Professional Development for Language Teachers

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Professional Development for Language Teachers: Strategies for Teacher Learning *by Jack C. Richards and Thomas S. C. Farrell*

Professional Development for Language Teachers

Strategies for Teacher Learning

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Contents

1 *The nature of teacher education*

This book is about how teachers can continue with their professional development as language teachers once their period of formal training is over. It also examines how supervisors and administrators can provide opportunities for such development to take place. The need for ongoing teacher education has been a recurring theme in language teaching circles in recent years and has been given renewed focus as a result of the emergence of teacher-led initiatives such as action research, reflective teaching, and team teaching. Opportunities for in-service training are crucial to the long-term development of teachers as well as for the long-term success of the programs in which they work. The need for ongoing renewal of professional skills and knowledge is not a reflection of inadequate training but simply a response to the fact that not everything teachers need to know can be provided at preservice level, as well as the fact that the knowledge base of teaching constantly changes. The following vignette is an example that shows the approach a teacher in Korea is taking to manage his own professional development.

Vignette

After teaching in Asia for 2 years without any qualifications and no teaching attributes beyond rough reflection (why didn't that lesson work?), I did the RSA CTEFLA in England (I'm an American). The course was frustrating because so much of what was taught seemed Eurocentric, with little relevance to teaching EFL in Asia. But it gave me tools and reference points for class reflection, and started me off with independent reading. Seven years later, I have begun a master's course in teaching foreign languages. It was the intervening time, however, that provided my principal opportunities for professional development. I am an active member of several TEFL societies: Attending conference sessions and reading newsletters and journals provides insights into the actions and thoughts of my contemporaries. I read professional materials regularly, and write book reviews on a monthly basis. Although I sometimes don't study these as deeply as a graduate student

would, the presentation of new ideas and the opportunity to balance them against conference presentations, newsletter articles, and regular chats with my colleagues allow theory and practice to find meaning in my own lesson planning. On the other hand, most of the planned staff development sessions I have attended have been of little relevance to the classroom. I would do better to use this time to reflect more carefully on the lessons of the past week. My aim for the next few months is to get in the habit of keeping a reflective journal, and reviewing and analyzing those entries every month or two. Unfortunately, although there have been many papers arguing the merits of reflective journals, there is little to teach how to analyze them. I have more research to do.

Robert Dickey

Reflection

- What are your plans for your professional development in the next few years?
- What kinds of organized staff-development activities have you found most useful?

As this example illustrates, teachers have different needs at different times during their careers, and the needs of the schools and institutions in which they work also change over time. The pressure for teachers to update their knowledge in areas such as curriculum trends, second language acquisition research, composition theory and practice, technology, or assessment is intense, and it is the school and the classroom that provide a major source for further professional development.

The teacher-education activities discussed in this book are based on the following assumptions:

- In any school or educational institution, there are teachers with different levels of experience, knowledge, skill, and expertise. Mutual sharing of knowledge and experience is a valuable source of professional growth.
- Teachers are generally motivated to continue their professional development once they begin their careers.
- Knowledge about language teaching and learning is in a tentative and incomplete state, and teachers need regular opportunities to update their professional knowledge.
- Classrooms are not only places where students learn—they are also places where teachers can learn.

- Teachers can play an active role in their own professional development.
- It is the responsibility of schools and administrators to provide opportunities for continued professional education and to encourage teachers to participate in them.
- In order for such opportunities to take place, they need to be planned, supported, and rewarded.

The example above also illustrates another crucial aspect of the notion of teacher education: the fact that it is a process that takes place over time rather than an event that starts and ends with formal training or graduate education. This process can be supported both at the institutional level and through teachers' own individual efforts. Both approaches will be discussed in this book. Although the primary audience addressed is classroom teachers, the kinds of activities discussed here often depend for their success on the active cooperation of program coordinators and others within the school or institution, and this audience is addressed when appropriate.

