



Revisiting the Continuing Professional Development of English Language Teachers

Revisitando el desarrollo continuo del profesional de los profesores de inglés

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ABSTRACT

This article addresses the insights of English Language Teachers about their Continuing Professional Development plan, using the results of a survey applied to 56 CPD trainees in Cuba and 15 CPD trainees in Ecuador who have taking part in the study. The main aim is reflecting upon the experience of teacher training in the Cuban and Ecuadorian context through the identification of what teachers believe their CPD Plan may cover according to their needs and interests. The main findings show that most teachers think about incorporating diverse CPD activities after they are enquired about the attendance to these types of sessions.

Keywords: Continuing Professional Development, teacher training



RESUMEN

El artículo se centra en la visión de los profesores de inglés sobre su plan de desarrollo profesional continuo, empelando los resultados de una encuesta aplicada a 56 entrenados cubanos y 15 ecuatorianos que formaron parte del estudio. El principal objetivo es reflexionar sobre la experiencia de la preparación de los profesores en los contextos cubano y ecuatoriano, a través de la identificación de lo que los profesores consideran forma parte de su plan de desarrollo profesional continuo, tomando como base sus necesidades e intereses. Los resultados principales muestran que la mayoría de los profesores piensan en incorporarse a las actividades de desarrollo continuo después de haber sido cuestionados sobre su asistencia a este tipo de sesiones.

Palabras clave: desarrollo profesional continuo, preparación de profesores

INTRODUCTION

Continuing professional development (CPD) of professionals has always been a priority for the Ministry of Higher Education in Cuba. Accordingly, many guidelines for conducting CPD have been passed over the years. In general terms, these guidelines have always considered upgrading courses, masters and doctorate programs as part of the CPD of university professors in order to improve their teaching in tertiary levels.

These types of CPD relate to all areas of knowledge, and provide professors with opportunities to be up to date in their academic fields. The teaching of English as a foreign language has also been a focus of attention, especially supported by the British Council (BC) office in Havana, and other organizations and higher education professionals from different countries.

This article focuses on CPD in Cuba with an emphasis on programs developed in the province of Cienfuegos. The scope, however, takes as a sample the participants in various courses in which the authors have been trainers/CPD deliverers. The main aim is reflecting upon the experience of teacher training in the Cuban and Ecuadorian contexts through the identification of what teachers believe their CPD Plan may cover according to their needs and interests.

METHODS

This study conducted followed a mixed approach where a survey was applied to English-as-a-Foreign-Language teachers in Cienfuegos, Cuba and Guayaquil, Ecuador; who had taken part in CPD activities conducted at the University of Cienfuegos and Buckingham Language Center; and some interpretations were made upon their answers. This survey intended to help the researcher identify where the participants think they are in terms of CPD



development and where they plan to be in a short or a long term. The sample participating in the study were 56 Cuban teachers of English in Cienfuegos province, Cuba and 15 teachers from Ecuador in 2025.

The main items participants had to identify to create their own CPD Plan included the activities they had attended or would like to attend in a short-term or long-term period of time.

These 22 activities are:

- a) ☐ Bachelor of Language Teaching
- b) ☐ Masters of Education/ELT
- c) ☐ other Master's Degree/More than one Master's Degree
- d) ☐ Doctorate of Education/ELT (PhD)
- e) ☐ Online teacher forum
- f) ☐ Face-to-face training courses
- g) ☐ Online teacher-training courses
- h) ☐ Attending a Conference
- i) ☐ Presenting at a Conference
- j) ☐ Joining a teacher's club
- k) ☐ Seminars
- l) ☐ Attending a Workshop
- m) ☐ Reading
- n) ☐ Self-reflection sessions on your teaching
- o) ☐ Group reflection sessions about language teaching
- p) ☐ Action research
- q) ☐ Peer-observation
- r) ☐ Observation by head teacher
- s) ☐ Watching teaching videos
- t) ☐ Recording your class and watching that video later
- u) ☐ Taking a CPD training certification
- v) ☐ Others, which one/s _____

RESULTS

The findings of the study include an analysis of the teachers CPD Plan elaborated after completing the survey applied. For the first 11 items, the results described below correspond to the Cuban teachers surveyed:

Table 1.

