**TEACHING BUDDIES: PRICELESS SUSTAINABLE TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TOOL**

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**Abstract**

Sustainable professional development is critical for teachers, especially in higher education, in attaining personal as well as professional satisfaction. However, dedicated time for this endeavor is hard to allocate in the reality of busy college life. Therefore, there is a need for a sustainable teacher professional development tool that can accommodate the needs for professional as well as personal struggles. At Faculty of Nursing, Universitas Pelita Harapan, three struggling English language teachers took the initiative to form teaching buddies to deal the reality of the busy schedule, teaching over 1000 student nurses with a variety of cultural backgrounds. In this presentation, the three teachers will share the personal and professional experiences from their ‘reflective teaching buddies journal entries’. The discussion will focus on exploring the implementation and implications of ‘Teaching Buddies’ as priceless tool of sustainable professional development. They will specifically cover three important areas of English language teaching in higher education: Lectureship, Scholarship and Stewardship. Ups and downs of the journey in the teachers' professional development will also be presented to get input from the audience to further improve the ‘teaching buddies’ model. It is hoped that the improved model will further benefit other EFL teachers, especially those working in higher education.

**INTRODUCTION**

Teaching in a higher education institution is not an easy job to do. University teachers need to consider three pillars of higher education, namely lecturership *(pengajaran)*, scholarship *(penelitian)*, and stewardship *(pengabdian kepada masyarakat)*. In addition, teachers often face challenges which must seriously be taken into consideration. Therefore, teachers need to develop themselves in order to help them face the challenges and also improvethe quality of their teaching practice. Bailey, Curtis, and Nunan (2001) point out that participating in oppportunity for professional development can help teachers acquire new knowledge and skills, make some changes, and finally increase their income and/or prestige within the context of their current job. This means that sustainable professional development is critical for teachers in higher education in attaining personal as well as professional satisfaction.

However, achieving professional development is not easy. Teachers need to work together with their colleagues and help each other. Unless, teachers will feel lonely and stressful. This indicates that teachers surely need support system from their surroundings. At the Faculty of Nursing, Universitas Pelita Harapan, three struggling English language teachers took the initiative to collaborate and work together called “teaching buddies” to deal the reality of the busy schedule, teaching over 1000 student nurses with a variety of cultural backgrounds. Moreover, there are two teachers who are less experienced in teaching English in a higher education institution, especially at the Faculty of Nursing. Considering these conditions, therefore, the practice of teaching buddies run so far focuses more on lecturership rather than on scholarship and stewardship. The teaching buddies is expected to remind the teachers and they do not work alone because they get support system from their buddies. The personal and professional experiences of those three struggling English language teachers will be shared in this paper.

**DEFINING “TEACHING BUDDIES”**

Before we talk about teaching buddies, we need to reveal some definitions related to teaching buddies;

**Team Teaching.** Haynes (2007) declares that team teaching can be described as a situation where two teachers work together to teach a lesson. Using a related term to describe the concept, it involves two credentialed professionals who are partners in the instruction of the lesson. One professional is usually a classroom or subject area teacher and the other is a certified ESL (English as a second language) teacher. (Ken-Maduako & Oyatogun, 2015)

**Collaboration**. Although it is generally preferred that co-teaching be collaborative, it might or might not be. Collaboration generally refers to how individuals interact, not the activity they’re doing (Cook, 2004). Thus, any activity—including co-teaching, and problem solving, consultation--may or may not be collaborative.

**Parallel Teaching**. On occasion, student learning would be greatly facilitated if they just had more supervision by the teacher or more opportunity to respond. In parallel teaching, the teachers are both teaching the same information, but they divide the class group and do so simultaneously (Cook, 2004).

**Our Teaching Buddies.** Borrowing some key points from the above definitions, the team of writers of this paper define **teaching buddies** as a collaboration between two or more teachers, not just in lectureship (teaching and learning scope), but also in scholarship (research and professional development scope) and stewardship (sharing and exchanging information and making a difference in the community). Through this model of teaching buddies, the team of teachers support each other in their professional development endeavors. Here are some practices that they do in their professional development journey: conduct learning needs analysis together, design and develop lessons and share their reflections on what works and what doesn’t work in their classroom. In addition, they exchange information, ideas and strategies to carry out educational research and propose curriculum changes. Finally, they also collaborate in sharing their ideas and skills to make a difference in capacity building projects in surrounding communities. As their communication tools, they conduct regular coordination meetings, set up a social media group for convenient communication and multimedia-sharing, and use learning management system platform and other technology-based platforms for exchanging information and coordination.

