

Book Reviews

Book Review 1



*Right strategies enhance
professional development of language teacher*

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Richards, J. C. & Farrel, Thomas S. C. (2005). *Professional Development of Language Teachers: Strategies for Teacher Learning*. Cambridge University Press. Pages: X+ 202. ISBN-13: 978-0-521-78647-8

The book entitled *Professional Development for Language Teachers: Strategies for Teachers Learning*, consisting of twelve chapters along with preface and appendix, attempts to examine different strategies for professional development for a language teacher. It further provides personal account of authors and language teachers activities such as journal writing, peer observation, action research and so on. Besides, it portrays illustrative examples of how and when such activities can be useful in language teaching and their advantages together with their limitations. The opening chapter presents an overview of the nature of professional development and a conceptual framework for the book as a whole. The remaining eleven chapters presents eleven procedures for professional development in language teaching. Each chapter is organized in a straightforward and non-technical way. The goal, methodology, advantages and problems, and practical examples in the form of vignettes with questions provide how teachers in different parts of the world have applied their activities in their own classrooms. In addition, reflection questions at the end of vignette allow readers to consider the application of given approach in their own teaching contexts and serve as possible topics for investigation.

Chapter 1, 'The Nature of Teacher Education' deals with the professional development of language teachers after their formal training is over. The need for ongoing teacher education has been a recurring theme in language teaching circles in recent years. In teacher education, activities such as action research, reflective teaching, and team teaching, are the renewed focus on the emergence of teacher-led initiatives. With the help of examples, the authors highlight that teachers have different needs at different times during their career because the needs of the schools and institutions change in course of time. For this reason, school and classroom provide the opportunity for teachers to update their knowledge in different areas. In this way, the notion of teacher

education takes place over time rather than formal training or graduate education. The chapter also distinguishes formal training from teacher development.

Chapter 2, 'Workshop' defines workshop and presents the benefits and procedures for planning effective workshop. The workshop is defined as an intensive, short-term learning activity designed to provide the teachers with an opportunity to acquire specific knowledge and skills. It is beneficial for teachers because they get input from experts, learn from teachers' practical classroom applications, and gain motivation, collegiality and supports in innovations. Appropriate topic, limited number of participants, suitable workshop leaders and appropriate sequence of activities for follow up and evaluation make a workshop effective.

Chapter 3 is about 'self-monitoring,' a systematic approach to the observation, evaluation, and management of one's behavior in order to achieve a better understanding and control over the behavior. The authors examine three approaches to self-monitoring of language lessons: lesson reports, audio recording a lesson, and video-recording a lesson. Self-monitoring helps teachers with better understanding of their own instructional practices by identifying their strengths and weaknesses. It further helps teachers make informed decisions about classroom practices. The book also presents the procedures for self-monitoring which included lesson reports, written narrative, checklists and questionnaires, audio-recording a lesson, video-recording a lesson, suggestion for video-taping lessons and reviewing the video. Teachers need to identify problems and areas for improvement for the implementation of self-monitoring.

Chapter 4 'Teacher Support Group' presents how teachers can set up a support group with colleagues with common goals in the form of collaboration. The chapter focuses on the objective, benefit, purposes and the ways of forming teacher's support group. The concept of teacher support group is based on the principle that working with the group is more effective than working alone. It further supports teachers to know their colleagues better through discussion and sharing of experience. It is necessary to consider membership, size, organization, goals, time, and meeting place while forming a teacher support group.

Chapter 5 'Keeping a Teacher Journal' delineates different aspects of keeping a teaching journal: proposes benefits, procedures and consideration for the audience for a teaching journal and ways of responding to another teacher's journal. By writing a teaching journal, teachers can clarify their own thinking and explore their own beliefs and practices.

Chapter 6 'Peer Observation' includes definition, purposes and benefits, procedures and implementation strategies of peer observation. Peer observation is a process of closely watching and monitoring a language lesson or part of a lesson in order to gain an understanding of some aspects of teaching and learning or classroom interaction.

It provides novice teachers with an opportunity to gain more experience of instructional practices, to reflect their own teaching, interact and share ideas with other teachers, collect information about teaching and classroom process, and get feedback on their teaching.

Chapter 7 'Teaching Portfolio' focuses on the nature of teaching portfolio, purposes and benefits of creating a portfolio, types, procedures used in compiling a teaching portfolio and implementing it. A portfolio is defined as a collection of documents and other items for providing information about different aspects of a teacher's work (e.g., qualification, a list of courses, a critique of school curriculum, a review of one or more books, a short essay describing the area a teacher teaches and written comments from supervisor). It presents evidence of the teacher's thinking, creativity, resourcefulness and promotes collaboration with other teachers; it provides teachers with a source of review and reflection; it also helps them assess their teaching and establish goals for professional development. Two types of portfolio are working and showcase portfolio. Portfolios can be paper-based or electronic.

Chapter 8 'Analyzing Critical Incidents' talks about definition, purposes and benefits, procedures, preparing and analyzing and implementing of critical incident analysis. A critical incident is an unplanned and unanticipated event that occurs during a lesson and that serves to trigger insights about some aspects of teaching and learning. Analysis of such incidents help teachers promotes teachers reflective inquiry and helps them identify and resolve problems, heightens their sense of professional awareness, encourages them to pose critical questions about teaching, creates opportunities for action research, help them build a community of critical practitioners.

Chapter 9 'Case Analysis' states about definition, purpose and benefits, procedures for analyzing and discussing cases and implementing of it. It involves collecting information about a teaching situation and using that information to help better understand the situation and to derive principles from it. It can be a valuable teacher training resource for novice teachers. It is based on what happens in a teacher's own classroom and teachers can read and discuss cases prepared by other teachers. The purpose of a case is to serve as input for discussion and reflection. Teachers in a school might decide to write a case based on a class they share. For implementation case analysis, it serves several useful functions.

Chapter 10 'Peer Coaching' includes definition, purposes, benefits and types of peer coaching and implementing peer coaching. Peer coaching is a procedure in which two teachers collaborate to help one or both teachers to improve some aspects of their teaching. A teacher and colleague plan a series of opportunities to explore the teacher's teaching collaboratively. The purpose of peer coaching is to provide the teachers with opportunities to identify problems and develop possible solutions, try out new teaching materials, enhance instructional practice by gaining constructive and non-threatening feedback on teaching from a trusted. Technical coaching, collegial coaching

and challenge coaching are different types of coaching. Peer coaching can be conducted on formal or an informal level; a teacher and colleagues can simply sit down and discuss his or her teaching in the form of conversation about what happened in the classroom. Three initial phases useful in implementing peer coaching are peer watching, peer feedback and peer coaching. Different ways of implementing peer coaching are also highlighted.

Chapter 11 'Team Teaching' focuses on a process, purpose and benefits, in which two or more teachers share the responsibility for teaching a class. It involves a cycle of team planning, team teaching, and team follow up. Team teaching develops collegiality, and combined expertise and creates teacher development opportunities, increases learner benefits. Teachers involved in team teaching need to decide on the roles within a team-teaching collaboration and to maintain their interest and enthusiasm over the long term.

Chapter 12 'Action Research' has definition of action research, its purpose and benefits, different phases and the ways of implementing action research. It is defined as the teacher-conducted classroom research, which involves a cycle of activities centering on identifying a problem, collecting information about the issue, devising a strategy to address the issue, trying out the strategy and observing its effects. The purpose of action research is to develop a deeper understanding of many issues in teaching and learning as well as acquire useful classroom investigation skills. It also seeks to redefine teachers' by giving them the means to set their own agendas for improvement. .

Everything has strengths and weaknesses. After going through the book, I concluded that the book has more strengths than weaknesses. The main strength of the book is that all the contents are presented in lucid manner. Although the book was written a few years ago, the knowledge and ideas presented are equally relevant and important today for professional development of language teachers. The strategies described in the text can be an asset for language teachers if they implement them in their teaching in a systematic way. However, some of the ideas may be difficult for institutions and language teachers to implement. I think the book can be more useful for teacher trainer than language teachers in the context of Nepal.