

Teacher Development for Teaching English

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Received January 24, 2023 **Revised** March 26, 2022; **Accepted** April 14, 2022

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to develop the teachers to have the skills of English for teaching the students. The reviewed studies suggest that language teacher development has focused the language proficiency, an integrated approach to teacher development, pedagogical skills and teaching approaches, and emerging technologies. Results suggest that there is a need to move from traditional master-apprentice, content-oriented, teacher-centered models of professional development towards initiatives that allow teachers to critically analyze their particular context and needs and devise their own local alternatives so that they can become more active agents of their own process of change. Issues that constitute possible alternatives for future research in the professional development of English language teachers are discussed.

Keywords: Development; Teaching English; Communicative Language Teaching

Introduction

The development of teachers is one of the major reforms introduced into the education systems. Since the start of the modern era in the 21st century, these reforms have been more vigorous and continued. Professional development mainly refers to the numerous forms of educational experiences related to an individual's work. Engineers, accountants, educators, lawyers, doctors, and countless other professions engage in professional development to learn and apply new skills and knowledge to improve their performance on the job. In education, research has shown that the quality of teaching and school leadership serve as the most crucial factors in raising the learners' academic achievement. (Guskey, 2000). The continual expansion of the skills and knowledge of educators is essential for implementing the best educational practices. The development programs serve as an important way of acknowledging that education is a never-ending process (Phumphongkhochasorn et al., 2022). Thus, continual education is crucial for career-minded individuals to constantly improve their skills to become more proficient at their jobs. Progressive nations have recognized the importance of educational reforms and the teachers' professional development (Villegas-Reimers, Eleonora, 2003). The dual role of teachers in the process of reform as the objects and the subjects of change makes this field a fast-growing

but more challenging area, which has received considerable attention in the past few years. Most teachers & educators have endorsed this approach as they consider it an advantage & appreciation in promoting the teaching process (Monpianjan & Puengpetch, 2023). However, there is a particular reservation among a few educators who regarded it as a sign of deficiency of teachers' performance due to inadequate teaching standards.

However, it has been generally accepted that professional development programs help the teachers to maintain high quality performance and supporting their professional development (Rattanawong, 2023). Therefore, enhancing teachers' teaching career is considered the most important and strategic investment of time, money, and efforts that human resource managers make in education (Holland, 2005).

This paper elaborates on teachers' dual role as agents of change and the role of development in the teaching career. Somehow, it also aims to delineate the pivotal role of teachers in the teaching process.

1. Clarifying terms associated with teacher learning and development

There are a number of similar sounding terms used in the theoretical and research literature that must first be clarified and differentiated. These terms include: teacher learning, professional learning, teacher development, professional development, continuing professional development, teaching training, in-service training and in-service education for teachers.

Teachers can learn in both formal and informal settings, at work and outside work. A simple way to differentiate between teacher learning and professional learning is therefore to specify that teacher learning can include learning outside work, whereas professional learning only refers to learning at work. For example, Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000) distinguish five different ways in which teachers can learn (of which the fourth and fifth points are not considered to be a part of professional learning):

1. Teachers learn from their own practice.
2. Teachers learn through their interactions with other teachers.
3. Teachers learn from teacher educators in their schools, and in specific teacher enhancement projects.
4. Teachers enroll independently in graduate programs.
5. Teachers learn about teaching outside their formal professional work. (Adapted from Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000:191–192)

The focus course might be considered as a “specific teacher enhancement project” (Point 3), but Points 1 and 2 will, to a greater or lesser extent, also be part of the teacher learning that takes place during a one-year part-time CQ course.

In the research literature, the terms teacher development and professional development are used in a somewhat different way than the term teacher learning. For example, Farrell and Richards (2005) describe teacher development as a process of growth and assert that:

“Teacher-education processes derive their rationale from assumptions about the nature of teacher development and how it takes place. This field is called teacher learning.” (Farrell & Richards, 2005). This suggests that the concept of teacher development is broader than that of teacher learning and is open to different interpretations. For example, in a review of publications on professional development (Avalos, 2011) finds that this subject is studied and presented in many different ways, yet “always at the core of such endeavors is the understanding that professional development is about teachers learning, learning how to learn and transforming their knowledge into practice for the benefit of their students’ growth”.

