The Teachers' Professional Development in The Implementation of CEFR-Aligned Classroom Based Assessment

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Abstract

The recent implementation of CEFR-aligned Classroom-Based Assessment (CEFR CBA) requires teachers to conduct comprehensive assessments of their students as part of their teaching and learning practises. Regarding this reform, the teachers' professional development (TPD) programme plays a crucial role in ensuring that teachers are well-equipped with the content and pedagogical understanding of the new policy. The TPD becomes an important medium with the aim of enhancing teachers' professionalism to suit the need of education reform. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the implementation of teachers' professional development at the meso (school) and macro (education department) levels by identifying the types of TPD strategies employed by trainers. This study also investigates the challenges preventing the TPD programme from effectively function in disseminating information to teachers. By using the qualitative approach and semi-structured interviews, data was collected to address research objectives. Overall, this study found that the implementation of the TPD programme for CEFR CBA was ineffective as it was highly transmissive but lacked the practicality required to ensure the dissemination of knowledge throughout the entire cascade system. Several obstacles, including the uncertainty of conducting in-house training, non-option teachers, participant engagement, and limited time, impede the TPD's ability to fulfil its purpose of coaching and mentoring teachers to implement the CEFR CBA. This study suggests that programme designers and trainers should better equip TPD by addressing the needs of teachers at the micro level.

Keywords: Teachers' Professional Development, Classroom-Based Assessment, Common European Framework of References, Cascade Model

INTRODUCTION

In the age of globalisation, education systems are changing, thus offering opportunities for serious and promising educational reforms. The development of education is increasingly important as it needs to keep up with the constant demand for improvement to be relevant with the current needs of country. In the context of language studies, the English Language Education (ELE) is one of the areas that has been involved in this rapid change. The implementation of Common European Framework of References (CEFR) in ELE curriculum signifies that Malaysia is moving to develop and meeting the demands of international standards (Azman, 2016). The integration of CEFR in ELE curriculum has impacted the entire system especially on the aspect of how the language assessment is conducted. As CEFR bring an

emphasis of moving away from the exam-oriented culture, many high-stakes examination *(Pentaksiran Tingkatan 3* and *Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah)* that were foreground at both primary and secondary schools were abolished starting 2021. Replacing these assessments, a more progressive and continuous assessment system known as CEFR-Aligned Classroom Based Assessment (CEFR CBA) was introduced in ELE curriculum. The changing climate from traditional assessment to CEFR CBA was considered as a quick transition in ELE curriculum. This reform requires teachers to learn new roles and ways of teaching that translate into long-term developmental processes which require them to focus on changing their own practices (Dichaba & Mokhele, 2017). Hence, to meet all this demand, the teacher's professional development is recognised as a vital element to enhance the quality of executing the reforms (Haug & Mork, 2021).

The teacher professional development or abbreviated as TPD is one of the essential components in the aim of enhancing the teacher's professionalism (Ngeze, Khwaja & Iyer, 2018). TPD acts as a medium of providing teachers with the professional learning. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) believed that there is a need to conduct TPD on a large scale to effectively engage large number of teachers in tasks of teaching and assessments. Hence, the cascade model was famously adopted in TPD design to engage and shape teacher practices through a social participation process involving communities with similar practices (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This model lays on the assumption of the knowledge in the new policy (CEFR CBA) is passed down according to the stages of stakeholders in the dissemination model. However, the adoption of cascade model in TPD for CEFR CBA has sparked a heated conflict in educational field. This dissemination system was claimed as a failed system because it causes the knowledge and information to be diluted as it passes the stages or tiers in the cascade (Abeysena, Philips & Poppit, 2016). As a result, Arumugham (2020) justified that teacher practices of CEFR CBA in the current situation still inclined towards exam-oriented assessment even they have been disseminated with the content and pedagogical knowledge in CEFR CBA. Most teachers do not follow the guidelines cascaded to them from the policymakers (Arumugham, 2020). To note, the insufficient materials on the new assessment (Ghavifekr, Kunjappan & Ramasamy, 2016) and lack of training (Arumugham, 2020) have been compounded to this problem. Balang Mahamod and Buang (2020) reported that teachers were found to have a limited understanding on enacting CEFR CBA leaving the implementation of this new policy become vague as it did not align to the needs of policymakers. This situation has sparked a contested site to see that even the TPD was conducted for the teachers, however, it does not able to provide insights for them to enact the changes in education claiming that the TPD was ineffective.

