Effective professional development: Principles and best practice

Part of the Cambridge Papers in ELT series
April 2018

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Introduction

The Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of teachers has recently regained attention in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT). This revival of interest in teacher development has led researchers, policy makers, leaders, managers and practitioners to seek evidence-informed answers to crucial questions, such as what types of CPD initiatives result in better learning, not just for teachers, but also for their learners, and why CPD matters – a pertinent question, considering that the planning, delivery, participation in and evaluation of CPD programmes requires a significant investment of time, resources and commitment from everyone involved. This paper sets out to answer such key questions by presenting the findings of reviews of research studies into CPD that works, and suggesting ways to implement these research findings in practice.

Thanks to the insights provided by large-scale international research studies we now know that teachers' CPD programmes only lead to powerful and transferable learning outcomes if they are designed in a certain way. Developing a solid understanding of what constitutes impactful professional development for teachers is fundamental for those involved in planning and teaching CPD programmes, as well as for those responsible for developing and implementing policies and managing teacher teams.

This exploration of the features of effective CPD programmes needs to be situated within the context of recent seismic changes in how teachers approach the task of developing their expertise. The next section will briefly focus on such changes.

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A recent history of professional development in ELT

The recognition that teacher learning does not stop when a novice teacher completes their initial teacher training is not new. Generations of EFL teachers have continued to develop their expertise both formally and informally throughout their careers, and over the years, universities, English language schools and publishers have implemented different initiatives and created resources for this end. Until relatively recently, however, the absence of robust evidence regarding what constitutes effective CPD has meant that most attempts to develop and resource teacher learning have been informed mainly by common sense and experience, and have had different degrees of success.

Towards the end of the 20th century, CPD in ELT was generally conducted mostly by teachers engaging in reading methodology books or magazines; attending conferences, talks and workshops (organized by both language teaching institutions or professional associations); and by engaging in communicating best practices developed 'in-house' by means of writing articles or presenting at conferences.

This situation changed mainly as a result of developments in technology in the last few decades.[1] The technological revolution brought about by the first generation of the World Wide Web (known as Web 1.0) allowed teachers mostly free and instant access to vast amounts of content on an unprecedented scale that they could now use for their professional development as well as to courses and activities delivered in new formats, such as online and blended learning programmes. The subsequent advent of Web 2.0 revolutionized the nature of teacher learning even more, as the widespread use of social media, web conferencing, webinars and webcasting enabled EFL teachers to interact and collaborate with one another in global virtual communities and personal learning networks (PLNs) and to publish free content generated by them for their followers. As more teachers posted their thoughts and experiences in blogs, vlogs, podcasts and screencasts, bloggers and members of teachers' PLNs became the go-to place for information and advice on resources for many ELT practitioners. The use of social media for professional purposes became the new normal, with an increasing

1 There were other causes for this change as well as technology. For example, the impact of research into teacher learning.

number of teachers sharing their opinions, links to resources and quotes via micro-blogs and social networking sites, compiling and sharing existing online content through content curation tools, and seeking quick answers to professional questions and requests by crowdsourcing.[2]

> The uncertainties brought about by this new and shifting professional development landscape call for robust, evidence-informed answers to questions such as which professional development initiatives are worth the time, effort and resources.

While this massive availability of professional learning resources and events has benefited many teachers, who may otherwise have been severely limited in their access to material for their development, it has also created new problems for teachers, their managers and teacher educators. Questions have been raised about the quality and accuracy of some of the freely published digital content, which often lacks the rigour that publishers' editorial processes guarantee, while peer-reviewed and edited content remains restricted to those few who can afford paid access or who work in organizations where such content is available. Also, due to their novelty, it is sometimes hard for teachers to demonstrate to their managers that the new CPD formats and channels – particularly the less formal types which often rely on what has been described by critics as decontextualized and fragmented 'bytes of information' – are sufficiently serious sources of professional learning. In a similar vein, it is almost impossible for those responsible for funding and planning CPD to evaluate the impact of these new CPD formats on both teacher and student learning, predict which innovations will stand the test of time and are therefore worth investing in, and which might prove to be just passing fads. The uncertainties brought about by this new and shifting professional development landscape call for robust, evidence-informed answers to questions such as which professional development initiatives are worth the time, effort and resources.

The current CPD landscape

The way in which teachers engage in CPD, the time they spend on it, who they engage in it with, what resources and channels they use to further develop their expertise, and how important they feel it is to continue learning throughout their teaching career varies widely among individuals and depends on many factors. Similarly, there is considerable variation in how CPD is funded and structured at institutional and governmental levels in different sectors, regions and countries.

EFL teachers tend to rely mainly on their own initiative and that of the organization for which they work to further their professional learning. In many contexts where teachers typically work many hours and in more than one institution, ELT professionals are often expected to fund their own professional learning and engage in CPD activities in their own time, with their workplaces providing little and infrequent CPD, if at all. The State of Teacher Development (SOTD) survey has found that a third of teachers who actively seek out development materials struggle due to lack of support from their institutions, and that many of those who took part felt unsupported. At the other end of the spectrum, organizations with a strong ethos of teacher CPD tend to have well-established INSET programmes in place with frequent face-to-face meetings, blended and/or online activities.