When the term professional development is used instead of teacher development, it may be to underline the fact that teaching is a profession, and that the profession has standards (See Continuing Professional Development (CPD) frameworks for English language teachers, 2016). The term development is also used in the title of this dissertation (The Development of English Teachers), because the term is best-suited to cover all of the aspects of development which the study focuses on.

In addition, the term teacher development is generally contrasted with that of teacher training: this is probably the most important distinction in this section, in relation to the present research project and the design of the CQ course. For example, one authority on the development of EFL teachers, suggests that

the learning needs for teacher training are typically defined by a recognizable deficit in the participating teachers’ knowledge or skills. The learning aims lead to (...) a predetermined outcome (...) specified by the institution which is funding the training. Training is in this sense sometimes referred to as “top-down”. (James, 2001)

Other recognized writers in the field also note that “The content of training is usually determined by experts and is often available through standard training formats or through prescriptions in methodology books” (Farrell & Richards, 2005).

In contrast, Farrell and Richards (2005) assert that teacher development serves a longer-term goal and seeks to facilitate growth of teachers’ understanding of teaching and of themselves as teachers. It often involves examining different dimensions of a teacher’s practice as a basis for reflective review and can hence be seen as ‘bottom-up’.

James (2001) also distinguishes between the two concepts:

In contrast to ‘teacher training’, teacher development often focuses on the extension or development of teachers’ existing knowledge or skills. It may be partly or wholly initiated by teachers, and is more individualized and flexible than teacher training respect to the participating teachers. For example, learning aims and outcomes (...) are not predetermined. Teacher development in this sense is sometimes referred to as “bottom-up”.

These ways of contrasting teacher development and teacher training in terms of bottom-up versus top-down and of a positive focus versus a deficit focus have parallels in the comparison of the terms continuing professional development (henceforth CPD) and in service training.

Borg (2015) suggests that CPD should be commensurate with a “development constructivist” (“process-product”) model of teacher education, rather than a “training transmission” (“input-output”) model. For Borg, the main thrust of CPD should be to ensure that teachers “own” their professional learning, although the need for the availability of expert support is acknowledged. This could be in the form of “courses led by external trainers who provide teachers with knowledge and ideas”. It is worth noting the positive inclusion of the term “trainers” here.

The comparisons and contrasts between the different terms described above are highly relevant to this research project, since the Norwegian educational authorities have identified a clear formal competence deficit in the primary school teachers who have been teaching English without any EFL teacher education. This implies the need for a form of training. However, the course participants are also experienced professional teachers, many of whom are likely to have well-developed general pedagogical knowledge and skills (Kantatong, 2023). This implies that any course should be designed in a way consistent with constructivist principles, where teachers are active participants, involved in decisions as to course content and delivery. This is a potential paradox or dilemma for teacher educators working on the Norwegian CQ course, since they are both required to train teachers to overcome a perceived knowledge and skills deficit and at the same time, avoid a top-down approach, allowing teachers to “own” their own development.

The final clarification of terms in this section concerns in-service education for teachers (henceforth INSET) and CPD. In most of the relatively sparse research literature on in service training within EFL teaching, the term INSET has been used (Wedell, 2005; Waters, 2006; Waters & Vilches, 2010; Uysal, 2012; Dawes & Iavarone, 2013), though some more recent studies focus on CPD for EFL teachers as opposed to INSET (Borg, 2015). Hayes and Chang (2012) suggest that the two terms CPD and INSET do share some common features, but also note that “where the terms are defined, in-service teacher education and training is generally held to be a subset of CPD centered on more formal, structured professional learning”. Again, it may be helpful to consider the term training as a useful alternative within CPD, referring to guided practice under expert instruction, rather than considering training as a part of a “transmission” model of learning.

