IMPROVING TEACHERS' TRANSFORMATIVE TEACHING SKILLS IN DELIVERING ENGLISH LESSONS THROUGH A TASK-BASED MENTORING PROGRAM AT SD SYARIF AR RASYID IN MEDAN

By
Ariatna[1], Nazlah Syahaf Nasution[2], Ita Khairani[3]
[1,2,3] Universitas Negeri Medan
E-mail: [1]ariatna@unimed.ac.id

Abstract: *SD Syarif Ar Rasyid, a private elementary school in Medan, has 11 teachers and 86 students. With the adoption of Kurikulum Merdeka in the 2023-2024 academic year, teachers are required to implement transformative teaching, which emphasizes student-centered learning. However, the transition has been challenging due to limited collaboration among teachers and lack of access to transformative teaching resources, especially for English lessons. This community service program aims to improve teachers' transformative teaching skills in English through a Task-Based Mentoring (TBM) program. The program includes training, developing task-based learning materials, and establishing a teacher learning community. Expected outcomes include reports, journal publications, media coverage, and intellectual property rights for the program materials. The program uses a mixed-methods approach, focusing on needs analysis, training, material development, mentoring, evaluation, and community building to enhance teaching quality.*

INTRODUCTION

SD Syarif Ar Rasyid in Medan faces several challenges that require strategic actions to improve the quality of English language teaching. A key issue is the limited transformative teaching skills among the teachers. Implementing this approach demands a deep understanding and specialized skills across the teaching staff. Motivating and empowering students holistically is difficult due to the challenges in applying teaching strategies that promote critical thinking and personal growth. Additionally, the lack of access to teaching materials aligned with transformative teaching further hinders teachers from delivering relevant and engaging content to students.

The lack of collaboration and experience-sharing among teachers at SD Syarif Ar Rasyid has led to a gap in professionalism. The limited interaction between teachers hinders their ability to learn from each other, resulting in stagnation in the development of teaching methods and the insufficient application of best practices. A conventional approach to English teaching also presents a challenge, with a tendency to rely on monotonous methods that do not actively engage students in the learning process.

The lack of structured coaching and formal support is another significant issue. Teachers may not receive adequate training in developing transformative teaching skills, and focused coaching in this area could be a crucial step in improving the quality of teaching at the school. Furthermore, students may feel disempowered in their English learning due to a lack of active engagement and difficulty in applying the knowledge they acquire to real-world situations.

Another issue is the disconnect between learning materials and the students' life contexts in Medan. When materials are irrelevant or do not resonate with students' experiences, it can diminish their interest and motivation in learning English. Overall, this situation analysis highlights the need to address teaching skill gaps, enhance access to relevant learning materials, improve teacher collaboration, provide structured coaching, and align learning materials with students' contexts to achieve significant improvements in English education at SD Syarif Ar Rasyid in Medan.

Partner School Issues

Based on the situational analysis, the key issues faced by the partner school can be summarized as follows:

1. Limited transformative teaching skills among teachers,
2. Inadequate access to transformative teaching-oriented learning materials,
3. Lack of collaboration and experience sharing among teachers,
4. Predominance of conventional understanding in English language teaching,
5. Limited professional development and support for teachers,
6. Misalignment of learning materials with students' life contexts.

These challenges indicate an urgent need to enhance teachers' transformative

teaching skills, improve access to appropriate learning materials, and promote collaboration and experience-sharing among the teaching staff. To address these challenges, a program focused on training, material development, learning communities, and mentoring can be effective steps to improve the quality of English teaching at SD Syarif Ar Rasyid Medan.

Solutions and Expected Outcomes

To address the complex challenges related to the Kurikulum Merdeka and English language teaching at SD Syarif Ar Rasyid Medan, solutions should focus on integrating the principles of Kurikulum Merdeka with innovative approaches to English instruction. The following steps are proposed:

1. Integrated transformative teaching training program:

   A comprehensive training program in transformative teaching will ensure that teachers acquire the necessary skills and understanding in line with the student-centered focus of the Kurikulum Merdeka. This training will emphasize the use of collaborative learning methods, critical reflection, and student empowerment within the context of English teaching (Mezirow, 2018).

