

Original Paper

Review of the Cooperative Development Framework in Language Teacher Education

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Abstract

This review article introduces the Cooperative Development (CD) model of professional development following its development process from Cooperative Development (Edge, 1992) to Continuing Cooperative Development (Edge, 2002) and to Computer-Mediated Cooperative Development (2006a). Some other professional development models are also briefly introduced in this review, including the Counseling-Learning approach, Collaborative Conversations, Collaborative Supervision, Professional Learning Communities, Communities of Practice, and Peer Coaching.

Keywords

Cooperative Development, teacher education, language teaching

1. Introduction

The CD model of professional development drew on the non-judgmental philosophy of Rogers (1995, 2004) in psychotherapy and originated from Edge's seminal work, Cooperative Development (1992), which itself was influenced to some extent by Curran's Counseling-Learning (1972, 1976, 1978), an educational approach grounded in Curran's teacher's (i.e., Rogers's) ideas. The CD discourse framework involves two or more colleagues working over a designated period through non-judgmental discourse to enhance the teachers' capacity building (Edge & Attia, 2014). The CD model has developed from one-to-one and face-to-face Cooperative Development into Group Development, CD by email, CD by cassette, Instant-Messenger Cooperative Development, and Computer-Mediated Cooperative Development (Boon, 2011). The process of CD involves attending, reflecting, thematizing, challenging, focusing, goal setting, and trialing (Edge, 2002). It requires respect, empathy and sincerity from both participants, the Understander and the Speaker.

2. Overview of Cooperative Development Framework

The Cooperative Development (CD) model of professional development (Edge, 1992) drew on the non-judgmental philosophy of Carl Rogers (1995, 2004; Rogers & Freiberg, 1994) in psychotherapy, on interpretations of this theory by Curran (1972, 1976, 1978), brought into the TESOL field by Stevick (1976, 1980, 1990), and developed by teacher educators and researchers such as Oprandy (1999). Rogers believes that the major barrier to mutual interpersonal communication is to judge and evaluate, the same with the field of education and learning (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994). The adaptation of Rogers' thinking into Curran's (1972, 1976, 1978) Counseling-Learning/Community Language Learning was brought into the TESOL field by Stevick (1976, 1980, 1990) and expanded upon by Rardin, Tranel, Tirone, and Green (1988) to incorporate a non-judgmental attitude to describe the importance of deeper human values in being a teacher. The non-judgmental attitude and communication styles, including Rogerian understanding (active listening), have also been used in teacher education, such as the use of "collaborative conversations" between teachers and their supervisors (Oprandy, Golden, & Shiomi, 1999). Meanwhile, this non-judgmental discourse also proved effective in teacher self-development, particularly in Edge's (1992, 2002, 2006a) Cooperative Development (CD) model of professional development.

The CD model is developed through several stages: the seminal work by Edge (1992) in his book *Cooperative Development*, which first brought up the theory of CD; the second stage involves Edge's (2002) book *Continuing Cooperative Development*, which is an extension of one-to-one CD to Group Development (GD) and approaches to conducting CD at a distance such as by email or cassette (Bartrick, 2002; Cowie, 2002); the third stage was inspired by Cowie and Bartrick, and developed into Edge's (2006a) *Computer-Mediated Cooperative Development (CMCD)* which includes *Instant Messenger Cooperative Development (IMCD)* by Boon (2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013) and *CD by email (EMCD)* (Cowie, 2002; Edge, 2006a). The third stage also involves CD in sociopolitical areas (Edge, 2006b; Edge, 2009) and other case studies (De Sonneville, 2005, 2007).

3. Cooperative Development

Rogers (2004) believes that self-actualization and the desire to grow are the inherent drive and urge for all human beings. It is in accordance with the idea of CD in that the center of teacher development is self-development (Edge, 1992). First, the idea of CD makes teachers feel the sense of taking ownership of their teaching and achieving self-satisfaction as an individual (Edge, 1992). Second, as a member of schools, societies or cultures, the CD model saves teachers from following the trend of the latest method, expert, or textbook, and encourages them to make decisions for themselves about their own criteria for development (Edge, 1992). Although teachers can learn from training, guest speakers, and publications to solve problems in their classrooms, the sense of developing their own potential and looking deeper into their own context is powerful in their professional development (Edge, 1992). The ultimate goal of CD is to empower teachers through professional development based on their own

understanding of their classroom context and practices (Stewart, 2003).

