Supporting Change and Innovation with Professional Development

Pam McPherson
AMEP Research Centre
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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank all the AMEP teachers who gave their time to complete the questionnaire and participate in interviews. I would also like to thank the professional development coordinators whose work on evaluating professional development models was central to the project, and others who contributed their feedback in questionnaires. I especially want to acknowledge Suksiri Bounchan for her excellent research assistance and excellent skills in data processing.
Executive summary

The ‘Supporting change and innovation with professional development’ project conducted by the AMEP Research Centre is the result of a request from the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) service providers for an investigation into new models of professional development (PD) that could support program delivery in a period of institutional change characterised by:

- changing government policies
- changing institutional policy and practices
- changing teacher and learner demographics.

This project aimed to trial and evaluate models of professional development that would enable teachers and AMEP service provider organisations to respond to changing influences in immigrant language teaching.

Aims

The aims of the project were to:

1. identify and trial resources that promote and support teacher reflection and exploration of teaching practice.
2. identify and trial institutional resources that assist teachers to identify and meet professional development needs.
3. identify ways that reflective teacher development processes contribute to the dissemination of teacher expertise.
4. explore ways that institutions can evaluate the impact of teacher development on AMEP program delivery.
5. develop a web-based resource that facilitates collaborative reflection among project participants.

Methodology

The project used a framework of research-based resources to support Coordinators as they developed new approaches to professional development for their institutions. The resources made available to Coordinators included the results of teacher surveys and interviews, literature reviews and professional development workshops related to the project goals. Central to the project was a series of Coordinator meetings convened by the researcher. At these meetings Coordinators shared reflections on the progress of their projects, and planned future directions in the light of insights gained from their collaborative discussions.

In their teaching centres, most PD Coordinators used action-research methodologies to trial their professional development models and approaches. Their action-research activities included regular meetings for shared reflection and insights, team teaching, peer mentoring and observation, curriculum, program and materials development. These projects enabled teachers to work individually, in teams or groups to explore teaching issues specific to their institution and to implement and reflect on teaching interventions. The action-research models created the conditions for critical reflection that reportedly led to renewal of professional practice.

Findings

The models of professional development developed and trialled through action-research projects conducted by PD Coordinators constitute the key outcomes of this project. Their reports (Appendix 5) individually address and respond to the aims of this project.

The models that Coordinators developed follow trends seen locally and internationally which are a step away from traditional models of professional development characterised by single-session workshops,
training courses and conferences. Rather they favoured a systemic approach characterised as “longer-
term, job-embedded professional development” which includes features such as program-based study
circles, mentoring, distance education, and inquiry projects focused on student learning (Smith & Gillespie,
2007). Their projects featured opportunities for collaboration and reflection among individual and groups
of teachers, activities which teachers rated highly in the project surveys and interviews.

Professional Development coordinators found the project’s collaborative research framework was
a valuable means of support for their work in developing professional development models for their
organisations. Several stated that professional development that supports their own role is a rare
occurrence. The research resources and regular meetings provided by the project encouraged a critical
reflection on issues in teacher development and their resolution. They benefited from peer-to-peer sharing
of ideas and resources as well as the specialist program evaluation workshop. However, they did not take
up the option of a web-based communication facility (Aim 5).

**Recommendations**

Teaching institutions can assist teachers to respond to changing needs by adopting a systemic approach
to the provision of professional development. Systemic models can be adapted to the contexts and
environments in which teaching and learning occurs, support collaborative learning and reflection, and
respond flexibly to teacher development needs that arise as a result of changes in policy, curriculum, or
student needs.

The recommendations of this report are:

- That the AMEP Research Centre disseminate descriptions of the PD models used successfully in this
  project to service providers in the AMEP.

- That institutions consider a systemic approach to professional development, providing material
  resources that enable teacher collaboration and reflection. For example, regular meetings, online
  resources (wikis, learning management systems).

- That further research be considered to explore the role and characteristics of reflective teaching
  practice in AMEP program delivery.
### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>AMEP</td>
<td>Adult Migrant English Program</td>
<td>AMEP RC</td>
<td>AMEP Research Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMES</td>
<td>Adult Migrant English Service</td>
<td>CSWE</td>
<td>Certificates in Spoken and Written English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIAC</td>
<td>Department of Immigration and Citizenship</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td>Distance Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAP</td>
<td>English for Academic Purposes</td>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESOL</td>
<td>English for Speakers of Other Languages</td>
<td>HTS</td>
<td>Home Tutor Scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technology</td>
<td>ILC</td>
<td>Independent Learning Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISLPR</td>
<td>International Second Language Proficiency Rate</td>
<td>LMS</td>
<td>Learning Management System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LO</td>
<td>Learning Outcome</td>
<td>NAMEP</td>
<td>Northern AMEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NMIT</td>
<td>Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE</td>
<td>OH&amp;S</td>
<td>Occupational Health and Safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTEN</td>
<td>Open Training and Education Network</td>
<td>PD</td>
<td>Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAS</td>
<td>Student Achievement Summary</td>
<td>SPRP</td>
<td>Special Projects Research Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TELLS</td>
<td>TAFE English Language and Literacy Services</td>
<td>TESOL</td>
<td>Teaching/Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages</td>
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<tr>
<td>VET</td>
<td>Vocational Education and Training</td>
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Introduction

This ‘Supporting change and innovation with professional development’ project was undertaken as part of the Special Projects Research Program (SPRP) at the AMEP Research Centre, and was based at Macquarie University. It was conducted over 18 months between June 2007 and December 2008.

Background: The need for the project

This study is the result of a request from the AMEP service providers for an investigation into models of PD to support program delivery in an environment of cultural change in their institutions. The factors they saw as contributing to cultural change in their institutions were:

- changing government policies
- changing institutional policy and practices
- changing teacher and learner demographics.

This environment of cultural change has prompted PD coordinators to think laterally about the ways they can provide and evaluate effective PD for teachers in their organisations. They have identified a need for a renewed focus on teacher awareness, knowledge and skills. There was a sense that aligning teachers’ knowledge and skills with new institutional priorities would enable all parties to better respond to changing stakeholder needs.

With these considerations in mind, a research methodology was developed that would support Coordinators as they implemented professional development strategies that responded to the conditions and needs of their own institutions.

This report is structured as follows:
An overview of the theoretical considerations is followed by project aims and methodology and a list of professional development projects developed by a PD coordinator. These constitute a major outcome of this project. Next follows the ‘Outcomes and findings’ section which discusses the results of teacher and coordinator surveys and interviews.

Theoretical considerations

Theorists have identified reflection and self-direction as the cornerstones of lifelong learning among professionals for example, the foundational work of Schön (1983). This position has been widely adopted by theorists and researchers in the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) field (for example, Bailey et al 2001; Richards and Farrell 2005). Reflection refers to the internal processes that practitioners draw on to inform decisions or actions in their teaching practice. Although essentially an individual activity, reflection is better informed when teachers can draw on resources such as events, people and conditions to examine their own practice. Reflective practice can draw on the experiences of peers and the expertise of mentors, and can be informed by available research on specific or current issues, discussion with students, or the processes of classroom-based action research. Reflective practice is goal-oriented, and aims to examine current practice for the purpose of improving on it (Schön 1983).

Beyond individual reflection, collaborative reflection can extend the possibilities of reflective practice. In this model, teachers meet with peers and mentors to discuss their beliefs and practices about a particular aspect of teaching for the purpose of improving their teaching practice. Collaborative reflection has been used most successfully in action research, which combines the processes of collaborative reflection with action for change (Bartlett 1990; Wallace 1997; Freeman 1998; Burns 1999).

Reflection is a key aspect of self-direction. Self-directed practitioners analyse their own beliefs and skills, identify future needs, and seek out resources and pathways that will help them to extend their knowledge and skills. Self-directed teachers are likely to engage in collaborative activities with peers, seek mentoring, or participate in formal learning that targets specific skills and practices. Institutions can assist teachers to be proactive in their approach to PD by providing resources and practices that support reflection and self-direction.
Consequently, it was a key aim of this project to provide resources and opportunities for teachers to engage explicitly with reflective practice. This was to be achieved through the following stated project aims.

Aims

The stated aims of the project were to:
1: identify and trial resources that promote and support teacher reflection and exploration of practice
2: identify and trial institutional resources that assist teachers to identify and meet professional development needs
3: identify ways that reflective teacher development processes contribute to the dissemination of teacher expertise
4: explore ways that institutions can evaluate the impact of teacher development on AMEP program delivery
5: develop a web-based resource that facilitates collaborative reflection among project participants.

Methodology

The aims were to be achieved through collaborative action research methodology. This section reports on the participants and the activities that they engaged in to achieve those aims.

The project drew on an action research paradigm to provide Coordinators with a rigorous yet flexible model with which they could introduce and monitor changes in educational practice at their institutions. The origins of action research are frequently attributed to Dewey (1929) and Lewin (1946) and its application to the educational field is illustrated by an iterative model described by Kemmis & McTaggart (1988) (See Burns, 2005 for a detailed overview). In this model, participants function as both researchers and practitioners, identifying problems and exploring conditions that surround them. In the next stage of the cycle they plan actions for change, then execute these actions while monitoring and documenting the results. The final stage of the cycle calls for reflection on the results and processes, which leads to another cycle of observation, planning, action and reflection.

In the AMEP collaborative action research has been used to support practitioners through the processes of curriculum change and professional renewal (Burns 1997, 1998, 2000, 2005). Collaboration between researcher and participants occurs through research guidance and resources offered by the researcher. Importantly, the contribution of peers in the reflection and planning processes broadens the knowledge base and encourages deeper insights through shared reflection.

In this project, the research resources provided to the Coordinators are detailed in ‘Research activities’.

Participants

Five AMEP service providers expressed interest in the project, and nominated PD coordinators and managers to participate. Teachers and coordinators in all AMEP organisations were invited to respond to surveys, and teachers in participating organisations were interviewed.

Participating organisations and coordinators were:
- AMES West Coast (Western Australia) – Clare Harris
- Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE (NMIT) (Victoria) – Vicki Hambling
- TAFE English Language and Literacy Services (TELLS) (Queensland) – Muriel Aloizos and Elene Claire
In the second year of the project, Judie Cross, a Language Programs Manager at TAFE NSW Sydney Institute, joined the group to share her experience of a PD project developed for similar purposes. Due to the lateness of her entry to the project, her participation was limited to attendance at two meetings and was not funded by this project. However, her report is included because it contributes to current knowledge about effective tools for PD in the AMEP.

Research activities

The project was multilayered in that it provided research support to coordinators as they developed and trialled PD models for their institutions. The collaborative action research methodology provided PD coordinators with a structure, resources and assistance for the development and implementation of their professional development projects. The following research and professional development resources were made available to coordinators.

- **PD coordinator meetings:** Coordinators met four times over the course of the project at Macquarie University (in 2007 on 30 August and 25 October; and in 2008 on 19 March and 19 June). At these meetings the researcher presented findings from research activities such as teacher questionnaires and interviews, and convened discussions on the progress of coordinators’ projects. Coordinators could raise issues, seek advice and guidance, and work on strategies to explore and resolve problems.

- **Program evaluation workshop:** The workshop was held at Macquarie University on 19 March 2008 and responded to coordinators’ need for guidance on how to evaluate their projects and report to different stakeholders. Associate Professor David Hall, an academic at Macquarie University with a research history in program evaluation, led the workshop and covered topics such as the features and challenges of evaluation research, and the categories of stakeholders and their information needs. He worked with each PD coordinator to help identify challenges in individual projects and to design strategies to address them.

- **Workshops: Doing action research** Several PD coordinators identified action research as a useful methodology for individual teacher projects. The researcher visited their sites and conducted workshops for teachers on the aims and processes of action research methodologies.

- **Literature reviews:** The researcher provided PD coordinators with summaries of journal articles and book chapters relevant to their local projects. In addition to reflection and self-direction, topics included mentoring, use of technologies, peer observation and peer mentoring. Theses, book chapters, and summaries of literature on current trends, strategies and techniques for PD were made available to coordinators to help them to select appropriate techniques and strategies for trial. (See Appendix 1: Annotated bibliography)

- **Teacher survey:** A questionnaire seeking AMEP teachers’ views on PD was distributed by paper and online (see Appendix 2: Teacher questionnaire). The survey elicited teachers’ views on:
  - their purposes for undertaking PD
  - ownership and responsibilities for teachers’ PD
  - evaluation of the impact of PD
  - preferred PD activities.

The 159 survey responses received were summarised and reported to PD coordinators at the second coordinator meeting to help inform their choice of PD strategies to trial in the professional development models they were developing. An overview of the survey finding is provided in ‘Outcomes and findings’.
• **Teacher interviews:** During individual site visits, the researcher conducted interviews with individuals, pairs and groups of teachers to enrich and expand the data on teacher perspectives collected by the teacher questionnaire. The interviews were in the form of an open-ended conversation (see Appendix 3: Teacher interviews) and further explored themes of:
  - teacher qualifications and experiences, and their influence on changing PD needs
  - teacher beliefs about the role of reflective practice in their teaching lives
  - beliefs about institutional/teacher roles in PD
  - teacher beliefs about self-direction and efficacy.
Twenty-three teacher interviews were held at six sites, including a distance learning program. An overview of results is provided in ‘Outcomes and findings’.

• **National survey of PD coordinators:** A survey of coordinators canvassed opinions about the provision of PD activities and resources to teachers (see Appendix 4: PD coordinator questionnaire). The survey questions elicited responses about:
  - teacher groups and differing needs
  - institutional resources provided
  - institutional support for reflective practice
  - evaluation practices.
Eighteen PD coordinators responded to the survey. An overview of results is provided in ‘Outcomes and findings’.
Summary of professional development projects

PD coordinators in each participating organisation developed and trialled PD models that aimed to align teachers’ professional skill needs with organisational needs in AMEP English language-teaching programs. The projects they undertook to develop these models are outlined in brief here; full reports are provided in Appendix 5: Professional development project reports.

PROJECT 1: ‘Old hands/new blood’: A strategy to examine and reflect on employability skills and the CSWE (Clare Harris, AMES West Coast)

Project aims:
- support teachers in integrating employability skills into teaching programs
- trial and evaluate peer collaboration as a means of PD.

Methodology: Four pairs of experienced/inexperienced teachers were asked to explore ways of incorporating employability skills into classroom practice. They were asked to plan together, to visit each other’s classes, to teach together as equals and to reflect on the process of working collaboratively.

Outcomes: From an organisational perspective, it was found that this kind of pairing and reflection can offer teachers a sense of ‘ownership’ of PD and can ensure that the wealth of experience within an organisation is not lost when experienced teachers move on. Both ‘old hands’ and ‘new blood’ reported that participation in the project led to a long-term change in their practice.

PROJECT 2: Increasing CSWE I student outcomes with action research (Vicki Hambling, NMIT)

Project aims:
- trial and evaluate various forms of teacher PD
- achieve the goal of increasing the student pass rate at Level 1 of the Certificates in Spoken and Written English (CSWE).

Methodology: Teachers trialled a unit of work as a means of increasing their understanding of:
- how CSWE could be embedded in a content-based approach
- how to build scaffolding for the CSWE learning outcomes using the unit content
- how to devise assessment tasks based on the content taught in the course.

Teachers used this focus to build a community of practice or ‘learning circle’ approach to PD that included reflection on their individual teaching practices.

Outcomes: Evaluations from teachers showed that those who had implemented measures from the project had improved their module completion rates, while those who did not implement these measures did not improve module completion rates.
PROJECT 3: Delivering PD online (Muriel Aloizos and Elene Claire, TELLS)

Project aims:
- trial and evaluate the effectiveness of online PD for AMEP teachers across the state of Queensland.

Desired outcomes included:
- an ongoing support network (community of practice)
- high participation rate
- development of eLearning skills
- centralised resources
- sharing of ideas (new and pre-trialled).

Methodology: Online assessments and surveys of current information and communication technology (ICT) skill levels; a two-hour training session introducing participants to my.TAFE (TAFE Queensland Learning Management System); online collaboration through a group forum; scheduled chat sessions; and reflection on practice via the group blog.

Outcomes: High participation rates by teachers; an ongoing support network (community of practice); development of eLearning skills by teachers; centralised resources shared via the learning platform; sharing of ideas through online collaboration.

PROJECT 4: Evaluation study: Impact of PD on teaching employment-related English in the AMEP classroom (Homeira Hosseini, Don Purvis and Jane Sindel, ACL Parramatta and Auburn)

Project aims:
- evaluate the effectiveness of recent PD
- identify what effect, if any, recent PD has had on current program delivery
- identify future PD needs for teachers
- suggest strategies for effective and innovative institutional support and better practice.

Methodology: Teachers at two ACL colleges were surveyed to establish if the PD delivered, to introduce a new employment-focused syllabus and resources, had been effective in altering the behaviour of teachers in class. Samples of learners at CSWE Levels I, II and III were also surveyed for their views on the inclusion of work-related course content.

Outcomes: Key findings were that most surveyed teachers use employment-related teaching materials and activities; more teachers feel confident about teaching work-related skills than those who do not; PD sessions on employment pathways are seen as significantly helpful for teachers; most teachers would like further PD on employment in a rapidly changing world; all surveyed teachers know about occupational health and safety in the classroom; and most teachers felt that employment-related English should be taught at every CSWE level (although a significant number disagreed).

A large majority of CSWE I students say they want to study 50 per cent or more employment and work-related content in their next class.
PROJECT 5: AMEP mentoring professional development
(Lorraine Eagles, OTEN, TAFE NSW)

Project aims:
- create cultural change towards a positive approach to using new technology and alternative delivery options
- establish a mentoring program for all AMEP teachers to learn skills needed for current and future delivery trends in technology, and vocationally-focused English programs
- encourage teachers to share skills and knowledge.

Methodology: At a PD day in December 2007, teachers presented an aspect of delivery or professional knowledge or a technology skill that they were using. All teachers were required to identify the skills they needed to learn and to take responsibility for acquiring these skills.

Outcomes: All teachers now have skills in a range of technologies. Some can use all the skills that were targeted. Each is now in a position to be a mentor to a new teacher in the future.

PROJECT 6 (Additional Project): Using reflection, wikis and mentoring as tools to support change (Judie Cross, TAFE NSW Sydney Institute)

Project aims:
- foster reflection by teachers on their delivery styles
- provide a forum for ongoing communication.

Methodology: Teachers were provided with readings on reflection in practice, and attended a workshop on mentoring. A wiki (a web page that can be freely edited) was created in which program managers posted their own reflections on their role, and teachers were invited to discuss teaching issues. Issues included time management, new technologies and the value of mentoring, as well as various problems to do with budgeting, classes and performance management.

Outcomes: Teachers appreciated a forum to reflect and discuss issues, and valued informal ongoing discussion. The teachers felt reasonably comfortable using the relatively new technology. They felt that the project had encouraged collegiality, increased their sense of self-worth and helped them to deal with changing demands by providing a forum for them to voice their concerns about various challenges.

Outcomes and findings

This section has an overview of the findings from teacher and coordinator surveys and interviews, and discusses the models of professional development created by project participants.

Teacher survey

A survey of teachers (see Appendix 2: Teacher questionnaire) was carried out prior to the commencement of the coordinators’ projects. The survey asked about teachers’ beliefs and attitudes to professional development, their preferred modes of access, and their perception of the role of employers and themselves in providing for it.

The survey was available in printed form and online. The online survey was available via a link provided in an e-bulletin distributed to AMEP subscribers by the AMEP Research Centre. The print format was distributed as a PDF document to key contacts in AMEP provider organisations with a request that it be made available to teachers. Approximately 159 survey responses were received, with the majority (102) being in print format.
The following sections report on the responses to survey questions and are grouped by categories of questions, rather than itemising each question in sequence. The aggregated responses are reported by number and percentage of total responses and it should be noted that not all respondents answered all questions. The number of absent responses per question is indicated in each table by the term ‘missing’. Percentages are calculated to one decimal place and rounded to whole units. Instances where such rounding occurs are marked with an asterisk (*).

**Profile of survey respondents**

Survey respondents were classroom-based and distance-learning teachers located in urban centres in full-time, part-time or casual/sessional employment. Most respondents (42.1%) had less than ten years’ experience teaching in adult TESOL but a substantial number had 11-20 years’ experience (35.8%) and a smaller number (22%) had more than 20 years’ experience. Most respondents reported being in a late (48.1%) or mid (36.7%) stage of career and described their TESOL teaching expertise as proficient (54.8%) or expert (29.9%). The majority of respondents (94.1%) had postgraduate qualifications in TESOL, and a small number (5.8%) had undergraduate qualifications only.

**Adult TESOL experience**

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<td>11-20 years</td>
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<td>more than 20 years</td>
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**Current stage of career**

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<td>Mid-career</td>
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**TESOL expertise**

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<tr>
<td>Advanced beginner</td>
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<td>Proficient</td>
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<td>Expert</td>
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Highest qualification

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<td>Postgraduate diploma</td>
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<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
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<td>PhD</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>159</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Attitudes to professional development

Almost unanimously, (99.4%) teachers reported that ongoing professional development is important to them and that it helps to further their teaching skills (95.6%). A substantial number (75.6%) also believed it helps to further their employment and career prospects.

Ongoing professional development is important

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>99.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>159</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ongoing professional developments helps further their teaching skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>95.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>159</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ongoing PD helps further their employment and career prospect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>75.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>24.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>159</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Circumstances for seeking professional development

The questionnaire asked teachers about the circumstances in which they sought professional development. Their responses indicate that teachers are more likely to seek and access professional development contingently, than develop a longer term plan. Of all respondents 86.5% seek professional development when they believe their students are experiencing obstacles to learning, and a majority (95.3%) seek it when they need assistance with a teaching and learning issue. A lower, but still substantial number (88.3%) seek professional development on the recommendation of their employer. Less than half the teachers surveyed, planned their professional development program regularly (37.7%) or occasionally (44.8%) and very small numbers frequently do so (8.4%), or never do (9.1%).

Planning for professional development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>44.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regularly</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>37.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>154</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>159</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PD is sought:
A: when students have learning obstacles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>86.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>148</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>159</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PD is sought:
B: when you want help for a specific teaching and learning issue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>141</td>
<td>95.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>148</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>159</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PD is sought:
C: when your employer recommends it

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>88.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11.7</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>145</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>159</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Roles and responsibilities for professional development

The questionnaire asked how teachers perceived the responsibility for identifying and organising their professional development, and how their professional development needs were evaluated. A majority of teachers (77.8%), stated that in their organisation the responsibility for planning and organising PD is shared between employer and teacher. Of the respondents (19.6%) reported that they had sole responsibility for their professional development, and 2.6% believed it was the employers’ responsibility alone. In their responses 38.2% of teachers stated that this responsibility was shared equally between teachers and employers and 34.9% stated that they had the greater share of responsibility for identifying and organising their own professional development.

When asked how often employers evaluated their PD needs, 47.1% stated that it was done regularly and 44.5% responded that it was done occasionally. In a separate question 76% of respondents agreed that employers evaluated their professional development needs in the context of performance management and appraisal processes.

Responsibility for identifying and meeting teachers’ PD needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility for identifying and meeting teachers’ PD needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self and employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key:  e = employer  
      s = self

Responsibility for planning and organising teacher development is shared

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility for planning and organising teacher development is shared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-s 0% - 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-s 25% - 75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-s 50% - 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-s 75% - 25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-s 100% - 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Employer evaluates your PD needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>44.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regularly</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>47.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>155</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>159</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evaluation is conducted as part of performance management/appraisal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>76.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>150</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>159</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Access and participation in professional development

The tables below show the results of questions asked about the number of professional development activities teachers participated in over 3-years, and who had selected these activities.

Almost half (42.4%) of surveyed teachers reported that they participated in more than 10 PD activities in that period and 20.9% reported 1-3 activities. Of these, 29.3% of teachers reported that they self-selected most (76-100%) of their PD activities and 24% of teachers reported selecting less than 25% of these PD activities. However, these figures are dissimilar to the responses given to the 'reverse' question that followed - the proportion of PD activities they undertook which were selected by their employer and related to their employer’s need.

The majority of responses (47.5%) were that less than 25% of teacher development activities over the past three years had been selected by employers and were related to employers’ needs, and only a small number (12.8%) indicated that employers had selected most (76-100%) of their professional development activities to meet employers’ needs.

The teacher interviews (p 15) shed more light on the roles of employers and teachers in identifying and providing for teacher development needs.
Number of PD activities participated in over the last three years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-10</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more than 10</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>158</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>159</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage of activities that were self selected

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-25%</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-50%</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-75%</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76-100%</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>150</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>159</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage of activities selected by your employer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-25%</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-50%</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-75%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76-100%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>141</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>159</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evaluating the impact of PD

Just over two-thirds (69.2%) of teachers evaluate the impact of professional development on their teaching practice and 28.3% reported that their employers also evaluate the impact of professional development.

In their additional comments teachers suggested a variety of means for evaluating their professional development. They included: trialling new techniques, materials and approaches; reflecting on changes to their teaching practice; evaluating changed practice in terms of meeting student needs; seeking feedback from students; discussion with peers and colleagues.

