CONTEXTUALIZING LANGUAGE TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR 21ST CENTURY SKILLS IN ASEAN MEMBER COUNTRIES

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INTRODUCTION

We live in a digital age. It is an age that information communication technologies (ICTs) have made our lives so convenient and conducive yet complex and complicated at the same time. While the use of ICTs such as the desktop, laptop, tablet, smart phone and wifi connection has helped us in our daily routine, at work or study, the complexity of life and the anxiety caused by having to 'catch up' with the rapid changing technology in information communication cannot be overlooked. Living in the digital age means having to keep on learning, including acquiring and honing technology skills to stay relevant and connected with others and the rest of the world.

The use of ICTs in language teaching and learning has enriched the experience of both teachers and learners. Beauchamp and Kennewell (2010) point out that ICTs have offered teachers and their classrooms new pathways towards language learning. ICTs have given learners the liberty to orchestrate learning resources, thus, moving towards learner autonomy and transforming their learning, be it individual, pair or group learning. ICTs have changed the way we teach and learn, replacing a teacher-centred approach with a student-centred one.

ICTs have revolutionized the learning process, providing learners with ample resources on the internet where learning can be engendered interactively through real world situations. ICTs have also contributed as teaching tools in the language classroom. The benefits of the use of ICTs in language learning are numerous. For example, through ICTs, images can be used in teaching and improving the retentive memory of learners while teachers can use them to help explain complex concepts to facilitate learners' comprehension. Language teachers are able to create interactive classes through the use of ICTs to make their lessons more engaging, all of which could help improve learner attendance and concentration. The World Wide Web, in particular, broadens the classroom context and provides access to an array of materials as it offers both teachers and

learners a plethora of materials in various modes, bringing culture and language to life and making it more visual and tangible.

Although ICTs are useful in maximizing the learning process, there are some drawbacks of using them in the field of language learning. Setting up the devices in the classroom can be troublesome or expensive to afford. Even when the technology and materials are available, on-going training of teachers in the use of ICTs in language teaching or in technology-induced pedagogy is essential and necessary, and such training for teachers requires a sustainable training framework that takes into consideration the needs of teachers and their learners in their own teaching or work context. All this calls for a new model or approach towards teacher professional development for the 21st century. Clearly new models must be found to integrate the new media into a principled approach to teaching and learning, which enriches and supplements traditional materials and well-tried delivery systems in existing schools and institutions. According to Law (2008), there is a still a long way to go before claiming that we can provide our students with fully ICT-integrated classrooms. Though there now exists TPCK (Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge), it still does not cover what teachers need in order to incorporate ICTs in pedagogical innovations: cognitive, metacognitive, social and socio-metacognitive capacities. Teacher learning as professional development, needs to embrace the orientation and motivation that will enable teachers and educators to enter a professional network of innovators and produce pedagogical innovation supporting their original goal, to educate in the 21st century (Law, 2008).

Put it simply, if teachers cannot make good use of the ICT tools, the amount of money and time spent on the ICTs is going to be a waste. Yet, as we all know, educational ICT tools are not for making teachers master ICT skills themselves, but for enabling them to create a more effective learning environment through the use of ICTs. Teachers need to come to terms with the fact that their role is constantly changing and that they shall have to gain knowledge of how to use relevant and appropriate ICT tools for educational purposes. Teachers have to believe that 21st century teaching and learning would require them to fulfill the following:

- Engage learners through more interactive work and hands-on activities that promote deep learning;
- Facilitate timely feedback to learners
- Enable content knowledge to be continually updated
- Provide quicker access to teaching and learning materials
- Promote various forms of learning, including individual, peer and group learning

- Facilitate more independence on the part of learners and more self-directed learning activities.

Teachers are faced with the daunting challenge: equipping their students with 21st century skills while teacher educators are equally challenged to update and upskill teachers' knowledge and competency for 21st century teaching. For teachers, they would need to foresee students' needs and determine how 21st century needs fit in with the existing curriculum, find ways to incorporate new skills to be taught along with content, and manage the complex process of implementing the curriculum. Hence, concerned teachers are continually requesting more training and additional professional development (Prensky, 2010). For teacher educators, they would need to consider a robust and sustainable framework for teacher professional development in order to better equip and prepare teachers in the delivery of 21st century skills to their students.

