

Continuing Professional Development (CPD): A Study on Secondary School English Teachers of Assam

**Ataur Rahman, M.A., B.Ed., P.G.C.T.E., P.G.D.T.E.
Dr. Kamala Kanta Borgohain, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.**

=====

Abstract

This study aims at uncovering the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) practices of the secondary school 'English' teachers of Assam. A self developed questionnaire, with 36 open-ended items was used for the purpose of this study. The sample of the study consisted of fifty English teachers of class IX and X, selected from thirty purposely selected schools situated in rural and urban areas in Dhemaji district of Assam. The study found nearly forty percent English teachers of Assam attended in-service and ELT training and possessed a professional degree. Most of the teachers' involvement in Conferences/Seminars, publication in English or subscribing any ELT journals, either in print or online and professional associations was found to be very low. Nearly eighty percent teachers did not facilitate Peer Observation or getting Feedback from students without knowing students identity. However, Peer Coaching was practised. The knowledge of internet, more specifically, browsing the net for updating with the global trend of English Language Teaching, was found among less than thirty percent of teachers. Since CPD is a voluntary activity, it is self-initiated. The study concluded that little support in the form of resources could encourage the teachers to take control of their own professional development and formation of subject expert groups at the state and district level, with whom the teachers could communicate, for any learning-teaching problem that might help teachers in their professional growth.

Key words: Continuing Professional Development (CPD), Assamese medium secondary schools, English teachers, subject expert groups

1.0 Introduction

It was Richard Gardner, who as in-charge of professional development for the building professions at York University in the mid-1970s used the term ‘Continuing Professional Development’ (CPD). It was chosen because it did not differentiate between learning from courses, and learning 'on the job'. The term is now common to many professions, including the teaching job. ‘Continuing Professional Development’ (CPD) broadly signifies the process of continuing growth of a professional after joining the profession.

Generally, two views of CPD are talked about – the narrow and the broad. The narrow view considers CPD as the imparting/ acquiring knowledge or specific set skills in order to deal with some specific new requirements (for example, training teachers to handle a new textbook, or using a new teaching aid). The broad view considers CPD to have a much deeper, wider meaning in which professionals continuously enhance, not only their knowledge and skills, but also their thinking, understanding and maturity. They grow not only as professionals, but also as persons; their development is not restricted to their work roles, but may also extend to new roles and responsibilities.

In the teaching profession, CPD includes all the planned and natural learning experiences that benefit directly or indirectly to the individual, group or school, which in turn contributes to the quality of education in the classroom.

Teaching is a learning profession and like any other professionals teachers are expected to be life-long learners. However, this expectation has remained unfulfilled because of the lack of professional learning culture in the teaching profession. An important reason for this, as argued by Amol Padwad and Krishna Dixit (2011) is the lack of recognition of CPD as a life-long, continuous and largely voluntary process, and the consequent paucity of support to sustain this process. It is “a planned, continuous and lifelong process whereby teachers try to develop their personal and professional qualities, and to improve their knowledge, skills and practice, leading to their empowerment, the improvement of their agency and the development of their organization and their pupils.” (*Padwad and Dixit 2011:10*)

2.0 Objectives

The present study has been undertaken with a view to:

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 14:12 December 2014

Ataur Rahman, M.A., B.Ed., P.G.C.T.E., P.G.D.T.E.

Dr. Kamala Kanta Borgohain, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD): A Study on Secondary School English Teachers of Assam

(a) Study the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) initiatives of the English teachers of Secondary Schools of Assam.

(b) Offer suggestions for improving secondary school English teachers Continuing Professional Development.

3.0 Methods and Procedure

3.1 Teachers Sample

Fifty English teachers of class IX and X selected from thirty purposely selected schools situated in rural and urban areas.

3.2 Delimitation

The study has been limited to Dhemaji district of Assam.