Results from items a. to k. about the CPD Plan of English Language Teachers in Cuba



Item	CPD activity teachers have attended to.	CPD activity teachers would like attend in the future.
a.	30	26
b.	18	38
c.	7	7
d.	0	12
e.	3	7
f.	49	56
g.	28	56
h.	30	46
i.	12	34
j.	5	42
k.	25	54

Source. Elaborated by the authors

The results in Table 1 show that 53.5 % of the sample already has a Bachelor of Language Teaching obtained in a Cuban university, while the other 26 teachers would like to obtain their degree in the coming future, representing the other 46.5%. As for holding a Master's Degree, only 60% of the teachers who already hold a Bachelor degree has already obtained a Masters of Education or ELT, while the other 12 graduated teachers and the 26 who do not hold a bachelor degree yet added they would like to obtain a Master's degree in the recent future. That is, 67.8% of the sample agreed they would like to hold a masters degree in Education or ELT in the next 6 years.

The third item, on the other hand, was only considered by few teachers. Seven participants in the survey added that they already had a second master's degree, while a similar number of teachers expressed their willingness to take a second master's degree program. None of the participants hold a doctorate of Education or ELT at present; however, 12 teachers would like to conduct doctorate research in the future, which represents 21.4% of the sample surveyed. Despite the online experience teachers were forced to have after covid 19, only 3 of them added they have participated in online teacher forum, while 7 expressed they would really like to participate in this kind of activity in the future. What is interesting considering in this item is the fact that 2 of the teachers who had already participated in this type of forum did add they would like to continue participating in the future. That is, only 5 teachers of the ones who have not participated in an online teacher forum expressed they would like to, which represents only 8.9% of the sample surveyed. This indicated that this type of CPD activity is not popular among English language teachers in Cienfuegos.



Most teachers, however, prefer attending face-to-face training courses rather than online teacher training. The greatest number of participants agreed on having participated in face-to-face CPD activities. Thus, 49 out of the 56 who represented the sample, stated that they prefer face-to-face interaction. The total sample added that they would really like to continue attending face-to-face activities in the future.

As for online teacher-training courses, 28 teachers stated that they had already taken this type of CPD, while the total number of participants stated they would like to be part of online training sessions in a short- or long-term period of time. Furthermore, 53.5% of the surveyed teachers agreed on having attended a conference, while only 21.4% had presented papers at this type of event. The number of teachers who would like to participate in conferences is greater, however than the number of teachers who would like to present papers, which is somehow derived from the lack of confidence to present research results, as some of them stated.

Only 5 teachers of the total surveyed agreed on joining a teacher's club, while 42 of them expressed they would like to join this type of CPD activity in the recent future. The answers to the last of the items of the row, indicate that 25 teachers had already taken part in seminars, while 54 expressed their willingness to participate in this type of activity in the future, representing the 96.4% of the sample surveyed.

The results of the second row of items evaluated are presented in Table 2.

Table 2.

Results from items l. to v. about the CPD Plan of English Language Teachers in Cuba

Item	CPD activity teachers have attended to.	CPD activity teachers would like attend in the future.
l.	42	52
m.	32	41
n.	4	24
o.	21	47
p.	3	7
q.	7	19
r.	44	23
s.	56	56
t.	24	47
u.	3	10
v.	0	2

Source. Elaborated by the authors



This second part of the survey included the experience of teachers attending a workshop, which was answered positively by 42 participants, which represent the 75% of the sample surveyed. As for the willingness to attend workshops in the future, 52 out of the 56 participants agreed on the idea that they would really like to attend this type of CPD activities; which allow them to exchange ideas and opinions about their teaching and reflect on the new tendencies for language teaching.

Reading is a type of activity most teachers find useful. However, only 57% of the sample agreed they had developed reading as part of their preparation and CPD. A greater number, 73% stated that they would like to read more in the future, especially methodology and teaching-related materials that help them improve their teaching.

Self-reflection sessions on their teaching was identified by only 4 teachers as part of their CPD Plan; that is, only 7% of the sample saw in this type of activity a good method to reflect and change their teaching practice. 42.8%, however, considered that self-reflection is a way to improve and adjust to the students needs, based on practical experience, which made them think of this as a CPD activity they would like to take in the future.