Teacher training and teacher development

Teacher training

Two broad kinds of goals within the scope of teacher education are often identified, *training* and *development*. Training refers to activities directly focused on a teacher's present responsibilities and is typically aimed at short-term and immediate goals. Often it is seen as preparation for induction into a first teaching position or as preparation to take on a new teaching assignment or responsibility. Training involves understanding basic concepts and principles as a prerequisite for applying them to teaching and the ability to demonstrate principles and practices in the classroom. Teacher training also involves trying out new strategies in the classroom, usually with supervision, and monitoring and getting feedback from others on one's practice. The content of training is usually determined by experts and is often available in standard training formats or through prescriptions in methodology books. The following are examples of goals from a training perspective:

- Learning how to use effective strategies to open a lesson
- Adapting the textbook to match the class
- Learning how to use group activities in a lesson
- Using effective questioning techniques
- Using classroom aids and resources (e.g., video)
- Techniques for giving learners feedback on performance

An example of a large-scale training initiative was a recent 60-hour in-service training program on text-based approaches to the teaching of grammar in Singapore schools, which was a mandatory course for all teachers of English in Singapore secondary schools. The content of the course was developed by an outside provider, the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) in conjunction with the Singapore Ministry of Education, and the training sessions were run by three educational institutions over a period of 24 months. In this case, the training was provided to help with the implementation of a new English language curriculum, one that seeks to link the teaching of grammar to the analysis of texts.

Teacher development

Development generally refers to general growth not focused on a specific job. It 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."

The following are examples of goals from a development perspective:

- Understanding how the process of second language development occurs
- Understanding how our roles change according to the kind of learners we are teaching
- Understanding the kinds of decision making that occur during lessons
- Reviewing our own theories and principles of language teaching
- Developing an understanding of different styles of teaching
- Determining learners' perceptions of classroom activities

Strategies for teacher development often involve documenting different kinds of teaching practices; reflective analysis of teaching practices, examining beliefs, values, and principles; conversation with peers on core issues; and collaborating with peers on classroom projects. However, although many things can be learned about teaching through self-observation and critical reflection, many cannot, such as subject-matter knowledge, pedagogical expertise, and understanding of curriculum and materials. Professional development, therefore, should go beyond personal and individual reflection. For example, it can include exploration of new trends and theories in language teaching; familiarization with developments in subject-matter knowledge such as pedagogical grammar, composition theory, or genre theory; and critical examination of the way schools and language programs are organized and managed.

The following vignette from a young English teacher in Cambodia shows how he is trying to address both his immediate needs and his longer-term development.

Vignette

I did my BA TEFL degree in Cambodia, and taught part-time at a private institute while I was studying. After I graduated, I got a job teaching at the university and I have been teaching there now for 2 years. My part-time job was the starting point of my development as a teacher and enabled me to make connections between my university course and the classroom. Before I started teaching at the university, I worked for 2 months with some of the senior lecturers and subject coordinators to familiarize myself with the tasks I would have to carry out. Since I have been teaching at the university, I have also tried to observe other teachers and learn from them. I have also taken a computer-training course. A highlight for me was attending my first international conference, held in Phnom Penh. Now I think I appreciate the importance of research for any professional development. Staff-development activities in my department (mostly in the form of a discussion guided by a more experienced senior lecturer) have also been very useful. I also organize a speaking club for our students, which has taught me the importance of extracurricular activities in language learning. My main challenges at present are caused by having to teach large classes and the shortage of up-to-date books and resources in our library. I hope I will have the chance for further training in the future.

Chan Virak

Reflection

- How much collaboration is there among teachers in your institution? What forms does it take?
- What are some of the problems language teachers face in the first years of teaching?

Understanding teacher learning

Teacher-education processes derive their rationale from assumptions about the nature of teacher development and how it takes place. This field has been

called teacher learning (Freeman & Richards, 1996) and is concerned with exploring questions such as the following: What is the nature of teacher knowledge and how is it acquired? What cognitive processes do we employ while teaching and while learning to teach? How do experienced and novice teachers differ? These questions are themselves dependent on our conceptualization of the nature of language teaching and our understanding of the knowledge, attitudes, skills, and processes we employ while teaching.