To summarize, CPD is the broadest of the terms considered in this section and is understood to refer to a wide variety of activities for teachers, with its main focus on teacher learning. CPD activities generally prioritize “exploration and reflection rather than methodological prescriptivism” (Borg, 2015), thereby recognizing the relevance and value of teachers’ knowledge and experience.

2. Reflection, metacognition, collaboration and self-regulation

Common to different approaches to the subject of teacher development is the belief in the usefulness of reflective practice with its implication that “teachers can improve their own teaching by consciously and systematically reflecting on their teaching experiences” (Farrell,

2008:1). However, while “many things can be learned about teaching through self observation, many cannot, such as subject-matter knowledge, pedagogical expertise, and understanding of curriculum and materials. Professional development should therefore go beyond personal and individual reflection” (Farrell & Richards, 2005).

Thus, while subject-matter knowledge, pedagogical expertise and an understanding of the curriculum and materials are needed to further PD, collaborative and cooperative processes are needed to help sustain individual reflection and development. In this respect, professional learning has been conceptualized as “adaptive expertise” (Hammerness et al., 2005), understood as the ability of teachers to learn from others on an ongoing basis.

This implies that teachers’ self-reflections on practice can benefit both the individual teacher as well as other teachers, since “a teacher’s sense of plausibility is developed through ongoing engagement with the experience of teaching and also through interaction with other teachers’ versions of plausibility” (Mann, 2005).

In CPD, teachers are encouraged to modify their existing beliefs and develop their practices by gradually incorporating new ideas and ways of working. There are different routes to teacher development such as classroom inquiry, action research, peer observation, lesson study, Critical Friends Groups, collaborative planning, reading groups and teacher study groups (Borg, 2015:17). All hold in common the view that teachers develop by studying their own practice and by using reflective processes (including metacognition, i.e. thoughts about thoughts), as the basis for evaluation and change (Yoosuk, Shoommuangpak & Pornpundejwittaya, 2023). . However, such processes require time to allow teachers to explore and develop their own classroom practices by trying out new communicative activities in EFL teaching, etc.

While reflection and metacognition are necessary to facilitate teacher change processes (Postholm, 2012), they are insufficient in themselves to guarantee teacher change because context-dependent motivational issues also influence teachers’ emotional lives, their will to change and their ability to determine their own path of future development (self-regulation) (Papaleontiou-Louca, 2008; Muijs et al., 2014). These context-dependent factors include the influence of local class and school environments, such as the presence or lack of presence of other well-qualified EFL teachers. Developments within national educational systems also influence teachers, such as the decision to make formal competence in EFL teaching mandatory for all primary school EFL teachers in Norway from 2024. The following brief overview of theoretical models shows some of the main contemporary perspectives on how such change processes occur.

3. Theories of teacher change and the impact of CPD

The impact of the CQ EFL teacher education course will depend greatly on how receptive participant teachers are to the ideas and processes they encounter on the course. In other words, if they do not believe that the presented ideas are relevant to them, or if they do not think they

have the capacity to put some of the new ideas into practice, their teaching is unlikely to change significantly. It is therefore important for the CQ course designers to have an understanding of the role of teacher cognitions in teacher change. Indeed, the role of teachers' cognitions in mediating teacher change is a growing field of research (Fives & Gil, 2014), though there is no agreed definition of what exactly is meant by cognitions. For example, a relatively simple definition that refers only to beliefs and knowledge has been criticized due to the implied separation of thoughts and emotions "despite the growing amount of research showing that emotions are a central factor in cognitive processes". (Bartels, 2007:3). Although understanding emotions is recognized as a critical factor in relation to understanding other persons' intentions (Vygotsky, 2000) and motivations (Dörnyei, MacIntyre, & Henry, 2015), the term cognitions is still typically connected to thoughts and thought processes.

