Teachers Learning From Teachers

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Over the last two decades, there has been a move towards providing ongoing professional development at Japanese universities. This reflects Richards & Farrell's (2005) assertion that ongoing renewal of professional skills and knowledge is critical to the long-term development of teachers and by extension to the students that they teach. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) now requires universities to provide faculty development. However, this is often formal and theory based, leaving opportunities for more informal, practical workshops. This paper is a report on a teacher-led initiative to provide regular lunchtime workshops at a Japanese university. The workshops offer mutual support for teachers and the opportunity to share practical teaching ideas. The authors make a number of recommendations on establishing such workshops, based on their experience of running the lunchtime workshops and the results of a questionnaire administered to both attendees and nonattendees.

20年ほど前から日本の大学において継続的プロフェッショナル・ディベロプメントが行われるようになってきた。Richards & Farrell（2005）が主張するように、専門的スキルと知識の開発は、長期的な教員教育にとって重要であり、学生にとって有益である。現在、文部科学省は各大学にファカルティ・ディベロプメントの実施を要請している。しかしながら、実質的なワークショップというよりは、理論ベースの形式的な場であることが多い。本稿は、日本のある大学において行われている、教員主導型の定期的なランチタイム・ワークショップについて報告する。このワークショップでは、教員たちは相互に協力しあい、実質的な教授法をシェアする機会を与えられる。本稿は、著者のワークショップ運営の経験と、教員アンケートの結果に基づいて、ワークショップ運営方法に関する様々なアイデアを提供する。

As educators, our primary concern is our students' learning outcomes. We may focus on our students' growth and success, but often fail to see our own shortcomings as teachers. In order to encourage the success of students, teachers themselves "need to engage in continuous professional development" (Vo & Nguyen, 2010, p. 205). The importance of continuous teacher training is reiterated by Peyton (1997) who stated, "Regardless of the skills and knowledge that foreign language teachers possess when they commence teaching, maintenance and improvement must be an ongoing process" (p. 4). Although many educational establishments provide formal in-service programmes, such as the faculty development (FD) systems in Japanese universities, it is questionable to what extent this knowledge is applied or replicated in the classroom (Sahin & Yildirim, 2016). This is not to say that FD does not serve a purpose, but rather that a change in teachers' beliefs and practices needs to begin with self-reflection. For teacher development to be relevant, teachers need to be willing participants in shared learning activities that not only involve reflection, but also monitoring and evaluation of their own professional growth (Richards, 2014). Instead of relying on institutions to provide teacher development, it may be more pertinent for teachers to organise and take responsibility for their own development through informal workshops and support groups by creating a "community of practice" (Buysse, Sparkman & Wesley, 2003). Tokai University's lunchtime workshops (LWs) are a prime example of a teacher-driven professional development (PD) programme that enables colleagues to come together in an informal setting to share ideas, methodologies, and work-related problems. In many ways, the workshops appear to provide a range of benefits to teachers and by extension their students. These benefits include improving pedagogical skills development, understanding learners, developing collegiality, and increasing teacher motivation. Drawing upon the results of a questionnaire administered at Tokai University to both attendees and nonattendees, this paper will examine teacher attitudes to the LWs and offer insights into establishing and improving PD.

Faculty Development and Professional Development in Japan

FD and PD both stress the importance of teaching and learning but from slightly different perspectives. Where FD tends to place importance on improving the quality of instruction and curriculum design (Richards, 2008), PD focuses more on teacher interaction through mentoring, problem solving, and sharing (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Regardless of the perspective, both are beneficial as they aim to facilitate understanding and the inclusion of new trends and theories in language teaching (Richards & Farrell, 2005).