Also, reflection in groups of peers provides the exchange of new ideas, experiences and best practices. In this sense, group reflection sessions about language teaching have been attended by 21 teachers of the ones surveyed, representing 37,5% of the sample; while 24 expressed they would like to attend this kind of sessions in the future.

Conducting research is not among the CPD activities teachers develop regularly. Only 3 teachers out of 56 stated they had developed action research to provide pedagogical solutions to problems they may encounter in the classroom. This is, however, a point that not so many teachers refer they would like to do, despite the importance this may have for improving their teaching practice based on science and innovation.

One of the most relevant qualitative methods is observation, and peer-observation plays an important role in planning an appropriate CPD Plan. Only 12.5% of the teachers surveyed stated they had already observed some of their peer teachers' lessons in order to reflect together on what they do similarly or differently. Some of the participants stated they do not feel comfortable when their practice is being observed by other teachers, and that is the reason why only 33% of the sample showed their willingness to be observed by peers in the future. Nonetheless, when they were asked about observation by head teachers as part of the CPD plan, 78% agreed on the fact that head teachers are well prepared people who can make great contributions to their teaching practice, but they do not see this type of activity as a CPD task. Only 23 teachers were willing to have head teachers observe what they do in order to improve their teaching practice. They see this as a control task rather than an activity that can contribute to their CPD.



With the ongoing use of technology, watching teaching videos has become more popular among teachers. The total number of teachers stated they have watched teaching videos and expressed they will continue to watch them, to grasp the best of the teaching experiences they have access to. Yet, when it comes to recording the class and watching that video later, teachers stated they do not usually think of this as a CPD activity. Only 24 teachers out of the 56 stated they have partially recorded their lessons and later analyzed what they did. This is not a common practice among teachers in Cuba, but 84% of the teachers taking part in the survey stated they would like to record part of the lessons with this reflecting purpose.

Whether taking teaching certification might be common around the world, certifying the teaching skills with an international certification is not that common in the context in which the study was conducted. That might be the reason why only 3 teachers said they have taking certification as part of their CPD, while another 17 referred they would like to. There were no suggestions made about some other CPD activities participants may think of.

As for the teachers surveyed in Ecuador, the findings of the study are described in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3.

Results from items a. to k. about the CPD Plan of English Language Teachers in Ecuador

Item	CPD activity teachers have attended to.	CPD activity teachers would like attend in the future.
a.	15	3
b.	4	9
c.	3	5
d.	0	4
e.	15	15
f.	15	15
g.	15	15
h.	10	14
i.	3	7
j.	10	12
k.	15	15

Source. Elaborated by the authors

As stated above, Table 3 shows the results of the survey applied to the 15 teachers from Ecuador. In this sense, 100% of the sample already has a bachelor of Education or Bachelor of Arts; however, 20% of the sample expressed their willingness in studying another bachelor. As



for holding a Master's program, 4 teachers already have this academic degree and 9 expect to attend masters programs in the recent future.

Twenty (20) percent of the sample stated that they already hold more than one masters course while 33 % stated they would like to take a different masters degree. Besides, none of the teachers surveyed hold a doctorate, and 26% expressed they would like to hold a PhD degree in the recent future.

The total number of the sample stated they have participated in online teacher forum and they all expressed they would like to develop this CPD activity in the future. As well, 100% of the teachers surveyed stated they have attended and would like to attend face-to-face training courses, because they offer possibilities for the exchange of ideas, best practices and experiences. This is reinforced with an active participation in conferences. Thus, 66% of the teachers surveyed stated they have participated in conferences, although only 20% of these teachers have actually presented papers or posters in these conferences.

Most of the teachers (10) answered they have taken part in teacher's clubs, and 80% considered attending these clubs in the future would help them reflect upon their daily practice. Item *k* rereferred to attending seminars, to which the total number of the sample stated they have attended this type of CPD activities, and would like to attend seminars in the recent future.

Table 4.

