Teaching as Lifelong Learning: Reflections on Professional Development

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Professional development for language teachers has undergone a paradigmatic shift in the past decades: from top-down, short-term, generic professional development to bottom-up, sustained, and situated learning focused on teaching and student learning. The Internet has also made it possible for teachers to interact and learn from and share ideas with colleagues globally. In this presentation, I summarize the major shifts in language teacher professional development, identify common features of effective professional development, and then focus on three initiatives that share many of these features: lesson study, reflective inquiry, and study circles/professional learning communities. I also highlight a number of other interesting professional development opportunities, including those that have been made possible by new technology.

Keywords: professional development, reflective practice, lesson study, learning communities, study circles

การสอนในฐานะที่เป็นการเรียนรู้ตลอดชีวิต การพิเคราะห์ในเรื่องการพัฒนาวิชาชีพครู

ในระยะเวลา 10 ปีที่ผ่านมาการพัฒนาวิชาชีพครูสำหรับครูผู้สอนภาษาได้มีการเปลี่ยนแปลงที่หลักการสำคัญ จากการฝึกหัดครูโดยที่ผู้ฝึกเป็นผู้บอกว่าควรสอนอย่างไร การเน้นการสอนระยะสั้น และการสอนโดยที่ไม่เน้นปริบท เป็นการสอนโดยเน้นให้ผู้ฝึกมีบทบาทในการคิดและการตัดสินใจ การเน้นการสอนระยะยาว และการสอนโดยเน้นบริบท อินเทอร์เน็ตสามารถทำให้ครูสามารถมีปฏิสัมพันธ์ และเรียนรู้หรือแลกเปลี่ยนความคิดเห็นจากครูทั่วโลก ในการนำเสนอครั้งนี้ วิทยากรจะกล่าวโดยสรุปถึงการเปลี่ยนแปลงหลักในการพัฒนาวิชาชีพครูสำหรับครูผู้สอนภาษา ระบุลักษณะร่วมที่สำคัญของการพัฒนาวิชาชีพครูที่มีประสิทธิภาพ และเน้นแนวคิดใหม่ ๆ ที่มีลักษณะดังกล่าว คือการวิจัยบทเรียน การพิเคราะห์กิจกรรมที่ได้ดำเนินการไปแล้ว การอภิปรายการสอนแบบกลุ่ม และการเรียนรู้อย่างเป็นประชาคม วิทยากรจะเน้นโอกาสในการพัฒนาวิชาชีพครูหลาย ๆ โอกาส รวมทั้งโอกาสที่เกิดขึ้นได้โดยเทคโนโลยีใหม่ ๆ

คำสำคัญ: การพัฒนาวิชาชีพครู การพิเคราะห์กิจกรรมที่ได้ดำเนินการไปแล้ว การวิจัยบทเรียน การเรียนรู้อย่างเป็นประชาคม การอภิปรายการสอนแบบกลุ่ม

Introduction

A number of experiences have led to this talk. Recently, I have been working on the fourth edition of my chapter on "Keeping up to date as an ESL or EFL Professional" for what many of us refer to as the "Apple Book": *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language*, edited by Marianne Celce-Murcia (Crandall, 2001), making me think about all the new professional development

opportunities that the Internet has made available, as well as some exciting professional development projects that I or my students have been involved in.

Teacher education and professional development have been central in my professional life. For the past 20 years, I have been teaching in a MA TESOL Program at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. In that time, I have also been a member of a national accreditation association, visiting teacher education programs in several parts of the country to analyze and evaluate their teacher education programs, and have also been invited to engage in professional development seminars, institutes, and webinars in a number of countries.

During that time, as well, I worked for five years with a local school system, creating a university and school district partnership focused on helping four secondary schools to improve the academic achievement of immigrant students (Project WE-TEACH) through tailored graduate courses and other professional development initiatives for teachers and administrators in the schools (Crandall, 2000a). I also recently worked for two years with five community colleges in the United States, identifying promising professional development practices (Chisman & Crandall, 2007). And for the past 13 years, I have also been involved in working with a Post Graduate TEFL Certificate Program at Sookmyung University in Seoul, Korea, visiting and providing support to the faculty.

And I've researched and written extensively on language teacher education and professional development and will draw upon some of that in this talk.