The 5Cs of 21st Century Skills

The literature on 21st century skills abounds with descriptions of listing after listing of what are considered to be key competencies and skills that students need to be equipped with before graduating and leaving their educational institutions for the workforce. It also contains descriptions and analyses of what 21st century teaching looks like in practice and what teacher professional development for 21st century skills should be like.

In this article, I will highlight the **5Cs** of 21st century skills as I consider these to be critical competencies and skills that teachers should teach and prepare their students for 21st century learning at 21st century schools and eventually at 21st century workplace.

Communication

The advent of sophisticated ICTs has made communication more complex than before. Complex communication requires the exchange of vast amounts of verbal and non-verbal information and the information flow is constantly adjusted as communication evolves unpredictably (Levy and Murnane, 2004). Therefore, a skilled teacher is an expert in communication, able to improvise answers and facilitate dialogue in the unpredictable, chaotic flow of classroom discussion (Dede, 2010).

Dede (2010) argues that in 20th century instruction problem solving skills are presented in abstract form removed from their application to knowledge, hence, transfer to real world situations is made difficult. He reiterates that little time was spent on group interpretation, negotiation of

shared meaning, or co-construction of problem resolutions. The communication skills that were given much emphasis then were those of simple presentation, rather than the capacity to engage in semi-structured interactions that articulate perspectives unfamiliar to the audience. Face-to-face presentation was the order of the day and so students in 20th century education developed few capabilities in mediated dialogue or in shared design with a common virtual workplace.

Communication skills, as expected of students in the 21st century, would be much more demanding than those in the previous century. Teachers need a very different set of communication skills. They can no longer rely on lecture or teacher talk in their communication with their students. They need to develop facilitation skills and technology skills to help students use technology to learn and communicate. Teacher professional development will play a key role in fostering these changes.

Cognition

A modern 21st century economy, being a knowledge economy based on the manipulation and transmission of knowledge, would require students to deal with an abundant flow of information and knowledge that is increasing at an astounding rate. They would need the skills to effectively find or locate, analyze and communicate this knowledge, and with so much information and knowledge at their fingertips, they would then need to use skills of analysis, evaluation and application of knowledge to help solve problems. Critical thinking skills or cognition skills are considered key 21st century skills for students to develop.

Creativity

Like critical thinking, creativity is considered an essential 21st century skill. It is often said that creativity is a process of having original ideas that have value, and being creative is looking for new ways of doing things within whatever activity one's is involved in. In other words, a creative process may begin with a flash of a new idea or with a hunch or an educated guess. It may involve critical thinking as well as imaginative ideas, new insights and fresh perspectives.

There are ways of thinking about teaching creativity. As teachers we can teach generic skills of creative thinking, for example, skills of divergent thinking and lateral thinking, all of which encourage creativity through the use of making comparisons, analogies, metaphors as well as visual thinking. In addition to teaching these skills, there is also personal creativity. Individuals

achieve best results in their work at a personal level when they connect with a particular set of things or processes that excites them.

Robinson (2017) makes a distinction between teaching creatively and teaching for creativity. Teaching creatively means that teachers use their own creative skills to connect what they are teaching to student interests, thereby making their lessons engaging. Teaching for creativity is where the pedagogy is designed to encourage other people to think creatively. Teachers encourage students to think out of the box, to experiment with new ways of doing things, to innovate, and to approach old and new issues and concerns with new and fresh perspectives and through new and original ways.

Collaboration

Collaboration is strictly not unique as a 21st century skill. It is a perennial ability that is valued as a worthy trait at workplace for centuries. However, sophisticated ICTs are changing the nature of this unique ability among humans. According to Karoly & Panis (2004), as work in today's knowledge-based economies is increasingly accomplished by teams of people with complementary expertise and roles, as opposed to individuals doing isolated work in an industrial setting, the degree of importance for collaborative capacity has taken on a new dimension. The nature of collaborative work now requires a more sophisticated skillset. Apart from having face-to-face collaboration with colleagues within the same office, 21st century workers undertake tasks through mediated interactions online with colleagues or business partners from different parts of the world and with people who do not necessarily share the same locality with them. Collaboration as a 21st century skill is characterized by cooperative interpersonal capabilities, which are more sophisticated than in the industrial era.

