



Continuing Professional Development in Basic Education

Workshop 2 – Brazil



13 November 2019

Report on the 2nd cpdBE workshop – Brasilia, 13 November 2019



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All the reports from the cpdBE workshops are available at
<https://americas.britishcouncil.org/services/schools/professional-development-basic-education/workshops>

Introduction

The *Continuing Professional Development in Basic Education* (cpdBE) project establishes a regional learning community of practice to enable connections between the UK and the Americas. It aims to influence thinking about Continuing Professional Development among policymakers, school leaders, teacher trainers and teachers. The main goal is to foster collaborative exchange and to promote an evidence-based approach to professional development in English Language Teaching (ELT) and other subjects in Basic (compulsory) Education in the Americas.

This report is a result of the second cpdBE workshop, held in Brazil in November 2019. During this workshop, invited guests came together to share research, best practice and successful experiences in CPD. This document summarizes the presentations, conversations, discussions and exchange of ideas that took place.



cpdBE Community of Practice

The cpdBE Community of Practice encourages wider online discussions and knowledge sharing on CPD. It provides a space for anyone interested in CPD to share articles, research, events, etc.

Join the cpdBE online community [here](#)

Second cpdBE workshop – Brasilia, Brazil

The second cpdBE workshop was held in Brasilia (Brazil) on 13 November 2019. This all-day event counted with 43 participants. They were teachers, teacher mentors, school leaders, researchers, public administrators and policy-makers, who came from a variety of contexts and regions in Brazil. This cpdBE workshop happened on the back of another British Council event, the launch of the publication [*Políticas Públicas para o Ensino de Inglês*](#) (Public Policies for English Language Teaching).

Similar to the 1st cpdBE event held in Colombia, the workshop in Brazil consisted of presentations by leaders in the field and an *Open Space* discussion.



The presentation slides are [available here](#).

Summary of presentations

Presentation 1 - Continuing teacher development: evidence-based literature review



The first presentation was given by Gabriela Moriconi (Fundação Carlos Chagas, Brazil), who shared the main findings of a study reviewing the research output on CPD that presents evidence of teacher improvement.

One of the findings was that there is an absence of research on CPD in Brazil that can provide evidence of impact. While it is known that there are many CPD studies in Brazil, there isn't yet a culture of evaluating the impact of CPD activities. When a study has an evaluative component, it is usually one that is based on the opinions and perceptions of the participants.

The research paper points out that we need to evaluate the results of CPD initiatives in order to know if we are meeting the objectives and to allow us to revise and change the actions if necessary. This requires a clear definition of these objectives, which are not always present.

The complete study report can be found at:

<http://publicacoes.fcc.org.br/ojs/index.php/textosfcc/issue/viewIssue/340/169>

The research found that the common characteristics of CPD programmes with positive evidence of impact are that they are:

- Focused on [pedagogical content knowledge](#)
- Based on [active learning](#)
- Collaborative

- Long-term
- Coherent with educational policies, teachers' needs, recent research findings, and recommendations from professional associations.

In regards to the duration and continuity of developmental activities, by definition time and frequency need to be sufficient; however, what is effective will depend on other factors such as the complexity of what is to be learned and the level of change that is required. Extended and frequent contact with trainers/mentors is needed given that the learning process is interactive and non-linear. Changing one's practice involves learning that often challenges beliefs, values and understanding that support current practice. Therefore, it is more important to ensure there is an active and guided participation than to try to establish the ideal duration of CPD activities.

All factors presented in the study for successful CPD indicate that it needs to be understood as public policy, and as such, it needs to:-

- be integrated to a larger policy and oriented by its objectives
- start from a precise diagnosis of the issue to be tackled
- be planned, followed up, evaluated and revised in order to reach the intended outcomes.
- be aligned and articulated with the other policies of the institution
- consider the conditions that enable participation of key actors
- consider the needs and interest of key actors in order to promote their engagement.



