

Teachers' perspectives on professional development

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Teachers' Perspectives on Professional Development

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In 2004, Peake and Fraser conducted an assessment of the state of voluntary professional development (PD) for teachers of Kanda's English Language Institute, generally finding only limited investment in PD, but a more recent investigation found considerably improved conditions (Stillwell 2008). Based on the findings in these two investigations a number of principles were identified that may be necessary for a culture of collaborative professional development to emerge. In the latest stage of this ongoing research, additional literature has been reviewed and interviews have been conducted with 7 former members of the ELI now working together to establish an English program at a small university in Hiroshima. With the benefit of both geographical and temporal distance from their experience at Kanda, these teachers were in a unique position to identify strengths and weaknesses of the PD activities in the ELI. Their recollections, viewed through the lens of their current working conditions, reveal additional insights into ways to improve the PD offerings available at Kanda and add another perspective on the necessary conditions for promoting collaborative PD.

Introduction

There are many natural obstacles to teachers' professional development, not the least being that teaching can be a compartmentalizing profession in which colleagues are isolated from one another in their individual classrooms. In their assessment of PD in the English Language Institute (ELI) at Kanda University of

International Studies (KUIS), two ELI teachers found little of note:

...looking at [our school environment], we felt that there were scattered opportunities for professional development and... that there was no obvious system of professional development opportunities... In our eyes, this lack of a system was a limitation to development. (Peake and Fraser, 2004, p. 181)

Four years later, another ELI teacher examined conditions at this same university and reported on a range of formal and informal professional development options, with no fewer than nine voluntary collaborative professional development initiatives thriving, drawing participation from faculty members across the university on a regular basis (Stillwell, 2008). Something must have happened to cause this change in the environment, but what was it?

This paper represents a snapshot of an ongoing investigation into the necessary conditions for collaborative professional development (PD) to take root and thrive, as exemplified in the recent history of the ELI at KUIS. It will draw from a range of sources, including in-house research and survey data collected in 2004 and 2008. A wholly new perspective is brought to the data through insights collected from interviews conducted in June 2009 with teachers who have left KUIS but remained 'in the family' as they start a new English program, the Bunkyo English Communication Center (BECC) at Hiroshima Bunkyo Women's University, now in its second year.

Portions of this paper have been adapted from Stillwell (2008) and Stillwell and Murphey (under review).

The Setting

Since its inception in 1987, the ELI has grown from a handful of teachers to its current size of over 60 instructors and learning advisors (here collectively referred to as 'teachers'). These teachers come from all over the globe, in most cases having recently completed graduate studies in teaching. They are by and large from English-speaking countries, with ages ranging from the mid-twenties to the late thirties. At present teachers are initially signed on for a two-year contract, which is renewable once.

Through the years, teachers in the ELI have been invited to choose a committee to participate in, such as 'student activities', 'professional library', and 'computers'. The 'professional development' committee has provided only limited offerings until fairly recently. Starting in 2006 a wide range of structured but voluntary PD options have cropped up from both within and outside this PD committee, from peer observations to writing circles to peer workshops, in which a large percentage of the teaching staff participates. An investigation into the state of professional development at the university in 2004 provides further reference for the changes that have taken place.

Background: 2003 and 2004

In 2003 and 2004 Peake and Fraser, two teachers of the ELI, examined how the 47 English as a Foreign Language teachers of the program felt about professional development, what they were doing, and what they wanted. They collected data from two questionnaires- first a qualitative one that sought a broad view of the teachers' perspectives, and then a more quantitative one that was meant to

identify teachers' priorities regarding PD, and what forms of PD they engaged in as part of their daily lives at school. They found a range of views, with some teachers resenting administrative demands that the teachers continue to develop their skills and others taking issue over a perceived lack of sufficient PD offerings, but overall, they report that the first survey showed “overwhelming agreement from all respondents that there was a need for professional development at KUIS” (Peake and Fraser, 2004, p. 183-4).

