

and ideal teacher self. Also, she mentioned that her research project was inspired by the 2nd FOLLM one-day event. Dr Christine Muir's presentation 'Investigating English language learner role models: Initial results from a large scale survey' drew upon her latest work-in-progress project investigating language learners' role models, which is the result of a collaboration with Cambridge University Press. Dr Martin Edwardes (Kings College London) discussed 'Self-motivation: Who is motivating whom?' by referring to the multifacetedness of self, and, finally, Taguhi Sahakyan, in her talk 'From the ideal to the feasible self: "I can't pretend to know everything"', discussed the notion of self from a different perspective: language teachers' layered self-framework from the viewpoint of person-in-context perspectives.

Conclusion

In light of these three highly successful, well-attended and insightful events, we are pleased to acknowledge the presence of an ever-growing international Forum On Language Learning Motivation community. We thus look forward to fostering research connections and co-constructing even more powerful research ideas in language learning motivation in the future.

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Biodata

Sal Consoli is an ESRC-PhD researcher at the Centre for Applied Linguistics, and Associate Teaching Fellow in the School of Modern Languages and Institute for Advanced Teaching and Learning at the University of Warwick. He has taught EFL, EAP, French and Spanish in the UK and abroad. His research interests include

EAP, Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, L2 Motivation, Teacher Education, and Teacher-Research.

Takumi Aoyama is a PhD candidate at the Centre for Applied Linguistics, University of Warwick. His research interests cover language learning motivation in the Japanese context, complex and dynamic systems approach to the psychology of language learning, and second language research methods. He received his MA in ELT degree from the University of Warwick in 2016.

Teacher Association Research for Professional Development in Cameroon

Eric Enongene Ekembe and Azarh Sheila Fonjong

Introduction

Professional development in the English Language Teaching (ELT) industry through teacher associations has gained currency within this decade and there have been calls for research on how this goes on. Such calls are premised on the belief that evidence of collective generation and dissemination of good practice can empower less active members of TAs thereby redynamising ELT within and across a range of contexts. Like other teacher associations, CAMELTA has been involved in activities that support English teacher development in Cameroon through annual conferences and regional workshops. This has been going on amidst both economic and technical constraints that can be traced to the broader political and educational contexts. Such broader contextual factors have had a significantly negative impact on teacher motivation leading, in some cases, to stiff resistance from practicing teachers who do not see an immediate interest in such Continuing Professional Development (CPD) endeavours. In 2013, CAMELTA set out on a new journey that would enable the association to develop a bank of research questions as well as collect accounts of successful classroom practice which could be more widely shared amongst members of the association (for details, see Smith & Kuchah, 2014; 2016). Following this, and owing to the challenges of engaging its over 2000 members nationwide who, although interested in the project, were not sufficiently prepared for research in language

education, a smaller group, the CAMELTA Research Group was formed in September 2016. This paper presents a short account of the activities of this group over its first year (2016-2017) and reflects on the challenges and successes recorded so far.

Setting up the CAMELTA Research Group

Following the initiation of the CAMELTA research project in 2013 and thanks to seed funding (GBP200) from IATEFL Research SIG, research questions and responses to an initial open-ended questionnaire (see Smith & Kuchah 2016) were collated, categorized and uploaded to the CAMELTA website (<http://camelta-cameroon.weebly.com/resources--useful-links.html>). The expectation was that CAMELTA members interested in classroom based research would make use of this database as a starting point for their enquiries, but between 2013 and 2016, only one publication (Ekembe 2016) had drawn from the online data. Informal conversations with members at local and national events revealed that there was a general docility amongst teachers who thought they had nothing to contribute to both the local and global ELT industry. In an attempt to respond to such understanding, the CAMELTA Research Group was created with the view of demonstrating that some of the current practices of its members were good enough to generate pedagogic reflections that are consumable both locally and globally. The vision behind such agenda was to develop a group of teachers who will be able to articulate their practice clearly and to develop a bank of pedagogic principles that are appropriate to the Cameroonian context and consistent with current thinking in ELT. Specifically, the Group aimed at:

- encouraging teachers to reflect on and interrogate their practices;
- coordinating teacher research based on autonomous and collaborative inquiry;
- testing new grounds in the classroom and reporting them to peers in monthly meetings;
- cultivating the spirit of Action Research and enhancing professional development within the framework of CPD

These goals were driven by the conviction to enable Cameroonian teachers to develop from their identities as 'ordinary teachers' (as they often refer to themselves) to those of informed practitioners and producers of knowledge about teaching that can be shared with other professionals throughout the world. For this to be effective, members had to volunteer to join the group and to commit to working together to achieve these aims. In total, 34 teachers agreed to join the group and were subscribed to a group WhatsApp forum.

