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THE IMPORTANCE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS IN UZBEKISTAN

(From my work experience as a school English teacher of high category with
eighteen years' service.)

Abstract: the article is devoted to solving problems of improving the mechanisms on strengthening professional competency of foreign language teachers in Uzbekistan as professional knowledge and skills of specialists is the key of success in life. The quality of teachers' pedagogical competency is very important in the education system. A harmoniously developed generation is the basis of the progress of Uzbekistan.

Keywords: professional development, secondary school education, development tendencies, pedagogical activity, professional competency, State Educational Standards, requirements, improvement of new curricula, teaching and educational work, multimedia learning, communicative activities, teaching process, studying, motivation, pedagogical innovation, effectiveness, technology of teaching, fulfill, harmony, elaborate, capacity, decision- makers, voluntary, encounter, challenge, projects.

Professional development of teachers is the key of the future. The aim of upbringing competent generation is a dominant goal of Uzbekistan. The first President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov signed a resolution on December 10, 2012, the implementation of the Presidential Decree №1875 on "The measures of strengthening the system of learning foreign languages" creates the basis for reforming on teaching foreign languages in the education system of the country. The document was adopted to improve teaching foreign languages, training specialists with good language skills, introducing advanced technologies into education system, etc. It is noted that in the framework of the Law of the Republic

of Uzbekistan "On Education" and the "National Programme of Personnel Training" in the country, a comprehensive foreign languages teaching system, aimed at creating harmoniously developed, highly educated, modern-thinking young generation, further integration of the country to the world community, has been created. According to the decree for foreign languages, mainly English, gradually throughout the country will be taught from the first year of schooling in the form of lesson-games and speaking games, continuing to learning the alphabet, reading and spelling in the second year (grade). Also, it is envisaged that university modules, especially in technical and international areas, will be offered in English and other foreign languages at higher education institutions.

In 2013, basing on the elaborated State Education Standards in learning foreign languages in the system of continuous (general secondary, secondary-specialized, professional, higher and post graduate) education, the requirements for obtaining foreign languages were indicated for gradulators of all stages of education. At the same time new curricula on systematical teaching foreign languages starting from the first grade was approved. The requirements on defining the level of language learning competency of learners developed according to the measures of International Standards of "Common European Framework of Reference for Languages- Learning, Teaching and Assessment" (CEFR).

The main attention has been drawn to teaching foreign languages, especially English by introducing advanced foreign language teaching strategies and techniques using modern pedagogic and information-communication technologies.

All English language teachers have obtained a privilege of receiving a 15 % (urban areas) or 30 % (rural areas) bonus on top of their monthly salary, if they have reached a level of C1 in CEFR and prove this with an IELTS certificate or a certificate of language proficiency at the National Testing Centre, which was assigned to design tests to check English teacher's language proficiency. The aim of this is primarily encouraging teachers to upgrade their language levels, which, in essence, is the principal obligation of a language teacher. Nevertheless, this policy has shown its positive impact on the quality of educational staff and has become

the main criterion of employment in the country, not only in education but in other spheres as well. This approach helped the Uzbek to understand what level must be acquired to meet the requirements of modern standards. The main reason for the reforms is 1) the international role of the English language, which has evolved into a ‘code’ of communication in various spheres, and 2) globalization, which has opened many new ways for nations to come closer.

From my personal experience, I would like to share that I have already passed the CEFR test two times, I work hard and do my best to grow professionally.

Every 5 years foreign language teachers systematically upgrade their professional competency within a month on the base of the 144-hour syllabus. So do I.



To create and introduce new mechanism on Professional Development of foreign language teachers target secondary schools in all districts (cities) of the republic implemented weekly Friday courses (once every week), which provide ongoing professional development of teachers. Such type of mechanism on fostering professional skills and pedagogical competency of foreign language teachers focused on completely new approach to professional development of personnel, that is, without interposing their work, they can update professional

knowledge and skills with the help of special trained teacher-trainers by attending constant operating courses.

I want to tell you that since 2015 I have been one of the trained English teacher-trainers on the above-mentioned program "Enhancing Professional Development of Foreign Language Teachers in the System of Public Education in Uzbekistan" since it was launched. It was 144-hour in-service teacher training program in Tashkent. It is pleasure to share experience with teachers from different schools and motivate each other to achieve own personal and professional growth. Teaching foreign languages, particularly English can be easier and effective with the help of different innovations based on improving the areas of vocabulary and grammar; different skills: reading, listening, speaking, and writing. It is important to make clear which one will be the main aim to focus on at a lesson.

Organization such type of courses create the following chance for foreign language teachers as to:

- upgrade their professional skills not far from their living place and without interrupting their work;
- practical use of gained new knowledge directly in their lessons;
- find feasible solutions for the problems, faced during the teaching process collaboratively with mentor-teachers and co-colleagues;
- participate in the examination on getting bonus for their monthly wages, if they consider themselves ready for the testing.

The quality and quantity of the Professional Development courses, delivered in two stages (1st stage- January-June, 2nd stage – September-December) mostly depend on the skills of teacher-trainers, who are responsible to conduct practical sessions of these courses. Owing to this, special preparation to be taken into consideration before starting each stage of this course.

Currently, in the Republic of Uzbekistan great attention is given to the radical reorganization of the educational system that will give an opportunity to raise it to the level of modern standards. In order to realize the aims and tasks put forward by the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Education" (1997) and the

“National Programme of Personnel Training” (1997) the complex system of reorganizing the structure and the content of personnel training, proceeding from perspectives of the social, economic development of the society, contemporary achievements of science, culture, technique and technology are being created in the country.

