

# Teaching, Administration and Research: Understanding Institutional Constraints on Teacher Development

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**T**hough the title of the paper starts with three major components of working life at the university, these three components might be equally named time, meetings and paper, or even education, institution and innovation. Indeed, whichever way one chooses to look at teacher development within the university, there is a varying but constant set of constraints that impinge on such developmental activity. In this paper, I would like to examine some of those constraints in more detail, as well as suggest some simple but effective ways in which teacher development can be conducted and achieved—for general English education, as well as towards a wider interdisciplinary view.

## CONFLICTING INTERPRETATIONS OF DEVELOPMENT

A university is by nature and design a hierarchical organisation in which competing interpretations of development interplay with each other in an endless but routinely predictable set of interactions. Because of the hierarchical character of the university as an institutional organisation, the interplay of differing interpretations of development frequently contradict, and clash with each other, when efforts are made to improve a particular system. These contradictions need to be acknowledged, first and foremost. At the same time, because they are routine and predictable to the point of becoming ritualistic, they can be questioned and understood in rather precise ways.

In terms of conflicting interpretations, I would like to characterize these on a scale from top-down to bottom-up. *Top-down* here means the formally bureaucratic, at all steps removed from overlapping with the daily business of classroom learning and teaching, whereas *bottom-up* here means the formally classroom-centred, at all steps removed from interlinking with committee discussions and decision-making of university policy. The analysis thus starts with the most top-down approach, and then works its way down through each successive hierarchical tier towards the context of classroom learning. Thus, I begin by examining first a formal committee approach to university curriculum development, before reviewing three other major approaches: the services and products approach, the needs analysis approach, and a learning-centred approach. My argument is that these four approaches are more or less

always *partially* invoked in discussions of how curriculum, teacher and learner development should be achieved: *Each approach embodies part of the narrative of development, but cannot in isolation offer meaningful and sustainable solutions.*

### **University curriculum development: The formal committee approach**

A traditional approach to improving a particular situation in the university involves formal committee work, which officially works as a mainstay of self-administering organisation within tertiary education. Such committee work tends to focus on the structural problems of organization (e.g., timetabling pressures and needs, budgets, committee composition and powers) as well as on staff issues and obligations (e.g., the number of classes to be taught according to rank, conditions for sabbaticals, and part-time faculty pay and conditions). As a result of the predominantly structural focus, very little time is devoted to discussing curriculum content, objectives, or faculty development.

Moreover, because of the way decisions are filtered top-down within the ranking hierarchy of the university, the efforts of the formal committee approach frequently do little more than reinforce the existing status quo. That is, the organisation discusses its own *modus operandi* rather than its educational function: Research and teaching are dealt with as issues of scheduling and budgets, and are, as a result, accorded low priority as important elements in development; students, moreover, receive even less attention, and end up assuming the anonymous status of scheduled classes rather than being legitimised as co-owners of the educational development process.

In other words, the formal committee approach to development, predominantly constructed within metaphors of time, money and status, tends to focus on administrative solutions to educational issues, and deals with change in the classroom only in an indirect sense, if at all.

### **University curriculum development: The services and products approach**

Although the University of Tsukuba is a national institution which is soon to assume the more independent and self-governing status of an educational agency, it does not exist within a vacuum. Indeed, the whole question of curriculum development can be interpreted within a wider context of increased exposure to the forces of the market economy. In this interpretation of curriculum development, the university becomes positioned as a corporate entity that must upgrade its products and services in order to maintain its market share. Again, within the institutional nature of the university organisation, market forces from without start to become internalised within. Here, middle-ranking tenured staff may feel the strongest pressures; promotion is no longer certain, and the upgrading of qualifications through completing further higher degrees, publishing academic papers and increased specialisation in research can figure strongly as the main

route to achieving development. Foreign staff, on less than tenured contracts, will inevitably feel such pressures even more acutely. This set of pressures on teaching faculty is, it can be seen, surprisingly similar to the squeeze on middle management that accompanies company restructuring in the commercial world.

A second characteristic of this type of development is that intra- and inter-department rivalries and pressures are likely to arise as different groups seek to protect their claim to the future; what is more, questions of staff overwork and productivity may tend to dominate discussion. As a result, in this interpretation, resistance to change and blocking tactics frequently surface as faculty come to terms with the uncertainties of where such reform might lead and of how this will affect their working routines and job security.

A third characteristic of such an interpretation of curriculum development lies in presenting students as educational consumers, to whom the university needs to offer an increased array of services and products, e.g., curriculum menus involving short-term courses abroad, intensive courses over one term, technology-based study, and equivalence of credits and scores to allow greater mobility and range of choice for the consumer-students. Yet, unfortunately, the student is once again excluded from a full and important role in such a process of educational change. Rather, it is the staff of the university who must assume responsibility for delivering the educational goods in a more efficient and appealing way to the student market.

Generally more favourably viewed by faculty members than the formal committee approach, this interpretation of development offers the appearance of substantive change in institutional matters such as scheduling and budgets, and allows new labels to be put on old courses once they have been differently packaged. This positive acceptance is also helped by the fact that very little needs to be actually done to achieve change.

