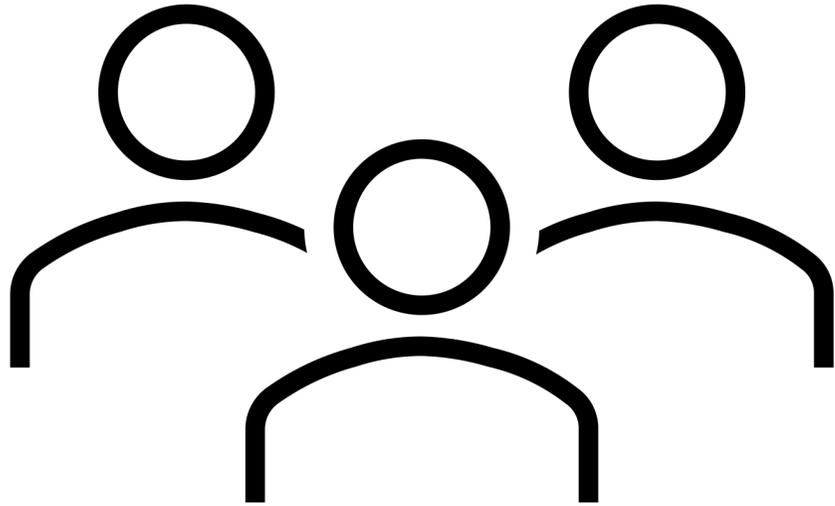# Today we will look at:

- **Definition of a Community of Practice (CoP)**

- **Facilitators/facilitator training**

- **How we choose topics**

- **Topics we have covered**

- **Face to face vs online**

- **How we organize CoPs in Spain**

- **Measuring success**

Quick poll

Have you participated in a CoP?

A definition

Characteristics of a CoP:

• **a domain of interest**

• **a community**

• **shared practice**

• **(Lave & Wenger)**

Therefore in a CoP ...

- **Participants are peers**

- **Learning is situated**

- **Learning belongs to the group**

Poll: could these be considered a CoP?

If you like, add why in the chat box.

1. **The teachers' staff room.**

2. **A chat at the photocopy machine.**

3. **A WhatsApp group.**

"Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly."

(Wenger-Trayner, E&B, accessed 2021)

CoPs in British Council Spain

- **A facilitator**

- **A topic**

- **Four meetings a term**

- **Teachers commit to attending all four meetings**

- **Classroom task after each meeting**

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Communities of practice

———

Facilitators/facilitating

Why have a facilitator to run a CoP?

In the chat box, give me your opinions.

My suggestions:

- **Conceptualises the CoP and gives it shape**

- **Not the expert in the room but the guide**

- **Creates the space for community to form**

- **Directs discussions**

- **Points to sources for reading/more information**

- **Sets up tasks for participants**

- **Summarises learning at end of CoP**
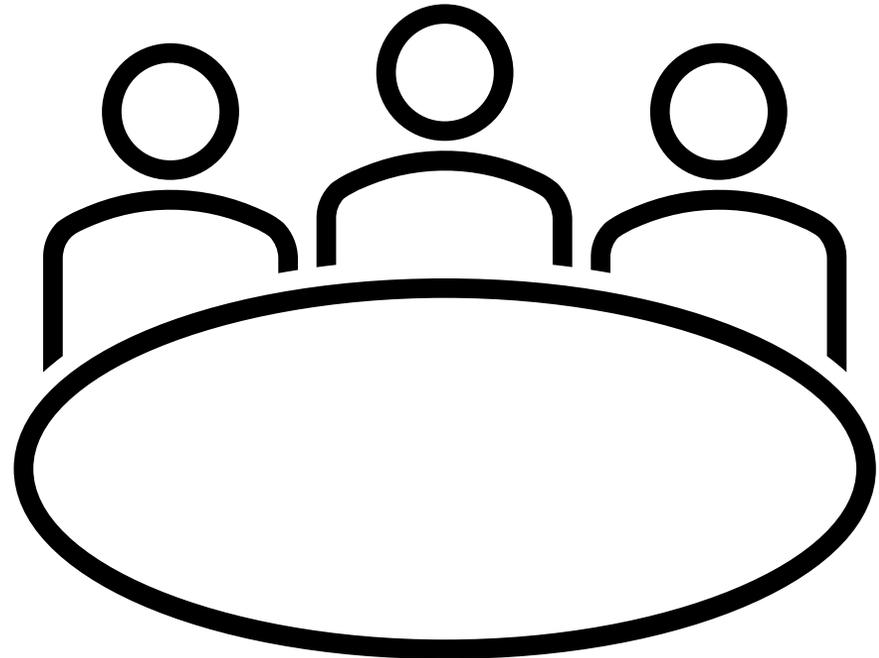
Who?
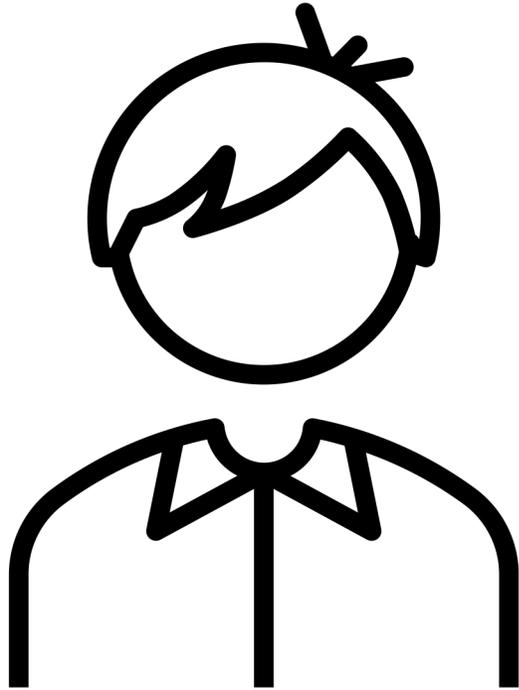
- **What I thought facilitators should be ...**

And they have a ...

- **Range of ages and experience**

- **Range of qualifications**

- **Commitment to collaborative forms of CPD**

Training for facilitators

The training covered:

- **Definition of a CoP and how it works:**

- **Peer group**

- **Confidentiality/safe space**

- **Sharing**

- **Reflecting**

- **Regular meetings**

- **Participants are both learning and teaching**

Notion of best practice

"Professional teaching practice involves sensitivity, interpretation, judgement and a flexible repertoire of methods."

(Lefstein & Snell, 2014:9)

Challenging teaching beliefs

"A proposition which may be consciously

or unconsciously held, is evaluative

in that it is accepted as true by the individual …

[and] serves as a guide to thought and behaviour."

(Borg, M., 2001:186)