Though the second survey found generally favorable attitudes towards activities such as conducting action research, receiving student evaluations, visiting libraries, attending and presenting at conferences, having casual conversations, and having articles published, it also found that there was a gap between attitudes and practices. In addition, they found that teachers were insufficiently aware of the need to initiate PD activities for themselves rather than waiting for the institution to provide for them.

2008

In 2004, the administration established a new policy- it implemented an official PD system in which teachers must submit portfolios and be observed by administrators in order to be eligible for a second contract. Though this system was received with suspicion and even hostility by the teachers already under contract at the time, it is at present largely uncontroversial; at least partially because all teachers beginning their contracts in the ensuing years have done so with the understanding that this is part of the job description.

In September 2008, new data was collected through anonymous surveys about the teachers' interests and opinions regarding professional development. Of 49 teachers who were not members of the administration and were not directly involved in the conducting of this research, forty participated. If the informal and formal PD activities were not sufficiently maximized in 2003 and 2004, the situation was changed by 2008, as can be seen in the respondents' answers to a question on the topic (Table 1):

TABLE 1- Making Use of PD Options

“When you have the opportunity, how often do you attend, participate in, or use these professional development options?”

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Response Count
Guest speakers	0.0% (0)	10.0% (4)	75.0% (30)	15.0% (6)	40
Peer observations	35.0% (14)	25.0% (10)	30.0% (12)	10.0% (4)	40
Reading discussions	55.0% (22)	22.5% (9)	15.0% (6)	7.5% (3)	40
Attending conferences	7.5% (3)	22.5% (9)	35.0% (14)	35.0% (14)	40
Presenting at conferences	17.5% (7)	20.0% (8)	27.5% (11)	35.0% (14)	40
Peer workshops	5.1% (2)	25.6% (10)	51.3% (20)	17.9% (7)	39
Writing circle	76.9% (30)	12.8% (5)	7.7% (3)	2.6% (1)	39
Professional library	17.5% (7)	20.0% (8)	47.5% (19)	15.0% (6)	40
KUIS library	22.5% (9)	45.0% (18)	22.5% (9)	10.0% (4)	40
Personal teaching journal	60.0% (24)	15.0% (6)	20.0% (8)	5.0% (2)	40

Based on this data, 90% of the teachers ‘sometimes’ or ‘often’ availed themselves of guest speaker opportunities, 70% attended conferences (and 62.5% presented), and 25% kept personal teaching journals. Regarding professional development activities of a collaborative nature, 69.2% participated in peer workshops, 40% took part in peer observations, and 22% attended reading discussions. Based on these numbers, it would appear that a majority of the teachers participate in a broad range of both institutional and self-initiated PD options.

The current study, 2009: Interviews with former ELI-ers

In 2008 and 2009, nine former members of the ELI left Kanda to begin the BECC, a new English program at Hiroshima Bunkyo Women’s University. Given that this group had transplanted from Kanda and begun working together once again in a new environment, they should have had ample opportunity to reflect on their old experiences in comparison with their new ones. Their perspective on Kanda PD might be better informed by their distance and circumstance, and it thus might be useful to hear their views on Kanda PD offerings in retrospect, to see which offerings had had the greatest impact and which aspects of Kanda PD could stand to be improved.

Apart from the program directors, all 7 remaining members of the faculty were interviewed, in sessions that lasted approximately 25 to 60 minutes. The interviews were largely unstructured, guided by a series of open-ended questions intended to promote reflection and free conversation regarding their views on what sort of PD is useful, and what factors had played a part in impeding or facilitating PD for them during their time in the ELI and in the BECC. Extensive notes were taken during

the interviews, and these notes were then reviewed and organized according to the themes that emerged.

Research Questions

1. What differences between the PD opportunities on offer at their old and new work environments would the teachers find most notable?
2. To what extent would the principles for promoting collaborative PD suggested in Stillwell (2008) be evident in what they had to say about PD in general?
3. What other themes and insights would emerge from open-ended conversations about PD?