However, it is also important to notice that self-development does not necessarily mean working alone. In the CD model, the development as a teacher is encouraged by working with one or more colleagues over a period to enhance teachers' capacity building (Edge & Attia, 2014). Therefore, groups which applied the CD model also report an increase in collegiality (Edge, 2002). The one-to-one CD model usually involves the roles of the Speaker (or the Explorer) and the Understander (Boon, 2013; Edge, 1992). The speaker is the person who seeks professional development (Stewart, 2003). The speaker is self-motivated for participating in the conversation and takes full responsibility for directions, topics, and outcomes that is completely free of judgment, ends, means, or standards to be evaluated by the Understander (Edge, 2009). The role of the Understander is to help the Speaker develop the Speaker's own ideas by clarifying and following the Speaker, wherever he or she leads. The Understander needs to put aside their own assumptions, knowledge, experience, and opinions in order to better understand the Speaker (Edge, 2006a).

The process of CD is non-judgmental and requires the attitudes of respect, empathy and sincerity (Edge, 2002, 2009). Respect requires the Understander to accept the Speaker's decision on what topic or direction they would like to work on and accept the Speaker's opinions and intentions without judging them according to the Understander's values (Edge, 2002). Empathy requires the Understander to see things through the Speaker's perspective and context by acceptance, imagination, asking for clarification, and paying attention to the attitudinal and emotional aspects of the conversation (Edge, 2002). Sincerity requires the genuineness of the Understander's respect and empathy, without pretending but being honest (Edge, 2002). It can be seen that the role of the Understander is challenging to master and has more requirements than that of the Speaker.

4. Continuing Cooperative Development

Practical applications of the CD model are introduced in Edge's Continuing Cooperative Development (2002), which provides real-life examples of the interactional moves explained in his first book, Cooperative Development (1992). Those moves include attending, reflecting, thematizing, challenging, focusing, goal setting, and trialing (Edge, 1992, 2002). "Attending" is the ability to make the Speaker feel actively and supportively listened to through a non-judgmental attitude, nonlinguistic communication such as body language, and showing sincere interest (Edge, 2002). "Reflecting" asks the Understander to reflect the Speaker's ideas by repeating the words or paraphrasing to make the Speaker be clear about what has been understood (Edge, 1992). It is important to catch the Speaker's attitude and emotion during the discussion for the strong feelings which might predict essential points that are worthy to explore further (Edge, 2002). "Reflecting" helps to build the empathetic relationship between the Speaker and the Understander which also avoids misunderstanding or losing track (Edge, 2002). "Thematizing" involves the Understander's identification of potential thematic links between two items mentioned by the Speaker to help the Speaker make connections or distinctions (Edge, 2002).

The Speaker can respond with not being interested in the connection, choosing to explain what it means, exploring it as a theme, or differentiating the two issues (Boon, 2011).

The next step is “challenging”, which involves the Understander bringing up statements from the Speaker that conflict with each other. The Understander may invite the Speaker to articulate further so that he or she can understand and empathize with what the Speaker is attempting to express. However, the Understander still should not express evaluation, agreement or disagreement with the statements. In order to move towards action, the Understander may let the Speaker focus on one specific idea which has developed during the discussion to achieve deeper understanding. “Focusing” requires the Understander to avoid suggesting the direction or topic to work on, but encourages the Speaker to naturally narrow the focus. The step of “goal setting” is when the Speaker formulates a specific goal or action that can be implemented or evaluated to accomplish (Boon, 2011). The last step of “trialing” requires the Speaker to talk about how to implement the 56 plan (Edge, 2002). The Speaker has no pressure in strictly following the plan but to articulate it in a meaningful and organized way which supports the adaptability and flexibility in pedagogical practice. A figure is included below to show the steps and processes of the Cooperative Development model.