This second interpretation of top-down curriculum development also tends to align itself with technological solutions in that technology is understood to drive profitability and survival in the outside commercial market from where the metaphors of change in this approach are derived. Thus, in a period when such an interpretation holds sway, innovation may become closely identified with budgetary efficiency and profitable investment in the fixed assets and artefacts of education. The emerging research agenda may consequently tend to align itself with dominant educational industries (such as TOEIC) and with particular high-tech corporate interests; also, great emphasis may be placed on the upgrading of physical infrastructure to improve capital value.

Although this second interpretation is constructed largely through metaphors of management, productivity and profit (and loss), it does nevertheless represent a half-way

stage between the first approach of centralised top-down development by committee, and a third, more complex approach that pays more attention to different parties in the development process—needs analysis-driven development.

### **University curriculum development: The needs analysis approach**

This third approach places its central emphasis on specification, a feature which may be also discerned within the framework of the previous approach but which here assumes a greater educational resonance, because it more firmly addresses the needs of the potential beneficiaries of efforts at curriculum development. A strong version of the needs analysis approach thus argues that curriculum development is a protracted, uncertain and long-term process where great care must be taken, first, to consult with faculty and students about the existing curriculum, and its strengths and weaknesses; second, the manner in which that existing curriculum is achieved in the classroom; and, thirdly, about the future objectives and needs interpretation in any reformed curriculum. Data collection is at the heart of this third approach.

Because this interpretation of curriculum development is data-driven, it promises to achieve even wider acceptance by reform-minded faculty than the previous approach: The data collection itself mirrors many elements of a quantitative approach to educational research. In such an approach, the emphasis is put on consultation and collaborative work, suggesting rather more clearly than either the first or second approaches that reform cannot be mandated and then neatly delivered, but must be painstakingly and collectively constructed over a long period of time.

A weak version of the needs analysis approach will limit the consultation exercise to the existing feedback channels within the university organisation. Thus, while this third approach can be clearly distinguished from the first two approaches earlier described in this paper, it also risks being subverted by the tendency of hierarchical organisations to centralise decision-making (the first approach) and to rush new products and services into operation without due involvement of different parties that any changes will affect (the second approach).

In contrast, a strong version of the needs analysis approach will seek to overcome this force of institutional inertia by collecting data from multiple sources. These may include:

1. Pre-course placement / diagnostic tests
2. Entry tests on arrival
3. Self-placement / diagnostic tests
4. Observation of classes
5. Surveys based on questionnaires
6. Structured interviews
7. Learner diaries

8. Case studies
9. Final evaluation / feedback
10. Previous research (Jordan, 1997; West, 1994)

Of these data collection methods, the survey is perhaps the most widely used, as West notes (West, 1994, p. 7). West also states that needs analysis can be carried out at three different points: (1) off-line analysis, where the analysis is completed in advance of the course; (2) on-line analysis, where the analysis is performed at the start of the course; and, (3) on-going analysis, where the analysis is repeated as needs, perceptions and priorities naturally change over the period of a course (West, 1994, p. 5). The third approach tends to emphasize the first two types of analysis: for example, through the English placement test and the English proficiency test at the end of the first year—off-line analysis—and through occasional questionnaires to various faculty charged with teaching English—on-line analysis.

In this third approach to curriculum development, the dominant metaphor is therefore one of specification and measurement *from the teaching side*. It is understandable that such an approach took hold in the field of English language teaching during periods when two fundamental types of syllabus were common: the formal syllabus in the 1960's, and the functional syllabus in the 1970's. These two types have been characterised as *propositional plans*:

Knowledge and capabilities will be organised and presented in the plan as things which are inherently system-based. They will be expressed in logical formulae, structures, rules, schemas or categories deriving from an analysis of the knowledge that is assumed to be the objective which the plan serves. Propositional plans map out knowledge of language and the conventions of language performance. (Breen, 1987, p. 160)

They are also otherwise referred to as synthetic (as opposed to analytic) approaches to language teaching and learning (Wilkins, 1976), where the effort is to objectify, list and quantify everything that is to be taught and learnt—with Munby's *Communicative Syllabus Design* typifying the Herculean challenge to specify everything and anything that will ever be used in a particular course (Munby, 1978).

The metaphor of specification can be thus seen as supremely rational and atomistic at the same time, and the source of many curriculum planning documents that miss the richness of classroom learning because they do not examine the curriculum-in-use. Moreover, although the methods of data collection for needs analysis clearly align themselves with many widely used techniques for conducting second language research, there are questions as to how analysed needs can be translated into curricula-in-action,

and how the results of such analysis can best serve the needs of learners (Dickinson, 1987), as well as take account of the complexity of classroom learning.

A final important aspect of this third approach is that it tends towards legitimising the existing state of affairs rather than encouraging re-thinking of the curriculum as a whole. These observed tensions point to the fourth and final approach to curriculum development, a learning-centred one, where on-going needs analysis comes to play a central role. In this next approach, the drive towards curriculum development is fully situated in the context of classroom learning.