4.0 Tool

A self-developed Questionnaire consisting of 36 open ended items was used for the purpose of this study. The domains of the questionnaire included: i) in-service training and ELT trainings, ii) professional and special degrees/diplomas in ELT, iii) participation in ELT Conferences/Seminars/ Workshops and iv) involvement as Resource Person, v) publication and participation in English programmes in Radio/TV, vi) involvement in external examination, vii) involvement in Professional associations, viii) involvement in Research activities, ix) Peer coaching , x) Peer Observation of class and Feedback from students, xi) updating with the latest innovations in ELT and xii) job satisfaction.

4.1 Standardization

Experts and practicing teachers validated the tool in terms of contents and language used in the construction of the tool. All the suggestions put forward by experts and working teachers were incorporated in the tool.

The Questionnaire was administered twice; after a gap of considerable time, upon a small sample of teachers. This sample was excluded from the main sample and the area selected for testing the tool was not the same as the area of the actual sample. Modifications wherever required were made accordingly.

5.0 Analysis of the Study

5.1 English Language Teaching Training

Table No.1
English Language Teaching training

In service training in English and ELT training		Agencies that provided training						
Yes	No	SSA	Dist. Acad. Council	RMSA	British Council	ELTI	Teachers Association	SEBA
40%	60%	25%	10%	30%	5%	15%	10%	5%

Table No. 1 shows 40% teachers responded to attending in-service training in English as well as ELT training and 60% stated they did not attend any in-service or ELT training.

10% teachers said they attended training provided by District Academic Council and 30% teachers responded that they were trained in ELT by the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA). 5% teachers stated they attended ELT training programmes provided by Board of Secondary Education, Assam (SEBA) and another 25% said they received training with the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). 15% teachers declared that they attended trainings provided by the English Language Training Institute (ELTI), Assam. Another 10% teachers said they attended training sponsored by the Secondary Teachers Association and only 5% received training from British Council.

5.2. Whether Training Courses in English help teachers in teaching performance

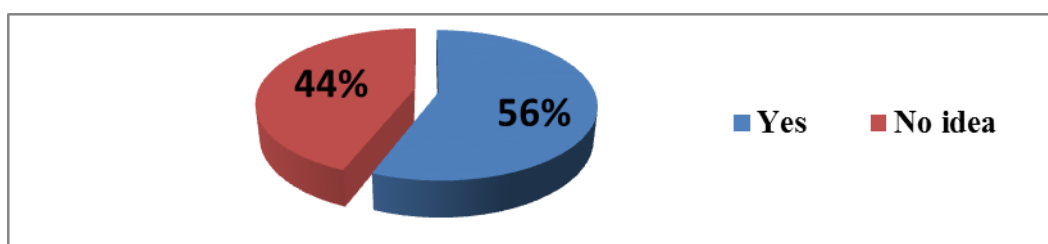


Figure No. 1
Opinion on the English training courses

Figure No.1 above shows 56% of teachers responded that the in-service and ELT trainings were helpful to them in their profession. On the other hand 44% of teachers replied that they had no idea whether the trainings were of any help to them in their teaching career.

5.2. Professional and special degrees/diplomas in ELT

Table No.2
Professional and special degrees/diplomas in ELT

Professional degrees					Degree s /diplomas in ELT	
Yes	No	Name of degrees			Yes	No
		M. Ed	B. Ed	B.T.		
36%	64%	2%	34%	-	0%	100%

Table No. 2 shows only 36% of teachers claimed they possessed professional degree/diploma like B.Ed. /M.Ed./B.T. (34% of teachers responded to having a B. Ed degree and 2% of teachers possessed M. Ed degree) . 64% of teachers stated they did not have any teaching degree. No teachers responded saying they possessed any English Language Teaching degrees/diplomas.

5.4 Participation in ELT Conferences/Seminars/ Workshops and involvement as Resource Person

Table No.3
Participation in ELT Conferences and involvement as Resource Person

ELT Seminars/Workshops/ Conferences attended		Involvement as Resource Person	
Yes	No	Yes	No
24%	76%	16%	84%

Table No. 3 reveals, only 24% of teachers stated they attended ELT Seminars/Workshops/Conferences and 76% admitted that they had not attended any such academic exercises.

