



«ԻՆՏԵՐՆԱԿՏԻՎ ԿՐԹՈՒԹՅԱՆ ԶԱՐԳԱՑՈՒՄ»  
ՀԻՄՆԱԴՐԱՄ



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Շարունակական մասնագիտական

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# Continual Professional Development

## Introduction

School systems today are charged with addressing ever-increasing demands: reducing the achievement gap, adopting evidence-based practices, meeting adequate yearly progress goals, managing the requirements of second-language and special-needs students, and remaining current on the increasing amount of pedagogical and content area research. Educators must keep abreast of the important advances that are occurring in education. This is where professional development comes in. Professional development is defined as *“The process of improving staff skills and competencies needed to produce outstanding educational results for students”* (Hassel, 1999). As Thomas Guskey (2000, p.4) states, *“One constant finding in the research literature is that notable improvements in education almost never take place in the absence of professional development.”*

Professional development is a key to meeting today’s educational demands. High-quality professional development strategies are essential to schools. The days of teacher staff development sessions consisting of “sit-and-get” workshops and expert-delivered awareness campaigns are long gone. We are now moving toward more effective and more engaging professional development models. Research and experience help us recognize that high-quality ongoing professional development that deepens teachers’ content knowledge and pedagogical skills; provides opportunities for practice, research, and reflection; and includes efforts that are job-embedded, sustained, and collaborative will assist in the goal to remain up-to-date. Levels of teacher learning and strategy use are greatly increased when coaching, study teams, and peer support are provided.

### The main aims

The purpose of the current paper is to encourage teachers or educators to develop and maintain their knowledge, skills and values, ethics and attitudes relevant for professionals to succeed in current dynamic and demanding teaching/learning environment. To develop professional competence in order to realise their needs, meet changing demands, identify which areas of practice they need to focus on for development. As a result they can:

- Plan lessons and courses
- Monitor learners in order to maintain motivation

- Have an awareness of the range of reference materials relevant to the subject and use these to support teaching and learning.
- Have an awareness of theories of language acquisition and how these relate to specific teaching contexts.
- Reflect on their strengths and weaknesses in relation to their subject knowledge and its application.

### **The main objectives**

For achieving the main goal the following objectives are applied:

- Five steps to perfect CPD: *plan, do, record, reflect, submit*
- Participating in conferences
- Joining other teachers
- Subscribing to a magazine
- Trying out new teaching materials
- Membership of professional associations
- Mentoring
- Being observed by a colleague
- Resources by publishers
- Reflection
- Research
- Specialization
- Training

Great teachers help create great students. In fact, research shows that an inspiring and informed teacher is the most important school-related factor influencing student achievement, so it is critical to pay close attention to how we get trained and support both new and experienced educators.

It is critical for veteran teachers to have ongoing and regular opportunities to learn from each other. Ongoing professional development keeps teachers up-to-date on new research on how children learn, emerging technology tools for the classroom, new curriculum resources, and more. The best professional development is *ongoing, experiential, collaborative, and connected to and derived from working with students and understanding their culture.*

*CPD is a planned, continuous and lifelong process whereby teachers try to develop their personal and professional qualities, and to improve their knowledge, skills and practice, leading to their empowerment, the improvement of their agency and the development of their organization and their pupils.*

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is the means by which professionals maintain, improve and broaden their knowledge and skills and develop the personal qualities and competencies required in their working lives. It is a process for setting yourself objectives for development then charting your progress towards achieving them. It's about where you want to be and how you plan to get there.

A wide range of activities can contribute to our CPD however it is not about the quantity of the activities but the quality of the reflections linked to recent learning activities. It is for us to recognise needs and opportunities both inside and outside our workplace and to take advantage of learning experiences to developing our own CPD programme.

Reflection of the learning activities is the most important part of CPD and has become one of the defining features of competence.

# 1. The five steps to perfect CPD

1. Plan
2. Do
3. Record
4. Reflect
5. Submit

## 1.1 PLAN

Planning our CPD starts by making an honest assessment of our current situation and determining our professional development goals for both the current year and the medium term e.g. next 2 to 3 years. Because the needs of each individual will vary, there can be no prescribed programme. It is for us to recognise our own needs and opportunities inside and outside the workplace and to take advantage of learning experiences in developing our own continuing professional development.