Presentation 2 – Sustainability in Exploratory Practice: A case study of former bilingual undergraduates

The second presentation of the day was given by Inés Miller (PUC-Rio, Brazil). The premise of the study presented was that teachers can work together with students to:

- understand quality of life in the classroom
- become knowledge makers in the field
- be considered as developing practitioners



The study aimed at understanding the impact of Exploratory Practice (EP) on teachers' professional lives. As a result 22 emerging themes were identified, among others:

- EP promotes student participation
- EP helps to integrate students, teacher mentors and teachers in training
- EP needs time and space in the curriculum
- EP improves teachers' tolerance and gives them a deeper understanding of how learning develops
- EP helps to deal with conflicts in the classroom

In practice this entails *planning for understanding*¹, i.e. planning lessons which not only aim at acquiring content knowledge, but also at the teacher and learners' understanding of learning processes and how they can be developed in their particular context.

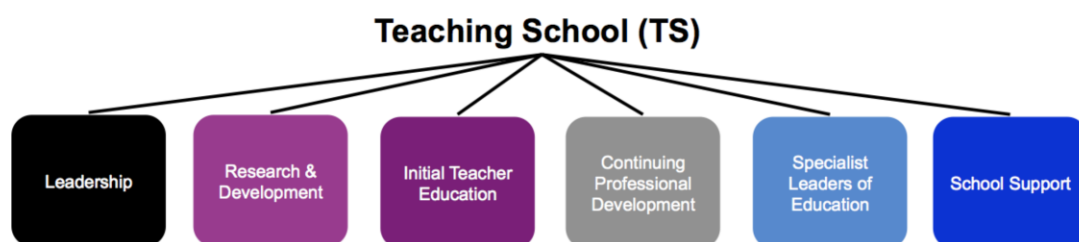
The conclusive statement from this research was that: *Exploratory Practice is fundamental for us to rethink our role – not only in-service teachers, but also teacher educators – if we are really focused on contributing to social justice and understanding quality of life in our classrooms.*

¹ Allwright, D. (2005). From Teaching Points to Learning Opportunities and beyond. *TESOL Quarterly*, 39(1), pp. 9-31.

Presentation 3 - Collaborative expertise as an approach to quality improvement

The third presentation was given by Paola Muñoz (British Council, Colombia), and it was centred around [collaborative expertise](#), drawing from the work of John Hattie² stating that “The variability between schools in most Western countries is far smaller than the variability within schools (...). There is a remarkable spread of expertise that can be identified, nurtured, esteemed and brought together to reduce this variance.”

The presentation showed that the UK is well positioned in collaborative expertise, and suggested we can learn from initiatives such as [The London Challenge](#) and the [Teaching School Alliance](#). These UK programmes have led to school improvement based on shared responsibility, interdependence and long-term collaboration between teachers and schools.



1. **Identify and develop people to fill leadership positions in the future**
2. **Lead, manage and publish pedagogy approaches and resources**
3. **School led initial teacher training: School Direct or SCITT**
4. **Offer range of professional development for all staff, creating strong learning culture**
5. **Outstanding middle and senior leaders: 2 years experience in particular specialism**
6. **Working with school or academy in challenging circumstances to improvement**



² What Works Best in Education: The Politics of Collaborative Expertise (Hattie, 2015)