Conceptualizations of teacher learning

A number of conceptualizations of teacher learning can be found underlying recent and less recent teacher-education processes, and although such conceptualizations sometimes overlap and may be understood differently by different theoreticians, they can lead to different approaches to teacher education.

Teacher learning as skill learning

This view sees teacher learning as the development of a range of different skills or competencies, mastery of which underlies successful teaching. Teaching can be broken down into discrete skills that can be mastered one at a time. The skills targeted with this approach (e.g., questioning, giving explanations, presenting new language) are those identified with a model of effective teaching. Teacher training involves presenting and modeling the skills and providing opportunities for teachers to master them.

Teacher learning as a cognitive process

This approach views teaching as a complex cognitive activity and focuses on the nature of teachers' beliefs and thinking and how these influence their teaching and learning. It emphasizes that "teachers are active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex practically-oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs" (Borg, 2003, p. 81). In teacher education, it encourages teachers to explore their own beliefs and thinking processes and to examine how these influence their classroom practice. Processes used include self-monitoring, journal writing, and analysis of critical incidents.

Teacher learning as personal construction

This educational philosophy is based on the belief that knowledge is actively constructed by learners and not passively received. Learning is seen as

involving reorganization and reconstruction and it is through these processes that knowledge is internalized. New learning is fitted into the learner's personal framework (Roberts, 1998). In teacher education, this has led to an emphasis on teachers' individual and personal contributions to learning and to understanding of their classrooms, and it uses activities that focus on the development of self-awareness and personal interpretation through such activities as journal writing and self-monitoring.

Teacher learning as reflective practice

This view of learning is based on the assumption that teachers learn from experience through focused reflection on the nature and meaning of teaching experiences (Schon, 1983; Wallace, 1991; Richards & Lockhart, 1994). Reflection is viewed as the process of critical examination of experiences, a process that can lead to a better understanding of one's teaching practices and routines. In teacher education, this has led to the notion of reflective teaching, that is, teaching accompanied by collecting information on one's teaching as the basis for critical reflection, through such procedures as self-monitoring, observation, and case studies.

The teacher-development activities discussed in this book are not linked to a single theory of teacher learning because we believe that teachers can usefully learn from procedures drawn from different educational philosophies. However, the majority of the activities discussed throughout the book can be seen as reflecting a view of teacher learning as a cognitive process, as personal construction, and as reflection on action.

Novices and experts

Another important dimension of understanding what is meant by teacher development is the difference between a novice teacher and an expert teacher. Although the nature of expertise in language teaching is an underexplored research field (however, see Tsui, 2003), some of the differences between novice and experienced language teachers seem to lie in "the different ways in which they relate to their contexts of work, and hence their conceptions and understanding of teaching, which is developed in these contexts (Tsui, 2003, p. 245). Expert teachers thus exhibit differences in the way they perceive and understand what they do. Some of these differences include the following (Tsui, 2003):

- A richer and more elaborate knowledge base
- Ability to integrate and use different kinds of knowledge
- Ability to make sound intuitive judgments based on past experience

- A desire to investigate and solve a wide range of teaching problems
- A deeper understanding of students and student learning
- Awareness of instructional objectives to support teaching
- Better understanding and use of language learning strategies
- Greater awareness of the learning context
- Greater fluidity and automaticity in teaching

Experienced teachers approach their work differently from novices because they know what typical classroom activities and expected problems and solutions are like (Berliner, 1987). By comparison, novice teachers typically are less familiar with subject matter, teaching strategies, and teaching contexts and lack an adequate repertoire of "mental scripts and behavioral routines" (Berliner, 1987, p. 72).

The following vignette, from a teacher in the United States, shows not only the influence of a Master of Arts (M.A.) in teaching ESL but also the inspiration of working with expert teachers on this teacher's professional development.

Vignette

I got a Master of Arts in teaching ESL from the University of Minnesota. But more important, I worked in a variety of well-organized ESL/EFL programs right from the start of my career. I've been fortunate because I've always been in contact with people who were experts in some aspects of the field, so I've been able to have lunchtime conversations that helped keep me up to date. The most helpful things in my professional development were those informal contacts with smart people. That's how I developed my interests in vocabulary teaching, in using corpora to enhance teaching, and in writing materials. Also very helpful were courses I took in linguistic analysis and English syntax at the University of Minnesota, although the methods courses I took, which were little more than surveys of the faddish "methods" of the 1970s and 1980s, were not helpful—I have never applied any of that in my teaching life.

