



Exploring CPD Activities

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Abstract

This study aims at exploring Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activities as CPD tools enable in-service teachers to hone their teaching abilities and the learning abilities of their students in turn. Although, ELT world has exhaustive literature on ELT approaches, methods, and techniques; but, in-service ELT practitioners often remain unaware of CPD tools and activities from utilitarian perspectives. This study aims to fill that gap by exploring secondary source of data (online and offline). As for the method of data collection, document analysis served as a key source; whereas analysis of data was made using content analysis.

Keywords: CPD, ELT Practitioners

Introduction

Each educational system of study rapidly brings changes in terms of pedagogy, methods, curriculum, learning strategies, practice-issues, educational system, and a host of other areas to which competent teachers must adapt and renew their competence in the related field of study. This determines a teacher's willingness to develop and enhance the professional quality of teaching as well. Motivation for learning and reflective practice are the processes by which all professionals develop their expertise and move from being novice to expert teachers (James H. Strong, Pamela D. Tucker, 2004). Towards the end of the 20th century, CPD in ELT was generally conducted mostly by teachers working on reading methodology, books or magazines;

attending conferences, talks and workshops – by engaging in communicating best practices developed ‘in-house’ by means of writing articles or presenting at conferences (Richardson & Díaz-Maggioli, 2018)

In the field of ELT, many teacher-centred activities cannot be considered CPD activities. Although, activities like organizing instruction, implementing instruction, classroom-management, preparing materials for the classroom, action plan are important in their own rights; however, this study focuses more on impactful CPD tools and activities like participation in conferences, workshops, seminars as delegates, speakers, panel members, or participants, action research, monitoring, collaborating learning, networking, portfolio, reflection on social media like Instagram live, Facebook, and WhatsApp, to hone the abilities of the ELT practitioners and improve the outcomes of the learners in the context of ELT in the Eastern zone of Afghanistan.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The importance of continuing professional development (CPD) became more important and essential for both learners and teachers and is considered as an important skill of the 21st century as it contributes to the improvement of teaching and learning process and an opportunity for students to hone their outcomes and get their ultimate goals of learning. However, academic institutions in across the globe do not give due emphasis on CPD activities. As a result, a huge gap is surfacing in terms of what a teacher should teach and what a teacher teaches.

1.1 Objectives

The general objective of this research is to explore effective CPD activities for ELT practitioners.

1. To understand the notion of CPD and its relevance to ELT
2. To list effective CPD activities for EFL/ESL classrooms

1.2 Research Questions

Conforming to the stated objectives, this study frames the following questions:

1. What is the implication of CPD in ELT?
2. What are the effective CPD activities used for learners in EFL/ESL classrooms?

1.3 Significance of the Study

As the aim of ELT practitioners is to facilitate or provide the opportunities to students to excel their competency in English language through lifelong learning process called *continuous professional development*, this study is significant for the reason that it will hone the abilities of ELT practitioners in terms of overcoming the teaching-learning challenges using different CPD tools and activities.

2. Literature Review

"*Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave,*" Prophet Mohammad had stated. In fact, Learning is a life-long process, and teachers are the best mediators in acquiring the knowledge one seeks. But those who join the profession of teaching are also required to constantly update their skill and knowledge both. It is erroneous to believe that once someone has assumed the role of a teacher, she or he has nothing more to learn further. This paper aims to help both novice and expert teachers to hone the learning abilities and bring positive results in the outcomes of the students. It is, therefore, vital to know how '*Continuing Professional Development*' (in brief, *CPD*) and its components help teachers to improve the abilities of their teaching. The notion of CPD is also called '*Life-long learning*' in literature on education. The notion of life-long learning come up with the revolution of extending technology and student- centered learning. As one is aware, "since the 1980s, the world's education development has entered a new era, with the education reform ushering the peak period "(Osterman and Kottkamp 1993). The *OECD* (2002) has already emphasized that "teachers are the key factor affecting the quality of school education", and that they "directly determine the success or failure of education." The society too has a very high expectation from teachers, because one is aware of their profound influence on students' growth (Jiang, 2016), and thus their value is enormous. In fact, the contemporary education has accelerated many-fold, forcing teachers to seek for self-improvement for both academic and professional growth. Like other professions teachers also need to renew what they had learned once - in both contextual and pedagogical terms, to hone the abilities of the students. to update their knowledge, and to maintain regularity by paying a constant and meticulous attention to this process.

