noyau, G. (1990). *Collaborative learning: Taking the first steps*. In I. Gathercole (Ed.), *Autonomy in language learning* (pp. 55-64). London: Centre for Information on Language Teaching.
- Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (1994). *Learning together and alone* (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Kagan, S. (1994). *Cooperative learning*. San Clemente, CA: Kagan Publications.
- Kinsley, C. W., & McPherson, K. (Eds.). (1995). *Enriching the curriculum through service learning*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Krashen, S. (1993). *The case for free voluntary reading*. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 50(1), 72-82.
- Kreeft Peyton, J., & Reed, L. (1990). *Dialogue journal writing with limited English proficient students: A handbook for teachers*. Alexandria, VA: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages.
- Kuhn, T. S. (1970). *The structure of scientific revolutions* (2nd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lee, I. (1998). *Supporting greater autonomy in language learning*. *ELT Journal*, 52.
- Liang, X., Mohan, B.A., & Early, M. (1998). *Issues of cooperative learning in ESL classes: A literature review*. *TESL Canada Journal* 15(2).
- Long, M. H. (1991). *Focus on form: A design feature in language teaching methodology*. In K. de Bot, R. Ginsberg, & C. Kramsch (Eds.), *Foreign language research in cross-cultural perspective* (pp. 196-221). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Macaro, E. (1997). *Target language, collaborative learning and autonomy*. Clevedon, Avon: Multilingual Matters.
- Merchant, C. (1992). *Radical ecology: The search for a livable world*. New York: Routledge.
- Oller, J. W., & Richards, J. C. (Eds.). (1973). *Focus on the learner: Pragmatic perspectives for the language teacher*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Oprandy, R. (1999). *Jane Jacobs: Eyes on the city*. In D. J. Mendelsohn (Ed.), *Expanding our vision* (pp. 41-59). Toronto: Oxford University Press.
- Oxford, R. L. (1990). *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know*. New York: Newbury House.
- Oxford, R. L. (1997). *Cooperative learning; collaborative learning; and interaction: Three communicative strands in the language classroom*. *The Modern Language Journal*, 81(4).
- Paul, R. W. (1995). *Critical thinking: How to prepare students for a rapidly changing world*. Santa Rosa, CA: Foundation for Critical Thinking.
- Raimes, A. (1992). *Exploring through writing: A process approach to ESL composition*. NY: St. Martin's Press.
- Ribe, R., & Vidal, N. (1993). *Project work: Step by step*. Oxford: Heinemann.
- Rothschild, D., & Klingenberg, F. (1990). *Self and peer evaluation of writing in the interactive ESL classroom: An exploratory study*. *TESL Canada Journal*, 8(1).
- Sapon-Shevin, M. (1999). *Because we can change the world: A practical guide to building* | Senge, P. (Ed.). (2000). *Schools that learn: A fieldbook for teachers, administrators, parents, and everyone who cares about education*. New York: Doubleday.
- Sharan, S., Shachar, H., & Levine, T. (1998). *The innovative school: Organization and instruction*. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.
- Slavin, R. E. (1995). *Cooperative learning: Theory, research, and practice* (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Shuy, R.W. (1987). *Research current: Dialogue as the heart of learning*. *Language Arts* .
- van Lier, L. (1996). *Interaction in the language curriculum: Awareness, autonomy & authenticity*. London: Longman.
- Voght, G. M. (2000). *New paradigms for U.S. higher education in the twenty-first century*. *Foreign Language Annals*, 33.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society* (ed. by M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner, and E. Souberman). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Widdowson, H. G. (1978). *Teaching language as communication*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.