Apart from being an essential 21st century skill, collaboration is key to creativity as most creative processes benefit greatly from collaboration. Although people always associate creativity with the individual, there is a social dimension to creativity that is pertinent in the 21st century. Most original thinking comes through collaboration and through the stimulation of other people's ideas. According to Robinson (2017), the great scientific breakthroughs have almost always come through some form of fierce collaboration among people with common interests but with very different ways of thinking. Collaboration, through benefiting from diversity rather than promoting homogeneity, is one of the great skills teachers can promote and teach. Teachers need to be mindful that a narrow curriculum and education system will stifle some of the basic skills and processes

that creative achievement depends on. It is important to note that at the heart of the creative process there lie collaboration, exchange of ideas, and building on other people's achievement.

Contextualization

In the digital era, the ability to filter large amounts of incoming big data and extract information pertinent to decision making is a contextual capability. Instead of spending time in the library searching for pieces of information and knowledge, which is characteristic of information access in the 20th century, the digital natives and migrants amongst us can now easily use search engines such as Google and Opera to access virtually unlimited amount of data and information. However, a lot of these online information and resources may be inconsistent, unreliable, biased or irrelevant to one's own context. The ability to process information, in the midst of the deluge of information in modern work and life, and the skill to contextualize it to meet and serve one's own needs and purposes calls for a new set of contextual 21st century skills that are centred on 'disorderly knowledge creation and sharing' (Weinberger, 2007; Dede, 2010).

According to Mazzeo *et al.* (2003: 3-4), contextualization refers to "a diverse family of instructional strategies designed to more seamlessly link the learning of foundational skills and academic or occupational content by focusing teaching and learning squarely on concrete applications in a specific context that is of interest to the student." This is an important skill since a large part of teacher professional development would require teachers to be skilled in contextualization so as to be able to bridge the nexus between theory and practice, and to appropriate relevant concepts and ideas and applicable strategies that work well in their own work context and setting.

Contextualizing Language Teacher Professional Development in ASEAN Member Countries

This paper focuses on language teacher professional development in the Southeast Asian region against the backdrop of the aspiration of ASEAN member countries in establishing the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). The launch of AEC was officially endorsed in January 2016. AEC is geared towards a freer movement of people across ASEAN border for education and work. The English language has been adopted to be the official working language among the ten ASEAN member countries. Teachers of English are expected to be equipped with the capability to prepare students to function effectively in using English for communication within and across the borders of ASEAN member countries.

How can language teachers be updated in their pedagogical knowledge and skills in English language teaching (ELT) to help their students acquire English for communication and for other challenges that lie ahead? What teacher learning is required of them to facilitate student learning and the acquisition of essential 21st century skills?

The paper will examine two types of language professional development programmes that SEAMEO Regional Language Centre (RELC) conducts for teachers in the region. The key to these language professional development programmes is contextualization, part of a new set of contextualizing 21st century skills (Weinberger, 2007; Dede, 2011). As the teacher participants who attend these programmes come from ASEAN member countries, each with its unique educational context and own classroom practice, contextualizing skill is important for them to make good use of the theory they learned when they put it into practice in their own local context. The paper will end with a discussion on the insights gained into the planning and implementation of these PD programmes and their implications for English language teaching in the region.

SEAMEO RELC's offering of regular teacher professional development courses

The Regional Language Centre (RELC) in Singapore is one of the centres under the ambit of the Southeast Asian Ministers for Education Organization (SEAMEO). It provides in-service language teacher professional development courses and programmes with the aim of fulfilling its mission, i.e. to promote cooperation among language professionals in the Southeast Asian region and beyond.

RELC offers a suite of regular Professional Development (PD) courses for in-service teachers from the region, some of which are listed below:

a. MA TESOL in collaboration with Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand
b. Blended Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Linguistics (comprising 6 modular courses over a 6-week residential phase in Singapore, a 12-week online phase in participants' home country, and a 4-week residential phase in Singapore)
c. 3-week Advanced Specialist Certificate Courses in different aspects of language education such as Teaching of Listening and Speaking Skills, Teaching of Reading and Writing Skills and Language Assessment
d. 3-week Specialist Certificate Courses in Teaching English as an International Language (TEIL), Teacher Professional Development for Department

Heads/Supervisors, Content & Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) or English as Medium of Instruction (EMI).

These regular PD courses are offered to Southeast Asian teachers who are nominated and selected by their respective Ministry of Education to undergo their training in Singapore on fully-funded RELC scholarships. They constitute the first type of language professional development programmes that RELC provides.

