

The Actuality Of Online Continious Professional Development For English Teachers

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ABSTRACT

In the period of current global outbreak, the actuality of online continuous professional development (CDP) for English teachers is very crucial in the improvement of quality of education in our country. CPD often requires teachers to attend the trainings, workshops, webinars and free online distance learning courses where teachers are introduced to and engaged with new ideas, innovative ways of teaching methods, information and practical advice focused on developing their professionalism particularly in terms of pedagogical and professional and personal competencies. The main purpose of this article is to introduce online CDP activities for English teachers where they can enrol to any educational platforms and software programs which are being used widely in distance education, especially in the period of current global outbreak-pandemic (infectious disease Corona virus-19).

Keywords:

online professional development, online continuing distance professional development, distance learning, distance teaching, educational platforms, software programs

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Introduction

In today's global quarantine in connection with a global outbreak of Corona virus-19, it has become as an actual topic to promote online continuous professional development through distance learning and teaching for English teachers in our country where teachers can foster the exchanging of knowledge and expertise in teaching English with technology, and providing faculty members with professional learning opportunities to advance personal and professional teaching skills.

We know that there are many innovative ways of CPD including workshops, forums, webinars, free online courses and any similar CPD activities which can contribute significantly to the development of English language teachers around the world. CPD by providing these mandated workshops, which are often delivered by ELT professional trainers.

Our Technical Institute organizes

conferences, workshops, tea chats, trainings, forums, projects, language courses collaboratively for the teachers of English every year. A series of workshops and webinars are conducted at different times in the year. Through those initiative activities, our teachers keep informed and refreshed about the latest issues of English teaching and develop their quality of teaching. And they discuss and share problems and solutions with other colleagues in the field of research in the classroom as well. The involvement and the participation of teachers in professional conferences, workshops, tea chats, trainings, forums, projects, language courses and academic programs could offer great benefits for their quality improvement in learning and teaching foreign languages. For instance, a short-term learning activity such an online workshop provides an opportunity to acquire specific knowledge and skills (Richards and Farrells, 2005) addressing issues related to both

institutional improvement and individual development. In addition, workshops are good way to stimulate everyday teaching with new classroom ideas and reflection on practice (Davidson, et al. 2012). Therefore, teachers' positive impacts on their professional competences, the majority of the subjects participated in some workshops get the better teaching skills. With regard to workshops, Lay (2010) claims that workshops could also help both trained and untrained teachers to be able to advance their knowledge in their teaching careers and become familiar with techniques and approaches and properly use them fruitfully. However, in current global outbreak period of Quarantine (covid-19), individual CPD is more highlighted in this article.

Materials and Methods

There has been a great interest recently in the discussion of teachers and professional development by several researchers, educational practitioners, and teachers. The theory, research, policy and practice in CPD in education generally have been studied by many scholars such as Broad, Timperley, Wilson, Barrar & Fung, Simegn, Richards & Farrell who have investigated that CPD have greater potential for transformative change in teaching and learning by their various reviews of literature. They have identified the characteristics of CPD which works better:

- CPD should be relevant to the needs of teachers and their students
- CPD should involve teacher collaboration
- CPD should be supported from the university leadership
- CDP should show critical engagement with received knowledge
- CDP should value teachers' experience and knowledge.

CPD with these features is more likely to conceive of the teacher as a knowledge generator. In other words, we should understand that CPD not only a strategy through which teachers acquire

knowledge from external sources but also, teachers can engage in (collective) professional atmosphere in doing action research, peer observation, and teacher support groups. For instance: There is PRESETT teacher support group on the social websites Telegram, Yahoo, Facebook where the teachers of English from all higher educational establishments share ideas, news, experience and knowledge related to the current reforms in teaching foreign languages in our country, training programs, grant projects, free open courses offered by top universities of the world and the webinars.