Results from items l. to v. about the CPD Plan of English Language Teachers in Ecuador

Item	CPD activity teachers have attended to.	CPD activity teachers would like attend in the future.
l.	7	12
m.	8	10
n.	12	15
o.	10	15
p.	3	7
q.	4	7
r.	6	8
s.	10	12
t.	3	8
u.	10	12
v.	0	0

Source. Elaborated by the authors



Another of the CPD activities that may help teachers reflect upon their practice are workshops. In this sense, 46% of the sample stated that they had attended workshops about language teaching, while 80% agreed on the fact that they would like to attend this CPD activity in the future. However, despite the fact that reading is an activity that may be conducted autonomously, only 53% of the sample stated they regularly read didactic material that help them improve their teaching practice or expressed they would like to read literature about language teaching.

As for developing sessions for self-reflecting on their teaching practice, 12 surveyed teachers referred that they use this type of activity regularly, while the total number of participants stated they would like to self-reflect about their own progress in language teaching. These reflections are also developed in groups, in which a similar number of the sample agreed on the fact that this CPD activity helps them reflect on what other teachers do and what they can incorporate to their daily teaching routines.

Action research is not very popular among the language teachers surveyed in Ecuador. Thus, only 20% of the teachers participating in the survey stated they had conducted action research to improve their teaching practice, while only a 46% referred they would like to conduct this type of research. Item q referred to the development of peer observation, which is a type of CPD activity that not many teachers do. Only 4 of the surveyed teachers added that they have been observed or had observed other teachers as a part of a CPD task, and 7 stated they would like to conduct peer observation in the future as part of their daily teaching routine.

Observations can also be conducted by head teachers, although participants consider they feel more controlled than observed in this type of activity. 53% of the sample agreed this is a type of activity they would like to have in the recent future.

Watching teaching videos is recognized to be a great CPD activity by the 10 teachers in Ecuador, while 12 considered they would like to use this activity as a means to improve their teaching. As for recording their class and watching that video later, only 20% of the sample stated they have actually done this in the past, while 53% agreed they would like to start doing such a CPD activity in the recent future.

Finally, Taking a CPD training certification is highly recognized to be a great CPD activity in Ecuador, a context where teachers certify their skills taking international examinations like the Teaching Knowledge Test, First Certificate and other Cambridge Certifications that help them improve their teaching practice.

DISCUSSION

Continuing Professional Development, according to Hayes (2014), is a multi-faceted lifelong experience, which can take place inside or outside the workplace and which often moves beyond the professional and into the realm of a teacher's personal life too. CPD is critical in providing teachers with the means to cope with the increasing demands placed upon



them by external forces while maintaining their individual capacity to take control of their own learning and to transform their educational practice.

CPD is essential to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools worldwide since it responds to different needs and reasons and is developed at different stages of a teacher professional career. As teachers continue to take CPD activities, courses and/or actions, their CPD needs and interests vary. In my opinion, CPD is continuously moving from one phase to another as times passes by and teachers acknowledge its importance.

As recalled by Floris (2021) 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. CPD is an autonomous activity, but the most effective CPD takes place through collaboration and sharing of learning and experiences.

The importance of increasing teachers' theoretical and practical knowledge about language teaching should emphasize on coaching as one innovative approach to professional development, addressing teachers concerns over staying current with changing technology (Zimmer & Matthews, 2022; Greaves & Vlachopoulos, 2023).

CPD may differ from one context to another. However, many CPD frameworks have been developed for English language teachers in order to create well-established definitions of expertise, measurable outcomes and greater accountability, as stated by the British Council, Cambridge English and EAQUALS (www.cambridgeenglish.org/teaching-framework). These frameworks focus on what teachers can do rather than what they cannot do, as they foster the use of non-linear scales to assess competence and allow development through an ongoing process of learning.

Moreover, the frameworks for English language teacher's CPD take into account their individual needs; that is, where teachers are at a given point, and where they should move to in the future as they develop professional competencies. In my experience as a CPD provider, any individual, even an experienced teacher, is good at some things and less effective at others, so the CPD frameworks provide tools to support constant teacher development. A more dialogic and interactive CPD options should focus on active learning that places teachers in the CPD learning processes and activities rather than replacing teachers' knowledge and skills (Abakah, 2023).

