

A Guide to

Continuing Professional
Development - Activities
for Teachers





The British Council CPD framework for teachers helps teachers evaluate their professional development needs and encourages teachers to take responsibility for their own professional development. It defines the professional practice “Taking responsibility for my own professional development” in the following way:

It involves:

- Understanding my professional needs, interests and learning preferences in order to identify areas for development
- Defining my short, medium and long-term career goals
- Understanding the developmental pathways available to reach my specific career goals
- Using technology to facilitate my professional development
- Staying up to date with developments in education in teaching and learning
- Being aware of, selecting and engaging in appropriate professional development opportunities and resources to inform my classroom practice, including
 - Collaborating with colleagues and other professionals
 - Reflective practice
 - Teacher research and other forms of classroom inquiry
 - Attending and presenting at conferences
 - Participating in training
 - Reading and publishing
 - Joining teachers’ associations
 - Observing other teachers and being observed
- Reflecting on and evaluating the benefit of my continuing professional development and its impact on my classroom practice and learner’s achievements

This brochure describes some of the professional development activities which you can do to develop your skills and knowledge, to learn and collaborate with other teachers, and to become an effective reflective practitioner. The following pages give more detail on different kinds of continuing professional development activity:

- Conferences
- English
- Feedback
- Groups
- Magazines
- Materials
- Membership
- Mentoring
- Observation
- Reflection
- Research
- Specialisation
- Team teaching
- Training
- Workshops

For more information and resources go to the British Council’s **TeachingEnglish** website at www.teachingenglish.org.uk

Conferences

A great way to develop is to participate in conferences for teachers. Teachers meet and talk with colleagues and learn from sessions given by experts. More experienced and confident teachers also benefit from giving their own presentations as a way to share experience with other teachers and for their own professional development.

Teachers’ associations often have conferences with workshops, talks and presentations from teachers, trainers, guest experts and publishers. Check out your local teachers’ association to find out when they hold their conferences,

Learner Feedback

Getting feedback on our teaching from learners can really help us develop. Don’t be afraid! If you approach your learners in a positive way, they can help you understand more about your teaching. Feedback needs to be formative, or ongoing.

Ideally, we should ask our learners to give us feedback on a daily or at least weekly basis. Giving feedback is part of learner training: it also helps the learner to understand and take responsibility for their learning. If students are not used to doing it, it will be hard at first, but it will improve as they learn what is expected of them. Here are some ways of getting feedback:

Orally

- Put students into groups, with a leader, to come up with 3 things they really liked this week, and three things they didn't enjoy so much. Leaders give feedback to the whole class.
- If you have a smallish class, get them to sit in a circle. Take turns around the circle at giving feedback.
- Tell students that you are planning tomorrow/next week. Ask them 'what would you like me to take into account?' Then put them into groups to come up with ideas.

In written form

- Give each student a post-it or sticky paper. They write one thing they liked, one they didn't about the daily/weekly lessons and stick it on the board at the end of the lesson.
- Give students a feedback form. Design a simple form. Ask questions like these:

1. What did you enjoy about the lessons this week?
2. Which activities were most useful?
3. What would you have liked more of/less of?
4. Have you got any suggestions for next week?

- Ask students to each write a short letter to you, giving you feedback on specific points.

Students will only take feedback seriously if they know that:

- a. you will not be too offended by it
- b. you listen and take note of it

This requires some work on your part. Remember also that giving feedback to the teacher is very empowering for students. The more you trust them to be sensitive, truthful and helpful, the more they will be just that!

Teacher Groups

Many teachers find that, after their initial training, their first step to professional development happens in the school where they start working. Getting together with other teachers and talking about problems and solutions is a very good way to help you to develop.

Look around you. Are there other teachers who would benefit from getting together once a month, say? You might even have a specific topic to talk about, and one of you might even give a short talk on that topic, so that you could all talk about it. If you find you have one among you who has a specialism such as SEN then why not get that person to share their knowledge?