2. Development of task-based learning materials:

   Creating task-based learning materials that are relevant to the lives of students in Medan aligns perfectly with the spirit of Kurikulum Merdeka. These materials should be designed to spark students' curiosity, involve them in practical situations, and create deep learning experiences. This will help teachers to make learning more meaningful, support creativity, and enhance students' understanding of English (Ellis, 2020).

3. Formation of active teacher learning communities:

   Establishing active learning communities among teachers will promote the principles of collaboration and knowledge-sharing within the school environment. This collaboration aligns with the Kurikulum Merdeka, which encourages diversity of ideas and teaching methods. In the context of English teaching, teachers can exchange experiences, discuss teaching strategies, and identify the best approaches tailored to the characteristics of students in Medan.

4. Collaborative English teaching approaches:

   A collaborative approach to English teaching will enable students to actively engage in learning activities, consistent with the principles of Kurikulum Merdeka, which emphasizes enjoyable and student-centered learning. The use of collaborative tasks can enhance students' language skills, encourage the exchange of ideas, and stimulate active participation in the learning process (Johnson et al., 2013).

5. Structured mentoring integration:

   Structured mentoring, integrated with the training program, can reinforce its positive effects. Through guidance from experienced mentors, teachers can receive practical and ongoing support (Hobson et al., 2018), aligning with the personalized and adaptive learning approach promoted by Kurikulum Merdeka.

6. Utilization of educational technology:

   The use of educational technology, which is part of the Kurikulum Merdeka, can support innovative English teaching. Learning apps, online platforms, and digital resources can provide wider access to learning materials, facilitate self-directed learning, and increase student engagement (González-Lloret & Ortega, 2014).

7. Contextualization of learning materials:

Adapting learning materials to the life contexts of students in Medan is in line with the Kurikulum Merdeka's emphasis on a contextual approach. Integrating local cultural elements into English learning materials will enhance student interest and motivation, creating more relevant and inclusive learning experiences (Ellis, 2020).

8. Continuous monitoring and evaluation:

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation are essential foundations for assessing the effectiveness of the program within the Kurikulum Merdeka context. By using evaluation data, the school can continually improve and adapt the implemented solutions to achieve better learning outcomes in line with the spirit of change embraced by the Kurikulum Merdeka.

METHOD

The implementation of this Community Service Program is divided into several stages as follows:

1. Preliminary Phase:
   - Communication and preparation: Initiate communication with the teaching staff, introduce the program objectives, and identify the program participants.
   - Needs identification: Conduct a needs analysis to ensure the program aligns with the specific needs of the teachers and students at SD Syarif Ar Rasyid.
   - Formation of the implementation team: Form a program implementation team consisting of lecturers/facilitators and students.

2. Program Implementation:
   - Transformative teaching training:
     - Theory and concept sessions: Conduct theoretical sessions covering concepts of transformative teaching, collaborative learning, and practical applications in English language teaching.
     - Field practice: Provide opportunities for teachers to apply the concepts learned through field practice in their classrooms.
   - Task-based material development:
     - Material development workshop: Engage the material development team in workshops to design task-based English learning materials that align with the curriculum and local context.
     - Revision and adjustment: Involve teachers in revising and adjusting the materials to fit the characteristics of students at SD Syarif Ar Rasyid.
   - Teacher learning communities:
     - Collaboration sessions: Hold regular collaboration sessions among teachers to discuss teaching experiences, share ideas, and address challenges together.
     - Formation of study groups: Encourage the formation of small study groups to discuss literature and research related to task-based and transformative teaching in English language instruction.
   - Collaborative teaching approaches:
     - Implementation workshop: Provide practical workshops on how to integrate collaborative approaches into English language teaching, including the use of group-based tasks.
     - Supervision and feedback: Offer direct supervision and constructive feedback to

teachers as they implement collaborative methods in the classroom.