It is useful to ask ourselves the following questions:

- What do I want to achieve?
- What do I need to learn?
- How will I learn it?

## 1.2 DO

Now that we've planned our CPD, it's time to get out there and start developing!

This requires time management skills and motivation to get out there and attend some activities. We must remember to reflect while on the 'go' while it is easy to remember the key light bulb moments which often result development and changes to the current practices.

## 1.3 RECORD

We've attended activities and events, now it's time to show for all the CPD we've done.

Now it is time to monitor and record our progress against our plan, including recording items that we may not have planned for such as training, learning and experience which nevertheless have contributed to our professional development. Having said that CPD is all about

quality of the learning rather than quantity of the activities performed. CPD-recording should not be input focused (list of date and actions) but output focus (what are the benefits of learning).

The easiest way to record our CPD is through online system. However, our records may be kept in paper format. It's recommend that we keep certificates issued by training providers, our written notes, and formal course materials.

## **1.4 REFLECT**

Reflection is an important part of the CPD reporting since it makes you think of the value of your work for yourself, your colleagues, clients, company and the wider community. If reflection is missing planning, doing, recording the activities stays separate and CPD becomes less beneficial and meaningful as a tool.

It is useful to ask ourselves the following questions:

- What did I get out of this?
- What have I learned?
- How did I learn it?
- How do I apply it in practice?
- What is the resulting change?
- Does this flag up any additional development which would be helpful for us to undertake?
- What benefits will it have for our clients and/or our service?

This is the time for us to harness the value of what we have learned by bridging the gap between theory and practice.

Professionals who regularly record CPD and are good at reflecting what they have learned tend to become professionals who continuously drive for development and bring in new ideas, which benefits not only themselves but most importantly colleagues, their company and industry overall.

## **1.5 SUBMIT**

Depending on our register and whether we are part of an organization or individual CPD scheme, we must be prepared to declare or submit our CPD report for assessment in the requested time scale.

If our CPD report doesn't meet the standards and requirements of the register or our organization, further evidence will be requested. Failing to submit CPD or if the submission is not sufficient enough, will result in the loss of status in the professional register.



## **2. CPD learning activities**

### ***Types of Continuing Professional Development activity***

There are many types of CPD, which can help teachers at every stage of their career, and suit their own interests and availability of time. The main areas of activity are:

- developing a reflective approach to our work
- expanding our skills and knowledge through working with resources
- sharing and learning with other teachers
- participating in training workshops and courses

### **2.1 Conferences**

A great way to develop ourselves is to participate in conferences for English Language Teachers. We shall be able to meet and talk with other teachers and learn from sessions given by experts. When we are experienced and confident enough, giving a presentation ourselves is a way to share our experience with other teachers and is a good professional development activity for us.

There is a lot to be learnt through taking advantage of all the experienced and expert practitioners in the field of ELT, by attending sessions they may give at conferences or, if teachers are lucky, talks that are available in their vicinity. Reading readily-available articles and books written by ‘experts’ and participating in online events or blogs with invited professionals is an alternative if ‘experts’ are not available in the flesh somewhere near you.

### **2.2 Groups**

Networking with other teachers is one of the most stimulating ways to develop. There are many ELT Facebook and Twitter groups we can join. We can follow the British Council’s TeachingEnglish website on both. We can also join or set up a local CPD group to discuss common issues and share experience with other teachers. We can start small and don’t need to be an expert to share a teaching idea or introduce an issue we’d like to discuss.

Joining other teachers in the staffroom discussing their next lesson or the materials they are using is one of the easiest and most effective ways of developing, especially if you borrow the ideas and try them out in your own classes.

## 2.3 Magazines

Subscribing to a magazine or journal is a good way to keep up-to-date with new ideas and themes in ELT. Most magazines and journals are available online as well as in hard-copy.

## 2.4 Materials

Trying out new teaching materials is a relevant way of developing – whatever our experience. We can find new teaching ideas in published books and on websites.

These may include an interactive virtual conference such as the annual IATEFL online conferences sponsored by the British Council, or the blogs on the TeachingEnglish website, or other forums and discussion boards set up to encourage participation around ELT topics by teachers from all over the world.

We can ask colleagues for classroom activities they recommend. We can also start to develop our own materials to meet the needs of our own learners and our own teaching style.