Fewer teachers commented on the ways that employers evaluate the impact of PD on their teaching practice. Those who did cited: formal PD surveys and reviews; end-of-course reports; staff and group meetings; observing teaching programs and resources; seeking teachers’ views on professional issues; student feedback; student retention; skills audits; providing opportunities for teachers to share knowledge/skills with peers; performance management processes.
Self-evaluate the impact of PD on your teaching practice

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
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</thead>
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<td>108</td>
<td>69.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>159</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Employer evaluates the impact of professional development on your teaching practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>28.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>71.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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<td>Missing</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>159</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Preferred PD activities

Using a three-point scale, teachers rated three kinds of PD activities, **Formal**, **Collaborative**, and **Independent/Reflective**. **Formal** activities are characterised as those which follow a traditional format, usually with an invited speaker leading a presentation which may or may not include audience participation. **Collaborative** activities are those in which teachers work together in pairs or groups on a PD activity that is not a formal presentation. **Independent/reflective** activities are those where teachers take the initiative to engage in reflective or investigative activities focused on aspects of their own teaching or their own class.

Among the **Formal** activities, **Short courses** and **Workshops** had the highest number of ratings as **Very Effective**, followed by **Award-bearing courses** and **Conference sessions**. More than half the respondents (56%) rated **Internet-based courses** as **Less Effective**.

Most **Collaborative** PD activities were rated as either **Very Effective** or **Effective**. Those that rated most highly were **Observing teaching on a similar class to yours** (66.4%); **Shared materials development and course planning** (57.5%) and **Observing videos of unknown teachers in class** (50.3%). The activities with most **Least Effective** ratings were **Observation of your class by a supervisor** (34.5%) and **Regular interaction with a formally appointed mentor** (31.5%).

Most of the **Independent/reflective** activities that elicited positive responses were rated **Effective** with only **Trialling new teaching approaches or styles** scoring highly (55.6%) as **Very Effective**. The items in this set that received the most negative responses were **Keeping a teaching journal or diary** (46.7%), **Video-recording own teaching for self-evaluation** (33.8%) and **Observation of your teaching by colleagues for self-evaluation** (32.0%).

Of the three sets of PD activities, those in **Collaborative** set appear to rate more highly than those in the **Formal** and **Independent/reflective** sets, however this set had more items than the other two, so a true comparison is not feasible.
### PD activity types

#### a) Formal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Type</th>
<th>Very Effective %</th>
<th>Effective %</th>
<th>Less Effective %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workshops</td>
<td>65.8</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short courses (2-5 days)</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Award-bearing courses</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>23.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference sessions</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>30.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet-based course</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>56.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### b) Collaborative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Type</th>
<th>Very Effective %</th>
<th>Effective %</th>
<th>Less Effective %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observing teaching on a similar class to yours</td>
<td>66.4</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observing teachers on different programs and courses</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observing videos of unknown teachers teaching a class, and discussion with your colleagues</td>
<td>50.3</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular discussion groups on planned topics, research, or other focus</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ad hoc discussion with other teachers about teaching/learning issues</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom research with teacher colleagues</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative action research with teachers interested in similar issues</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation of your class by your supervisor, followed by discussion</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>34.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observation followed by evaluative discussion with your peer</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular interaction with a formally-appointed mentor</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>31.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared course design and planning sessions</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared materials design and development sessions</td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### c) Independent/reflective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Very Effective %</th>
<th>Effective %</th>
<th>Less Effective %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Video-record own teaching for self-evaluation</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>33.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation of your teaching by colleagues, for self-evaluation</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping a teaching journal or diary</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>46.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compiling a portfolio to record professional growth</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>36.3</td>
<td>5.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action research (alone, or with a colleague)</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formally investigating critical incidents</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>50.3</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focused reading program on specific TESOL area</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td>24.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trialling new teaching approaches or styles and monitoring your progress</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Summary

The survey respondents showed a high level of appreciation of professional development and its role in maintaining the currency of their teaching practice. Most participate regularly in professional development activities and evaluate its impact on their teaching work. Many believe professional development is a shared responsibility between the employer and the teacher, and reported that their employers demonstrated involvement and interest in their PD needs, although the majority also reported that employers do not evaluate the impact of PD on teaching practice.

Teachers reported that they seek professional development when they and their students encounter specific issues, rather than making longer term plans. Their preferred professional development activities are those that involve demonstrations of teaching practice by other teachers, or collaborative activities and consultation with teacher colleagues. They value workshops as a mode of professional development but gave low ratings to Internet courses, conferences and independent/reflective activities such as keeping journals and portfolios, video-recording their own teaching sessions and observation and discussion with supervisors and mentors. The lowest-rated activities in the survey involved keeping diaries, journals and portfolios – activities that many researchers regard as essential tools for reflective practice (Bailey et al 2001; Richards and Farrell 2005).

The activities that rated most highly were those that are characterised by collaboration, sharing and reflective practice. These include:

- observing other teachers in a similar class to one's own
- observing an unknown teacher in class and subsequent discussion with colleagues
- regular discussions with other teachers
- sharing sessions on course and materials design
- trialling new teaching styles, materials or approaches and monitoring progress
- attending workshops (interactive).

Interviews with teachers were conducted to seek more detail and qualitative comment on themes and issues that arose from the survey responses. The following section reports on the interviews and tables that have been categorised into major themes.

### Teacher interviews

The purpose of the interviews was to explore, in greater depth, responses to the questionnaire that dealt with themes of reflective practice and self-direction in professional development. The interviews did not aim to evaluate the professional development models instituted by service providers for this project as each had its own means of evaluation.
The interview subjects were a small sample of teachers from teaching institutions participating in the project who volunteered to be interviewed. It is not intended to imply they are a representative sample of AMEP teachers, or of teachers in their location. Not all interviewees were participants in their institution’s professional development projects.

The following section begins with teacher profiles then summarises teacher responses to questions about their perceptions and experience of reflection and self-direction in professional development. The themes explored in the analysis are defining teacher professional development needs, reflective practice and self-direction.

Teacher profiles

While most survey respondents had 1-10 years teaching experience and the fewest had more than 20 years’ experience, the interview ratios are the reverse. The largest number of interviewees (10) had more than 20 years of experience, and the smallest (6) had 1-10 years’ experience. However, as with the survey, there is not a wide disparity in the numbers with 7 having 11-20 years’ experience.

Despite the difference in years of experience, in the interviews and the survey a majority of respondents stated they were at a late stage in their career, and proficient teachers. However, some teachers found the categories proficient and expert problematic, pointing out that teacher expertise in TESOL areas can vary and teachers may be more skilled in some areas than others. An example given was of a teacher who is highly proficient in teaching literacy or pronunciation, but may be less proficient in teaching digital literacies. Several teachers who described themselves as proficient teachers agreed that they were expert in at least one TESOL area.

### Adult TESOL experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-10 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 years</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>30.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 20 years</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>43.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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</table>

### Current stage of career

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early career</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid career</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late career</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>65.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>23</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TESOL expertise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Novice</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced beginner</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>47.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>30.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>23</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Highest TESOL qualification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>undergraduate</td>
<td>3 + RSA or CELTA</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>postgraduate certificate</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>postgraduate diploma</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>43.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>100.0*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Defining professional development needs

**Questions:**

1. How often do you evaluate your professional development needs?
2. How do you do this, e.g., what processes, how do you document it?
3. How often do your employers formally evaluate your professional development needs?
4. Are your PD needs related to:
   - career advancement
   - finding/retaining employment
   - better teaching.
5. What kinds of professional development work best for you at this stage of your career?
6. Have your PD needs changed over years of teaching experience?

Teachers’ responses to questions about evaluating their PD needs tended to be framed by institutional practices at their teaching centres. Most reported that their institutions require teachers to complete documentation annually in which they record their professional development needs and priorities for the coming year. It is apparent that this regular routine of formally identifying their priorities and needs prompts a reflection on individual needs, and teachers reported their appreciation of these processes, although the degree of appreciation varied.

Several teachers added that they evaluate their own PD needs frequently, in more informal and individualised ways. They report that such evaluations often follow reflection on classroom teaching events, students’ learning difficulties, or class management issues. Such informal evaluations may eventually be reported to the institution, but most teachers reported that they do not always record these reflections. Sometimes they keep personal notes and record their thoughts in diaries, but otherwise they keep aware of the needs until formal consultations with their institution occur.

One respondent made the point that when evaluating his own PD needs, he is aware of a distinction between ‘needs’ and ‘wants’, and that as a teacher, his instinct is to prioritise the ‘wants’, that is, the area of most interest to him, rather than focus on an area less interesting but needing attention. On the other hand, others pointed out that institutional determinations of teachers’ PD needs can sometimes override their ‘wants’. An example was provided whereby a regular timeslot designated for professional development was regularly used to address administrative concerns, with less time available for curriculum issues.

Almost all teachers said that the primary reason for their professional development choices was better teaching practice. A small minority said that career and retention of employment were also influential, and two teachers said that they sought professional development activities that contributed to their personal development, such as learning another language and exploring related skills which might contribute to language teaching and learning.
A question about the changing professional development needs drew a mixed response, with most teachers focusing on their current needs and preferences. A small number agreed that their needs had changed over time. In their early years of teaching they were focused on classroom issues, seeking the expertise of academics in curriculum areas. In more recent years they have felt able to identify their own needs and sources of professional development, preferring to engage with colleagues working with similar student profiles and in the same local context. Three teachers nominated formal activities such as conferences where they can interact with TESOL teachers outside of their institution, and workshops led by experts in the field, while most others cited mentoring, peer observation, and other similarly collegial activities.

**Reflective practices**

7. Do your current PD activities include explicit processes for reflection?

8. How often do you engage in reflective processes alone, informally?

9. How often do you engage in reflective processes with colleagues, informally?

10. Describe one example.

Some teachers nominated institutional surveys of their PD needs as a time for reflection, while others nominated specific activities such as group meetings with a curriculum agenda, or individual reflection following participation in a workshop or other formal PD activity. Several commented that it would be useful to have time for individual or group reflection scheduled into formal PD events.

Teachers described reflection as a review of classroom events which includes their own teaching activities and performance, and student responses. It can focus on individual students, groups, the whole class or the curriculum, tasks and activities. They may review established practices, techniques and materials or trial a new technique, resource or strategy. Individual reflection may be followed up by discussion with a colleague or mentor.

Teachers described their individual reflective practice as occurring ‘frequently’, ‘constantly’ and ‘ongoing’. It occurs when they are in class, after a class ‘in the lift’ and at other times ‘before sleeping, in the shower’. Almost unilaterally they agreed that they engage in joint reflection with other teachers in a range of circumstances. Those who co-teach set aside time two to three times per week for reflection and discussion on classroom events; those with similar interests meet regularly in small groups. They described this as a highly valuable professional development activity. Others reported on daily informal conversations at the lunch table in which they described issues arising in their class and listened to other teachers’ experiences. Several recalled an organisational practice of regular scheduled sessions where teachers with common interests could engage, reflect and share experiences, materials and resources. While this practice seems to have continued in some institutions, others reported that it has declined, but were not able to say why.

**Self-directed professional development**

11. What kinds of self-directed professional development do you engage in?

As a starting point for the discussion, teachers were given a list of self-directed professional development strategies and asked to identify those that they use, and to describe additional strategies they use. The kinds of self-directed activities the teachers engage in are listed here in order of popularity, followed by teachers’ own suggestions.

- ad hoc discussion of teaching and learning issues with colleagues
- reading TESOL-related journals and books
- seeking formal courses or workshops on specific topics
- observing peers teaching their class
- reporting on PD activities and their impact on own teaching
- keeping a journal or diary
- having peers observe own teaching, using self-defined criteria.
Additional items provided by teachers were:

- sourcing new research, ideas, strategies etc from the Internet
- observing teaching strategies and techniques used in non-TESOL areas
- maintaining awareness of colleagues’ areas of expertise
- maintaining relationships with TESOL academic field, eg supervise practicum students.

In the discussion about self-directed professional development strategies and activities, a number of teachers identified clear advantages they saw for themselves. They noted that self-selected and self-sourced activities were more timely and relevant as they addressed individual and specific needs at the time of need. They enjoyed the flexibility of being able to achieve their professional development goals at their own convenience, time and pace. Some teachers commented that group PD activities were sometimes not targeted to their specific needs and an ineffective use of their time “… you go for the occasional insight, right? Ok … maybe sitting there for 60 minutes but there was one point which you can take away and say yes … that …. that was good … but the other 59 minutes …”

On the other hand, some believed that self-directed professional development was largely unacknowledged in their institution, “it doesn’t have the same status as … you know … having been to a course”. Consequently it was not regularly scheduled and had to be fitted in with other duties and responsibilities in non-teaching time. Other teachers questioned whether the high level of expertise sought for areas of need was always locally available, “Who is the guy who can do it better than me? … identifying the expertise would be a problem” and “your PD should be of good, high quality, I think”. They found that seeking and organising their own professional development required higher levels of motivation, and was time-consuming and difficult to organise if it involved other teachers and their interests.

The additional financial costs were also a disincentive, as professional development organised by their employer is generally funded by the employer, while course and workshops that do not address institutional goals and are sought independently, generally had to be funded by individuals.

In summary, it seems that while local expertise is sought readily and easily in informal and ad hoc ways as well as in organised activities, teachers find that accessing professional development externally is more demanding of their time, and not always supported by institutional practices.

Evaluating the impact of professional development

In the survey and interviews, teachers were asked how employers evaluated their professional development needs. In the interview, they were also asked if it was possible to evaluate the impact of professional development on teaching practice and how it could be achieved.

Several teachers thought it could be beneficial to keep brief notes about their professional development activities and meet together occasionally to reflect on how they influenced their teaching. One reported that she did it alone and had noted changes in her teaching as a result of what she had learned or heard in professional development. Several believed it could only be done productively in collegiate ways that did not result in increased “unnecessary paperwork”. Most believed it could only be done in qualitative ways “a qualitative approach would evaluate the impact of PD on teaching. Being able to pass it on to other people” and that quantifying outcomes and accountability would be too difficult to achieve.

Summary

The interviewees spoke positively about the role of professional development in their teaching practice, and about the processes by which their institutions sought feedback on their professional development, and provided organised activities and expertise. All teachers, regardless of levels of experience also stated that the expertise and mentoring role of colleagues was a greatly valued aspect of their professional development, and one that they frequently sought. A smaller number appear to be very proactive in seeking further professional development, and this appeared to be related to areas of teaching that had inspired their interest. These teachers not only sought greater expertise and experience in these areas but also enjoy sharing their expertise with other teachers through the provision of professional development in both formal and informal ways.

The notion of reflection was unproblematic for most teachers, who said it is part of daily teaching life as a sole or collegiate activity. They found that such reflection occurs in a number of ways – in the classroom,
in the staff room, at home or anywhere. Most also reported that formal institutional processes often require them to reflect collegiately on teaching practices, skills and professional development needs. However, one noted that reflection as an internal process alone could be limited, as could be group reflection where the expertise is limited.

Teachers identified a number of ways in which they proactively seek professional development for themselves, but also perceived some barriers. Some like the flexibility of identifying and seeking professional development activities that target their specific needs, while others find the time-consuming aspect is a disincentive.

Overall, the teachers interviewed were highly positive about the benefits of professional development and its impact on their teaching. There was uncertainty about the ways this impact could be evaluated, and believed a qualitative approach may have a better chance of effectiveness.

**Coordinator survey**

A questionnaire was made available online and an invitation to participate was distributed to all personnel responsible for arranging PD in all AMEP service provider organisations. Eighteen responses to the coordinators' survey were received.

The questionnaire sought feedback from PD coordinators on the ways teachers participated in planning their professional development, the circumstances in which teachers work and can access professional development, and the kinds of professional development resources PD coordinators available to teachers in their programs.

**Planning professional development**

The responses indicated that the institution takes on at least 50% of the responsibility for planning teacher development programs, with equal numbers nominating rates of 50% and 75%. A very small number indicated that teachers took on the larger responsibility for their own professional development.

Some possible influences on the planning and organization of teacher development programs were itemised for comment by survey respondents. The items asked respondents to indicate teacher and program profiles in their organisations, and other factors that may influence the planning and delivery of teacher development programs.

Respondents indicated that the teachers in their purview vary in a number of ways. All (100%) indicated that teachers are employed on a Full time, Part time and/or Casual/sessional basis. Approximately three-quarters (77.8%) of the respondents have teachers in the latter stages of their career; and similar numbers (72.2%) have teachers in mid and early stages of TESOL careers. A majority of coordinators report that their teachers work in diverse programs, for example Urban centres (83.3%) and Distance learning (77.8%). Half of the responses reported responsibility for the PD needs of teachers in Flexible Delivery programs (50%) but fewer than half (38.9%) provide for the teachers in Rural programs or Self access Centres. All of these teacher and program characteristics can be indicators of specific professional development needs and requirements. See Summary: Coordinator Survey for further comment.

In addition to teacher and program profiles, respondents agreed that other factors influence their decisions about professional development programs. They rated a minimum of 77.8% agreement on the items listed. **Teacher consultations on their needs and preferences** was nominated by 100% of respondents. **Curriculum maintenance** and **Organisational and regulatory procedures** were both nominated by 94.4% of respondents, and more than 80% agreed on **Performance appraisal/management processes**, **Curriculum change** and **Formal student feedback**.
### Shared responsibility for PD planning

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<thead>
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<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
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<td>I-T 25% - 75%</td>
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<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-T 50% - 50%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-T 75% - 25%</td>
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<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td>94.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>missing</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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</table>

Key: I = Institution  
T = Teacher

### Program and teacher characteristics

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<tr>
<th>PD Coordination responsibilities for:</th>
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<th>% No</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban centres</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural programs</td>
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<td>61.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolated teachers</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>88.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance learning teachers</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-access centres</td>
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<td>61.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flexible delivery programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Casual/sessional</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Late career</td>
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<td>Mid-career</td>
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<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early career</td>
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### Influences on planning teacher development programs and activities

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher consultations (needs and preferences)</td>
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<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum maintenance</td>
<td>94.4</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational and regulatory procedure</td>
<td>94.4</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance appraisal/management processes</td>
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<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum change</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal student feedback eg surveys, complaints</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager/supervisor feedback</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Professional development resources available to teachers

Respondents reported that they are able to offer a wide range of professional development resources to teachers in their organisations. They include Formal/traditional, Reflective/collaborative and Reflective/self-directed activities. They also indicated capacity to provide services and resources that support teachers engaged in other kinds of professional development activity.

Respondents can provide PD in a variety of formal delivery modes, with the maximum (100%) able to offer In-house Workshops by an external expert and fewest (44.4%) able to offer Funding to attend external award-bearing courses.

In the Reflective/Collaborative category more than 75% of respondents can provide Regular discussion with an appointed mentor (94.4%), Shared course design and planning sessions (88.9%), Expert teacher demonstrations/observation by peers (83.3%), and Peer observation (77.8%). More than 50% can provide Discussion group with planned topic (70.6%), Observation by a mentor (61.1%), Focused reading program on defined TESOL topics (61.1%), Collaborative classroom-based research and Shared materials design and development sessions (50%) while fewer can provide sessions based on Observation of recorded teaching sessions (38.9%) with group discussion; Collaborative action research (33.3%) or Observation by a supervisor (33.3%).

Fewer than 50% of Coordinators agreed they can offer the listed Reflective/Self directed activities, with a maximum of 44.4% able to offer Individual action research as a professional development activity, and a minimum of 5.6% able to offer the Investigation of critical incidents by teachers.

However, a large proportion of Coordinators reported the capacity to offer physical resources such as meeting rooms (94.4%) and professional resources such as disseminating research literature (77.8%), providing a means of recognition for self-directed activities (66.7%) and avenues for reporting research findings (62.2%). Approximately two-thirds can provide administrative support for convening meetings, and will undertake timetabling of teacher release, or peer observation schedules.

PD activity types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a) Formal/Traditional</th>
<th>% Yes</th>
<th>% No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workshops delivered in house by external expert</td>
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<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshops delivered in house by staff</td>
<td>94.4</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding/teaching release to attend external courses/workshops</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet-based courses</td>
<td>72.2</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plenaries, lectures, at PD events</td>
<td>72.2</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short courses</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding to attend external award-bearing course</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>55.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
b) Reflective /Collaborative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>% Yes</th>
<th>% No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regular discussion with an appointed mentor</td>
<td>94.4</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared course design and planning sessions</td>
<td>88.9</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert teacher demonstrations/observation by peers</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observation</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion groups with planned topics</td>
<td>70.6</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation by a mentor</td>
<td>61.1</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focused reading program on defined TESOL topics</td>
<td>61.1</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative classroom-based research</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared materials design and development sessions</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation of recorded (DVD) teaching sessions with group discussion</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>61.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative action research</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation by supervisor</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>66.7</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

c) Reflective/Self-directed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>% Yes</th>
<th>% No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual action research</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>55.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers video own teaching for self-evaluation</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers compile portfolios of professional learning, with self-evaluation</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>77.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers keep journals/diaries for ongoing self-evaluation</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-managed formal trials of different teaching approaches or styles (managed by teacher)</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers formally investigate critical incidents, keeping a journal or other documentation</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>94.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

d) Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>% Yes</th>
<th>% No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide rooms, timetables for discussion groups</td>
<td>94.4</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collect and disseminate research literature on requested topics</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convene discussion groups (minutes, note-taking)</td>
<td>72.2</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide resources for classroom based research, eg teaching release</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide a means of recognition for self-directed PD activities</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide avenues for reporting research findings</td>
<td>62.2</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide peer observation programs and schedules</td>
<td>61.1</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide resources for action research, eg teaching release, mentoring</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Opportunities for teachers to share expertise

More than 60% of respondents can provide a formal means by which teachers can share their expertise with colleagues. The majority (88.9%) can support teacher-led workshops and courses, and the lowest-rating items: *publication of teachers’ articles in in-house publications* and *opportunities to design curriculae and syllabi* are reportedly supported by more than 60% of the respondents.

A majority of the respondents (94.4%) see a professional benefit to teachers who choose to share their expertise with colleagues and more than 80% were in agreement with the kinds of professional development benefits such teachers gained. Almost unanimously (94.4%) respondents agreed on the benefits to teachers of having peers share their expertise, although fewer (77.8%) agreed that it provided more opportunities for mentoring.

Supported strategies for sharing teacher expertise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>% Yes</th>
<th>% No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-led workshops, courses, etc</td>
<td>88.9</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor colleagues, new teachers</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produce teaching materials</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate peer observations of expert teacher classes</td>
<td>72.2</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present work on research-based practice in seminars, etc</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publish articles in in-house publications</td>
<td>61.1</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design curriculae and syllabi</td>
<td>61.1</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Professional development benefits to teachers who share their expertise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>% Yes</th>
<th>% No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgment of their skills by supervisors</td>
<td>94.4</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extends professional growth</td>
<td>94.4</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotes reflection and self-evaluation</td>
<td>88.9</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extends professional experience</td>
<td>88.9</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgment of their skills by peer</td>
<td>88.9</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improves morale</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improves collegiate relationships</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Benefits to teachers whose colleagues share their expertise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>% Yes</th>
<th>% No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peers understand the impact of local conditions on teaching and learning, eg curriculum, institutional practices</td>
<td>94.4</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer expertise is more accessible to teachers</td>
<td>94.4</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More opportunities for follow-up</td>
<td>94.4</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More opportunities for mentoring</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Evaluating professional development

Respondents reported that they evaluate the effectiveness of professional development activities through performance management processes, ongoing monitoring of teachers’ needs and requests and their evaluation of individual sessions (88.9% in each case). Fewer draw on student feedback (50%) or review teacher reports for recurring preferences (44.4%). Many (72.2%) also report that teachers evaluate their professional development needs at least annually. Half of all respondents reported that their institution formally evaluates the impact of professional development on teaching practice, and fewer evaluate its impact on AMEP program delivery. Several Coordinators commented that although they review their AMEP program regularly, it would be difficult to establish a clear link between the review findings and professional development activity.