Sixteen per cent (16%) of teachers responded that they were involved as Resource Person in different ELT trainings and Workshops whereas 84% of teachers replied in the negative.

5.5 Publication in English and participation in English programmes in Radio/TV

Table No.4

Publication in English and participation in English programmes in Radio/TV

Publications in English		Discussion / programme/s in English, either through Radio /TV	
Yes	No	Yes	No
6%	94%	0	100%

Table No. 4 shows only 6% of teachers claimed they made some publication in English and 94% of teachers admitted that they had not attempted any form of publication in English.

None of the English teachers responded to taking part in discussion or in any programme in English through either Radio or TV.

5.6 Involvement in External Examination

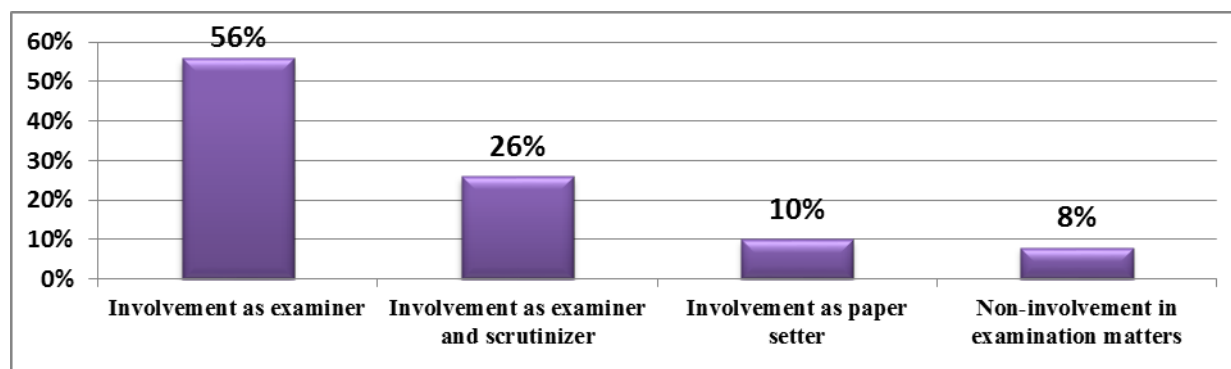


Figure: 2

Involvement in external examination

Figure No 2 above shows 56% teachers replied they were involved in external examinations as examiner only, 26% teachers said they were involved as both examiner and scrutinizer. Ten percent (10%) teachers claimed to have involved as paper setter. On the other hand, 8% teachers admitted that they were not at all involved in examination matters.

5.7 Involvement in professional association:

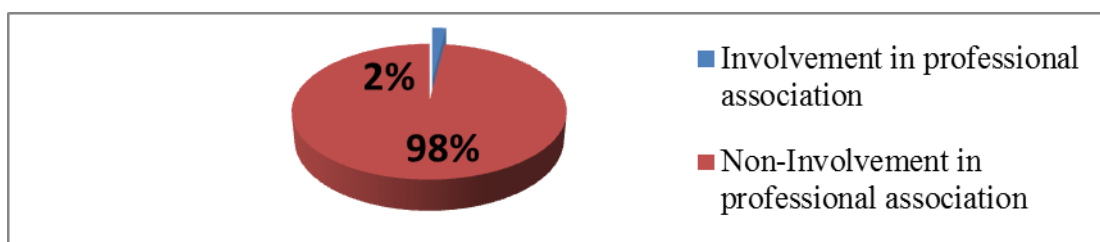


Figure: 3

Involvement in professional association

Figure No.3 shows 98% of teachers admitted they were not involved in any professional associations and only 2% of teachers said they were involved with professional associations either at the district or at state level.