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Communities of Practice
—

Topics

Framing a CoP

Either

- **through a topic or classroom challenges**

Or

- **examining/reflecting on practice**

Topics we have covered

Using literature with YLs

L1/L2 use

Vocabulary at C1/C2 levels

Motivation

Learner autonomy

Teaching pronunciation

SEN learners

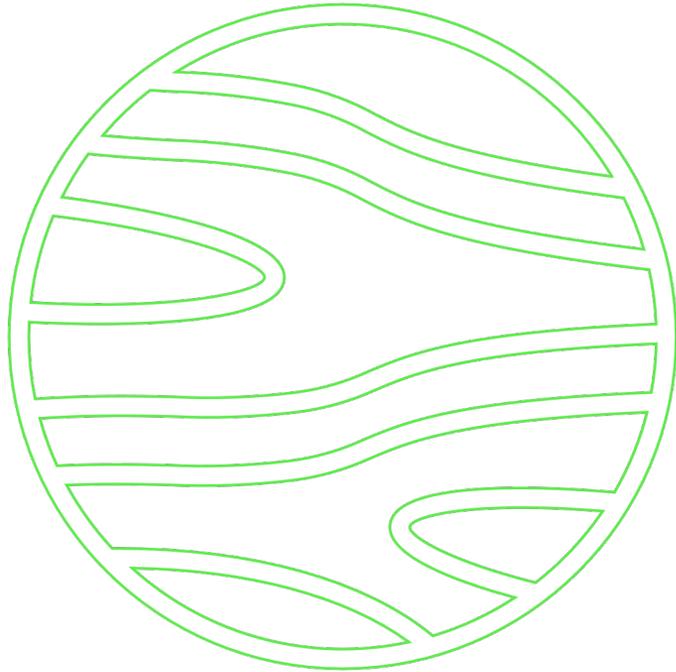**Framing learning through stories**

Differentiation

Assessment

Poll

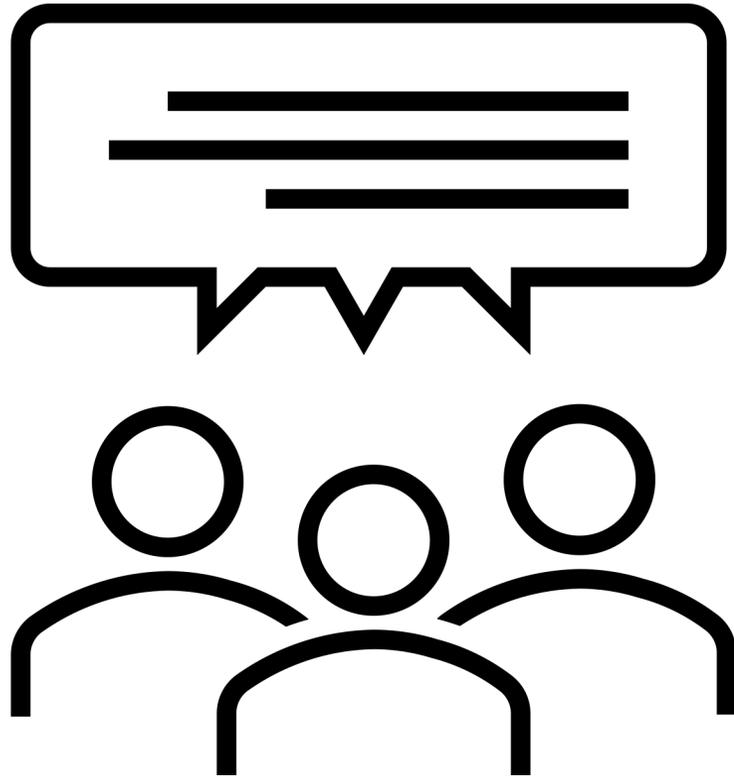**Are these relevant in your context?**

Examining practice

Exploring our practice

Experience vs. expertise

(Teacher Development over Time)

Classroom events

(Critical Incidents in Teaching)

Your suggestions

If you have participated in a CoP or some form of teachers' group, write in the chat box the topic, and if relevant the frame:

- **Topic e.g. teaching vocabulary**

- **Frame e.g. teaching large classes**

Examples of CoPs

Vocabulary for C1/C2 learners

- **Presenting vocabulary (Nation's definition of knowing lexis)**

- **Recording vocabulary (examples of learners' work)**

- **Recycling vocabulary (questioning techniques)**

A couple of example CoPs

Vocabulary for C1/C2 learners

- **Presenting vocabulary (Nation's definition of knowing lexis)**

- **Recording vocabulary (examples of learners' work)**

- **Recycling vocabulary (questioning techniques)**

Experience vs. Expertise

- **Teaching beliefs**

- **Career path through a timeline**

- **Huberman's life stages, where are we?**

- **Diaries**

- **Critical incidents**

- **Good practice**

Tasks after each meeting

- **Need to be manageable**

- **Experimentation with classroom practice**

- **Examples:**

- **Questioning techniques**

- **Using dictation**

- **Portable resources**

- **Prose/translation (L2 to L1 to L2)**

- **Peer assessment with criteria provided by learners**

Sources of information for facilitators

Use articles, books, videos, blogs.

British Council: https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/

IATEFL: https://www.iatefl.org/resources

International House: https://ihworld.com

ELTJ: https://academic.oup.com/eltj (check Key Concepts in ELT)

Blogs: Simon Borg, Scott Thornbury, Philip Kerr, Leo Selivan etc.