In Edge’s (2002) work, he also introduces the Group Development (GD) model, which is an extension of the one-to-one CD approach and involves three or more colleagues to focus on the individual development of each member in turn (Boon, 2011). GD involves three stages: speaker-articulation, understander-resonance, and speaker-review (Mann, 2005). The first stage of “speaker-articulation” is when the designated Speaker talks about a topic or issue they would like to work on, while the other colleagues work as multiple Understanders to listen carefully and reflect their understanding of the issue (Mann, 2005). The second stage of “understanderresonance” involves each Understander sharing their own experiences related to the discussed issue after listening to the Speaker’s statements (Mann, 2005). The last stage of “speaker-review” is when the Speaker responds to the Understanders’ resonances and gives last thoughts about the topic or issue after hearing the Understanders’ ideas (Mann, 2005).

The third part of Edge’s (2002) Continuing Cooperative Development introduces conducting CD at a distance with colleagues or teachers who work in isolated work environments or geographically remote areas through email (Cowie, 2002) and exchange of cassette recordings (Bartrick, 2002). Bartrick introduces the CD by cassette and mentions that the absence of body language, delayed response, and asynchronous discourse, provide both opportunities for reflection and reassessment, as well as challenges for feeling not well listened to by the Speaker.

5. Computer-Mediated Cooperative Development

Computer-Mediated Cooperative Development (CMCD) is the extension of CD through emails (EMCD) and instant-messenger (IMCD) (Edge, 2006a). The use of emails and instant-messenger proves that the CD model can be in both spoken and written forms (Cowie, 2002). Cowie argues that

compared with a spoken version of CD, the written version by email (EMCD) has many advantages in that written words can be more carefully crafted and reflected upon while writing; the colleagues can write whenever and wherever they want in a relaxed and comfortable way; the conversation can be rewritten and revisited to help with the reflection; and a variety of topics and themes can be discussed. The CD by instant-messenger (IMCD) enables two colleagues to work online through the Skype Instant Messenger text-chat function to have non-judgmental discussions and explore possible ways for dealing with topics or issues the Speaker is interested in (Boon, 2013). The Understander and the Speaker need to make real-time arrangements and have immediate conversational interaction through instant-messenger (Edge, 2002). The advantage of IMCD is that the Understander and the Speaker can have more time to articulate and reflect on their statements to make them clear and to the point (Boon, 2011). Moreover, the verbatim quotes of such conversations can serve as data for later analysis or edited when necessary (Boon, 2011). The individuals may be more willing to disclose their feelings and thoughts online than through in-person communication. Boon (2007) conducted a study by using IMCD with a Japanese teacher as the Speaker. The results of the study demonstrate that IMCD can be used in different cultures and successfully applied between native and non-native English speakers (Boon, 2007).

6. Other Professional Development Models

Curran (1969) defines the purpose of the Counseling-Learning approach (CL) as “incorporate teachers and learners together in a deep relationship of human belonging, worth and sharing”. According to Curran (1972), counseling and learning are sort of interrelated processes. The ultimate goal of the Counseling Learning approach is improved personal awareness and observable integration of practice for the learner, as well as the intellectual awareness of things beyond oneself (Curran, 1972). The difference between the Counseling-Learning approach and the CD model is that in CL the Speaker is always completely in control of the content of the conversation and can choose to move the discussion in whatever directions he or she wishes (Oprandy, 2002). On the other hand, the Understander in the CD model has the function of moving the Speaker towards a direction in reaching goals and the next step in terms of action emerging from the discussion. Nevertheless, the relationship between the Speaker and the Understander are similar in both models, and both models stress the importance of listening actively and providing understanding responses without judging or adding on one’s own opinions and values (Oprandy, 2002).