I will discuss a regular PD course called Language Curriculum Design and Implementation that I teach to illustrate the first type of language professional development programmes that RELC conducts. This course is offered as one of the six modules for the Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Linguistics, which adopts a blended mode of delivery in line with the demands and needs of teachers in 21st century schools. In such a PD course, the class is composed of English teachers from the Southeast Asian member countries. The teacher participants of such course come from diverse school settings and educational contexts. They teach either general English or English for Specific Purposes courses at different levels, ranging from primary, secondary to tertiary.

The main focus of the PD course is to familiarize the teacher participants with key principles, processes and issues related to language curriculum design and implementation. Through a series of planned teacher learning activities during the course, the teacher participants get to further develop and hone their skills in communication, collaboration, contextualization, cognition and creative thinking. Table 1 illustrates how the PD course in Language Curriculum Design and Implementation embraces the teaching and practice of the 5Cs of 21st century skills for teachers in the region.

Table 1. Embracing 5Cs of 21st century skills through teacher learning activities and other features of the PD course.

21st century skills	Features of the PD course and the teacher learning activities
Communication	• Online mediated communication through Learning Management Platform where the course materials are uploaded for teacher participants to access and to post their queries and comments on the course readings. • Trainer-facilitated semi-structured interactions and discussions in groups or at class level to enable course participants to engage in group interpretation, negotiation of shared meanings and co-construction of problem-resolutions.

	• In support of technology-induced pedagogy and mediated communication, there are hands-on learning activities which provide the teacher participants of the PD course to experiment with some aspects of TELL and MALL, for example, the use of applications such as mentimeter and padlets.
Cognition	• Teacher learners need to engage in classroom tasks that promote critical thinking in school and work settings, such as recognizing and solving problems, analyzing relationships between ideas, evaluating evidence, or applying ideas to a new context. Critical thinking skills are honed through a number of teacher learning activities in which course participants are probed deeper in their thinking and beliefs about English language curriculum and teaching. • Course participants are given a variety of English course books to analyze and evaluate the types of language syllabuses used in the course books and the principles that have guided the content and curriculum of these course books. • Teachers' experiences as learners on this PD course inform cognitions about language curriculum planning, teaching and learning; and teacher cognitions and practices are mutually informing, with contextual factors playing an important role in determining the ability of teachers to implement curriculum design and instruction that are congruent with their cognitions. • Metacognitive activities (e.g. think-pair-share, exit ticket, 3-2-1 strategy) that enable course participants to review and reflect on their learning are used in class by the trainer to check for understanding and to gather feedback from the learners.
Creativity	• Opportunities are provided for course participants to explore new ways of looking at language curriculum, syllabus and course design for different groups of learners, etc. • Opportunities are also provided for course participants to demonstrate their creative way of planning a course for a specific target group with specific language purposes.
Collaboration	• Apart from individual study, the course provides a lot of opportunities for pair work and group work to promote collaborative learning and to enable the teacher participants build a teacher learning community among themselves.
Contextualization	• Opportunities are provided for course participants to apply what they learn about principles and processes of language curriculum design in their work context. For example, the course requires them to plan a language course that serves the needs of learners in their familiar school context.

	• The course trainer who has experience in contextualization is able to initiate and support contextualization. For example, the course trainer sets up a task for each course participant to work on. This is followed up with consultation sessions with the trainer who also provides supporting monitoring to each participant in completing the assigned task.

All in all, the PD course in Language Curriculum Design and Implementation provides a platform for English language teachers from the member countries with diverse teaching backgrounds to exchange ideas and perspectives in language curriculum design and to learn together as a teacher learning community to better understand each other's educational context and the ways its language curriculum and syllabus design is implemented. One key benefit of attending this type of PD course is for the teacher participants to acquire a deeper understanding of the English language curriculum design and implementation in the Southeast Asian region and to gain an enriched perspective in this aspect of language education.

SEAMEO RELC's offering of customized PD courses

The second type of language professional development programmes is customized for a group of selected master teachers from a particular member country to undergo a longer PD programme in phases, which include both in-country and out-country training. Such a PD programme adopts a robust and sustainable training framework as it requires the master teachers who have received their PD training in Singapore to first consolidate and contextualize their learning in their own work environment and then plan and deliver workshops of relevant content knowledge and skills to cascade their learning and training to benefit many more other teachers when they are back in their home country. Such a PD programme would have the benefit of multiplying effects as the number of local English teachers to be trained is multiplied several times through the cascading training that the master teachers pull their resources together to collaborate and conduct.