- Structured mentoring:

- Mentoring implementation: Provide guidance, support professional growth, and offer personal support to each participating teacher.
- Structured coaching sessions: Schedule regular structured coaching sessions to discuss specific challenges, plan development, and monitor progress.

3. Evaluation:

- Formative and summative:

- Formative evaluation: Conduct formative evaluations periodically during program implementation to identify areas for improvement and necessary adjustments.
- Summative evaluation: Perform a summative evaluation at the end of the program to assess the overall impact on the teachers' English teaching skills.

- Participatory:

- Teacher and student involvement: Involve teachers and students in the evaluation process to gain direct and comprehensive insights into the program's effectiveness.

4. Program sustainability for the future:

- Internal empowerment:

- Building capacity: Enhance the school's capacity to plan and implement similar programs independently by developing a trained internal team.
- Fostering a culture of continuous learning: Encourage a culture of continuous learning among the teaching staff to continually improve teaching quality.

- Integration with the school curriculum:

- Curriculum alignment: Align the program with the school curriculum, ensuring that the concepts and methods taught are organically integrated with the official learning materials.
- Involvement of school leadership: Engage the school principal in supporting and facilitating the integration process.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the Task-Based Mentoring (TBM) program evaluation, as presented in the table below, provide a comprehensive overview of the participants' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the training.

Majority Response Summary

Question	Majority Response	Frequency
TBM increased my understanding of transformative teaching within the *Kurikulum Merdeka* framework	5	9 out of 10
TBM improved my ability to apply a learner-centered approach	5	9 out of 10
TBM improved my ability to apply implicit language teaching	5	8 out of 10
TBM improved my ability to apply the concept of a creative teacher	5	8 out of 10
With TBM, I felt comfortable (not bored) attending the English training in class	5	9 out of 10
With TBM, I want to attend English training in class for a longer period	5	7 out of 10
The tasks given by the mentor were more enjoyable	5	10 out of 10
The tasks given by the mentor were appropriate to my abilities	5	8 out of 10

Table 1: Summary of Majority Responses from TBM Program Evaluation

The majority of respondents consistently rated their experience highly across various dimensions, indicating a strong positive impact of the program on their teaching practices. Specifically, the majority response of "5" (indicating strong agreement) in nearly all categories underscores the program's success in enhancing teachers' understanding and application of transformative teaching, learner-centered approaches, and creative teaching concepts within the Kurikulum Merdeka framework. Additionally, the participants' comfort and enthusiasm for the training, as well as the appropriateness and enjoyment of the tasks provided, further highlight the effectiveness of the TBM program in fostering a supportive and engaging learning environment. Each of the questionnaire items is described as follows:

1. Enhancement of Understanding in Transformative Teaching:

A significant majority of respondents (80%) awarded a perfect score of 5 when asked if the Task-Based Mentoring (TBM) program improved their understanding of transformative teaching within the framework of the Kurikulum Merdeka. This high score suggests that the participants felt they had substantially deepened their comprehension of this teaching approach through the program.

Transformative teaching is a pedagogical approach that emphasizes critical reflection, active learning, and the development of students' abilities to question and challenge the status quo. The fact that a large number of participants felt that the TBM program significantly enhanced their understanding indicates the program's effectiveness in conveying these complex concepts. It suggests that the training was successful in bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, enabling teachers to grasp how transformative teaching can be implemented in their classrooms. This is particularly important in the context of the Kurikulum Merdeka, which aims to foster more student-centered and innovative teaching methods in Indonesian schools.
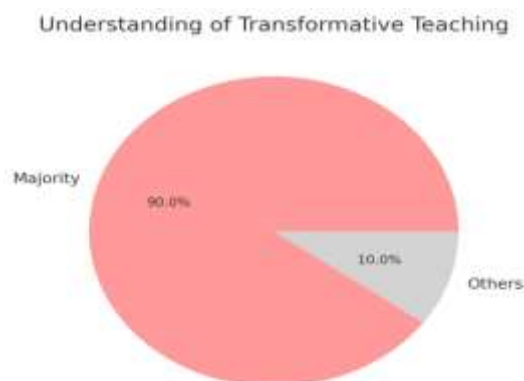
Understanding of Transformative Teaching