Setting the ball rolling

The first task was for each member to visit the CAMELTA website and identify three research questions (RQ) which resonated with what they would want to investigate in their classrooms; they were also encouraged to include any important RQ not found in the online list. Over a period of one week, members each shared their top three research questions on the WhatsApp group, together with a short explanation/justification of their choice of RQs as in the excerpts in the table below:

| Research Question | Arguments | Thematic concern |
|--|--|---------------------------|
| <p>1a.What can Teachers of English do to sustain learners' interest in large classes during lessons?</p> <p>1b. What must teachers do to motivate students who are not interested in the subject to become interested?</p> | <p><i>I chose this question because interest is central to participation and learning. Once the learner loses interest, all what you prepared, no matter how excellent it were, would have been a waste.</i></p> <p><i>I chose this question because every day I am faced with this challenge of my students complaining that English is too difficult; as such they are always distracted during the lesson. I try in my own little way to bring them closer to the subject. Thus doing research on this will help me to better overcome this challenge in my lessons</i></p> | Motivation |
| <p>2a.What are the problems that the English language teachers of "Anglais" (i.e English language to francophones) face in their classrooms? How can these problems be solved?</p> <p>2b.How can you make students interact actively in English during English language lessons?</p> | <p><i>I selected this question because I am faced with challenging situations time and again in my Anglais classes. I actually get stocked at times during lessons because my students do not seem to understand all the English I speak. I would wish to work and share experiences with others in identifying the causes and finding out what could be done to make lessons more successful in our Anglais classrooms.</i></p> <p><i>I think it is important to me because I teach purely francophone students who neither understand nor speak English language and I find it difficult to get them participate in class.</i></p> | Low learners' proficiency |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| <p>3a. What strategies can teachers use to train learners to write various text genres (essay types) for classroom use?</p> <p>3b. How can we effectively teach the literacy skills to empower learners to read and write confidently?</p> | <p><i>In my opinion, the relevance of the problem of teaching writing lies in the fact that, nowadays speaking skills are far more emphasized in the classroom than writing skills. This leads to the training of Cameroonians whose sociolinguistic competence is pending. In order to get learners totally participate in the construction of new knowledge and competence there is a need to really train our learners produce various text types that can be used not only in the classroom but prepare them for future challenges in production and dissemination of research findings. As far as I train my learners in achieving great writing skills, I usually plan and teach writing in a systematic way in large classrooms and it always works.</i></p> <p><i>I have lots of difficulties teaching reading and writing with very little resources especially in EFL contexts. One of the reasons why we go to school is to be able to read and write. Literacy skills are also very important in the learners' educational career.</i></p> | <p>Teaching English language skills (reading and writing)</p> |
| <p>4a. What strategies can a teacher use in classes with no text book.</p> <p>4b. How do English language teachers remediate in a situation where the ratio of the lack of text books is 10:1?</p> <p>4c. How can Teachers cope with the lack of textbooks on the part of the learners?</p> | <p><i>1. The greatest problem in our schools today is the fact that parents think education and sponsoring of the child ends at the level of their fees. This has created a great barrier for teachers to get into real interaction with their learners. My focus shall be on how teachers can use other means to resolve such problems.</i></p> <p><i>2. I selected this question because I am faced with a lot of difficulties working with my learners in a class with one or no text book at all. This issue slows down my work. I believe Carrying out research will help to acquire strategies to cope with the situation and still teach effectively.</i></p> <p><i>3. This is a perennial problem in most of the schools and I intend to share some of the strategies that I've learned and adopted in such circumstances.</i></p> | <p>Lack of course books</p> |