### **University curriculum development: the learning-centred approach**

As argued in the discussion of the previous approach, plans tend to abstract and quantify what has happened or what is about to happen, but do not in themselves look at how a curriculum is enacted and achieved. Thus, though powerfully resonant, the needs analysis approach is at one step removed from how students learn. In contrast to the propositional plan-type syllabus associated with the third approach, Breen proposes a second, more recent type as *process plans*, which he further divides into (1) the task-based syllabus, and (2) the process-based syllabus. Breen comments:

Process plans, on the other hand, represent *how something is done*. They will seek to represent knowledge of *how* correctness, appropriacy, and meaningfulness can be simultaneously achieved during communication within events and situations. They may derive from an analysis of performance within events and situations, but map out the procedural knowledge or the underlying operations which enable a language user to communicate within not merely one event or situation but within a range of these. (Breen, 1987, p. 160)

This is also similar to the distinction that Wilkins makes between synthetic syllabi—previously mentioned in the third approach—and analytic syllabi, which are more concerned with an approach to learning through task and activity (Wilkins, 1976). Thus, process plans form one important part of the learning-centred approach.

On-going needs analysis directs attention to the continued effort after understanding learning tasks and processes, as well as to genre—how members of a particular discourse community use language for a particular communicative purpose. Swales, for example, defines genre in these terms:

#### **Genre defined**

A genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic

structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style. Communicative purpose is both a privileged criterion and one that operates to keep the scope of a genre as here conceived narrowly focused on rhetorical action. In addition to purpose, exemplars of a genre exhibit various patterns of similarity in terms of structure, style, content and intended audience. If all high probability expectations are realized, the exemplar will be viewed as prototypical by the parent discourse community. The genre names inherited and produced by discourse communities and imported by others constitute valuable ethnographic communication, but typically need further validation. (Swales, 1981, cited in Jordan, 1997, p. 230)

Example written academic genres might include summaries, critiques, reviews, and research papers (Swales and Feak, 1994), whereas example spoken academic genres could feature seminar presentation, speech, lecture introduction, and discussion (Jordan, 1997). So, this fourth approach to curriculum development is geared to understanding (1) what genres are of particular relevance in a particular academic discipline; (2) how members of that particular discipline construct those genres; (3) what skills, tasks, and process learners need to engage in so as to achieve gradual mastery of those target genres. Genre forms a second important part of this approach.

Moreover, this approach to curriculum development does not limit itself to understanding the "how" within the confines of the classroom only. It actively seeks to understand a range of relevant genres through research and consultation across the university. Thus, a third defining characteristic of this approach is that it depends on classroom and institutional collaboration—in other words, it promotes collaborative interdisciplinary research as its primary *modus operandi*:

Just as individuals are the agents of organizational action, so they are agents for organizational learning ... But in order for organizational learning to occur, learning agents' discoveries, inventions, and evaluations must be embedded in organizational memory. They must be encoded in the individual maps of organizational theory-in-use from which individual members will subsequently act. If this encoding does not occur, individuals will have learned but the organization will not have done so. (Argyris and Schön (1978), cited in Pugh, 1984, p. 362)

This view emphasises the need for greater collaboration and communication among colleagues in order to understand how different aspects of the curriculum-in-use work and achieve effectiveness or not. The focus of such collaboration and communication needs, though, to be on how students learn and what they are (and should be expected) to do.

### **Teaching-research / Learning-research**

Two other aspects of the learning-centred approach also need to be highlighted. The first is its emphasis on the researcher-teacher; the second is on the learner-researcher.

**Teacher-researcher.** Because of the conventional view of universities as places of higher research, pedagogy is traditionally down-valued within the university and is accorded a certain low status. Yet, this institutionalised dichotomy results more from how status is constructed within the university organisation than from any particularly strong divergence between these two central processes of educational activity. Freeman, for examples, comments:

At their most fundamental, both teaching and researching are concerned with processes of knowing and establishing knowledge. For teachers, these processes focus on the learning of students; the knowledge established in classroom teaching is what the students learn through the teaching-learning process. For teacher-researchers, the processes concentrate on understanding what is going on in classroom teaching and learning, and the knowledge established reflects those understandings. To put the connection simply: Teaching seeks knowledge in students as its end; researching seeks knowledge of teaching-learning processes as a means toward that end. (Freeman, 1998, p. 7)

In the sense that teaching is so intimately connected with learning, and research with both, it is only through teachers pro-actively deciding to investigate more into the learning of their students that a professional knowledge base of pedagogy can be established and extended. With this knowledge base, research is at the same time enhanced; without such a pedagogic research base, research in itself can but further differentiate itself from teaching and ignore, at its own peril, the processes of both academic literacy and learning that are at the heart of how the university can better serve all its students.

**Learner-researcher.** The other, final aspect of the learning-centred approach to development is the concept of the learner-as-researcher. In parallel with the re-conceptualisation of the teacher as a teacher-researcher (Freeman, 1998), understanding the learner as a researcher in all aspects of their academic study from general courses in the first year through to specialized postgraduate work in later years is an appropriate corollary. The shift in emphasis towards learning here involves a move towards greater collaboration between learners and the teacher, and greater decision-making by learners themselves:

Learner autonomy is characterized by a readiness to take charge of one's own learning in the service of one's needs and purposes. This entails a capacity and willingness to act independently and in co-operation with others, as a socially responsible person. An autonomous learner is an active participant in the social processes of learning, but also an active interpreter of new information in terms of what she/he already and uniquely knows. It is essential



that an autonomous learner is stimulated to evolve an awareness of the aims and processes of learning and is capable of the critical reflection which syllabuses and curricula frequently require but traditional pedagogical measures rarely achieve. An autonomous learner knows how to use this knowledge in any learning situation she/he may encounter at any stage in her/his life. (Bergen, 1990, p. 102, cited in Dam 1995)

Dam further describes and examines five major differences which evolve when a greater emphasis on learner autonomy is placed. These are: (1) a shift in focus from teaching to learning; (2) a change in the learner's role; (3) a change in the teacher's role; (4) the role of evaluation; and, (5) a view of the language classroom as a rich learning environment (Dam, 1995, pp. 4-6).