You might even want to start a teachers' group in your village, town or city. It may sound like a lot of work, but if there are a number of you who have the same idea, it can be great fun. Here are some tips to get going:

1. Start small

Is there someone in your school, your town or village who thinks in the same way, or who you could convince? Try sending a flyer round to local schools, proposing a preliminary meeting. Your school may be happy to host it on the school premises. If not, you'll maybe have to use your house, even a local café, perhaps.

2. Have some ideas (but not too many)

For your first meeting it's good to have a few ideas to get the ball rolling. These might come out of your discussions with other teachers before the meeting, or they may be your own. People are more likely to get involved if they think that someone else has at least thought about the basics e.g. regularity of meetings, basic organisation (see later). Have a short list of possible topics for people to think about e.g.

- Differentiation
- Mixed- ability classes
- Classroom management techniques

Even if people reject all of them, they will come up with alternatives, which is exactly what you want. Remember that you want to get people involved, so you need to 'leave enough room' for that to happen.



If you've thought of absolutely everything, there's no need for anyone else to do anything; getting the balance between inspiring and empowering is crucial at this point.

It's also nice to make your first meeting a pleasant social event. Teachers need to get to know each other and have time to chat. You want people to feel that this association will add something to their lives in a wholly positive way. Have tea and cakes if possible; make it relaxing and different from 'work'.

3. Simple organisation

You need to give people the impression that this new idea is not going to be a lot more work for them and does not require a lot of organisation. You can start an organisation with only two people. Then you can grow. One way of starting is to sit down and write a list of the jobs that need to be done. Again, start with the absolute essentials. For example:

- finding a venue to meet
- deciding on activity
- communicating with other people
- collecting money and keeping accounts (if necessary)
- developing membership

Decide what it is essential for you to do. Think of yourself as the dynamo at this stage, feeding the machine with the energy to keep going. So, for example, you should be the one to make sure that the topics keep flowing and that each meeting actually takes place- the co-ordinator. Then you can present the other tasks as discrete 'jobs' that others in the group might like to take on, e.g. gathering together books for a small 'library'. This is much less daunting than presenting people with huge tasks that they haven't got time to do.

4. Skill-sharing: simple but effective

You don't need an expert to come and give a talk on an aspect of theory; you can start by sharing skills among yourselves. If you are a group of teachers from different schools, you'll have plenty to talk about for the first few meetings, plenty of skills to share.

One way forward is to run the meeting round a particular theme and ask everyone to come with one idea that they will share. Some of the best in-service sessions are based on this principle.

Another way is to encourage teachers to do a short 'slot' on a particular theme e.g. vocabulary or some listening materials that they have used effectively. The talk, demonstration, or workshop needs only be 15 or 20 minutes- just enough to provoke ideas and discussion. Teachers will gain the confidence to talk about ideas in front of their peers and the whole teaching community will benefit from this.

To sum up, make it simple to begin with and start small even if you think big. Take it one step at a time from base camp onwards. Concentrate on taking people with you rather than forging ahead alone. You'll need those people every step of the way. Above all, have fun!!

Magazines, Newspapers and Online

Reading a magazine or journal is a good way to keep up-to-date with new ideas and themes in teaching. Your local teachers' association or education authority may publish a newsletter or magazine. You can subscribe to a magazine yourself or share the costs with colleagues. You might also be interested in more theoretical journals too.

Most magazines, journals newspapers are available online as well in hard-copy and there are free web-based magazines. Try reading a newspaper with a dedicated education section. Such as the Guardian <http://www.guardian.co.uk> or the Times Educational Supplement <https://www.tes.com/teaching-resources> with dedicated sections on the latest developments in the field of education.

If you have good access to the internet, you can join an online discussion group where you can talk with like-minded professionals about the issues directly related to your educational context.