In the present study, cognitions are generally defined as referring to beliefs, knowledge, thoughts and emotions, though in Article 3 it was limited to knowledge and beliefs. Borg (2006a) uses an even broader definition of cognition in his model of change in language teacher cognition. He includes "beliefs, knowledge, theories, attitudes, assumptions, conceptions, principles, decision-making about teaching, learners, subject matter, materials, activities, colleagues, assessment, context". This representation of "elements and processes in language teacher cognition" emphasizes the "pivotal" role that cognitions play in influencing change in teachers' practices (or the lack thereof). Borg (2006a) assumes that there is a two-way (rather than unilinear) linkage between language teacher cognition and classroom and contextual factors, indicating an ongoing dynamic interchange. Borg's (2006a) model also takes into account the effect of the teacher's own schooling, including classroom experiences early in life and the teacher's broader personal educational history, informing his or her preconceptions about teachers and teaching.

In relation to the potential impact of the CQ courses, Borg (2006a) suggests that professional coursework may influence existing cognitions (and therefore EFL teaching practices); but if these cognitions, in the form of previous knowledge and experience, are not awakened or acknowledged, the course work is likely to have less effect in changing the teacher's beliefs about teaching and his or her teaching practices. In a further development of this model, Borg (2011) suggests that teacher trainers on in-service language teacher development courses should "deliberately create opportunities for teachers to doubt their beliefs", by exposing them to "powerful alternative conceptions" (Woolfolk Hoy, Davis, & Pape, 2006). If teachers also get the opportunity to try out these new conceptions in their own teaching practices, then they are more likely to become deeply internal as the teachers' cognitions change.

Gregoire's (2003) dual-process cognition-affective model of teachers' conceptual change shares some of the same characteristics as Borg's model, and is designed to show why "teachers' beliefs about instruction are resistant to reforms that challenge their existing beliefs". It "provides a conceptual framework within which to devise a better means of advancing teachers' beliefs and support them in the process of integration".

Gregoire (2003) suggests that school reformers should acknowledge that teachers' identities may be at stake during CPD activities, which in turn might create resistance to change. Consideration of how putting expected changes into practice will impact teachers' beliefs and self-images is a mediator of the extent to which teachers will decide to change or not. Teachers' decisions are also closely related to whether they consider that changing their practices will help their students learn. Subsequently, Gregoire (2003) suggests that attempts to help teachers to experience mastery experiences are "more likely to increase efficacy beliefs than are attempts at verbal persuasion"

Opfer and Pedder (2011) propose an approach to teacher change that attempts to integrate both the traditions of psychological research, as well as taking into account the social, cultural and political contexts of school organization. In this more complex theoretical model, the effects of PD activity are understood to depend on "the individual and school orientations to learning systems that mediate teacher learning and teacher change", where "the myriad of elements within and between these systems poses significant challenges for conducting causal studies of teacher professional learning" (Opfer & Pedder, 2011).

Borg (2015) sums up Opfer and Pedder's approach by noting that the complex ways in which teachers' "existing cognitions and experiences interact with their school systems to shape professional learning, will differ across contexts".

Despite this emphasis on the importance of taking into account individual contexts, Borg (2015:547) identifies a research consensus indicating that when certain conditions are met, PD activities can be effective across a range of contexts: On a macro-level, one condition is that teachers' PD should be understood as a "collective enterprise supported by schools and educational systems".

To sum up so far, this section presented central ideas and theories of CPD, suggesting that in order for a CQ course for EFL teachers to have a strong impact, it would need to place emphasis on awakening and developing participant teachers' cognitions by helping teachers to reflect both individually and collectively. Teacher educators need to assist teachers to explore new ideas and methods, while bearing in mind that teachers are less likely to accept such ideas or suggestions and use them in practice, if they find them too threatening. In the next section, specific challenges connected to in-service EFL teacher education for primary school teachers are considered.