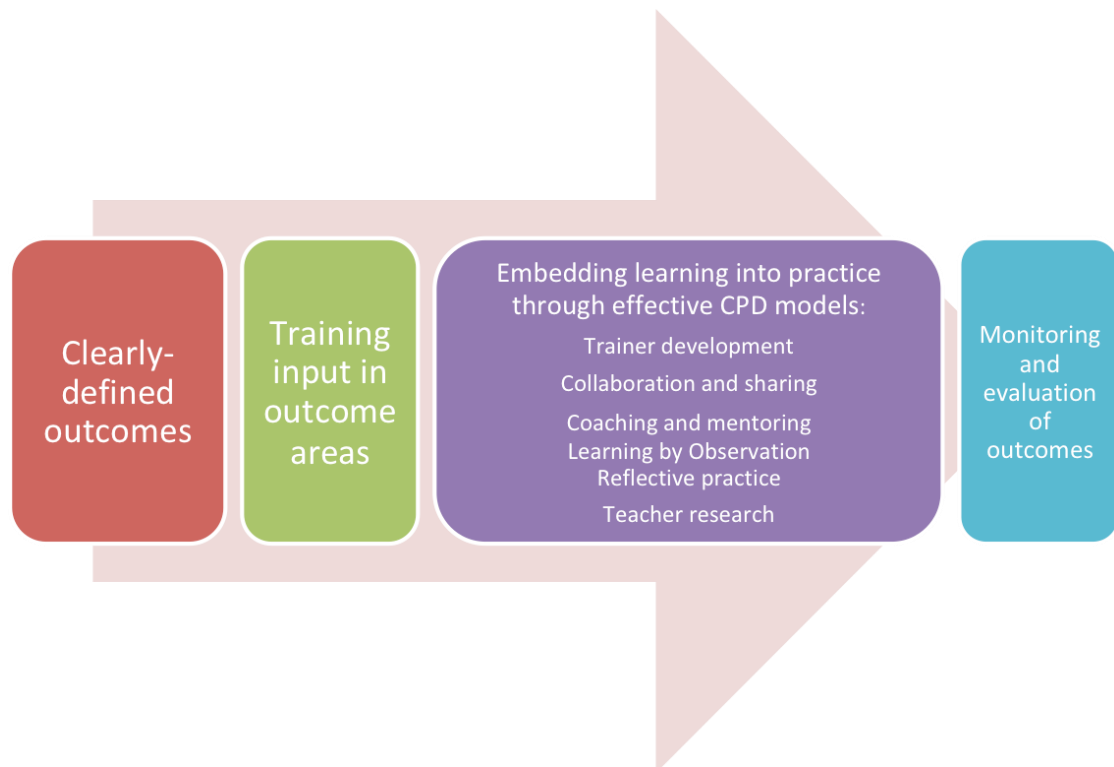
In Colombia, the British Council has developed projects with the Ministry of Education and local education authorities grounded on collaborative expertise based on models from the UK. For example, [De Escuela a Escuela](#) (School to School support), which is a project that arises from the interest to promote collaborative work between state teaching schools (Escuelas Normales Superiores) and bilingual private schools. Through institutional partnerships, teachers are able to visit each other during a full school day, and from this experience they exchange knowledge, strategies and good practices.

With the support of a mentor, teachers and directors map their strengths and development areas onto the Teaching for Success framework. Then, an improvement plan is designed and put into practice involving a series of activities such as, peer training, class observation, exchange of lesson plans, piloting of materials, etc. At the end, mentor and project leader evaluate the transformations in the classroom by comparing the formats completed during the project against the indicators established in the institutional improvement plan.



Presentation 4 - Teaching for Success and Remote CPD in the Americas

The fourth presentation was given by Graham Stanley (British Council, Americas). It started with a brief introduction to the British Council's approach to cpd called [Teaching for Success](#), highlighting how it provides clear objectives for improving practice in the classroom. This approach builds upon what the British Council has learned through its many different programmes throughout the world and is also based on what is known about effective CPD.



Focus on clear objectives for improving actual practice in the classroom



The second half of the presentation introduced participants to *Remote Teaching* - the practice of teaching a language live online through videoconferencing. In the British Council, the most significant experience in remote teaching comes from Uruguay, where it has been working in partnership with [*Plan Ceibal*](#) to cater for the lack of trained and qualified English language teachers in the country.

In terms of CPD, remote teaching can offer the following benefits:

- To solve the problem of the shortage of teacher trainers.
- To provide cost-effective training remotely, saving on airfares and accommodation.
- To bridge the social divide and give opportunities to teachers who otherwise would be excluded.
- To provide teachers and trainers to places and people where there are problems with supply.
- To offer new opportunities for teachers to do CPD in an interesting and different way.

For further resources on remote teaching, the British Council has recently published [*Innovations in Education: Remote Teaching*](#), a free book containing research papers and case studies, including chapters describing best practice in CPD through mentoring, peer observation and team teaching.



Presentation 5 – Best Practice in CPD: Coaching

The last presentation of the day was given by Willy Cardoso (CPD consultant, Colombia) and described a coaching and mentoring model used in British Council projects in Colombia.



Although coaching has been defined in many ways, the essence of coaching is:

- To help a person change in the way they wish and helping them go in the direction they want to go.
- To support a person at every level in becoming who they want to be.
- To build awareness that empowers choice and leads to change.³

The presentation walked participants through the stages of an 8-month project which had 110 participating state schools in Bogotá, Colombia. In this project, teacher mentors visited schools to support their teachers and leaders in the implementation of the English curriculum. This happened through CPD activities including workshops, classroom observations, co-planning, curriculum development and coaching sessions.