Larry Zwier

Reflection

- How have you been able to apply what you learned in your TESL/TEFL studies since you started teaching?

- How can teachers and schools make best use of the expertise of experienced teachers?

Many of the teacher-development activities discussed throughout this book seek to enable teachers with different levels of expertise to work together through peer observation, team teaching, mentoring, group discussion, and joint planning and problem solving.

Individual and institutional perspective

The individual perspective

Professional development is directed toward both the institution's goals and the teacher's own personal goals. Achieving personal growth and improving departmental performance can go hand in hand. Most schools strive for a mix of both. The vignettes above demonstrate that teachers are generally interested in adding to their professional knowledge and keeping up to date with theory and practice in the field, in improving their teaching skills so that they feel more confident about what they teach and achieve better results with their students. They may also be interested in clarifying and understanding their principles, beliefs, and values, as well as the nature and values underlying the schools in which they work, so that they can be empowered. These can all be considered as examples of teacher development from the perspective of the individual teacher. From the point of view of the teacher's personal development, a number of areas of professional development may be identified:

- *Subject-matter knowledge*. Increasing knowledge of the disciplinary basis of TESOL—that is, English grammar, discourse analysis, phonology, testing, second language acquisition research, methodology, curriculum development, and the other areas that define the professional knowledge base of language teaching
- *Pedagogical expertise*. Mastery of new areas of teaching, adding to one's repertoire of teaching specializations, improving ability to teach different skill areas to learners of different ages and backgrounds
- *Self-awareness*. Knowledge of oneself as a teacher, of one's principles and values, strengths and weaknesses
- *Understanding of learners*. Deepening understanding of learners, learning styles, learners' problems and difficulties, ways of making content more accessible to learners

- *Understanding of curriculum and materials*. Deepening one's understanding of curriculum and curriculum alternatives, use and development of instructional materials
- *Career advancement*. Acquisition of the knowledge and expertise necessary for personal advancement and promotion, including supervisory and mentoring skills

The institutional perspective

In many situations, teacher training provides adequate preparation for a teacher's initial teaching assignments during the first few years in a school. New teachers tend to have a fairly heavy teaching load and tend to get the more "basic" and less problematic courses. However, it is also generally the case that the preservice courses they took were of a fairly general nature, somewhat theoretical, and not directly relevant to their teaching assignments, and thus much of what they need to know has to be learned on the job, as is seen in the vignettes above.

After teachers have been teaching for some time, however, their knowledge and skills sometimes become outdated or there may be a lack of fit between the knowledge and skills the teacher possesses and what the school needs. For example, a teacher may have to take on more difficult tasks for which he or she has not received any formal training, such as the preparation or supervision of entrance tests; or, as a result of staff changes, the teacher may have to take on new assignments that were not previously part of his or her teaching; or a key staff member may leave and his or her teaching may have to be taken over by others, none of whom share the teacher's specialization. Qualifications too soon become outdated as a result of changes in the field.

The most practical response to this situation is for the school to provide the means by which teachers can acquire the knowledge and skills they need. Here, teacher development is primarily conceived of in terms of the needs of the institution. Because it refers to developmental activities within a school or institution, it is usually referred to as *staff development* and often takes the form of *in-service training.* It is intended to directly or indirectly enhance the performance of the institution as a whole, as well as to contribute incidentally to the teacher's individual development. Hence it has the following goals:

- *Institutional development*. Improvement of the performance of the school as a whole, that is, to make it more successful, attract more students, and achieve better learning outcomes. Most successful organizations regard the training and development of their staff as a matter of high priority.

- *Career development*. It also facilitates the professional advancement of teachers to more senior positions in the institution (e.g., senior teacher, coordinator) by providing them with the necessary knowledge and skills. Increased job satisfaction that results will lead to better teacher performance and better teacher retention.
- *Enhanced levels of student learning*. An important goal is to raise the achievement levels of students in the institution, a goal that is not only important for its own sake but that also adds to the reputation of the institution and its teachers.