English teachers find themselves in a unique and challenging position, as they come from all sorts of cultural and linguistic backgrounds and have to bridge the gaps of an equally diverse student population. As such, the importance of professional development for ESL teachers cannot be understated. But, what are the specific benefits of professional development in English teachers?

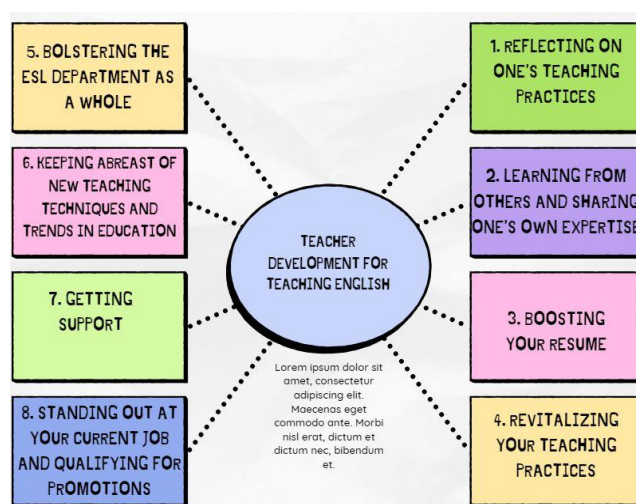
Just like an effective teacher is one who addresses students' needs, effective professional development should address the teacher's specific needs. These may vary depending on the individual's strengths and weaknesses, the context where the teacher works, and in what stage

they are in their career. For instance, online teachers often deal with a very diverse student population and need to learn effective techniques to reach all of their students. In contrast, teachers in a brick-and-mortar school will deal mostly with students from the local community.

A well-designed professional development program should provide teachers with learning opportunities that meet their specific needs, help them deepen and broaden their skills, challenge their assumptions, and foster cooperation.

Let's take a closer look at the specific benefits of professional development in ELT!

Knowledge from the Study



1. Reflecting on one's teaching practices

One of the greatest benefits of professional development in ELT is to provide teachers with an opportunity to reflect on their teaching practices. As the purpose of professional development is to improve students' learning outcomes by making teaching more effective, teachers should start by becoming cognizant of what areas in their teaching need improvement. A well-designed professional development plan will inspire teachers to evaluate their practices and challenge their assumptions about teaching and learning.

2. Learning from others and sharing one's own expertise

When engaged in professional development, teachers have the possibility to compare notes with other teachers and share their expertise. A particularly useful concept in this regard is that of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). PLCs refer to groups of educators who cooperate regularly to share their expertise and collaborate to improve their teaching.

Jennifer Kelly, in "Collaboration, Collegiality, and Collective Reflection: A Case Study of Professional Development for Teachers," writes that "PLCs can allow for collaboration and reflective practice, where teachers come together with their colleagues to actively learn about and reflect on their practices."

Teaching can be a solitary business, especially in the age of online classes. Participating in professional development can provide great opportunities to exchange experiences and challenges and form inspiring and lasting connections.

Bridge's Expert Series webinars are a great way to learn from others in the industry! You can tune in live to connect with others or watch from a growing library of webinars that cover topics ranging from teaching pronunciation to strategies for teaching Business English to developing a teaching philosophy.

Here's a clip, from a webinar on creating custom courses (watch the full webinar here):

3. Boosting your resume

Prioritizing professional development can do much to boost a teacher's resume. For example, investing some time in TEFL certification can open new career opportunities for teachers, whether they teach online or in person. Many schools require certification of at least 120 hours as a prerequisite for hiring, but those who go above and beyond and earn additional credentials, such as Specialized Certification or Micro-credential Course Certificates, stand out from other applicants and are usually better paid.

Specialized Certification can also help you break into new TEFL niches, such as Teaching Business English or Teaching English Online. Micro-credentials, on the other hand, are short courses that offer targeted training in ELT subfields like Teaching English Pronunciation or Teaching IELTS Exam Prep. Professional development TEFL courses can help take your career to the next level and set your resume apart from others, as it shows your dedication to lifelong learning.