In terms of individual PD activities, Simegn (2014) reveals that the teachers need higher cognition about the importance of self-initiated professional development. They should acknowledge that the self-driven activities and tasks of professionalism act the significant roles in bringing about real change on teachers' pedagogical effectiveness and efficiency. For example, activities can be in the forms of individual reading, joining online professional community, writing articles and some reflective activities such as self-monitoring and reflective writing journal. Each activity contributes differently for each individual teacher.

According to Lee, teacher's professional development along with the needs for ongoing renewal of professional skills and knowledge is seen as the cornerstone of teachers' professionalism and quality. (Lee, 2011) Having this in mind, Johnson and Golombek (2011) conclude that teacher professional development is a key to improve the quality of student learning and the ultimate goal of any educational enterprise.

In English Language Teaching (ELT) context, some scholars (Chan, 2011; Karimi, 2011; Kasi, 2011; Lee, 2011, Wati, 2011; Meng and Tajaroensuk, 2013) investigated various programs concerning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher professional development. They examined several effective

approaches to teachers' involvement in professional development programs such as seminars, pre-service teachers programs, teachers training programs, workshops and other similar activities. Their findings suggest that it is necessary for the teachers, as professionals, to keep updated and at least to maintain their professionalism in responding to new educational paradigms and trends.

Current ELT teaching is being delivered in our country by online videos and video podcasts to teach students outside the class in the period of quarantine. Students are learning through the use of e-Books, audio books, audio-visual aids, mobile applications, and webinars and do online exercises with the interactive multimedia lessons that assist in increasing their motivation and develop their autonomous learning.

As being EFL teachers, we have the key role in facilitating in distance learning and teaching English and keeping our continuous professional development as well. There is a wide array of free educational software applications and platforms that make English learning resources more accessible and they promote more personalized and meaningful learning for students and teachers, along with a healthy dose of classroom collaboration. For example: Moodle, Google Drive, Google Classroom, Edmodo, Kahoot and etc. These tools can be used to enhance and facilitate deeper and more authentic learning and teaching English simultaneously.

In this regard, 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 simultaneously. There are four main competencies that all EFL teachers have to cope with pedagogical, personal, social and professional competencies. These competencies are also in line with Brown's (2007) concepts pertaining to knowledge and skills of good English teachers including technical knowledge (subject matter),

pedagogical skills, interpersonal skills and personal qualities. These knowledge, skills and competencies are important to shape qualified and professional teachers. Therefore, teachers are required to have a great recognition in developing their competencies due to their responsibilities as professionals.

Webinar is the best example for online learning. Webinar is an interactive seminar that is conducted by the World Wide Web. Usually a live presentation, lecture or workshops that occur in real time as hosts and guests take part in through chatting, video-chatting, file-sharing or asking questions with using a microphone. Webinars are more helpful in learning English. Current ELT free webinars are being conducted by Regional English Language Office, US Embassy in Uzbekistan, Britishcouncil.org, Oup.com, CambridgeEnglish.org and etc.

Results and Discussions

There are many major online learning platforms (Coursera, EdX, Canvas network, Udemy, Future learn, Udacity, Khan Academy and others.) which provide free catalogs of all online courses for universities around the world for continuous professional development for EFL teachers.

Coursera <https://ru.coursera.org/courses>

It is a platform which offers more than 4,000 courses from universities and companies around the world. At Coursera, you can take hundreds of free courses to learn and to master a variety of specialties (more than 400), certificates listed in master's programs, certifications, and even access to complete information from the Internet.

EdX (<https://edx.org>)

A global nonprofit organization founded by Harvard and MIT. More than 2,500 courses from 140 institutes for those who want to learn languages, programming, psychology, biology, marketing and other fields on the free open EdX platform.

FutureLearn <https://www.futurelearn.com>

This is an MOOC project founded by Open University (UK) and SEEK Group. It offers online, short courses in various disciplines, professional and academic accreditation, and BA, BSc, MA, MSc, MBA, PgC degrees from UK universities.