Frame of Analysis

In Stillwell (2008) and Stillwell and Murphey (under review), a deeper analysis of the ELI PD survey data, with reference to how it differed from or aligned with the findings of Peake and Fraser's 2003/2004 survey, brought some conclusions as to the conditions that may contribute to high levels of participation in and enthusiasm for professional development activities. The revised list of conditions that may promote participation in PD activities is as follows:

- Individual Autonomy
- Administrative Support
- Structures and Models
- Awareness and Convenience

In the following sections these principles will be expanded upon slightly in view of

a deeper look at relevant literature and a reanalysis of the 2008 survey data. Each of these principles will then provide a preliminary frame for analyzing the interview data collected in Hiroshima. Following that, further themes that emerged from the interviews will be analyzed in the hopes of identifying additional necessary conditions for promoting participation in professional development. These themes are:

- Wise Mandates
- Knowledge Gaps
- Inclusiveness

Individual Autonomy

When Peake and Fraser did their research, they took inspiration from Megginson and Whittaker's (2003) definition of professional development as "a process by which individuals take control of their own learning and development" (p. 5). The surveys they gave were aimed to provide support for the goal of offering a system based on individual action, "of self-directed professional development opportunities and guidelines... envisioned to be entirely voluntary" (p. 181). This perspective was perhaps partly a reaction to the manner in which official PD measures had suddenly been imposed by management as a condition of the teachers' contract renewal, but this perspective can also be viewed as aligned with the ELI's decidedly western stance and its culture of promoting independent learning, where autonomy is a key theme of the curriculum.

The 2008 survey sought to assess the degree to which ELI members share Peake and Fraser's emphasis on the need for acting as individuals. Though an emphasis

on individual freedom was indeed valued, it was not without exception- 16 teachers (40%) agreed with the statement “I believe professional development should be completely self-directed and voluntary,” but 14 teachers (35%) disagreed and the remaining 10 (25%) were neutral on the topic (Table 2):

Table 2- Autonomy and PD

“I believe professional development should be completely self-directed and voluntary.”

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Count
2.5% (1)	32.5% (13)	25.0% (10)	27.5% (11)	12.5% (5)	40

On another survey item (Table 3), 25% of current ELL-ers expressed a preference for working alone, while 42.5% agreed that “When it comes to my professional development, I prefer to work with others.” This range of views suggests the importance of choice. PD options can survive without being mandated, and it is possible that they can only truly thrive when participants feel they have the choice to commit themselves of their own free will and out of their own self-assessments of what they need.

Table 3- Working with Others

“When it comes to my professional development, I prefer to work with others.”

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Count
5.0% (2)	20.0% (8)	32.5% (13)	35.0% (14)	7.5% (3)	40

The interviews with teachers in Hiroshima were open-ended, with little prompting from the interviewer. As such, the participants were not directly asked to opine on the extent to which autonomy played a part in PD. Still, the topic presented itself

in a variety of interesting ways during the interviews. One member expressed that the small size of the BECC had impeded autonomy insofar as it created a situation in which members may feel “guilted into” attending PD offerings like guest speaker talks, to prevent embarrassing the organizers with low attendance. In Hiroshima, the teachers no longer face an official PD requirement, and at least one other interviewee expressed this as a positive, saying that there was no concern about contract renewal, the atmosphere was more relaxed, informal and autonomous, and had a greater feeling of trust. “They actually trust you to do what you are doing... they’re not looking over your shoulder.”

Issues of autonomy also surfaced when a number of interviewees turned their attention to KUIS ELI’s official PD system, which requires ELL-ers to be observed in the classroom by administrators three times and to submit a portfolio in the middle of their second year of employment. One interviewee felt that having official PD as a requirement for contract renewal had an impact on the unofficial PD, such that the non-official PD became a “benchmark.” Had this interviewee still been at Kanda, this person would have expected to feel pressure to be seen to be participating.