The second type of PD programme that RELC conducts for teachers from member countries is one that aims to train a cohort of 50 English language master teachers who will then be trained as trainers to conduct workshops to cascade their learning and training to benefit many more other teachers in ELT. Such cascading training would have been contextualized and tailored to meet the education and training needs of the local context in which the cohort of 50 master teachers work.

Professional Development (PD) Programme in ELT for Indonesian Master Teachers

The PD programme in ELT for 50 Indonesian master teachers from PPPPTK Bahasa in Jakarta was a capability-building programme jointly sponsored by a philanthropic foundation, the Ministry of Education, Indonesia and RELC from November 2015 to August 2016. Figure 1 shows the framework for the PD programme in ELT that was conducted in phases for the 50 Indonesian master teachers in two separate batches (25 master trainers per batch).

Fig. 1 The Professional Development Programme for Indonesian Master Teachers.

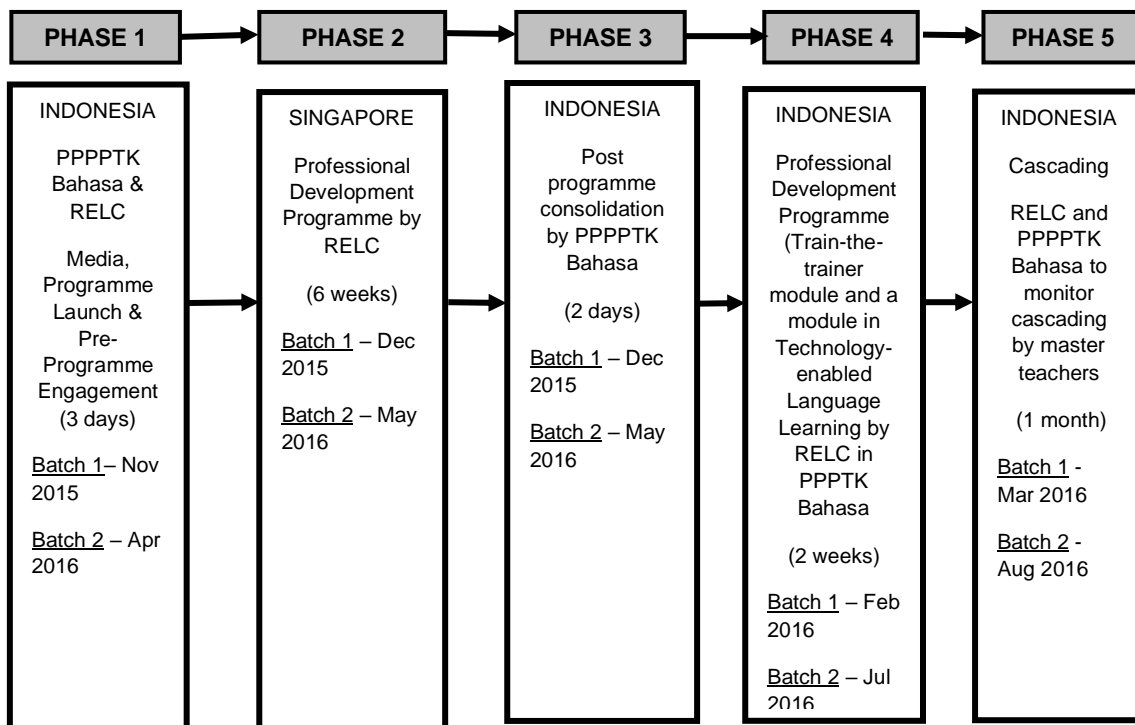| PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3	PHASE 4	PHASE 5
INDONESIA PPPPTK Bahasa & RELC Media, Programme Launch & Pre-Programme Engagement (3 days) Batch 1– Nov 2015 Batch 2 – Apr 2016	SINGAPORE Professional Development Programme by RELC (6 weeks) Batch 1 – Dec 2015 Batch 2 – May 2016	INDONESIA Post programme consolidation by PPPPTK Bahasa (2 days) Batch 1 – Dec 2015 Batch 2 – May 2016	INDONESIA Professional Development Programme (Train-the-trainer module and a module in Technology-enabled Language Learning by RELC in PPPTK Bahasa (2 weeks) Batch 1 – Feb 2016 Batch 2 – Jul 2016	INDONESIA Cascading RELC and PPPPTK Bahasa to monitor cascading by master teachers (1 month) Batch 1 - Mar 2016 Batch 2 - Aug 2016