For the British Council (BC) CPD projects, critical self-reflection helps to create a stronger sense of self-awareness and accountability. Thus, the hereinafter principles and beliefs about teaching and learning are usually present in BC CPD activities:

1. English is best acquired through communication and students should be given as much opportunity to use it in the classroom as possible.



2. Collaboration through task-based group and pair work has a very positive effect on learning.
3. Teachers and students become motivated and develop a positive attitude to learning when it is engaging and fun and relates directly to their needs and context.
4. Change can only be achieved if teachers are encouraged to reflect on their current teaching practice and their personal beliefs about teaching.
5. Through experiential teacher education and development activities such as peer teaching and lesson planning, teachers can practice and develop their teaching skills and knowledge more effectively.
6. Teacher education and development programs should provide a mix of teaching skills and subject matter knowledge.
7. The relationship between the teacher and student or the teacher and trainer is fundamentally important and should be based on mutual respect and understanding. (Hayes, 2014)

In a study conducted in 2017 by Priajana, this author summarized different types of CPD activities for English language teachers. This study was aimed at exploring how the English-as-a-Foreign-Language (EFL) teachers developed professionally, particularly in terms of pedagogical and professional competencies.

As summarized by Priajana (2017), in the context of English Language Teaching (ELT), there are effective approaches to teacher's involvement in professional development. Some of the programs to attain this purpose are seminars, pre-service teacher programs, teacher-training courses, workshops, and other similar activities. Additionally, attending and presenting at a conference, joining a teachers' club, peer-observation, watching teaching videos, and recording your class and watching that video, may be other forms of CPD activities.

However, most of these programs used a face-to-face approach, which in the current Covid-19 pandemic situation might reduce effectiveness if developed as planned before. Thus, CPD planners need to think about activities in which learning can occur using online resources and platforms that allow teachers maintain their professionalism in responding to new educational paradigms and trends. The focus should be on the ways we deliver CPD nowadays rather than the CPD activities themselves. Some of these non-face-to face activities are online training courses, reading, self-reflection, joining an online teacher forum, etc.

Many effective strategies and activities such as reflective inquiry, individual and collaborative teacher professional development programs can be implemented to upgrade teachers' performance and competencies (Priajana, 2017). In some contexts, there are Policies to CPD that make these activities institutional. Thus, many universities provide EFL teachers with academic masters or doctorate programs as part of institutional CPD policies.

Prince and Barret (2014) state that a series of CPD workshops is used with master trainers and teacher educators in India to help them appreciate the value of CPD, to become a role model and a "CPD Champion" for the teachers they train; an experience that is worth to be



shared worldwide. The key factor to CPD activities, whether institutional or non-institutional is the interest of the EFL teacher to go further on its own professional development. That is, the willingness to attend CPD activities and their motivation to learn new things.

CPD attendees need to feel CPD is meaningful to them. Thus, getting to know their expectations with the activities CPD officers plan to develop is essential to effective sessions. The hierarchy of needs defined by Maslow in the mid-1950s help attendees keep motivation towards learning. Without the bottom layer of hierarchy met, CPD attendees cannot reach the next level. Each level, once met, allows them the ability and motivation to learn. That is, with the proper support, each participant can move up in the hierarchy.

Figure 1:

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Poston (2009).



Understanding and implementing Maslow's Hierarchy is in the best interest of CPD officers and attendees, since officers can use their knowledge of the hierarchy to structure the CPD activity or activities and the environment. Furthermore, by environment for learning, we not only refer to physical parameters in the classroom, but also to safe emotional and physiological settings where participants feel free to ask questions, exchange ideas and opinions, without being mocked by other participants or the CPD officer.

The motivation continues to increase as attendees move from one level to another in the hierarchy scale. As suggested by Abraham Maslow, before individuals meet their full potential, they need to satisfy a series of needs. In order to create an appropriate CPD plan, CPD officers and attendees need to create it together. Thus, CPD could be diversified according to each individual needs and interest about EFL teaching.



CONCLUSIONS

Despite the level of professional development teachers may be situated at, there is always something new to learn, there is always a CPD opportunity awaiting. Teachers and CPD officers need to create a CPD plan that suits the best interest and needs to improve the teaching practice. The use of the items described to create an appropriate CPD plan for teachers allows them to think about where they are and what they need to continue improving their teaching practice.

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