From the institutional perspective, professional development activities are intended not merely to improve the performance of teachers but to benefit the school as a whole. Consequently, opportunities for professional development should be provided for all staff. A program coordinator may well need to complete a master's degree in TESOL, but a newly hired teacher may also need training in how to use video effectively as a teaching resource. Both needs are equally important because the success of a school program may well depend on both the strengths of its curriculum and the teaching skills of its junior staff. Improvement of teaching skills and acquisition of new information, theories, and understanding are not goals in themselves: They are part of the process of institutional development. The fact that a teacher has, on his or her own initiative, acquired a specialization in New Zealand literature, for example, may be commendable, but it may be irrelevant to the school's goals. Burns (1999, p. 209) argues that professional development activities such as action research that are "integrated into school or organizational change become a powerful way of facilitating school curriculum renewal and ensuring that language teachers retain greater ownership of curriculum implementation."

Joyce (1991) identifies five dimensions of institutional improvement that teacher development can contribute to:

1. *Collegiality*. Creating a culture through developing cohesive and professional relationships between staff (and the wider community), in which "broad" vision-directed improvements as well as day-to-day operations are valued
2. *Research*. Familiarizing staff with research findings on school improvement, teaching effectiveness, and so on, which can support "in-house" development
3. *Site-specific information*. Enabling and encouraging staff to collect and analyze data on students, schools, and effects of change—both as part of a formal evaluation and informally
4. *Curriculum initiatives*. Collaborating with others to introduce change in their subject areas as well as across the school curriculum

5. *Instructional initiatives*. Enabling staff to develop their teaching skills and strategies through, for example, generic teaching skills, repertoires of teaching methods, and specific teaching styles or approaches

Collaborative and self-directed learning

Collaborative learning

Although much teacher development can occur through a teacher's own personal initiative, collaboration with others both enhances individual learning and serves the collective goals of an institution. Most successful organizations depend on people working effectively together in teams, but special effort often has to be made to develop teamwork in schools because teaching is generally seen as an individual activity. The goals of collegial forms of professional development are to encourage greater interaction between teachers, peer-based learning through mentoring, and sharing skills, experience, and solutions to common problems. The school is viewed as a learning community. Collaborative professional development projects allow tasks and responsibilities to be shared. For a culture of cooperation to develop in a school, opportunities need to be provided for teachers to work and learn together through participation in group-oriented activities with shared goals, and responsibilities, involving joint problem solving. Collegiality creates new roles for teachers, such as team leader, teacher trainer, or critical friend. Cooperation becomes a value that can guide the process of teacher development. It is "grounded in the human moral and social capacity to take the position of the other through numerous forms of reciprocity, mutuality, and give and take" (Brody & Davidson, 1998, p. 6). Successful collaborative learning cannot be taken for granted, however, and must be carefully planned and monitored. The following vignette, from a teacher in the Philippines, demonstrates the crucial role collaborating with others can play in a teacher's development.

Vignette

I got my degree with a major in English from one of the best private universities in our city. But this didn't make my teaching career easy. When I started teaching, I felt so limited with the way I handled my class. I could not even identify what teaching methods I was using. I was dependent on the teacher's manual to the students' textbook and limited to teaching suggestions from some of my colleagues. I felt I wasn't really doing any justice in my teaching and I realized I needed to learn more. Having to face more

than sixty students in a classroom every day forced me to read whatever I could, to experiment, and to consult others with more experience.

I was fortunate to have been sent to participate in several training seminars and workshops at local, regional, and national levels. My participation in these courses and workshops enhanced my skills and better equipped me as an English language teacher and helped me make a quick adjustment to my "baptism of fire" in the teaching profession. I was very lucky to be asked to join a team working on planning a syllabus for secondary level. I learned so much in the process. Researching and collaborating with members of the group was very enriching. From my more experienced colleagues I have learned the importance of considering students' interests and proficiency level in preparing lessons and the need to use feedback from students to make necessary adjustments in my teaching.