I often begin my talks by asking how many in the audience are doing what they thought they would be doing or had been prepared to do, and usually find that the number of hands is limited, revealing the many lives of language teachers and language teacher educators, and the many phases in their professional life cycles. I often follow this with additional questions: Where did you learn to be a teacher? Who has helped? Are you still learning? If so, how?

The responses reflect the different phases of our own professional life. As we become more experienced, we need and want different opportunities and different kinds of support. In a famous study of teachers (not just language teachers), Martin Huberman (1989) identified (and Tessa Woodward reviewed in her 2010 IATEFL talk on "The professional life cycles of teachers") the following stages in a teacher's career, moving from the early years where we are just trying to stay

afloat—spending every night preparing for classes and trying to figure out how to manage those classes and keep our students on task; to years in which we become more confident and thinking about ways in which we might change our classes or our instruction (even when we have difficulties convincing others that this is the right thing to do), to periods of "burn out" and questioning if we should continue in the field, and then in our later years, either finding peace in what we are doing or becoming bitter from maybe having stayed in teaching too long.

Where we are in our professional teaching cycle will have a profound effect on the types of professional development that we want and also on what professional development will be effective. But even when we have been teaching a long time, there will be times when we really want to learn something new, and it just might be that new teacher who can help us with that, especially if it has something to do with technology!

However, not all professional development opportunities are good ones. Sometimes the people who are leading the efforts have little sense of how these will fit in with our teaching contexts. Other times, new approaches or activities are discarded before there has been enough time to reflect upon and adapt them.

Professional development: Both training and development

Professional development needs to provide both teacher training and teacher development (Schaetzel, Peyton, & Burt, 2007). Richards and Farrell (2007) explain that teacher training focuses on meeting teachers' current needs and short-term goals, or what Henry Widdowson (1997) refers to as "specific instruction in practical techniques to cope with predicatable events" (p. 121). Teacher development, according to Richards and Farrell (2005), is focused on teachers' long-term goals, facilitating "growth of teachers' understanding of teaching and themselves as teachers" (p 4). In the early stages of our career, we need much more training and mentoring to help us get through our days and learn techniques for both teaching and managing our classes, but as we become more experienced and more reflective, we need opportunities to focus on our own growth and change, often through longer-term, collaborative professional development models such as study circles or reflective teaching groups (Richards & Farrell, 2005; Garet et al., 2001) often with colleagues in our own institution or using the possibilities offered by the Internet, with others who are interested in the same questions globally. Or we may find ourselves mentoring or coaching new teachers, and learning a great deal in the process. Professional development related to one's daily practice, involving colleagues we work with or with shared interests, and taking place over time is likely to

have greater impact, since it is more relevant, intensive, and sustained (Darling-Hammond, 1995; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992; Garet et al., 2001; Schaetzel, Peyton & Burt, 2007).

Still, even experienced teachers may find that there are new techniques that we want to learn or a need to learn something new to enliven our teaching, and more traditional, short-term training through workshops or seminars or conference attendance (Garet, et al., 2001) can help provide opportunities to learn from those outside of our regular sphere and give us new ideas to try out in our classes. If we can find ways to keep in touch with those who have provided us with some new ideas, after we have tried them out, or to share them with our colleagues at our own institution and reflect upon how they can be made even more relevant to our program, then that training has a better chance of having a lasting impact.

Research on professional development (Schaetzel, Peyton, & Burt, 2007) has found that effective initiatives share the following features:

- It is relevant to our work and the stage in our professional life (focusing on a specific English level, or skill, or curriculum that we are teaching);
- It is something we have helped to identify that we need, we help plan it, and it fits in with our other responsibilities;
- It involves opportunities for active learning (we can apply and adapt what we are learning); and
- It lasts long enough that we can both apply and reflect on what we are doing and learning.

Dennison & Kirk (1990), in their "do, review, learn, apply, do, review, learn, apply" model provide one example of a professional development initiative that exemplifies those features. Here's what that might look like, according to Schaetzel, Peyton & Burt (2007):

> For example, a professional development activity in which teachers learn about student language errors and the possible effects of students' first language on their production of English might have teachers analyze a sample of writing for errors (do), review their analysis with the trainer (review), ask questions about the patterns they see (learn), bring samples of their students' writing to analyze in class (apply), develop a lesson for their students to address one of the types of errors identified (do), and so on.

A changing perspective on what constitutes appropriate professional development

In my 2000 synthesis of "Language Teacher Education" in the millennial issue of the *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* (Crandall, 2000b), I identified several major shifts in perspective on effective teacher education that I believe apply not only to pre-service teacher training but to professional development as well.

The first is a shift from transmission, product-oriented theories to more constructivist, process-oriented theories of learning, teaching, and teacher learning. Traditional approaches to professional development often view teachers as passive recipients of transmitted knowledge rather than participants in the construction (or re-construction) of their own views. As teachers, we are used to being decision makers, and our professional development must provide opportunities for us to research and reflect upon our own practice (for example, through action research). As teaching professionals, we need to be engaged in lifelong learning, but we need to help plan that process and have opportunities to actively reflect upon what we are learning. As Michael Wallace (1991) has explained, in clarifying the difference between teacher training (or education) and professional development: "training or education is something that can be presented or managed by others; … development is something that can be done only by and for oneself" (p. 3)

The second shift is from "one size fits all" workshops to a recognition that effective professional development reflects the different contexts in which we teach—the differences in learners, programs, curricula, materials, policies, and the socio-cultural environment—with a shift from separation of theory and practice to increased focus on "situated learning." When I ask most teachers where they learned their craft, they respond that it's "on the job" and that they are still learning. It is not surprising, then, that experienced teachers are more likely to accept professional development that links theory with their current practice (Finch, 1999).

It is interesting to note that in the United States, and I suspect in many countries, there is no preservice teacher education required for university faculty, and in many states in the United States, very limited preservice teacher education for teaching adults, certainly nothing close to the expectations for those preparing to teach elementary or secondary education (Crandall, Genesis, & Lopez, 2008). What that means is that most university and adult education teachers obtain most of the training and development on the job—either learning through their own practice, or through professional development opportunities that they seek or are planned for them. On our own campus, there is a Center for Teacher Development that faculty members can seek out for

assistance (or be assigned to visit if student evaluations of their teaching are sufficiently poor) and many adult education programs (for nonformal or workforce or professional education) provide a range of opportunities by which teachers can learn as they are practicing their profession. However, even those teachers who have extensive preservice teacher education need to continue to learn what works from within their own contexts after they have begun teaching.

A third shift involves a "recognition that teachers' prior learning experiences (what Lortie, 1975, refers to as 'the apprenticeship of observation') plays a powerful role in shaping teachers' views of effective teaching and learning and their teaching practices." We teachers tend to teach the way they were taught. We likely were successful students, and we believe that the way we were taught will result in equally successful learning with our students. Unless we have opportunities to reflect upon our beliefs about teaching and learning and our experiences as teachers, we're not likely to change our views or our teaching practices.

The fourth shift involves a recognition that successful professional development recognizes that we teachers—like doctors, lawyers, or engineers—are professionals who must have a major role in our professional development through collaborative planning of study or inquiry groups, opportunities for mentoring or coaching, and sustained professional development programs, as well as short-term workshops or seminars (Crandall, 1993; 1998; 2000a; 2000b; Darling-Hammond 1995). In place of top-down decisions on what teachers need for their professional development, effective professional development begins with the teacher in more innovative bottom-up, teacher-directed professional development (Atay, 2008; Richards & Farrell, 2005), with teachers involved in all stages of planning and implementing their professional development (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999). In their introduction to the series, *Language teaching: A scheme for teacher education,* Candlin and Widdowson explain it this way: "If language teaching is to be a genuinely professional enterprise, it requires continual experimentation and evaluation on the part of the practitioners whereby, in seeking to be more effective in their pedagogy, they provide at the same time. . . for their continuing education."

Perhaps what is most significant in current theories of effective professional development is the role that collaboration plays and the focus on development of learning communities or communities of practice to which both novice and experienced teachers bring their knowledge and experience and learn from each other. These learning communities provide continuous professional development because they are linked to the classroom or teaching context and foster collaborative

learning (Hassan, 2011; Hargreaves, 1992; Lieberman, 1996). It also begins with teachers reflecting upon their own practice, in contrast to more common top-down approaches that focus on decontextualized knowledge or skills.

Models of professional development

There are a number of ways of conceptualizing or thinking about the opportunities we as teachers have for continuing professional development. Wallace, in his book on *Training foreign language teachers: A reflective approach* (1991), describes three major approaches to teacher education that I believe also serve as a way of thinking about professional development. The three approaches include:

1) a craft or apprenticeship approach in which novice or less experienced teachers learn from those with more experience (or what Donald Freeman, 1991, 1996; has referred to as teaching as doing);
2) an applied science or theory-to-practice approach in which teachers learn from experts and then apply what they have learned to their own contexts (or what Freeman 1991, 1996; has referred to as teaching as thinking and doing); and
3) a reflective approach by which teachers critically analyze, reflect upon, and adapt their own practice (or what Freeman 1991, 1996; has referred to as teaching as knowing what to do).

In actual practice, many professional development activities involve aspects of all three, especially with the availability of podcasts, webinars, lists, social networking sites, and all the other resources that the Internet makes available to us. For example, we may find that when we want to learn more about ways in which we can better apply technology in our language teaching, we find that there is a TESOL Virtual Seminar on "Tech Tools for Busy Teachers" being provided by Deborah Healey and Robert Elliott in May 2011. We talk with others in our program and agree that this is something that several of us are interested in, so we decide to participate. Following that, we try out some of those tech tools and find that some of our colleagues (undoubtedly the younger ones) seem to be having more success, so in a reversal of the usual roles that more experienced teachers mentor newer ones, our newer colleagues begin coaching and mentoring us, helping us through some of the complexities of using these new tools. In doing so, however, we find that we want to learn more about these tools and how they are being applied, so we decide to do some research and begin meeting informally to discuss what we are learning, maybe sharing some of those new insights at our next regularly-scheduled faculty meeting, where time has been set aside (in the best of all

worlds) for that kind of professional sharing. And as we learn more, we innovate and reflect more on our practice in a sustained cycle of professional learning.

Some exciting professional development initiatives

That sustained cycle of professional learning appears in the following exciting professional development initiatives. Some of these I have been involved in, and others I have learned of through my students.

Lesson study

Lesson Study is a professional development approach that began in Japan as a means of improving elementary education, but has now spread far beyond that, in Japan and in the United States (Murata, 2002; Yoshida, 1999; Stigler & Hiebert, 1999; Richardson, 2004). In a lesson study cycle, a group of teachers, usually teaching the same subject and level, work together in a small group, meet to discuss their learning goals and collaboratively plan a lesson (called a "research lesson") to improve student learning. One of the teachers then teaches the lesson, while the others observe, focusing on student learning. Then the teachers meet again, reflect upon the class and discuss their observations, revise the lesson, and then often, another teacher teaches the revised lesson (Lewis, 2002; Richardson, 2004; Cerbin & Kopp, 2006). While lesson study has been widely used in math and science education in Japan, it has now become much more popular as a professional development process in elementary, secondary, and higher education in the United States (Lewis, 2002; Fernandez, 2002; Fernandez & Chokshi, 2002; Lewis, Perry & Hurd, 2004).

The lesson study project I want to talk about is one that my doctoral student, Asli Hassan, developed in her work as the newly-appointed Academic Affairs Coordinator of the first-year Foundation Program at the Petroleum Institute in Abu Dhabi, which prepares students for five fields of engineering, where the medium of instruction is English. Since many of the students have had most of their academic instruction through Arabic, they need additional English preparation before they can take their classes through English, as well as additional learning in mathematics, physics, and chemistry. As so often happens in programs of this type, where English becomes a gatekeeper--allowing or preventing students from moving into their fields of study--there was little integration among the various subjects and some frustration on the part of students. Hassan, drawing upon her knowledge and commitment to content-based instruction, thought there might be ways to integrate instruction in the curriculum, without intruding upon any of the faculty's own academic subjects. She raised the idea of Lesson Study; said that she would like to explore its

possible effectiveness and use the research for her dissertation; invited her colleagues to participate in the project; and then made materials about lesson study, a video, and a website available. Twelve teachers who taught Level 2 chose to participate. They decided to first develop an integrated lesson plan that drew content from mathematics, physics and English for one cycle, with three teachers each teaching that portion of the lesson in their subject area and the other members of the team observing and taking notes. After discussing the results and revising the lesson, they taught it again to another group of students. They did this through two cycles over the course of one term, with chemistry replacing physics in the second cycle. In both cases, the lessons were videotaped to allow those who were unable to be in the class for observation to be able to participate in the reflection and revision process (Hassan, 2011).

As you might imagine, the results of this cross-disciplinary project were quite powerful. Although there was some concern, in the beginning, about being observed by colleagues (not surprising, since observation is often used for evaluation and university faculty may not be accustomed to being observed), the focus on student learning helped alleviate that, and in the process of collaborating, the teachers became a much closer learning community or community of practice.

Teachers became aware of how much they were already integrating language and content in their instruction, but also of how much more they could do this when they had the opportunity to develop an integrated lesson plan and observe it being taught by someone in another discipline. They also learned different instructional strategies that arise out of teaching subjects as different as physics, mathematics, and English. Of particular interest to us as English teachers is that both teachers in other disciplines and students became more aware of the importance of English. As Hassan, explains, “Both language and content teachers stated that integrating the different disciplines was of value for all the subjects taught (English, mathematics, physics, and chemistry) and a benefit for the students’ long-term learning” (p. 63). As one teacher explained, “And they [students] saw how connected, how integrated the math and the science and the English parts are if they stop and think about it. Often times, you know, even though we're teaching the same subject, the same theme, they don't see it that way. They see it as, ‘Okay this is English class; this is math class; now this is science class’” (pp. 71-72). Another teacher noted that the integrated approach motivated some of the less motivated students: “maybe certain individual students that were laid back and lackadaisical and didn't give a darn . . . perked up during these lessons” (p. 77).

So why is lesson study so effective? It meets many of the criteria of effective professional development: it is teacher-directed, focused on the current teaching context and content (Lewis, 2002), collaborative (and in this case, collaborative across disciplines), and occurs over time. Moreover, it builds from research on effective practice and is focused on student learning. As Hassan explains, it is reflective of the paradigm shift in professional development, where teachers are "professionals who can initiate and create collaborative environments that enhance their professional growth. As a result, teachers become experts in their fields and in their classrooms (p. 16). Through lesson study, teachers are able to move out from their isolation and share their knowledge with colleagues in a way that also benefits students (Stigler & Hiebert, 1999; Hassan, 2011).

Moreover, through lesson study, a learning community or community of practice evolves with teachers observing and learning from each other through their professional work as they collaboratively plan, develop, teach, revise, and re-teach their lessons (Wenger, 1998).

Reflective inquiry

Next I'd like to talk about a professional development program that I was involved in with a local family literacy programs. "Family literacy" programs are adult, nonformal programs that provide education and support for parents (almost always mothers) and their young children. While the mothers are in ESL class where they not only focus on English, but also on job training and ways to support their children's education, the children are in early childhood education programs, where they also engage in a number of educational activities focusing on language and literacy development. Parents and children also come together on a weekly basis, where parents and their children might look at a picture book and "read" together. One of the ESL teachers in the school (a neighbor) asked if I'd be willing to talk with them about professional development activities. After some discussion with the program leaders and their discussion with the teachers, we decided to engage in a Reflective Inquiry Project, since the majority of teachers were very experienced and wanted to focus on specific issues related to their own teaching.

This Reflective Inquiry Project, a combination of action research and group inquiry, is based on the work of the Teacher Knowledge Project and the Reflective Teaching Project at the School for International Training (Rodgers, 2002), as well as the extensive literature on reflective practice. The goal of the Reflective Teaching Project, according to Rodgers, is to help teachers become more reflective practitioners (Cf. Dewey, 1933) and to develop a community of teachers

reflecting on their teaching and their students' learning. I had first learned of the Reflective Teaching Project in some research I undertook to identify promising professional development practices in US community college ESL programs. In this research (Chisman and Crandall, 2007; Seymour, 2007) I learned of the experiences of City College in San Francisco, where a number of faculty were engaged in researching their own practice with a focus on student learning after discussing their classroom concerns and sharing ideas with colleagues in a structured discussion session. The project was so successful, that though it was intended for experienced teachers, less experienced teachers asked to join.

We held sessions on a monthly basis, and before each session, I met individually with one of the teachers to discuss an issue or problem that this teacher was going to share with the group. Then at the meeting, we used an approach similar to the "cycle of inquiry" in the Reflective Teaching Project. To begin, that teacher described the issue or problem, using what were appropriate of Wh-Questions as a guide. Then the other teachers asked open-ended questions for clarification, but not giving advice (which could have closed down the discussion). Next, the teacher and then the group moved from description to interpretation, reflecting or theorizing on the source of the problem. Based on their interpretation of the problem, the teachers then gave suggestions about possible ways of addressing the situation, which the teacher could reflect upon before deciding on a course of action. The session then was closed with the participants providing feedback on the process. Before the next session, the teacher applied what s/he has decided was the best course of action and then shared the results and insights from that action research, at the next session describing what they did and why, how well it worked, what changes they might make, and what they learned from the process before another teacher introduced a new issue or problem.

Our sessions began with a focus on better ways to engage problematic students who for a variety of possible reasons were not engaged in the process, perhaps because they were more educated than the other learners or had educational aspirations that were not being addressed. Because of the size of the program, most of the teachers knew these students and could share their thoughts and interpretations, as well as what they had tried with these students in the past. Another session, quite by surprise, involved two new teachers who had heard me discuss how learning centers might be used to meet the diverse needs of the adult learners in the program, though they have been principally used in elementary (and to some extent, secondary) education in the US. These two new teachers read about centers and then set up their own centers and reported back to the group on their effectiveness and what they learned in the process. This led to a follow-up

workshop, provided by a doctoral student who had applied this approach in adult ESL as part of her doctoral dissertation research, something I knew quite well since I was on her doctoral committee (Lovrien, 2011).

Why is reflective inquiry effective? First, it provides all participants with a chance not only to research one aspect of their practice, but also to draw upon the insights and experiences of colleagues as they think through ways to address the issue or concern. As one participant at City College explained, the "process encourages discussion of the thorniest problem issues in a supportive environment" and "gives teachers time to sort out and understand these issues better" (Chisman & Crandall, 2007:97). It also nurtures a learning community, in this case, even bringing in first-year teachers and interns. And it promotes critical reflection on practice, which Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of Freedom*, (2000) has identified as "the essential moment" "in the process of the ongoing education of teachers." As Kenneth Wolf (1991) explains, "Reflection is what allows us to learn from our experience. It is an assessment of where we have been and where we want to go next."

Moreover, while action research can be a very effective individual professional development approach, it may not be easy to undertake. Action research undertaken by individuals can also be quite lonely, only underscoring the isolation that many teachers feel in their work. This reflective inquiry project provides a process for identifying and interpreting a teaching problem and identifying and planning action to address it. It also engages a group of colleagues in the process of reflection and discussion, providing more ideas about both the sources of the problem and possible avenues to address it, and nurtures a stronger community of practice (Hassan, 2011; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). While collaborative action research may also pair novice teachers with more experienced teacher mentors, providing new teachers with the benefit of their mentor's experience and experienced teachers with the enthusiasm and new theories and instructional strategies of the novice teacher (Farrell, 2007), in this project, the new teachers decided to work together, only later having the benefit of a mentor.

Study circle or professional learning community

The last professional development approach that I want to describe in detail is an elementary school study circle focused on helping children (both native and non-native speakers) who are having difficulty learning to read in English using an approach called Reading Recovery (Clay, 1993, 2002), a one-on-one tutoring program with a trained instructor.

I came to know about this professional development group through the work of one of my doctoral students, Derek Lewis (2011), who began as an ESL teacher, went on to be both an ESL and Reading Recovery teacher, and then the teacher leader for this program in his district. Reading Recovery requires a teacher to develop a complex set of understandings and skills, including being able to assess a child's oral reading, noting what the student reads correctly, as well as incorrect substitutions, insertions, and omissions. They also note syntactic, semantic, visual, or other bases for determining what problems the child is having and how best to address these. This approach involves both training in a new reading intervention and ongoing professional development. Teachers attend a week-long summer institute prior to beginning their tutoring role, and then participate in a teacher-in-training year of on-the-job, "embedded professional development," during which time they also enroll in two courses on Reading Recovery at a local, partner university. At the end of that training year, if their performance is appropriate, they become certified Reading Recovery teachers (Lewis, 2011). From that point on, every year that they teach in this program, they attend six professional development sessions (in what I am referring to as a study circle but over time has become a professional learning community) during which they read and discuss the major texts by Marie Clay, who established the Reading Recovery approach, meeting regularly to discuss what they are learning from their readings and their daily sessions with their students. At these sessions, as well, two of the teachers each tutor one of their students, in a typical 30-minute session, in a room with one-way glass, while the others observe and take notes, providing feedback after the session has ended. Teachers admit that having their colleagues observe them is anxiety producing, but the focus is foremost on the student's reading, and the goal of these observations is for the observers to take away what they can apply in their own teaching, not to critique the teachers being observed.

At these sessions, the teachers also analyze student performance data and discuss whether the student may be ready to exit the program and return full-time to the regular classroom and teacher. During the year, as well, every teacher receives a class visit by the teacher leader, to ensure that the discussions are relevant to the teachers' experiences and needs (Lewis, 2011).

In becoming more familiar with the instructional intervention, the success of which was the focus of Lewis's dissertation, I was fortunate to be able to participate in one of the two-hour professional development sessions, described above, and to see how readings, observation, and experience--and discussion and reflection on each of these-- were seamlessly interwoven in an

ongoing learning community, where teachers with different backgrounds and experience were able to discuss and learn from each other.

What is also interesting in this program is the way in which teachers who are interested in the program can not only train and receive professional development to teach part-time in the program, but also the ways in which a teacher can through extensive graduate education become a teacher leader working in a new capacity with former colleagues. Also of note is the partnership with a local university, where the training is provided. The teacher leaders from a number of districts also meet regularly (four to six times a year) with the teacher trainer at the university, thus creating broader learning communities or communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998)

Common features

These professional development programs all share the following features of effective teacher professional development:

- They engage teachers in research on their classrooms and programs;
- They provide an opportunity for teachers to share insights and learn from each other, leading to professional learning communities;
- They involve or lead to further reading on relevant issues related to the teachers' teaching and learning;
- They promote critical reflection on practice; and
- They occur over a sustained period of time.

Other promising professional development initiatives

In this final section, I want to highlight other promising professional development initiatives:

- An open door policy by "master teachers" who invite colleagues in to observe their classes (usually at specified times) and also function informally as mentors to new teachers. Extensive mentoring and coaching, especially for new teachers or even for experienced teachers when a new instructional approach is being introduced, can be very effective, providing support for the less experienced teacher and offering the prospect of learning some new techniques for the more experienced. But mentoring and coaching can also be

exhausting for the mentor, and in small programs with extensive turnover of teachers, the same experienced teachers may be asked to take on this role too often. This open door policy with observation and informal mentoring may make it possible for even small programs to provide this type of support.

- Team teaching, either by teachers who share the same subject and level or by teachers from different disciplines who share the same students (for example in a ESP Program) providing an opportunity for language and other subject matter teachers to learn not only something about each others' content areas, but also new instructional strategies.

- Paired, peer-observation of student learning and follow-up discussion or analysis (Richards & Lockhart, 1994). This approach is especially effective when teachers share a student who is having difficulty.

- Faculty meetings that routinely provide time for teachers to share and receive feedback on things that they are trying in their classes. This is especially important when colleagues have attended conferences and have new ideas they want to discuss.

- Engaging students in bringing their family and community "funds of knowledge" into the classroom, helping to create a larger community of teachers and learners (Moll, 1992; Edmonds, 2009).

The Internet has also made it possible to engage in most of Wallace's three approaches, sometimes resulting in global learning communities. For example:

- A TEYL (Teaching English for Young Learners Facebook Page that my colleague Joan Kang Shin has been maintaining for some time, with teachers and teacher educators from around the world who have participated in online TEYL courses.

- An online library of videos of teachers, the Media Library of Teaching Skills (http://mlots.org) that "shows what teachers are doing in their adult classrooms and in tutorials." (Although the current adult ESL videos are limited, the idea is one that other institutions or professional associations might want also to consider implementing.)

- A self-instructional course developed by the Center for Applied Linguistics on "Developing Oral Proficiency of Adults Learning English," with texts, videos, self-assessments, and other resources (www.cal.or/adultspeak) that helps teachers understand the nature of oral proficiency and factors that affect it and also provides activities for building speaking and listening skills and assessing them.

- A series of Webinars like the Virtual Seminars provided free to TESOL members, offering opportunities to listen to ask questions and listen to discussions by major theorists and practitioners. Among those offered in May-June, 2011, are "Teaching Large Heterogeneous Classes in ELT Contexts Worldwide," with Penny Ur, and "Tech Tools for Busy Teachers" with Deborah Healey and Robert Elliott.

- An Adult Education Wiki [http://wiki.literacytent.org] created at a national conference for practitioners and researchers so they could continue the dialogue following the conference, that has now become a community of practice, with ESOL as one of 30 topics, but also a number of others such as Action Research or Project Based Learning that would also be of interest.

Conclusion

As these initiatives make clear, there are many exciting and professionally satisfying ways in which we can grow professionally, by learning from or with our colleagues, from or with colleagues in other disciplines, as well as our students, both locally and globally. Sometimes, all that is needed is to take action to implement these changes.

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Biodata

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