Materials

Trying out new teaching materials is a way of developing that is relevant whatever your experience. You can find teaching ideas in published books and on websites. Look out for ideas that bring to life the topics or subjects you teach, and add energy and interest to your lessons. Always evaluate any new materials you use to examine how they supported learning and whether you need to adapt them to better meet your learners' needs.

Also find out from colleagues what materials they use and like and try them. Offer your materials to your colleagues in return. It's a good idea to share a bank of materials with other teachers in your school so that you can all benefit.



You may even write your own materials. Try developing a variation of a successful activity you have found in a book, or develop your own materials using authentic reading texts or using a short video from Youtube. Make your materials look attractive using pictures and always review how the materials worked with learners so that you can continue to improve them.

Membership

Is there a local Teachers' Association that you can join? Such organisations often hold workshops, seminars and conferences, and have regular newsletters. An association can provide training to help build your teaching skills, keep you up-to-date with new ideas and information, and give you an opportunity to meet and share with colleagues from other schools and places. They also often have invited speakers and trainers from abroad. If you don't have any information about your association, ask your colleagues for information about local associations. If there is no association near you, then why not set up your own group.

Mentoring

Learning from more experienced colleagues – talking to colleagues and observing them - is an invaluable way to gain insight into teaching English. Find yourself a teacher who you trust and respect and who is willing to mentor you. You can ask them to support you with advice, teaching ideas, observations and evaluation of your planning and teaching

If you are an experienced teacher, it is also a good developmental activity for you to mentor less experienced colleagues. You can learn a different kind of teaching, share your experience, and also learn a lot from the perspective and understanding of another teacher. There is more about mentoring in this book from Cambridge University Press:

“Mentor courses: a resource book for trainer-trainers” by Angi Malderez and Caroline Bodóczy

Observation

Another way of helping yourself is to observe another colleague or colleagues, or for others to observe you. Observation is a wonderful way of learning new ideas, or of getting feedback on your own teaching. Observation is a skill which has to be developed. At any given moment, there are hundreds, thousands of things going on in a lesson, which could be observed. In general terms, there are two types of observation: Evaluative Observation or Developmental Observation.

Evaluative Observation is sometimes called ‘judgemental’ observation. You may have experienced it while training, or in your first year of teaching. The ‘agenda’ is external; that means that someone else- a trainer, supervisor or head of department – is judging you against a specific set of criteria. The criteria might be whether you are good enough to pass the course or teach at this school.

Developmental Observation is when you decide that you would like to use observation as a tool for development. In other words, it's your agenda. Observers are usually peers (at the same level, such as colleagues.) You decide when you want to be observed, by whom and for what purposes. Peer Observation is a type of developmental observation. It's about two colleagues observing each other's classes. The aim is for both teachers to learn something.

Here is a possible procedure for peer observation, where you already have an agreement with a colleague that you would both like to use observation for development. You need a relationship in which there is a certain level of trust already.

1. You notice something in your lessons that you would particularly like feedback on e.g. your instructions, your presentation of new topic, or the way you deal with the students.
2. You talk to a colleague and explain that you would like her/him to observe.
3. Write a lesson plan and give a copy to your colleague.
4. Agree on an observation form. The observer has to write things down, otherwise she'll forget
5. Your colleague observes.
6. Make your own self-assessment of the lesson and write notes.
7. You talk about the lesson and your colleague gives you feedback

Here are 3 ideas on how to use peer observation in the early stages:

1. 'Blind observation': This is particularly good if you don't like the idea of someone sitting in your class at first. Teacher tells the 'observer' about the lesson they are going to teach- talks them through it. The teacher points out one or two areas they're trying to improve e.g. instructions. She then teaches the lesson (without the 'observer'). After the lesson, the two colleagues have feedback, paying particular attention to those previously identified areas.
2. The power of three: The teacher asks the observer to observe three areas (maximum 3 is good) e.g. instructions, boardwork and how you set up group work. The observer observes and then later feeds back on these three areas only.
3. 'Stealing': Both teachers agree that they will observe in each of their classes. Decide that you will look for ideas, activities or techniques to 'steal.' Write down why you chose to steal it. This is a very supportive way of starting a peer observation relationship.