Many well-meaning INSET programmes are simply ineffective in achieving lasting and transferable teacher learning as they seldom go beyond initial input. Such programmes tend to rely on one-off sessions which do not offer the necessary support and follow-up that teachers need while experimenting with new strategies, implementing them in their classrooms, and evaluating their impact on their learners and their learning. Nor do they tend to offer the necessary differentiation to cater for the diverse starting points and learning needs of the teachers taking part in the CPD programme. These characteristics are often cited as the main reasons for the failure of these programmes in reviews of the literature on CPD.

The issue of professional development for teachers has been at the forefront of many discussions about teaching and learning over the past decade. This renewed interest in CPD is mainly due to the dissemination of research findings from various systematic reviews of large-scale, evidence-based studies into impactful continuous professional development.[3] Although most of these reviews come from the field of general education and rarely make explicit references to ELT, their conclusions are nevertheless relevant to ELT, as in many contexts EFL is offered as a curricular subject in education systems, and as such, is part of the remit of general education studies. These studies provide a useful lens through which to better understand how the teaching profession engages in teacher development, its benefits, and the forms teacher learning could take in ELT.

3 Systematic reviews are syntheses that summarize the results of several related studies.

Rationale and characteristics of effective CPD

Various systematic reviews into teachers' professional learning have centred on the impact of CPD on students' learning via enhancements in teacher learning – in other words, they have found that developing teachers' ability to teach well made a significant difference to students' progress and led to improved learning outcomes. A case in point is Robinson et al.'s review, which in conclusion emphasizes that not only do general student outcomes and teacher morale improve when CPD is a focus, but also that those previously weaker students become stronger and teachers feel empowered to improve their knowledge and performance.[4] This review also points to the importance of leaders supporting the continuous professional development of teachers, and identified managers promoting and taking an active part in teacher learning and development activities as the most impactful dimension of leadership. The attitude and actions of leaders are a fundamental driver of effective teacher development. In the most effective institutions, professional development is a leadership priority and CPD programmes balance alignment to high-level, organisation-wide development goals with individual needs.[5]

Studies on the benefits of English language teachers' engagement in CPD have reported that teacher learning through CPD results in deeper and more nuanced understanding of their learners, their needs and life stories, and that this deeper understanding allows teachers to fine-tune their teaching so that it is more in line with their learners' needs. New learning has been found to have positive effects on the teacher's identity and agency, leading to increased levels of autonomous decision-making. Studies have also documented teachers

gaining renewed enthusiasm for the profession and their role within it, as well as developing greater self-confidence in their teaching and instructional decision-making.[6]

The findings of these various systematic reviews of the CPD literature and research studies in the fields of Teacher Education and ELT have provided a core set of principles that characterize effective programmes. To help the reader remember these features, they have been organized around the word INSPIRE:

INSPIRE — Impactful, Needs-based, Sustained, Peer-collaborative, In-practice, Reflective, Evaluated

4 Robinson et al. (2009). See also Walter and Briggs (2012), which analysed the results of 35 evidence-based studies of teacher professional development conducted in the first decade of the 21st century.
5 Weston (2015).
6 Atay (2008); Burton (1998); Canagarajah (2012); Wyatt and Ončevska Ager (2017).

Impactful

There seems to be consensus in the literature that the main goal of CPD is to effect changes in teaching so that it results in enhanced students' learning. To this avail, programmes that have been reported as effective capitalize on teachers' strengths as a way of providing insights into what needs to be changed in their teaching so that students learn more. Because different teachers will have different CPD needs, it stands to reason that programmes are impactful when they address the diverse needs of teachers and their learners.

Needs-based

The literature stresses that impactful CPD responds to the daily challenges that teachers and students face. Depending on the situations and problems they encounter, each teacher has unique learning needs, different from those of their peers. Then it follows that teachers should have a say in the construction of their CPD programme and in setting CPD goals.

While teachers' engagement in evidence-informed CPD programmes leads to improved learning outcomes for their students, it is important that this evidence is used judiciously to inform the design of contextually relevant professional learning programmes.[7] If evidence-based principles are applied without consideration of (1) the socio-political, educational and cultural contexts where the teaching and learning is situated; (2) the institutional culture and its needs – i.e. what the organization has identified as its priorities for teacher learning, given its characteristics and constraints; and (3) the reality of teachers' working conditions, their learners' needs, and what is feasible, the resulting CPD programme may prove ineffective or unrealistic for such contexts. Ultimately, the impact of a CPD programme depends on understanding and applying the available research evidence with reference to the needs of the local context. The question CPD providers need to answer when designing programmes is not just what works, but what works *in this context, for these learners, teachers and leaders, at this point in time.*

Involving teachers in choosing the areas and activities for their own professional development has been identified as a key feature of effective CPD. As well as the

obvious motivational gain of making CPD programmes contextually relevant and needs-based – that teachers will be more likely to want to take part if the programme relates to their experiences in their classrooms[8] – one meta-analysis has found that 'the more teachers are involved in selecting their own professional development activities, the more they report improvements in their subject knowledge, their commitment to teaching, their teaching practice, and the learning of their students.'[9]