5.8 Involvement in Research Activities

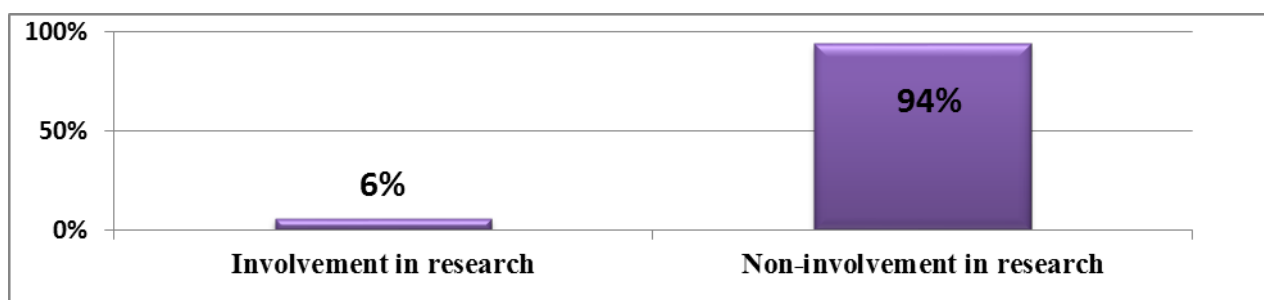


Figure: 4

Involvement in research

Figure No.4 shows 94% of teachers said they were not involved in any form of research activities. Only 6% of teachers claimed to have involved in some form of research activities.

5.9 Peer Observation of Class and Feedback from Students

Table: 5

Peer Observation and feedback

Peer Observation			Peer Coaching/Teaching			Feedback from students		
Always	Never	Sometimes	Always	Never	Sometimes	Always	Never	Sometimes
0%	88%	12%	0%	20%	80%	0%	64%	36%

Table No. 5 shows 12% of teachers claimed they sometimes facilitated Peer Observation in their class while 88% of teachers said they had not adopted this healthy practice.

Most of the teachers (80%) claimed they sometimes discuss their academic problems with peers, only 20% of teachers responded that they never discussed their academic problems with colleagues.

On the other hand, a considerable percentage of teachers (64%) admitted that they had never obtained feedback from students on their teaching performance (without knowing pupils' names). Only 36% of teachers claimed they sometimes adopted this healthy habit.

No teacher responded to the always option in peer observation, discussing with peers anything related to teaching problems, and obtaining feedback from students without disclosing names.

5.10 Updating with the Latest Innovations in ELT

Table No. 6
Updating with the latest innovations in ELT

Subscribe ELT journals print or electronic		Know the Use of internet		Possess an email account		Browse internet for updating with ELT innovations		Access to social networking sites – Facebook, Twitter etc.	
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
4%	96%	28%	72%	24%	76%	22%	78%	28%	72%

Table No. 6 shows secondary school English teachers responses towards updating with the latest innovations in ELT. Almost all (96%) teachers replied in the negative on the question of subscribing ELT journals, print or electronic. 72% of teachers admitted they lacked knowledge on the use of internet, only 28% of teachers replied in the affirmative. Another 28% of teachers stated accessing social networking sites, whereas 72% of teachers said they had no account in social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter etc. 78% of teachers declared they were not in the habit of browsing internet for updating with the latest innovations in ELT. There were 22% of teachers who claimed that they browsed the internet for the latest knowledge in ELT. A huge number of teachers (76%) admitted they had no email account. Only 24% of teachers said they had email account.

5.11 Job Satisfaction

Table No. 7
Job satisfaction of English teachers

Sl. No	Teacher	Job satisfaction	No job satisfaction	Comments
1	Male	91.43%	8.57%	NIL
2	Female	73.33%	13.33%	13.33%

Table No. 7 above shows, out of the fifty teachers thirty-five were male and fifteen female. 91.43% male teachers expressed satisfaction with the job of English teachers and 8.57% stated dissatisfaction with their job. In case of the female teachers, 73.33% were happy with the teaching job and 13.33% teachers expressed displeasure in the teaching profession. Another 13.33% female teachers did not respond to the question.

6.0 Findings and Discussion

Teaching is a learning profession and like any other professionals teachers are expected to be life-long learners. This expectation has remained unfulfilled because of the lack of professional learning culture in the teaching profession. An important reason for this, as argued by Amol Padwad and Krishna Dixit (2011) is the lack of recognition of CPD in its own light as a life-long, continuous and largely voluntary process, and the consequent paucity of support to sustain this process.