It's important to remember that a peer observation relationship is not useful if you just treat it as a friendship. You need to be kind, but also remember that your colleague wants to develop—and so do you! You need to be supportive, but also to find a way to give constructive criticism.

Giving and receiving feedback

After you have observed a colleague's lesson, you need to give her/him feedback. In a peer observation relationship, you will do this collaboratively. This means that you will probably follow a procedure something like this:

1. Ask your colleague to reflect on the lesson s/he has just taught. (This takes a little time)
2. Talk about the positive things in the lesson, especially in the areas s/he wanted you to focus on.
3. Mention two or three things that perhaps didn't work so well. (Perhaps s/he has noticed them in stage 1. If not, mention them, or ask about them.) Using questions is a useful way to get a colleague to reflect on issues that come up in the lesson.
4. Use your notes as a point of reference.
5. Finish on a positive note, with something that went well.
6. Thank your colleague for asking you to go into his/her class.

Tips on observation & feedback

1. To be effective, observation need to be specific.
2. There should always be a lesson plan that the observer can refer to.
3. The teacher being observed should always assess his/her own lesson in some way before feedback.
4. If you're giving feedback, always ask the other teacher how s/he thinks the lesson went first. Then talk about what you observed.
5. It's best if the peer observation goes both ways, not just one person observing all the time.
6. Always use a feedback form. It helps you to be specific and rigorous.
7. Always write down anything you are going to comment on as an observer (with an example).
8. Agree to give each other copies of feedback forms after oral feedback. It's sometimes useful to have notes to refer to, and it improves the observer's writing skills if s/he knows s/he has to hand the notes over!

Reflection

The ability to reflect on your own practice is an essential skill for teachers. It enables you to examine your strengths and weaknesses, and identify ways to improve. One way of doing this is to keep a teaching diary. You can use it to keep notes on what you actually do in class, but also on points you would like to improve on, what worked, what didn't and your feelings about it all. Keeping a diary helps you to 'notice' things that sometimes get lost when you are busy, rushing from class to class. Looking back at your diary will help you see issues that come up over and over again, and to be able to work on them. Here is a way of starting a diary:

Find an empty notebook. Take 15 or 20 minutes to write some reflections about the last class you taught. Some aspects you might include are:

- Did the class go as you planned? Why/why not?
- What did you learn about your students, either individually or as a class?
- What would you do the same next time?

- What would you do differently?

Remember that the diary is just for you, so be as truthful as you like.

Look back on this entry a few days later. Is it useful for thinking about this lesson next time? Is it useful for thinking about your teaching in general?

Research

Small-scale classroom action research can help in finding out more about classroom processes and so develop professional understanding and skills. Classroom action research begins with a question or questions about classroom experiences, issues, or challenges. It is a reflective process which helps you explore and examine aspects of teaching and learning and to take action to change and improve. It can help you understand more about teaching and learning, develop teaching skills and knowledge, and take action to improve student learning.

Its benefits are that it:

- provides a framework for trying out different approaches and ideas
- helps develop reflective practice
- enables teachers to make choices and decisions about their teaching styles
- helps develop confidence
- helps teachers improve student learning

You can carry out your own classroom action research by following these stages:

1 Reflect Consider your current classroom practice. Think about questions you have about teaching, topics you are interested in, problem areas, or aspects of teaching/learning you are unsure about. Make a list. From your list, decide what you would like to research. To help you decide, think about why you want to do it. What are the benefits to you and your learners? When you have decided, write a research question.