If the trend in university and teacher development is towards one of a learning organisation within a learning society, as was previously suggested in the discussion of the encoding of organizational memory across its individual faculty and student body, then these pathways to greater learner development need also to be accorded due priority. Teachers cannot develop their pedagogy without understanding learning better; neither can learners become more independent, nor can they develop greater critical thinking, without understanding and developing their own learning, either. In short, the curriculum cannot change unless the focus in reform moves to questions of pedagogy and learning.

The predominant metaphor of the learning-centred approach to curriculum and teacher development is one of networking, constructing understanding, and negotiating meanings. Such a metaphor implies greater linkage between different efforts at curriculum and teacher development: It places the learner and decisions about learning at the centre of such development.

## **THE INTERPLAY OF INTERESTS IN DEVELOPMENT**

The argument has been put forward that teacher, learner and curriculum development are subject to major pressures and constraints within the university. This is in part due to the size of the organisation, and the complex way in which it works. This is also a consequence of the current pressure on the university to restructure and reform itself. It results, too, from highly differentiated (and, one might add in passing, differently valorised) views of learning, teaching and researching. This differentiation is summarised in the table on the following page.

Each interpretation of development is structurally situated within the university as an organisation. Different interpretations achieve prominence according to the hierarchical level of organisation in which the discussion of development takes place. Top-down development approaches (i.e., the formal committee, or products and services approach)

often fail because they do not tackle the complex web of factors that are prominent at lower levels of interpretation. Similarly, bottom-up development approaches (i.e., the

Table 1  
Situating developmental interpretations

Hierarchical level of organisation	Approach & Focus	Metaphor	Values
University, Intra-departmental, Interdepartmental, Institutes, Clusters, Centers	<u>Formal committee:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structural problems</li> <li>• Scheduling budgets</li> <li>• Staff issues</li> <li>• Appropriate channels</li> </ul>	Time Money Status	Hierarchical Administrative solutions
Intra-departmental, interdepartmental, Institutes, Centers	<u>Products and services:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specialisation</li> <li>• Academic publications</li> <li>• Research grants</li> <li>• Productivity</li> <li>• Insecurity</li> <li>• Curricular menus</li> <li>• Technological solutions</li> <li>• Fixed assets</li> <li>• Capital investment</li> </ul>	External market Internal market Delivery Profitability Corporate service	Hierarchical-horizontal Financial solutions Large research projects Evaluation of programmes
Intra-departmental, Inter-departmental, Institutes, Centers, Students	<u>Needs analysis:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data collection</li> <li>• Quantitative analysis</li> <li>• Consultation</li> <li>• Propositional plans</li> </ul>	Off-line / On-line analysis Specification Measurement	Rationalising Atomistic Investigating existing state of affairs Documentary solutions
Inter-departmental, Centers, Students	<u>Learning-centred approach:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Process interpretations</li> <li>• Tasks / Skills / Roles</li> <li>• Genres</li> <li>• Academic literacy</li> <li>• Interdisciplinary research</li> <li>• Qualitative analysis</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Pedagogy</li> </ul>	On-going analysis Networking Understanding Negotiation Autonomy	Exploratory Emergent learning and teaching Learner-as-researcher Teacher-as-researcher Researcher-as-teacher / learner Open-ended inquiry Evaluation of learning Self-assessment

needs analysis, and the learning-centred approach) may similarly fail to take hold because they pass by the focus, metaphors and values of top-down approaches. This missing of minds happens because the proponents of each interpretation quite simply speak different languages of development, with different values and interests powerfully selected and exclusively defining the respective field of focus and development.

If top-down approaches are, as a result, intensified, the effect is bound to be one of greater centralization of reform into administrative and financial solutions—and an even greater schism between top-down issues of administration and bottom-up questions of learning. It is only by taking up the values of the lowest level into the upper levels (emergent learning and teaching, learner-as-researcher, teacher-as-researcher, researcher-as-teacher/learner, open-ended inquiry, and evaluation of learning) that a concrete and specific consideration of educational change can inform the upper levels, and, gradually over time, lead to a greater overlap of development interests between learners, faculty and administration.

This is the path to *pro-active development over reactive development*. To paraphrase Little's central arguments in favour of learner autonomy (Little, 1991), effective and worthwhile learner, teacher and curriculum development may take place to the degree that learners and teacher achieve greater autonomy in their learning, teaching and research—and to the extent that such development is prioritised in higher top-down interpretations.

## **REALIGNING THE FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS LEARNING**

### **Options for making transitions**

Having recognised some of the major constraints and pressures on development within the university, the focus now shifts to how the values of the lowest level might be taken up into the upper levels. By way of illustrating possibilities for placing a greater specific emphasis on teacher and learner development, I will now consider a limited number of useful options. These options focus on: (1) communication in formal meetings; (2) communication in semi-formal meetings; (3) the communication of teacher roles; (4) communicating teacher constructions of learning; (5) communicating learner constructions of learning. From reviewing these options, I will conclude with a brief consideration of situating teacher development within the complex web of different academic disciplines at the University of Tsukuba.