In Japan, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has only recently placed greater importance on PD. Prior to the mid-1990s, FD was notably absent from many Japanese universities. A MEXT (1995, p. 2) report included the statement that in fiscal 1993, "slightly more than 10% of universities had established faculty study groups." This changed in 1998, when a Council for Higher Education Report made FD a key part of university reform with the aim to improve teaching skills (National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation, 2009). The Council's educational reforms also called for the restructuring of curriculums and programmes, third-party evaluations, and better management (Kawashima, 2010). Subsequently, FD was made mandatory from April 1, 2007, under the provisions of the *Standards for the Establishment of Universities* (National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation, 2007). To ensure that universities implemented reforms independently and autonomously, a system of quality assurance and accreditation was set in place by MEXT (Higher Education Bureau, MEXT, 2012). As a result of the government's mandate, reportedly 99% of Japanese universities in 2009 conducted FD activities largely in the form of workshops and seminars (Suzuki, 2013). These workshops were intended to improve the quality of teaching and learning by enhancing the professional capabilities of the educators through academic research.

Official Faculty Development and Professional Development at Tokai University

At Tokai University, the Educational Support Center (*kyouiku shienka*) oversees all government-stipulated FD sessions, whereas individual departments manage PD. The International Education Center (IEC) officiates teacher training for the university's 160-plus full- and part-time EFL teachers. Both FD and PD are expected to incorporate new information, theories, and goals by improving the performance of the school as a whole. An important forum for FD and PD is the workshops that are aimed at raising awareness of institutional improvements, such as to the curriculum, as well as provide an opportunity for educators to reflect on teaching practices and develop pedagogical skills. In such

a forum, experts provide specific knowledge and skills that direct and inform participants in order to ensure classroom application (Richards & Farrell, 2005).

Although in-service training is provided for all EFL teachers at Tokai, they are still predominantly attended and facilitated by full-time teachers. These formal workshops have addressed such diverse topics as information and communication technology, interaction between international and domestic students, and active learning. Because these FD workshops are regularly held after school or at weekends, many teachers are unable to attend due to other commitments, making them not only less accessible, but also less effective in reaching more faculty members.

The IEC's PD programme is predominantly designed to help new teachers become familiar with their duties. Each new teacher is paired with a "buddy" or an experienced teacher who acts as a mentor. The mentor assists with such matters as syllabus and grade input. New teachers are also required to attend an orientation session in which they are given an overview of the IEC programme, a handbook explaining their professional duties, and a tour of the campus. In addition, midway through a teacher's first semester, explanatory curriculum workshops are held to assist with assessment and field questions. Occasionally, whenever there are important changes to the unified curriculum, additional mandatory workshops are held for all teachers. These components cover the core in-service training and help ensure consistency at the IEC.

Lunchtime Workshops

Ideally, PD should connect researchers, educators, and administration, but in reality, too often the participating parties operate with different motives and perspectives, which limits success (Buysse et al., 2003). Clearly, there is a strong need for a professional community of teachers that is founded on collective interests. In this scenario, voluntary teacher-support groups enable educators to collaborate and achieve shared goals by discussing approaches, methods, and materials development that are related to the workplace (Richards, 2008; Richards, 2010). At Tokai, the unofficial teacher initiative called LWs would seem to fall under this category of voluntary support groups. These workshops may also be viewed as an alternative to official PD, creating what has been termed a community of practice (see Establishing Lunchtime Workshops, below).

Held on a regular basis, the LWs offer teachers the opportunity to share (a) teaching ideas, including materials and methods, related to both required and elective English courses; (b) classroom management issues; (c) approaches to assessment; and (d) questions on university policies and other matters. Because LWs can be held more frequently than the official FD and PD sessions, they can be tailored to current concerns and even

to small issues that may not warrant a full session. Furthermore, by ensuring that LWs are not mandatory, nor monitored, it is hoped that teachers will feel able to express their ideas more freely and openly.

Establishing Lunchtime Workshops

The main benefits of holding workshops at lunchtime, rather than after school or at weekends, is that teachers can fit PD into their regular teaching schedules. This is a particular advantage for part-time teachers, who may work at several different institutions. The main disadvantage is that of time restraints, which limit workshops to 40 minutes. To compensate for the problem of limited time for workshops, it was decided to hold them on a frequent, regular basis. This would also allow busy teachers to attend at least once during a semester. By making PD a regular part of teaching life, it was hoped that "learning and development [would] become as varied and engaging for teachers as they are supposed to be for students" (Lieberman, 1995, p. 71).

To attract and engage teachers, there is the need for clear objectives. In the case of the LWs, the authors established three goals: (a) to encourage active participation, (b) to address practical aspects of teaching, and (c) to foster collegiality. These three goals share some of the aspects of communities of practice, which have been defined as "a group of professionals . . . in pursuit of a shared learning enterprise, commonly focused on a particular topic" (Buysse, et al., 2003, p. 266). Communities of practice have two main tenets: "knowledge is situated in experience . . . [and] experience is understood through critical reflection with others who share this experience" (Buysse, et al., 2003, p. 267). This reflective practice is an important part of the community of practice approach. It is based on the precept that the teacher's own experiences are an important source of knowledge, in addition to the knowledge gained from more formal research.

In order to attain these goals, it was decided that the themes for LWs should be practical, relevant, and topical. Although in official FD, more theoretical matters are frequently addressed, LWs should focus on practical matters: materials, methods, and skills for English teaching. Presenters can be encouraged to bring along worksheets that other teachers can use in class as well as practical suggestions for websites, smartphone apps, learning activities, and teaching techniques. It is also possible to collect teaching materials presented at workshops and make them available online. Another important consideration was the frequency of workshops. By holding LWs regularly and frequently, teachers have more opportunities to attend. It was also felt that frequent workshops allow a sense of collegiality to develop, especially for those who have little professional contact with each other, as may also be the case in other large institutions.

Implementing the Lunchtime Workshops

The first step in implementation of an LW is to decide the time and place. Teaching schedules should be taken into account to ascertain on which days and at which locations teachers are predominately working. In the case of Tokai, it was decided to hold the workshops on the third Tuesday and Thursday of the first 3 months of each semester. By holding workshops on regular, predetermined dates, it was hoped that teachers could plan their schedules with the workshops in mind. The workshops were also scheduled to be held in the building where the largest number of teachers were working. Unlike in the case of formal PD and FD, teachers can be encouraged to bring their lunches, which may contribute to an informal atmosphere.

The next step is to decide themes for the workshops. Initially, organisers should chose themes related to the main courses or issues related to the educational institution. In the case of the Tokai, the initial focus was on the main required courses: Listening & Speaking and Reading & Writing are taken by all 1st- and 2nd-year students. Later, participants were asked to suggest themes that they would like addressed in future workshops. Once a theme is decided, teachers with an interest in the theme can be asked to present a teaching idea for discussion. It is also recommended that the organisers prepare teaching ideas to ensure the discussion continues. A list of questions related to the theme can also be prepared by the organisers to facilitate discussion (see example in Appendix A).

Another important part of implementation is to widely publicise the workshops. In the case of Tokai, a distinctive logo was designed, and leaflets for each workshop were put in teachers' mailboxes. Small posters were also printed and placed in prominent places. In addition, 2 or 3 days before each month's workshops, an email reminder was sent out. The profile of the LWs was also raised by announcing upcoming workshops at the monthly faculty meetings and then making verbal reports the following month. Finally, an account of the LWs yearly activities was published in the university's official FD report.

Workshops themselves should follow a simple, informal structure. One member of the organising committee should act as an informal chair to introduce the theme of the workshop, invite teachers to make short presentations, and encourage discussion. Through preparing these short presentations and participating in the subsequent discussions, teachers can benefit from the "reflective practice" considered important for professional growth (Richards, 2014). Another important role of LWs is that they can be an opportunity to answer teachers' questions. As in other Japanese universities, in the IEC at Tokai there is a mix of veteran and new, full- and part-time, contract and tenured, Japanese and non-Japanese teachers. Teaching requires knowledge of not only how to

teach, but also matters such as rules and regulations, administration, and ways to deal with problems. The informal atmosphere of LW-style workshops allows teachers to ask questions that they may be reluctant to ask in more formal situations, for example, how to deal with plagiarism and how to help students with learning disabilities.

Evaluation

Three criteria for the LWs at Tokai were initially established: active participation, practical themes, and collegiality. Three years on, it is now necessary to determine the degree to which these criteria have been satisfied. In terms of active participation, the LWs have attracted regular attendance. Each year, 12 workshops have been held on the dates publicised at the start of the academic year. Attendance has been consistent over the 3 years at between 10 and 15 participants for each workshop (i.e., 20 to 30 participants per month). At each workshop, four or five teachers present an idea, followed by questions and discussion.

The workshops have also been consistent in addressing practical themes. The following is a selection of the themes addressed: speaking activities and assessment, extensive reading, teaching writing with technology, listening and speaking materials and activities, reading and writing materials and activities, classroom management, encouraging self-directed learning, teaching vocabulary and grammar, short projects and task-based learning, test preparation, teaching with games, and Christmas quizzes (see example in Appendix B). On the LWs section of the IEC website, these teaching discussions have been summarised, methods explained, and worksheets uploaded. The website now contains explanations of approximately 100 methods together with downloadable worksheets and relevant Internet addresses (see Appendix C).

Another measure of success is that the official FD committee has asked for an annual report from the LW committee. There have also been requests from the FD committee for the LWs to become a part of official FD. However, it has been decided to keep LWs separate to maintain the informal, relaxed atmosphere of voluntary workshops. In order to further evaluate the success of the LWs, as well as glean ideas on how to improve future workshops, a survey of teachers was conducted.

Survey of Teacher Attitudes to Lunchtime Workshops

In January 2016, all EFL teachers—full- and part-time, native and nonnative English speakers—were asked to respond to a Google Forms questionnaire even if they had not attended the workshops. The questionnaire contained multiple-choice questions, a series of Likert-scale questions, and a comment section. Of the 160 English teachers in the IEC, 55 responded to the questionnaire, a response rate of 34%. Details of the responders are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Respondents to Questionnaire (*N* = 55)

Teacher category	Number
Japanese full-time teachers	8
Japanese part-time teachers	12
Non-Japanese full-time teachers	17
Non-Japanese part-time teachers	18

A total of 24 LWs were held during the 2014 and 2015 academic years. Workshops have attracted regular attendance of between 10 to 15 teachers (an ideal number for this format). Although 63% of the 55 respondents who answered the questionnaire attended fewer than one in 10 workshops, their responses helped provide insights into the overall perception of the LWs. In particular, the survey helped clarify why many teachers were unable to attend, as 32 respondents cited that they were "too busy at lunchtime" with meetings and class preparations. This suggests that the respondents were not disinterested, but were engaged elsewhere. Only nine respondents stated a general disinterest in the topics, but 11 respondents cited inconvenience because the campus is spread out over 500,000 square meters.

Sharing teaching materials is an important part of the LWs. Many of the materials discussed in the workshops have been made available on the LWs "Materials Bank" on the IEC Moodle site. These online materials were accessed by 46% of the respondents. The main reason for not accessing the materials bank was that the respondents were unaware of it. Understandably, there are many curriculum resources on the IEC Moodle site; this might lead to the LWs section being overlooked. However, 65% found the workshop ideas and materials very useful or useful. Interestingly, this suggests that some teachers are accessing the online materials without actually attending a workshop (26% of the respondents had not attended a workshop). However, thanks to this survey, the authors believe that there is now a greater awareness about the materials bank and the workshops.