One of the highlights of this project was the coaching sessions with school leaders, which were driven by questions such as:

- How do you see the school in the next 4 years?
- What are your aims regarding the curriculum, bilingual environment and methodology?
- How will the school achieve its aims in the following years?
- What strengths has the school gained in this project that will enable it to continue its improvement plan?

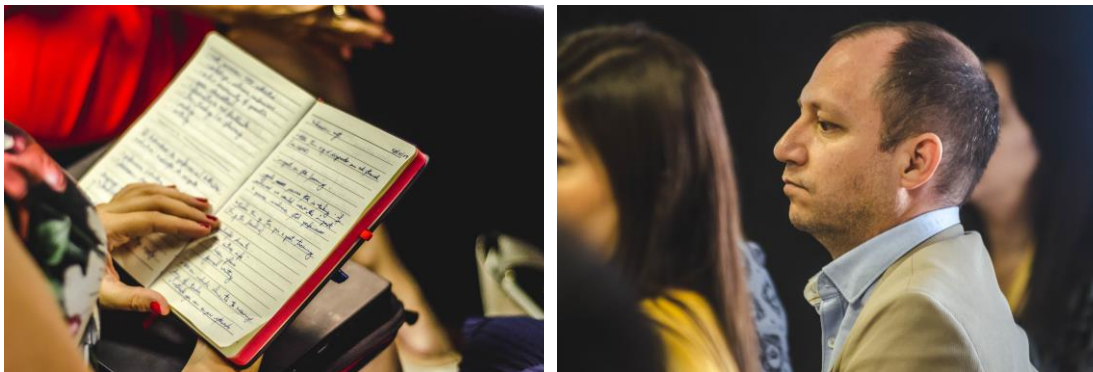
Overall, the main goal of the teacher mentors was to end the project with the schools being able to continue the implementation of the curriculum more autonomously. This included giving each school a comprehensive assessment report, which included the CPD needs identified in classroom observations and feedback from teachers, as well as resources to monitor and evaluate the development and implementation of each school's English curriculum.

³ Source: <https://internationalcoachingcommunity.com/what-is-coaching/>

Open Space Technology - Round Tables

The 2nd cpdBE workshop also included a session based on Open Space Technology (OST) - a flexible and participant-driven approach to setting up round tables and workshops. The driving question in this session was: *What are the conditions for successful CPD?*

Participants were invited to submit post-it notes with more specific questions or issues, which the moderator then categorized into themes. Each theme was assigned to a different table and participants chose the one they wanted to join to begin the discussion. Although OST offers the flexibility for participants to move to another group at any time, no one felt the need to do so and all groups remained the same throughout the activity. At the end of the session, each group presented a summary of their discussion.



The themes were:

- Developing educators, trainers and mentors
- Sustaining communities of practice
- Making distance learning effective
- Measuring the impact of CPD on student learning



Developing educators, trainers and mentors

A common issue participants identified was that in many CPD programmes the teacher trainers or mentors haven't been 'at the chalk face' for a very long time and the feeling is that they are out of touch with the actual challenges teachers face today, especially in the public sector. As a result, the credibility and impact of these CPD programmes might be compromised. Moreover, in many contexts, governments are dependant on third parties to provide CPD to the educational system, i.e. they don't have their own CPD experts who can work directly with teachers. Consequently, they don't retain or build knowledge internally. It was discussed that a national policy on CPD is needed; one that has clear objectives with direct impact in the classroom, and that can provide the conditions for teachers in the public school network to become CPD agents.



The group identified a need for trainers and mentors who can cater for different teacher profiles and their CPD needs, for instance:

- Teachers who need to develop content knowledge
- Recently graduated teachers who were taught 'academically', but not how to deal with the reality of the day to day in the classroom
- Teachers who know the content but not exactly how to teach it, or who need to develop classroom management skills
- Teachers who need to develop socio-emotional competencies
- English language teachers who need to develop their linguistic competencies

The discussion group also identified the following areas for improvement.

- To train and develop new teachers within a school environment, as opposed to having most of their training at a university or training centre.

- To implement an apprenticeship model that is more extended than the usual internship of a few hours observing other teachers. In this model, mentor and trainee would plan and deliver lessons together.
- To look at the objectives of the national curriculum and work on the ground on how to implement them, taking into account the conditions available in each context.
- To create the necessary conditions for teachers to become mentors, especially working conditions related to time and remuneration.