To note, many past literatures (Arumugham, 2020, Balang et al., 2020, Acarerdol & Yildizli, 2018) has limit the discussion by addressing the effectiveness of TPD in engaging teachers' implementation of CEFR CBA. However, the types of TPD strategies in the enactment of CEFR CBA has yet to be discovered. Hence, the present study intended to discover the implementation of TPD in two main contexts. This study describes the types of TPD strategies employed by the trainers at the meso (school level) and macro (state and district education department) level. As a focus, this study emphasises on the teachers' professional development that is job-embedded and contextualised in the enactment of CEFR CBA. The discussion in this study will also elucidates on several challenges that interfered for the TPD program to serve its purpose in the enactment of CEFR CBA. Hence, the salient findings of the study are intended to answer two main research questions as follows:
1) What are the types of TPD strategies conducted at the meso and macro level in the implementation of CEFR CBA?
2) What are the challenges that the trainers (ELP Heads and SISC+) face in training teachers through TPD?

1.   The Concept Of Teachers' Professional Development

Researchers long have recognised that the teachers' professional development (TPD) is essential to changing the classroom practice, improving schools, and ameliorating students' learning outcomes (Postholm, 2018). In general, TPD is described as professional learning medium that often takes place in formal settings (Kwakman, 2003). According to Timperly (2011), this formal setting includes the small group interaction and formal coaching and mentoring programs. Besides, the learning process does not only augur in the formal setting situation. A TPD also engages teachers through informal

interaction which can occur through the peer teaching, collaborative planning and mentoring between colleagues (Little, 2012). The engagement of teachers in TPD program can greatly influence the sense of Community of Practice (COP) (Lave & Wenger, 1991) through the engagement of adult learning theory (Knowles, 1978). The TPD is grounded in the concept that teachers learn from more capable colleagues which can eventually contributes to their learning trajectories in adapting to the new knowledge. Lave and Wenger (1991) clarified that in order for teacher to master the knowledge and skills in the new practices, the engagement of teachers (newcomers) with the experts is desirably significant to promote the community of practice that shares common understanding and aims in the learning process. Thus, the implementation of TPD is perceived to provide the medium for this type of learning process to take place. To add, Darling-Hammond, Gardner, and Espinoza (2017) addressed seven main criteria for the TPD to function effectively. These criteria include:

1. Is content focused
2. Incorporates active learning utilising adult learning theory
3. Supports collaboration, typically in job-embedded contexts
4. Use models and modelling of effective practice
5. Provides coaching and expert support
6. Offers opportunities for feedback and reflection
7. Is of sustained duration

In this sense, there is strong evidence that the TPD is best when it addresses teachers' specific needs in their areas (Darling-Hammond, Chung, Adreee, & Richardson, 2009). Thus, the involvement of administrators in TPD is demanding important to create a learning environment in schools which can nurture teachers' development needs, by encouraging experimentation, finding, and allocating resources to support teachers' learning, and by enhancing the implementation of new learning in the policy (Vanblaere & Devos, 2016). The leaders must play important role in ensuring the proper learning conditions are in place at the school which can create a "culture" of learning for teachers. Forte and Flore (2014) assert that there must be an interplay between the structure and culture of teachers are to learn together. The collaboration between teachers produces a number of benefits with significant impact on their professional lives, thus playing an important role in professional teacher development strategy (Vangrieken, Dorchy, Raes, & Kyndt, 2015).

2. Adopting Cascade Model In The Teachers' Professional Development

The TPD of CEFR CBA in Malaysia was designed using a "cascade model." Abeysena, Philips, and Poppit (2016) characterised the cascade model of TPD as "top-down" collective professional learning. The cascade model depicts the flow of knowledge from 'expert' teachers, also known as Primary Trainers (PTs), to Secondary Trainers (STs) or multipliers at various levels (Abeysena, Philips & Poppitt, 2016). This model was adopted by a number of TPD programs in order to inform and equip teachers with the fundamental content and knowledge in a "short period of time while minimising the cost of the training programme" (Turner, Brownhill & Wilson, 2017). Briefly, the cascade model employs the strategy of "training the trainers," which is repeated at lower levels until the target audience is reached. Figure 1 illustrated the cascade model of teacher professional development in the context of CEFR CBA implementation.

Based on the cascade model depicted in Figure 1, the TPD in CEFR CBA enactment was set accordingly in top-down situation owning to the three layers of tiers which are the macro (state/ district education department), meso (school) and micro (classroom) level. Each of these levels represented by the stakeholders that involves in the implementation of CEFR CBA in educational institutions. From the structure of this TPD model, the SISC+ (School Improvement Specialist Coaches) situated at the macro level are described as the primary trainers (PTs) as they responsible to bring down the knowledge of CEFR CBA from the policymakers through the entire stakeholders in the cascade system. At the meso (school) level, the roles of ELP (English Language Panel) Heads as the secondary trainers (STs) are also incredibly important. The ELP Heads who receive the initial training and skills via workshop from the PTs needs to train other teachers at the micro levels by carrying out the in-house training in their respective schools. However, up to this point, there were no clear guidelines as to how the in-house training should be carried out at the school level. But general understanding was these ELP Heads