The real challenge lies in ensuring that this constant revision is done in a systematic manner and not haphazardly. Copper (2008) defines CPD as "a systematic maintenance, improvement and broadening of knowledge and skill, and the development of personal qualities necessary for the execution of professional and technical duties throughout the practitioner's working life."(Cooper, 2008). As one can see, the aim is to enhance the quality of professional ability of the faculty members engaged in teaching. This professional development, as Francesca Bernardini argued, is an uptake of formal and informal learning opportunities that deepen and extend teachers' professional competence, including knowledge, beliefs, motivation and self-regulatory skills (Michael J. Warburton & Francesca Bernardini 2001). There had been several studies earlier and later in this direction. Baumert & Kunter (2006) had also talked about teachers' professional competence, and how to enhance it. Kunter et al (2007/2013) reported on the findings of the Professional Competence of Teachers in specialized areas such as in Mathematics where an experiment was conducted in Cognitively Activating Instruction , and in the Development of Students' Mathematical Literacy ability.

Lifelong learning requires an active learning style involving self-assessment, risk taking, self-discovery, and the ability to deal behaviorally with difficult situations, for example, situations requiring assertiveness, listening, conflict management, giving feedback, or delegation (Hopkins, 2012). Many empirical studies that follow lifelong learning theory believe that continuing means that one needs to commit oneself to a lifelong learning process. Achieving your initial professional qualification is just the start of the process of self-development (Cooper, 2008). Many language teachers like Jack Richard (2005) believe that in most schools and institutions today, language teachers are expected to keep up to date with developments in the

field, to regularly review and evaluate their teaching skills, and to take on new teaching assignments according to the changing needs of the institution. He argued that some teachers may also be expected to serve as mentors to new teachers, to plan workshops and other professional activities, to present papers at seminars or conferences, and to write for journals and teaching magazines. Thus, Richards asserted that institutions of Language teaching are expected to maintain high professional standards, to provide opportunities for their teachers as well as to pursue professional development, and to provide conditions where teachers cooperate to achieve higher levels of learning among their students (Richards, 2005).

Researchers have further revealed that CPD requires a dynamic learning style involving self-assessment, risk taking, self-discovery, and the ability to deal behaviorally with difficult situations, for example, situations requiring assertiveness, listening, conflict management, giving feedback, or delegation (Bigelow, 1996, p. 307). Pickering Jo and his colleagues quoted in the book of *Continuing professional Development in the Lifelong Learning Sector* that Continuing professional development means maintaining, improving and broadening relevant knowledge and skills in your subject specialism and your teaching so that it has a positive impact on practice and learner experience (Sector & Boulton, 2011). The outstanding characteristic of the extended professional is a capacity for autonomous professional self-development through systematic self-study, through the study of the work of other teachers and through the testing of ideas by classroom research procedures (Stenhouse 1975: 144).

A recent review of the literature on teachers' professional learning has centered on the effect of CPD on students' learning via enhancements in teacher learning – in other words, they have found that increasing teachers' ability of competence to teach well made a significant difference to students' cognition, progress and led to improved learning outcomes (Richardson & Díaz-Maggioli, 2018).

Drawing from the above research work and experiences in various fields of teaching, I would like to discuss the impactful CPD tools (activities) in the field of ELT in the context of Afghan English language teachers in higher level (college or university) in eastern zone of Afghanistan. This qualitative and quantitative research paper mainly focuses on assessing of formal and informal activities in the context of continuing professional development of In-service English language practitioners.

Findings and Discussion

Many ELT practitioners are already involved in CPD activities but they are not fully aware of them. Teachers who are aware that their knowledge base is updated and who need to socialize their knowledge among their peers by training, coaching, action research, reflections, participating in conference, seminar and workshop, guiding and observing other teachers and many other formal and informal CPD activities are considered to be the updated practitioners.

As part of its pilot survey in the EFL scenarios of India and Aghanistan on the CPD activities that English language teachers have undergone, the following figure 1 shows the degree of CPD activities that selected samples of English language teachers underwent. The result indicates that about 80 percent of the ELT practitioners undergo CPD professional development experience of *participation in conferences, seminars, classroom observation or workshops*; whereas, about 50% underwent CPD activities like *faculty developemnt programs*,

using authentic materials, and peer-observation. The result is alarming as almost 50% of ELT practitioners were found to be deprived of being exposed to essential CPD activities.

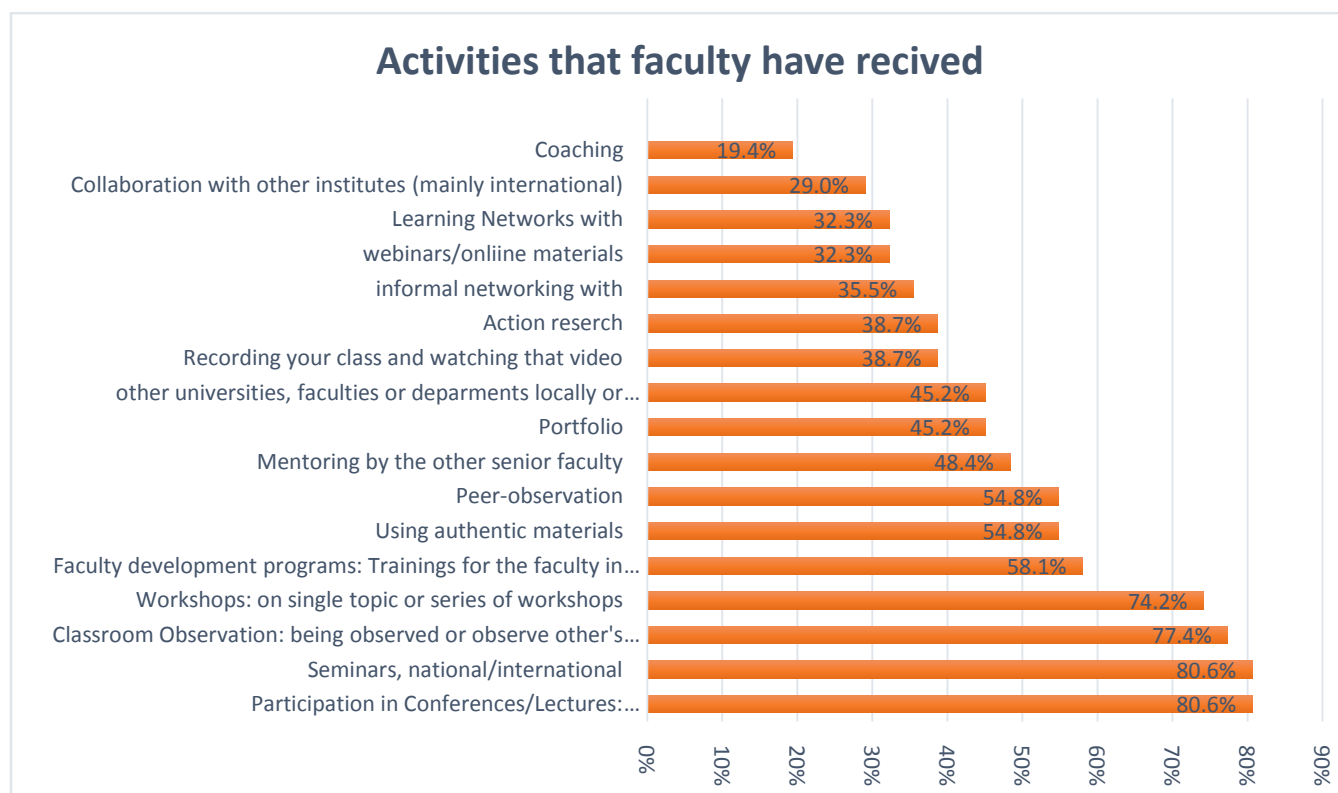


Figure 1: Acquired Activities by ELT practitioners

4.6 Activities Demanded for CPD by ELT Practitioners

Among the activities demanded by ELT practitioners for CPD, total eight activities came into light (see figure-2). Of them, *seminars, conference, and workshops* proved to be the most demanding CPD activity; whereas, *class observation, classroom reflection and reading research articles* were found to be three major demanding activities. On the other hand, less than 20 percent of the faculty demanded “*coaching a colleague, being mentored, coach yourself and webinars*” for their CPD professional development.

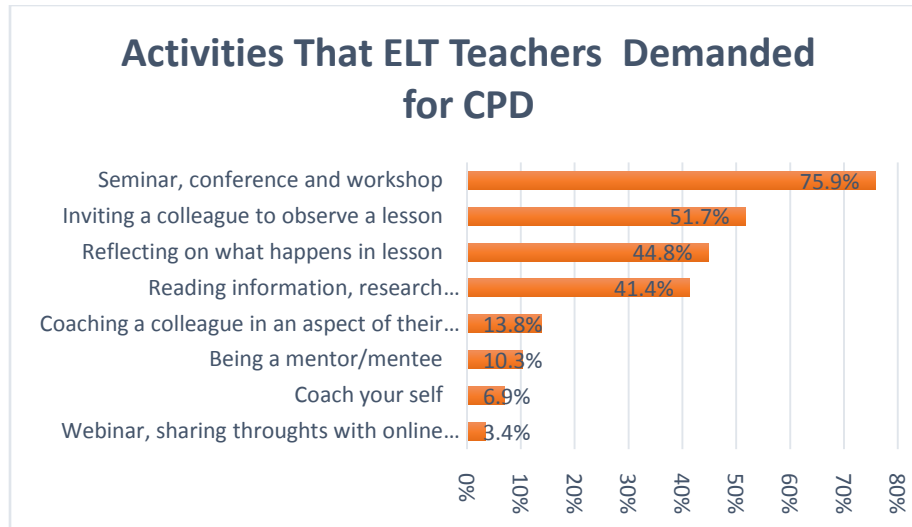


Figure-4: Activities that Practitioners demanded for CPD activities

5. Conclusion

In its heuristic approach, this study has attained all the set objectives by answering two research questions. To sum up, the study, tried to decode the underlying principles of CPD advocated by past and contemporary researchers. Moreover, the study elicits the perceptions of ELT practitioners on six parameters namely *observing good practitioners, extended professional experiences, own experiences, other professional experiences, CPD experiences acquired, and activities demanded for CPD by ELT practitioners*. Among the striking facts, it is desirable to mention here three facts as they are more pertinent to the scope of this research. Firstly, the ELT practitioners admit that “observing and working with a visiting expert” will help them improve their CPD skills. Secondly, a large number of practitioners realized the importance of action research and networking as part of *Extended Professional Experiences*. Thirdly, a significant number of respondents stressed over the importance of *participation in conferences, seminars, classroom observation or workshops* as key CPD activities. Despite all these formalisms, it is apt to quote here Palmer (1997: 10) who believes that good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher. Teachers’ understanding of identity plays an important role in their professional development.

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Introduction of Zamark Shinwari



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