Sustained

There is consensus in the literature that one-off sessions and short courses are not effective in creating the necessary conditions for deep and lasting changes in teacher cognition and performance, and that for a CPD programme to be impactful, it needs to be prolonged. This is because teachers need considerable time to learn new strategies in sufficient depth to apply them confidently and effectively in the classroom and embed them systematically as part of their practice. Duration in itself, however, does not guarantee effective teacher learning: the nature of the activities and the availability of support throughout the duration of the programme is equally important.[10]

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Peer-collaborative

The process of teacher learning for transferability – i.e. learning a new strategy or approach to implement it in practice to enable impactful student learning – is not just long, but also complex. Throughout this process regular support and feedback from colleagues and experts is crucial, and should therefore be a key component of a CPD programme.[11] Effective peer collaboration has been

7 Coe (2017).
8 Higgins et al. (2015).
9 Walter and Briggs (2012: 4).
10 Higgins et al. (2015).
11 Op. cit.

reported to be amongst the highest indicators of effectiveness in CPD,[12] as it is conducive to the co-construction of contextual knowledge which is beneficial to individual teachers, specific groups of teachers and the organization. However, while there is consensus that collegial support is a key ingredient of effective teacher development – particularly when it involves teachers in solving problems or refining approaches together – what makes collaboration effective is still disputed.[13] Some collaborative support strategies, such as Peer Coaching, foster not just the development of teaching skills, but also large gains in transfer to classroom practice and a deepening of teachers' capacity to reflect and make informed decisions.[14]

In-practice

Another often cited condition for effective CPD is that it involves a classroom-based focus on teaching practice, which means teachers learning through doing, tackling real issues and developing practical solutions.[15] One synthesis has found that programmes that ask teachers to try out new practices and see the effects on their students tend to be more successful than those that focus on changing attitudes first in the hope that this will lead to changes in practice.[16]

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Reflective

The practical component of CPD programmes has been found to be more powerful when it is framed within action research or inquiry cycles of investigation, action, evaluation and refinement[17] which offer teachers opportunities to reflect critically and systematically on their practice and improve it as a result, while developing new perspectives and research skills. Teacher engagement in reflection and the use of CPD strategies which promote reflexive practice have been found to lead to changes in pedagogical beliefs, enhanced teacher knowledge and transformative growth.[18]

Evaluated

CPD programmes which prioritize impact support teachers to develop a greater awareness of the effect that their teaching has on their students' learning. They make this possible by teaching teachers to understand learning systematically through the eyes of their learners, which involves helping teachers understand that one of their most fundamental tasks is to become evaluators of their own impact, and equipping them to become active and ongoing seekers of feedback on the effect of their teaching.[19] As well as teachers, institutions also need to evaluate the quality and impact of their CPD programmes on a regular basis. This will enable them to diagnose what has and has not worked, capitalize on those strategies that best promote teacher learning, and provide evidence of progress, thus becoming more accountable.

The next section of this paper proposes practical recommendations that institutions could consider implementing to develop more impactful teacher learning programmes.

12 Sparks (2002).
13 Higgins et al. (2015).
14 Joyce and Showers (2002); Vacilotto and Cummings (2007).
15 Higgins et al. (2015); James et al. (2006).
16 Ingvarson, Meiers and Beavis (2005).
17 James et al. (2006); Walters and Briggs (2012).
18 Atay (2008); Díaz Maggioli (2012); Farrell (2012); Sahin and Yildrim (2016); Wyatt and Oncevska Ager (2017).
19 Hattie (2012). This implies a sustained focus on Assessment for Learning as part of the CPD programme.

Implications and recommendations

The following implications and recommendations follow the INSPIRE order used in the previous section for ease of reference.

Impactful

Moving from CPD that is less concerned with improved student learning to a focus on impact requires:

1. Leaders to develop, share and sustain an inspirational vision that encourages teachers to believe that better outcomes for their learners are both possible[20] and desirable, and to work hard to achieve such outcomes.

2. Leaders and teachers to work together to identify what change and impact they want to achieve within their institution both for teachers and for their learners, and to have a clear understanding of what that change will look like in concrete terms, and how it can be achieved.

3. Leaders and teachers to be clear about what evidence-informed strategies teachers will need to learn and implement in their classes to drive the desired improvement in learner progress and outcomes. This in turn requires leaders and teachers to be up-to-date and conversant with the best available evidence on impactful strategies.

4. CPD providers to implement evidence-informed effective CPD approaches, as in order for a teacher learning programme to achieve impact on student learning its design needs to include the features of CPD that lead to impact.

5. Leaders and teachers to set clear objectives for teacher learning and development linked to improved student learning, and later assess their progress against those objectives.

Needs-based

Designing contextually-relevant, needs-based, differentiated CPD programmes requires a deep understanding of each of the following dimensions of context, ordered here from the macro to the micro, as each dimension influences the next.

1. *The global context* – Understanding the demands that contemporary global phenomena such as globalisation, massive transnational movement of the population, multilingualism, the widespread use of technology, etc. make and will continue to make for the foreseeable future on learners. An example would be the global spread of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and its impact on all aspects of contemporary life.

