Community of Practice for Teacher Educators

Year in Review 2018-2019

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A look back at our first year
Following a successful pilot, we launched our Community of Practice on 27 June, 2018. Research by the European Commission into the roles, qualities and professional development of teacher educators, had highlighted a lack of clarity on teacher educator roles and identities; a lack of shared understanding about the skills, knowledge and understanding required for the role; and limited opportunities to engage in continuing professional development.

Our community addresses these challenges by providing a space for teacher educators to connect with each other, share knowledge and ideas, engage in topical discussions, find out about events relevant to the profession and engage with professional development opportunities.

The community underpins the British Council’s commitment to the continuing professional development of teacher educators.
And statistics from Google analytics show that members in India, Egypt and the UK are consistently in the top three for most frequent access to the community, followed by members in Ukraine, Nigeria, Italy, Spain, Turkey, Mexico and Russia. We are a truly international community, providing access to CPD without borders with members in every continent.
Our goals
Our overarching goal is to provide continuing professional development opportunities for teacher educators all over the world.

Meeting our goals
Teacher educators are often quite isolated in their working environments with a corresponding lack of developmental opportunities which come through interacting with peers. Our community of Practice has addressed this challenge by enabling Teacher Educators to connect with others in similar roles. In this way, as Wenger (2007) says: “they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.”

Our range of discussion forums has encouraged members to respond to questions, reflect, share knowledge, explore ideas, swap stories and information. Our three most popular forums this year are as follows.

**Microteaching and developmental observations**  
We provided videos where three teacher educators in different countries described how they organised classroom observations of teachers. Members described their own experiences, shared techniques and also expressed frustration with the difficulties of formal, unconstructive observations in traditional contexts.

My colleagues and I have recently engaged in a three-way peer observation, whereby we plan the session together and each delivers about 20 minutes while the other two discuss what they see and at times give suggestions to the trainer in action (of course without disturbing the trainer in mid-flow). I must say we’ve all found it incredibly useful, especially as it’s right there as it happens and we can make immediate adjustments and see immediate results which we discuss afterward the session in a reflective conversation. Other advantages we’ve found is that giving feedback after a session, we tend to either forget or not recall fully the whole session; also that in a session feedback we’ll try to usually focus on one or two ‘main’ areas for development, whereas, there are many little adjustments we can make in classes if we’re reminded that would have a hugely beneficial impact on learning, for example, someone holding a sign up at the back of the room ‘TTT’ to remind the trainer to focus the feedback. Finally, as we discuss the trainer in action, we can also apply immediately techniques we noticed the participants responding to.

That’s interesting - wanted to check if I understood this correctly but are the three of you co-training the same group of teachers? Does this happen normally or was it planned just for the peer observation?

Three of us are co-delivering a month-long course to Teacher Educators. So it’s me, and two Master Trainers who’ve already done the course we’re now cascading further down. So we plan who wants to deliver which sessions, some we deliver alone, some two deliver and some all three deliver...and we’re all very keen on PD so the door’s always open for others to come into the training room and observe, participate or give feedback...support participants during monitoring, contribute in any way but without being disruptive to the flow.
Hello everyone!

Have always been passionate about teaching and it was forever my dream to teach kids for all of my life. Due to certain urgent domestic priorities, had to discontinue my teaching job of 20 years. The urge to be associated with the teaching sector pushed me to enrol in a voluntary service that would require me to teach 'economically challenged' youth for a couple of hours every day. That was a life changer! Enjoyed my association with them so much that I ended up working full time with that organisation. Along the way we were encouraged to train the new volunteers who were to be first time teachers. I was mentored diligently by the British Council trainers and thus was initiated into my new role of a teacher educator. It's been six years since and am enjoying exploring and learning at every step of my journey.

Hi!

I think for me the there was no significant event rather the feeling that there was still so much to learn and so many people to learn from. I also felt and still feel that many teachers conceive CPD as something imposed from above and helping others to see that they can be the 'owners' of their own development is amazing when you actually see how empowered they feel if they do take the bull by the horns and focus on an area that is important to them.

I can see how being encouraged to 'train the new volunteers' would help you to naturally move into a teacher trainer role. Sometimes we need that little 'push', don't you think?
Community of Practice for Teacher Educators

Benefits of activity groups
A video was provided to stimulate discussion. The forum generated much interest with members sharing their knowledge and asking questions to learn more.

I know I am super late joining and replying, but the topic is important for me, and I noticed you are running a webinar on Friday (which I can't attend due to other obligations)
I have been facilitating/coordinating a Reflective Practice Group in Dnipro, Ukraine since 2016. Love the questions you listed in the original post and would love to answer them in more detail on my blog, at some point.
From time to time I post about the group, too: some info and links on what we do, topics, activities, etc. there: https://wednesdayseminars.wordpress.com/reflection-process/, and we can of course be in touch via Twitter/Facebook, or other channels.
Good luck with the webinar! I would love to watch a recording, if possible.
Sharing is not limited to forums

*Journeys of Reflective Practice* – a publication on the theme of teacher educator professional development through action research was donated to the Community by one of our members.

In November our members responded to our call for examples of case studies for a new Teaching for Success publication with suggestions and ideas from their own experience.