The RQs were ranked according to frequency and classified into four thematic areas: including learner motivation, low learner proficiency, Teaching English language skills (reading and writing) and lack of course books. Participants then agreed to focus on ways of investigating and developing learner motivation since this appeared to be the most pressing thematic concern. In a second online (WhatsApp) meeting participants identified and discussed a number of strategies that could be introduced in the classroom to foster learner motivation, and these were summarized and shared on the chat forum for every member to review. Following this, members were encouraged to pick realistic strategies, plan and deliver lessons, and then report their classroom experiences in face-to-face meetings. As a way of creating opportunities for non-controlled engagement, they opted to carry out the exercise according to their individual schedules. Thanks to funding from the University of Bath, five different face-to-face meetings were held during which time participants narrated detailed stories of how they planned, delivered, and evaluated motivation-based lessons. Each participant account was followed by a question-and-

answer session and discussions in which participants reflected on the content, process, and thinking behind the lessons etc., highlighting what they considered the particular merits of the teaching and learning process. Two further workshops were dedicated to reading and discussion of published articles on the subject, such as, Kuchah and Smith's (2011) article on learner motivation and learner autonomy and Xiao's (2013) article on planning motivation lessons. These were complemented with an Action Research workshop sponsored by the US Embassy in Cameroon and delivered by Peggy Kang, a US language fellow to Cameroon.

And so What?

So far, feedback from group members has been very positive, as can be seen from the following excerpts from the WhatsApp forum:

Excerpt 1

... the activities we have had so far have given me more aptitudes to analyse classroom practices and coach younger colleagues in my department.

Excerpt 2

I have learned a lot through this group. First of all, I have learned that as a teacher, I need to be reflective in order to improve on my classroom practices. Secondly, I have learned that through Action Research, I can become a better teacher. I have also learned to share my shortcomings as a teacher and have learned from other colleagues. I have become more confident in preparing and delivering my lessons, moving from teacher centered lessons to learner-centered lessons. I have also become conscious that I could document my lessons. Above all, I have become a better teacher and still strive to continue to grow personally. CAMELTA Research Group is a place to belong.

Excerpt 3

The CAMELTA Research Group has opened up my mind to understand that to succeed in ELT practices, I need to document the most winning and challenging experiences and that will give birth to research. Through this Group, I have been ...exposed to the good news that what we are doing as professionals here is to some extent better when compared to some practices worldwide. I have learnt to be committed, to write and to mirror my classroom activities. Through the presentations we have been having in the group, I have got to ... to revisit the need for my learners to provide material for their learning especially in the teaching of writing. In addition, this group has enabled me to be more sensitive to what makes my lessons work... the group has helped me a lot to understand some deep things concerning research such as the importance of timing ... setting action plans and assuming my assigned tasks. As a member of this group, I have been able to take engagement to try to do better in my pedagogic activities now, than I used to do before. I have learnt through this group that the more experiences are shared, the more I feel confident in teaching in general. I have also learnt that for research to be successful, very committed mentors like the ones we have both at home and abroad should also blow the flames of encouragements as they have always done. I have been exposed to the fact that carrying out research as a team is less frustrating than carrying it as an individual. The list is long but above all, one of the most amazing benefits to me is that through this group, I am growing professionally and I feel like I am able to improve on ELT by empowering other close colleagues.

Concretely, over the course of this first year, group members have been able to develop in different ways. For example, four group members (including the second author of this report) were invited to run training workshops and demonstration lessons for pre-service teachers at the College of Education of the University of Yaounde 1. This collaboration between the College and in-service teachers is an unprecedented development in ELT in Cameroon. Three other members of the group have recollected their experiences in newsletter papers that are undergoing editing in international ELT

newsletters while three other novice teachers in the school of education (Higher Teachers Training College, ENS, Yaounde) are now set to make their first presentations at the National CAMELTA conference.

The feedback provided by members has character of feelings and subject matter and the spontaneity with which members responded was in itself an indication of how much they have found membership of the group useful to their professional and emotional development. Since, upward mobility and career profiling is not the result of professional input, pulling teachers to be involved in such reflective practices requires more than just gaining insights into the profession. For participants to leave their work place and get to Yaounde for workshops for more than four hours and go back with no support is not yet a culture of Cameroonians, who are barely struggling to survive in a context having an inflation rate of more than three percent. For a new Group such as this one to depart from their traditional culture and get involved in such activities with such feedback is a great starting point with potential for bigger initiatives if technical and material support is continuous.