2. *The national and regional contexts* – It is imperative to understand where policies not only influence or even dictate the direction of teaching and learning but also determine the funding available for the professional development of teachers. Hence, it is crucial that CPD designers make judicious and principled use of the research evidence, both to counteract the effect of ideologically-driven initiatives for which there is little or no evidence of their effectiveness, and to design evidence-informed CPD programmes that are suitable for their contexts.

3. *The institutional context and culture* – Identifying institutional priorities and high-level goals for CPD – which largely depends on the change and impact the institution sets out to achieve – requires understanding what change is needed at different levels and for different groups:
(a) The institution as a whole – Developing a solid understanding of an institution's culture can be difficult for both in-house CPD providers and external experts: the former may be used to the organizational culture and struggle to recognize what needs to

20 Higgins et al. (2015).

change, while the latter may not have the opportunity to get to know the organizational culture well enough to design a programme that could effectively address the problematic aspects of its culture. Hence, it is crucial that CPD designers work closely with leaders from the beginning to ensure their full support, explicit endorsement and participation in the CPD programme. When in-house staff are tasked with developing the CPD programme, it is important for the CPD designers to supplement their own and their leaders' assumptions about the organizational culture and the institution's learning needs by gathering information from many stakeholders using different methods, such as lesson observations, focus groups and interviews with students, teachers and leaders, examining students' work, etc. Where this is feasible, doing so might also help external consultants. While potentially time-consuming, this can be a worthwhile investment, as the resulting CPD programme will be likely to be more grounded in the real culture and learning needs of the organization, and therefore more relevant, contextually appropriate and impactful.

(b) Specific groups of teachers – As well as establishing what all the teaching staff need to learn, when designing CPD programmes it is also important to consider the learning needs of specific groups of teachers within the institution. An obvious example is newly qualified teachers, who have very different professional development and support needs to those who are more experienced. Other examples of groups of teachers with specific learning needs in the same organization include teachers teaching different:

- age groups (e.g. very young learners, young learners and adults)

- course types (e.g. General English, exam classes, English for Academic Purposes (EAP), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), English-Medium Instruction (EMI), Business English, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), etc.)

- student types (e.g. EFL students, student teachers, qualified teachers, etc.)

- blends (100% face-to-face courses; blended learning courses; 100% online courses)

- class sizes (large classes, small groups, one-to-one).

The distinctive features of such teaching contexts require that teachers develop specific types of expertise through a differentiated menu of development options that cater for all teachers' needs. This differentiation may take various forms:

- Targeted specific training – Organizing or commissioning in-house, blended or online training events or a complete training programme for a specific group of teachers.

- Electives – In addition to mandatory CPD events for all the teachers in the organization, the CPD programme can also include a range of options for teachers to choose from according to their learning needs or preferences.

- Special Interest Groups (SIGs) – As part of their CPD programme, teachers teaching the same course types, age groups, etc. can have opportunities to agree on a common professional learning strand to develop their expertise in a specific area, ideally aligned to high-level CPD goals. These could take many forms depending on the participants' learning orientations. Here are a few examples:

  o reading groups

  o standardisation or moderation groups, e.g. for teachers who teach exam classes or are examiners

  o engagement with external SIGs, e.g. attending special-interest webinars or seminars organized by teaching associations or other CPD providers and reporting back.

In addition, in many institutions teachers are offered different terms and conditions – i.e. full time or part time with permanent or temporary contracts. Where CPD programmes rely mainly on attendance at in-house face-to-face seminars, extra provision can be made by offering repeat sessions, short 'bite-sized' sessions at times when part-time staff are at work, or videoing the sessions and making these available online, supplemented with reflection tasks and feedback to engage teachers who are viewing the material by themselves in their own time.

(c) Individual teachers – If the one-size-fits-all CPD model, based on teachers learning together in the same room at the same time with the same materials at the same pace is often inadequate for addressing the needs of specific groups of teachers, it can be even more ineffective in fostering the development of individual teachers, as it often overlooks the many differences that exist among them. Effective CPD needs to make provision for the unique learning needs

of each individual teacher, catering for both their current needs and any relevant areas of expertise that they will need to develop for future career progression.

Institutions can support teachers to identify priorities for them to work on as part of the CPD programme by involving them in creating individual professional learning plans (see Appendix 1).

Sustained

Given that effective teacher learning programmes need to be prolonged to give teachers the time and support they need to learn new strategies well enough to apply them in the classroom and embed them as part of their daily practice, CPD designers need to find ways of moving away from one-off or short CPD events. One way of achieving this is to create long-term CPD plans (e.g. between one to three years) informed by needs analysis and high-level priorities that identify learning outcomes, success criteria, potential impact, resources needed, stages, timelines and measures.