Fig. 2 The Training Framework for the PD Programme in English language teaching (ELT) for Indonesian master teachers.
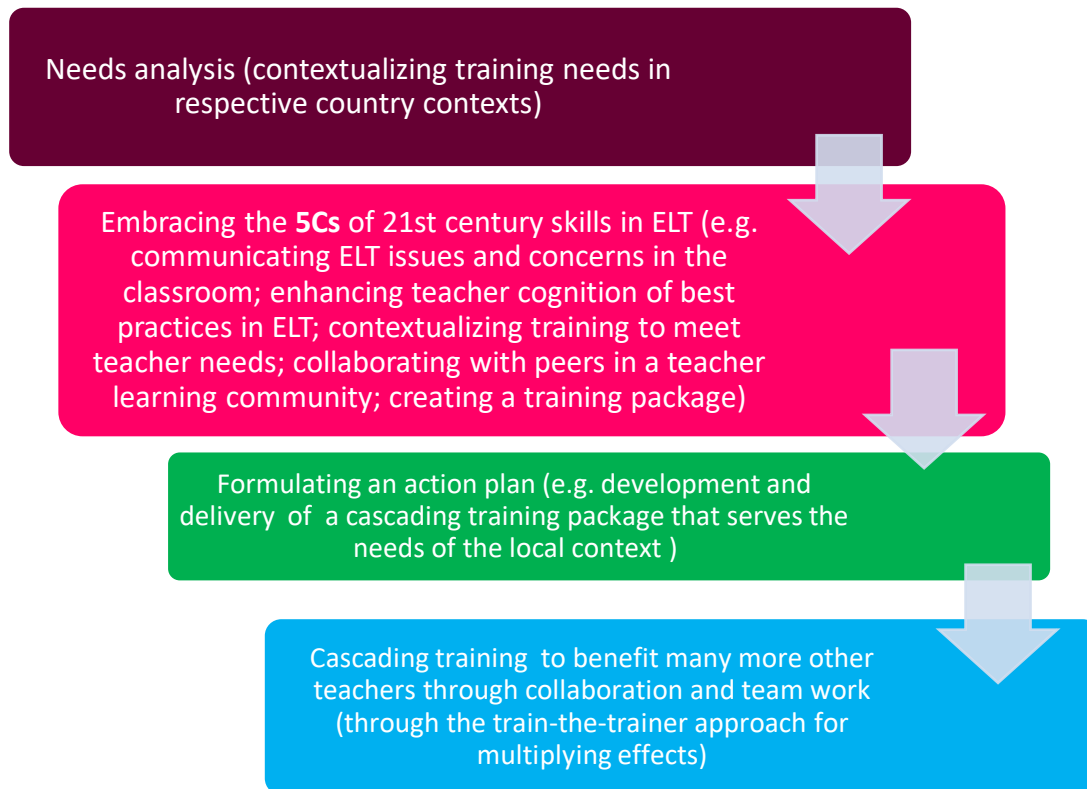

Figure 2 shows the training framework that was used for the professional development programme in ELT for Indonesian master teachers. In the needs analysis, the teacher trainer would ask the class of Indonesian master teachers who attended the 6-week PD programme in Singapore to sketch how their students would use English, to discuss what language skills are usually involved, and who their students would use English with and for what reason. The master teachers were asked to wear their thinking hats and be critical of the current practice in ELT in their own teaching context back in Indonesia. They would be asked to share and communicate with one another through collaborative learning to review and reflect on what works well in ELT and what does not work well in ELT in their own teaching locale. With the information gathered from the needs analysis, the teacher trainers of the programme would customize their modular courses and contextualize the content as far as possible to meet the needs of the Indonesian master teachers.