Evaluating the effectiveness of professional development activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PD activities are evaluated by:</th>
<th>% Yes</th>
<th>% No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant evaluation of individual activities</td>
<td>88.9</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance appraisal/management processes</td>
<td>88.9</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing monitoring of teachers’ stated needs and requests</td>
<td>88.9</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal reports by students, eg satisfaction surveys, complaints</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor surveys and EOIs for recurring preferences</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>55.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant evaluation of annual program</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>72.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teachers’ self-evaluation of professional development needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occurs:</th>
<th>% Yes</th>
<th>% No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequently (eg each teaching block)</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>88.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regularly (eg annually)</td>
<td>72.2</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally (less often than annually)</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>88.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not required of teachers</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evaluating the impact of professional development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your institution formally evaluates the impact of PD</th>
<th>% Yes</th>
<th>% No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On teaching practice</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On AMEP program delivery</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>76.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary

Coordinators respond to a wide range of factors when planning and organising professional development programs for AMEP teachers. While curriculum needs are a high priority and teachers' preferences are taken into account, coordinators must also respond to the requirements of policy and organisational practice that specify particular kinds of content or delivery mode. (See AMEP Manual 2006, Standards and Criteria for Accreditation within the Adult Migrant English Program, pp 16-19). For example, the AMEP Manual states that all teachers must have training in using a curriculum framework as a basis for course design (2006:16) and requires those who teach Distance Learning clients to have specific training in the AMEP Distance Learning Program, and those who teach clients in the Special Preparatory Program to have training in meeting the needs of survivors of torture and trauma. The Coordinator’s role is further complicated by variations in need among teachers with differing TESOL backgrounds and experience. Teachers’ needs can change over a long career and expertise may progress at different rates for different aspects of TESOL. Additionally, the logistics of providing professional development for teachers at remote locations or with limited availability as sessional teachers intensifies planning and delivery issues.
Survey respondents report a capacity to offer a wide range of professional development activities classified as Formal/traditional or Reflective/collaborative, and can provide resources and support structures for individual, ad-hoc activities. However fewer can provide the conditions for the kinds of PD activities classified as Reflective/Self-directed, which may also be characterized as solo activities initiated by individual teachers. Qualitative responses in the coordinator survey demonstrate a willingness to provide support for self-directed and collaborative professional development, however, some are restricted by the limits of funded professional development time, the difficulties of timetabling joint activities for interested teachers, and the low take-up or maintenance of such opportunities in the past.

Despite these difficulties, a majority report that they are able to provide a range of resources to support non-traditional forms of professional development, should teachers require them. The resources they offer include physical resources such as meeting rooms and facilities; personal assistance with timetables and scheduling; convening meetings; and professional assistance in sourcing opportunities to publish or present research findings.

Respondents rated highly the benefits of teachers sharing expertise with colleagues and they reported on a number of ways they can support teachers to share their knowledge and skills. While traditional modes of delivery rated most highly, less traditional modes such as developing curriculum and teaching materials, teaching demonstrations, peer mentoring and presentations and publications also rated well.

In terms of evaluating professional development needs and results, a large majority reported that individual PD activities are evaluated on delivery, then more broadly through performance management processes and ongoing monitoring of teachers’ stated needs. Fewer draw on formal feedback from students, or teacher evaluations of the annual program. They also found that the impact of PD on program delivery was not formally evaluated in their organisations and in their comments pointed out that the number and diversity of variables that would have to be accounted for in such an evaluation would severely limit the possibility of a clearcut result.

Findings of surveys and interviews

Despite the diversity of teacher profiles and programs in their institutions, PD coordinators are able to offer a variety of professional development activities to support program delivery. Teachers and coordinators alike reported that teacher needs are assessed regularly, and their needs and preferences are taken into account when planning institutional professional development programs. Overall, the teacher questionnaire responses indicate a preference for traditional modes of delivery. However, interviews revealed that collegiate interaction is valued highly both as organised activities and informal adhoc encounters. Coordinators reported that annual consultations with teachers elicit a preference for formally organised events, and their PD programs include sessions led by staff with expertise in specific areas.

Some teachers report high levels of autonomy and self-direction in their professional development while others find cost and time factors to be major barriers. Although questionnaire responses indicate that coordinators are less able to provide support and resources for teachers engaged in action research and similar self-directed activities, they report being able to provide these if teachers express interest.

Teachers report that evaluation of their own teaching is a daily, ongoing practice in their teaching life which feeds into more formal reflection during performance management activities that include a consideration of professional development needs. Coordinators pointed out that such self-evaluation is valuable to teachers and to the institutions and contributes to the planning of professional development. However, in terms of evaluating the impact of professional development on program delivery, they were in agreement that diverse variables in program delivery would make it difficult to infer effects from professional development undertaken by teachers.

Professional development projects

PD coordinators were motivated to develop an approach to teacher development that would equip teachers and their organisations to meet new challenges, and help them attain the skills to respond individually and collectively. The coordinators drew on theoretical principles in the literature on teacher development, teacher perspectives in the questionnaire, and the results of their own consultations with local teachers and management to develop and trial innovative approaches to PD (see Appendix 5: Professional development project reports).
Four of the local action research projects were informed by institutional perspectives on teacher needs, and one was developed in response to needs expressed by a teacher group. The projects embedded the theoretical principles of reflective practice and self-direction to varying degrees, some making these central to the design of the project, others making it a more peripheral aspect.

Project 1 was developed to respond to a course design and teaching issue (employability skills) identified by AMES West Coast as an issue of importance. A traditional response may have been to provide a series of workshops and presenter-led sessions to inform teachers of the changing course requirements and leave it in their hands for implementation in the classroom. However, the PD coordinator (Clare Harris), devised a system of paired collaboration between highly experienced and novice teachers – not to provide mentoring to novices, but to recognise that both groups had skills and knowledge to share. Each pair identified an aspect of the topic to implement in teaching practice, and developed strategies to explore it: ‘Teachers planned together, carried out research, visited each other’s classes, observed, shared teaching duties, met and discussed what they had learned, and reflected on the process’, writes Harris. In this teacher-directed model, teachers took control of the process, deciding how they would explore the issue and how they would timetable their meetings and activities. Reflection on action underpinned most of their interactions.

In a similar project invoking principles of teacher self-direction, Project 5 asked teachers to nominate an area of ICT in which they needed more skills and an area in which they could impart skills. Teachers were given responsibility for achieving mastery of a defined set of ICT tools within a defined period of time, which they achieved by making arrangements to get tuition from colleagues.

It could be argued that these two projects exemplify weaker models of teacher self-direction, in that the skills and knowledge to be acquired were defined by the institution rather than by the teachers themselves. However, in both cases teachers were able to take ownership of the development of their professional skills in collaboration with their colleagues.

The focus of Project 2 was an issue identified by the institution and located in teaching and assessment practices. The action plan developed by the coordinator invited teachers to actively participate in seeking solutions to the issue by first identifying barriers to students’ achievement of language-learning outcomes, and then trialling teaching materials designed to model good teaching and assessment practices. While this approach appears to be at the lower end of the spectrum in terms of self-direction, it was not entirely a top-down, institutionally-directed process. Framing teachers’ participation as action research offered them a central role in reshaping knowledge and practice at their teaching centres, and led to enhanced roles for teacher knowledge in management processes at local centres.

Project 4, another institutionally-directed project, sought to evaluate the impact of PD sessions on teaching practice. As the evaluation was conducted by means of teacher and student surveys, it was not intrinsically a PD activity in itself, so the discussion on self-direction in this case does not directly apply. However, the activity of completing a questionnaire gave teachers an opportunity to reflect on their current practices in teaching employment-related language skills, the impact on professional development provided for them, and their use of available resources.

Another project that can be examined for notions of self-direction was Project 3. In Project 3, the PD coordinators (Muriel Aloizos and Elene Claire) responded to the need expressed by geographically isolated teachers of Preliminary CSWE classes for a means of collegiate sharing and discussion on issues in teaching Pre-CSWE. The most viable solution was to provide an online platform for teachers to share materials, reflection and discussion, and the coordinators designed an online program to facilitate these activities. Teacher evaluations showed a high rate of participation, and Aloizos and Claire write that facilitators rated the blog ‘an outstanding success as a way of encouraging reflective practice’. The project occurred as a result of teachers self-identifying their own needs and seeking resources from their institution to fulfil them, and so is another example of self-directed teacher development. It is also an example of the ways in which institutions support self-direction by teachers through the provision of resources.

Most of the projects consciously foregrounded reflective practice by providing a clear focus, tasks and resources to support interaction and collaboration among peers. Projects 1, 2 and 5 provided a structure that allowed regular interaction and reporting among peers, while in Project 3 Aloizos and Claire provided a similar structure in an online environment, with additional support through their own participation, response and encouragement of teacher reflection on relevant issues.
These projects created the conditions for critical reflection and systematic scrutiny of teaching practice. The project infrastructure provided the time needed for peer mentoring, peer observation, action research and shared meetings.

Access to forums for critical reflection was enhanced in projects that used online tools such as wikis and online learning management systems. Even isolated teachers were able to participate in the sharing of resources and ideas across wide geographical areas. Additionally, teachers who worked side by side on a daily basis found online wikis a useful tool for voicing interests and concerns, and for contributing to solutions.

**Conclusion**

Teachers in the AMEP are a diverse group in terms of their skills and experiences and in their responses to social changes impacting on their role as teachers of English to adult immigrants. Institutions can assist teachers to respond to changing needs by providing and supporting PD strategies that are collaborative, incorporate strategies for reflection on teaching, address current teaching concerns, and are grounded in practical action.

PD coordinators in this project reported that they found the collaborative action research model used for their own participation a useful means of exploring and trialling new models of professional development. They appreciated the research-based resources and peer support made available to them by the project, and the support structure it provided to assist them in developing, implementing and evaluating their individual projects.

The following information identifies the ways in which project aims have been met.

**Aim 1: identify and trial resources that promote and support teacher reflection and exploration of practice**

This aim was achieved through research projects that identified current teaching issues and developed models of professional development that encouraged teachers to examine teaching practice through critical reflection and action research. This was most evident in Projects 1, 2, 3 and 5. The resources provided by these projects were:

- an overarching goal that guided and framed teachers' reflection on practice
- an infrastructure that allowed peer observation, team teaching, shared planning, mentoring and regular meeting times for teachers
- online communication facilities and training.

**Aim 2: identify and trial institutional resources that assist teachers to identify and meet PD needs**

This aim was achieved through professional development models that invited teachers to use action research methodologies to explore their own practice (Projects 2 and 3). Project 2 gave teachers a model set of teaching materials exemplifying the institution's preferred approach to teaching and assessment. In the process of trialling these materials, teachers reflected on their own skills and were able to identify areas for further professional growth. Project 3 was a response to needs articulated by teachers and taken up by their institution.
Aim 3: identify ways that reflective teacher development processes contribute to the dissemination of teacher expertise

The reflective teacher development processes built into action research projects were collaborative in nature, in accordance with teacher preferences expressed in surveys and interviews. In Project 1, novice and experienced teachers were paired to develop new course content and materials. In interviews, both members of pairs reported that the experience was very beneficial. Novice teachers tended to be well-trained in current research and theory, but inexperienced in dealing with the demography of AMEP students and, for this, they drew on the knowledge of more experienced teachers. Experienced teachers benefited from fresh ideas and innovations from the novice teachers. In Project 2, teachers met regularly to reflect on their use of new materials and the methodologies embedded within them. This provided opportunities for the sharing of ideas and skills, which teachers rated well in their evaluations.

The dissemination of expertise was a core goal of Projects 3 and 5, and the processes and resources devised for these projects enabled collaboration among teachers of different experience and expertise.

Aim 4: explore ways that institutions can evaluate the impact of teacher development on AMEP program delivery

This aim was partially achieved through the provision of a full-day PD workshop on program evaluation, which allowed coordinators to explore strategies for evaluating the impact of PD at their institutions and particularly the impact of the professional development models they had implemented. The presenter, Associate Professor David Hall, took participants through the principles of evaluation and the stages of evaluation processes, and advised each participant on suitable evaluation strategies and processes for their individual projects. Participants were given handouts and professional readings on which the workshop was based.

Additionally, Project 4 evaluated the impact of PD on the teaching of employment-related English. The project surveyed teachers and students to ascertain their familiarity with and awareness and usage of work-related curricula, materials, topics, class activities and PD support needs. Hosseini, Purvis and Sindel reported mixed results and perspectives from teachers in different locations, and a high level of support from students for the teaching of employment-related English, and will use these results to inform future teacher development programs.

Project 2 had the explicit aim of improving program delivery and raising the completion rate for learning outcomes at CSWE I level. The evaluation of the project reported success in achieving this aim, and attributes its success to its focus on changing teacher attitudes and assessment practices through reflective practice. This project model and its strategy for evaluating the impact of teacher development on program delivery may well be one that can be replicated in other contexts.

Aim 5: develop a web-based resource that facilitates collaborative reflection among project participants

To achieve this aim, PD coordinators were provided with the use of a discussion facility on Blackboard, the online teaching facility used by Macquarie University. However, PD coordinators advised that they would prefer to have reflective discussions on their projects in scheduled faced-to-face coordinator meetings with researcher and peers, rather than in an online discussion, so the web-based resource was not used. Several expressed doubts that they would find time to post messages to an online forum.
Recommendations

- That AMEP Research Centre disseminate descriptions of the PD models used successfully in this project to service providers in the AMEP.
- That institutions consider providing material resources that enable teacher collaboration and reflection in professional development for example, regular meetings, online resources (wikis, learning management systems).
- That further research be considered to explore the role and characteristics of reflective teaching practice in AMEP program delivery.

References


APPENDIX 1: Annotated bibliography

Action research


Burns, A. (2003). Belief as research, research action, beliefs and action research for teacher education. In B. Beaven & S. Borg (Eds.), *The role of research in teacher education* (pp. 5–10). Whitstable: Oyster Press.


This paper gives a brief review of the literature on action research and an overview of procedures for conducting it, and discusses the implications for teaching and language program management.


This paper reports on a PD program organised around a series of action research projects. The project took place in an English-medium institution in the United Arab Emirates and was conducted over a year. The action research project developed into action learning with a greater focus on PD by the participants themselves and was developed directly from actual classroom problems. A process of learning, development and reflection took place throughout the year. The goals were to develop an effective, self-managing PD program involving all instructors and operating under their control, to encourage all instructors to work together to share and apply knowledge and experience, and to define issues and problems encountered and to encourage best practice in the classroom. The project resulted in the creation of a number of action learning projects involving all teachers. The project was deemed successful mainly by the creation of improved teaching materials; providing insights into new approaches to topics; increasing student motivation, and improving skills and confidence.


Change management


This article discusses the changes and challenges for teachers in adult education over the past ten years. It looks at the profession; policy; new markets; changing student populations; and competency-based and accredited curriculums. The paper concludes with a round-up of changing technology, the global economy and questions regarding the future.


This article suggests four ways in which teachers and professional developers of teachers can resource their resourcefulness. The first suggested way is through networking, and the issues involved in making a network effective are discussed. The second suggested way is through the organisation of an integrated system of PD, which, very importantly, should be task-based. The third suggested way is to gather together all available means of communication (that is personal, face-to-face, electronically mediated and published) to create a self-sustaining system that is inwardly replenished by teachers and colleagues. The last suggested way is by becoming more flexible in meeting the needs of learners, in organising curriculums and teaching activities, and in seeing change in a positive light and as a challenge, not a problem.


The ‘Professional development for the future’ project, undertaken in 2003–04 within the Australian Flexible Learning Framework Professional Development Program, investigated PD for the future, taking into account the way people maintain and upgrade their professional skills within a knowledge economy. Individual and team processes of knowledge workers were investigated, along with ways in which these processes can be informed by contemporary theories on learning networks, chaos and complexity, knowledge management...
Appendix 1

and systems thinking. The project had six research phases. This discussion paper from the fourth phase
draws together preceding research work, focusing on possibilities for approaches to the PD of knowledge
workers in the vocational education and training (VET) sector. A number of models for PD are proposed and
the paper invites comment, advice, further practical suggestions and feedback for further development of
the proposed approaches to the PD of knowledge workers in VET. The paper concludes by discussing the
relationship between the development of knowledge workers and enhanced organisational performance.

Collaborative professional development


Professional learning is a social enterprise where peers rely on the expertise and support of one another
to adopt innovative practices. Reciprocal interactions in a community of practice, where teachers take
responsibility for each other’s learning and development, may provide an effective means of supporting
situated professional learning. The paper proposes a collaborative apprenticeship model featuring reciprocal
interactions as an approach to promote PD, encouraging peer-teachers to serve as modellers and coaches
of strategies and ideas aimed at improving instruction. Collaborative apprenticeship is designed to help
teachers learn and implement new teaching skills and strategies through four development phases,
beginning with implementation of best practices from a mentor to the development of their own. Teachers,
in turn, contribute new ideas to their teaching environment and become future mentors in order to sustain
skills and strategies across a community of teachers. In addition to the model, the paper discusses various
influences related to affect, beliefs, environment, culture, cognition, and personality that characterise the
nature of reciprocal interactions in order to stimulate collaborative apprenticeship.

Baltimore: Capitol Communication Systems, Inc.

Evaluation in professional development

Attinello, J. R., Lare, D., & Waters, F. (2006). The value of teacher portfolio for evaluation and professional

The demands placed on principals in the era of No Child Left Behind are rapidly increasing. In light of these
challenges, balancing diverse roles and additional responsibilities can be arduous for even the finest school
leaders. The use of portfolio-based teacher appraisals has emerged as an intriguing option to make the
time required for teacher evaluation more productive and the process more meaningful, comprehensive,
and accurate. This study examines the value of a district-wide, portfolio-based teacher evaluation system.
Results indicate that teachers and administrators perceive that teacher portfolios were more accurate and
comprehensive than the traditional snapshot observation and, despite some disadvantages, suggest that
portfolios show promise as a tool for teacher evaluation and professional growth.

Davies, M., & Bryer, F. (2004). Personal skills for teachers: Measuring and developing their emotional
competencies. In B. Bartlett, F. Bryer & D. Roebuck (Eds.), *Educating: Weaving research into practice*
(vol. 1, pp. 246–258), proceedings of the 2nd Annual International Conference on Cognition, Language,
and Special Education Research, Surfers Paradise. Nathan, Qld: School of Cognition, Language and
Special Education, Griffith University.

This conference paper looks at ways teachers’ emotional competencies effect teacher graduate
effectiveness. The study examined final-year teacher education students and measured their emotional
intelligence. Results showed the teachers gave low ratings to their existing competencies, suggesting
further training in this area is needed.

Goodall, J., Christopher, D., Harris, A., Lindsay, G., & Muijs, D. (2005). *Evaluating the impact of continuing
professional development.* London Department for Education and Skills.

Australian experience. In C. Day & J. Sachs (Eds.), *International handbook on the continuing professional

This review article begins with an examination of regulatory and development approaches to professional teaching standards and looks at subject-specific standards including English as a Second Language (ESL) and English and literacy. It continues to explore the current status of language teaching standards in Australia at both national and state levels and compares them with language teacher standards in the United States. Ways to examine forms of teacher knowledge, content, pedagogic, pedagogic content, and procedural and support knowledge are outlined and discussed. The review concludes that a teaching standards model must be flexible to reflect the variability within good teaching.


This state-of-the-art article examines recent research into the relationship between language teacher development, varying forms of teacher knowledge and reflective teaching processes, as well as collaborative and cooperative development.


Half-way through this first decade of the 21st century, educators are working diligently to ensure that all students learn and schools demonstrate annual yearly progress. Schools are scrambling to find ways to reach students who are struggling. Once again PD is being seen as a major tool to support improved practice and to assist teachers in meeting goals for student learning. Recently our perspectives about what works in PD and where to best focus energy and resources have been shifting, based on research and lessons from the field. This article explores three major shifts in beliefs about PD that are suggested by the research on teacher learning, and shares examples of programs from the National Eisenhower Consortia that demonstrate the importance of these shifts. These three shifts must inform decision-making about the structure, form and focus of teacher PD. Policy makers and practitioners must recognise the importance of quality teaching to student learning and create permanent mechanisms and structures, embedded in the school culture, that support teachers to develop deep knowledge of teaching throughout their careers. This includes providing PD with a strong content and pedagogical content focus tied to student learning goals and situated in teacher practice.


ICT in professional development


The Internet has had a transformative effect on many aspects of contemporary living. While there may be a tendency to overstate the impacts of this technology, workplaces and work practices in many societies have been greatly affected by almost instant access to massive amounts of information, delivered through broadening bandwidth. This paper embeds a discussion of PD in this technological context, and comments on the emergence of a range of Internet-based tools designed to assist with the delivery of PD programs for secondary teachers. The paper argues that the tools by themselves are not enough to guarantee effective PD and that building ‘communities of practice’ will become significant in lifelong learning models. The paper discusses some work undertaken in a PD project with secondary school teachers distributed at a distance from the host institution.


This article describes trends in e-learning and discusses the implications for teacher education and PD. This is an abridged version of a refereed online article. Full text available at http://www.austcolled.com.au

Computer-assisted language learning (CALL) has been available at the Monash University English Language Centre for ten years. This paper investigates teacher responses and presents encouraging results of a survey on teacher attitudes to language teaching using CALL. Current training provisions and CALL policy are outlined.


Continuing PD as it is pursued through the interacting paradigms of reflective practice and action research can be facilitated through the disciplined use of non-judgemental discourse. A framework for such purposeful interaction, cooperative development, has been established for face-to-face use among TESOL professionals for some time. It has now been extended into computer-mediated communication via the use of emails and Instant Messenger. An example of each is analysed, highlighting the continuing importance of effective considerations in both the personal and pedagogic aspects of a teacher’s continuing development.


This article discusses five interaction strategies that can be used in large-scale (more than 30 participants) web-based training. Evaluation data are presented from seven web-based continuing education workshops conducted with United States Department of Education Middle School Drug Prevention and School Safety Coordinators (MSCs) that used two of these large-scale strategies. Results show, contrary to the current literature, MSCs who participated in large-scale web-based training were highly satisfied with many aspects of the workshops, including the online facilitation. The results point to a need to replicate these findings and to further study additional large-scale interaction strategies in web-based training and PD.


The study reported in this paper examined the types of PD activities, support systems and organisational structures necessary for a community college faculty to make transitions from traditional teaching to web-based teaching. Results indicate that (a) instructional change can by initiated through sustained PD; (b) change is more meaningful and effective when it occurs in context over a sustained period of time; (c) a faculty can embrace innovations when supported by knowledgeable professionals and peers; and (d) students welcome the use of web-based components in course work. The implications for practice may be useful to those wishing to increase a faculty’s online instructional competence.


The provision of a PD program for distance tutors can be problematic because of the need for flexibility to cater for a variety of working practices, or to overcome the hurdles imposed by geographical remoteness. At the United Kingdom Open University, online networks are widely in use for teaching and learning, and the authors of this paper are actively exploring their potential for PD. This paper describes the ‘Supporting open learners in a changing environment’ project, which has piloted a reflective approach to PD using a log to structure reflection, which is then shared with others in a computer conference. The evaluation of tutors’ perspectives of the project indicated that all participants found the experience stimulating and helpful for identifying and sharing issues of student support, although some found the process unexpectedly time consuming. The authors believe there is considerable potential for such an approach to networked reflection among distance tutors, provided the issue of tutor time can be addressed.

**Institution roles in teacher development**


This conference paper presents discussion of a research project that investigates positive and negative aspects of informal language teacher development groups that meet to exchange practical teaching ideas.


This article considers how teachers learn about teaching and how institutions, systems and programs can support teachers’ PD. With reference to the AMEP, it tracks the extent to which teachers’ PD can occur with institutional support and without it.

In this case study, the authors use a consensus model as a framework for examining the PD component of a standards-based reform effort initiated by a school district in the United States. They describe the district’s actions, analyse the extent of adherence to the model and identify reasons for what occurred. Although administrators intended to adopt key design principles of effective PD, specific implementation strategies undermined and contradicted these principles. Their response to increasing bureaucratic controls at the state and national levels translated into increased regulation and control at the district and school levels, which paradoxically restricted the very attributes they sought to enhance.

**Mentoring**


This article links approaches to mentoring with an evolutionary model of professionalism in teaching called the four ages of professionalism. The analysis is extended to examine key areas of change that should lead us to look at mentoring differently. Finally, the article draws conclusions for redesigning teacher preparation, developing continuous learning through the career and changing the teaching profession more fundamentally.


Mentoring has become an important part of teacher education, as an element in both the enhancement of reflective practice and the PD of schools. Yet the concept remains confused. Problematic issues such as the elements of power and control, and the danger of dependence and intimacy are seldom heard when mentoring is considered, and new plans for teaching and education are presented. This article discusses the concept of mentoring, especially as a feature of the PD and training of student teachers in Norway. A PhD study shows how mentoring may turn out to be an obstacle to reflection rather than an enhancement. It argues for new ways of regarding mentoring as part of the student's process of becoming a professional teacher.

**Reflection and reflective practice**


The paper examines the rationale and the uses of portfolios in initial teacher education. This rationale is then applied to explore the development and implementation of the Professional Development Portfolio as an integral part of the initial teacher education program offered by the Faculty of Education, University of Malta. The paper considers the responses of students and lecturers to this mode of assessment; in particular, how the tensions between the formative and summative functions of portfolios were experienced and responded to at institutional level. The paper is the result of the debates and discussions among the three authors. Deborah Chetcuti and Grace Grima were directly involved in the development of the assessment innovation; Patricia Murphy was a visiting academic and external examiner during the period.


This guide helps teacher educators develop creativity, independence, critical thinking and resourcefulness in pre-service ESL teachers and provides reflection on classroom practice for in-service teachers based on current theory and practice. Using case studies as class discussion points, the guide identifies issues for discussion, considers perspectives and possible actions and consequences, poses questions for reflection and suggests activities for each case.