Another approach is to focus on impact over quantity and information transfer, selecting fewer topics, creating thematic threads across the year, taking more time on each, with multiple activities focused on deep, sustained learning and transferability.[21]

While increasing the number of hours of a given programme might not always be possible, CPD programmes can be structured to ensure that the total number of hours is utilized to support teachers' development over a longer period of time. Here are a few examples:

1. A one day face-to-face event can be broken into three shorter sessions spread over two terms or an academic year. This would allow CPD providers to:

- Set experimentation, reflection and evaluation tasks that teachers can work on in the interim to process the content of the sessions in more depth, apply the taught strategies in their practice, assess their fitness for purpose in their context, and identify issues that they can bring to the next session.

- Support and coach teachers throughout the difficulties of the implementation process.

2. The model above can be adapted to include synchronous webinars instead of face-to-face sessions.

3. One-off, face-to-face events can be supplemented with online components to create a more prolonged and supportive blended learning programme. For example:

- A one-day face-to-face session can be supplemented with online support preceding and following it. Some of the content can be flipped[22] before the session (introduced online with minimum or no e-moderation) and follow-up support can be built after the face-to-face component through implementation tasks and forum discussions.

- Most of the content can be flipped, and the face-to-face session timetabled towards the end of the programme to support teachers with the practical aspects of implementation.

The possibilities are many and it is up to CPD designers to create prolonged and supportive CPD formats and to raise leaders' awareness that this model is more effective than one-off events in achieving impact.

Peer-collaborative

It makes sense to build into CPD programmes the types of collaborative practices that have been found to be ingredients of effective teacher development – i.e. involving teachers in solving problems or refining approaches together. Various activities can be used to promote peer collaboration, for example:

- Joint planning in pairs or small groups of teachers who teach the same level or course type;

- Team-teaching followed by joint evaluation of the planning, teaching and learning achieved;

- Focused live or videoed peer observation leading to discussion of specific issues or key aspects of implementation.

These activities can be integrated into coherent sequences following teacher inquiry or research models that promote peer-collaboration, such as lesson study, supported experiments, and collaborative action research (see 'Reflective' for an explanation of each). Other collaboration-based approaches that can be implemented to foster collegial teacher learning include:

21 Clay (2017).
22 Flipping teacher learning here refers to teachers engaging with the content before the face-to-face component by, e.g. watching online mini-lectures or webinar recordings, taking part in forum discussions or carrying out reading in their own time.

- Peer coaching – A process through which two or more teachers agree to use or practise a new initiative while supporting each other in the change process. This support includes shared planning of lessons and materials, and gathering data about the implementation process and its effects on students' learning.[23]

- Action learning sets – Problem-based learning and reflection, working on real issues with the support of a group of colleagues.[24]

- Cooperative development – An inquiry-based approach that integrates intellectual and practical learning with learning through talk, where two colleagues agree to work together for a certain period, following rules for their communication that foreground non-defensive talk and non-judgemental deep listening.[25]

Before embarking on ambitious peer collaboration initiatives, it is important for leaders to consider what this involves. For peer collaboration to work, the contextual constraints and cultural idiosyncrasies of the institution need to be taken into account, and the operational, staffing and cost implications should be carefully factored in and budgeted for in advance.

In-practice

Simply showing and telling teachers how a strategy or digital solution works and inviting or telling them to 'get on with it' is unlikely to result in them implementing it and embedding it as part of their own practice. Unfortunately, this is exactly the approach frequently adopted in many contexts, and this is perhaps the reason why many teacher development initiatives fail to deliver their promise of improved practice leading to improved student learning.

For CPD programmes to achieve impact they need to have a direct application to teachers' daily tasks and to be structured and sequenced to ensure progression in teacher learning from awareness resulting from initial input, to deep understanding of the new material, to deliberate and sustained practical implementation and experimentation, with opportunities for teachers to apply, refine and consolidate the new strategies in their own teaching contexts and grapple with any issues that may arise during the experimentation period. This journey from input through implementation to direct impact[26] also requires ongoing evaluation, so that teachers can assess what works and what does not as they implement changes in their practice, and adapt the new strategies to suit their context.

23 Joyce and Showers (2002).
24 Weinstein (1999).
25 See Edge and Attia (2014).
26 Weston and Clay (2018).

For CPD programmes to achieve impact they need to have a direct application to teachers' daily tasks

Reflective

If one of the main goals of a CPD programme is to enable teachers to embed evidence-informed, impactful and contextually relevant strategies in their practice which are not currently part of their repertoire, teachers need to become aware of why it is important for them to adopt these strategies and how these are different from what they already do. This requires CPD activities that allow teachers to critically examine their existing beliefs and practices, and understand and reflect on the value and relevance of the new strategies.