Of the official PD observations, one interviewee said they were useful, but they “put a lot of stress on people rather than thinking how they’ll benefit... It’s like creeping death.” More interviewees volunteered opinions on the portfolios. Though one said that they “seem to motivate some people,” others felt that it was “just jumping through hoops.” Furthermore, one noted that choice was not a factor in terms of how the portfolio was executed (e.g. e-portfolio vs. paper).

Administrative Support

Peake and Fraser (2004) found that “support from management and having access to opportunities are essential” to professional development (p. 183), and the survey data in Stillwell (2008) bore this out- 75% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I believe professional development requires support from management.” Further analysis of the conditions noted how structures in place at the ELI promote collaborative professional development by supporting a diversity of viewpoints and nurturing a culture of innovation, sharing, and crossing borders (Stillwell, 2008).

With regard to the BECC in Hiroshima, two teachers highlighted the balancing act that administrators face in promoting PD. One placed ultimate responsibility with the management, saying:

Whether it will become like Kanda, with PD workshops and many other circles and groups that meet, I don't know. I don't know if it's realistic to think that it's going to be like that here, size-wise and culture-wise. It'll depend on the management.

In contrast, another expressed that “sharing ideas is the #1 most useful kind of PD,” and that it happens naturally and works well “as long as management doesn't interfere too much.” For instance, the interviewee explained, weekly meetings could be good to ensure the sharing of ideas, but staff could get irritated about the extra demand on their time.

Reflecting on the administrative support provided to the ELI at KUIS, another

Hiroshima teacher noted that having small groups in research projects and fostering freedom and trust by treating teachers as professionals all help teachers feel they can do other things. “[The administrators] work pretty hard to establish a culture where teachers see that they can do things, particularly research... because it’s an expectation, a requirement, it facilitates what happens- people read, attend statistics workshops, bag lunches.”

In the interviews, three areas were identified where administrative support for PD at KUIS might be improved: defining the portfolios, having a person on the faculty dedicated to PD matters, and providing ongoing (official) professional development beyond the first weeks or first 18 months. With regard to the portfolios, the prevailing tone was somewhat negative, with the general theme being that the lack of definition of the task and its purpose caused many to question its utility. One interviewee stated that the absence of a rubric and explanation of purpose made it necessary to ask 2nd- and 3rd-year teachers what was expected, and that the absence of real feedback all meant that the portfolio is about “keeping up appearances” and is not “legitimately PD.” Another said that the vague requirements make teachers get overly worried about it, though it “did make you think about what you have to do to get the next job.”

One interviewee expressed that Kanda needs someone dedicated to helping teachers get PD benefits, someone who can say what the objectives and expectations of the PD program are and can make clear what is acceptable- “Having a full-time PD person with a staff of over 60 is not unrealistic.” Another expressed this need more in terms of research, lamenting that the

existing channels for feedback on research had not been sufficiently candid and that as a result, this interviewee had not been “stopped from doing a project that was crap.”

It was expressed that (official) PD should not be one thing that happens at the end of 18 months- it should be ongoing. For learning advisors, this need could be particularly acute given the fact that newcomers typically do not have prior experience in this role. It was mentioned that the training for learning advisors primarily happens before starting work and runs a risk of information overload, and there is insufficient follow-up in terms of on-the-job training. One advisor expressed the wish to have training “after [beginning the job] too, not just at the beginning,” and indicated that the training would be more meaningful once actual experience had made explicit the need for particular kinds of knowledge. Still, this interviewee acknowledged that not everyone shared the same opinion.

Structures and Models

An excerpt from Stillwell and Murphey (under review) suggests the importance of structures and models in promoting PD:

Naturally, there are limits to what administrators can do to promote autonomy, for “the majority of employees take their cues from a trusted colleague rather than from the boss, the employee manual, or a silver tongued trainer” (Reeves, 2006, p. 34). History and psychological research show that as a species we are prolific modelers of our peers, sometimes for our good (Piaget, 1962) and sometimes to our detriment (Lorenz, 1967; Zimbardo, 2008). Anthropologists and sociologists contend that it is our ability to work together in groups and

learn from each other, to collaborate, that has allowed for our advancement on the planet.

Structures that support collaboration can have a broad reach, having an impact on various other areas of the school environment. As Dornyei and Murphey (2003) note, collaboration is a fractal that begins with teacher modeling and then is often replicated among students. Schools with cohesive and collaborative teacher groups have students who actually learn more and collaborate more. One affordance of modern education is the possibility of many students seeing and modeling each other on a regular basis and in fact becoming the main influence of each other's development (Rich Harris, 1998). Such near peer role models (Murphey & Arao, 2001) are successful to different degrees depending on the socio-economic and educational circumstances. There is also substantial data that modeling works to some extent at the organizational level (e.g. the learning organization, Senge, 1990) and that it could happen in education (e.g. the learning school, Senge et al, 2000) and for groups of teachers (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Reeves, 2006, 2009).

Such modeling can be inferred in the explosion of professional development offerings in the ELI over the past 3 or 4 years, where the success of a writing circle preceded the creation of a conference abstract circle, reading discussion sessions preceded scheduled conversations on common classroom issues, and peer workshops were established before a presentation practice group came onto the scene. Though it is hard to prove, it is not hard to imagine that the administration's efforts to support diversity and border crossing at the institutional level have had

a similar effect of promoting such activity at the individual level.

Hiroshima teachers noted that the small size of the staff and their common curriculum made collaboration a natural occurrence. Professional development of this nature often happens quite by chance, with little or no structure evident, though structure can be at work in invisible ways. For instance, Asaoka et al. (2008) describes how a huge university staff room facilitated professional development along these lines. Because this room contained the mailboxes for all the full time and part time teachers, as well as the photocopier, it fostered collaborative PD of the informally organized kind, making people cross paths and happen upon opportunities for informal PD. At KUIS, the more formalized procedures for peer observation via mentor development or lesson study provide structures that can make candid discussion following classroom observation relatively safe, in spite of the risks involved in sharing substantive feedback to peers, as noted in literature on peer observation (Stillwell 2009, Gillies et al, in press).

ELI-ers are expected to join committees at the start of the year, making a choice between PD, student activities, computers, and professional library. Though this has not been the practice in Hiroshima, one recent addition to their administrative landscape has been the formation of a PD committee. One interviewee recounted that there had been some debate over whether a Bunkyo PD committee was necessary. Though some had asked, “Can’t we do things without the formality?,” the interviewee expressed an alternative view that the PD committee could offer structure and help in situations where people might simply decide to do something PD-related, but might need a nudge in the right direction. It was hoped that

through a PD committee “things could be put in place to facilitate people doing PD on their own.”

Awareness and Convenience

It does not matter how many PD options are officially or unofficially on offer if the teachers are not made aware of them. Ideally, those people interested in promoting PD will find the most effective ways of reaching colleagues and maximizing the possibility that participants will come to the table. The survey used in Stillwell (2008) asked “How do you prefer to hear about PD opportunities?” and found that the easiest means listed, receiving e-mail and hearing announcements at meetings, were by far the most popular, while the least convenient (visiting the mailboxes or checking for new announcement pages in the copy room), were least popular.

In 2004, Peake and Fraser noted that few teachers regularly borrowed books or used the university library very much, and surmised that this was because the library was not considered conveniently situated or accessible. The 2008 survey asked ELI members’ opinions on the matter by asking their feelings toward the statement “I would use the professional library more if it was in building 7 [the new location of the university library, on the far side of campus] instead of the building 6 copy room [a hub of frequent teacher activity]”. Only 20% of respondents agreed with the statement, while 52.5% disagreed.

The current experience of Hiroshima teachers shows that ‘convenience’ is relative, as they now have to do much more than cross campus to find a library- the pauci-

ty of professional literature at their location forces them to seek loans from the Kanda library. Two of the interviewees remarked that these Kanda offerings were sorely missed, and another shared that efforts were underway to raise awareness of the resources that they do have by creating a database of the teachers' personal book collections.

In terms of the myriad informal PD options available at KUIS, one interviewee noted a specific instance in which convenience had played a part in participation. Though this interviewee was not particularly interested in collaborative PD, the conveniently available copies of the readings for discussion facilitated individualized PD by making it easy to read new literature independently. A similar practice has continued at Hiroshima, where recordings of guest speaker talks are made available on the shared server for easy access.

The interviewees noted that architecture can play a part in facilitating collaborative PD. At Hiroshima, teachers are all on the same floor and thus have easy access to one another. On the other hand, one interviewee noted that at Kanda architecture can interfere, particularly insofar as the staff is distributed between two buildings, though "it should be overcome-able." The interviewee admitted spending the first year rarely venturing from building 6 to building 4, and that perhaps some PD opportunities had been missed by never visiting the place where the 3rd and 4th year people tended to be. Another interviewee took up a similar theme, saying measures should be taken to facilitate newcomers' benefiting from the experience of ELI-ers who have been around for a few years.

Learning advisors in Hiroshima have changed from having 3 ELI-ers in an office to having their own office in the BECC, and one advisor noted that this had been somewhat detrimental to PD because it no longer happened quite so naturally. In a shared office, one can simply ask questions or benefit from being in the room for officemates' discussions. At present, an advisor would have to get up, leave the office, and knock on a colleague's door to have a conversation. Though it may seem to be only a moment's inconvenience, this change in the environment can likely have a major impact on the extent to which 'natural' PD takes place.

Wise Mandates

Part of an administrator's job is to establish policies for the staff. It is tempting to think that individual policies can exist in a vacuum, but the truth is that their impact can extend beyond the original intent. When establishing policies for faculty development, administrators would be wise to consider the potential side benefits and risks.

At the 2009 JALT conference, the author had occasion to participate in two presentations on voluntary PD at KUIS, and judging from the nature of the questions in the last ten minutes, the audiences were quite informed on PD-related matters. In both instances, the audience's probing eventually led to the disclosure that ELI members are contractually required to participate in official PD in the form of observations and portfolios in order to have their contracts renewed, and in both instances this detail seemed to satisfy the audience's incredulosity at how much collaborative PD is taking place at KUIS. To them, this mandated PD obviously has a direct effect on people's motivation to participate in PD, "to be seen

to be participating,” as it was put in the words of one Hiroshima interviewee.

Some universities in Japan have monthly meetings at which all faculty are required to attend, regardless of direct relevance, and part of the reason for this is probably because attendance at meetings is a lot easier to measure than other types of faculty development. Still, it is hard to see what constructive parallel activities may ripple out into the rest of the school culture as a result of useless meetings- more useless meetings? On the other hand, the ELI's official PD requirement may have a more positive impact. Because this requirement puts teachers in the position of having to bring administrators into their classrooms for observations followed by conferences, a number of participants in the mentor development program have expressed that they have been motivated to participate in peer observations for the opportunity to become comfortable with being observed and to trial material in advance of the official observation. In this fashion, the official PD requirement has led to informal PD activity which happens to hold tremendous potential for collaboration and individual growth.

Knowledge Gaps

A recurring theme in the Hiroshima interviews was the influence of experience on PD. One stated that PD at Kanda had been of great interest in the beginning when inexperience made the need for training obvious, but that now things were different. While two others expressed interest in working with more experienced colleagues, one expressed the opposite sentiment, a sentiment of not wanting to waste time on PD that will not be beneficial, for there seemed to be few colleagues who would have anything to offer. It appears that awareness of a pertinent

knowledge gap among colleagues can facilitate collaborative PD, while the belief that such a gap does not exist in a particularly relevant area can have a negative impact on PD activities. It is interesting to note that students in communicative language classrooms may feel the same way, disproportionately favoring teacher input over the learning opportunities to be found in peer interaction (Stillwell, Curabba, Alexander, Kidd, Kim, Stone, and Wyle, in press).