In-service trainings are those short and long-term trainings which a teacher undertakes during his/her tenure of service. In the study, in-service trainings have been studied as trainings in the teaching of English, sponsored by the government for professional development of teachers. A poor fraction of the teachers attended English teaching trainings of 1 and 3 months, 'Master trainer', to conduct ELT training programme hosted by the SSA and the British Council, Orientation Programme in English provided by the ELTI, Guwahati and training as Resource Person for English with SEBA and week-long training sponsored by Secondary School Teachers Association. Even then, it is difficult to comment on the end result of these trainings because teachers were divided in their opinion on the usefulness of the training courses in English. More than forty percent teachers declared they had no idea whether the trainings helped in their teaching profession and the remaining teachers replied trainings contributed in their teaching performance. A host of earlier researches pointed out

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 14:12 December 2014

Ataur Rahman, M.A., B.Ed., P.G.C.T.E., P.G.D.T.E.

Dr. Kamala Kanta Borgohain, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD): A Study on Secondary School English Teachers of Assam

that professional development could be achieved through high quality in-service training courses. But, in India, in-service training of teacher has remained a neglected issue. The NCFTE 2009:6-7 document mentions, “both the pre-service and in-service trainings of school teachers are extremely inadequate and poorly managed in most states.” (*National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education Towards Preparing Professional and Humane Teacher. New Delhi: India. NCTE, 2009*)

Therefore, teacher-training programmes should be more frequently arranged and focus more on practical issues of classrooms rather than on the theoretical aspects of teaching. Secondly, teachers can avail themselves of a number of online courses in his/her interested field or in area/s where he/she desires to improve. Most of these courses, at an affordable cost, can be attended at the convenience of the teacher. Today there is opportunity enough to offer a course of study through the distant mode.

Only a mere twenty-four percent of teachers participated in ELT Conferences/Seminars/Workshops basically at the district level. These included workshops on ‘Lesson Planning’, participation in International Conference and attending National Seminars. There is no reason why teachers working in permanent posts showed reluctance towards participating in ELT courses and in Conferences/Seminars. Probably secondary school English teachers of Dhemaji district still hold the belief that it is the responsibility of the state to sponsor teachers to attend such programmes. On the part of the temporary and contractual teachers, the financial hardships could be one of the reasons for non-involvement in such courses and programmes. This view of the researcher corresponds with a study conducted by Ahmed (2003) on the professional difficulties facing secondary school English language teachers in Northern Governorates of Palestine. The findings showed most of secondary school English language teachers suffered from several professional difficulties including lack of sufficient financial resources for development activities.

The investigator studied two other CPD activities, Peer Observation and Peer Coaching.

Peer Observation refers to a teacher or other observer closely watching and monitoring a language lesson or part of a lesson in order to gain an understanding of some aspects of teaching, learning, or classroom interaction. Peer Observation can provide an opportunity for novice teachers to see what more experienced teachers do when they teach a lesson and how they do it. The experienced teachers can also benefit from Peer observation. She/he can know how someone else deals with many of the same problems teachers daily face. Observing another class may also trigger reflections about one’s own teaching. Nearly ninety percent teachers admitted they had never adopted Peer Observation of class. The remaining section of teachers who claimed to have adopted Peer Observation, refrained from giving details of what they achieved by Peer Observation. Looking at the poor response in other CPD practices and their refusal to comment on the experience gained through Peer Observation, the

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 14:12 December 2014

Ataur Rahman, M.A., B.Ed., P.G.C.T.E., P.G.D.T.E.

Dr. Kamala Kanta Borgohain, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD): A Study on Secondary School English Teachers of Assam

response of these teachers is hard to believe. Probably our teachers relate this healthy practice with evaluation, and consider it as a threatening and unpleasant experience.