It was also discussed that leaders in the educational community can make a greater effort to raise parents' awareness of their children's learning process. In the case of ELT, it is also a leader's responsibility to raise awareness in the education community of the importance of the English language in the curriculum, which is still regarded by many in Brazil as an 'extra' and not as an essential curricular area. More effort is needed to show that English can be an axis across different subjects, serving as a medium for cross-curricular projects and for the development of 21st century skills.



Sustaining communities of practice

Workshop participants were interested in addressing the following issues regarding communities of practice (CoP).

- How to sustain a CoP in a context where you have many factors preventing it from developing?
- How can a CoP be formalized in a school environment and not simply remain at the level of 'chat' during staff meetings?
- How to encourage people to have an active participation?



The groups problematized the fact that CPD programmes tend to focus on the individual to develop his/her skills without a clear link to how it will have a positive impact on the school as a whole. Developing a CoP within a school environment can then help raise awareness that CPD, as a learning process, is a social construct. It was also noted that the sense of belonging to a CoP is tightly related to one's identity, which in the Brazilian context is a key factor for people to remain or leave the profession.

As members of a community of practice accumulate knowledge, "they become informally bound by the value that they find in learning together. This value is not merely instrumental for their work. It also accrues in the personal satisfaction of knowing colleagues who understand each other's perspectives and of belonging to an interesting group of people. (...) They also develop personal relationships and established ways of interacting. They may even develop a common sense of identity."⁴

⁴ Wenger, Etienne; McDermott, R.; Snyder, W.M. (2002). *Cultivating Communities of Practice*. Harvard Business Press; 1 edition.

The distinction between a community and a Community of Practice can be sometimes confused. For this, participants in this group highlighted that a CoP needs at least 3 elements:

- **Shared repertoire.** The community speaks a language, a pedagogical discourse, that everyone understands (e.g. active learning, interlanguage, scaffolding, etc). They also share common methods and techniques bound by a cultural context. The community is then built upon this shared repertoire.
- **Shared goals.** Members of a CoP work towards common goals through activities that depend on others as well (e.g. curricular revision and materials design).
- **Cooperation and engagement.** As the community develops and objectives change, members engage in different roles according to their knowledge, skills and experience.

The group also identified the following conditions for a successful CoP:

- Allotted time for meetings during regular working hours
- Trust - so participants can speak freely
- Working conditions so teachers are not floating between two or more schools
- Leadership that is sensitive to contextual needs

Furthermore, it is important to consider the role of the moderator and whether a CoP of teachers need external agents who can challenge the group to think outside the box and offer them different perspectives about their work.

The group also identified a few areas for improvement related to fostering CoP.

- To prevent it from becoming simply a space where teachers vent their frustrations or exchange stand-alone lesson activities.
- To develop a community where learning is supported by theory and reflection.
- To encourage the inclusion and participation of teachers from different subjects.
- To include monitoring and evaluation instruments which can collect evidence of whether the activities developed by the CoP have an impact on student learning.
- To foster the participation of pre-service teachers and early career teachers, in order for them to develop soft-skills such as *working together, helping others, etc.*

“CoP is an opportunity for teachers to understand that the challenges they face are similar. Seeing that there is a person going through certain challenges and how they are dealing with them relieves ‘my’ frustration, and motivates me as I see there is hope I can also overcome my challenges” - workshop participant.

Making distance learning effective

The group identified the following challenges regarding distance CPD:

- Lack of continuing development for online tutors.
- Anxiety regarding whether there will be connectivity, and demotivation due to lack of ICT skills necessary to follow the course.
- Too many students assigned to one or a few tutors.
- A greater focus and investment on the platform and its resources at the expense of qualified tutors and on providing opportunities for interaction among tutors and students.
- Resistance to the use of new technologies, the idea that online courses are lower in quality, and that studying online is a lonely activity.
- Registering for distance learning courses because of a lack of time to study as the main reason.



The group then identified the following areas for improvement.

- To design distance learning and CPD programmes as a way to reach more people and not as a way to reduce costs.
- To consider the ratio between online and face-to face interactions, or synchronous and asynchronous interaction; this being decided according to the learning objectives of the course.
- To assess how much interaction is needed for someone to learn what is offered; how much experience applying the content in the classroom is needed in order to acquire the new knowledge or skill.

- To raise awareness that distance learning does not mean studying alone, and that the time required to learn something is more or less the same whether it is face-to-face or online.