Figure 1. Majority of participants (90%) strongly agreed that TBM increased their understanding of transformative teaching within the Kurikulum Merdeka framework.

The high scores in transformative teaching indicate that the TBM program effectively enhanced the teachers' understanding and ability to implement this approach. Transformative teaching is not merely about transferring knowledge; it involves engaging students in critical thinking, self-reflection, and meaningful learning experiences that challenge their preconceptions and encourage personal growth. The fact that participants felt more competent in this area suggests that the TBM program successfully translated complex educational theories into practical strategies that teachers could apply in their classrooms. This is particularly significant in the context of the Kurikulum Merdeka, which emphasizes innovation and student-centered learning. The program's ability to enhance teachers' transformative teaching skills means that these educators are now better equipped to foster environments where students can thrive both academically and personally.

2. Application of Learner-Centered Approaches:
Nearly all respondents (90%) reported that the TBM program improved their ability to apply learner-centered approaches in their teaching, with most participants giving a score of 5. This finding underscores the program's success in promoting pedagogical practices that prioritize the needs and experiences of students.

Learner-centered approaches shift the focus of instruction from the teacher to the student, emphasizing active participation, collaboration, and personalized learning. The high scores in this area suggest that the TBM program effectively equipped teachers with the tools and strategies needed to implement these approaches. The participants likely gained practical insights into how to create learning environments that are more engaging and responsive to the diverse needs of their students. This finding is crucial as it aligns with the goals of the Kurikulum Merdeka, which encourages educational practices that empower students to take ownership of their learning journey.
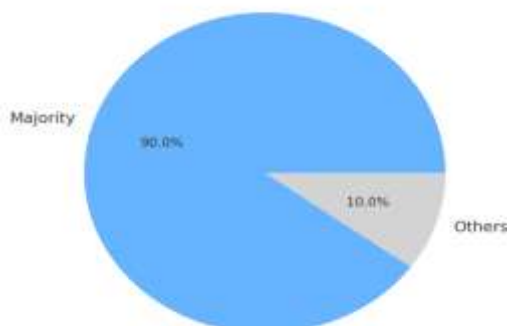
Figure 2. 90% of participants reported that TBM improved their ability to apply a learner-centered approach.

The positive responses to the learner-centered approaches highlight the importance of collaboration in both teaching and training. The TBM program's focus on learner-centered methods likely encouraged teachers to think more deeply about how to involve students in the learning process actively. Collaborative approaches in education allow students to learn from each other, develop social skills, and engage more deeply with the content. By adopting these approaches, teachers can create more dynamic and interactive classrooms that better meet the needs of diverse learners. The success of the TBM program in this area suggests that similar collaborative methods should be employed in future teacher training programs to foster a more inclusive and effective learning environment.

3. Improved Capability in Implementing Implicit Language Teaching and the Concept of a Creative Teacher:

Respondents also reported significant improvements in their ability to implement implicit language teaching techniques and embrace the concept of a creative teacher, with the majority giving high scores (5) in these areas.