This brief journal article outlines issues involved with teachers’ reflective journal writing as a PD tool. It contains sample journal entries and a journal entry pro forma for teacher or lecturer use and describes stages in the journal-keeping process.


Mentoring has become an important part of teacher education, as an element in both the enhancement of reflective practice and the PD of schools. Yet the concept remains confused. Problematic issues such as the elements of power and control, and the danger of dependence and intimacy are seldom heard when mentoring is considered and new plans for teaching and education are presented. This article discusses the concept of mentoring, especially as a feature of the PD and training of student teachers in Norway. A PhD study shows how mentoring may turn out to be an obstacle to reflection rather than an enhancement. It argues for new ways of regarding mentoring as part of the student’s process of becoming a professional teacher.


Self-direction

Brennan, B. (1997). Self-directed professional development: The potential contribution of REFPRO. In Self-directed professional development (pp. 18–30). Toowong: Queensland Board of Teacher Registration.


This conference paper presents a discussion of a research project that investigates positive and negative aspects of informal language teacher development groups that meet to exchange practical teaching ideas.


This paper describes the findings and recommendations resulting from a research project into the acceptance and use in the Australian VET system of new flexible learning environments and practices that encourage learners to take responsibility for their own learning processes. Key issues included whether there exists a shared understanding of the meaning of PD, and the level of support required by staff undertaking such programs.


Maintaining a high-quality professional portfolio is important for both pre-service and in-service physical
educators because a portfolio serves as a comprehensive representation of an individual and his or her accomplishments as a professional. For this reason, it is important that physical educators take an active role in updating and maintaining their portfolios. In this article, the author presents techniques for organising a professional portfolio and discusses the types of documents to include in a portfolio. This article encourages one to assess his or her own portfolio through the use of a scoring chart. Among other things, the author discusses self-assessment, which can be used to review the portfolio for quality and content.


This article is concerned with processes that assist teachers identify their own PD needs. The article argues that the involvement of teachers in this process is an essential starting point for PD. It illustrates how these needs are diverse, often are interrelated, and have both a professional and personal dimension. They reflect both the needs of the teacher and the organisation in which they are working. To assist in identifying these needs, a strategy was developed, implemented and evaluated with a group of teachers. This paper reports on teachers' responses to their participation in this strategy. It provides insights into the diversity of teachers' needs and examines their responses to issues, such as change and the appraisal of needs.


Self-assessment is a powerful technique for improving achievement. In this article the authors outline a theory of teacher change that links self-assessment by teachers to their professional growth. This theory provides avenues for peers and change agents to influence teacher practice. The authors apply the theory to change in mathematics teaching and report an explanatory case study in which use of the self-assessment tool, in combination with other elements, contributed to change in the instructional practice of a Grade 8 mathematics teacher. Provision of a self-assessment tool contributed to teacher growth by (1) influencing the teacher's definition of excellence in teaching and increasing his ability to recognise mastery experiences; (2) helping the teacher select improvement goals by providing him with clear standards of teaching, opportunities to find gaps between desired and actual practices, and a menu of options for action; (3) facilitating communication with the teacher's peer; and (4) increasing the influence of external change agents on teacher practice. The study argues that providing a self-assessment tool is a constructive strategy for improving the effectiveness of in-service, provided it is bundled with other professional growth strategies: peer coaching, observation by external change agents and focused input on teaching strategies.


Focuses on self-directed learning and continuing professional education for the Maintenance of Certification Program of radiologists in Canada. Importance of self-directed learning to resolve patient problems; aims to keep pace with technology and intellectual curiosity; plans to enhance practical skills such as literature searching.


Various studies have focused on self-regulated student learning. However, little attention has been given to the self-regulation processes in teacher learning. In this study, the authors focus on the work-related learning processes reported by experienced higher education teachers. The aim of this study was to discover whether teachers actively self-regulate their learning experiences (as their students are expected to do) and to examine how this regulation takes place in the workplace. The authors tested some generally held assumptions and conceptions regarding teacher learning. Fifteen experienced college teachers, from three different colleges in The Netherlands, participated. Two semi-structured interviews and a (digital) diary study were used as the primary data collection methods. The authors collected 86 examples of teacher learning episodes. These were analysed using a phenomenographic method. The results show that teachers' learning experiences are not as self-regulated, planned, reflective or spiral as some assume. Sometimes, the teachers' learning was planned (self-regulated), but mostly it occurred in a non-linear (both external and self-regulated) or spontaneous (externally regulated) way. The authors conclude that their teachers do not always self-regulate their learning, but they mostly do self-regulate their teaching practice (with learning as a result).
Teacher perspectives on professional development


This research project explores the PD views of English-language teachers from various sectors in Victoria, with the sample group being composed of members of VATME. The aims of the project were twofold. First, it was to provide a review of the VATME PD program. Second, it was to survey the members regarding their involvement in VATME's PD program and their own preferences for PD. Findings identify the concerns of the teachers and their needs and expectations – especially from government schools, English-language centres and from the adult education sector. Proposals are made to make the program more receptive to teachers' needs and expectations.


This study compared the effects of four electronic portfolio curriculums on pre-service and beginning teachers' self-ratings of their PD (n = 207), using a 34-item electronic Portfolio Assessment Scale (ePAS). Three formative portfolios, A, C and D, had teacher development as a primary objective and used participants' narrative reflections on students over a two- to three-month period. One summative portfolio, B, assessed teacher accountability through participants' analyses of professional teaching standards concerning students during one- to two-week teaching units. Factor analyses of the ePAS assessments for each portfolio and all four combined yielded the same five factors concerning professional outcomes: overall teacher development, including reflective skill (F1), an understanding of assessment roles (F2), an understanding of backwards planning (F3), the benefit of analysing student work (F4) and the benefit of teacher peer collaboration (F5). For F1, F3 and F5 the means of the formative portfolios A, C and D were significantly higher than those of portfolio B. No differences were found among the portfolios concerning the benefits of analysing student work (F4). The researchers concluded that formative portfolios that focused on teacher development better supported professional outcomes than did the summative accountability portfolio. It was concluded that portfolios should not be used for the summative accountability of teachers.


Computer assisted language learning (CALL) has been available at the Monash University English Language Centre for ten years. This paper investigates teacher responses and presents encouraging results of a survey on teacher attitudes to language teaching using CALL. Current training provisions and CALL policy are outlined.


This conference paper looks at ways teachers' emotional competencies effect teacher graduate effectiveness. The study examined final-year teacher education students and measured their emotional intelligence. Results showed the teachers gave low ratings to their existing competencies, suggesting further training in this area is needed.


Discusses findings of a study, conducted by the National Foundation for Educational Research, on teachers’ experiences and feelings about continuing professional development (CPD). Range of CPD activities; role of schools in determining the focus and nature of CPD as the School Development Plan; factors that determine teachers' participation in the CPD.


Appendix 1 39

This conference workshop paper examines language teachers’ PD preferences. Why do they request practical classroom teaching ideas rather than reflective, explorative PD? An example of a Peer Observation Program, which started well but failed to continue well, is described and summaries of workshop findings on features of ideal teacher development and peer observation sessions are provided.


This article reports three studies in which a scale for assessing teachers’ beliefs about PD initiatives was developed and its scores evaluated for reliability and validity. Results indicated that the Teachers’ Attitudes About Professional Development scale produced scores with high reliability, a stable one-factor structure, and satisfactory construct and discriminant validity (relative to measures of need for social approval, need for cognition, authoritarianism and teacher self-efficacy). The studies support the theoretical and practical utility of the construct and measure of teachers’ beliefs about PD.


The main purpose of this study was to test the universality of the Huberman model of career phases, which was proposed in earlier research conducted in 1989 and 1993 in Geneva and Sydney. TESOL teachers were found to have more variations during their career cycles than school teachers, who were in a more stable and predictable situation. The study focused on particular moments in the career cycle looking at satisfaction levels. It was found that TESOL teachers have more positive experiences than their school counterparts, that their personal development needs were different and that the traditional career phase model is inappropriate for their profession.

Teacher reflection in professional development


This paper outlines an approach to teacher development that is achievable in today’s pressurised teaching and learning environment. Reflective practice is differentiated from basic good teaching and underlying values are articulated. The case studies presented demonstrate two different but equally effective processes for implementing and promoting reflective practice. Reflecting on their hands-on experience, the writers identify five principles fundamental to effective implementation in teaching teams. Insights are transferable to a range of teaching contexts.


This guide helps teacher educators develop creativity, independence, critical thinking and resourcefulness in pre-service ESL teachers and provides reflection on classroom practice for in-service teachers based on current theory and practice. Using case studies as class discussion points, the guide identifies issues for discussion, considers perspectives and possible actions and consequences, poses questions for reflection and suggests activities for each case.


This conference paper examines ways to provide reflective PD for language teachers on a realistic scale and cost. It describes the process from theoretical framework, awareness raising, thinking and provision of feedback, creation of meaning to planning and a course of unseen observations of the teaching sessions with a colleague.
Focuses on self-directed learning and continuing professional education for the Maintenance of Certification Program of radiologists in Canada. Importance of self-directed learning to resolve patient problems; aims to keep pace with technology and intellectual curiosity; plans to enhance practical skills such as literature searching.


Mentoring has become an important part of teacher education, as an element in both the enhancement of reflective practice and the PD of schools. Yet the concept remains confused. Problematic issues such as the elements of power and control, and the danger of dependence and intimacy are seldom heard when mentoring is considered, and new plans for teaching and education are presented. This article discusses the concept of mentoring, especially as a feature of the PD and training of student teachers in Norway. A PhD study shows how mentoring may turn out to be an obstacle to reflection rather than an enhancement. It argues for new ways of regarding mentoring as part of the student's process of becoming a professional teacher.

**Teacher research**


APPENDIX 2: Teacher questionnaire

Supporting Change and Innovation with Professional Development

Introduction
The AMEP Research Centre is conducting a research project that will explore teachers' perspectives on professional development, and how PD supports their work.

We are interested in the ways that teachers' professional development needs and preferences change throughout their teaching careers. Your responses to this questionnaire will help us to understand your changing PD needs; how PD supports your work, and your recommendations and preferences.

We would like to hear from all AMEP teachers: full-time, part-time, casual or sessional teachers; working in large, small, urban, or rural programs; in classrooms, distance learning and independent learning centres.

A. About your experience
1. How long have you been teaching adult TESOL?
   ______ year(s)

2. How would you describe the current stage of your career?
   1. Early Career   2. Mid-Career   3. Late Career

3. How would you describe your stage of TESOL teaching?

4. What is the highest TESOL qualification you hold?
   4. Masters   5. PhD

5. What year did you gain this qualification? ______________

6. Where did you gain this qualification?
   1. Australia   2. Other

B. Your views on professional development
7. Is ongoing professional development important to you?
   1. Yes   2. No

If no, state reasons ________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________

42       Supporting Change and Innovation with Professional Development
8. Does ongoing professional development help to further your teaching skills?
   1. Yes  2. No
   If no, state reasons

9. Does ongoing professional development help to further your employment and career prospects?
   1. Yes.  2. No
   State reasons

C. Planning your professional development

10. Do you seek professional development:
   A. When students have learning obstacles.  1. Yes  2. No
   B. When you want help with a teaching and learning issue.  1. Yes  2. No
   C. When your employer recommends it.  1. Yes  2. No

11. How often do you plan a professional development program for yourself?

12. How often does your employer evaluate your professional development needs?

13. Is this evaluation conducted as part of performance management/appraisal?
   1. Yes  2. No
   If no, explain why it is done.

14. Who is responsible for identifying and meeting your professional development needs?
   1. Yourself  2. Your employer  3. Yourself and your employer

15. How is responsibility for identifying and organising your professional development shared?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employer</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<td>50%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Comment:
D. Your experience of professional development

16. How many professional development activities have you participated in over the last three years?

(select number)

1 2 3 4
1 – 3 4 – 6 7 – 10 more than 10

17. Of these, what percentage was selected by you and was related to your own professional needs?
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________

18. Of these, what percentage was selected by your employer and were related to employer’s needs?
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________

19. Do you evaluate the impact of professional development on your teaching practice?
1. Yes 2. No
If yes, how __________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________

20. Does your employer evaluate the impact of this professional development on your teaching practice?
1. Yes 2. No
If yes, how __________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________

21. Which of the following professional development activities are most effective for furthering your knowledge and skills? Use the following scale to rate them.

1. very effective 2. effective 3. less effective

(A) Formal activities Rate 1 – 3

21A1. Workshops
21A2. Short courses, 2-5 days
21A3. Internet-based courses
21A4. Conference sessions, eg plenaries, papers
21A5. Award-bearing courses, eg TAFE, university or other provider
21A6. Forums, seminars, eg National Forums by AMEP Research Centre
21A7. Classroom research, led by university or other researchers
21A8. Other (please describe)

Comment
22. Of the following professional development activities, which would be most effective for furthering your knowledge and skills? Use the following scale to rate them.

1. very effective  2. effective  3. less effective

(B) Collaborative activities

 Rate 1 – 3

22B1. Observing other teachers working in a similar class to yours
22B2. Observing teachers working on different programs and courses
22B3. Observing videos of unknown teachers teaching a class, and discussion with your colleagues
22B4. Regular discussion groups with other teachers on planned topics, research reports or other focus
22B5. Ad hoc discussion about teaching and learning issues with other teachers
22B6. Classroom research with teacher colleagues
22B7. Collaborative action research with teachers interested in similar issues
22B8. Observation of your class by your supervisor, with later discussion
22B9. Peer observation (observing each other) and evaluative discussion with your peer
22B10. Regular interaction with a formally-appointed mentor
22B11. Shared course design and planning sessions
22B12. Shared materials design and development sessions
22B13. Other (please describe)

23. Of the following professional development activities, which would be most effective for furthering your knowledge and skills? Use the following scale to rate them.

1. very effective  2. effective  3. less effective

(C) Independent/reflective activities

 Rate 1 – 3

23C1. Video record aspects of your own teaching for self-evaluation, or discussion with a colleague
23C2. Observation of your teaching by colleagues, for the purposes of self-evaluation
23C3. Keeping a teaching journal or diary to self-evaluate teaching and learning in your class
23C4. Compiling a portfolio to record professional growth
23C5. Action research, alone or with a teacher colleague
23C6. Identifying and formally investigating critical incidents
23C7. Program of focused reading on research in a specific TESOL area
23C8. Trialling new teaching approaches or styles, and monitoring your progress and results
23C9. Other (please describe)

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. The results of this questionnaire and other research activities for this project will be reported at AMEP National Forum and AMEP Conference sessions throughout 2007 and 2008.

Please return your completed response using a reply paid, pre-addressed envelope to AMEP Research Centre, Macquarie University.
APPENDIX 3: Teacher interviews

The purpose of the interview is to flesh out some of the themes arising in the teacher questionnaire. The format of the interview is an open-ended conversation rather than interview, and will explore these themes:

1. **Teacher qualifications and experience**
   To form a baseline of information, and explore the different needs of diverse teachers.

2. **Current and past experiences of professional development**
   - Evaluating needs of diverse teacher groups
   - Teacher preferences for purpose, content and delivery
   - Beliefs about reflective practice, self-direction and self-efficacy.

3. **Roles and responsibilities**
   - Evaluating needs
   - Meeting individual or specific needs
   - Institutional/teacher roles and responsibilities.
APPENDIX 4: PD coordinator questionnaire

The AMEP Research Centre is conducting a research project on contemporary approaches in teacher development. Teachers and PD coordinators will explore options for professional learning and growth for teachers of differing experience and expertise.

In this questionnaire we are seeking the perspectives of those who plan and organise teacher development programs. Your responses will help us understand the nature of teachers’ needs; options and opportunities for professional growth; and the impact of teacher development on AMEP program delivery.

Professional Development Coordinators involved in the project will draw on the collated results of this and teacher surveys, to identify and explore models of professional development that meet individual teacher needs in differing AMEP programs.

For more information on the survey or the research project, please contact Pam McPherson on 02 9850 7674 or email her at pamela.mcpherson@mq.edu.au.

Planning

1. How is responsibility for planning professional development shared in your teaching institution? Choose the closest match.

Institution

<table>
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<tr>
<th>25%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other, please describe ______________________________________________________________________

2. Which of these teacher groups do you have PD responsibilities for?

a) teachers in urban/suburban centres
b) teachers in rural areas
c) isolated teachers
d) distance-learning teachers
e) teachers on flexible delivery programs
f) self-access centres’ programs
g) full-time teachers
h) part-time teachers
i) casual or sessional teachers
j) early career teachers
k) mid-career teachers
l) late career teachers

Comment: ________________________________________________________________________________
3. Do all your teacher groups have equal access to teacher development?
   1. Yes  2. No  If no, please comment: ______________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________________

4. Which teacher groups or needs are most difficult to accommodate in your PD planning and delivery?
   Comment: ______________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________________

5. What informs your planning of teacher development programs and activities?
   a) Performance appraisal/management processes
   b) Changes in curriculum
   c) Curriculum maintenance needs (for example, assessment practices)
   d) Changes in organisational or regulatory procedures
   e) Teachers’ advice on their needs and preferences
   f) Formal student feedback, for example, satisfaction surveys, complaints
   g) Manager/supervisor feedback
   h) Other (please describe) ___________________________________________________________________
   Comment: ______________________________________________________________________________

Program design
6. Which of these professional development resources can you offer your teachers?

Formal/traditional
   a) Workshops delivered in-house by own staff
   b) Workshops delivered in-house by external expert
   c) Short courses, for example, 2-5 days
   d) Internet-based courses
   e) Lecture style presentations, for example, plenary speakers at PD events
   f) Financial support or teaching release to attend external award-bearing courses
   g) Financial support or teaching release to attend external workshops, courses
   h) Other, (please describe) ___________________________________________________________________
Reflective/collaborative
a) Peer teacher groups observe each other’s teaching
b) Observations of teachers with particular expertise
c) Observation of recorded teaching sessions, with group discussion
d) Regular discussion groups on planned topics, research findings or other focus
e) Focused reading program on specific TESOL areas
f) Collaborative classroom research on agreed topic or focus
g) Collaborative action research on agreed topic or focus
h) Observation of teaching by a supervisor
i) Observation of teaching by a mentor (more-expert teacher)
j) Regular discussion with a formally-appointed mentor
k) Shared course design and planning sessions
l) Shared materials design and development sessions
m) Other, (please describe) ____________________________________________

Reflective/self-directed
a) Teachers video their own teaching for focused self-evaluation
b) Teachers compile portfolios of professional learning, with self-evaluation component
c) Teachers keep a teaching journal or diary for ongoing self-evaluation
d) Teachers formally investigate critical incidents, with journal or other documentation
e) Individual action research
f) Self-managed formal trials of different teaching approaches or styles
g) Other: (please describe) ____________________________________________

Comment: __________________________________________________________________________________

Resources only
a) Provide peer observation programs and schedules
b) Provide rooms, timetables for discussion groups
c) Convene discussion groups - minutes, note-taking
d) Collect and disseminate research literature on requested topics
e) Provide resources for classroom-based research (for example, teaching release, mentoring, record keeping hardware and software, data analysis tools)
f) Provide resources for action research (for example, teaching release, mentoring, record keeping hardware and software, data analysis tools)
g) Provide means of recognition for self-directed PD activity
h) Provide avenues for reporting research findings
i) Other, please describe ________________________________

Comment: __________________________________________________________________________________
7. **What strategies do you use to encourage the sharing of teacher expertise in your institution?**

**Teachers:**

a) Deliver workshops, courses etc
b) Write articles for in-house publication
c) Formally mentor colleagues, new teachers, etc
d) Publish/produce teaching materials
e) Design curriculae and syllabi
f) Participate in seminars on research-based practice
g) Allow observation of their class teaching
h) Other, (please describe) _______________________________________

Comment: _______________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

8. **How are teachers recruited to provide specific expertise or experience to their colleagues?**

a) Call for volunteers
b) A requirement of their position
c) On request from colleagues
d) Other, (please describe) _______________________________________

Comment: _______________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

**Evaluation practices**

9. **What are the professional benefits to teachers who share their expertise through formal PD activities?**

a) Sharing of expertise promotes reflection and self-evaluation
b) Opportunities to extend professional experience
c) Recognition of their skills among peers
d) Recognition of their skills by supervisors
e) Improves morale
f) Improves collegiate relationships
g) Extends professional growth
h) Other, (please describe) _______________________________________

Comment: _______________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
10. What are the professional benefits to teachers of having colleagues share their expertise through formal PD?
   a) Peer experts understand local conditions, for example, curriculum, regulatory environment, student profiles
   b) Peers give a collegiate rather than ‘expert’ approach
   c) Peer expertise is more accessible
   d) More opportunity for follow-up
   e) More opportunity for mentoring
   f) Other, (please describe) ____________________________________________

Comment: __________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

11. How do you evaluate the effectiveness of professional development activities?
   a) Participant evaluation of individual activities
   b) Participant evaluation of annual program
   c) Ongoing monitoring of teachers’ stated needs and requests
   d) Monitor surveys and EOIs for recurring preferences
   e) Performance appraisal/management processes
   f) Formal student reports, for example, satisfaction surveys, complaints
   g) Other, (please describe) ____________________________________________

Comment: __________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

12. How often are teachers in your organisation asked to formally evaluate their professional development needs and experiences?
   a) Frequently (for example, after each teaching block)
   b) Regularly (for example, annually)
   c) Occasionally (less often than annually)
   d) On request only
   e) Never
   f) Not required of them

Comment: __________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
13. Does your institution formally evaluate the impact of PD on teaching practice?
   1. Yes    2. No    If no, please comment: ____________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

14. Does your institution formally evaluate the impact of PD on its AMEP programs?
   1. Yes    2. No    If no, please comment ____________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

15. What other issues arise for you in providing professional development for AMEP teachers in
    your institution?
   Comment: ____________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. The results of this questionnaire
and other research activities for this project will be reported at AMEP National Forums and AMEP
APPENDIX 5: Professional development project reports

PROJECT 1

‘Old hands/new blood’: A strategy to examine and reflect on employability skills and the CSWE

(Report prepared for the AMEP Research Centre project ‘Supporting change and innovation with professional development’)

Clare Harris, AMES West Coast

Executive summary

Four pairs of experienced/less experienced Adult Migrant English Service (AMES) teachers were given time to explore ways of incorporating employability skills into their classroom practice. They were asked to plan together, visit each other’s classes, teach together as equals and to reflect on the process of working collaboratively.

The pairs were teaching in different contexts and they went about this project in very different ways but a number of themes emerged from their reflections.

- The value of professional conversation – all teachers felt a sense of invigoration or renewal from the experience.
- The building of confidence in teachers new to AMES and the CSWE – these teachers appreciated being in the position of an equal.
- Pushing the boundaries: the value for more experienced teachers – these teachers felt that they had been pushed and helped to extend themselves in new ways.
- Excitement over student achievement – the pairing led to valuable innovations in teachers’ classroom practice.

Both ‘old hands’ and ‘new blood’ reported that participation in the project had led to a long-term change in their practice. From an organisational perspective, this kind of pairing and reflection can offer teachers a sense of ‘ownership’ of PD and can ensure that the wealth of experience within an organisation is not lost when experienced teachers move on.
Background
When AMES West Coast planned for its participation in the AMEP RC project, there were two key areas of focus.

- **Teachers miss the chance to work collaboratively.** In the past, many teachers at AMES West Coast learned new skills and strategies from team and tandem teaching, when two teachers worked on a course with allocated time to plan and work in the classroom together. This no longer happens due to timetabling and other factors. While teachers, new to the organisation receive induction and mentoring, the opportunity to work collaboratively has been reduced. The prospect of involvement in a project to develop models that would ‘draw on contemporary notions of reflection and collaboration’ was therefore very appealing.

- **Teachers need to integrate employability skills into their delivery.** With the current government emphasis on facilitating entry of immigrants into the workplace, AMES West Coast teachers are aware that they need to integrate employability skills development into their delivery. (These are the skills of communication, teamwork, problem solving, initiative and enterprise, planning and organisation, self-management, learning and technology.) However, teachers wonder how they should do this, especially with beginner-level learners, how explicit they should make the skills, and whether this would entail extra work for teachers.

Context
AMES West Coast is one of the two AMEP providers in Western Australia. It has a large contingent of ‘old hand’ teachers, who have up to 30 years of AMES experience and are now aged in their 50s and 60s, with some approaching retirement. A large amount of expertise will disappear when they leave.

New teachers join the program as required but are generally employed on a casual basis, with occasional opportunity to apply for short-term contracts. Casual teachers are likely to leave for more secure employment, and may have less time to spend onsite.

The timetabling of classes and the spread of locations means that band meetings no longer take place, as it is problematic to gather all teachers together. Teachers are invited to state their PD needs, but requirements like CSWE moderation, task development and Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAA) take priority.

Project goals and description
The title of the AMES West Coast project, ‘Old hands/new blood’, refers to the plan to pair long-term teachers with teachers newer to AMEP/CSWE delivery. The focus of their collaboration was to be the integration of employability skills into their CSWE delivery.

The aim was to evaluate this pairing as a PD model. In addition, by the end of the project, each pair would have a model to incorporate employability skills into CSWE delivery that could be shared with other teachers.

This pairing was not planned as a mentoring exercise. The experience of colleagues had been that mentoring systems ‘work for a while, then fade away’, while some AMES teachers expressed feelings of ‘mentor burnout’. These pairings were to be equals, with both parties expected to learn something. While the focus on employability skills was a set one, each pair could choose its own approach and develop ownership of the work together.

Other collaborative practice has had positive outcomes, such as that described by Wigglesworth and Murray (2007: 19), where teachers ‘grew professionally because they were able to learn from each other and reflect on and change their own practice through collaboration as peers, rather than through experts trying to change them’. It was hoped that the AMES project would be of equal value for the participating teachers and for their workplace.
Project in action

One teacher pair was identified in late 2007, and the chance to be part of the project was offered to all staff at the start of 2008. (A pre-session survey completed by staff revealed that knowledge of employability skills was quite limited at that time.)

It took some time to identify four pairs because of logistical issues and the current conditions of work: staff were preparing for a physical move (from the city to suburban premises) and for the impending transition to the 2008 CSWE curriculum.

Four teacher pairs were finally identified, including one pair in which both members were ‘old hands’ but who wanted to work together.

Each pair then met with the project coordinator. To fit with the theme of ‘change and innovation’, they were asked to work together to decide on the nature of their collaboration, their timeframe and what aspect of employability skills they would investigate. The aim was for the project to be teacher-directed, although the project coordinator was available on request to provide focus or ask pairs to reflect on their progress. All pairs were asked to keep meeting records/reflections and some had additional comments that were recorded by the project coordinator.

The timeframe was set by the teachers themselves, over Term 1 and Term 2 of 2008, with the understanding that the funding would cover up to 15 hours each for relief teaching (allowing them to visit each other’s classes) or other meeting time. There was some difficulty when some staff members had their teaching hours/classes changed in Term 2.

Teachers planned together, carried out research, visited each other’s classes, observed, shared teaching duties, met and discussed what they had learned, and reflected on the process. Teachers also spoke individually to the AMEP researcher, who visited over two days as part of her research.

Pair 1: Pre-CSWE

**Shared query:** How can employability skills be introduced to the pre-CSWE classroom, through classroom management and other practices?

**Key factors:** The two teachers were asked to share a preliminary and a Certificate I class, teaching in adjoining rooms, moving in and out of each other’s classes, and observing each other teach. Both were passionate about the fact that employability skills are relevant to learners at this level.

**Examples of strategies explored:** Helping learners to transfer organisational skills like ‘sorting’ (categorising) from one context to another, and prompting the development of initiative through the teachers ‘taking time out from assisting’, so learners have to use problem-solving skills to help each other find the answers.

Pair 2: Certificate II

**Shared query:** How can we explore the communication aspect of employability skills more deeply, as described in the Teaching in Action publication from the AMEP RC (Yates 2007)?

**Key factors:** One teacher taught a night class, the other a day class. They were particularly interested in ‘communication that contributes to productive and harmonious relation between customers and employees’.

**Examples of strategies explored:** Use of the SMART Board™ interactive Whiteboard to develop communication skills and the structure of conversations, as well as pair and group work.

Pair 3: Mixed-level community class/home tutors

**Shared query:** How could a needs analysis questionnaire be used to explore pathways and show how these needs might match with the employability skills?

**Key factors:** Both teachers in this pair teach in the community program, and one also works in the home tutor program. One wanted to use the questionnaire with her class, while the other was interested in
using it in volunteer tutor training. She wanted to know if it could support tutors to help learners develop learning skills and preparatory workplace consciousness.

**Examples of strategies explored:** Develop and research a needs analysis to gain better understanding of student needs.

**Pair 4: Certificate II and III**

**Shared query:** How can we work on teamwork and initiative, when the academic demands of the program mean there is not a lot of time for ‘real life’ team projects?

**Key factors:** This pair of ‘old hands’ had both been mentors in the past and felt some degree of exhaustion over what they saw as a one-way process. They wanted the opportunity to share their common knowledge.

**Examples of strategies explored:** Rearrangement of classes to break up patterns of seating and grouping; rotating group leadership, where consensus must be reached on the week’s conversation topic; community tasks done in pairs, with support and reporting by the non-active member; use of a class blog and individual blogs for research projects.

**Evaluation**

Evaluation was based on teacher reflection during and after the project, as well as a post-project survey. The project coordinator collated the reflections, looking for recurring themes and comments that exemplified the themes.

- **The value of professional conversation**

  Having a focus and time for discussion or planning offered teachers the chance to have a ‘professional conversation’ – something that they lamented is missing these days. Teachers talked about the enthusiasm that grows from this kind of opportunity:

  - The process is what’s interesting. Collaboration was the ‘shining’ part of the whole thing.
  - The different focus makes you reflect on that particular thing and broadens your teaching.
  - We may just be focused on this small topic – employability skills – but we’re getting across other stuff at the same time. This is a vehicle to share ideas.

  The reflection and sense of ownership was seen as giving back energy:

  - We no longer have band meetings – but it’s interesting to find out how things are done – to get cross-pollination or hear people say, ‘That’s a brilliant idea’.
  - The open-ended direction has been good – there’s not much of this in PD any more – it’s very top-down. It shrinks your creativity.

- **The building of confidence in teachers new to AMES and the CSWE**

  Teachers enjoyed the opportunity to share and explore their practice:

  - … I’d been struggling with what I’ve learnt at uni at the moment and how it fits with what I’m doing here. Working together gave me the opportunity to see different ways of doing things. This has given me someone to bounce ideas off, someone who sees things in a different way.

  It was important to be seen as an equal, even if a less-experienced equal:

  - Working together is the best thing I’ve ever felt – real team teaching. We have consideration for each other and for each other’s plans.
• Pushing the boundaries: the value for more-experienced teachers

The response from the newer teachers could have been predicted but the experienced teachers were also very positive:

You can still learn even if you have years of experience – because you see how someone else does things. At this level, we probably share less with each other because it could be seen as insulting to offer ideas without being invited. When there’s the invitation, we get the chance to do this.

Initially I felt I had to be more responsible, but that’s shifting. You can get set in your ways because they work, and this has made me think more laterally.

Even for ‘old hands’, there is something to be learnt – and from observing her teach, I was also able to reflect on techniques that I had either forgotten about or were completely new.

• Excitement over student achievement

Many participants also expressed their pleasure in the outcomes:

The focus on learning strategies is so important – it’s fantastic seeing a learner who can’t remember the alphabet, able to transfer a concept and complete a task brilliantly.

My Certificate II learners were capable of so much more than I realised! The team work pairing gave them the confidence to go out there into the community and get the information they needed.

Post-project survey

In his seminar for project coordinators on the topic of evaluation, David Hall, Associate Professor at the Department of Linguistics, Macquarie University, noted that projects are more likely to fail than succeed (85% of innovations break down) and that a negative evaluation is as useful as a positive one.

With this in mind, teachers were asked to be completely honest about the value of the project, especially in the informal post-project survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall – was the project worth the time invested?</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>All agreed worth the investment of time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has it made any change in your practice or thinking, even a small one?</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>One said, ‘probably not – already that way inclined’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you see this kind of pairing as important?</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>‘Yes, brilliant’; ‘Depends on who you pair with’; ‘Depends on logistics’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have an outcome you can share with other teachers?</td>
<td>7–8</td>
<td></td>
<td>One said outcomes are specific to their own areas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants were asked how the pairing compared to organised PD. Participants found it hard to compare the two:

It’s like comparing apples and oranges … it’s an adjunct, not a substitute.

Both are good, but this offers the chance to build up and reflect.

While teachers were positive, there were some aspects of the project that teachers felt could be improved for future pairings.

One teacher felt the imposition of a topic was unnecessary:

I think it would have been better to just focus on generic teaching techniques, rather than focus on employability skills. I wasn’t enthusiastic about that part of it.
Logistical problems (anticipated in the risk planning) were the main cause of concern for several of the pairs:

In a way it would have been better if we could have shared a class; that would be the most beneficial way of working together. This has felt a bit like a ‘project’.

A solution had been found by one pair, who had requested to share a pre-CSWE and CSWE I class, teaching in adjoining rooms and moving in and out of the two classes with some fluidity:

From a professional perspective, the sharing of two classes between two teachers has been an invaluable experience and much better than any other kind of team teaching. It’s not about dividing up the teaching – ‘you take the grammar, I’ll take the reading’. It’s a real sharing.

It gives you a reality check on the two levels, which is important for moving students up.

A number of participants suggested that all teachers could benefit:

I’m not sure about the ‘old hands/new blood’ aspect of it – I think any sharing is valuable.

It would be good for other community teachers, who are much more isolated than centre-based teachers.

The project coordinator, a PD officer, also reflected on the project process. She initially found the open-ended nature of the project challenged her need to ‘manage’:

This project has been an interesting exercise in learning to let go. All the participants got on with their projects in their own ways: meeting, emailing, phoning, visiting each other’s classes – they didn’t need to be monitored and supervised. When I did talk to teachers, it was more of a ‘professional conversation’ – they told me what they were doing and asked for feedback.

However, by the end, she had also experienced the benefits of ‘professional conversation’ through her meetings with project coordinators from other states:

Someone in the meeting talked about the importance of having someone to talk to who values your knowledge – that’s so true. It’s not just in the official meeting, but over meals, or in the taxi from the airport. These are the professional conversations that revitalise my worklife and spark off different ideas.

Another concern from a PD point of view was the cost benefit:

It costs money to give teachers time to reflect and share – but what does it cost if people leave the program and take all that experience with them?

**Summary and recommendations**

While this was a very small-scale project, the positive responses suggest that the ‘pairing and reflection’ model has value. The question is whether it is cost-effective in a competitive environment. However, it can be seen as one way to ensure that the huge accumulation of expertise within the organisation is passed on and that teachers are able to maintain enthusiasm and energy when faced with new, imposed requirements.

Some options could include:

- using collegiate learning and reflective practice as an ongoing part of PD or professional duties, especially when new requirements might otherwise be introduced without a sense of teacher ownership
- looking at pairing more- and less-experienced teachers as they focus on using the new CSWE (this is planned for another centre)
- re-instigating band meetings using professional duties time or other project funding (this is about to happen)
- offering teachers the option of sharing two classes (in adjacent rooms) as a model for effective joint teaching, especially for a newer teacher who needs the encouragement of an experienced staff member.
None of these options would be overly costly, though all require planning, support and encouragement for teachers.

In addition, the work done on employability skills suggests that the model has led to important outcomes that will now be shared with other teachers during PD week, thus providing an ongoing benefit to the program and – ultimately – to more of its clients.

References


Notes

2 D. Hall in a seminar on evaluation delivered to ‘Supporting change and innovation with professional development’ project coordinators at AMEP RC, 2008.
PROJECT 2

Increasing CSWE I student outcomes with action research
(Report prepared for the AMEP Research Centre project ‘Supporting change and innovation with professional development’)

Vicki Hambling, NMIT

Executive summary
The aim of this action research project was to take a current issue (low module completion at CSWE I level) in the AMEP provision and use this as a focus to build a community of practise or ‘learning circle’ approach to PD, which would then meet regularly to improve teaching and course delivery.

The project had two clearly stated goals:

- trial and evaluate various forms of teacher PD, and through this
- achieve the goal of increasing the student pass rate at the CSWE I level.

In this sense it was about reporting gains made in class. It was always intended to offer a continuous improvement model to improve our AMEP delivery.

Background
This project came about as a direct outcome of a national student survey and statistics highlighting low completion rates. This is an issue across the AMEP program nationally and has been raised by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) on a number of occasions as an area of concern. The low module completion rate has also been highlighted as an area of weakness within the general TAFE system. The following figures illustrate a need to investigate the barriers and identify enablers to student completion rates in low-level certificates.

Northern AMEP (NAMEP) figures 2006–07:

- 69 per cent of all our clients enter at either pre-CSWE or CSWE I
- 37 per cent of these clients do not continue
- 66 per cent of these non-continuing clients leave without achieving anything
- 21 per cent complete CSWE I
- 12 per cent move on to CSWE II or above.

National Client Satisfaction Survey:

- 50 per cent thought the class level was too low
- 59 per cent told the AMEP provider and
- only 63 per cent of these students were offered a higher class.
Project in action

The teachers

The teachers came from the centres within the Northern AMEP consortium:

- NMIT Epping Joy Hayes
- NMIT Preston Janet Shaw
- NMIT Broadmeadows Asha Chaudhry
- Kangan Batman TAFE Wendy Stewart
- Wingate Avenue Community Centre Beth Rowse
- Glenroy Neighbourhood Learning Centre Manjit Bhamral
- Meadow Heights Learning Shop Ishrat Hussainai
- PRACE Merrilands Community Centre Franca Majoor
- Moreland Adult Education Ianthe Shee
- Olympic Adult Education Louise Caddy

The challenge

The first step was to ask teachers at each site to discuss what they saw as the barriers preventing students from satisfactorily completing CSWE I. Responses came back from the 10 sites and were collated into a single document.

Barriers were identified and divided into the following three areas:

- barriers due to problems with the system
- problems with the teaching
- barriers caused by the students.

Strategies and recommendations were identified to overcome these barriers (see addendum p.62).

The intention was that the sites use this action research report to develop a site improvement plan and a local PD plan to improve the delivery at their sites.

The objective was to use a philosophy of continuous improvement and in this respect see the project as an agent of change, to use it to critically look at what we were doing and improve our delivery.

Project design

At the consortium level we made the decision to target a number of areas that we believed contributed to low student completion rates. We made the assumption that insufficient scaffolding or building of the elements required to complete a learning outcome would lead to a low module completion rate and that giving students tests that did not test what had been taught in the classroom (but, rather, were moderated tests taken from the task bank) would also result in low module completion. In order to address these issues, teachers were asked to trial a unit of work as a form of PD. The unit called ‘Fire safety in the home’ was based on an Occupational Health and Safety VET module but written up as a settlement topic.

The aim of the unit was to demonstrate how the CSWE could be imbedded in a content-based approach, how to build the scaffolding for the CSWE learning outcomes using the content of fire safety, and how to devise CSWE tests based on the topic ‘Fire safety in the home’ so that the tests related to the material taught.
Evaluation

Trialling the material as a professional development activity to teach

The teachers were asked to comment on the usefulness of trialling the material as a mechanism for teaching them about scaffolding. Five teachers found it very useful and three teachers found it useful. A number of comments on scaffolding were:

I think that this is the key.
Used with other classes. Very valuable practice.
Useful to see another methodology and to learn from this.
The scaffolding material provided was very helpful as I could create more materials based on it.
Fire unit a good example of scaffolding.
Scaffolding approach very successful.

Prior to the project commencing, I made an assumption that inadequate scaffolding would have a detrimental effect on students’ ability to pass a learning outcome. The positive response to the trialling of this material has demonstrated the need to share within our communities of practice the various ways we scaffold learning outcomes.

Linking assessment tasks to material taught

In addition to the assumption that inadequate scaffolding would have an effect on results, I also believed that administering tests that were not related to the content covered in class would have a negative effect on pass rates. Six teachers rated ‘relating assessment tasks to content taught’ as very useful and two teachers rated it as useful. Some of the comments were:

Learnt how to create tasks which are related to teaching of content.
It was both challenging and interesting to develop tasks appropriate to the set of materials provided.
OK where task bank assessment could be modified … more difficult where assessment tasks were devised from scratch.

There has been a reluctance among staff in general to create their own assessment tasks. The requirement that tasks need to be moderated has resulted in a feeling of uncertainty and self-doubt, making teachers reluctant to make their own tests. As a result they have used tests from the task bank. This has resulted in tasks not testing the vocabulary, grammar and structural forms covered in the class. It is my opinion that this has had a detrimental effect on the module completion rate across the country.

In response to the statement of the need to relate assessment tasks to the content taught, one teacher wrote:

Sometimes useful but sometimes students would just learn something off by heart, for example, the recount of Nina’s story, so they passed but whether or not they have the skills is questionable.

There is a feeling that at Certificate I level, skills need to be transferable and I believe that this has come about because teachers have believed they were required to use task bank materials to test students.

I discovered that assessment was not only compromised by the testing not being related to what was being taught in the class, but that it was also compromised by teacher attitudes. There is a reluctance by teachers to pass students and promote them to Certificate II.

What teachers consider to be a pass at CSWE I level is not uniform. If a teacher sticks rigidly to the requirements of CSWE and passes students as soon as they achieve the various learning outcomes stipulated in CSWE it seems to me that a lot more students would pass. However, teachers are reluctant to promote students for a whole range of reasons. I have illustrated this point with the following quotes from two different teachers at two different sites.

In the first case the teacher does not feel that students have sufficient knowledge of the language structures and the grammar needed to tackle the requirements of CSWE II, so this teacher is reluctant to promote students unless they have mastered a range of additional language structures which she feels are necessary. It is not a requirement to be able to use the future tense in order to pass the CSWE I but
Appendix 5 – Project 2

this teacher feels that it is absolutely necessary. She uses the future tense as an example to illustrate her point. So with the best of intentions this teacher does not assess students until they have mastered her extra requirements.

The second teacher does not want the student to be put into the next level as she feels that the student is so lacking in confidence using the language that moving her to CSWE II may stop her learning. The teacher at the next level should be able to cope with a shy, quiet student in the class just as the CSWE I level teacher coped.

I am reluctant to focus on the LOs [learning outcomes] … as the LOs do not cover language structures which a student should have at various levels (for example, you can pass them at level I without them ever learning single future form, which is really a benchmark for elementary students etc). To focus on the LOs all the time gives students an unrealistic idea that they cover everything a student needs to learn. And I do care about this as I also teach higher levels and expect them to have certain language skills by the time they get to my class, and contrary to the aims of the CSWE, these omissions in the curriculum do affect their employability.

Hugely lacked confidence. Never spoke. A case for not moving up. [Note: student had passed all LOs.]

One teacher did not trial the material and remains very sceptical of its usefulness. However, the staff members who did trial the material acknowledged the usefulness of the approach.

Students will achieve more outcomes when they are able to concentrate on a topic that they can become familiar with.

**Improved module completion rate**

Evaluations were received from nine teachers. Seven teachers reported that their module completion rates had improved.

The seven teachers who reported that their module completion rates had improved had implemented all the measures requested in the action research. They were to:

- trial the materials provided
- review Student Achievement Summary (SAS) forms at the beginning of the term
- assess regularly
- relate tests to the teaching material used in class
- arrange alternative times for students who missed tests to sit for them
- ring absent students
- teach students to monitor their own progress.

The two teachers who reported that their module completion rates had not improved did not teach their students to monitor their own progress, and one of these teachers did not review the SAS forms at the beginning of term.

**Action research as a form of PD**

The teachers were asked to comment on the trialling of the action research model as a form of PD.

My reflections discovered areas of my teaching that can and need to be improved so it was obviously a useful exercise.

A practical way of looking at my own work to check that it is as I would like it to be. Helped me in carrying out a systemic investigation into my teaching. Made me aware of the need for constant self-evaluation – a kind of giving an account of myself.

Will use in the future.
Summary: Lessons learned

Teachers are generally very busy people; however, giving them material to trial was a successful form of PD.

Trialling new materials was a good approach because it eliminated the possibility of staying within my comfort zone and using materials used successfully in the past. It necessitated a completely fresh approach to the topic so was in itself a learning experience.

Increased flexibility for students to sit assessment tasks leads to higher module completion

This project had embedded within it an expectation that the teacher would take a greater responsibility for student achievement. There was an expectation that the teacher needed to offer more opportunities for their students to pass. This represents an important change in practice. Previously teachers felt it was the students' responsibility to come to class regularly so that they could sit for and pass tests. If a student did not take this responsibility, it was considered the student's problem. However, the action research shifted that responsibility to the teacher and made it the teacher's responsibility to provide regular, alternative opportunities for students to sit for tests. This change resulted in an increase in module and certificate completion rates.

I believe this achievement would have been strengthened further had sites offered opportunities for those students who successfully passed CSWE I at mid-term to sit for tests from CSWE II. At most sites, these students could not be moved to a higher class due to the disruption it would have caused and they therefore achieved no modules during the time they sat in the class they had passed. Although teachers responded that they taught students at the higher level, there was no evidence of achievement.

A number of issues needing attention were highlighted in the reports: who follows up students who withdraw and how is this done? There may be a case for providing training for administrative staff, teachers and coordinators or it may be a case for changing the model used. Five teachers reported that students completed the certificate mid-term but could not be put up to the next level. This highlights the need for mixed-level classes and for teachers to develop units of work with tests at two different levels. It also raises the issue of how this progress is recorded and how and where proof of achievement is filed and how this information is passed on to the next teacher, so that students are not repeating tests unnecessarily.

The action research project was short term and highly focused, which I believe contributed to its success. The project empowered teachers to observe barriers to student progress and gave them the opportunity to feed their results back to the coordinators.

Four teachers reported that the regular meetings with the coordinator were very useful and four reported that they were useful. The project raised the need for sites to offer opportunities for staff to contribute ideas on how to improve site delivery. It became clear during the research that not all sites offered staff a forum to contribute ideas, and in some ways this is a wasted resource.

Recommendations

All teachers should:

- review SAS forms at the beginning of the term
- assess regularly
- relate tests to the teaching material used in class
- arrange alternative times for students who miss tests to sit for them
- ring absent students
- teach students to monitor their own progress.
Professional development

Teachers need to maintain currency and each site needs to implement a continuous improvement model where staff are supported using a community of practice model in which staff share the successful activities they do in class, discuss the issues they need help with, and together build up materials to be used by others.