Add any other useful sources in the chat.

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Communities of Practice
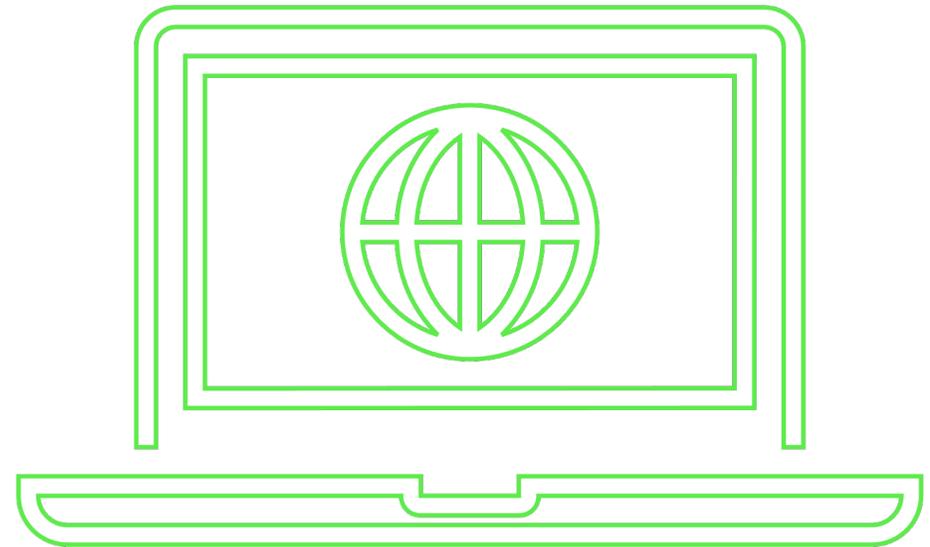
Practical issues

Face to face vs. online

Number of participants

Location of participants

Platform Zoom/Teams

Considerations

- **Timetabling**

- **Choice of topic**

- **Participant commitment**

- **Participants completing tasks**

- **Number of participants**

- **Outcomes**

How we run them

- **Facilitators selected and trained**

- **Facilitators propose topics**

- **Teaching Excellence manager advertises, selects time etc.**

- **Facilitator receives support if needed**

- **BC Spain context (Ts, centres, CPD hours)**

- **Management support and commitment essential**
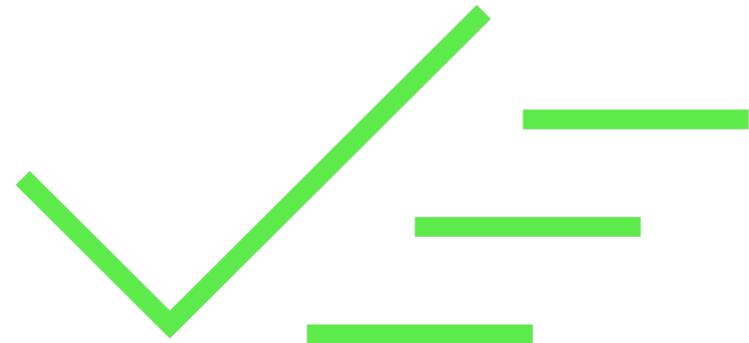
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Measuring success

- **Possible criteria:**

- **Borg's (2015) successful CPD is relevant, teacher-led, collaborative and situated**

- **Walters & Briggs (2012) state effective CPD is concrete and classroom-based; collaborative but with guidance; sustained allowing teachers to embed practice**

Teacher feedback

"I think this kind of training set-up is the way forward"

"Interaction with colleagues is rewarding"

"I felt more confident about what I'm doing"

"Tailored to our needs"

"CoPs provide a forum"

A valuable opinion

- **CoPs provide a space to share issues, concerns and problems**

- **The discussion is as important as the solution**

- **Reasoning, explaining, exploring and interpreting**

- **CoPs model a process of critical enquiry**

(Dr Helen Donaghue, 2018, personal correspondence)

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References

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Thank you!

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