In *Peer Coaching* two or more professional colleagues work together to reflect on current practices, expand, refine and build new skills, share ideas, teach one another, conduct classroom research, or solve problems in the workplace. It can be collaborative between two teachers on the preparation of teaching materials, can observe each other's lessons, can co-teach lessons and observe each other's approach and teaching style. When teachers are supported by peers, they become willing to take greater responsibilities and exert much effort to improve their teaching and show more interest in professional development activities. Eighty percent of the secondary school English teachers declared they resorted to this good practice. Probably teachers infrequently indulged in informal talks with colleagues about teaching-learning problems. Whatever it might be this is a good CPD practice of the secondary schools English teacher of Assam.

Another CPD activity is getting feedback from the learners without knowing students identity. As in Peer Observation, here too, nearly forty percent teachers responded to obtaining feedback from students. These teachers did not respond to how they utilized the feedback in their professional development. Hence, practice of this CPD activity, as claimed by a section of teachers is doubtful. Whatever may be, if taken in its true spirit, this CPD initiative can help in the making of a great teacher.

More than ninety-five percent teachers did not subscribe to ELT journals (print or electronic); only four percent teachers talked of subscribing to ELT journals via email.

None of the teachers had participated in any discussions/programmes in English through either Radio or TV and only a negligible fraction of teachers (6%) claimed to have published articles in English, but did not give details of their published articles. There could be no other reason for vast majority of teachers avoiding participation in programmes in English, publication of articles in English and not subscribing to ELT journals, other than lack of interest, enthusiasm and lack of sufficient confidence. This view of the researcher resembles earlier study conducted by Remez and Sasson (2011). They argued that reasons for lack of enthusiasm in professional development training can be the lacking of confidence in abilities, fear of failure, low self-esteem, lack of enough interest, laziness, no awareness of the importance of goal, stressed or nervous, teachers conservativeness, conflict with work schedule, family responsibilities and not having pre-requisites.

The knowledge of internet for the secondary school teachers of the 21st century is essential to make students become global citizens. It is a great tool to assist language teaching and offer directions in current language use as well as study materials of various kinds. Therefore, the secondary school

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 14:12 December 2014

Ataur Rahman, M.A., B.Ed., P.G.C.T.E., P.G.D.T.E.

Dr. Kamala Kanta Borgohain, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD): A Study on Secondary School English Teachers of Assam

English teachers of Dhemaji district should adapt and transform their practices to benefit from the power of technology as much as possible; else they will remain isolated from rest of the ELT world. The study found less than thirty percent teachers possessed knowledge of internet. Nearly eighty percent of teachers admitted they were not habituated to browsing the internet to keep in touch with the latest global trends in ELT nor had an email account. The social networking sites (SNS) have become very popular and can be used as tools that facilitate and sustain professional networking and development among teachers. According to the summary of a chat organised by the Education World 2009 “teachers are increasingly using online social networking tools to break the traditional isolation of the classroom. In formal programmes and casual after school conversations, they are discussing ideas with colleagues, sharing experiences, and getting answers to questions”. Though this is the trend in many countries across the world for some time, use of social networking tools for CPD is not yet popular among teachers in India. Teachers’ involvement in social networking sites presents a gloomy picture. More than seventy percent teachers declared they had no account in any social networking sites. Since CPD on SNS is informal, it is self-initiated. Teachers who accept the revolution of the www can bring much improvement into their profession.

Save the novice teachers, others had gathered experience in evaluating the English second language learners as examiners, scrutinizers and paper setters.

Ninety percent teachers had no experience in research activities either individually, jointly or in group. Except for 2% of teachers, who had membership of English Language Teachers Association of India (ELTAI), others did not have link with any professional associations.

Job satisfaction of teachers was another aspect of the study. In simple terms when someone is satisfied with his job, that is job satisfaction. In other words, when any job fulfils one’s expectation, that is job satisfaction. It differs from person to person and organization to organization and even in context of male and female. Therefore, job satisfaction comes from not only the job, but also from one’s personal, social, organizational, administrative and economic condition. Therefore, the investigator tried to see the job satisfaction of the secondary school English teachers of Dhemaji district, separately as males and females. The study found (91.43%) male teachers expressed satisfaction in the teaching job than their female counterparts, 8.57% of male and 13.33% of female teachers said they were not satisfied with the job of English teachers.