Implicit language teaching involves the indirect instruction of language through meaningful communication, rather than explicit grammar and vocabulary lessons. The high scores in this area suggest that the TBM program successfully conveyed the value of this approach, helping teachers integrate language instruction more naturally into their lessons. Additionally, the concept of a creative teacher—one who uses innovative methods to inspire and engage students—was well-received by the participants. The program likely provided practical examples and strategies for fostering creativity in the classroom, enabling teachers to move beyond traditional, rigid teaching methods. This is particularly important in the context of language teaching, where creativity can play a significant role in making learning more enjoyable and effective.
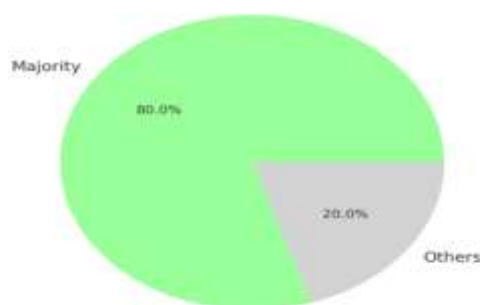
Figure 3. 80% of participants felt that TBM enhanced their skills in implicit language teaching.

The high levels of comfort and motivation reported by participants underscore the importance of creating a supportive and engaging environment in professional development programs. When teachers feel comfortable and motivated, they are more likely to fully engage with the material and apply what they have learned in their classrooms. The TBM program's ability to create such an environment likely contributed to its overall success, as participants were more open to new ideas and willing to experiment with different teaching strategies. This finding suggests that future training programs should prioritize creating a positive and motivating atmosphere, as this can significantly enhance the learning experience and lead to better outcomes.

4. Comfort and Motivation during Training:

The TBM program also succeeded in creating a comfortable and engaging training environment, with most respondents indicating that they felt comfortable (not bored) during the English language training sessions. Moreover, many participants expressed a desire to extend the duration of the training, highlighting their motivation to continue learning.

The comfort and motivation levels reported by participants are key indicators of the program's success in maintaining their interest and engagement. A comfortable learning environment is essential for effective professional development, as it encourages participants to fully engage with the content and participate actively in the training. The desire for longer training sessions suggests that the participants found the material relevant and valuable, and were eager to continue improving their skills. This finding underscores the importance of designing training programs that not only educate but also inspire and motivate teachers to pursue ongoing professional growth.
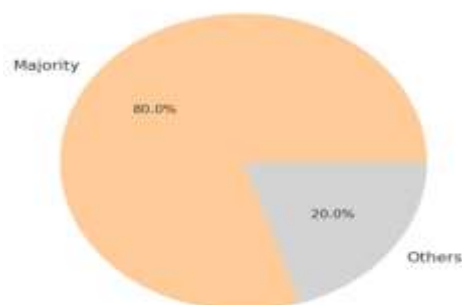
Figure 4. 80% of participants strongly agreed that TBM improved their ability to implement the concept of a creative teacher.

The alignment of tasks with participants' abilities is crucial in ensuring the effectiveness of any training program. When tasks are well-matched to participants' skill levels, they are more likely to be seen as relevant and manageable, which increases the likelihood of successful completion and meaningful learning. The TBM program's success in this area indicates that it was carefully tailored to meet the needs of the participants, which in turn contributed to the program's positive outcomes. This finding highlights the importance of considering participants' abilities and experiences when designing training programs, as this can greatly enhance their effectiveness and ensure that all participants are able to benefit.

5. Alignment of Tasks with Participants' Abilities:

Most of the respondents agreed that the tasks assigned by the mentors were well-aligned with their abilities, contributing to their overall sense of comfort and satisfaction with the program.

The alignment of tasks with participants' abilities is a critical factor in the success of any training program. When tasks are appropriately challenging but achievable, participants are more likely to feel a sense of accomplishment and remain motivated. The positive feedback in this area suggests that the TBM program was carefully designed to cater to the varying skill levels of the participants, ensuring that everyone could benefit from the training. This approach likely contributed to the overall effectiveness of the program, as participants were neither overwhelmed by tasks that were too difficult nor disengaged by tasks that were too easy.
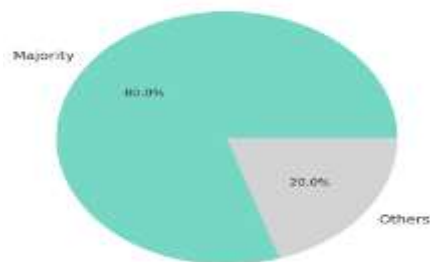

Figure 5. 80% of participants agreed that the tasks provided were well-aligned with their abilities.