I know my 5-year teaching experience is not enough. I believe I still need to deepen my content knowledge and learn new methods of teaching, devote more time to working with colleagues, to examine new standards being proposed, and to seek innovative ways to improve student achievement, promote quality teaching, and motivate students. I am currently completing a diploma course in applied linguistics, which is providing many opportunities to develop, master, and reflect on new approaches to working with students.

Ali Anudin

Reflection

- What are some of the classroom realities that a university degree may not adequately prepare a teacher for?
- What do you think teachers can learn working on group projects?

Self-directed learning

An important direction in teacher development in recent years has been a movement away from "outsider" approaches to "insider" ones. The former are often based on expert knowledge as well as general theories and principles that teachers apply to their own situations; the latter are locally based approaches that encourage teachers to explore their own contexts and construct their own knowledge and understanding of what takes place in their classrooms. In self-directed learning, teachers assume responsibility for setting goals for self-development and for managing and controlling their own learning.

Among the reasons for the shift toward self-directed approaches to teacher development are a move from an authoritarian organizational

structure in schools toward more democratic and participatory forms of teacher development; a shifting of responsibility for professional development from managers and supervisors to teachers themselves; and a recognition of the power of experiential and action-based learning.

Central to self-directed learning are the following processes:

- *Inquiry*. Asking questions about one's own teaching practices and seeking the information needed to answer these questions
- *Self-appraisal*. Assessing one's teaching and development on the basis of evidence from oneself and others and the ability to critically reflect and a desire to analyze oneself to determine one's strengths and weaknesses
- *Experience*. Personal experience becomes the basis and stimulus for learning.
- *Personal construction*. Meaning is personally constructed by the learner.
- *Contextualized learning*. Learning takes place in a particular context and social setting and is socially constructed.
- *Planning and managing*. Learning is dependent on the ability to set short- and long-term goals and to select strategies for their achievement.

Many of the development activities discussed in this book attribute a crucial role to self-direction.

A wide variety of methods and procedures are available for in-service teacher development, and in the remaining chapters of this book we will examine the various options available, consider what they are useful for, and describe procedures for implementing them. We will consider activities that can be carried out at the individual level, those that involve working with a colleague, those that are group-based, and those that are often a response to an institutional directive. Both the individual teacher's perspective and that of the supervisor or administrator are addressed, where appropriate. Some can be carried out in more than one mode, as Table 1 illustrates.

Table 1: *Activities for Teacher Development*

Individual	One-to-one	Group-based	Institutional
• Self-monitoring • Journal writing • Critical incidents • Teaching portfolios • Action research	• Peer coaching • Peer observation • Critical friendships • Action research • Critical incidents • Team teaching	• Case studies • Action research • Journal writing • Teacher support groups	• Workshops • Action research • Teacher support groups

Implementing professional development: The teacher's perspective

Teachers can plan many aspects of their own professional development. Most of the activities and procedures discussed in this book can be carried out under the teacher's own initiative, although the institution can and should play an important role in facilitating the individual initiatives of its teachers. The following guidelines reflect the teacher's perspective:

Decide what you would like to learn about your teaching and about the field

Even though you have probably completed your formal preparations as a teacher, your professional development does not stop once you have acquired your professional qualifications. The first step in planning for your ongoing professional development is to determine what your short-term and long-term goals are. These could include goals such as the following:

- To become better informed about the field
- To learn more about learning strategies and to explore ways of incorporating a focus on strategies into my teaching
- To develop more effective ways of assessing students
- To improve aspects of my teaching that are in need of review
- To develop a better understanding of English grammar and how to teach it
- To work on collaborative materials-development projects with colleagues
- To learn how to plan and evaluate a language course

The starting point is thus to focus on particular issues that seem to be important to your teaching and that you would like to know more about.

Identify a strategy to explore the topic you are interested in

This book will introduce you to a number of different ways of facilitating professional development. Which of the activities seems to be best suited to clarifying the issues you want to explore and helping you achieve your goals? We recommend starting with a simple activity, such as self-monitoring or peer observation, in order to develop some preliminary ideas about the topic you are interested in. Later you can decide if you want to follow up your initial investigation with other activities, such as peer coaching or action research.