Inspired by the mentoring special, several members shared mentoring stories from their own experience.

Knowing our members’ interest in new development opportunities, one of our most active members curated a list of MOOCs to share.

Resources with a teacher educator focus

Compared to resources for teachers, there is a limited range of resources available for teacher educators. Our aim is to provide access to resources which very specifically focus on teacher educator work. We seek out publications, research and videos which we can share with members and which inform our selection of topics and underpin discussion forums. Below are some highlights from across the year.

* A series of articles by Tessa Woodward on the theme of teacher educator self-awareness
* A report from a study in Malaysia on professional development for teacher educators
* A new publication: Journeys of reflective practice: strengthening teacher educator professional skills through action research

* Our teacher educator identity topic was introduced in a video with teacher educators from Tunisia, Uruguay and Romania giving their different viewpoints.
* Video on organising teacher observations – one of our most popular topics.
* In October, the publishers of the Teacher Trainer Journal offered a special discount to our members.
Access to ELT expertise
As well as our wide range of publications, articles and videos, we commission Webinars. Here are some highlights.

**Webinar: Coaching and emotional intelligence**

Coaching and Emotional Intelligence by Nik Peachey, course designer, author and education technology consultant

**Webinar: A conversation on implementing inclusive practices: creating an inclusive school environment**

Two webinars on Inclusive Practices by Phil Dexter, our British Council expert on Equality, Inclusion and Diversity. Feedback from members led to the second one as members wanted to explore this important topic further.

**Webinar: Teaching for All: How teacher educators can work with teachers to unlock learning potential in all our learners**

Join Phil Dexter on Thurs 27 September at 1600 UK time.

To coincide with our mentoring special, Doina Fleante, an experienced mentor, provided an innovative Webinar which included a role play.
Feedback from membership on all of our Webinars has been very positive. Comments from participants show how much they are valued.

“Both the content and the delivery were innovative and interesting. I like the experimentation with the discussion techniques. Thanks Phil for a very enlightening webinar. Yes the seeds are so important. Thank you for this inspiring seminar!”

In addition to our specially commissioned Webinars, we have encouraged our members to take advantage of Webinars provided by the UK ELT sector.

**IATEFL Sig**
Online task design for teacher trainers
CPD for new teacher trainers
Building teacher communities
Planning, managing and implementing INSETT programmes with experienced teachers in mind

**Aqueduto**
Online language teacher education: Exploring the Aqueduto research report

**Macmillan English**
Strategies to promote and protect language teacher well-being

And we were delighted that in February we had our first member-led Webinar.

**Webinar: New Year CPD resolutions from teacher educators**
Join our webinar with three teacher educators Cristiana Osan, Teodora Naiha and Nelson Arditto and find out about their CPD resolutions! We hope this event will inspire you to make 2019 your year of personal and professional development!
CPD activities which work with challenging, irregular schedules

With our webinars which are recorded for those who can’t make the scheduled times; our discussion forums which can be accessed at any time and the availability of our other resources, our community provides the flexibility needed to enable members to connect and engage at times which fit around their work.

To complement our regular CPD activities, we have introduced ‘specials’. These are ‘mini-courses’ offered on our Thinking Cap platform and enable members to develop skills and knowledge on selected topics in more depth.

Our first special, on the topic of mentoring, was launched in September. Members engaged in a series of activities, including how to set up mentoring programmes, observing and giving feedback to mentees, and how to make mentoring a meaningful CPD experience. The special concluded with a mentoring project which involved peer mentoring amongst our members. One of the participants in the project has scheduled a Webinar to share his experience with the community: Mentoring teachers and trainers: a recipe for successful programmes.

Recent developments

Research

Our community co-ordinator, Sirin Soyoz, chose the community as the focus for her Master’s thesis. 94 members responded to her call for participation in a survey in January about the professional development needs of teacher educators. In our second year we will be looking at the data Sirin has gathered to see how we can use it to provide more targeted content, as well as to create an article for publication.

Teaching for Success Tunisia Project

We are proud to support this project. We have created a closed group for primary teaching advisors. This provides a dedicated space within the community where the advisors can share ideas and hold discussions relating to the project in their local context.
Can CPD change lives?
This discussion is currently trending on the community. Several members have mentioned the important role the British Council has played in their development.

“I have the chance to be involved in a British Council Romania project - English for the community (training and supporting local Teacher Activity Groups). I am the Local Facilitator for TAG Sibiu and this role has changed my life and my teaching practice, too.
British Council is playing vital role in CPD.
British Council always offers strong support for English teachers and learners!”

Our plans for our second year

**Improving and extending member participation and engagement**
To coincide with our anniversary, we will launch our second special: developing an online presence. This is aimed at our shyer, less confident members and will be followed later in the year by a special aimed at our more skilled and advanced, members.

**Focusing content more closely on our members professional development needs**
In addition to the research provided by Sirin, we will conduct surveys amongst our members to ensure content matches their needs and interests. We will also offer members opportunities to take on responsibility for some community content.

**Introducing new CPD opportunities**
We will set up teacher educator activity groups to meet once a month online to discuss items selected by the community.

We will create a ‘help corner’ where members can ask for advice on anything relating to their teacher educator work

We will provide a space for members to tell their stories.