The action research model worked very successfully as a method to support change within the consortium. Comments by teachers suggest that it will result in a practice of self-reflection for the remainder of their teaching careers. In this sense, one would have to say that it is a highly successful and relatively inexpensive model for PD. In addition, the method of asking teachers to trial and reflect on materials that demonstrated both scaffolding and how to relate assessment to one’s teaching proved to be an extremely successful model. This, combined with the principles of action research, proved to be an effective method to promote discussion and change in the teaching methods of some highly experienced teachers. Teachers are constantly trialling new materials but they are rarely asked to reflect on the process and on the materials themselves. The process showed that it would be a highly effective method to develop materials, as each teacher had different strengths to contribute to the process of improving the unit of work.
## Addendum

These are the collated replies from all the sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers to successful completion</th>
<th>Strategy to improve student outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>System issues</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failure to offer (DL), evening (HTS).</td>
<td>Include in orientation of teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Need to induct all sessional and new staff to these services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Put notices up in all languages on the wall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consider offering evening classes at other sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consider offering weekend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Offer DL and HTS to all students who stop their hours and give them the information in their language at that time, with ... contact details. Offer to ring for them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NAMEP to provide a list to all members re availability and location of this provision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide lists where evening classes are currently available and refer them on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete a certificate but do not immediately move up to a higher level class.</td>
<td>If students are wrongly placed [International Second Language Proficiency Rate] move them into the new class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Need to have the flexibility to move students mid-term or mid-semester.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staff need more flexibility – needs to be negotiated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If students cannot be moved make certain that students are doing tests relevant for their level so that they are not disadvantaged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers to keep up-to-date records of what LO students have passed and need to begin the record from the beginning of the term. This should pick up incorrectly placed students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It takes a long time with our current timetable for students to achieve whole Cert, maybe 18 months – 2 years. (Adult Community Education provider and evening). Students may become dissatisfied with a perceived lack of noticeable improvement and drop out.</td>
<td>Offer DL to these students. Encourage students to combine DL and classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Email [teacher] and give her the details for the students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students promoted on the basis of their [ISLPR].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students informed about alternative providers – NAMEP brochure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Get students to track own progress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers develop students’ self-evaluation skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encourage students to develop study groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students may need more drills, more repetition in class.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cont ...
### Barriers to successful completion

<table>
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<tr>
<th>System issues</th>
<th>Strategy to improve student outcomes</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| Centrelink requirements (20 hours) may cause problems when student learning activities are only three or four days a week (three hours). | Centrelink says they cannot see whether student is in a [part-time] or [full-time] Learning Activity.  
Write 16 hours + 4 independent study on confirmation letter.  
Include individual study time above teacher contact hours with clear guidelines about how and where to access facilities to assist.  
CD Rom programs on computers, ESL Internet sites, books, tapes, CDs, DVDs, readers, homework tasks or other as appropriate for the Pre-lit students. |
| ![Table](image)                                                             | ![Table](image)                                                                                       |
| [Special Preparatory Program] students are not to have more than 15 hours/week. | ![Table](image)                                                                                       |
| Job networks putting pressure on students to get jobs.                      | Incorporate pre-vocational outcomes.  
Offer job search modules.  
Generic employability skills and job search skills at medium and high level classes.  
Lobby Job Networks to take the pressure off those not job-ready.  
Obtain information from Job Networks regarding levels required to be job-ready for different jobs. |
| If students are put into preliminary CSWE I unnecessarily, it will take them longer to complete especially with the new Certificate. | Only pre-lit students doing exclusively Prelim classes.  
Other low-lit students can do prelim outcomes concurrent with level 1 outcomes.  
Establish clear guidelines for all interviewers as to what determines entry into pre-lit classes.  
Level 0 (ISLPR), cannot read and write in own language, do not know English alphabet etc.  
If student misplaced, ensure student is re-assessed and placed in CSWE I.  
Transfer students from prelim when it is established that they could cope with level 1 assessments. No need to complete prelim assessments. |
| Class too high or too low for students and so students drop out.            | Need to carry out student evaluation early in the course, mid-way through and at the end.  
Need to teach students to tell you if the work is too easy or too hard.  
Cultural differences here regarding feedback need to be explained. |
## Barriers to successful completion | Strategy to improve student outcomes

### System issues

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students need to be asked to help the teacher. Maybe other higher level students could be used as interpreters.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Times not suitable and students drop out.</td>
<td>Classes too long. Need to check if this is an issue at point of evaluating.</td>
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### Teacher issues

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<tr>
<td>Assessment not linked to what is being taught.</td>
<td>Teachers need to refer to the test requirements as for most tests at CSWE I, it clearly states that the materials must be familiar. Teachers develop an assessment task on a task template. Fast track some local moderation at staff meetings – put moderation on the agenda.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderation differences between staff. Rigid interpretation of the CSWE. Teacher expectation too high.</td>
<td>All staff need to attend moderation internally and externally. Paying sessional and evening teachers to attend. Mentor teachers new to CSWE and encourage them to read the CSWE documents and to ask the Reps any questions they may have. Meetings with other teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching methods do not seem to be working.</td>
<td>Share ideas and create resources. Timetable as part of duties. Timetable topics so others can join us. Review classroom teaching. More local/site meetings/PD to share teaching ideas. Timetabled CSWE level meetings need to be reported in some way at staff meetings so issues and ideas are shared. New teachers to pair up with experienced teachers. Teachers should attend teaching methodology trainings/seminars. Keep abreast with the latest teaching methodology. Teachers need opportunities to meet and exchange ideas about methodology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of understanding of the CSWE. Students need to pass modules not standalone LOs.</td>
<td>Ensure students have first language list of modules. Use the ILP to show students their progress and sense of achievement. Split modules fairly between coordinating teacher and co-teacher according to time fraction.</td>
</tr>
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### Barriers to successful completion

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| Lack of books/readers/materials for this group of clients. | Need to share materials more often both within and across campus.  
Allocate time for some teachers to develop more local/student/background-focused teaching materials.  
Encourage teachers to develop course books for each term, so students have a booklet to work from and a reference.  
Sets of picture dictionaries are useful.  
‘Spark Wordbank’. |
| Teachers felt a diversity of activities/approaches needed to occur, not just units of work as such. | Devote more staff meeting time to talking about actual classroom teaching.  
Excursions, singing, role play, games, guest speakers with interpreters, visit places such as the Community Health Centre. |
| Lack of volunteer support in classroom. | More training of volunteer tutors to help specifically in the classroom.  
Encourage CSWE III students and ex-students to become volunteers.  
Some CSWE III students like to volunteer to help with their own English learning. |
| Students passing all but one LO. | Teachers need to monitor this more closely and make certain that this does not happen. Staff need to look at student SAS at beginning of term and be mindful of who needs to pass what and make certain that this happens.  
Looking at SAS forms at beginning of term will show if someone has been incorrectly placed. |

### Student issues

| Students being absent when tests are given. | Plan time for catch up tests.  
Breaks.  
ILC [Independent Learning Centre] time.  
Computer time.  
Before class.  
After class.  
Mail task to student with return envelope.  
Extra session at end of term. |
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give an experienced teacher the duty of working with sessional teachers to help them follow up with assessments.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students leaving during the course before completing tests.</td>
<td>Ongoing assessment policy needed. Give students the chance to do the test before leaving if they are ready for it. Monitor students’ attitudes towards the course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor learning strategies and study habits.</td>
<td>Need to share our ideas on this and look at the various ways people do this. Address learning strategies in class. Give students a course book. Teach basic study skills. Encourage purposeful homework. Run a prelim course in the area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students do not understand the CSWE requirements and at this level they lack an understanding of pathways.</td>
<td>Need to share our ideas on this and look at the various ways people do this. Importance of students understanding pathways. Needs to be ongoing. Teacher to address in class, explaining the assessment criteria as they teach. Use interpreters. Simple notices in the student areas … in <strong>Languages Other Than English</strong>. Discuss with students the skills that they can expect to have at the completion of the level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor morale.</td>
<td>Brainstorm this, what can we do in a class to improve morale team building? Be encouraging. Have excursions, social gatherings or morning teas with provision for interaction with native speakers where possible. Join in all student activities on campus (TAFE).</td>
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</table>
| Mental health issues. Personal hardship or trauma can also influence the students’ ability to acquire new skills. | Review telltale signs for this.  
What do we have on this at each site?  
Different teaching strategies  
- referring students to appropriate support agencies or Foundation House, Refugee Health Nurse staff PD on mental health etc.  
Link students with Foundation House.  
Art therapy, gardening, sewing, choir, bbqs, soccer, games.  
Integrate ESL teaching into hands-on activities.  |
| Lack of confidence.              | Brainstorm this and make a list.  
Ideas to improve confidence with speaking.  
Encouraging classroom environment.  
Pair work, group work etc.  
Encourage small steps – lots of positive reinforcements.  
Help build friendships within the class.  
Modify tasks so that they do not always fail.  
Constant encouragement – focus on the things students CAN do. Assure students that the work they are doing IS difficult. Remind them that everyone has different strengths and weaknesses. Avoid making students who lack confidence read aloud or present work in front of class. Provide lots of pair work/group work for the student to practise in a less confronting context. Ensure students understand that making mistakes is OKAY.  |
| Discouraged by their slow progress? Lack of interest or application/no expectation of success. | Make certain clients aware of Certificate and self-moderate the progress.  
Self-evaluation strategies to build self-esteem.  
Brainstorm ideas.  
Encourage, praise small successes.  
Raise awareness of the difficulty of learning another language.  |

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low levels of literacy/illiterate in first language.</td>
<td>Brainstorm difficulties of particular groups and ideas to overcome these.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New educational concepts to grasp.</td>
<td>Share units of work eg coffee time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to use dictionaries.</td>
<td>List materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teach students to use dictionaries.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Prelim course and a literacy orientation.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lots of oracy activities to build confidence.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Address concepts and learning strategies in class.</td>
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<td>Use visuals.</td>
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<td>Spelling books in place of dictionaries. Students can add topic vocab. And will be learning dictionary skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Content of classes not relevant and therefore little student interest.</strong></td>
<td>We could discuss sharing stuff regularly at staff meetings.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Inform students how the activity or content will help them.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Offer short courses eg conversation classes to day and evening study skills classes.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Need to offer a women’s class on childbirth.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Teachers need to review relevance.</td>
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<td>Do a ‘needs’ analysis.</td>
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<td>Design goal-oriented activities that generate language practice rather than just worksheets for example. Activities that involve a communicative quest for information from other students may keep students more involved than answering comprehension questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students stop coming but do not stop their hours and the hours are taken.</strong></td>
<td>Clearly establish whose job this is and staff need to follow this regularly.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Needs to be part of induction process.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Needs to be raised at interviews that students have this responsibility.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Let students know that temporary withdrawal is an option.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Teachers follow-up, if no contact admin or PCO should withdrawn on ARMS.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher or coordinator should encourage student to return and give reasons, offer DL, HT or evening as another study option.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pro forma letter in a range of languages to be mailed out.</td>
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<tr>
<td>None of the writing Assessment Tasks are drafted. High achieving students do not like being judged on work markedly below the best they are capable of.</td>
<td>This should be tackled in new CSWE. Students do have time to draft and teacher can encourage students to self-correct. Allow high achievers to do a first draft and rewrite even if they go over the time a little.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older clients who have more time and less responsibility but find it hard because learning is much slower.</td>
<td>Need to revise work done the previous lesson and recycle. Encourage students to use ILC/ drop in and libraries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger women who are juggling many responsibilities, but then life gets too busy. Limited time to practise and study their English.</td>
<td>Offer a home tutor if formal classes less than six hours per week. It is cultural for some women to stay at home, so need to build some materials to help them understand why they need to access classes eg talking to the teacher, helping with homework etc. Encourage students to watch TV with young kids while ironing etc, listen to radio while working. Always speak English in shops etc. Suggest activities to use with their kids. Teach the students the time management concept. Instil in them the importance of prioritising things. Encourage engagement in community projects so they can meet others in the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living within their own ethnic communities – no urgency or necessity to be proficient.</td>
<td>Provide opportunities to talk to native speakers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMEP offers only six hours per week of child care, so students do not attend all classes.</td>
<td>Offer home tutor and DL to support these students. Need to advertise idea of the hubs and each site needs to offer space for this. [...] needs to talk to staff. Encourage them to continue with English language learning tasks they can manage at home like borrowing reading books from library, keeping a journal, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ill health.</td>
<td>Need to be offered a home tutor and only enrol part-time, that is no more than six hours. Teacher and coordinator follow-up to get students back as soon as possible. Admin needs to keep records of students in this area. Keep in contact with students.</td>
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<td>Pregnancy and childbirth and family responsibilities for both wives and husbands.</td>
<td>Cultural needs to be included in this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure on women to shoulder all responsibility for household chores. Wives with limited education are often very dependent on their husbands – as a result attendance is poor and they do not progress quickly.</td>
<td>Offer part-time place in a full-time course. Encourage wife and husband to attend class at the same time. Sometimes this works if they are in the same class. Support systems for these women. Centrelink/support networks support husbands as well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding or looking for work after course has started. Desperate desire to work – will do anything.</td>
<td>Need to make students aware of DL, HTS. Need to stress the importance of working and learning English and the opportunities it offers. Educate the students on the job system here in Australia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointments made in class time – driving lessons / driving tests / Centrelink / Job Network /Immigration Dep’t / Sponsorship / Public Housing and house hunting.</td>
<td>Dealt with at interviews and induction. Need to encourage them to show Centrelink their timetable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often overwhelmed and unable to cope with the routine resulting in high absenteeism or dropping out.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of maturity to engage in learning as an adult (particularly young males who missed out on being teenagers due to conflict in country of origin).</td>
<td>Refer these students to the [Young Adult Migrant English Course] program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classes with a dominant language group resort to native language more than they should.</td>
<td>Try and use this to your advantage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large classes of disparate learners.</td>
<td>Sharing ideas with other teachers. Group work. Use of volunteers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship groupings: Not prepared to accept promotion if without a friend or friends.</td>
<td>Informing student of CSWE, feedback on their assessments. Let student meet students in next class – arrange social interaction. Combined class activities to help break down barriers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing enrolment. Start late in course and sometimes miss out on foundations.</td>
<td>Ongoing revision. Short topics so this is not a problem. Enrol students in blocks eg twice a term.</td>
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<td>Lack goals or understanding of pathways.</td>
<td>Explanation of the CSWE.</td>
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<td>Involvement in the individual student assessment folders.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Learning plans can help with this.</td>
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<td>Do not complete homework tasks.</td>
<td>Document students’ homework: and use as feedback on progress.</td>
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<td>Give appropriate/realistic homework – teach students how to benefit from revising their classroom work at home, rather than setting extra work.</td>
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<td>Offer homework times on site, 8.30 – 9am.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Spend the beginning of class time on homework review to establish it as an important part of learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing issues.</td>
<td>Noticeboard – community support groups. Multilingual info.</td>
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<td>Include in settlement info.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of support networks.</td>
<td>Organise social activities to help develop these.</td>
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<td>Choir.</td>
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<td>Sewing group.</td>
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<td>Make a mural.</td>
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<td>Write poetry.</td>
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<td>Advertise the groups in the area and get students involved.</td>
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<td>Make a student information board.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public transport with children and weather conditions can contribute to students lack of attendance.</td>
<td>Need to discuss this with students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Help students catch up – stronger classmates can assist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning English is not always a high priority for some students; this is heightened for students coming from a strict culture to a casual culture. For example, no repercussions for students not attending class except a personal cost.</td>
<td>Need to discuss this, it is about how education works in Australia.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Need to discuss this. This is a cultural difference.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Discuss learner responsibilities.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Getting a Centrelink guest speaker with interpreters to remind students of their obligations, as well as teachers positively reminding students of this while inducting using the AMEP 2008 Handbook.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encourage sense of purpose by brainstorming/discussing with students all the reasons for learning English, and what the benefits are in all social/economic spheres.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Provide examples of people who have learned English and have achieved what they wanted.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Invite inspirational accounts/guest speakers (as one of the class activities).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>At intake the coordinator stresses the importance of English especially now with the new citizenship test. This is a big carrot.</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student issues</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdraw from the program to find work.</td>
<td>Inform Home Tutor and DL.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Offer evening class so student can look for work during the day.</td>
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<td>Encourage students to come two or three days a week.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Have work/study programs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSWE I BLO3 GLO2 FLO2 are difficult learning outcomes.</td>
<td>Need to begin teaching these as soon as the class begins and do elements every week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with Centrelink making our Cert I’s who only come for 12 hours per week, look for four or five jobs per week, so school is only a part of the demands on their week.</td>
<td>Check if Centrelink will accept that the provider determines what is full time. Broadmeadows C’link does at the moment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to constantly induct students – takes up valuable teacher time.</td>
<td>Involve other students in inducting eg escorting to reception centre and/or library.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Re-visit key areas of induction during the course to enable all students to stay informed.</td>
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<td>Get volunteers to help here.</td>
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<td>Mid-term induction session for late enrolments. Hold a one-off mid-term induction session for the late (continuous) enrolments.</td>
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<td>See if CSWE II and III students will help with some induction – buddy system.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Getting students to read Induction booklet at home with a proficient English speaker (if they have one), then returning with any questions they may have.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make it part of ILC activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With spasmodic attendance students miss key content.</td>
<td>Keep recycling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.30am start, 4.30pm finish is not family friendly, so many women especially miss hours every week.</td>
<td>Do assessments or other things until class arrives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encourage before and after school care where possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some students come from a cultural background that does not value adult learning and perhaps considers it demeaning.</td>
<td>Ex-students as guest speakers to talk about their experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promote 'learning for life’ is an important value being embraced by Australian culture.</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Student issues</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>There are men who supported their families in their country of origin, who now have to rely on the dole for income while they are learning English. Many of them prefer to get a job working for people who speak their language.</td>
<td>Although this may be the case, we always encourage our students to persist with their English classes – not only to get a job but also to operate effectively in the community/country they live in. Also stress they cannot help their children progress in school if they are limited by their lack of language skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The pathways available to students at Certificate I are not really varied and, in most cases, all they can do after Certificate I is to continue with Certificate II. This seems too long for people who want to get a job, help their children with their school work – especially while their children are progressing much faster than they are, or simply achieve some level of independence.</td>
<td>Offer VET subjects. Offer evening classes. Suggest DL. Put up on the board what will be covered each lesson and at end of lesson revise the list. Make small books to give students so they can see where they are going and review the work. Provide training and materials for self-improvement or individual study via audio-visual, computer or print-based learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some students enrol to get their transport concession card and then do not come.</td>
<td>Some students enrol to get their transport concession card and then don’t attend class. We have no strategy to overcome this as attendance is not compulsory and once the students have the card we can’t do anything about it. They can then stop their hours and use their concession card to get cheaper fares. We always follow up with a phone call when we suspect this has happened. It concerns very few students so we did not tackle it in the project.</td>
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PROJECT 3

Delivering PD online

(Report prepared for the AMEP Research Centre project ‘Supporting change and innovation with professional development’)

Muriel Aloizos and Elene Claire, TELLS

Background
TAFE Queensland delivers the AMEP at all metropolitan and 14 regional sites across the state and is committed to providing innovative PD to all teachers in the program. Participation in the AMEP RC’s research project, ‘Supporting innovation and change with professional development’ afforded an opportunity to investigate the effectiveness of online delivery of PD to AMEP teachers in geographically diverse locations.

Project goals
The facilitators aimed to trial and evaluate the effectiveness of online PD for AMEP teachers across the state. Desired outcomes included:

- an ongoing support network (community of practice)
- high participation rate
- development of eLearning skills
- centralised resources
- sharing of ideas – new and pre-trialled.
Context

Teachers of Pre-CSWE classes had been requesting PD opportunities to share teaching resources and approaches. The requests were being made by experienced teachers who were finding that their students were achieving very few Pre-CSWE learning outcomes, yet had almost completed their AMEP entitlements. They were keen to investigate new strategies and approaches. The PD needs of this group were the focus of this action learning project.

TAFE Queensland Pre-CSWE teachers were invited to participate in an eight to nine-week PD project, which was mainly delivered online. Activities included:

- pre-workshop online survey using SurveyMonkey
- initial face-to-face workshop in Brisbane (9 May 2008). Topics included:
  - participating in an action research project (Pamela McPherson, Macquarie University)
  - Teaching Strategies with Oral/Aural Learners (Shirley Sangster, AMES Perth (West Coast TAFE))
  - Introduction to my.TAFE (TAFE Queensland Learning Management System)
- online collaboration for eight to nine weeks via my.TAFE
  - group forum
  - four scheduled chat sessions
  - reflection on teaching practice via the group blog
- final workshop at TELLS PD conference (9 July 2008)
  - participants report back and share resources/experiences
  - participants evaluate online mode of PD.

Project in action

Seventeen AMEP teachers participated in the project:

- two were from regional institutes (Townsville and Toowoomba)
- two were from the Gold Coast Institute of TAFE
- 13 were from three Brisbane metropolitan institutes.

Pre-workshop online survey using SurveyMonkey

SurveyMonkey was used to gather information about the participants. In response to participants’ pre-project self-assessment of online abilities, the majority of participants rated themselves as ‘complete novices’ when it came to blogs, working collaboratively online and using a Learning Management System (Table 1).
Table 1: Participants’ pre-project self-assessment of online abilities

Have you ever done the following? (16 responses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have you ever done the following?</th>
<th>Complete novice</th>
<th>Comfortable</th>
<th>Experienced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participated in an online chat</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributed to a blog</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uploaded a file</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked collaboratively online</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used an LMS (Learning Management System) eg Janison, Blackboard as a TEACHER</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used an LMS as a STUDENT</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Introduction to my.TAFE (online learning system)

At the initial face-to-face workshop, a two-hour session in a computer room introduced participants to the project site on the my.TAFE learning platform.

Comments on the online component of the day included:

... chat rooms etc are not that hard to use.

I was surprised by the excitement of participants while playing with my.TAFE.

I really like my.TAFE element because I like new things. This gives me the opportunity to speak to my peers at a distance which is what I need.

I hadn’t realised that we were going to be introduced to my.TAFE or that we were going to be collaborating via this platform. Not having looked at my.TAFE before, I was pleasantly surprised by how user-friendly it is, and by how easy it will be to work collaboratively with colleagues across the network. I’m very impressed!

Using my.TAFE wasn’t as difficult as I had first thought.

Online collaboration for eight to nine weeks via my.TAFE

While working on their own action learning project, participants were encouraged to log on to the community of practice to actively collaborate through:

- the group forum
- four scheduled chat sessions
- reflection on teaching practice via the group blog.

Online participation rates

Seventeen teachers commenced the program:

- two did not log on to my.TAFE during the weeks following the initial workshop
- 15 logged on during the following weeks – 12 participated regularly (Figure 1)
Figure 1: Participants’ log-on activity for my.TAFE

Figure 2 compares ‘pre-project novices’ with numbers who participated during the project. It reveals that teachers attempted online activities, with the majority doing this more than once.

Figure 2: Participants’ online activity
Teachers were also asked how often they shared information online. A core group embraced the online mode, and participated three or more times each week (Figure 3).

![Figure 3: Teachers who shared information online](image)

**Evaluation of online mode of PD**

At the end of the project, teachers were asked to evaluate the online process as a way of delivering PD. In response to the question, ‘Would you recommend an online PD project to other teachers?’, 15 responded ‘Yes’.

- Different, exciting and refreshing.
- A good way to share ideas across isolated campuses and you don’t feel completely alone.
- It is entirely flexible time wise. It is a great way to be sharing our successes and brainstorming together when we hit brick walls ... often the brick walls are easily overcome through someone else's idea.

In response to a question about future directions, ‘How will you follow up on this project?’, teachers said:

- Continue to chat with other teachers and share ideas.
- I would love to be part of a continual community of practice like the one we shared ... I think if there was a mechanism to let people know there were new contributions we might pick up again and become regular visitors and contributors.

**Evaluation**

**Successes**

- **An ongoing support network (community of practice):** teachers have actively embraced this mode of communication and sharing of ideas.
- **High participation rate:** 90 per cent of participants followed the project through to completion.
- **Development of eLearning skills:** teachers were given hands-on training and practice at the initial workshop. For the majority of participants, this assisted in overcoming initial apprehension and they were willing to explore what online collaboration had to offer.
- **Centralised resources:** teachers shared resources via the learning platform and ResourceBank on my.TAFE.
- **Sharing of ideas:** this occurred at the initial workshop, online and at the final face-to-face workshop, and has continued ad hoc on the community of practice.
Barriers

- **The technology:** some participants commented that they needed further support. Following the initial workshop, two did not participate in the online component – both commented that they lacked confidence with the online process and the time to practise and develop it.

  I didn’t find the online component helpful. I didn’t realise from the outset that sharing ideas online was part of the project. I also didn’t feel that I knew the other teachers well enough to ask them questions about my teaching dilemmas online. Maybe a clearer explanation of the use of the online component at the beginning would have encouraged me to participate more.

  I found the chat line was a waste of time for me. The conversation moves on so fast when there are a [number] of people involved that, by the time I’ve answered the question that someone has asked, three more people have joined the group, the conversation has changed topics six times and my answer’s irrelevant!!

- **Time to participate:** many participants commented that their workload and other commitments prevented them from logging on more frequently. As my TAFE is accessible from any computer with an Internet connection, the majority of participants accessed it from home.

A final comment from a participant

With online delivery teachers need to make time to participate otherwise you do not get anything out of it. I would not like to see it as the only way professional development is delivered as I still feel getting together face to face is the best way as interaction is immediate and resources can be really examined. Online is great for outlying areas and the delivery of a lot of information to a large group at the same time.

Recommendations

Online participation was an effective way of encouraging collaboration.

Facilitators contribute success to:

- the defined topic and project timeline – participants were aware of the commitment they were making and that there would be a tangible end to the project. Teachers were prepared for the online component at an initial one-day workshop, which gave them ‘time to play’ with support on-hand, if needed

- the project needs at least one ‘champion’ who will facilitate online collaboration through regular chats and timely responses to entries on the forum and group blog

- the blog was an outstanding success as a way of encouraging reflective practice.
PROJECT 4

Evaluation study: Impact of PD on teaching employment-related English in the AMEP classroom

(Report prepared for the AMEP Research Centre project ‘Supporting change and innovation with professional development’)

Homeira Hosseini, Don Purvis and Jane Sindel, ACL Parramatta and Auburn

Background

Recent changes in emphasis of Federal Government policy (DIAC, 2008) and community and AMEP client expectations have combined to set the stage for an increased role for employment-related topics, language, knowledge and skills for AMEP clients attending English classes and in the professional lives of the AMEP teachers and support staff entrusted with responding to these new directions and needs.

This study, planned and implemented during 2007 and 2008 as part of the AMEP RC project ‘Supporting change and innovation with professional development’, focused on the effects of new, innovative and wide-ranging changes to ACL’s curriculum and PD programs during that period: specifically, the introduction of key employment-related resources and training.

Context

AMEP teachers in general, and ACL teachers specifically, as one group of stakeholders described in this report, are faced with new and complex professional challenges as they strive to meet the language and settlement needs, aspirations and goals of their clients, the learners in their classrooms.

ACL teachers are expected to prepare students for their future (and sometimes concurrent) working lives, as well as to cater to their other language and settlement needs. In 2007 ACL introduced new syllabuses at each CSWE level to all AMEP colleges. Each syllabus level comprised four separate but cross-referenced and integrated sections: Learning in Australia, Living in Australia, Working in Australia and an Appendix containing an employability skills framework. A full day of PD training was conducted for all teachers at their local colleges in August 2007 to familiarise teachers with the new syllabuses and to provide time, space, practical opportunities and support to collaboratively plan their programs for the ensuing term. Formal evaluations received from teachers participating in this PD day – innovative and distinct in content and delivery – were highly favourable, with many requests for repeat sessions in the same format.

In addition, most ACL teachers in 2007 attended a PD training session on workplace visits. These sessions were presented by their peers who had visited workplaces such as Tip Top (bakery) and First Fleet (logistics and warehousing) to observe language and occupational health and safety (OH&S) needs, as part of the ‘Reframing the future’ project, a PD initiative of the State and Federal Governments. Two PowerPoint slideshows of the visits were prepared by trainers from ACL’s Employment Pathways Unit and the Curriculum Coordinator at Parramatta. The end point of the ‘Reframing the future’ project thus became one of the starting points for the current study, as one of our objectives was to evaluate the impact, if any, of these PD events on current and future classroom practice.
Project goal and description

Our objectives were to:

- evaluate the effectiveness of recent PD
- identify what effect, if any, recent PD has had on current program delivery
- identify future PD needs for teachers
- suggest strategies for effective and innovative institutional support and better practice.