shared the knowledge that they had gathered from the PTs and transmitted it to the teachers in the school. As the final recipients of this cascading system, teachers are the main agents to determine the effectiveness of the TPD. As the micro implementers, the success of the policy is determined from the ability for them to enact the changes through their practices that is aligned with the needs of the curriculum goals. Hence, it is increasingly important for the trainers (primary and secondary trainers) to ensure the dissemination are effectively done in TPD program.
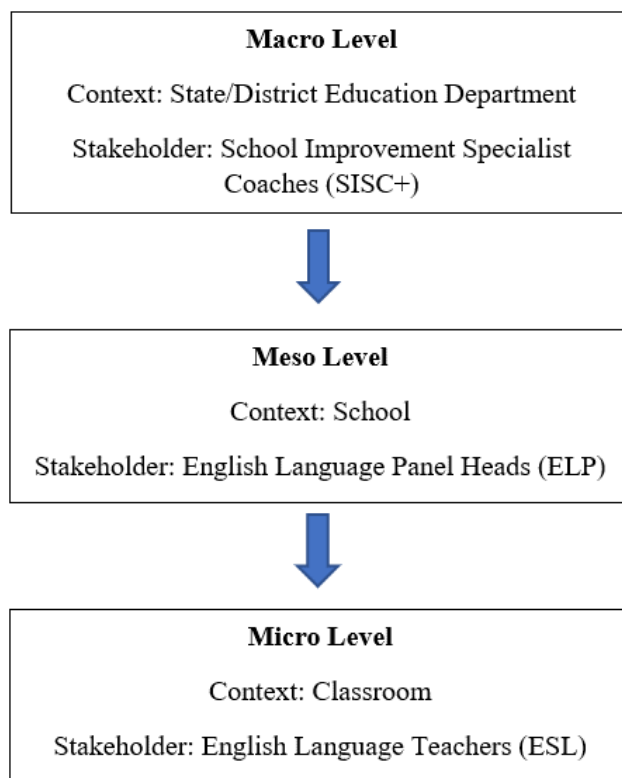

Figure 1 Cascade model of teachers' professional development for CEFR CBA

METHODS

As this study intended to discover the enactment of TPD in the implementation of CEFR CBA, a qualitative approach was utilised to provide a deep insight and comprehensive view (Creswell, 1998) on the aspect TPD enactment. In a more specific context, a case study design was used in this study to rectify the types of TPD strategies carried out by the trainers and at the same time exploring the challenges that interfere the TPD to function effectively. According to Merriam (2009), the case study design can help researchers 'explore detailed perspectives' of the studied area. Hence, the data retrieved for this study are based on the semi-structured inte2rviews with the participants at the meso and macro level who are directly involved in the overall enactment of TPD for CEFR CBA. Rahman (2014) further supported that the use of semi-structure interview in the qualitative case study is beneficial for the researchers to probe in-depth information on the studied phenomenon.

1. Sampling Method

This study was conducted in educational institution (secondary schools and state education department) in Pulau Pinang, Malaysia. 4 ELP Heads at the school (meso level) and 2 SISC+ members at state education department (macro level) were selected to sit for the interview. These participants were chosen through the Purposive Sampling method. In order to disseminate the sample from a larger

population, the criterion-based selection method was used. The ELP Heads must have a minimum bachelor's degree and at least 10 years of experience in ELT field. They are the group of school administrators which conducted the in-house training at the school level and at the same time participated in the cascading workshop conducted by the SISC+ at the macro level. Besides, the SISC+ members participated in this study are considered as the primary trainers (PTs) who must have at least 10 years of experience and master's degree in ELT related field. In the context of TPD, the SISC+ must be from the group of trainers who conducted the CEFR CBA training and mentoring to the teachers in the cascade system. Table 1 below summarises the participants' demographic data. A pseudonym was used to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants in this study.

