Reimagining the Traditional Paradigm of Professional Development

Randall’s ESL Cyber Listening Lab
esl-lab.com

Purpose

1. Discuss current challenges facing teachers and students in the new learning environment.
2. Describe the inadequacies and limitations of current professional development practices.
3. Propose fundamental changes to current PD that reflect a broader vision for the future.
Question

1. What are the greatest challenges that you face in teaching in this pandemic era?
2. What activities do you engage in to deal with these challenges?
Current Challenges

1. Teachers and students often have a difficult time juggling work, family, and self-care.

2. Teachers feel overwhelmed with the expectations to revolutionize their online teaching in days or weeks.

3. Teachers experience a loss of connection with students and colleagues.
Quote

“We are all faced with a series of great opportunities brilliantly disguised as impossible situations.”

How do we develop to be able to see new possibilities?
Goals of Professional Development

1. Experience personal enrichment
2. Learn new teaching skills for different learning environments
3. Become a teacher trainer or public speaker
4. Find a new job
5. Seek a promotion and get a raise
Traditional Model of Face-to-Face Training
Question

1. What shortcomings do see in this traditional training model today?
Pandemic has isolated colleagues from one another.
Disruptions in traditional models during periods of change and turmoil can lead to accelerated innovation and growth.
"The mind, once stretched by a new idea, never regains its original dimensions."

- Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.

How can we help each other stretch and enlarge our minds and skills in new directions?
“If you want to improve the organization, you have to improve yourself and the organization gets pulled up with you.” – Indra Nooyi, Former Pepsi CEO

“I was a rebel in every way.”
What is the Answer to Supporting Teachers?

Professional development (PD)

“Just get a good speaker to talk to our teachers, show them a few features on Zoom, and they will improve. That will fix any teaching problems.”

Source: https://www.pexels.com/photo/wooden-desk-with-books-on-top-707196/
Dilemma

“Professional development cannot be part of the solution until it is no longer part of the problem.”

*Hayes Mizell*

*Professional Development Educator*


Problems with Professional Development

- Not relevant to teachers’ needs.
- Too generic and superficial.
- Too short with no follow-up support.
- Focus on novelty tools assuming they are better.
- Too much information to process.
- No specific process to determine PD outcomes in instruction. Examine outcomes in depth, not superficially.
- Peer feedback from colleagues isn’t the norm.

Source: https://www.pexels.com/photo/business-computer-contemporary-270640/
What PD Will Serve Me Best in the Coming Year? How Can I Be a Leader?

- What do I want to learn more about?
- What would be a good idea for me to learn about/how to do?
- What “holes” do I have in my training/education?
- What “new learning” can I take on this year?
- How might I help my colleagues or institution or field of EL Teaching?
Issues with Current Professional Development
People sometimes make unfounded assumptions and blame teachers for why they struggle.

Recognize that teachers are human beings with skills to be developed; they are NOT a problem to be fixed.
Develop Soft Skills

Understand that the reasons for struggle can be very individual and personal . . . outside of the classroom.

"The eye sees only what the mind is prepared to comprehend."
- Henri Bergson, French philosopher

Empathy = the ability to sit with someone in their discomfort and pain
Build Your Empathic Muscles

Work on developing an empathetic spirit toward those who struggle: teachers, parents, students, and strangers.
Step Two

CONDUCT A NEEDS ANALYSIS: Determine what teachers need in advance of any training.

Speakers lecture on things that are irrelevant to the teachers’ needs.
“Drop-in” Training Model

Step Two

▪ (For trainers/presenters): Make direct contact with teachers, not just with school administrators or conference organizers who are inviting you to come.
▪ Administer a detailed survey to all teachers.
▪ PD tends to crash when implemented from the top down.

Speakers lecture on things that are irrelevant to the teachers’ needs.
Step Three

ACTION PLAN: No “drive through window” workshops. Provide long-term, sustained, and cumulative practice (job-embedded training).

Schools only organize training in short bursts with the hope that such training will “fix” instructional issues.
Step Four

TRAINING: Avoid the lecture model or marathon training sessions that become an information dumping ground.

Provide small, digestible chunks of learning.
----- No 500-slide show in 15 minutes.
Step Five

- Develop and assign expert teacher mentors and coaches to other teachers.
- Foster a creative, supportive, and collaborative culture.
Step Six

- Implement a system of evaluation on the impact of the training to determine the value and return gains.
- Teachers come up with an action plan and report on 2 or 3 changes they have made as a result of training.

Teachers aren’t provided follow-up support and feedback.
Professional Development Model

- Identify needs
- Provide cumulative and long-term training.
- Develop action plan for implementing new ideas.
- Assess PD outcomes
Reimaging Current Professional Development
“Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”

– Ralph Waldo Emerson, poet and essayist
Changes to Professional Development

1. Develop the soft skills of self-awareness, empathy, self-care, and self-compassion.

2. Expand your network of colleagues and online communities (friendships) through Social media and language-teaching events (and encourage others to do likewise).

3. Create an online mentor system of collaborative learning and accountability.

4. Develop remote group projects and courses with colleagues to develop professional skills.

2. Expand Your Network of Colleagues and Friendships Through Social Media and Language-Teaching Events.
2. Expand Your Network of Colleagues and Friendships Through Social Media and Language-Teaching Events.

- Join networks and actively engage. Don’t create a profile and then disappear.
- Create our own online communities.
3. Create a Mentor System of Collaborative Learning and Accountability.

- Task-based mentoring
- Experience-based mentoring
- Just-in-time mentoring
- One-to-one mentoring
- Team mentoring

Online Teacher Support Programs: Mentoring and Coaching Models
North American Council for Online Learning
Task-based Mentoring

- Creative Solutions for Teaching and Assessing Listening/Speaking Skills
- “Help! My Class is Out of Control!”
- Activities and Games to Spice Up Your Grammar Classes
Zoom Swap Shop Gatherings

Organize a meeting with once a month with teachers from around the world to share ideas.

- Select of specific topic (e.g., classroom management techniques).
- Invite teachers to participate in a group event for a Zoom meeting.
- Give each teacher 5 minutes to share their idea followed by questions.
- Record the meeting for public release after the meeting.
Benefits of Collaborative Learning

- Promotes human connection across geographic and cultural boundaries.
- Expands teaching perspectives outside of our egocentric worlds.
- Encourages feelings of reciprocity.
- Promotes concrete, meaningful feedback.
4. Create New Projects with Colleagues to Enhance Professional Skills

- English Language Institute
  University of Utah
  eli.utah.edu

- Social Media Content
  - Teacher Tips
  - Alumni Interviews
  - Facebook Live Broadcasts
5. Present Ideas to a Global Audience.
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“chameleonic”
Quote

“Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”

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“Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.”

– Barack Obama, former U.S. President
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