**TEACHING BUDDIES MODEL**

In the era of faster-than-the-speed-of-light information and technological changes, it is critical that teachers keep moving ahead to improve themselves in speed and quality. Traveling alone in teacher development journey is not only an extremely daunting venture, but also a nearly mission-impossible one. Teachers need the supporting power and wisdom of their fellow teachers to move ahead. It is not wonder that teachers' sustainable professional development (STPD) is gaining more and more interest internationally. In fact, it is the very focus of this TEFLIN 2018 international conference. There are many tools that teachers can use to embark on their journey to sustainable professional development. The team of writers of this paper would like to share their ‘unique’ model of STPD: TEACHING BUDDIES MODEL.

The teaching buddies model that we apply in our institution is adapted from and an infusion of various models of teachers’ continuing professional development. Table 1 illustrates the model in a simple way.

**Table 1. Teaching Buddies Model**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No** | **Strategies** | **Goal** | **Primary Focus** | **Communication Tools** |
| 1 | Coaching and mentoring | * Remedy and problem solving * Teaching skills and strategies improvement | Lectureship | 1. Social media Group 2. Email correspondence 3. Learning Management System 4. Coordination Meeting |
| 2 | Collaborating | * Instructional design and development | Lectureship and Scholarship |
| 3 | Transforming | * Initiating and proposing transdisciplinary changes | Scholarship and Stewardship |

**Coaching and mentoring**

Coaching and mentoring are two-in-one strategies in any sustainable professional development effort. This means that they are two strategies that are usually implemented in parallel to one another. Implementing coaching would not be complete without mentoring and vice versa. Both aim at improving professional quality of a teacher. However, there are also attempts to distinguish between the two strategies. These attempts suggest that coaching focuses more on hard skills improvement (skills-based), while mentoring focuses heavily on soft skills improvement which involve more counseling elements (Rhodes & Beneicke, 2002, p. 301, in Aileen Kennedy, 2005).

In many cases, coaching and mentoring is implemented in hierarchical manner, between novice and more experienced member. In our Teaching Buddies model, we co-coach and co-mentor one another in the areas of our respective strengths, specifically in lectureship roles and responsibilities. For example, in technology in teaching, one of our team members becomes our coach and mentor, whereas in extensive reading, another team member becomes the coach and mentor. When dealing with organizational standards and best-practices, the more senior member (the member with longer employment period), functions as the coach and mentor of the more junior ones. To support this STPD, the team mostly communicate using our regular coordination meeting and social media platform.

**Collaborating**

STPD is not necessarily skills-based. Teaching scope extends beyond classroom teaching skills to team-based tasks in proposing instructional changes within the institution, such as developing new curriculum and syllabus, implementing new learning management system and exploring new approaches to improve teaching qualities and learning gains. Such efforts require team collaboration as suggested by Wagner in his Community of Practice model of teacher development. Wenger (1998) underscores the benefits of such model, which recognizes of positive outcomes of collaboration beyond planned and structured sharing of hard skills and soft skills in teaching in classes. The outcomes of th qe collaborative efforts are the results of collective wisdom, skills, and experiences the group members (The sum is more than the total of individual results).

In our teaching buddies model, we implement the collaborating strategies similar to the one proposed by Wenger when we deal with policy making and changing issues, and planning and designing new courses, mostly in the areas of lectureship and scholarship. The collaborative effort is mostly supported by the team’s communication tools of coordination meeting, learning management system, and email correspondence.

**Transforming**

Sustainable teacher professional development isn’t limited to the classroom and university contexts, nor is it limited to individual and organizational changes. When dealing with much wider educational impact, teachers need a model that can accommodate massive transformational changes to sustain not only the teacher and the organization where he or she works, but also the sustainability of the teaching profession and education system. Hoban (2002) as quoted in Kennedy (2005) suggests an interesting view of STPD as a means of transforming teaching profession and education system.

In our context of teaching buddies, we adopt the model suggested by Hoban when dealing with collaborating with external parties with regards to improving the quality of education (for example through research and community building efforts). In such contexts, we collaborate beyond the team to include trans-disciplinary members within the scopes of scholarship and stewardship. In proposing and executing any transformational responsibility, the team take into the consideration the responsibilities and authorities set up by the collaborating institutions and by the ministry of higher education through their collaboration schemes for research and community service. The transforming efforts are carried out using all available communication tools.

**CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the Teaching Buddies that the team has been implementing so far, has served as an important sustainable teacher’s professional development model for each team member, and at this stage mostly in professional development efforts in the scope lectureship and scholarship, and still in emerging stage in the scope of transforming stage. However, the Teaching Buddies model is still open for improvement and adjustment when implemented in different teaching and organizational contexts.

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