To meet these objectives it was decided that this study would evaluate the usage of the employment-related resources introduced through the favourably received PD and thereby to obtain a picture of the existing teaching and learning environment and where it sits in relation to changing external circumstances. It would also identify future PD and resourcing needs in ACL AMEP colleges.

In June and July 2008, the majority of teachers at Auburn and Parramatta colleges were surveyed to establish if the PD delivered to introduce the new employment-focused syllabus and resources had been effective in altering the behaviour of teachers in class. Questions focused on teachers’ familiarity with, and usage of, work-related curriculums, materials, topics, and the nature of class activities used to support students’ employment needs. To provide a fuller picture of what was taking place, a sample of learners at CSWE Levels I, II and III was also surveyed. Finally, in recognition of the ongoing nature of PD, teachers were asked to identify future PD support needs.

Project in action

An initial meeting of the research group, comprising two teachers, one teacher/coordinator and one curriculum coordinator, took place at ACL Parramatta on 19 March 2008. The initial research questions were agreed as follows: what is the uptake of work-related content by teachers in the classroom? To what extent is work-related content taught? What are the gaps in PD and resources needed to enhance the uptake?

A literature review was conducted on the subjects of program evaluation and employment-related content, to reflect the underpinning orientation of the research questions.

Literature review

Rea-Dickins and Kiely 2005 cite a study by Jacobs (2000) evaluating an innovative English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program in the South African tertiary education sector. Jacobs identified three broad objectives of the evaluation, which had some resonance with the aims of the present study:

1. To understand the ways (L)EAP as an innovation changed the curriculum, teaching and learning.
2. To understand the ways the institutional context (social, political and economic climate) impacted on (L)EAP.
3. To identify and involve all (L)EAP stakeholders in the evaluation. (Rea-Dickins and Kiely 2005: 262).

Given the scope of the present study was smaller in scale, the involvement of all stakeholders, as stated in objective (3) above, was not feasible. In any case, the intention from the outset was to focus on the views of the teacher and student cohorts as being principal stakeholders in the curriculum renewal process.

Murray (2003) looked at factors affecting retention of adult immigrant learners in classes and suggested strategies for improving retention of clients wanting to join the workforce, such as including program modules on ‘general English, OH&S, resume writing, casual conversation, negotiation skills, invited speakers, workplace visits, computing skills (and) interview skills’, among others (Murray 2003: 2).

Earp and Everitt (2006) compiled an information sheet for the AMEP RC outlining job-focused learning and teaching strategies and materials for CSWE I. They state that previously ‘the topic of employment and employment-related language has often been thought of as suitable only for learners of Certificate III level of the CSWE’ (Earp and Everitt 2006: 1). As will be discussed, this view is reflected to some extent in the opinions of teachers surveyed for the present study.
Project implementation

Participants negotiated a three-phase research work plan, the main points of which are summarised in Figure 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1</th>
<th>Phase 2</th>
<th>Phase 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Design student questionnaire</td>
<td>Conduct student surveys</td>
<td>Collate learner and teacher data, analyse data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design teacher questionnaire</td>
<td>Conduct teacher surveys</td>
<td>Collaboratively write draft and final reports</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Research work plan

Two survey instruments designed to encompass the scope of the research questions were drafted by the research team. Both the teacher and student surveys used statements, rather than questions, to elicit responses. Students were mostly asked to respond dichotomously (yes/no), while teachers responded along a four-point scale of quantity and degree. Both surveys contained a Comments section to garner more qualitative data. The student survey was entirely anonymous, and teachers had the option of giving their names on the survey (very few did). The surveys appear as Addendum A and Addendum B at the end of this report.

Thus, the research orientation was more ethnographic and qualitative than experimental, although to some extent quantitative, with teacher and student responses collated and quantified for ease of comparison. Samples of learners at CSWE Levels I, II and III, and most teachers at Auburn and Parramatta colleges, were surveyed. The surveys were administered in June and July 2008, at the end stage of one term and the beginning of the next, to gain a retrospective snapshot. The teacher questionnaire left space for teachers to comment freely about PD and any other issues. Student survey statements numbers 14 and 15 looked forward, asking students to circle a percentage of how much ‘English for work’ they would like and what else they would like to study in their next classes.

Evaluation

Key points are:

- most teachers at both colleges use employment-related activities in the classroom
- more than half of the teachers surveyed state they use ACL’s Working in Australia syllabus ‘a lot’ or ‘quite a lot’ for planning and teaching work topics
- more teachers feel confident about teaching work-related skills than do not (25 teachers, compared to seven)
- Employment Pathways PD sessions are seen as significantly helpful for both teachers and students
- all teachers surveyed know about OH&S in the classroom
- most teachers would like further PD around employment in a rapidly changing world
- a large majority of CSWE I students say they want to study 50 per cent or more of employment and work-related content in their next class
- nineteen teachers felt that employment should be taught at every CSWE level, and 13 disagreed with the statement
- employability skills have been studied by 50 per cent or more of all CSWE II and CSWE III students, and 20 per cent of CSWE I learners.

It is expected that these findings will inform ACL’s future PD training plans and curriculum renewal processes, and add to the knowledge base in work-related curricula, AMEP and PD research fields.
Recommendations

Analysis of the survey results led to the following recommendations:

- expand and increase the frequency of local and central PD on teaching employment-related language and skills at AMEP colleges
- provide more PD on the underpinning theory of CSWE and the interconnectedness of ‘general’ and ‘work-related’ English
- develop more job-related resources, if possible as a national project, and provide PD on teaching strategies for CSWE I and Pre-CSWE classes
- increase resources and training for teachers to update knowledge of the current Australian labour market and workplaces, for example, online, print, face-to-face
- continue to expand the role of the Employment Pathways Unit within ACL to increase job-search skills development and specific vocational courses
- invite experts in the field to address workshops at ACL AMEP PD days, for example, Dr Lynda Yates on employability skills
- revise the ACL syllabi to enable easier access and navigation, and enhance teacher usage of the documents for course planning
- continue to acknowledge teachers’ past and current efforts to improve their employment-related teaching repertoires, skills and knowledge
- conduct further research on workplace visits and work experience and how they may best contribute to learning.

Conclusion

At risk of stating the obvious, what the AMEP learner learns, and what the AMEP teacher teaches, is crucial to the lives of both groups. Both need to participate in employment and a multitude of other social activities. Both need to use language, knowledge and skills to participate in society, achieve their potential, and realise their individual dreams and ambitions. It is widely understood and commonly agreed by all stakeholders that the AMEP is a language and settlement program with a long and successful track record. The evidence uncovered by the present study shows that ACL’s AMEP teachers are acutely aware of the multiple purposes of the AMEP and of the language, employment and other settlement needs of their learners, and have made considerable progress in meeting those needs (more convincingly in the case of CSWE II and CSWE III learners) in their classrooms on a daily basis. It is equally apparent that there are gaps and employment-related resourcing and PD processes and programs that need to continue to expand and renew. It is clear there is an ongoing need to enhance the teaching and learning repertoires of ACL’s AMEP staff as they face the changes and challenges involved in living, learning and working together in present-day Australian society.

References


### Appendix 1 Teacher Survey

Name (optional) _____________________________________________________________________________

Current class level ___________________________________________________________________________

College _____________________________________________________________________________________

Please tick ✓ one box for each question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>A lot</th>
<th>Quite a bit</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I use employment-related activities in class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I know about general workplace language relevant to my students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I teach general workplace language to my students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I know about OHS in the classroom</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I teach OHS to my students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I teach résumés</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I teach job interview skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I teach job-seeking activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I know about the current Australian labour market</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I use the computer/Internet to teach work topics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11a</td>
<td>I remember the PD sessions on Tip Top and First Fleet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11b</td>
<td>I use the Tip Top/First Fleet resources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>I use the ACL syllabus for planning and teaching work topics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Employment topics should be taught at every CSWE level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I have access to enough resources to teach work topics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>There should be more PD on teaching employment topics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>I think the Employment Pathways sessions are helpful for students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>The Employment Pathways sessions are helpful for teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>It is important for students to learn about employability skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>I feel confident about teaching work-related skills and topics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>I believe work-related topics are less important than general English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please add any comments or suggestions here:

PD  ______________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________

Other  ______________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________

Thank you for your time in completing this survey!
Appendix 2 Student Survey

Please circle one answer for every question.

I am in level 1 / 2 / 3 at ACL Auburn / Parramatta

I speak _____________________________________________________________________________________

This is my first / second / third course at ACL.
1. I know how to have my qualifications recognised in Australia. Yes No

In my English class …
2. I wrote a resume. Yes No
3. I looked for a job in the newspaper. Yes No
4. I looked for a job on the Internet. Yes No
5. I practised job interviews. Yes No
6. I learned about different jobs in Australia. Yes No
7. I learned about conversations at work. Yes No
8. I learned about forms at work. Yes No
9. I learned about safety at work. Yes No
10. I learned about safety in the classroom. Yes No
11. I learned about my rights at work. Yes No
12. I learned about employability skills. Yes No

13. I studied English for work (circle one number only)
0%  25%  50%  75%  100%

14. In my next English class, I would like to study English for work (circle one number only)
0%  25%  50%  75%  100%

15. In my next English class, I would also like to study (write here) ________________________________

16. Please write more comments here ________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________
PROJECT 5

AMEP mentoring professional development

(Report prepared for the AMEP Research Centre project ‘Supporting change and innovation with professional development’)

Lorraine Eagles, OTEN, TAFE NSW

Background

OTEN is a distance learning provider for TAFE NSW. Staff PD needs differ from the PD needs of classroom teachers. Most available PD in the ESOL discipline is for classroom teachers. I saw this project as an opportunity to implement PD for teachers that is more suitable for distance and online delivery.

Context

At OTEN the AMEP teachers use the It’s Over to You program provided by DIAC to teach their students. They have been somewhat resistant to gaining technology skills that other OTEN teachers use, including ESOL teachers working on other programs. All OTEN teachers ideally need to have skills in developing and using web-based and social software programs. There are 15 teachers in the program and the AMEP teaching staff members are mostly in the 50–60 year age bracket; they are very experienced teachers who are looking at retirement in the short term but who are needing technology skills now.

Project goals and description

The project goal was to establish a mentoring program whereby all AMEP teachers could learn skills needed to use technology, and vocationally-focused English programs to address current and future delivery trends. The program commenced with a full day PD (where each teacher presented an area of expertise) and continued throughout the year with mentoring activities.

The initial goal was to inspire each teacher to learn new skills and technology and to encourage each one that he or she had skills and knowledge that could be shared in a more formal way for the benefit of the AMEP section.

The teachers have access to a range of PD activities within the institute and at OTEN and regularly attend PD. However, teachers often do not have the time nor the opportunity to implement what they have learned. The mentoring approach provides a social context and cultural change in the group and promotes a positive attitude of learning new technologies. It also keeps staff accountable to at least one other person.

Project in action

The program started with a full day PD in December, where most of the teachers presented an aspect of delivery or a technology skill that they use. As part of their annual teacher activity plan, each teacher then nominated an activity to be mentored in during the following semester. Agreements were made between the teachers and times for mentoring were allocated. These were to take place and be finalised in the first semester.
Four different technologies were chosen to be learned: Adobe Connect™ to manage online meetings and classes; Audacity® to manage sound files; Captivate® to create online resources; and some features of the Xerox printer to save printed material in Word files to be edited. Mentoring was conducted mostly face to face but also using Adobe Connect online meeting room to train teachers in using this facility.

In the second semester, a PD coordinator was employed to assess the learning that had taken place within the group and what was still outstanding from the mentoring agreements. The coordinator organised some additional training for the whole group. All teachers participated in some whole-of-section training in Captivate® to learn how to create online interactive activities, which were to be put onto the students’ online support site.

**Evaluation**

The teachers sent a short report giving feedback on the value of the project. All gave similar feedback in that they valued the full-day workshop and the opportunity to be mentored in new skills and technologies. The PD coordinator also interviewed each teacher to ask each one what he or she felt was useful and successful throughout the program.

Most teachers felt the mentoring approach was useful in that it was training they could implement immediately and the learning activities were relevant to their own teaching situations. Most also expressed a need for more time on task to practise the new skills. In the second phase of the program, all teachers learned how to use the Captivate® program successfully and, as a group, they created an online program for preliterate students.

The mentoring program worked well for the teachers who were mentees, but it became very time-consuming for the mentors. Many of the teachers are casual, coming to work for limited times, and this made it difficult to train them in groups. Subsequently, the mentors felt they were repeating training for individuals who could not make it to the small group training. For some mentors teaching hours were adjusted to accommodate the additional demands on their time. The program was implemented over a 12-month program. A six-month program would be more successful in keeping participants focused on the goals and commitments. Having 12 months to complete the project gave some teachers a sense of having plenty of time, and so training sessions were postponed when there were competing commitments.

**Summary**

The result of the program is that all teachers now have skills in a range of technologies. Some can use all four of the technologies that were targeted. Each is now in a position to be a mentor to a new teacher in the future.
PROJECT 6

Using reflection, wikis and mentoring as tools to support change

(Report prepared for the AMEP Research Centre project ‘Supporting change and innovation with professional development’)

Judie Cross, TAFE NSW Sydney Institute

Executive summary

The Languages Section of TAFE NSW Sydney Institute at Randwick is composed of teachers from diverse backgrounds. It caters for students who are primarily immigrants and refugees living in the eastern suburbs of Sydney. Approximately 10 per cent of the student population is in the AMEP.

This project’s aim was to foster reflection by teachers on their delivery styles by utilising evaluation surveys and a wiki adapted for the purpose of encouraging communication and reflection, as well as by attendance at a mentoring workshop. Issues discussed and reflected on included time management, new technologies and the value of mentoring, as well as various problems to do with budgeting, classes and performance management. The workshop on mentoring encouraged further reflection on teaching styles and the integration of technologies, and it, too, was evaluated by the use of SurveyMonkey and by encouraging teachers to comment on it on the wiki. In addition, teachers met informally and reflected on their posts on the wiki, the changing educational context and their teaching.

The posts on the wiki, the informal discussions and the feedback on the mentoring workshop showed that teachers appreciated being given a forum to reflect and discuss issues, while at the same time valuing informal ongoing discussion. The posts on the wiki also showed that the teachers felt reasonably comfortable using this relatively new technology. The teachers felt that the project had encouraged collegiality, increased their sense of self-worth and had helped them to deal with changing demands by providing a forum for them to voice their concerns about various challenges.

As a result, our section intends to continue its reflections, both by informal discussions and by contributing to our wiki. Our teachers feel more confident about using digital technology to communicate with each other.

Background

The Languages Section of TAFE NSW Sydney Institute at Randwick is extremely diverse. Our practitioners teach ESOL to AMEP students, as well as to other non-English speaking background students. Our AMEP students are suitably placed throughout the range of our ESOL delivery.

Our organisation actively encourages the use of digital technologies for delivery as it goes through the process of adapting to a new ‘market’ environment.

With these two change agendas in mind, the two head teachers (Jane Lock and Judie Cross) of this section introduced the theme of the reflective practitioner, as discussed by Schön (1983) in his classic book bearing this name. Schön believed that the worth of an educator was not really dependent on how much the person knew, but on how effective he or she was in helping others to learn. Thus, this theme of reflection, adopted within the changing context of new digital technologies and a new market agenda, resonated naturally with AMEP’s ‘Supporting change and innovation with professional development’ project and led to our inclusion within this action research.
Supporting Change and Innovation with Professional Development

Context

The Languages Section comprises nine full-time permanent staff members and two head teachers, as well as over 30 part-time casual teachers. Nearly all teachers are, as a minimum, tertiary trained with specialist TESOL qualifications and a Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment. Many of our teachers not only have tertiary and postgraduate degrees in accountancy, business, communication, law, welfare services, information technology and fine arts, but also bring with them diverse professional experiences and skills from these disciplines. The Languages Section is the principal section that has cross-disciplinary staff with specialist second literacy training. Our section caters primarily for immigrants and refugees who live in the eastern suburbs of Sydney.

Project goals and description

Initially, the two head teachers were primarily interested in ensuring that our teachers (specialists in teaching new arrivals to Australia) reflected, as a matter of course, on their own delivery styles when evaluating the effectiveness of their courses; that is, we wanted to stress that sometimes it can be the teacher’s style rather than the mix in the class, the delivery schedule or even something about the students themselves that impacts negatively on course outcomes. We also wanted to provide a forum, other than formal meetings or impromptu encounters in the corridor, for ongoing communication.

Considering that reflection can be a rather delicate and even confronting exercise, we had to choose a vehicle that allowed for varying degrees of sensitivity and also privacy. Hence, we decided to utilise the new Languages Wiki http://lang10.sydneyinstitute.wikispaces.net, which was created from scratch by one of our permanent, part-time members of staff, Kara Whittingham. Kara advocated the advantages of this relatively new Web 2.0 technology, especially for collaboration and as a relatively easy way for staff to become more comfortable with using computers for communication and thereby to comply with TAFE’s agenda. Kara made herself available at specific times to assist staff in their use of this new tool. We then started a specific discussion thread on the wiki, entitled ‘The reflective practitioner’.

Project in action

In order to motivate staff to contribute to this discussion:

- Kara presented the wiki she had created for us, outlined its relevant features at one of our monthly section meetings and advertised her availability for giving assistance regarding its use
- the two head teachers verbally introduced the theme for the year (the reflective practitioner)
- a review of Donald Schön’s classic text was handed out at this meeting and uploaded to the wiki
- both head teachers were the first to post their reflections.

Contributions to this wiki discussion were voluntary and could take the form of reflections on any aspect of teaching. Several staff members were specifically invited to help the discussion along and the impact of technology developed as a popular theme. Later in the year, budget cuts and the new market agenda for TAFE were also highlighted.

Most teachers wrote about a range of issues including, for example, time constraints, needing ‘just in time’ assistance, possible reasons for teaching difficulties encountered, communication with colleagues, and new ways to organise courses and/or tutorials. After reading these responses and sharing them with other members of this research project, we decided that we needed to explore the concept of mentoring more closely and invited staff members to a workshop.

After this workshop (on 23 October 2008), we realised that we constantly mentor our students, as well as teaching them, and act as informal mentors for each other. One head teacher said:

We do ‘reflect’ subconsciously about our teaching and learning and about our students’ learning outcomes and it’s wonderful to have a wiki to express our concerns, sound out our ideas and share our thoughts. It’s a space where we feel we are not alone in our struggle to come to terms with the budget cut and the future of Languages in TAFE. The Mentoring Workshop confirmed for me the importance of integrating mentoring in our everyday work and provided me with ideas and strategies on how to be an effective mentor.
After attending the Management Performance Workshop, part of a Head Teacher’s duties is to guide and mentor teachers to allow them to grow professionally and to encourage them to be reflective practitioners, the very process that is happening in our wiki!

At the mentoring workshop, staff were also made aware of the wealth of material available for our institute at [http://umfweb2.sydney.det.win/mylearningwiki/index.php/Mentoring_program](http://umfweb2.sydney.det.win/mylearningwiki/index.php/Mentoring_program)

**Evaluation**

- Mid-semester, twice in the year, teachers were sent a variety of evaluation surveys to administer to their classes.
- Reminders about the discussion forum were sent to all teachers, and they could contribute their reflections and evaluations.
- Those who attended the mentoring workshop were invited individually to reply to a SurveyMonkey questionnaire.
- Informal chats between staff members evaluated the workshop and the effect of the topic ‘the reflective practitioner’ on their teaching practice.

As demonstrated by the responses to the wiki (see attached Appendix), it appears that the Mentoring Workshop was validating in that most of us realized we were continuously engaged in an informal way in either mentoring and being mentored in the course of our regular duties as teachers. Also, this workshop provided information about a valuable institute online link that does offer support to staff as well as provide specific resources for mentoring.

It was also extremely important that staff were able to receive some payment for attendance at this workshop and/or for their reflections in order for them to feel their contributions were valued.

Informally, it is popularly acknowledged that TAFE NSW is going through a paradigm shift where staff members are expected to be computer literate (for example, payment can only be received if approved electronically, all class rolls are electronic, important forms are only available if their most current version is downloaded from our intranet and so on) and to apply for special funds or commercial courses to subsidise (and perhaps eventually replace) courses that were formerly government sponsored. PD is offered but attendance at such events is almost never paid. Hence, staff feel uncertain about their future, pressed for time and generally undervalued. The 12 staff members who attended this workshop appreciated the time it provided for them to reflect on the project to date, discuss issues face-to-face and to feel a sense of collegiality. As one workshop participant said:

> This was an interesting exercise for me as it was the first time I had attended an externally run session with most of us present. I echo the comments of the previous contributors about the course but I would also like to make an observation quite independently from the content and interesting subject matter.

> The way we all worked together in such a cohesive yet warm and friendly way. We laughed at ourselves, we appreciated each other’s comments and contributions and the camaraderie was so good when viewed looking at us operating from outside. We are such a wonderful group of people who happen to not only love teaching but enjoy experiencing new things together.

It is interesting to note here that Schön also made the point that real (as opposed to virtual) time was needed for people to learn in a more profound way.

**Summary**

Schön believed that ‘coaches’ (for which we have substituted ‘mentors’) who were committed to helping others learn would lead the most effective educational institutions of the future. We believe our research project into the theme of reflection and its subsequent PD via mentorship demonstrates that supporting staff in their AMEP and ESOL teaching through difficult and changing times is the most relevant, supportive and least-threatening avenue. We also believe it will be most fruitful and enable us to face future changes as a team.

**Reference**

Addendum

J: The Reflective Practitioner

After numerous discussions with each other about our pride in, as well as our concerns about, the Randwick Languages section, A and I have developed individual action plans.

A has decided to attend a ‘Managing Performance’ Staff Development at Ultimo TAFE on 23rd and 30th July whereas I have decided to join in an AMEP research project, ‘Supporting change and innovation with professional development’ - I have been invited to attend their next meeting (since the project has already started) at NCELTR on 19th June.

‘Managing Performance’ is a two day professional activity that aims to build skills and work practices that support staff to achieve positive performance results. It will cover the important steps in managing performance and developing actions that support good performance in giving and receiving feedback.

The ‘Supporting change . . .’ research project emphasises the imperative for the TESOL teacher to move towards the systematic implementation of programs that encourage self-assessment of professional needs, reflection on classroom practice and the distribution of knowledge amongst individuals, peers and mentors.

Posted Apr 30, 2008 5:40 pm

m re: The Reflective Practitioner

From M:

I have just reviewed the replies so far received for the mid-semester evaluation of the GS:Health course. It is interesting to note that while the students’ overall satisfaction with the course is very high, the ‘vocational’ aspects (Senior First Aid and medical terminology) and job-seeking skills have consistently been given higher satisfaction ratings than the English language and general interpersonal skills.

In addition, all the suggestions for improvement relate to English language skills - e.g. “I’d prefer a faster pace in reading and writing skills”; “We need more practice in using the telephone and developing a good telephone manner” - plus two requests for more computer work.

In my opinion, this seems to indicate that students are most motivated when they are using English for a specific purpose of their choice and have specific goals in sight (e.g. a First Aid Certificate, a week's work experience for which they need to supply a CV). I believe it also indicates that it is hard to suit the pace and content of “general English classes” to everyone in a class where there is quite a range of ability.

My suggestions for our Section would be that we approach vocational sections in the college such as the Dental Section, the Childcare Section, the Massage section, the Accounting Section etc to see whether:

- we could incorporate a team-taught module from their stage one courses in more of our SWT courses
- we could create speaking/listening/pronunciation courses/tutorials for specific groups of students from vocational sections. (These would need to be discussed with the relevant sections and timetabled to suit interested students - this approach has worked well for group tutorials at Ultimo TAFE.

There appears to be a definite demand for some kind of vocational involvement from our section focusing on listening/speaking/pron to supplement the reading and writing support given by ABE and the ESP courses provided through the Multicultural Unit.

In A332, we have also received several telephone requests from migrant jobseekers who have completed Australian quals but want some short, focussed oral support prior to going for interviews. The requests that have come late in the semester have had to be referred to individual teachers for private tuition - perhaps there is a way we could tap into this potential market?

I’m reflected out now - hoping to read what others think soon! M

Posted May 8, 2008 10:49 pm
Hello everyone,

I have reviewed the responses to SWT5’s student evaluations and found the results pleasing and very helpful. Overall, the students appear to be very satisfied with the course. Most of them are long standing members of the class and seem happy to plod along year after year. It is a large group consisting of approx 23, mainly older students, mostly women who seem to really enjoy the social aspect of being a TAFE student. The numbers in this class are consistently very good and the students are very committed to their studies.