Talk to people who have taken part in a professional development activity

Try to meet and talk to teachers who have taken part in teacher-development activities of the kind you wish to try out. The Internet is an excellent way of getting in touch with teachers who share your interests and concerns. In your conversations with other teachers and with Internet colleagues, you can find out what their experience of different activities such as journal writing or team teaching was like, how they went about it, what they learned from it, and what recommendations they would give to someone who wished to carry out a similar activity.

Decide what kind of support you will need

Many of the activities discussed in this book do not need support from a coordinator or manager. However, some such as peer observation, team teaching, and peer coaching, will benefit from institutional assistance. In this case, discuss the goals of such an activity with colleagues and negotiate suitable support where available.

Select a colleague or colleagues to work with

You may want to work with a colleague or colleagues (in your own organization or from outside) in order to help you implement a teacher-development strategy or activity. You will need to find a colleague you can trust to work with you as you investigate the issue. This relationship can be in the form of a critical friendship, team teaching, peer coaching, or a teacher support group.

Set realistic goals and establish a time frame

It is important not to underestimate the time commitment that the activity you have selected may require. You are the best judge of how much time you can afford to devote to journal writing, team teaching, a discussion group, and so on. And in planning an activity you should decide on when you feel it will have achieved its aims. How many times will your support group meet? How often will you take time to write a teaching journal? How often will you and a colleague plan to observe each other's teaching? Often, the first time you carry out a particular activity should be regarded as a tryout

in order for you to judge whether the activity will need to be fine-tuned or modified in light of your experience.

Evaluate what you have learned and share the results with others

Once you have carried out an activity, such as team teaching, a journal, a case study, or assembled a portfolio, step back and review what you learned from the process and whether the process could have been improved or modified in any way. How can you share what you learned with colleagues? (See the discussion above.)

Implementing professional development: The institutional perspective

From what has been said thus far, it follows that professional development, either from the perspective of the individual teacher or from that of the institution, should not be left to chance. The following guidelines reflect the institution's role in implementing a professional development program for its teachers.

Determining the needs of both the institution and its teachers

A strategic approach to professional development starts with needs analysis. Needs analysis here refers to both the institution's needs and the perceived needs of teachers. The former may be the judgment of senior teachers and management, while the latter may be determined informally through conversation with teachers or formally through administering a questionnaire or collecting information in other ways (e.g., at a staff meeting). For the institution, appraisal is often used as a way of identifying the professional development needs of teachers. This process can be facilitated either by managers/mentors or by teachers themselves as part of a process of reflective review of their needs and interests.

Needs analysis should include the needs of both the individual and the institution as a whole. At the individual level, areas for training and development for different teachers in a program can be identified and strategies recommended for helping them achieve their goals. For example, it may be found that the school needs a specialist in computer-assisted language learning, teaching young children, or teaching business English, and, if additional staff are not to be hired to address these needs, opportunities for

existing staff to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills will have to be provided for.

However, in determining the needs of an institution it should be realized that research on professional development emphasizes the importance of horizontal decision making in determining goals (Sparks, 2002). Diaz Maggioli (2003, p. 4) observes: "Programs which involve participants in the planning, organization, management, delivery and evaluation of all actions in which they are expected to participate have more chances of success than those planned using a top-down approach, where administrators make decisions in lieu of teachers."

Setting goals for professional development

Information obtained from needs analysis forms the basis of setting both institutional and individual professional development goals. Both long-term and immediate goals should be identified. At times there may be differences in perceptions between institutional needs and teachers' individual interests. Eraut (1995, p. 250) suggests that in planning teacher-development activities:

- Change should be managed and phased so as not to put impossible demands on a person at any time. Teacher development also needs to be planned over a period of time to keep its demands at a realistic level.
- Each professional development activity has to be resourced and supported at a level that gives it a reasonable chance of achieving its purpose. Distributing resources over too many separate activities is likely to result in none of them being effective.
- Negotiation should take place, preferably with each individual teacher, about the proper balance between the teacher's personal needs and the needs of the school. A teacher's professional development plan should normally incorporate elements of both.