4. Revitalizing your teaching practices

We have all experienced that moment when the teaching routines we have relied on for a while start to feel boring or stale. Like actors on a stage, teachers need inspiration to be effective communicators and involve students in the learning process. One of the benefits of professional development in ELT is to revitalize one's teaching practices. There is a thrill in learning something new and a sense of anticipation that makes teaching exciting again and that makes teachers look forward to the time when they can apply the newly-acquired skills in their classroom.

5. Bolstering the ESL department as a whole

For teachers working within a traditional ESL department, the benefits of professional development extend to the department as a whole. Administrators can tailor professional development to address specific issues and can receive direct input from teachers to address the specific learning needs of the student body.

The advantages of a professional development program organized at the department level are many:

It can address the specific learning needs of the student population.

It can benefit from teachers' cooperation and peer observations.



It can create a working environment where teachers feel inspired and supported by their institution.

6. Keeping abreast of new teaching techniques and trends in education

Teaching techniques are continually evolving. With the introduction of computer technology, the internet, and the use of learning apps in schools, new techniques that leverage the above tools crop up all of the time. While teachers cannot be expected to know about all of them, they should be selectively aware of those that can help them better meet their needs and those of their students. A well-thought-out ESL professional development plan can assist teachers in this task.

In addition, some teaching techniques arise in response to new trends in education, some of which will likely find their way into schools. Thus, teachers should keep themselves informed, and school administrators should provide adequate professional development to support their teachers.

Explore techniques like teaching English using videos or using podcasts in Bridge's Micro-credential courses.

7. Getting support

Professional development can benefit ESL teachers by providing them with the needed support to develop their skills and be successful in their careers.

This is especially true for novice teachers who often start working directly after completing their TEFL/TESOL certification. In "Novice-Service Language Teacher Development: Bridging the Gap Between Preservice and In-Service Education and Development," Thomas S. C. Farrel explains how "most novice teachers (...) from the very first day on the job must face the same challenges as their more experienced colleagues, often without much guidance from the new school and institution."

Also, just like students' learning, professional learning has an affective element. "Teachers are more likely to engage with others in the learning process, and, therefore, take more risks with a level of support (..)" (Kelly, 2015). Find out how to get more support by building an online ESL community of practice.

8. Standing out at your current job and qualifying for promotions

In addition to boosting a teacher's resume when job seeking, seeking out professional development opportunities enables teachers to stand out at their current workplace. Employers will take note of which teachers prioritize continued learning, and the more skills you acquire, the higher your chances are of obtaining salary raises and qualifying for promotions.

Professional development in ELT comes in many shapes and forms, from online TEFL certification to school-sponsored workshops geared to address local issues and improve teachers' skills. A well-thought-out professional development plan is an excellent opportunity that will likely produce the benefits outlined above and assist ESL teachers in developing their professional skills and career.

Continue your professional development by exploring Specialized Certification that helps you break into new niches or Micro-credential courses that allow you to upskill in targeted ELT areas.

Conclusion

To conclude, teacher development is necessary in the 21st century mainly because of the fact that current generation students don't comprehend traditional teaching methods. We cannot teach students of today with methods of yesterday. Students in the 21st century need personalization in education. Thailand education system has been following the habit of seeing the classroom as a whole and not as individual students, which is unfair to the majority of students. Each student is unique in myriad ways including in the way they think, analyze, understand and go about academics. It is therefore important for our existing system to bring in this change. Developing teachers to know how to view their students as unique individuals with different learning styles is the game changer. Once teachers understand this and know how to cater to the various learning styles, they will positively impact hundreds and thousands of students.

Teacher development is also more critical now than ever because teachers today are struggling with identifying and filling the learning gaps in students to bring them up to grade level. Plus, they need to complete the current year's syllabus as well. If there were ever a mammoth task, it is this. Without the right knowledge, tools, and skills, teachers cannot be reasonably expected to navigate these challenges on their own.

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