The student evaluations indicate that students would benefit from more listening and speaking practice. Because the groups as a whole is not gearing up for further study, and has a community focus we often base the classes around relevant interest topics and current affairs.

I also have noted that on the whole students are happy with this semesters change to a 10am start. I find that most students are able to arrive on time which maximises our class time together.

One student wrote that they would like practice with filling in forms for medical appointments. Also another student asked for help with pronunciation. I appreciate these kinds of direct suggestions and will keep it in mind.

Today I delivered a lesson on Ian Thorpe from a resource I had not used before, the class went really well and a few students commented at the end how interesting it was. The lesson was taken from a book called ‘More readings and interviews from Australia’.

That’s all for now.

I look forward to hearing from others soon.

E  Posted May 15, 2008 9:08 pm

J re: The Reflective Practitioner

I was heartened to read M’s reflections on the popularity of a vocational focus in our courses - this is the way we are being directed to head and it’s great if this also happens to be where students wish to go! Of course, many classes such as E’s will still be more interested in a community focus but there is no reason why both streams of students can be catered for by our new suite of courses.

On a more personal note, recent eruptions in our previously harmonious staff room in A315 have been a cutting reminder for me that reflection about space and time issues are long overdue.

I suggest we put these two items on our agenda for discussion at our next meeting on June 11th:

1. teaching timetables that allow us adequate time for planning, liaison and related duties as well as delivery - hopefully a DRAFT timetable for semester 2 will be ready by this time

and

2. effective sharing of rooms, computers & desk space.

Posted May 24, 2008 5:55 pm
k re: The Reflective Practitioner

Swat 2 has three different teachers and this can only reflect my experience. A hybrid class, they are generally students who have no family responsibilities that require being at home after morning classes. The class has a large Russian contingent, though not all of them attend. Like many Russians they don’t like writing but love grammar, so instead of labouring the writing, which is my designated area, I am hiding the writing behind the grammar.

None of the Russians speak English outside of the classroom so, really prefer a speaking/listening class. There are however at least 2 students from other language backgrounds that do want writing and do need to work to their outcomes. I am dealing with these students by giving them work to do at home as well as in the classroom, which hopefully helps them to achieve their linguistic requirements.

I have endeavoured to encourage students to attend on Friday afternoons by having ‘afternoon tea’ where each take turns in bringing in something to eat. Hopefully, this makes them feel obliged to attend at that time. Certainly, the others look forward to sharing food and conversation over a cup of tea.

Posted May 26, 2008 6:38 pm

A re: The Reflective Practitioner

I enjoyed reading all the reflections posted by our colleagues.

One of the more challenging aspects of a head teacher’s job is handling student complaints about teaching performance and discussing such matters with teachers. Whenever we receive a student complaint we tend to think of the negative, but it is not necessarily so and I want to explore ways in which we can assist and support teachers with achieving positive performance results. As J mentioned in the first posting, I will be attending a two day workshop in July to develop my skills and I hope the training will be of benefit to our staff and Section.

J’s involvement in the ‘Supporting change’ research project is her commitment to this year’s theme - the Reflective Practitioner and I’m confident that J will bring many positive outcomes from this project.

I also agree with M and J that Languages can collaborate with the vocational sections to deliver bridging EVP courses to our students. Amir has EVP/ESP courses targeting NRS3 students and Child Studies and Dentals have international students with an IELTS score of 5.5 and we can offer EVP courses at the post intermediate level to prepare them for the mainstream offerings. I know that Child Studies would be happy to work with us as their mainstream CALD students require a lot of language support. E, you’re also doing wonders with the SWT5 group and addressing their communication needs for the community. All our classes are a challenge, but that’s what makes our profession interesting.

Until next time...

Posted May 26, 2008 8:00 pm

s re: The Reflective Practitioner

I have posted a reflection on AMEP in AMEP WIKI News

Also AMEP WIKI has now information on class lists as well as information on procedure.

ENJOY.....S

Posted May 26, 2008 11:05 pm
Cont ... 

**s re: The Reflective Practitioner**

From the postings so far, and from discussions I’ve had with other teachers, it seems to me that students are looking for relevancy. Certainly, the mid term evaluations for EFS and English for Retail indicated this with all the students commenting on how useful the content was to them. Some students wanted more. For example, some students in EFS wanted to learn more about job seeking. This could perhaps be done in tute support, but the problem is time, as our students often cannot spend any more time at TAFE.

The students also valued teachers’ attitudes. The EFS class commented on their teachers “passion for teaching” while the Retail class emphasised their teachers’ caring and supportive attitudes. Perhaps they felt this because the teachers had been working together for some time, and so were familiar with the courses’ content and could thus focus more on students’ needs and subject content.

Posted May 28, 2008 5:19 pm

**kl re: The Reflective Practitioner**

The SWT 1 class are a group of learners who are quite highly focussed on developing their English language skills at all levels. Most have fairly high(level 3-4) reading and listening skills. Writing skills range from level 1 - to 3. They love a good discussion and 1 or 2 are quite forthright about some topics .However they are not as successful in their oral communication as they would like to be. Like many high level learners they feel very unconfident about their spoken English.

This is largely due to their pronunciation difficulties. Mis-pronunciations are common and a few of the students have retained a number of deviant phonological forms.

Earlier in the term they expressed an interest in reading out aloud. At first I thought that this was a very antiquated method of learning. However I have been able to look into a bit of literature on-line on the topic of pronunciation.

One practitioner in an ESL journal believed that reading aloud “forces the learner to pronounce sounds clearly” Apparently this process will assist in the development of more flexible speech organs and will help them to form the sounds of the target language.

The mid-term survey indicated they would like more class time dedicated to improving their pronunciation so these past 2 weeks I have worked more closely with not only the phonemes that have been challenging for some in this group but also Rhythm, intonation, stress and linking.

The running dictation proved to be a winner as it integrated all the macroskills in one session. (There was a collective groan when they heard dictation.) They really loved the challenge of being able to read and remember the sentence strips posted around the room and “dictate” it back to their partner who had the task of listening and writing.

Posted Jun 2, 2008 7:31 am

Cont ...
Hi all,

Inspiration --- difficult to find sometimes...found some in the most unexpected place for my PEAT class. I recently went to the writers festival and heard Atte Winterson talk about writing, reading and the place of poetry in her life. She had some very interesting things to say about poetry. From a very young age she has been memorizing and reciting poetry. Every week she stands in front of the mirror and learns a poem. This she did in reaction to her mother burning her books. One of her methods is to use stress in different ways when reciting the poem.

This got me thinking..The Peat students have to read a text as a presentation for their exam... Maybe stress can only be truly understood when you learn something by heart. Poetry (Not all) has the advantage of set stress patterns and varied pace. It can be very short and full of meaning. I have taught poetry for primary native speakers but I have never used it for pronunciation in a ESL context.

In the past I have marked up texts with pronunciation and asked them to read or asked them to mark a passage... (Most have great difficulty doing this!) This has had mixed success as the students don’t tend to transfer this knowledge when reading an unmarked passage. In an attempt to improve their speaking presentation I examined an ‘Aussie Ballad’. I asked the students to learn the poem by heart and then present it to the class. Some students did this and others didn’t. Then I gave the students another poem to present ... Although the students who had recited and learnt the previous poem - did much better, some students found the exercise not directly relevant to their exam. This, I felt was my problem in the way I presented the activity. Maybe I should attempt to write some ‘PEAT relevant poetry’!

Anyway, I feel it is an area worth further exploration ... I would be interested to know if others have used recited poetry for teaching stress and presentation skills in an English class.

Posted Jun 17, 2008 11:26 pm

As planned, on Thursday 19th June I went out to Macquarie University. Here I was privileged to be able sit in on the discussion conducted by Pam McPherson with members of the AMEP research team for “Supporting change and innovation with professional development”. Members of this team included representatives from ACL and TAFE from Queensland, Victoria and Perth. Each representative reported on the research he/she had been doing.

I was impressed that so much thought and planning had gone into designing various projects for upskilling staff. These projects included well-being and meditation themes, forming communities of practice, team teaching, mentoring and using technology to communicate with like-minded practitioners across the whole state of Queensland. Discussion focussed on how best to evaluate whether the PD was relevant, effective, valued, just-in-time and whether this was able to be demonstrated.

I thought the very fact that hours/time had been given to staff to focus on their own professional development meant that things were off to a good start. I also agreed that professional development needs to coincide with a personal preference for what is undertaken.

I came away wishing we too had funding that would allow us to develop multiple mini action research projects for the issues raised by our wiki reflections; that is, time to work on developing meaningful working relations between Languages and vocational areas, time to focus on how pronunciation and oral skills can be highlighted without negatively impacting on literacy and time to focus on how the role of the teacher needs to evolve when students come from some many diverse backgrounds with problems as profound as torture and trauma.

Posted Jun 25, 2008 10:55 pm
EAP is an issue at present, as, unlike Ultimo and Petersham, we do not have sufficient numbers to take only those students whose English is of a level that would generally guarantee them a pass if they do all the work required from the syllabus. This begs the question as to what to do with the students that are accepted into the class who are borderline or under the desired level of entry. Like all students they intend to work extra hard to make up for their lack of language but inevitably life commitments interfere and they can put in no more work than the other students.

My conflict is between the urging and support we offer students to overcome their language and personal difficulties to reach the minimum level of Cert 1V outcomes and the requirement of Universities like UNSW who rely on our course to bypass the usual university entrance exam IELTS.

Like most teachers, deadlines are dispensable when teaching students who, after all, are learning academic writing skills, not working to a teacher's need to collect material by a certain date so they can be marked. Consultation is ongoing and providing students with any or all opportunities to complete the course is mandatory. However, the consequence of a student either not achieving their stated goal or dropping out because their ability does not meet their expectations is awful and one a teacher in my position does not take lightly.

Nevertheless, I hope to find new strategies to help EAP students with achieving the writing skill outcomes and move on to University without compromising the integrity of the course.
Following on from G’s comments on stress and rhythm, the current advanced pron tut students have asked to practise stress and pron using written versions of their own speech as previously recorded (and corrected) in class. They would also like some outside input (e.g. simplified versions of radio transcripts). I am trying out this method now because of the continuing problem with viruses being transmitted through USB devices. (I still use instant playback for feedback in class).

As a general consideration, there seems to be a demand for Speaking and Listening courses and Reading and Writing courses as alternatives to courses which integrate all four macro skills. This type of request has come from some tutorial students who would like to focus their language skills development in this way, rather enrolling in a course with integrated language skills so that they can access a specific type of tutorial.

Regarding the SWT:Health class, in semester 2, 2008 the enrolled students are, for the most part, looking for a quick fix in job-seeking. They are still very keen on getting a Senior First Aid certificate, but oral feedback indicates that a job-seeking tutorial might have been more effective for many of them than this course. We had trouble attracting enough students for SWT:Health this semester. There is also a wider than usual range of language skills within the class.

When the “Health course” was “Get Skilled” funded for 2 semesters, the job-seeking components were given more emphasis. At present it seems very difficult to maintain the balance between job-seeking, preparation for Further Study and the development of English language skills, especially given the disparate goals of this current class. I am wondering whether we should look at discontinuing this course.

As far as our section offering ESP courses courses or tut support is concerned, perhaps a SWT Statement course run in conjunction with, for example, Dental Technology Stage 1 might be more successful? Certainly Dental Technology Head Teachers are keen to become more involved with our section in terms of receiving support for their students. The Head Teacher of Accounting, has also expressed interest in setting up tutorials for CALD students in their stage 1 classes in 2009 (the Accounting timetable will be finalised in November). KH has been making very good progress in getting Child Studies students interested in tutorial support from our Section.

However, when looking at ESP issues, there is also the question of how our offerings could fit in tutorials and classes offered through ABE and the Multicultural Unit.

All in all quite a lot to think about in terms of what our Section could offer and how it could do so.

M 11/9/08

I believe K has made an important point that I too have struggled with in relation to improving the writing skills for both EAP and PEAT students.

Students, such as these, whose writing is relatively advanced still need ongoing support, scaffolding, correction of their work, conferencing and practice for a whole range of lexico-grammatical and pragmatic issues - otherwise their writing remains just below the standard they need to achieve.

How best to do and give all this guidance and instruction within the time limits of a course and our lives is the question!

I also agree with M that our section has a lot to offer other departments in the college and how we “package” our offerings will be significant.

J re: The Reflective Practitioner

I believe K has made an important point that I too have struggled with in relation to improving the writing skills for both EAP and PEAT students.

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I also agree with M that our section has a lot to offer other departments in the college and how we “package” our offerings will be significant.
J re: The Reflective Practitioner
Before posting my responses to your reflections, I felt I needed to write them down on PAPER first!
See? I too am a “digital immigrant”; well integrated maybe, but with a strong accent! For me, writing a “Reflection” in a digital format is almost an impossibility, a contradiction.
So, on reflection, my conclusion is that the most significant change factor that staff in Languages need to be supported in is “the digital divide”. However, in ‘Supporting change and innovation with professional development’(which is now the AMEP funding source for our Reflective Practitioner theme) I do not think it is simply technical training in the use of various software applications that we need.
Rather, I believe we need opportunities for “just in time” as well as ad hoc ongoing support and mentoring in dealing with the cultural shift technology has brought into the workplace.
Posted Sep 14, 2008 5:27 pm

s re: The Reflective Practitioner
Communication between teachers sharing a class is crucial but sometimes this does not take priority. It seems ironic that our ability to communicate has skyrocketed with our ever evolving digital access yet it’s difficult to keep track of one another’s teaching plans. By ‘plans’, I do not mean what we have taught (that is mostly efficiently paper recorded), I mean what we intend to teach in more detail. This would be of great benefit—the problem...time to ‘fit it in’. Now, digital tools provide us with the ability to communicate our intentions ‘any time’ HOWEVER, do we want to be so flexible that any time becomes ‘all the time’. (Not a novel reflection!)
BUT...’on reflection’, we need to perhaps look at the WIKI as a time saver, a means of course communication/’plans’ between teachers on the same class where there is an allocated time for WIKI-ing and where information is shared and more importantly STORED-to save time!
Posted Sep 16, 2008 12:39 am

KW re: The Reflective Practitioner
I have reflected a lot on the uptake of wiki technology by staff and students.
It has been interesting to observe how my ‘digital native’ students, who have never heard of wikis, will find their way around a class wiki with ease, teaching themselves to add images, links, tags, and to use the various wiki features unaided.
I have had ESOL 3 students (who have been described as “fossils”) create fantastic wiki pages with links and images and content that they have sources from the www.
So why the reluctance amongst teachers to use this technology? The user name and password login is the barrier that precludes some. More than this though, I feel that there are so many competing demands on language teachers these days, so much for us to get our heads around: LLNP reports, clams, lesson recording procedures, a constant flow of new students and the challenges that this brings, assessment requirements, the ongoing search for interesting lesson materials, etc etc. All of these various demands are much more urgent than getting into a new technology. There isn’t the head space, the energy, the time left to make the effort to get into using a wiki.
The irony is that a wiki is a tool that can make the way you work much more efficient.
It is said that wiki adoption spreads virally. Maybe we need to use more wiki adoption patterns in our section to promote this spread.
Posted Sep 16, 2008 6:00 am
su re: The Reflective Practitioner
Like K, I’ve been thinking about wikis and their usefulness. S’s post about the need for communication got me thinking about why I don’t use wikis for this purpose. I think that when there’s a problem, or when I have ideas about things, I like quick feedback. At the moment, I feel this is best achieved by having a chat with colleagues or by emailing them. Perhaps this will change with time, as more of us access our wiki. At the moment though, I like to look at our wiki periodically as I find other teachers’ reflections very interesting.

Posted Sep 17, 2008 1:21 am

su re: The Reflective Practitioner
I’ve just had another look at our wiki and was astonished to find that my last post was supposed to be at 1.21 a.m. I’m sure you’ll all be relieved to know that I actually posted it at around 5 p.m. today.

It will be interesting to see what time this post will be said to have been created. (The time now is 8.40 p.m.) Could this be a ploy to get me to check on posts more often?

Posted Sep 17, 2008 3:40 am
The value of attending/participating in professional development

I’ve been thinking about this lately, partly in response to a number of different ways I’ve felt in attending professional development workshops. Clearly I have to feel I get something out of these for the time, money (though some are free), and energy I give them. An obvious value is keeping in touch with content and techniques that are relevant for my teaching. However, what I often get out of participation in such workshops/presentations is less predictable and a little hard to pin down. One effect sometimes I can only describe as a sort of re-sharpening of my focus (another word??) as a teacher. Another effect is feeling inspired about my own potential projects and my ability to carry them out. This was my response to Averil Coxhead’s recent presentation of her work (EAP writing and vocab learning), which wasn’t even directly related to anything I’m doing right now, but made me feel I could certainly carry out research projects. Sometimes I experience the content of a workshop as affirming my own knowledge and/or know-hows, and that can be useful. Just why I should need affirmation is another question….

Noticing connections between different workshops is interesting too. This occurred for me at the recent presentation by Sue O’Connell with her reference to Averil Coxhead’s work on the AWL (Academic Word List) and vocab acquisition. I had been to Averil’s presentation at Sydney Uni just 2 weeks earlier. I think that noticing such connections is part of increasing awareness of the community of practice (and theory) in our profession.

Back to the original point about keeping in touch with what’s going on – seeing Sue O’Connell’s evidence-based proposals for work with students (eg on what basis to set priorities – but that’s a separate topic) was a clear affirmation of what I already know. Discussions with a colleague in France over quite some time about the frequency of use of certain verb tenses, for example, helped me prioritize work on certain tenses depending on the student’s level. Much of the evidence to base such decisions on is now available thanks to corpora studies, as Sue O’Connell pointed out (see the reference book published by Longman, ‘Student Grammar of Spoken and Written English’). Yet, thinking back to discussions with colleagues reminds me of how important those discussions have often been to me, perhaps more important than more formal training.

Reading J’s point about ‘just in time’ training/assistance reminds me of the ‘Communicating with Online Technologies’ course I’m doing at the moment (online) and how much I agree with her. Some of the technical stuff I already know, like about wikis, and some I’ve had some experience of, but I feel what I really need is just to be at a computer with someone who knows more than me about what I’m just ready to use, eg with Karen, say, to work on using Photostory to make a digital story. Hopefully, she’ll be able to spare me a little time at the beginning of next term to just give me that little bit of support I need to do what I’d like to.

Well, I’ve ended up writing quite a bit and so will stop here.

Posted Sep 25, 2008 9:24 pm
su re: The Reflective Practitioner

Just a quick post to say that yesterday’s workshop was interesting because it allowed us to pat ourselves on the backs, and because it provided us with useful templates to record the mentoring process if desired.

I found the comment that teachers mentor students as a matter of course rang particularly true. The workshop reminded me that, although our students repeatedly tell us that they appreciate our empathy and help, we tend to forget just how much we all do to help them. For example, I had forgotten that I recently went out of my way to help one of my AMEP students who had missed an assessment without explaining the reason. I arranged a special time to assess her. After I did this, she explained why she had been absent and expressed her gratitude for the opportunity to do the missed assessment. She also spoke more about her situation and how grateful she was to me and the other teachers for caring for her as a person and for helping her to learn more about Australia.

The workshop also reminded me that we mentor each other in an informal manner, often providing just-in-time help that is quite invaluable, and that our willingness to help each other has really helped us to cope with quite a few problems.

Posted Oct 23, 2008 7:03 pm

J re: The Reflective Practitioner

I’m so glad Su aptly summed up what I felt was most valuable about our Mentoring Workshop: the knowledge that we are constantly mentoring our students and each other in an informal manner.

I also felt it was an extremely timely workshop in that it gave us much needed space to reflect on the importance of what we do and the impact that budget cuts and/or financial remuneration may or may not have on our practice . . .

On Monday I will be posting us all the template I need to adhere to when writing up our final reflective report on this theme, due on Monday November 10th. I hope each one of you who attended this workshop can write a final reflection by COB on November 5th so that I can take into account your reflections and evaluation of this project. (Thank you Suzanne, for starting off this important last stage in the process.)

Posted Oct 25, 2008 2:41 am
Appendix 5 – Project 6

KW re: re: The Reflective Practitioner

Last Monday, for the first time I conducted a class (an EAP class) entirely online (remotely). It was a challenging and rewarding experience. It has me thinking about and reading about the delivery of education through online chat rooms, forums, blogs and wikis.

What really struck me about the experience was that there were many opportunities for active learning and bonding. We all had a really good time and lots of learning took place.

Today, when one student arrived at the classroom he said “I am still excited about last week’s online class.” The preparation for the online delivery, and the design of the lesson resulted in a very positive experience for all.

I have surveyed the class and they are all keen to participate in such online learning again. I imagine that with time, this kind of change and innovation will become more common. I am increasingly confident that, when prepared and executed carefully, online learning can be a very positive learning experience for students and teachers.

Last Thursday’s mentoring workshop got me thinking about how much we need to support each other through change and innovation such as online learning, through informal mentoring, formal mentoring, coaching, and other such behaviour.

Our students want and often need to develop computer literacies with the special support of language teachers. However, there is so much to look at and evaluate that preparing to use new technologies in the context of language education is very time consuming for us. The mentoring process is vital when we are all so time poor as it is a quick and safe way to learn about what other teachers have found to work (or not).

I thought last Thursday’s workshop was valuable because by talking about behaviour such as mentoring, we increase our awareness of it and may come to value and practice it more.

Posted Oct 26, 2008 8:33 pm

A re: re: The Reflective Practitioner

I was particularly inspired by the following reflections from Su, J and K about the Mentoring Workshop:

Su - “...although our students repeatedly tell us that they appreciate our empathy and help, we tend to forget just how much we all do to help them.”

J - “I also felt it was an extremely timely workshop in that it gave us much needed space to reflect on the importance of what we do and the impact that budget cuts and/or financial remuneration may or may not have on our practice...”

K - “I thought last Thursday’s workshop was valuable because by talking about behaviour such as mentoring, we increase our awareness of it and may come to value and practice it more.”

We do ‘reflect’ subconsciously about our teaching and learning and about our student’s learning outcomes and it’s wonderful to have a wiki to express our concerns, sound out our ideas and share our thoughts. It’s a space where we feel we are not alone in our struggle to come to terms with the budget cut and the future of Languages in TAFE. The Mentoring Workshop confirmed for me the importance of integrating mentoring in our everyday work and provided me with ideas and strategies on how to be an effective mentor.

After attending the Management Performance Workshop, part of a Head Teacher’s duties is to guide and mentor teachers to allow them to grow professionally and to encourage them to be reflective practitioners, the very process that is happening in our wiki!

Thank you, J, for having the wisdom to organise and fund the Mentoring Workshop.

Posted Oct 26, 2008 10:39 pm
The mentoring workshop was quite reassuring...I felt that focusing on the mentoree's needs is very important. This IS what we do on a regular basis in the classroom, we adjust our lesson content to suit the students’ needs and provide extra time to mentor them in a ‘non’ language capacity. I have found that AMEP provides a forum for incidental mentoring where, along with W-the AMEP councillor; I feel I can provide empathy and help for the students’ settling in process.

As I stated in our workshop, teacher/teacher mentoring is highly valuable and I have gained immeasurably from Suzanne's mentoring for my TAA2-both practically and emotionally!

Online mentoring is another practical and valid form, as provided by the Institute’s “Hot Topic site”. This considers time constraints....a problem on the increase!

It's been a while since I contributed to this reflective practitioner site, not the least being that I needed to reflect on the different issues raised and the different people's comments.

1. Mentoring workshop

This was an interesting exercise for me as it was the first time I had attended an externally run session with most of us present. I echo the comments of the previous contributors about the course but I would also like to make an observation quite independently from the content and interesting subject matter.

a) The way we all worked together in such a cohesive yet warm and friendly way. We laughed at ourselves, we appreciated each other's comments and contributions and the camaraderie was so good when viewed looking at us operating from outside. We are such a wonderful group of people who happen to not only love teaching but enjoy experiencing new things together.

b) The trainer or facilitator of the course. When I was first appointed as a temporary he was the trainer who coordinated the large introduction of newly appointed teachers. He explained that he was a cartographer and I thought that we were as different in our approach to the classroom as chalk and cheese. This time, it was interesting to watch a man who slowly unwound from a structured training to a warm communicator as he discovered his own confidence and warmth with a group of responsive and intelligent trainees. It was on the discussion about this very website 'the reflective practitioner' that the change took place. He loved that we were doing, what he believed was so important to the learning process, ‘reflecting and sharing’. Congratulations to everyone, I enjoyed the afternoon and the observation.

2. With each new semester comes a new EAP class and boy how different they can be. This term, though we have differing levels of ability the motivation to learn is encouraging with this class. They actually see criticism as something they can learn from and don't become defensive when you point out their mistakes. This inspires me to extend them further than they expect. I do believe that one person can lead the rest of the class in terms of attitude to the teacher and this group are mature and well educated in their own language already. I am enjoying teaching them but it not without some trepidation that the difficulty we had in getting the numbers in this course could reoccur, thereby putting it's continuation in jeopardy. This is the kind of class that reminds me of why I’m a teacher. The gains are exciting.