Table 1 Participants' demographic data

Participants	Age	Gender	Qualification	Experience in ELT field
ELP 1	40	Female	B. Ed TESL	15
ELP 2	48	Female	B. Ed TESL	18
ELP 3	35	Female	B. Ed TESL	10
ELP 4	45	Female	B.A Linguistic	19
SISC+ 1	50	Male	M.Ed Education	24
SISC+ 2	45	Female	M.Ed TESL	19

2. Research Instrument

The participants in this study were individually interviewed through open-ended questions. Longhurst (2003), stated that the use of open-ended questions can help researchers to obtain insightful and specific information as the participants were given the freedom to stimulate their responses by using their own word. This probing technique is helpful for the researchers to derive 'information rich' data needed for the study. The interview protocols were divided into three main sections. The interview protocol was adapted from Rahman (2014) and John (2018). In Section A, participants were required to present their professional background which mainly refers to their qualifications and experiences in ELT field. Whereas, in Section B, participants were asked to state the types of TPD program that they conducted as a mean of coaching and mentoring among the stakeholders in their job-embedded context. Section C was concerned to rectify the challenges in conducting the TPD program in the implementation of CEFR CBA. An interview guide (Merriam, 2009) was used as mean of sustaining the consistency in data collection process and at the same time reducing the biases in reporting this study. The interview was lasted between 15 to 20 minutes for each participant, and it was conducted in English as all the participants are the ELT practitioners. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed and went further thematic analysis through the Atlas.Ti application.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study were analysed using the theme analysis. Through the Atlas.Ti, several coding appears in relation to the research questions mentioned previously. Hence, the subsequent sections below present the findings of the study.

1. Types of Teachers' Professional Development at the Meso Level

At the meso (school) level, the implementation of TPD focused into controlling the quality assurance of CEFR CBA implementation. Hence, the PLC (Professional Learning Community) was used extensively in designing the TPD at the school level. The PLC was introduced in Malaysian schools in the aim of serving the medium and platform for teachers to work collaboratively in the activities that can enhance the quality of teaching, learning, and teachers' training (Salleh, 2020). Through the PLC medium, it offers a place for teachers' engagement and interaction to be taken over in the decision-making process. The coding below elucidates the types TPD strategies that were carried out at the school level by the ELP Heads.

a.   School Coaching

One of the TPD strategies that were foregrounded at school level is the coaching. School coaching was conducted as a mean of serving the medium for 'professional partnership' among teachers (Ali, Wahi & Yamat, 2018). This coaching system was assimilated in the PLC where the 'qualified coach' or the ELP Heads conducted the in-house training in their respective schools. As the ELP Heads received the training from the primary trainers (SISC+), the school coaching served as the medium of cascading information to the teachers at the micro level. As expressed by ELP 2, the school coaching has become a continuous effort done at the school level as this TPD was conducted tentatively. In the context of ELP 2 practice, she considered the coaching at the school level as a monthly activity for the panel so that teachers can be well updated with the new information related to CEFR CBA.

> *...we carried out a monthly discourse through PLC, so that teachers can come together and discuss about their classroom assessment... (ELP 2)*

From the excerpt above, an instructional coaching approach (White, Smith, Kunz & Nugent, 2015) was used in the coaching system at the school level through the formal talk given by the ELP Heads. In this context, the coaching was conceptualised in traditional and didactic way where it was treated as a formal learning platform in the school. In addition, the peer coaching (Barkley, 2010) was also used in the coaching at the school level. The peer coaching was carried out in the aim of supporting teachers working collaboratively among their peers. Barkley (2010) posited that the peer coaching provides the opportunities for teachers to improve skills and behaviours which lead to the professional and personal success. It promotes the teacher-to-teacher interaction where the learning take place when teachers learn from a more capable peer which can lead to an increase professionalism. For example, ELP 3 conducted peer mentoring when she assigned mentors to the new teachers in her school. The mentors, who were among the in-service teachers with extensive experience in education, were assigned with training the new teachers in the school through peer coaching.

> *...I appointed some mentors for the new teachers. So that... erm... they can collaborate with their peer because for me they best learn with their friends... (ELP 3)*

In this coaching system, the role of mentor is incredibly important to support the community of learning to the new teachers. Mentors' roles cover the process of imparting the knowledge to the new teachers at the same time ensuring the teachers can apply pedagogical practices that is aligned to the needs of policymakers. In this sense, this method of coaching is perceived to support teachers' professional growth in implementing new knowledge at field (Ali et al., 2018). A comparable conclusion was reached by Wedell (2005) in his study of the TPD programme in China. This study revealed that school coaching was also widely utilised in the TPD programme for teachers in order to keep them abreast of the most recent requirements of their educational system.

b.   Coordination

Coordination is an additional TPD strategy which is implemented in the school. It is a term used to describe the procedure where the stakeholders decide upon their shared objectives for the purpose of putting the new policy into effect (Castener & Oliveira, 2020). In the context of this study, "coordination" refers to the decision-making process that was carried out by the teachers in regard with the implementation of CEFR CBA. For the purpose of managing the CEFR CBA's implementation, the "top-down coordination" was carried out at the school level. The process of coordination was carried out in a cascade way through the Form Coordinators, who had been selected by the ELP Heads. As a result of this circumstance, the Form Coordinators are the ones who accountable for overseeing the implementation of CEFR CBA in accordance with the form that they have been given, in accordance with what is stated in ELP 4.