In the ELI, the influence of knowledge gaps has manifested itself in a number of areas. In the English program, Freshman English teachers have been invited to 'pizza sessions' in which to share and exchange ideas and insights about the curriculum. A follow-up survey with all the participants found that the new teachers were more inclined to express that they had benefited from the sessions, while those teachers that had been at Kanda for more than a year tended to be a bit more blasé about it (Stillwell, Kidd, Alexander, McIlroy, Roloff, and Stone, in press). In the second semester of 2008, Fenton-Smith and Stillwell (under review) collected attendance data for the bi-weekly, voluntary reading discussions, finding that ten out of the twenty participants were from the newest cohort of teachers and learning advisors (and 3 were in the core group of 7 that attended 2/3 of the meetings or more). And in the spring and fall semesters of 2009, 6 out of the 14 participants in peer observations with the mentor development program have also been from the newest group of teachers.

This tendency of newer teachers being motivated to participate in PD activities makes logical sense. It is only natural to be eager to learn when one is acclimating to new surroundings- it is a necessity for survival. However, the relationship

between relative inexperience and interest in PD points to another factor likely to have had a major influence on the high levels of participation in PD in the ELI-limited contracts. The 2-4 year contracts ensure that the ELI is in a constant state of turnover, with an influx of new teachers and advisors every year, eager to learn the skills necessary not only to teach in a new environment, but also to become a researcher, another contractual requirement that demands a lot from many newcomers.

Inclusiveness

One interviewee noted that most PD options at KUIS are based on issues of interest primarily to teachers, and that this may have an alienating effect on the learning advisors. Though efforts have been made to include learning advisors in all PD activities, those in charge of selecting content for reading discussions, peer workshops, guest speakers and the like would do well to ask themselves how selected material will be relevant to that segment of the ELI population. In interviews with other teachers in Hiroshima, the topic of useful PD topics came up, and it was interesting to see that two teachers that took up the issue did indeed suggest topics that were exclusively classroom-focused. As one put it, it would be good “to have peer workshops on topics relevant to everyone, like ideas for warmers and classroom management.”

Future Directions

At this point, a few suggestions can be gleaned for those interested in promoting collaborative PD in their workplaces:

1. Make expectations clear, and provide examples.

2. Remove all obstacles- make participation easy.
3. Provide a range of choices so as to facilitate self-direction.
4. Promote interaction between experienced and inexperienced members.
5. Cast a wide net, and invite participation from all corners.
6. Mandate wisely, with consideration of the impact mandates may have in related areas.

The research done up to this point has been necessarily exploratory, and the list of factors that may be critical in promoting collaborative PD here suggested is by no means exhaustive. Additional factors may include such things as having money and resources, as well as having a large pool of faculty members from which to draw participants. Now that the beginnings of a set of principles has emerged from the surveys and interviews, these principles might be used as the basis for a revised questionnaire that seeks further secrets of collaborative PD from those who participate in it.

One interviewee stated that a key factor to successful PD offerings is having people that want to initiate something. The ELI is fortunate to have people willing to dedicate themselves to writing circles, websites, reading discussions, and the like, apparently out of a personal passion for the subject. It would be useful to take the principles for promoting collaborative PD here proposed and hold interviews or a focus group session with these PD leaders to find out how well these principles represent what is actually necessary to get a PD initiative off the ground. In addition, it should be illuminating to get the rest of the ELI to weigh in on these principles through the format of a simple survey regarding what factors have

played a role in their decisions to participate in PD. Finally, it would also be good to go outside the Kanda umbrella and find out what factors are prohibiting or facilitating collaborative PD at schools further afield.

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