Khan Academy
<https://ru.khanacademy.org>

It offers a panel of hands-on exercises, videos, and personal learning tools that allow students to read as they wish in class, in class, and beyond. Khan Academy teaches mathematics, computer programming sciences, history, art, economics and other subjects.

Udacity <https://www.udacity.com>

It is as an experiment emerged when Stanford teachers published a course on “Introduction to Artificial Intelligence” on the Internet for free. This platform offers many technical courses: data analysis, artificial intelligence, and programming, cloud computing and business.

Udemy www.udemy.com

It is a global learning market that provides millions of students with the skills they need to succeed. This platform has 150,000 courses in more than 65 languages. Through those educational platforms, top universities around the world offer a wide range of free asynchronous courses which will facilitate us with the authentic learning to enhance our English language skills and communicative competence and continuous professional development.

There are great ideas and recommendations for EFL teachers to upgrade their individual or collaborative continuous professional development.

-Publish reviews, articles in the magazines, teaching tips, lesson plans in the newsletter of a local teaching organization, flashcards, worksheets, conference report, blog posts (on your own or other people’s blogs), etc. In terms of writing articles, Johnny (2009) points out that writing ranges from short articles right through to

books and keeping a diary and reflecting on teaching is a good way to start good writing. By writing some articles, teachers can develop their language skills particularly such as writing skills.

-Read blogs and blog comments, online forums, books of practical ideas, articles, book reviews, magazines, journals, email newsletters (e.g. Oxford teachers club.com), e-books, relevant popular science books (e.g. ones of learning or psychology), linguistics books, etc.

-Research on classroom investigation, student opinions, what teachers really do while teaching, planning, marking or choosing jobs, the effects of something on learning, common teaching mistakes, the development language competences and etc.

-Set up online book club, tea chats or any professional groups using the platform wordpress.com.

-Share worksheets (e.g. on [ESLprintables](http://ESLprintables.com), Scribd.com), teaching ideas (e.g. on a notice board in your teachers’ room), favourite worksheets (e.g. in level files or a sharing file in your teachers’ room), warm ups, lesson plans (e.g. on [Onestopenglish](http://Onestopenglish.com) Lesson Share), your favourite links (e.g. oup.com) and etc.

-Subscribe to website updates (e.g. TESOL updates), magazines and journals (e.g. [ELT Journal](http://ELTJournal.com), [English Teaching Professional](http://EnglishTeachingProfessional.com), [Modern English Teacher](http://ModernEnglishTeacher.com)), Google News Alerts in things of interest (e.g. “Second Language Acquisition” or “ELT publishing”)

-Join and take part in online courses, CEFR, TEFL or TESOL, IELTS courses, webinars, Yahoo groups, Facebook groups and Telegram groups.

-Be a volunteer or a mentor to help organise and run online conference, organise the teaching resources, organise and lead a series of workshops, find out about the possibility of becoming a teacher training centre. There is a great possibility to deliver the trainings, courses, chats in many major online learning platforms

(Coursera, EdX, Canvas network, Udemy, Future learn, Udacity, Khan Academy and others.)

-Watch online workshops or lectures, a videoed lesson (e.g. the DVDs at the back of Teaching with Bear and The Practice of English Language Teaching), a colleague's lesson, a video of your own lesson, webinars, movies about teaching, videos on the CD ROMs in the publishers' latest catalogues

- Join the webinars organized frequently by Regional English Language Office, US Embassy in Uzbekistan.

Conclusion

To conclude, in spite of a the period of quarantine in our country, distance education in terms of learning and teaching English as well as upgrading continuous professional development simultaneously is being conducted through various digital educational platforms such as Moodle, Zoom, Google Classroom, Edmodo, Kahoot and etc. Distance education will allow teachers to keep updated about the latest issues of English teaching through discussing and sharing problems and solutions with other teachers. And also, teachers' involvement and the participation in the professional online courses, forums, tea chats, webinars and academic programs could offer great benefits for their quality improvement in their learning and teaching.

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