Integrating reflection and practice

Engagement in CPD requires engagement in and with reflection as a tool for learning so that while practising a certain theory, teachers are also able to theorize their practice. In other words, reflection is the lynchpin that prompts change. In order to support teachers to develop critical and systematic reflection on their practice, CPD designers can adopt teacher research and enquiry approaches based on iterative cycles of investigation, action, evaluation and refinement, such as:

- Lesson Study – A teacher research model in which three teachers work together to address an identified area for development in their students' learning by planning together, teaching and observing a series of at least three 'research lessons', and reflecting on and refining their interventions.[27]

- Supported Experiments – Small scale, informal action research projects where teachers pilot a strategy that is new to them with support, feedback and coaching from their peers. The focus is on deliberate practice to change the way teachers teach and refinement to improve teaching.[28]

- Exploratory Action Research – An approach that is particularly suited to supporting teacher-research in difficult circumstances. Teachers conduct small-scale, practically useful research to understand a problem, a puzzle or a success, and plan to effect changes in practice. It stresses the need to de-mystify and de-academize teacher research, and to ease teachers into it gradually by engaging them in exploration of issues arising in their classrooms before attempting to solve them.[29]

- Collaborative Action Research – This model of action research stresses the peer-collaborative element of successful CPD described above. Teachers voluntarily work with others in research pairs, groups or teams, researching and evaluating findings together, sharing ideas, and supporting and keeping each other focused throughout the process.[30]

In addition to providing a systematic integration of theory and practice, the approaches to teacher research mentioned above also offer opportunities for a prolonged and sustained focus on one topic over time, and the potential for embedding the resulting changes into institutions' procedures and culture, particularly if teachers undertake research and experimentation together and share their findings with other colleagues. Implementing such approaches, however, requires expertise in teacher research, a significant time commitment for teachers to conduct the cycles, and support from management to make the needed resources available.

Evaluated

Guskey (2000) proposes a five-level model to evaluate CPD: 1) evaluation of participants' reactions; 2) assessment of participants' actual learning; 3) analysis of the alignment between the institution's policies, procedures and practices, and the CPD offered; 4) evaluation of participants' use of the new knowledge and skills; and, 5) assessment of the impact of the CPD on students' learning outcomes. Each level builds on previous levels and is important both to establish the impact of professional development programmes (feedback) and to inform the design of future programmes (feedforward).

27 For more information about Lesson Study see Dudley (2014).
28 To find out more about Supported Experiments see Petty (2003) and Richardson (2016).
29 Further information about Exploratory Action Research can be found in Smith (2015) and Smith et al. (2014).
30 More information about Collaborative Action Research can be found in Burns (2015).

Putting it all together

Enabling the professional growth of teachers with diverse backgrounds, qualifications, experiences, areas of expertise, beliefs and stages in their professional careers is a challenging undertaking that requires a comprehensive and flexible framework for CPD. Such a framework needs to be capable of orchestrating a delicate balancing act: on the one hand, achieving teachers' improvement in specific areas of underperformance and where necessary, raising standards in line with institutional goals – which is arguably a non-negotiable and often an other-directed objective – while simultaneously enabling teachers' career-long growth as empowered creators of content-relevant knowledge in the driving seat of their professional learning, which requires teacher agency, choice, autonomy and self-direction.

A CPD programme that aspires to achieve both these ambitious and seemingly contradictory goals must be designed in a coherent and integrated way, so that institutional needs and teachers' personal needs can be met without tension, while sustaining teachers' motivation, engagement and commitment throughout the process. One possible approach is to design a two-pronged CPD programme consisting of two key strands, which are equally important and necessary: 'CPD Directed' and 'CPD Choice', both informing each teacher's individual learning plans, as follows:

CPD Directed

This strand aims to raise standards of teaching and learning and is aligned to strategic, whole-organization priorities. As such, it is non-negotiable. CPD Directed activity is designed to develop the knowledge and skills that each teacher needs to do their job effectively in their context. The topics covered in this strand are carefully selected and informed by recommendations from inspections, relevant strategic documentation (e.g. the organization's strategy and education plans), analyses of quality assurance observation data, teacher voice, etc.

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CPD Choice

This strand offers personalized teacher learning and involves teachers in selecting areas for development and activities to undertake. CPD Choice activities are shaped by individuals' interests and goals, are designed to develop knowledge and skills that might be beneficial or enhance practice. Teachers are supported by leaders to make relevant and potentially impactful choices, using a range of sources of information and inspiration, such as the ones mentioned on pages 10 and 11 – 'Individual teachers'. Examples of CPD Choice activities include elective sessions and involvement in teacher research projects, through which teachers can choose the topic and focus of their project, the research question to be answered, the teacher research approach, the dissemination channel(s) – e.g.: giving an in-house presentation, a talk at a conference, writing a blog post or article for a teachers' publication, a combination of the above, etc.

Planning CPD for impact

To ensure that the various strands, goals and needs are woven together coherently into an impactful CPD programme, an alternative is to consider Guskey's five levels and – as he suggests – to plan 'backwards', starting with the desired final outcomes and working back. This entails identifying in the following order:

1. The improved student outcomes that the institution wants to achieve (Level 5).

2. The practices and innovations that would enable the organization to produce such outcomes (Level 4).

3. The organizational support that needs to be in place to enable the new practices to be implemented (Level 3).

4. The knowledge and skills that teachers need to develop to apply the identified practices and innovations to their context and bring about improved student learning (Level 2).

5. The CPD events and activities that enable teachers to develop the needed knowledge and skills (Level 1).[31]

Appendix 2 includes an institutional CPD planning pro-forma organized following this sequence.