In the 6-week PD programme in Singapore, the master teachers completed five modular courses in Teaching of Listening, Teaching of Speaking, Teaching of Reading, Teaching of

Writing, and Language Assessment, to update their pedagogical knowledge and skills in these aspects of language education. They were provided with opportunities to communicate with each other through collaborative learning their concerns in the teaching of the four macro language skills as well as issues pertaining to language assessment. They were tasked in each of the four language skills courses to design lesson plans that are relevant to their context. For example, the module of Teaching of Writing was designed to enhance the master teachers' pedagogical knowledge and skills in teaching writing in the Indonesian context, and to provide an overview of the current approaches to teaching writing, in particular the process approach and genre approach. It was designed to be a practice- and activity-oriented module requiring the master teachers to design writing instruction appropriate to their students' needs and plan engaging learning activities in their writing class. In the fifth module, Language Assessment, the master teachers examined the principles of language assessment by looking at both summative (Assessment of Learning or A*o*L) and formative (Assessment for Learning or A*f*L) assessments and raised their awareness, cognition and appreciation of how A*o*L complements A*f*L in language assessment. They were given hands-on opportunities to plan, design and build valid, reliable and practical summative tests for both the receptive and productive skills. They were also given hands-on opportunities to demonstrate how A*f*L is integrated as part and parcel of everyday English lesson which informs teachers and learners of the teaching/learning development and process.

In the 2-week PD programme in Indonesia, the master teachers completed two modular courses taught by RELC trainers. One module was on technology-enabled language learning (TELL) which examined key principles and practice of technology-enabled language learning, including mobile application language learning (MALL), e-learning platforms, learning management system and evaluation of online language learning materials and resources. The other module was the 'train-the-trainer' component which provided guidance and support to the master teachers in developing a training package for the cascading workshops.

The master teachers were taken through the seven modular courses which embraced and incorporated the **5Cs** of 21st century skills. Communication skills as demonstrated and practised in each modular course would pinpoint the instructional language and facilitation skills that the master teachers need to use as trainers or facilitators in the teaching of the four macro language skills, in language assessment and in TELL. For example, in the TELL modular course, the master teachers would be familiarized with mediated communication. They would also be provided with

opportunities to engage in structured interactions that articulate perspectives that they are unfamiliar with, as well as to engage in group interpretation, negotiation of shared meaning, or co-construction of problem resolutions (Dede, 2010).

Through collaborative learning with their peers in a teacher learning community, the master teachers were provided with opportunities to review and reflect critically on issues and concerns pertinent to ELT based on their own teaching experience and practical knowledge. The notion of teacher cognition, as defined by Bakkens *et al.* (2010), is "an integrated whole of theoretical and practical insights, beliefs and orientations". Through the critical discussions and collaborative learning in the classroom, the master teachers were encouraged to explore new possibilities and creative ways of teaching engaging lessons. Indeed, they were taken through a series of teacher learning activities, which studies such as Van Eekelen *et al.* (2005) and Kwakman (2003) have discerned the four types of such activities: (a) learning by experimenting (e.g. trying out a new teaching method); (b) learning in interaction (e.g. with colleagues and peers); (c) using external sources (e.g. course trainers); (d) consciously thinking about one's own teaching practices (reflection).

Collaborative learning expands and refines learners' 21st century skills as they use language "to collaborate on a plan, negotiate tasks, contribute ideas and constructive criticism, assess progress, and achieve consensus on various issues" relevant to the learner (Finn Miller, 2010, p. 4). The master teachers were also given collaborative tasks to work in teams and by tapping and building on each other's creative ideas, they synergistically developed a training package. This package drew on the consolidation and contextualization of their learning from this PD programme and included the application of relevant theories and appropriate ELT methodology and strategies in the Indonesian educational context. Knowledge of context is important for the master teachers. It encompasses an understanding of the particular contexts in which they teach to adapt their more general knowledge to specific school settings and individual students (Grossman, 1990). It is imperative that teachers use their local knowledge (Canagarajah, 2005) in classroom practice to meet the needs of their specific students and adapt to the demands of their school districts and school culture.

In preparation for the cascading workshops which they had to conduct as part of cascading their learning and training to benefit many more junior high school teachers from different regions

in Indonesia, the master teachers worked in teams to prepare their own training materials and rehearse for the delivery of the workshops.

The PD programme trained a total of 50 master teachers to become trainers who then worked in teams to conduct the cascading workshops to train a total of 960 junior high school teachers from ten different regions in Indonesia (Table 2). This multiplier effect is a significant outcome of the PD programme who has adopted a sustainable training framework and such a model that can be replicated in other educational contexts and settings.