What next?

Based on the experience accumulated, the Group has developed an agenda to further develop classroom research on motivation as a collaborative responsibility. Instead of simply preparing motivation-based lessons, members have developed an observation mobility scheme whereby they travel to other schools to observe peers; exchange knowledge on lesson procedures, successes and limitations; get feedback from learners; plan and deliver lessons in peers' classrooms in view of systematically developing learner motivation profiles. The interest here is to be able to analyse their professional knowledge and practice based on the evidence obtained from learners, how responsive their research agenda has been and how much professional consciousness has been the output of the agenda. In fact, more recently, TESOL International Association organized a summit on the future of the TESOL profession which, amongst other themes, considered how TESOL professionals, particularly working within TAs, could become change agents. Within this thematic concern, a key question was how practice can shape and inform policy and research. It is our strong conviction that evidence from our present agenda will provide some response to this worry.

Conclusion

In a context fraught with a broken link between career profile and industry, it seems very challenging getting professionals to settle and carry on with something that has incidence only on professional satisfaction. Professional development within the CAMELTA Research Group, evident from membership testimonies is a breakthrough amidst constraints given its infancy. The response to the frequency of meetings (both online

and onsite) seems to have been the result of the benefits of the meetings as opposed to instrumental motivation, which naturally characterizes reaction to professional activities in Cameroon.

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Biodata

Eric Ekembe is teacher and teacher educator in ELT at the Higher Teachers Training College (ENS) Yaounde, Cameroon. His research focus is context-appropriate strategies in English Language Teaching. He is co-editor of *Interdisciplinarity in the 21st Century Global Dispensation: Research in Language, Literature, and Education in Africa*: Nova Science Publication and has published book chapters and articles in international publications and journals. Currently, he teaches TESOL courses.

Azarah Sheila Fonjong teaches English as a Foreign and Second Language in Cameroon. She is an active member of the CAMELTA Research Group and has recently been involved in classroom based research as well as in assisting younger colleagues and trainee teachers develop their career aspirations.

The International Festival of Teacher-research in ELT

Richard Smith, interviewed by Deborah Bullock

From April 2017 to March 2018, [The International Festival of Teacher-Research in ELT](#) featured a range of face-to-face and online events promoting and showcasing teacher-research by teachers of English around the world.



The festival aimed to promote teacher-research (research initiated and carried out by teachers into issues of importance to them in their own work) as an empowering means of professional development.

A key objective of the festival was to help more individual teachers engage in teacher-research. The festival also sought to encourage Teacher Associations (TAs) to support teacher-research by showcasing existing models of mentoring schemes.

Twelve separate events took place in 2017, and one of the last events of the Festival was the IATEFL Research SIG supported January–February 2018 Electronic Village Online experience, 'Classroom-based research for professional development', which offered voluntary online mentoring to participants from all over the world. You can find more information, including photos and videos from each event on [The International Festival of Teacher-Research in ELT](#) website.

In this interview, Richard Smith, the instigator of the Festival and Chair of its Steering Committee, explains further what the Festival has been for, what it has achieved, and what he hopes its legacy might be.

First of all, Richard, what exactly was the 'International Festival of Teacher-research in ELT'? And why call it a 'festival'?

Well, at the beginning of 2017 I realized there were going to be a lot of teacher-research events going on during the year in different parts of the world and the idea came to me that it'd be good to try to bring them all under one umbrella, to promote teacher-research in a very practical way and link people up internationally with one another. It was great that various groups also saw the value of this and quickly agreed to come together to support and publicise the initiative – IATEFL Research SIG especially, but also TESOL, the British Council, IATEFL Teacher Development SIG, and various teacher associations.¹ I tried to ensure that all the events that

¹ Here is the full list of supporters: [IATEFL Research SIG](#), [IATEFL Teacher Development SIG](#), [All-India Network of English Teachers \(AINET\)](#), [Federación Argentina de Asociaciones de Profesores de Inglés \(FAAPI\)](#), [TESOL International Association](#), [CAMELTA](#), [APIBA](#), and [British Council English Agenda](#), [British Council TeachingEnglish](#) and [TIRE](#) also highlighted the festival in blog posts.