**Communication: Formal meetings**

It has been argued that formal meetings often fail to address central curriculum questions of foreign language education. The administrative burden, or, for want of a better phrase, the bureaucratic paper chase, does little to facilitate the discussion of such questions when faculty gather to meet. One simple way to confirm this is to attend a meeting and keep time of what topics are discussed; how many people speak up at such meetings; who sets the topics on the agenda; and whether students' perspectives are included or not.

It is highly likely that 95% of the meeting time will be taken up with the administration of existing education systems rather than in discussion of core curriculum educational concerns. It is similarly highly probable that research will not be included either in formal meetings. For this, separate research seminars are organised; research is squeezed out by administrative matters. Does teaching then get included in research seminar discussions? The answer must be "occasionally at best", for much research in turn squeezes out discussion of teaching and learning: A simple example of a structural faultline for teacher development. This dilemma is summarised in the following table, where the large question mark indicates the gap in the formal organisation of meetings for discussions of everyday teaching.

Table 2  
Administrative and research constraints

<b>Form:</b>	<b>Formal meetings</b>	<b>Research seminars</b>	<b>Teaching meetings</b>
↕	↕	↕	↕
<b>Focus:</b>	<b>Administration</b>	<b>Non-classroom based research</b>	<b>?</b>

On the one hand, this gap may well point to the relatively high status accorded "pure research" over the relatively low status accorded "classroom research". At the same time, a routine and predictable response to such a way of looking at the existing state of affairs is "We simply don't have time to discuss such practical educational matters." It could rather be argued that the preoccupation with time is a question of educational management, in that too much time is given over to administration, and too little to substantive matters of practical teacher, learner and curriculum concerns. As one management consultant has ironically noted, "Our problem, in essence, is a simple one. We never have time to do anything, but we always seem to find time to do it twice" (Plant, 1987, p.32).

One simple teacher development step would be to try and ensure over a period of time that more equal time were divided during meetings between discussing administrative

matters and discussing teacher, learner and curriculum concerns. As one colleague has commented, "As for English teachers' meeting, I think you know we are teaching the same type of students, you know the first-year students, so we have the common interest and common experience, so we should have more 'content-based' meetings, not the bureaucratic... To know what other people are doing is very interesting also sometimes very helpful." It is quite possible to achieve this if enough faculty members take a stake in changing in a small but important way how discussion topics and time are managed in faculty meetings.

### **Communication: Semi-formal meetings**

A second way in which teacher development can be enhanced is by interested teachers choosing to take more time together to explore their teaching and learning concerns in more depth: The simplest way to do this is to meet regularly for a given period of time, and to structure the format of the collaboration away from a culture of red tape towards one of co-operation. This type of teacher development co-operation is explored in detail in a separate case study (Barfield, 1998), so discussion here will be limited to a general overview of possible process and content in such teacher development.

*In terms of process*, such co-operative teacher development work will probably evolve through a number of distinct phases that can be commonly identified with reflective learning and collaboration, such as (1) Orientation, negotiation and adaptation; (2) Perception of inner and outer processes; (3) Dynamic of experimentation; (4) Increased awareness; (5) Cyclical growth. Underhill has framed this kind of awareness-raising collaboration within the following four stages (Underhill, 1992, p.76):

#### **Stage 1. Unconscious incompetence**

I am not aware of what I am not doing well.

#### **Stage 2. Conscious incompetence**

I become aware of what I am not doing well.

#### **Stage 3. Conscious competence**

I am aware of doing it more competently.

#### **Stage 4. Unconscious competence**

My new competence becomes second nature

(...) But stage 2 is the one that hurts. This is where I may begin to feel deskilled and destabilized as my self-image is challenged by the discovery of the disparity between what I think I am doing and what I am actually doing. This second stage is the crucial development stage, and is precisely where the supportive climate of the surrounding group comes into play. Conversely, though lack of appropriate support, it is the stage that often gets overlooked.

What both interpretations emphasise is the need for a supportive relationship of professional collaboration.

*In terms of content*, some simple open-ended questions can act as the starting basis for collaboration, such as

- ❖ What has gone well for you with your classes over the last term?
- ❖ What were the successes for you and your students?
- ❖ What were the problems?
- ❖ What were the puzzles?
- ❖ What goals are you and your students aiming for now?

From such questions collaboration may soon evolve. The only necessary condition is a wish to develop one's teaching.

### Communication: Teacher roles

Another simple focus could derive from a teacher development task that asks a teacher to consider the kind of teachers that they have been taught by in the past—*Were they teachers who focussed on explaining things to you? Or did they focus on trying to involve you in your learning? Or were they teachers who tried to enable you to learn by yourself and/or with others?*—and then to consider what kind of teacher one sees oneself as.

Table 3  
Three kinds of teacher (Scrivener, 1994)

#### **Teacher A: The explainer**

Many teachers know their subject matter very well, but have limited knowledge of teaching methodology. This kind of teacher relies mainly on 'explaining' or 'lecturing' as a way of conveying information to the students. Done with style or enthusiasm or wit or imagination this teacher's lessons can be very entertaining, interesting and informative. The students are listening, perhaps occasionally answering questions and perhaps making notes, but are mostly not being personally involved or challenged. The learners often get practice by doing individual exercises after one phase of the lecture has finished.

