

Learn, Relearn, Unlearn: Professional Development through ELTAI

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CPD (Continuing Professional Development) is the latest buzzword in education. The need for teachers to focus on professional development has been discussed and emphasized in various forums in the recent past. Teachers become better teachers when they voluntarily and constantly take steps to develop their subject knowledge and pedagogical skills. In order to stay relevant in their teaching profession, teachers are required to prove their professional competence and demonstrate their effectiveness in the classroom.

Professional development is a continuous process and a lifelong journey. It is a requirement for English language teachers who aspire to climb the ladder of success in their career. English teachers are required to learn, unlearn and relearn in order to make their teaching more meaningful and relevant. Achieving it becomes easier if they are part of a wider network of teachers as it can provide them with opportunities to learn from one another and share their knowledge with others.

There is one teacher association that has been supporting the professional development of English language teachers across the country, and that is the English Language Teachers' Association of India,

known by its acronym ELTAI. Founded by Padmashri S Natarajan, ELTAI is an associate of the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL), UK.

ELTAI that celebrates its fifty years of existence this year has been contributing to the professional development of English language teachers in several ways. It partners with both government and private educational institutions in order to improve the quality of English language teaching in the country. The services the association provides include consultancy, training teachers, designing materials, and providing assistance with curriculum development and textbook preparation. ELTAI has about 50 chapters across India and each chapter organizes conferences, seminars and workshops, and contributes to the professional development of English language teachers of the region and some members are actively involved in carrying out action research.

The Journal of English Language Teaching (JELT), a bi-monthly published by ELTAI, is the oldest ELT journal in the country. The journal is a forum for teachers, researchers and scholars to get their research work published. Besides *JELT*, the association

brings out three more [online] journals and provides opportunities to the ELT community in the country to make their research work known to others.

The annual international conferences, organized by ELTAI in collaboration with the British Council and the Regional English Language Office (RELO) of the US Embassy, attract hundreds of participants from various parts of the country [and abroad]. The conferences create opportunities for teacher participants to interact and network with globally well-known ELT experts and professionals.

The Golden Jubilee Conference of ELTAI is going to take place in Amity University, Noida, on 9-12 October 2019. The theme of the conference is “Right to English”. When asked why this theme was chosen, Dr K Elango, General Secretary, ELTAI, said, “English has percolated into the very psyche of the Indian subcontinent over the last four centuries, and the time has come when we cannot wish it away from our lives. Knowledge of English is no longer the prerogative of a few, but the need of the masses. It is essential to review our priorities

and methodologies related to ELT in India. Hence we have chosen the theme.” He added, “The Right to Education (RTE 2009) implies the Right to English for all as well, as proficiency in English has become a global imperative today.”

What is going to be the focus of the association? Elango says, “The ELTAI’s primary focus is to cater to the needs of those teachers who are toiling to teach English with no exposure to English and not even an iota of how to teach it as a skill. So, the association is set to identify the motivated ones in the unreached areas and initiate the process through its chapters in different parts of the country. We have envisioned it as a bottom-up model to transform the way languages are taught in our country.”

Teachers interested in becoming members of ELTAI can visit the site www.eltai.in

[Editor’s Note: The author is an academic, columnist and freelance writer; he may be contacted at: rayanal@yahoo.co.uk (Email) and at: @albertprayan (Twitter). This article was published earlier in the EDGE section of The Hindu dated April 8, 2019.]