> *It is easier for me to handle the teachers if I appoint the coordinators for each form, and I am the one who makes those appointments. (ELP 4)*

In order to facilitate collaboration during the CEFR CBA implementation at the school level, the assessment methods were standardised. This involves the decision-making process on the instrument that will be utilised in the assessment as well as the coordination of the professional judgement among the teachers. In a nutshell, "standardisation" has evolved into the primary factor that is essential for teachers to use CEFR CBA. Also, ELP Heads noted that the coordination served as a valuable means for them to distribute support to all of the teachers who participated in the panel, echoing the sentiments voiced by ELP 1.

> *.... when we do coordination, umm, I think it is easier for me to distribute the assistance for all of the teachers.... (ELP 1)*

Referring to this assertion, coordination was viewed as a method for delivering support to individual teachers at the micro level. Castener and Oliveira (2020) supported the idea that coordination plays a crucial role in the cascade system of TPD. This role helps to ensure that the expertise does not merely concentrate at the top-tiers of the system. This is done to ensure that teachers have the assistance and scaffolding to put the new policy into practise in a manner that is consistent with the requirements and goals of the educational authority.

c. Supervision

At the school level, there was also a component of the TPD known as supervision that was carried out. The term "supervision" refers to the assistance that is provided by the principle and other heads of department at the school, with the intention of fostering the growth of the teachers' professional capabilities in order to achieve the required curricular objectives (Asyari, 2020). According to Karim, Kartiko, Daulay, and Kumalasari (2021), this 'assistance' can come in the form of guidance in the educational reform implementation, which can involve the selection of learning tools and methods of assessment. ELP Heads who were interviewed for the purpose of this study stated that the school administrators were responsible for providing comprehensive oversight. For instance, ELP 2 asserted that the supervision was carried out by the Head of Department (HOD) in the school in order to prevent an inflated data report in the evaluation. This was done with the intention of achieving the goal.

> *...the monitoring was done by the GK (Head of Department). This is really important for us to ensure no inflated data reported in the transit form… (ELP 2)*

The fact that the TPD programme at the school inculcates a "whole school" approach is evidenced by the oversight and monitoring that is carried out by the administrators of the school. In this scenario, the TPD was developed with the engagement of a wide variety of stakeholders at the school level being a primary consideration. It does not only centred to the development of teachers as individuals, but at the same time, the TPD was carried out with the aim of enhancing and creating professional learning communities that share a common and mutual understanding of defining the CEFR CBA policy into their practises. This was the primary objective of the TPD. The findings of this study appear to correlate with a study that was conducted by Preston and Barne (2017). That study found that the South African TPD was found to be effective because it inculcates the practise of cross-collaboration between the various stakeholders in the school. The findings of this study have shown that the South African TPD has been found to be effective. It was intended that the implementation of TPD at the school level would preserve and maintain the quality assurance in CEFR CBA implementation for all time and for all good. It was done in order to ensure that the practises of teachers are matched to the requirements of the curricular goals, and this was the reason why it was done.

2. Types of Teachers' Professional Development at the Macro Level

The macro level, the enactment of TPD was focusing on providing effective training for teachers to enact CEFR CBA. The TPD takes the approach of 'training the trainers' where the SISC+ were tasked to cascade the information of the new policy to the secondary trainers (ELP Heads) at the school level. This was done in relation to the nature of cascade approach that was adopted in the TPD design of

CEFR CBA. Hence, the aspect of training and coaching are centred to coach the middle leader teams (MLTs). The middle leaders (specifically the ELP Heads) are expected to cascade the information they retrieved from the trainers to the teachers through in-house training. The preceding section below presents the types of TPD at the macro level.

a.   Workshop

Several workshops were conducted by the SISC+ members at the macro level. The workshops act as a medium of engaging the teachers (ELP Heads) with the formal learning to implement new educational policy. This workshop marks the beginning of the "cascade" or "train-the-trainer" where the ELP Heads participated in several sessions spread out across the school year. SISC+ 2 claimed that the CEFR CBA workshop was conducted in a series where teachers are engaged in a modular approach of the workshop session.

> *We conducted the workshop mainly in series. Teachers are ought to join several series of workshop conducted by us the at state level. (SISC+ 2)*

The ELP Heads who attended the workshop were expected to apply the pedagogical practices and new knowledge that has been cascaded to them. As the secondary trainers (STs), it is an obligation for them to transmit it to their colleagues through the in-house TPD in their respective schools. However, the workshop was treated as an "event" rather than a "process". In this sense, the workshop was implemented in one-off nature as the workshop was conducted upon the request from the school as shown in the excerpt claimed by SISC+ 1 below.