#### **Teacher B: The involver**

This teacher also knows the subject matter that is being dealt with. (In our case this is essentially the English language and how it works.) However, she is also familiar with teaching methodology; she is able to use appropriate teaching and organizational procedures and techniques to help her students learn about the subject matter. 'Teacher explanations' may be one of these techniques, but in her case it is only one option among many that she has at her disposal. This teacher is trying to involve the students actively and puts a great deal of effort into finding appropriate and interesting activities that will do this, while still retaining clear control over the classroom and what happens in it.

(Table 3 continued)

**Teacher C: The enabler**

Essentially teaching is about working with other human beings. This teacher knows about the subject matter and about methodology, but also has an awareness of how individuals and groups are thinking and feeling within her class. She actively responds to this in her planning and working methods and in building effective working relationships and a good classroom atmosphere. Her own personality and attitude are an active encouragement to learning.

This kind of teacher is confident enough to share control with the learners, or to hand it over entirely to them. Decisions made in her classroom may often be shared or negotiated. In many cases she takes her lead from the students; seeing herself as someone whose job is to create the conditions that enable the students to learn for themselves. Sometimes this will involve her in less traditional 'teaching'; she may become a 'guide' or a 'counsellor' or a 'resource of information when needed'. Sometimes, when the class is working well under its own steam, when a lot of autonomous learning is going on, she may be hardly visible.

Scrivener characterizes the three types of teacher with the following broad strokes:

	Subject matter	Methodology	People
<b>Explainer</b>	✓		
<b>Involver</b>	✓	✓	
<b>Enabler</b>	✓	✓	✓

Scrivener further notes that all teachers at some time shift between these basic roles in the classroom:

These three descriptions of teachers are, of course, very broadly painted. There is no way to categorize all teaching under three headings; many teachers will find elements of each category that are true for them, or that they move between categories depending on the day and the class and the aims of a lesson. However, this simple categorization may help you to reflect on what kind of teaching you have mostly experienced in your life so far and may also help you to clarify what kind of teacher you see yourself as being now or in the future. (Scrivener, 1994, p.7)

Yet, how do teachers construct the roles that they play?

**Communication: Teacher constructions of learning**

The discussion transcript in the table on the following pages captures the fundamental shifting back and forth between roles and focus highlighted by Scrivener. The excerpt focuses on the difficulty of the transition towards teaching more according to the learners' interests and individualised needs. In the following excerpt, the three participants have

just been discussing their own interpretations of content-based learning. After this excerpt, the discussion moves towards the three teachers discussing the classroom research that they wish to undertake under the broad theme of global issues content-based learning.

Table 4

Contextualizing teacher roles: Towards teachers as co-learners  
(A=Ayabe, B=Barfield, K=Kawasaki)

**B:** (...) So there's a kind of an element of learner training there because if the teacher is controlling everything, surely the students can't be developing their own thinking or independence as thinkers.

**K:** So probably the difficult part is to let them keep the motivation to keep on going with the project.

**B:** I think that's right. I think the balance changes during the year as you have to awaken that motivation first of all, then they become motivated but then you need to sustain it so that they really take off. So in a sense, that then says that for a content-based language course, one part of that is seeing or understanding or working out what kind of things does the teacher have to do to help develop the learners' independence from the teacher, and that goes in phases I think.

**K:** Well I just thought of the syllabus. The syllabus is the one that we make up at the beginning of the class, at the beginning of the year. But I think this kind of content-based course should have a sort of rough syllabus and more flexible teacher's attitude depending on what states students are in. If they are really motivated we can give them a lot more instruction of the forms of language and information but if they are not motivated then you really have to dig out what they want to do so the teaching should be more flexible. This is the difficult part. I think that all the teachers can do.

**B:** Well it's the challenge isn't it? And it's also the interest for the teacher in trying to judge where are particular students in this group—am I supporting them too much or do they need more support from me? And things like this. I think this is the kind of teacher-thinking that goes on. But I wonder what you think?

**K:** I've had a sociolinguistics seminar for years, and I have stopped this year and that course is really the project course. In order to find a topic for their report they have to do a lot of readings on their field and everybody chooses different topics—I have to be very flexible of reading various papers and in the second semester they do some research on Sociolinguistics and in the third semester they write a small paper, about one-fifth of thesis size.

And I really had a good time. I think through that course I trained myself to be a flexible teacher and find out what my students really need and in that course I am really a helper because I'm not interested in all the topics, and I don't know much about either topic, but I've seen some really weird things like... the funniest one was "the word of propose" and I didn't know anything about that. The student who was doing that was so serious and worked really hard, and I said "you are the propose pro of this field" and what I can do is to help you find the way to reach the goal.