It was also discussed the need to provide online tutors with more professional development, for example, on how to engage students, help them organize a study plan and connect with others in the course. In terms of course design, it is essential to always have a module with an introduction to online learning, explaining how the platform works, the assessment criteria, the number of contact hours, learning strategies, etc.

One of the strategies offered to overcome the problem of organizing face-to-face or synchronous sessions, was to create a private YouTube channel where teachers in a course or online community of practice can post short videos sharing what they have tried in the classroom.



Measuring the impact of CPD on student learning



The discussion focused on the need to invest time and energy assessing the impact of CPD programmes. It was commented that at best there is usually only anecdotal data: interviews, questionnaires or journals describing teachers' perceptions of success or failure. "But how do you know that what they're saying that they have gained is really being put into practice in the classroom and more than that how do we know that has had an impact on student's learning?", inquired a workshop participant. The group agreed that CPD can boost teachers' morale, it can motivate and encourage teachers, but ultimately it needs to have an impact on student learning.

One of the challenges highlighted was that, in Brazil, the academia is strictly averse to quantitative studies in Education. The education community in Brazil is delegating research decisions to economists because they are refusing to do what economists do, which is to have the quantitative big data studies. Consequently, if educators want to influence policy-making, research needs to provide quantitative data to support CPD interventions.

The group identified the following areas for improvement in relation to monitoring and evaluating CPD:

- To create better performance indicators related to language development and to pedagogical development.
- To design performance indicators drawing from the existing literature on pedagogical knowledge, adapting them according to the context.
- To focus on the students, from whom we can get information related to teaching. They can be informants, in a more informal or subtle way.

One suggested way of measuring this through students would be to have performance indicators (as a checklist) with students rating how much they feel their teachers follow them, with this being done before and after the CPD programme. The major problem with this, and any other evaluation, is to expect short-term change. A six-month course to update teachers on methodology, or to introduce them to a new approach, is unlikely to result in better student achievement at the end of the programme. For example, for a teacher to start moving away from a grammar-translation to a task-based approach, it is unrealistic to expect that there will be better student results in the same academic year. This teacher might need a couple of years to fine-tune the approach according to the context, to collect or design materials, and to change how students are evaluated.

It was also noted that impact cannot always be seen on student performance in terms of exam results. Much more so when national exams are not aligned with modern teaching approaches, e.g. a grammar-based exam evaluating students who have been learning English through CLIL. It was highlighted that another important indicator is student motivation. If it can be seen that a CPD intervention had an impact on student motivation, this is positive because it might lead to more learner autonomy and an increased effort to learn, while better grades may come much later as a result of this, and therefore cannot be measured in the same programme.



Another strategy would be to monitor how teachers improve their lesson planning. Teachers would be asked at the beginning of a CPD programme to share a lesson plan they have recently taught, and as the programme progresses they will be asked to submit new lesson plans. At the end of the programme, it could be seen whether the teacher has improved his/her practice, at least at the level of planning. Ideally, this would be done alongside classroom observations.

The group also considered whether it would be the case of re-certifying teachers every couple of years, which in case of not being approved the teacher would remain on the job but with more guidance and support.

Reflection and Action

Towards the end of the Open Space session participants were asked to reflect on what they can do to improve the conditions, opportunities and quality of CPD programmes in their context. Here are some of the actions they shared:

Expand, as public practices, the ideas discussed in the event.

Define stages of development, with clear objectives and evaluation criteria for learning and impact.

Organize and present workshops to share what was learned in the event.

Propose policies for teaching and learning that include continuing development and seek support for this policy to be implemented.

Consider bringing school and university closer in the revision of the curriculum of the undergraduate course I teach.

To think of ways to persuade public administrators that it is essential to allocate resources and time for development.

Interact with decision makers so they take into account research in the area of teacher education and development.



Conclusions



The 2nd cpdBE workshop opened a valuable space for sharing evidence-based research and practice in Continuing Professional Development in education.

Workshop participants had the opportunity to share successful experiences and critical challenges from a variety of contexts. They were asked to share their main takeaway from the workshop, this included: learning about specific issues in CPD in Brazil and the opportunity to discuss it at a regional level; gaining a different perspective on remote CPD; confirming some aspects regarding the design and implementation of relevant CPD programmes; and an understanding that CPD is part of a complex system at the intersection of policy and politics.