> *…by the way, the workshop is conducted upon request. We don't have a specific time on how it happens in a year… (SISC+ 1)*

Hence, a Training Needs Analysis (TNA), was conducted by the SISC+ in rectifying the needs for training in the schools based on the request from MLTs group. To note, the workshop in TPD was not comprehensively used by the SISC+ to train teachers in the implementation of CEFR CBA as the nature of organizing a series of these workshops was more inclined to one-off nature. The workshop was only aimed at disseminating information to the STs in the hoped that they are able to apply specific workshop content strategies to conduct the in-house training at the school level.

b.   Materials Sampling

The TPD also made use of the methodology of material sampling as one of its various approaches. The evidence-based practise presented in CEFR CBA was made available to the teachers. The term "evidence-based practise" was first coined by Diery, Vogel, Knogler, and Seidel (2020), who defined it as "empirical evidence that best constitutes and exemplifies source of information which can impact teachers' practises in the classroom." Under the scope of this study, teachers were given access to a variety of resources that serve as examples of CEFR CBA practises. This includes a sample of the students' work and an instrument that will be shown to the teachers with the intention of illuminating the process of putting into practise the CEFR CBA as outlined by SISC+ 2.

> *…during the TPD we showed to the teachers with some samples…you know…this mainly related to the students' sample work and some examples of the questions that they can use in their classroom-assessment (SISC+ 2)*

Through the modelling of effective practice, teachers are hoped to assimilate the samples given to them to suit to the needs of the students in their respective classroom. Darling-Hammond et.al (2017) further affirmed that for the instructional modelling to be effective, it should support the ability for the teachers to "see" on the good practices to implement new strategies in their classroom situation. In general, in order for the modelling of CEFR CBA to be practiced, it is pertinent that the materials

exemplified to the teachers should become practical in the context of their classroom environment.

c. Personal Coaching

Even though the approach of coaching and training at the macro level were centred to train MLTs in school, however, there was a claim from the trainers that a personal coaching was conducted to the teachers. According to Denton and Hasbrouck (2009), the personal coaching acts as one of the TPD practice in which the trainers or "experts" works directly with the teachers by changing and improving the skills. In the context of this study, the personal coaching was carried out as an intervention medium to the teachers who were considered as "low performance educators". Hence, these teachers were identified through the TNA conducted by the SISC+ in the TPD program. This coaching includes instructional approaches where the SISC+ work hand in hand with the teachers through the classroom observations.

> *…I also work individually with the teachers. Like I conducted the classroom observation…*
> *(SISC+ 1)*

Through the personal coaching, the trainers provide more hands-on training to the teachers. This can help teachers to get more specific support that can suit to their needs. For example, trainers were used the personal coaching to identify the problem and discussing the solution in the teachers' assessment practices as claimed by SISC+ 1,

> *…during this personal coaching, it is easier for me to identify what the matter in teachers view*
> *to implement CBA and usually we also discuss how to handle the problem… (SISC+ 1)*

Hence, the personal coaching includes the delivery of performance feedback that was done through the classroom observation. The trainers conducted the performance review with the teachers in the aim of helping teachers to increase their professional development.

> *…I recorded the feedback that I can give to the teachers during the classroom observation so*
> *that they know the room for improvement… (SISC+ 1)*

According to Van Der Kleij & Adie (2020) the delivery of performance feedback through the classroom observation is helpful to provide learning medium for teachers to know what best constitutes their practices in enacting new knowledge. Hence, through the inculcation of personal coaching in the TPD, it helps teachers to see a milestone on the improvisation that can be done in implementing CEFR CBA. This has been proven in a study conducted by Rodgers (2019) on a TPD program in the southern states in USA. The teachers were observed in a biweekly classroom observation and performance feedback was constructively delivered to them which has able to help these teachers merge into the target behaviour of employing the pedagogical practices. All in all, the TPD program conducted at the macro level are meant to train teachers through coaching and mentoring. The trainers were tasked to design a training program which can help teachers increase their knowledge in the enactment of CEFR CBA. Hence, the next section of this study presents the challenges arises faced by the trainers (ELP Heads and SISC+) to design the TPD program for CEFR CBA.

3. Challenges in Implementing TPD Program for CEFR CBA

a. Uncertainty to Conduct In-House Training

The design of CEFR CBA TBD program that grounded on the design of cascade model has sparked many uncertainties among the MLTs (ELP Heads) to conduct in-house training in their respective school. Even these ELP Heads were trained by the SISC+ members through the workshop, but it is just limited to expose them with the policy (CEFR CBA). These ELP Heads were expected to cascade the information to the teachers in the absence of the primary trainers (SISC+) making the training at the school level cannot be properly executed. In fact, most ELP Heads claimed that they have the

uncertainty to cascade the information they received from the trainers.

> *…if I were to be honest, I don't know how to train my teachers in school. I have uncertainty that I might give wrong information to these teachers… (ELP 2)*

The cascade model lays on the assumption that these ELP Heads already have a foundational understanding on the training and CEFR CBA. However, delving into the current situation, the ELP Heads posit that they have a limited understanding on enacting CEFR CBA, and hence this can lead to a distorted dissemination at the ground level.

> *Once you know you are also learning to implement the policy and they expect you to train teachers, it's a struggle. I think it is a process of learning together (ELP 2)*

This matter can impede the flow of instructional delivery in the TPD to disseminate the knowledge of the policy to the teachers at the ground level. According to Bett (2016) the cascade model of training can contribute to the "dilution" of knowledge hence halting the TPD to serve its purpose for training teachers. Hayes (2000) further claimed that the dilution occurs in the cascade model happens due to tendency of the information being "adultered" as it is passing down to tiers and hence leaving the misinterpretation of information. The present finding seems to correspond to the study by Suzuki (2011) which has revealed that the cascade model in Nepal was found to be ineffective as the trainers at the lower level were not able to disseminate information making the bridging of knowledge cannot be transmitter to the implementers.

b. Non-Option Teachers

Another demanding challenge of employing TPD at the school level is dealing with non-option teachers. ELP Heads claimed that the emerging huge number of non-option ESL teachers has sparked a challenge for them to design TPD that best suit to the teachers' need and preferences of practicing CEFR CBA. This happened due to limited pedagogical and content knowledge embodied in these non-option teachers, hence affecting the execution of the training at the school level. ELP Heads claimed that most of the non-option teachers were having a limited knowledge in ESL field and language assessment due to the different background. These teachers were forced to teach English in order to fulfil the needs of school organization. ELP 3 claimed that,

> *… you know it is really tough to teach and train teachers who have a limited knowledge in ESL. I understand they are non-option, but the challenge here is me, I was forced to train them with CEFR CBA in which I'm also still new to this… (ELP 3)*

According to Jones and Moreland (2007), pedagogical and content knowledge are the important key foci in enhancing teachers' planning, teaching, and assessment because they help to develop the teachers' understanding of subject ideas and how these might be translated to best fit their students. This is because it helps to develop the teachers' understanding of subject ideas and how these might be translated to best fit their students. As a result, having pedagogical and content knowledge in the ESL field is important in order to ensure that a proper implementation of this assessment can be enacted. This is because CEFR CBA requires both of these types of knowledge. Having said that, in the context of this study, some ELP Heads were forced to train teachers who did not embody the ESL knowledge. As a result, it has become a real challenge for them to ensure that these teachers are equipped with CEFR CBA. For instance, ELP 1 stated that in order to build the conceptual understanding in approaching CEFR CBA, she needed to train these teachers with the fundamental understanding of language assessment.

> *…the teachers under me are mostly non-optionist, I only have one optionist teachers. So, I need to approach them from the basic to complicated things in handling English CBA (ELP 1)*

In this context, it is necessary for ELP Heads to develop a complete dissemination structure for these teachers. In addition, the lack of help from experts during the process of implementing the TPD programme has made it difficult for ELP Heads to design TPD that meets the demands of non-option teachers. Darling-Hammond, Hyler, Gardner, and Espinoza (2017) stated that coaching or other expert help is necessary for the dissemination model to support teachers' implementation of new curricula, resources, and strategies. This scenario is in stark contrast to the research conducted by Wedell (2005) on the TPD model in China. It has become abundantly clear that the participation of teachers and trainers over an extended period of time in the TPD programme has enhanced the pedagogical practises of teachers in executing the policy. This demonstrates that expert support in the cascade model is required to ensure the efficacy of dissemination.

c. Participants Engagement

It is vitally important for teachers to take part in professional development opportunities. Since the primary goal of the cascading that was carried out was to provide teachers with new and extensive knowledge of the pedagogical content of the policy, the active participation of teachers in TPD is unquestionably essential to ensure that proper implementation can take place at the grassroots level. Nonetheless, in the context of this study, trainers indicated that the low participation of teachers in TPD has impeded the process of disseminating the information in a way that is effective and fulfils its purpose. As Since they had a high level of scepticism towards the trainers, teachers were refused to attend the Teacher Professional Development programme (TPD). Due to this unfavourable perception, the teachers' relationship with the trainers deteriorated, which in turn made it more difficult for the training to be carried out in an effective manner. According to SISC+ 1, teachers frequently aren't prepared to be coached since they have the impression that there are "eyes" peering at them from the rear of the classroom.

