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Continuing Cooperative Development: A Discourse Framework for Individuals as Colleagues.
Julian Edge. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2002. Pp. 295.

ESOL teachers today are increasingly engaging in investigations of their pedagogical beliefs and methodology. This is no accident. The convergence of reflective teaching, action research and the teacher-as-researcher movement, have shaped what is now being called the *new scholarship* (Zeichner, 1999). Here is a book on the cutting edge of this scholarship. Edge, like Burns (1999), approaches action research as a collaborative practice through the use of colleagues as sounding boards who help formulate one's ideas. Cooperative Development (CD) is the label Edge gives to his method for reflective practice. In CD, a teacher talks about her teaching with a non-judgmental colleague who listens to and helps focus this talk, with the aim of uncovering professional development issues for investigation. The ultimate goal is to empower teachers through professional actions based on *their own understanding* of their classroom teaching situation.

The book is a complete revision of Edge's 1992 publication and has four sections. In the first two chapters, Edge explains his approach. His audience is in-service teachers who reject formulaic methods and "best practices" whilst possessing a genuine interest in professional development. Part 2 contains instructional tasks to assist colleagues in learning this cooperative approach to self-development. Part 3 discusses a number of experiences teachers from around the world have recorded on using CD. The book ends with a reference section explaining the origins of tasks presented.

The heart of this book is the six brief chapters in Part 2 that together form a training manual for teachers to begin to learn to talk about their teaching in a new way, by learning the roles of *Speaker* and *Understander*. The *Speaker* is the person seeking professional development and so initiates an exchange. The *Understander* supports a colleague's development, not simply by listening, but by "understanding". To the uninitiated this may sound straightforward, but the role of *Understander* is a challenging one to master. The *Understander* can never insert his own views on matters raised by the

Speaker but is limited to restating ideas presented by the *Speaker* and challenging her to reconcile incoherent thoughts. The practice tasks train the *Understander* in techniques such as *attending* and *reflecting*, wherein he must listen attentively and reflect back what he thinks the *Speaker* is getting at by constantly trying to understand (“This is what I’m hearing ...”). Through the process of hearing one’s own words restated and further attempting to clarify ideas, it is hoped that the *Speaker* might gain insights into her practice.

To gain an appreciation for this approach it is imperative to work through the tasks in Part 2. Having said that, there are a number of potential drawbacks to CD. For example, it might be difficult to find colleagues with whom one can be open about “problems” in pedagogy. The key *Understander* role is difficult to master. Also, the design of the book’s activities is quite artificial and many may seem too clinical. As I began learning this “new discourse for development” with a colleague, we both varied from feelings of self-consciousness to those of uncertainty and frustration. Yet at the conclusion of every session we agreed that with a sincere effort the purpose and value of each task became apparent.

The approach’s artificiality and structure have a beneficial side as well. CD encourages scheduling regular meetings to think about teaching. These meetings must be structured in advance and are focused on individual development, so are unlike other meetings between colleagues. For teachers interested in reflective practice, CD provides a framework to assist us in exploring what is happening in our classrooms in a disciplined way, while colleagues can supply the emotional support needed to sustain our momentum once we have begun.

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