2 Explore Reflect on your research question. Where can you find information to help you plan your research? It may help you to discuss your question with colleagues. You may need to consult published materials or the Internet for information and ideas. Find out as much as you can about your question topic to help you plan how to do the research.

3 Plan Draw up an action research plan which states your question, how and why you are going to carry out the research. Things to think about: how long it will take? What tools will you use in your research? How will you record your research? There are different ways of doing research. It can be as simple as just writing down your own reflections after each lesson or it could include questionnaires, observations, audio recordings and so on.

4 Research Carry out your research using your chosen method. Some tools are:

- Peer observation
- Teacher diary
- Learner feedback
- Lesson evaluation
- Recording lessons
- Analysing learners' work

Choose the method which best suits your research question.

5 Analyse - This stage helps you to make sense of the data you have collected in your research. It is a process of reflecting on, organizing and reviewing your data to help you answer your research question. What have you found out? What insights have you gained from the research? What does your research show you?

6 Reflect then act on your results - Look at your teaching practice - what changes will you make? Take action based on what you found out from your research.

7 Review - When you have implemented changes, it is important to review. How successful were the changes? Do you need to take any follow-up action? Has your research indicated other areas you could explore? In other words, you begin a new reflective cycle.

Specialisation

Many teachers progress by developing a particular specialisation such as teaching SEN, or A level subject content. This may involve reading more deeply into the specialist area, consulting colleagues with experience in this area, and taking training to develop your skills and knowledge.

If you have a local teachers' association, you may be able to join a special interest group (SIG) where you can join colleagues and explore the particular area of teaching that interests you. SIGs hold events, workshops, discussion groups and publish newsletters to keep you up-to-date with the area.

Team Teaching

In team teaching two teachers participate actively in planning, teaching and evaluating a lesson. Team teaching can be much less pressurised than teaching on your own. There's less pressure because two of you are involved in planning and teaching and managing the classroom. A teacher co-ordinating a large class has little or no time to observe details of how an activity is going, how individual pairings are working, or to help the student who is struggling. The teacher who is not 'fronting' is, however, in a perfect position to do all of the above.

These are some tips to help you:

1. Before trying team teaching, talk to the other teacher and discuss what both of you want to get out of it.
2. Make sure that you get on well with the other teacher.
3. Be ready to explain to students why you're doing it and that it's actually an advantage for them.
4. Try starting with just half an hour team-teaching and see how it goes.
5. Take turns at teaching and sitting back or monitoring.
6. Always talk to each other about the lesson afterwards.
7. If something goes wrong, or your colleague does something you don't like, find a way of talking about it.

Training

At certain stages of a career, taking a training course can have a decisive effect on your development. If you take it at the right time, when you are ready and have the time to devote to it, it can refresh you and help you progress. When you choose a course, you need to take into account these factors:

- Is the course offered by a recognised course provider with a good reputation?
- Does the course offer you a recognised qualification which employers will recognise?
- Is the course content relevant to your needs, and up-to-date and interesting?
- Is there evidence of the quality of the course trainers?
- Is the course delivered at a time and place that is convenient to you? Can you fit it into your teaching schedule?
- Is the course affordable and value for money?
- Does the course have both practical and theoretical element so that you will learn how the principles are put into practice?

When you are taking the course, use the ideas and information you get to reflect on your own teaching and try ideas out in your lessons. You will also learn a lot from other participants on the course. After you finish the course, make sure you plan how you are going to put what you've learned into practice and evaluate the impact on your work. You can use feedback and research to do this.

Workshops

Many organisations offer workshops for teachers: the British Council, book publishers, in-service training organisations, awarding bodies. They're a good way to stimulate everyday teaching with new classroom ideas and reflection on practice. Because they are often single events – some only an hour, others a day – they are easier to fit into your schedule than a full training course. But in a short time you will learn something new to refresh your teaching. You will also meet other teachers to share concerns and ideas and extend your "personal learning network" – the network of colleagues who you can communicate and share with.

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