31 Guskey (2001).

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Conclusions

Given the central role of CPD programmes in fostering impactful teacher learning which results in improved student learning and a motivated and knowledgeable workforce, it is in the best interests of institutions to invest in designing, implementing and evaluating evidence-informed and contextually relevant programmes for teacher learning. Teacher learning is simply too important to be left to teachers' goodwill, time and resources. It is the institution's responsibility to provide the necessary resources and support for teachers to engage in impactful CPD programmes, not just to keep up-to-date with the latest developments, but to ensure that each learner achieves the best possible outcomes. In times of high stakes accountability, great competition, constant change in education systems and significant cuts in education budgets, institutions which operate as if CPD is an unnecessary expense and a low-priority activity are at risk. Investment in teachers' CPD is investing in the institution's future survival and success.

Data from the SOTD survey as well as those from a recent independent survey on the same topic[32] both seem to confirm that the evidence-informed features mentioned above offer sound underlying principles upon which to design impactful CPD programmes, if applied judiciously with reference to the many contextual factors that need to be considered. A contextually sensitive and responsive programme of professional development for teachers designed on the basis of these principles, resourced adequately and supported by senior management is likely to provide a viable alternative to the ineffective CPD models and practices that still abound in many institutions.

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32 Díaz Maggioli (2017).

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Appendix 1: Suggestions for Individual Development Plans

These plans can be informed by:

- the teachers' own views of their learning needs;

- feedback from their academic managers and students;

- areas for development identified in observation reports;

- previous in-house CPD workshops, conference talks and webinars attended – these provide opportunities for teachers to become (more) aware of what they could be doing, doing more of, or doing better;

- recurrent classroom issues, which offer 'raw material' for areas of focus and research questions for action research and experimentation projects;

- teacher development frameworks (see below).

CPD frameworks

CPD frameworks are sets of descriptors sequenced to reflect different stages of a teacher's development across a range of categories of teacher knowledge and skills. They are often accompanied by online diagnostic tools based on the frameworks that can be used to help teachers and their managers map out short, medium and long-term development goals by identifying their current stage of professional development and the areas they need to focus on, and providing guidance on how to access the knowledge, skills and qualifications needed to achieve specific goals. Examples of CPD frameworks identified by Cambridge English include:

The **Cambridge English Teaching Framework**

The **Cambridge English Teacher Development Tracker**

The **Cambridge English Digital Framework for Language Teachers and 'Test my Digital Skills'**[33]

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33 University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, 2014 (see http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/images/269979-continuing-professional-development-for-english-language-teachers-case-study.pdf for further information).

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Another tool that can be used to diagnose teachers' learning needs is Díaz Maggioli's practical framework:[34]

Updated Knowledge

Socialization

- Sharing
- Observing
- Modelling
- Guiding

Externalization

- Awareness-raising
- Sharing
- Accepting
- Articulating

Aware   **Unaware**

Internalization

- Accessing
- Adopting
- Adapting
- Organizing

Combination

- Awareness-raising
- Learning
- Unlearning
- Adopting
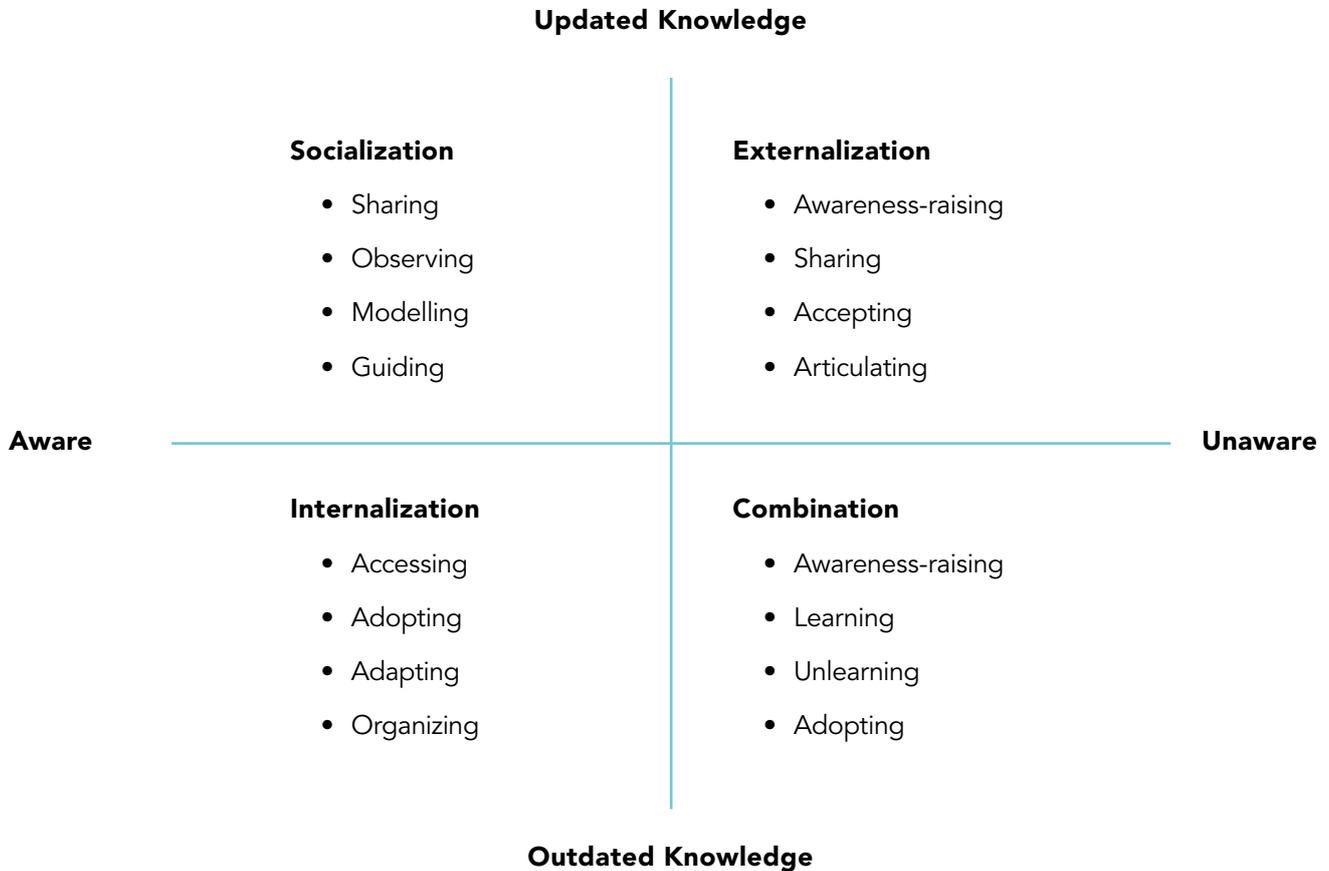
Outdated Knowledge