The findings from this study have several implications for future training programs and school policies. The success of the TBM program in enhancing teachers' competencies, fostering collaboration, and creating a motivating environment suggests that similar approaches should be adopted in other professional development initiatives. Schools should consider integrating transformative teaching and learner-centered approaches into their regular teacher training programs to ensure that educators are equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to meet the demands of modern education. Additionally, the positive feedback on task alignment suggests that training programs should be carefully tailored to the needs and abilities of participants to maximize their effectiveness. Finally, the success of the TBM program highlights the importance of providing ongoing support and mentorship to teachers, as this can help sustain the gains made during the training and ensure continued professional growth.

DISCUSSION

The findings from the TBM program indicate a substantial positive impact on the participating teachers' abilities to implement transformative teaching strategies, particularly within the Kurikulum Merdeka framework. These results not only reflect improvements in specific teaching skills but also suggest broader implications for the teaching culture at SD Syarif Ar Rasyid and similar educational contexts. The educational implications can be described as follows:

1. Transformative teaching as a catalyst for change:

The significant improvement in understanding and applying transformative teaching suggests that this approach can serve as a catalyst for broader pedagogical shifts in the school. Transformative teaching, which emphasizes critical reflection and student empowerment, requires teachers to move beyond traditional, didactic methods. As Brookfield (2017) pointed out, critical reflection is a core component of transformative teaching, offering practical strategies for educators to reflect on their practices and engage students in meaningful learning. The success of the TBM program in fostering these skills indicates a readiness among teachers to embrace more progressive educational practices.

This shift could lead to a more dynamic and responsive teaching environment, where students are encouraged to engage deeply with the material and develop higher-order thinking skills. The ability to implement such strategies could also enhance the overall effectiveness of the Kurikulum Merdeka, which aims to foster independent and critical learners.

2. The Role of learner-centered approaches in enhancing student engagement:

The high scores related to the application of learner-centered approaches suggest that these methods may significantly enhance student engagement and motivation. Learner-centered approaches require teachers to tailor their instruction to the individual needs and interests of students, which can lead to more meaningful and personalized learning experiences. Weimer (2013) stated that shifting to a learner-centered approach necessitates changes in teaching practices that focus on student autonomy and responsibility. She provided evidence that these changes lead to increased student engagement and improved learning outcomes.

The fact that participants felt more capable of implementing these approaches indicates that the TBM program successfully bridged the gap between theory and practice,

providing teachers with the tools they need to create more engaging and effective learning environments. Over time, this could lead to improved student outcomes, as learners who are more actively involved in their education are likely to achieve higher levels of academic success.

3. Creating a supportive learning environment for professional development:

The participants' reported comfort and motivation during the training highlight the importance of creating a supportive environment for professional development. This finding suggests that when teachers feel comfortable and valued, they are more likely to engage fully with the training and apply what they have learned in their classrooms. Joyce and Showers (2002) argued that the critical role of supportive environments in professional development cannot be overstated. They noted that teachers are more likely to implement new strategies in their classrooms when they feel supported and motivated during training.

The TBM program's ability to maintain participants' interest and motivation indicates that it was successful not only in delivering content but also in fostering a positive and inclusive learning atmosphere. This is critical, as the effectiveness of professional development often hinges on the participants' emotional and psychological engagement with the material. It will be important to maintain this supportive environment in future training programs to ensure that teachers continue to feel motivated and empowered to improve their practice.