Table 2. The number of teachers trained through cascading workshops conducted by 50 master teachers (25 in Batch 1 and 25 in Batch 2).

	Cascading workshops conducted by master teachers (Batch 1)		Cascading workshop conducted by master teachers (Batch 2)	
No	Region	Number of teachers who attended the cascading workshop	Region	Number of teachers who attended the cascading workshop
1	Medan	80	Manado	100
2	Malang	100	Bali	97
3	Makassar	100	Padang	105
4	Banjarmasin	101	Yogyakarta I	96
5	Bandung	100	Yogyakarta II (Surabaya)	81
	Total	481	Manado	479

Key Success Criteria for Capability-building PD Programme

The PD programme in ELT for the 50 Indonesian master teachers was funded mainly by a philanthropic organization with the support of the Ministry of Education in Indonesia and the service provider, RELC. The collaborative support among the main sponsor, the local partner and the service provider was a key factor to the successful completion of the programme, which was conducted in phases, both in-country and out-country. The coordinating work and logistical support provided by the local partner was important in ensuring the in-country training phases were running smoothly, especially during the cascading training phase which involved bringing 960 junior high school teachers from different parts of Indonesia to attend the workshops at the ten regional training centres.

Another key success factor was the consistent follow-up by the trainers to provide after-course support and guidance and to observe and advise the master teachers when they were conducting the cascading training workshops for the junior high school teachers.

The experience of the trainers in contextualizing and customizing the PD programme to meet the needs of master teachers teaching in the Indonesian educational contexts is also a contributing factor to ensuring that learning and training acquired by the master teachers can be transferred and applied to suit the local teaching context.

Most importantly, the key stakeholders – the 50 master teachers took pride in and ownership of the PD programme. They were motivated and determined to perform to the best of their ability in taking on both the roles of first as learners and then as trainers to cascade their learning and training to benefit many more other teachers in the country.

Challenges and Implications

Like any other PD programmes, one key challenge faced by teacher trainers on the PD programme is the uneven levels of English proficiency among the 50 Indonesian master teachers. The low English proficiency level among a number of the master teachers is a hindrance to their understanding of the more theoretical components of the PD programme. As noted by Canagarajah (1999), English language teachers around the world are non-native speakers of English who do not necessarily have a native-like proficiency. Hence, the teachers from the region, though qualified with a BA degree in English from their own country, will still face a number of language-related and cultural knowledge-related difficulties when they study at RELC for their professional development.

Another challenge is that not all the master trainers could relate well the connect between out-country training and actual classroom practice or the nexus between theory and practice. For example, one trainer on the PD progamme expressed his concern for the mismatch between training received and realities in the classroom:

> "Some of the master teachers told me that they would face a lot of problems in modifying their teaching approaches and that what they learned here could not be used and supported by their colleagues in their country."

A key implication for teacher trainers is that they would need to continue exploring ways to better customize and contextualize English teacher professional development in the region. They need to be mindful of the fact that modifying any teaching approach, materials and curricula in

response to the needs and demands of 21st century skills and learning would require substantial rethinking on the part of the master teachers and other stakeholders. It would also require time for any pedagogical change or reform in the language classroom to come to fruition.

CONCLUSION

Language teachers are now required to take on new roles for 21st century teaching at 21st century schools. In the digital era characterized by more self-directed learning as well as collaborative learning at school, the teacher is to function as facilitator and guide to the learners. The teacher is expected to be orchestrator; for example, when the teacher is able to synchronize learner styles, learning method and educational technology tools, the symphony orchestrated by the teacher with the learners as performers will be well in tune. The teacher is also expected to be a good evaluator; the first evaluation task for a teacher is that of selecting suitable materials, appropriate methods and other resources for the learners to work with. All this is by no means easy for the teacher. It calls for teachers to continue with their learning as part of their professional development and growth, in mastering a wide range of skills and competencies, including critical and creative thinking. It also calls for teachers to be able to plan activities conducive to learning languages by encouraging learners to participate in collaborative efforts.

Teacher learning is therefore important for teachers to keep themselves updated on the expanding knowledge and equipped with new skills set so as to be competent for teaching in 21st century classrooms. Teachers would need PD programmes that are customized to meet their needs and contextualized to serve them well in their own teaching context. The two types of PD programmes that RELC conducts for English language teachers from the region are aimed at honing their skills needed for 21st century teaching and learning.

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