A Likert scale (*strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*) was also included in the questionnaire to ascertain whether the LWs were achieving their purpose. The results are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of Questionnaire Likert-Scale Items (*N* = 55)

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I can get new teaching ideas.	18	16	11	5	1
I can get worksheets to use in class.	7	16	22	5	2
I can discuss problems and solutions related to teaching.	14	15	13	5	5
Workshops have helped professionally.	7	23	15	5	2
I am able to meet colleagues.	21	15	9	4	2
There is an informal atmosphere.	19	14	10	3	3
The workshops create a better working environment.	11	16	8	3	5

What is clear is that the LWs are achieving their purpose of fostering collegiality. Thirty-six respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement *I am able to meet colleagues*. Moreover, 33 respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement *There is an informal atmosphere*. This suggests that the LWs are achieving their social purpose, a necessity for such a large campus where many teachers rarely have the chance to meet colleagues.

In terms of obtaining classroom materials and professional skills, teacher responses tended to be somewhat mixed. On the one hand, 66% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement *I can get new teaching ideas*. However, only seven respondents strongly agreed with the statement *I can get worksheets to use in class*, pointing again to the lack of knowledge in regards to the materials bank.

Conclusion

This paper has described a series of informal LWs run by teachers in the IEC at Tokai University and given suggestions for those interested in holding such workshops. The aim of an LW is to provide a space for language teachers to share teaching ideas, answer one another's questions, and offer mutual support. Holding workshops in classrooms during the lunch break allows teachers to fit them into their busy schedules. At the IEC,

the LWs feature short presentations by teachers on practical methods, materials, and skills that they have found successful. Summaries of the workshops are posted on the IEC teachers' website together with materials to download.

The LWs can be placed in the context of more formal FD provided at all Japanese universities. Results of a questionnaire about the LWs at Tokai suggest that they are providing an important role in ongoing teacher education. Using the results of the questionnaire, together with their experience of organising the workshops, the authors have made a number of recommendations on how to establish and develop similar workshops. They have also suggested that such teacher-led initiatives can help teachers to develop a sense of collegiality in what is often a solitary occupation. By hearing about new methods, experienced teachers can overcome any complacency that may affect them. Likewise, newer teachers can ask experienced colleagues for advice with work problems and concerns. Through such exchange of ideas and experiences, it is hoped that initiatives like the LWs will play an important part in the ongoing PD of language teachers.

Bio Data

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Appendix A
Example Lunchtime Workshops Discussion Questions

Lunchtime Workshop 2: Speaking Activities and Assessment

Discussion Questions

1. How do you conduct speaking assessment? Do you use a video recorder? Do you prepare topic cards? Do you do interviews, pairwork, or groupwork? Explain your methodology to your group.

2. How do you ensure that you assess students fairly, given that we only have a few minutes to watch them speak? Do you have any special methodologies?

3. Do you have any suggestions for alternative ways to assess, which would still fit in with the goals of the LS curriculum?

4. How do you help students improve their performance in speaking tests?

5. Do you have any suggestions for improving the speaking rubric?

6. [other]

Appendix B
Example Lunchtime Workshops Presentation List
Theme: Speaking Activities and Assessment

This workshop includes: Ideas for teaching and assessing student's speaking for required Listening & Speaking classes.

1. A/B Conversation Topics Icebreaker – A 5-minute pre-pairwork icebreaker activity that uses 2 sets of worksheets (Presenter: Mark Shrosbree)

2. Teamwork Game – Students work cooperatively to spell "teamwork." (Presenter: Jeffrey Durand)

3. Profiles – Students ask questions about a classmate by asking other classmates about them. (Presenter: Bob Ashcroft)

4. Pairwork Matching Activity – Students cooperate to finish a series of thematically linked items. (Presenter: Benedict Rowlett)

5. Speaking Stations – A rotation of different speaking activities that are completed within 15-minutes. (Presenter: Catherine Cheetham)

6. Voice to Text (VoT) Technology on Smart Phones – Using apps such as "Dragon Dictation" and "Google Voice Search," students can convert speech to text or ask questions. (Presenter: Rich Bailey)

7. Whole-Class Pairwork Assessment – To assess pair speaking test with more than one partner, a video camera is used to record conversations. (Presenter: Mark Shrosbree)

Appendix C
IEC Teacher's Moodle Site