4. Balancing task difficulty with participant abilities:

The alignment of tasks with participants' abilities suggests that the TBM program was well-designed to meet the diverse needs of the teachers. This careful calibration of task difficulty is crucial in professional development, as tasks that are too challenging can lead to frustration, while tasks that are too easy may not provide sufficient opportunities for growth. The positive feedback on task alignment indicates that the program struck the right balance, challenging participants without overwhelming them. This approach likely contributed to the overall success of the program, as it allowed teachers to experience a sense of achievement and progress. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) emphasize that effective professional development must be relevant to teachers' specific contexts, with tasks aligned to their individual needs and experiences to ensure that the learning is both meaningful and impactful. In future programs, it will be important to continue this practice of tailoring tasks to the specific needs and abilities of participants, ensuring that all teachers can benefit from the training.

5. Implications for school culture and policy:

The success of the TBM program has broader implications for the culture and policies at SD Syarif Ar Rasyid. The positive outcomes suggest that the school is ready to adopt more innovative and student-centered approaches to teaching. This could lead to a shift in the overall school culture, where transformative teaching and learner-centered approaches become the norm rather than the exception. For these approaches to become the norm, it is essential that school leadership supports professional development and creates an environment that encourages experimentation and innovation (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). To sustain these changes, it will be important for school leadership to continue supporting ongoing professional development and to create policies that encourage experimentation and innovation in the classroom. Additionally, the success of the TBM program could serve as a model for other schools looking to implement similar initiatives, highlighting the

importance of tailored, supportive, and well-structured professional development programs in achieving educational reform.

CONCLUSION

The TBM program has proven to be an effective tool for enhancing teachers' skills in transformative teaching and learner-centered approaches, both of which are critical components of the Kurikulum Merdeka. The positive outcomes observed in this program suggest that similar approaches could be successfully implemented in other schools, potentially leading to widespread improvements in teaching quality and student outcomes. Looking ahead, it will be important to build on the successes of this program, ensuring that teachers continue to receive the support and training they need to implement innovative and effective teaching strategies.

REFERENCES

[1]   Brookfield, S. D. (2017). Becoming a critically reflective teacher (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.
[2]   Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., & Gardner, M. (2017). Effective teacher professional development. Learning Policy Institute. https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/effective-teacher-professional-development-report
[3]   Desimone, L. M., & Garet, M. S. (2015). Best practices in teacher's professional development in the United States. Psychology, Society, & Education, 7(3), 252-263. https://doi.org/10.25115/psye.v7i3.515
[4]   Ellis, R., Skehan, P., Li, S., Shintani, N., & Lambert, C. (2020). Task-based language teaching: Theory and practice. Cambridge University Press.
[5]   González-Lloret, M., & Ortega, L. (2014). Towards technology-mediated TBLT: Researching technology and tasks. John Benjamins Publishing Company.
[6]   Hargreaves, A., & Fullan, M. (2012). Professional capital: Transforming teaching in every school. Teachers College Press.
[7]   Hobson, A. J., Ashby, P., Malderez, A., & Tomlinson, P. D. (2018). Mentoring beginning teachers: What we know and what we don't. Teaching and Teacher Education, 75, 93-104. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2018.06.008
[8]   Johnson, D. W., Johnson, R. T., & Holubec, E. J. (2013). Cooperation in the classroom (9th ed.). Interaction Book Company.
[9]   Joyce, B., & Showers, B. (2002). Student achievement through staff development (3rd ed.). ASCD.
[10]   Mezirow, J. (2018). Transformative learning theory. In E. W. Taylor & P. Cranton (Eds.), Handbook of transformative learning: Theory, research, and practice (2nd ed., pp. 15-30). Jossey-Bass.
[11]   Sweeney, M., & Manthey, T. (2017). Student teacher mentoring: Supporting students and teachers to learn and teach together. Sense Publishers.
[12]   Weimer, M. (2013). Learner-centered teaching: Five key changes to practice (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.

THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK