

Developing Teacher Cognitions: Maximising the Impact of In-service CPD Programmes

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Outline

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- ▶ Exploring teacher cognition and its relevance in CPD
- ▶ Materials development and developing teacher cognitions
- ▶ The Trinity CertPT-Nile impact study
- ▶ Early findings from the impact study on Trinity's CertPT qualification
- ▶ Questions



In-service CPD: Some perspectives



In-service CPD: Some perspectives

- ▶ Learning in language education, *learning to teach*, has come to be seen as a life-long activity, which begins with teachers' experiences as learners in schools, then to learners in teacher education courses, and continues throughout their professional career (Johnson 2009).
- ▶ In-service CPD, both informal (e.g. collaboration with peers) and formal (e.g. courses and qualifications), is central in developing teacher expertise (Anderson & Taner 2022).
- ▶ Teacher CPD in the state sector / basic education tends to be top-down, administrative and not focussed on teachers' pedagogic needs or learners' developmental requirements (Borg, et al, 2022).
- ▶ More embedding of materials development is required in teacher education courses (Carabantes & Paran 2022).

Exploring teacher cognitions and its relevance in CPD



Teacher cognitions

Teacher cognitions: a definition

The “unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching – what teachers know, believe, and think.” (Borg 2003: 81)

There is a broad agreement that teachers’ pedagogical actions are strongly influenced by their beliefs, the “eclectic aggregations of cause-effect propositions from many sources, rules of thumb, generalizations drawn from personal experience, beliefs, values, biases and prejudices” (Clark 1988: 5).

There is a constantly restructuring and bi-directional influence between teachers and their environments, these influences comprising both *social structures* and *objective structures* (Bourdieu & Passeron 1990).

Studies into teacher cognition

Generally, studies into teacher cognitions:

- ▶ are international in scope;
- ▶ use non-probability samples;
- ▶ involve teachers of English as a foreign language who work in state institutions;
- ▶ are modest in scale (in terms of numbers of participating teachers);
- ▶ use mixed or qualitative methods; and
- ▶ have interviews as the most common data-collection strategy, followed by questionnaires, observations and then document analysis.

(Borg 2012: 25-26)

What has this told us about developing teacher cognitions?

Classroom materials and developing teacher cognitions



Materials and their influence on teachers

- ▶ “Textbooks now take care of all the details of classroom life, and most of them come with teacher guides that include achievement tests and even all the examples teachers need in their classes” (Akbari 2008: 647).
- ▶ Teachers often use materials in ways not intended by the designers, extending their use out of context (Humphries 2014; Seferaj 2014).
- ▶ Early career teachers can develop a dependency on published materials, giving a primacy to the coursebook rather than student need or their own pedagogical knowledge (Carabantes & Paran: 2022).

Materials development as CPD

- ▶ Application of Critical Pedagogy in the language classroom includes the need to adapt materials to meet learners' specific contextual learning and social needs (Akbari 2008b).
- ▶ Including materials development in teacher education programmes (both initial and in-service) demonstrably enhances teachers' knowledge and practice of teaching (Tibbitts & Pashby: 2014; Hughes, 2022).
- ▶ On-going and localised CPD, especially that linked to higher-level teacher certification, is found to be much more effective as a developmental activity than one-off workshops or conferences (Goodall, et al, 2014). Materials evaluation and development lends itself well to this kind of CPD.

The Trinity CertPT-NILE impact study



Trinity's TESOL qualifications

Qualification	RQF & EQF Levels*	Guided Learning hours (GLH)**	Total qualification time (TQT)	Focus of pedagogical knowledge and skills
CertTESOL	Level 5	130	200	Essential TESOL
TYLEC	-	58	100	Specialist young learner TESOL
CertOT	RQF - Level 4 EQF - Level 5	30	50	Specialist online teaching
CertPT	Level 6	30	100	Specialist TESOL professional development
DipTESOL	Level 7	150	600	Advanced TESOL

Nile courses and the CertPT

In-service courses:

- Teaching young learners
- Teaching teenagers
- Materials development
- Testing, evaluation and assessment
- Classroom activities and Interaction
- Trainer development



Teachers 'opt in' for concurrent CertPT input and support.



Teachers submit the four CertPT assessment tasks (with formative feedback and final submission):

1. Materials evaluation
2. Materials adaptation
3. Materials creation
4. Materials use and reflection

www.nile-elt.com/catalog?pagename=NILE-Online

Impact study aims

1. To evaluate the impact of the CertPT assessment tasks on:
 - ▶ teachers' resource use and development; and
 - ▶ teachers' agency using resources to meet learners' needs.
2. To evaluate constructive alignment between:
 - ▶ NILE's CPD course content;
 - ▶ CertPT assessment; and
 - ▶ application of course and assessment learning for teachers' local contacts.

Impact study method

1. Review of literature and identification of aims and research questions.
2. Identification of suitable courses at NILE.
3. Recruitment of teacher participants from identified CPD courses.
4. Semi- structured interview with teacher participants at the very start of their CPD course.
5. Semi- structured interview with teacher participants at the end of their course.
6. Semi- structured interview with Nile's CPD course tutors.

7. Analysis of participants' CertPT assessment tasks.
8. Semi- structured interview with teacher participants 3-4 months after the end of their course.
9. Qualitative text analysis of emergent themes from teacher narratives, supported by participants' assessment evidence.
10. Research dissemination.

Early findings from
the impact study on
Trinity's CertPT qualification



Impact of the CertPT assessment tasks

Interview data suggests the assessment tasks have a strongly positive effect on teacher cognitions and critical pedagogy. The tasks:

- ▶ create a framework that guide teachers' learning from acceptance of published materials to a critical evaluation based on local context;
- ▶ build teachers' confidence in being able to question the appropriacy of materials to their local context;
- ▶ give teachers an opportunity to experiment with creating their own materials, helping meet localised learner needs; and
- ▶ raise teachers' awareness of the learner voice, and how to record it, as a key stakeholder in the learning process.

Impact of the CertPT assessment criteria

Interview data suggests the assessment criteria also have a positive effect on teacher cognitions and academic literacy. The criteria:

- ▶ require teachers to consider areas of pedagogic evaluation they may not have previously considered (e.g. the wider learning context, learners' end-point requirements);
- ▶ help teachers make the link between underpinning pedagogic principles of the realities of day-to-day teaching;
- ▶ encourage teachers to engage with literature that is relevant to their area of teaching, e.g. low resource refugee contexts, teacher training; and
- ▶ help build an understanding of core features of higher-level academic texts (e.g. referencing and organization).

Some quotes from the participants

"[Materials] shouldn't be put on a pedestal as something to always be rigidly followed. It's something that can be flexible, adapted and changed."

"[Task 2] really made me think about linking lessons and levels and using things that students had created themselves in high-level classes with lower-level students. Kind of creating a student community."

"I saw [the material in Task 1] from a new perspective. In terms of my role, I'm going to focus on these strengths, something I'd previously overlooked."

"You really need to know the specifics of your group. If you're creating the resource from scratch for a specific group of students, it's important to know them and know their interests."

Next steps

1. Review of literature and identification of aims and research questions.
2. Identification of suitable courses at NILE.
3. Recruitment of teacher participants from identified CPD courses.
4. Semi- structured interview with teacher participants at the very start of their CPD course.
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Implications for CPD

Developing teacher cognitions

The “unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching – what teachers **know, believe, and think.**” (Borg 2003: 81)

1. Create a space to question accepted practices
2. Use materials as a vehicle to encourage the questioning of accepted practices
3. Use tools that encourage teachers to explore areas of analysis beyond their immediate classroom (e.g. frameworks)
4. Reviewing the past can reveal as much [or more] as preparing for the future

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Questions

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