## 2.5 Membership

Professional associations offer a range of activities for our development, including conferences, journals, special interest groups, research activities and projects. The national organization for all teachers of English is *IATEFL*. The association has a number of special interest groups (*SIGs*) on specific areas of ELT:

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

## 2.6 Mentoring

Learning from a more experienced colleague is an invaluable way to gain insight into teaching English. We should find such a colleague, observe them and talk to them about what works in English language teaching. Similarly, if we are an experienced teacher, it is a good developmental activity to mentor a less experienced colleague.

## **2.7 Observation**

Being observed and getting feedback from a trusted colleague can give us fresh perspective on our teaching and help us identify areas we would like to develop.

Here are also two easy ideas for peer observation:

1. ‘Ghost observation’: If we’re not confident about someone sitting in our class, talk to a colleague about the lesson we are going to teach, and describe one or two areas we’d like to develop. The colleague does not observe our lesson, but afterwards we discuss the lesson and the areas of focus with our colleague.

2. ‘Stealing’: We agree with a colleague to observe each other’s classes and look for ideas, activities or techniques to ‘steal.’ Afterwards discuss with our colleague what we would steal and why.

## **2.8 Publishers**

Usually the publishing houses offer a vast range of resources to support our work. There are resources to support specific course books and more.

Individual reading is another easy way to learn that can include internet materials and journals as well as actual books, which can be expensive and difficult to obtain in some parts of the world. We can read anywhere in any short piece of snatched free time.

## **2.9 Reflection**

The ability to reflect upon our own practice is an essential skill for the teacher. What are our strengths? What do we need to develop in order to improve?

## **2.10 Research**

Small-scale classroom action research can help us find out more about classroom processes and so develop our professional understanding and skills.

We may be lucky enough to have a head of department or principal who wants research results which shed light on what is going on in his or her institution, and is prepared to provide time for teachers to provide the evidence. This is one interpretation of programmed action research,

though there are lots of others, and teachers cannot help but learn from the experience and the results.

## **2.11 Specialization**

We may find that our career moves us in the direction of a particular ELT specialization such as Business English, Young Learners etc.

## **2.12 Training**

At certain stages of our career, taking a training course can help us make significant progress in our teaching. Doing a formal course is often the first thing people think of when they think about professional development. But it is often the most prohibitive due to time and expense, and often courses do not provide exactly what is needed. If you are lucky enough to be able to follow a course, however, make the most of the time you have laid aside for thinking and learning, because doing a course is a great way to develop.

## **2.13 Workshops**

Many organizations offer workshops for EL teachers. They're a good way to stimulate our everyday teaching with new classroom ideas and reflection on practice.

Often teachers get a lot more out of smaller, more intimate workshops where there is the opportunity to discuss and debate ideas and opinions and take away ideas for classroom activities and to reflect on. Giving sessions can range from a small in-school meeting where teaching ideas are shared right through to a session at a large international conference. All conference speakers started small and all teachers have something to say. This is a particularly effective way to develop due to the planning and research which takes place before the session as well as the discussion and feedback which it provokes.

The professional skills and knowledge we require will vary considerably, depending on our professional role and discipline. Our CPD should reflect both our current needs and our future aspirations. It is for us to decide the areas of skill and knowledge that are relevant to our role. As our career evolves, our skills and knowledge needs will change and our CPD will help us steer and manage our own route into the future, by enabling us to more readily adapt to changing circumstances.

## Conclusion

CPD is an investment that you make in yourself. It's a way of planning your development that links learning directly to practice. CPD can help you keep your skills and knowledge up to date and prepare you for greater responsibilities. It can boost your confidence, strengthen your professional credibility and help you become more creative in tackling new challenges.

How CPD benefits your organization

The organization you work for can benefit from your commitment to Continuing Professional Development. Your hard work can lead to:

- Higher workplace performance
- Higher skilling of staff
- Improved morale and staff motivation
- Development that can be linked to the needs of the organization
- Unlocking of talent and potential within the organization
- Prove to employers your commitment to professionalism

This paper will act as a transportable toolkit to help with the planning and recording of our personal and professional development. It should be used in conjunction with any continuing professional development (CPD) related specifically to our profession or professional registration.

## References

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