Selecting the participants

As already noted, and as will be illustrated throughout this book, professional development activities may be undertaken as either individual or collaborative projects. Careful consideration needs to be given to determine an appropriate mix of both kinds of activities within a school or institution. Within a school, there may already be some teachers who have developed some degree of expertise in activities such as journal writing, action research, or video-recording of lessons and who can give practical advice to colleagues wishing to undertake these activities for the first time. In the case

of group activities, procedures for deciding on group or team membership will need to be worked out. In one school, at the beginning of the year the principal first circulated a list of different types of professional activities that teachers might like to consider. Teachers indicated their interest in particular activities and their reasons for wishing to take part in them. This information was used in setting up preliminary plans for participating teachers.

Important considerations

Cooper and Boyd (1998, pp. 58–59) suggest that traditional models of staff development often ignore principles of adult learning, such as that with adults development is linked to their self-worth and efficacy, they learn through active involvement, learning must connect with their current understanding, and that it is a continual process of identity formation and re-formation. Principles that should be reflected in a teacher development program are therefore:

1. Opportunities to try out new practice and be self-directed in the learning process
2. Careful and continuous guided reflection and discussion about proposed changes, and time to analyze one's own experience, because experience is the richest source of adult learning
3. Personal support for participants during the change process
4. Provisions for differences in style, time, and pace of learning

A wide variety of methods and procedures are available for in-service teacher development, and the goal of this book is to examine the various options available, consider what they are useful for, and describe procedures for implementing them.

Providing support

In order to carry out professional development activities, support is crucial. This will include institutional support as well as peer support and may take many different forms. For example:

- Providing information in the form of a dossier of articles or reports that make available examples and guidelines for carrying out different kinds of activities (which is the primary goal of this book)
- Providing a forum for teachers to meet and review their progress
- Arranging visits to other schools, where appropriate, to find out how activities were conducted and supported there

- Providing time for ongoing review and feedback about how well activities are working

Diaz Maggioli (2003, p. 5) observes that "the true impact of professional development comes about when efforts are sustained over time, and when support structures exist that allow participants to receive modeling and advice from more experienced peers."

Evaluating what has been learned

Once an activity has been carried out, it is important to review how well it worked and what was learned from it, and to share the findings with others and decide if it is something that would be worth recommending to others. Issues that need to be addressed include the following:

- *Describing*. Reporting on what happened, within what time frame, using what resources, and what problems occurred
- *Justifying*. Showing that something useful was accomplished from the activity
- *Improving*. Suggesting how the activity could be improved or more widely applied

Kirkpatrick (1988) suggests that the evaluation of an organization's training and development activities can be assessed at four levels:

- *Reaction*. How do people feel during and immediately after the experience?
- *Learning*. How much have they learned in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes?
- *Performance*. What are they doing differently now as a result of the learning experience?
- *Organizational results*. What additional benefits has the organization gained?

Brock, Yu, and Wong (1992) evaluated their learning experience at the levels of *reaction* and *learning* and confirmed the importance of review of professional development activities. They participated in a collaborative journal-writing activity, and although their overall evaluation of the experience was positive, they also emphasized that it was time-consuming and a burden at times. They concluded that the experience could have been less demanding if they had developed a tighter focus for their writing, narrowing their focus to a few salient issues rather than trying to follow too many issues at the same time.

Disseminating the results

In order to strengthen the collaborative benefits of professional development activities, avenues need to be identified for sharing the results of such inquiry with others. Because the primary audience for the results is the participating teachers and colleagues within the institution, school-based networks are an ideal forum for presenting the results. There are many options available for disseminating the results. These include:

- A brief written report of the project, which can be made available to anyone interested (such a document helps other teachers assess the feasibility and usefulness of carrying out a similar activity in their own classroom)
- A lunchtime or other form of presentation to colleagues
- An account of the project in a newsletter or e-mail forum
- A presentation at a conference
- An account of the activity in a professional magazine or journal
- A workshop exploring issues in carrying out development activities

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