> *When you go into the school you know they have this thought like oh my God. Here she is. But I was there, it's just that I do my job. You do your job? Mm-hmm... (SISC+ 1)*

In addition, SISC+ 2 provided additional evidence for the idea that this skeptical mindset that was embedded in the teachers caused them to become separated from the training program. This is due to the fact that the majority of teachers feel that the trainers were very authoritarian and superior.

> *...when we are in the position of a trainers, we tend to be seen as superior, we are very authoritative. That's what the teachers see and that's not the point. I always try to erase that from their mind... (SISC+ 2)*

Mohamad, Abd Rashid, Yunus and Zaid (2016) posited that establishing the relationship between teachers and the trainers is important in building trust to overcome resistance in dissemination process to take place. In this sense, the trainers need to provide some background information about their professional experiences in order to establish credibility in the beginning and to gain the trust from the teachers. In fact, training, in many cases, is about trust and building relationships. Some past studies have depicted the importance of trust in the coaching relationship (e.g. Kowal & Steiner, 2007; Brady, 2007; Neufeld & Roper, 2003). For instance, Brady (2007, p.47) stated that trainers need to learn to communicate with teachers in a way that is "non-threatening or offending" when they are providing feedback; and they must be able to establish and maintain the trust and respect of everyone involved at the school. Teachers must be able to work with their coach "without fear of punitive reporting to the principal" (Brady, 2007, p.47).

d. Time Constraint

Another significant challenge that the teachers must deal with is the restricted amount of time they have available for continuing their own professional development. In order to successfully implement TPD, there must be a significant amount of time spent training employees over an extended and continuous period of time (Darling-Hammond et.al, 2017). The TPD ought to provide a forum in which teachers

can engage in self-reflection and discussion in conjunction with the training. No matter how dynamic it is, a one-shot, sit-and-get approach to teacher professional development is not sufficient to engage teachers in professional learning (Bates & Morgan, 2018). Unexpectedly, SISC+ voiced their displeasure with the fact that they were only provided with a restricted amount of time to train the teachers. A quick transformation was deemed to have occurred when the former evaluation system, which consisted of high-stakes tests, was replaced with the CEFR CBA. Teachers were required to gain as much knowledge as possible in order to apply this change, and as a result, this has posed a problem for trainers to provide effective TPD in a short amount of time, as represented by SISC+ 2.

> *Time is limited. Teachers were automatically forced to change their role as CBA was introduced. As a trainer, it's a really challenge to train these teachers in the midst of them having other works to do… (SISC+ 2)*

In addition, SISC+ 1 reported that teachers are frequently overburdened with an infinite number of jobs and chores in addition to the primary responsibility of teaching, which results in an insufficient amount of time for teachers to spend in TPD. The limited participation and exposure of teachers in TPD has the potential to adversely affect the process of CEFR CBA dissemination.

> *…yeah they were too busy. Sometimes I have to make an appointment with them to conduct classroom observation and even to give a slot. It was so limiting… (SISC+ 1)*

This matter has the potential to alter the quality of instructional delivery in the programme, and as a result, it has the potential to affect how teachers understand the new policy. According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), the short amount of time that is spent on training can negatively effect the odds of teachers reflecting on new tactics that can help encourage change in their practise. A study that was carried out by Thang, Quang, and Buyens (2010) revealed that TPD would become ineffective if only a limited amount of time was given for its implementation. This is due to the fact that it reduces the engagement of teachers to actively participate in the training, which obviously affects the flow of knowledge to the teachers.

CONCLUSION

It was determined that the TPD of CEFR CBA was not fully effective. This research revealed that the TPD programme was highly contagious. The philosophy, rationale, and theoretical pedagogical principles of the CEFR CBA were presented in the form of a lecture or briefing, with the cascading system relying heavily on the trainers to impart the policy's specifics to the teachers. This mode of training relied primarily on one-way communication because it emphasised theoretical curriculum knowledge over providing trainees with practical experience. The model of curriculum dissemination lacked opportunities for teachers to reflect on the new curriculum and consider how best to implement it in light of their own experience. Due to a number of internal and external obstacles within the TPD programme, the training failed to deepen the teachers' understanding of the curriculum or even facilitate its implementation. Therefore, this study provides policymakers and training course designers with a better understanding of the factors they must consider when designing the TPD programme for teachers. One of the factors that must be considered is ensuring that the cascading is not centralised solely at the top level. The trainers must ensure the dissemination of curriculum-related knowledge and expertise throughout the entire cascade system. This will contribute to the development of an equitable distribution of support and scaffolding for all parties involved in the implementation of CEFR CBA. The TPD programme must also be conducted over an extended period of time in order to provide teachers with opportunities for active participation in the training. Unless these issues are addressed, it will be difficult to design an effective TPD programme.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data will be made available on request.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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