6.1 Suggestions

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 14:12 December 2014

Ataur Rahman, M.A., B.Ed., P.G.C.T.E., P.G.D.T.E.

Dr. Kamala Kanta Borgohain, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD): A Study on Secondary School English Teachers of Assam

1. Little support in the form of resources can encourage teachers to take control of their own professional development. Teachers having a higher degree/ specialized degree should be awarded advanced increment in salary.
2. Subject expert group may be constituted at the state and district level, with whom the teachers can communicate for any learning-teaching problem.
3. Since CPD of individual teachers differs, teachers' professional need should be carefully investigated using a variety of ways such as interviews and questionnaires and specialized trainings should be provided.

6.2 Conclusion

To sum up, professional development is inevitable in order to survive in this fast changing competitive society. The development must not become static. It should be a continuous process. Teachers need to be highly interested in their professional growth if they want to be efficient and effective in teaching. CPD activities shall have to be undertaken by teachers at own effort and if needed, with own resources, for which he may not get due recognition from educational administrators. Since, technology has become an integral instrument of the educational kit; teachers need to be equipped with the technological advances in order to keep pace with the global trend of ELT. Continuous Professional Development of the teacher is as important as teaching itself.

References

Ahmed, M. (2003). *Professional Difficulties Facing Secondary School English Language Teachers and It's Effect in Classroom Performance in Northern Governorates of Palestine*. Master Thesis, Al Najah National University, Nablus.

Bolitho, Rod and Amol Padwad. *Continuing Professional Development Lessons from (2013) India*. British Council: New Delhi.

Herzallah, Ahmed Akram (2011). *Professional Development Obstacles Facing Primary English Language Teachers in Northern Gaza*. Phd diss. The Islamia University of Gaza.

Khan, Intakhab Alam (2014). *Philosophy of Continuous Professional Development in India: The Higher Education Perspectives*. PARIPEX-Indian Journal of Research. Vol. 3 Issue 1.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 14:12 December 2014

Ataur Rahman, M.A., B.Ed., P.G.C.T.E., P.G.D.T.E.

Dr. Kamala Kanta Borgohain, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD): A Study on Secondary School English Teachers of Assam

Muzaffar, Misbah and Samina Yasmin (2012). *Attitude of Teachers towards Professional Development Trainings*. Languageinindia.com Vol.12.

National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education Towards Preparing Professional and Humane Teacher. New Delhi: India. NCTE , 2009.

Padwad, Amol and Krishna Dixit. (2011). *Multiple Stakeholders views of Continuing Professional Development*. Rod Bolitho and Amol Padwad (Ed). Continuing Professional Development Lessons from India. British Council, New Delhi: India.

Ramez and Sasson (2011). Reasons of Lack of Motivation and enthusiasm in Professional Development trainings. Retrieved from www.successconsciousness.com/lack-motivation-enthusiasm.htm.

Richards, Jack C and Thomas S.C. Farrell (2005). *Professional Development for Language Teachers Strategies for Teacher Learning*. Cambridge University Press. New Delhi

Rose, Jo and David Reynolds (2009). *Teachers Continuing Professional Development: A New Approach*. 20th Annual World ICSEI, U.K.



Ataur Rahman, M.A., B.Ed., P.G.C.T.E.,
P.G.D.T.E.
Associate Professor
Dhemaji Commerce College & UGC
Teacher-Fellow
Department of Education
Dibrugarh University
Assam
India
rahmanataur00@ymail.com



Dr. Kamala Kanta Borgohain, M.A.,
M.Phil., Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Department of Education
Dibrugarh University
Dibrugarh 786 004
Assam
India

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 14:12 December 2014

Ataur Rahman, M.A., B.Ed., P.G.C.T.E., P.G.D.T.E.

Dr. Kamala Kanta Borgohain, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD): A Study on Secondary School English Teachers of Assam