Figure 1 – The Teacher's Choice Framework

The framework is made up of four quadrants defined by two variables: how updated a teacher's knowledge base is and how aware the teacher is of their knowledge base. Quadrant one refers to teachers who are aware that their knowledge base is updated and who need to socialize their knowledge among their peers by training, guiding and observing other teachers and modelling best practices. Teachers in quadrant two are not fully aware that their knowledge base is updated and can develop further by externalizing their knowledge through CPD activities that allow them to raise awareness of their own expertise, share it by articulating it, and in doing so, accepting it. Quadrant three teachers are aware that their knowledge base is outdated and need to internalize new knowledge by accessing it, adopting and adapting new ideas and organizing their existing and new knowledge. Teachers in quadrant four are not aware that their knowledge base is outdated, and in general tend to engage less in CPD. These teachers have expertise in certain areas of teaching, which needs to be recognized and valued so that they can be motivated to develop it further by becoming more aware of their learning needs and learning from others about new developments. This may mean unlearning long-held assumptions and practices, and embracing new ideas and strategies.

34 Díaz Maggioli, 2004, 2017.

Appendix 2: An institutional CPD planning pro-forma

This pro-forma is based on Guskey's five levels of professional development evaluation (2000). It can be used to plan whole-organization CPD programmes, or departmental plans that feed into the whole-organization plan.

Period:

Priorities for CPD

1. STUDENT OUTCOMES

What student learning outcomes do we want to achieve?
Please write SMART outcomes. Consider:

1. Improved learning outcomes to be achieved by all learners.

-
-
-
-
-

2. Improved learning outcomes to be achieved by specific classes, departments, schools or faculties.

-
-
-
-
-

2. PRACTICES AND STRATEGIES

What evidence-informed and contextually relevant strategies and practices will enable us to achieve the student outcomes identified in '1' above in the most effective and efficient way?
Please consider impactful approaches and strategies that have been implemented in a context similar to ours.

1. Teaching and learning strategies to be taught to all teachers across the whole organization.

-
-
-
-
-

2. Teaching and learning strategies to be taught to specific groups of teachers.

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-
-
-

3. INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES AND SUPPORT

What institutional policies will we need to be put in place or adapt to support the implementation of the new strategies and practices?
What other support is needed?

-
-
-
-
-

4. TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

What knowledge and skills will teachers need to develop to apply the practices and innovations identified in '2' above to their context?
Please write specific competencies. Consider the knowledge and skills that:

1. All the teachers in the organization will need to develop.

-
-
-
-
-

2. Specific groups of teachers in the organization will need to develop. (These should feed into Individual Teachers' Learning Plans).

-
-
-
-
-

5. CPD ACTIVITIES

What teacher learning events, activities and approaches will enable teachers to develop the knowledge and skills identified in '4' above most efficiently and effectively?
Consider evidence-informed and contextually-relevant approaches, models and activities that lead to impactful teacher learning. Identify these for:

1. All the teachers in the organization.

-
-
-
-
-

2. Specific groups of teachers (These should feed into Individual Teachers' Learning Plans).

-
-
-
-
-

Timeline

(Column '1' can be adapted to suit different organzations as they work with different times – e.g. semesters, terms, quarters, etc.)

PERIOD (e.g. term, quarter, etc)	TEACHER LEARNING TOPICS (identify themes and competencies for each theme)	CPD ACTIVITIES		SUCCESS CRITERIA	EVALUATION METHODS
		CPD DIRECTED	CPD CHOICE		

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