A collaborative conversation approach is to work with classroom teachers in an exploratory, non-judgmental way to describe their pedagogy and teaching lives. Arcario’s research (1994) found post-observation discussions are typically dominated by a “canonical conversation” which consists of evaluation, justification and prescription of classroom teaching. By promoting the collaborative conversation approach when teachers are actively listening, being descriptive rather than prescriptive, providing empathetic understanding responses, and assuming a believing stance rather than a doubting

stance, teachers avoid the self-defensive trap and take responsibility for more cooperative endeavors (Oprandy, 1999; Oprandy, Addington, Brown, & Rutter, 2013). “Active collaboration leads to shared or mutual reconstruction that is agreed upon by both practitioner and researcher” (Richardson, 1994). The results of collaboration are suggestive of new ways of looking at the practitioner’s context and providing possibilities for changes in practice (Richardson, 1994). The collaborative conversations could happen among teachers who teach the same subject in their school, teachers who teach in the same grade, or teachers who have the same interest in specific topics or themes (Vincente, 2017).

In the Collaborative Supervision model, the supervisor’s role is to work with teachers without overtly leading them towards any directions (Gebhard, 1990). Instead of prescribing what a teacher should or should not do, the supervisor could actively participate in the decisionmaking process and share ideas with the teacher (Gebhard, 1990). Cogan (1973) advocates this model and calls it “clinical supervision.” The Collaborative Supervision model is a problem solving process which includes posing hypotheses, experimenting, and implementing strategies to offer a reasonable solution to the problem (Gebhard, 1990). Through the supervisor asking questions such as “What did you think of the lesson?” “How did it go?” or “Did you meet your objective?”, the discussion could contribute to self-reflection by the teacher (Gebhard, 1990).

According to Astuto, Clark, Read, McGree, and Fernandez (1993), a professional community of learners is defined as when teachers and administrators of a school “continuously seek and share learning and act on that learning” (p. 2). The Professional Learning Communities model was developed by Shirley Hord (1997; 2004) and comprised of five essential dimensions: (a) supportive and shared leadership; (b) shared values and vision; (c) collective learning and its application; (d) shared personal practice; and (e) supportive conditions. Professional Learning Communities exist in a school where a group of teachers collaboratively exchange their instructional ideas in a reflective way to lead to innovation and professional development (Mitchell & Sackney, 2000). Hord (1997) believes that through participating in professional learning communities teachers become well informed, professionally enhanced, and inspired to improve student achievement.

The Communities of Practice model was initiated by Lave and Wenger (1991), who proposed that “learning occurs through social participation in which social participants must negotiate their identities” and learning through transforming from newcomers to old-timers (p. 149). Lave and Wenger (1991) suggested that the elements of legitimacy, power relations, and social structures are important in defining learning opportunities in a Communities of Practice model. The concept of Communities of Practice was developed further by Wenger (1998), who provided a clearer definition through including the elements of mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire. Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002) define Communities of Practice as “groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis” (p. 4).

Peer Coaching is a developmental model of supervision largely influenced by Goldhammer’s (1969)

seminal work in clinical supervision. Joyce and Showers (1980, 1996) defined a coaching relationship as one in which two or more colleagues share aspects of teaching, plan together, and reflect on their experiences to improve teaching performance. The process of peer coaching involves three stages: the first stage of preview conference involves discussing the lesson and planning a goal for observation between the teacher and the coach; the second step of lesson observation happens when the teacher teaches the lesson while the coach observes and takes field notes, and can make audio or video recordings; the last step of having a reflective conference takes place after the teaching, when the peers discuss the field notes and the lesson together in a reflective way (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004). The successful application of the peer coaching strategy requires developing a trusting relationship (Costa & Garmston, 2002; Huston & Weaver, 2008; Vidmar, 2006), remain confidential about the conversation (Hicks, 1999; Vidmar, 2006), be voluntary to participate (Bernstein, Johnson, & Smith, 2000; Huston & Weaver, 2008), and collaboration (Bowman & McCormick, 2000).

7. Conclusion

The Cooperative Development model of professional development provides one possible approach for language teacher education in China. In the CD model, a teacher is encouraged by working with one or more colleagues over a period of time to enhance teachers' capacity building (Edge & Attia, 2014). The CD model allows teachers to develop their own potential and look deeper into their own context and, as such, can be powerful in their professional development (Edge, 1992). The ultimate goal of CD is to empower teachers through professional development based on their own understanding of their classroom context and practices (Stewart, 2003).

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