*So probably even the English teachers who haven't done these things at all may enjoy—it's very challenging because it's easy to use one text and teach one lesson—it's routine. If you don't have any routine you have to work a lot but I think it's challenging, it's a teacher developing topic.*

*B: I was struck that you said that you learned a lot. And I think that the great thing is that you're on an equal footing, aren't you? Though you're playing different roles but you're learning as well. That makes it so much more interesting. Can that be done with content-based language classes if you do it with sociolinguistics?*

*K: Yes, if you have less than 20 students in that class. That's my impression. But if you can make up a group, probably, you will have several topics, but if you have forty students with forty different topics...*

*B: Well, I don't think so. But then class size is a factor in how free you feel yourself about doing that.*

*K: But first to do a really good class you first have to remember students' names. How can you remember forty students' names? So small class size is what I really want.*

*B: I find it is easier to remember the students when they are doing something unique. They are just much more real as people then.*

*A: I agree with you both saying that teaching is learning, and I think the teacher is the one that learns the most in any class—and I think particularly in a language class that if students can train themselves after the class is over, after a year, after the teacher has taught, how to go on without the teacher in the exploration of some particular field of reading or in the way of how to understand and evaluate that particular book, that's my own personal goal that they can do things without me.*

Through such shared awareness-raising and exploration—essentially an effort to discover overlaps and differences of emphasis about learning and to explore these further—the foundations can be gradually laid for greater collaborative classroom research.

### **Communication: Learner constructions of learning**

Achieving greater learner involvement also depends a good deal on learners identifying their needs, raising their awareness of how they can best learn, and making pro-active choices about what to learn. The following example counterbalances the previous discussion excerpt that partially showed how three teachers 'construct' learners, their learning needs and priorities. As a contrast, the next example highlights one learner's voice, and her side of her perception of the challenge, process and change in her communication in English.

Here, extracts from a student's learning diary over one term are presented to show how the use of a simple reflective process in a course on English communication has enabled this individual to take a more conscious interest and control in what she is learning. It should be noted that the learner is in a class group of 40 first-year students, and that the

class has been guided towards adopting a learning cycle of *Perform-Observe-Reflect-Plan*. To do this, the learners practised English communication in class by:

- 1) Preparing notes and mindmaps for homework (from watching films and reading newspaper articles) on topics that interest them;
- 2) Selecting basic communication strategies that they plan to practise in class (such as repeating key words and asking questions to get more information);
- 3) Deciding a learning contract with their in-class partner(s) of (2);
- 4) Performing communicative practice in pairs or small groups where the learners record their communicative practice on a mini-Walkman;
- 5) Observing their performance by listening to their recorded practice;
- 6) Reflecting on their practice by writing a learner diary entry each week where the learners examine what they did in (4) & articulate what they noticed in (5);
- 7) Planning learning goals for what they intend to practice in (1) and (2) the following week based on their reflection in (6);
- 8) Starting a new cycle from (1) again.

**Table 5**  
**A learner's voice of development (unreformulated)**

April 22<sup>nd</sup> Ideas about conversation

*A speaker speaks clearly and uses a simple word. A listener reacts and asks questions after speaker's talk.*

May 13<sup>th</sup> Asking questions

*In my conversation, I seldom asked short questions and seldom showed reaction. So my partner only talked, and I often kept quiet. I think it was because I wasn't used to speaking English. I wanted to ask many questions and examples, but I often kept quiet. I often don't able to change Japanese word to English word well.*

May 20<sup>th</sup> Goals and diary

*Today I want to try \*not to use Japanese \*not to be quiet for long time \*ask many questions \*show my interest. I thought that the sentences and words I speak were not clear. And I found myself speaking more unclearly when I was worried about my English skill.*

May 27<sup>th</sup> Diary and goals

*I thought that I still often kept quiet. Because it takes much time for me to change Japanese into English. While I'm thinking about the words I use, I tend to keep quiet. So I want to try not to be quiet this time. And in my conversation I can't ask a question, so I want to ask many questions. And when I have little confidence about my topics and words, I tend to speak rapidly and unclearly. So I want to speak clearly.*

June 3<sup>rd</sup> Diary and goals

*I tried not to keep quiet and tried to ask some questions. But when I couldn't understand the words other people use, I often asked in English. And I found that I often couldn't look at other people's eyes, especially boy's eyes. This is serious problem for me.*

*Is it because I'm shy? So today I want to try to look at the other people's eyes when other people or I speak.*

June 10<sup>th</sup> Diary and goals

*I tried not to use Japanese and tried to look at other people's eyes. When I had difficulty in speaking in English, other people helped me, so I could enjoy our conversation. It is very important to enjoy the conversation. It is very important to speak friendly and to laugh. So today I want to try to enjoy the conversation. Even if I have a little confidence, I want to have positive attitude towards English.*

June 17<sup>th</sup> Diary and goals

*I tried to enjoy the conversation, and I could enjoy our conversation. It was interesting for me to listen other people's story. Today I want to ask questions. I think it is difficult to ask questions in suitable word and suitable time. So I often hesitate to ask questions. I want to try not to hesitate to speak and to ask questions.*

(Table 5 continued)

**June 24<sup>th</sup> Review**

*The first time in the class, I became very nervous of my English skill, and I hesitated to speak in English. It was very difficult for me to change Japanese into English. But I made effort to speak with more confidence, to not to be quiet, to ask questions and to enjoy the conversation more and more. And I became to be able to look at other people's eyes and to ask some questions. And I did my best each week to improve my English skill. I progressed in my English skill more than on April. I became to be able to speak with some confidence more than at April.*

**Does a learning diary each week help you? Why (not)?**

*Yes, it does. Because writing a learning diary helped me to think about my goal of English. By writing it, I could reflect my attitude and I could know my bad points and the points that are to improve. And writing in English improved my English skill of writing a little. So writing a learning diary each week helped me, I think.*

It is interesting to note that this learner's progress is neither linear nor step by step; rather, it is a gradual movement towards substantial change. That progress involves frustrations, but the learner advances both her learning awareness and English communication through guided conscious and critical reflection. The example learner's voice also emphasises that learners are not empty vessels into which knowledge can be simply poured: Learners to a large extent construct their own knowledge through pro-actively developing various strategic competencies and tactical skills. Here, feedback from learners to themselves in the form of learning diaries, and to the teacher, in the form of discussion of goals, problems and solutions at a specific level, can but help learners and teachers achieve more effective results. This is not to say that learning diaries are a *sine qua non* of a learning-centred approach to development. In a nutshell, the form of feedback is not so important as the collaborative shared purpose.

## CONCLUSION

### **Towards a changed style of communication for teacher development**

Through this paper, several varying interpretations of development have been presented and deconstructed in terms of the powerful and conflicting messages and interests that they may bring into play. This deconstruction has categorised the interpretations from top-down to bottom-up, as well as indicated a telling disconnection between the uppermost level of administrative approaches to development and the lowermost level of specific classroom learning. Seen as problematic, this gap was noted for its effect on existing channels of communication for development.

At the same time, it was pointed out that students and teachers have their own classroom concerns for learning. It was also shown that these unofficial constructions of

learning need to be fully recognised and accounted for when integrated efforts are undertaken at making curriculum, teacher and learner development more coherent. This division between *tatema* and *honne* interpretations of development can be narrowed when teacher development is better addressed in a number of simple but possibly far-reaching ways. Foremost amongst these was suggested a re-consideration of modes and focus of communication in formal and semi-formal meetings—away from a predominantly top-down administrative focus towards a more equal division of time and collaborative effort on common concerns of learning, teaching and classroom research.

In such a shift of focus, at a general level, a central emphasis on teachers and learners of English articulating and recording their goals and roles was recommended as a powerful starting point. By focusing on roles, teachers, if they so choose, may comfortably begin to re-assess their preferred teaching styles and the possible effects that such teaching styles have on learner involvement. Furthermore, by starting to engage in such an inquiry, teachers may begin to recognise and explore collaboratively, both with their colleagues and their students, other learning formats and arrangements. It was also argued that the central part of such an inquiry rests on developing appropriate channels of feedback between colleagues, between teachers and their students, and between students themselves.

### **Towards an interdisciplinary mode of teacher development**

Within the wider picture of English language education at the University of Tsukuba, such a collaborative inquiry might also help narrow the gap between general English education and English for academic / specific purposes. Language education faculty are specialists in their own area of language education but cannot properly claim to understand fully the great diversity of academic disciplines that their first-year students belong to and that they are beginning to be specialised into through the first year and beyond.

At a first level of collaboration with discipline specialist faculty in different departments and institutes across the university, consultations in semi-formal to informal meetings would help English language education teaching staff better understand some of these areas (based on Orr, 1997):

#### **Profession profiling**

- ❖ What are the future professions that students in a particular academic discipline are being prepared for?
- ❖ What are the primary goals of these professional areas?
- ❖ What are the primary activities that members of these professional groups take part in to achieve such goals?

- ❖ What are the values and cultural norms that influence such primary professional activities?

### **Discipline profiling**

- ❖ What are the major academic disciplines that the students are prepared in?
- ❖ What parts of these academic disciplines do the students need to learn English for?
- ❖ What primary skills do the students need to practise (listening, reading, writing, speaking)?
  - ❖ In what example genres?
  - ❖ In what example situations?
  - ❖ With what example people?
- ❖ What primary information, knowledge and skills areas do students need to master in English in their discipline while studying at the university?

### **Skills profiling** (after Johns, 1997, p.78)

- ❖ What does critical thinking mean for your classes or your discipline?
- ❖ What critical thinking, reading, and writing objectives do you have for your students—in Japanese, and in English? What would you like your students to be able to do in these areas that they cannot do when they enter your class?
- ❖ What kinds of reading in Japanese and in English do you assign? From textbooks? From other sources? How do you want your students to approach the reading of these texts? Are they to read different assignments differently?
- ❖ What kinds of writing in Japanese and in English do you require? What should students know or be able to do when they write? What kind of academic reports do you require your students to write—individually and/or collaboratively?
- ❖ Do you or does your department give a needs assessment for English to your students? If so, what have you discovered about their English skills and their understanding of their discipline? Do they understand the English reading and writing demands made of them? What problems can you identify in their English reading and writing (and speaking and listening if you conduct classes through the medium of English)?
- ❖ How would you like to develop your teaching of English with your students? Would you be willing to take part in some semi-formal / informal consultations about your English teaching needs and the English learning needs of your students?

In the different answers to such questions lies a greater understanding for all concerned. Such an understanding of development does not aim to standardise learning or teaching in any particular way, but rather to encourage individuals across academic disciplines to explore and develop collaboratively. In this manner, such a mode of teacher development speaks clearly to a consultative style which is both horizontal and open-ended rather than hierarchical and dogmatic... Or as Francis Bacon put it:

*"If a man will begin with certainties he shall end in doubts; but if he shall be content with doubts, he shall end in certainties."*

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