“It is necessary to raise the quality of general secondary education to a new stage. At the same time, based on what skills the student will receive in each class, it is necessary to revise the state education standards and curricula. It is necessary to create and publish textbooks on the basis of the most modern techniques, to strengthen in schools such areas as technology, the foundations of engineering, mathematics, art, foreign languages, re-equip subject laboratories. Attention should also be paid to ensuring the continuity of the system of preschool and higher education”, said Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

The most powerful source of the students’ cognitive activity, developing their creativity, interests, skills and other mental characteristics is innovative technologies. Innovative educational technologies are, first of all, information and communications technologies, closely connected with computerized education application. In the work of the first President of Uzbekistan I.A. Karimov “High spirituality – invincible power” noted: “the Foundation of the future is created in schools, arguing otherwise it is the future of nation depending on how today our children take education and upbringing.”

Sometimes my pupils hold their own lessons in different classes and it is very pleasant to watch the way they teach, their contact with pupils, the way they understand each other, their desire to feel themselves as teachers trying to teach and show their methods of teaching. I see my results and their own willingness to become teachers. I feel their energy, my observation of these lessons helps me also understand young minds and motivates me to something new. Professional development for teachers is all about helping students succeed. That’s because quality teachers make all the difference. According to The RAND Corporation,

“Teachers matter more to student achievement than any other aspect of schooling.”

Stronger teachers drive student' achievement higher.



That's why it's important to have data that shows a holistic view of student performance to gauge the effectiveness of professional development efforts. This data can also drive more informed creation of learning plans for individual teachers. This way professional development is constantly adapted and honed to become more effective in the long term.

I would like to write about Uzbek-American project to increase knowledge and skills of English teachers officially launched in 2020 and where I was selected as a Core Teacher (CTs) finalist of the English-Speaking Nation: Secondary Teacher Training (ESN: STT).

English Speaking Nation: Secondary Teacher Training (ESN: STT) is a program of the Public Affairs Section (PAS) of the U.S. Embassy in Uzbekistan implemented by American Councils for International Education in close cooperation with the Ministry of Public Education (MoPE) that offers an integrated professional development opportunity for English language teacher trainers and secondary school English language teachers in Uzbekistan. ESN:STT improves student skills and knowledge of English by preparing more than 15,000 secondary

school English teachers and over 1,000 teacher trainers to use teaching and in-service training practices that improve student language learning.

The goal of the three-year program is to strengthen English language secondary education in Uzbekistan by:

- Improving Uzbekistan secondary school teachers' English language skills with the goal of increased fluency and better use of English in the classroom;
- Improving Uzbekistan secondary school teachers' student-centered pedagogical skills;
- Strengthening the positive perception of Uzbekistan secondary school teachers inside and outside their communities;
- Cultivating a supportive ecosystem of teaching and training in order to attain excellence in English language teaching.

Over 33,000 teachers of English language in secondary schools of Uzbekistan will have the opportunity to improve their knowledge and skills within the new English Speaking Nation: Secondary Teacher Training project, implemented by the Ministry of Public Education of Uzbekistan with the participation of American organizations.



The Minister of Public Education of Uzbekistan Sherzod Shermatov noted: “In 2019, the Concept of development of the public education system until 2030 was adopted. The ministry presented the concept to international partners, and the American side supported this program. English is one of the international languages. Uzbekistan is becoming more open to the international community. To develop cooperation with other countries of the world and the country's competitiveness, our graduates must know foreign languages. This program is the first step to improve the teaching of foreign languages in schools. Knowledge of a foreign language will provide an opportunity for additional earnings for graduates, including via the Internet, which is important in the "Year of the Development of Science, Education and the Digital Economy."

Education is a never-ending process. It doesn't stop after earning a degree and starting a career. Through continuing education, career-minded individuals can constantly improve their skills and become more proficient at their jobs.

In recent years, state and national policies have focused more attention on the issue of “teacher quality”—i.e., the ability of individual teachers or a teaching faculty to improve student learning and meet expected standards for performance. The No Child Left Behind Act, for example, provides a formal definition of what constitutes high-quality professional development and requires schools to report the percentage of their teaching faculty that meet the law's definition of a “highly qualified teacher.” The law maintains that professional development should take the form of a “comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improving teachers' and principals' effectiveness in raising student achievement.” Similar policies that describe professional-development expectations or require teachers to meet certain expectations for professional development may be in place at the state, district, and school levels across the country, although the design and purpose of these policies may vary widely from place to place.

Generally speaking, professional development is considered to be the primary mechanism that schools can use to help teachers continuously learn and improve their skills over time. And in recent decades, the topic has been

extensively researched and many strategies and initiatives have been developed to improve the quality and effectiveness of professional development for educators.

“All our work and reforms are for the future of Uzbekistan. Moreover, the foundation of tomorrow is you, the youth. Obviously, you want to become educated, people worthy of the motherland. We will create all conditions for this”, the President said.

“A child who is well versed in information and communication technologies will not waste time in the streets, he will do business. If we raise young people as such experts, then tomorrow they will benefit the family and the state”, said Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

The tasks for implementation of each direction of Five Initiatives in districts and cities were defined, one of the directions is Enhancing the spirituality of young people, a wider propaganda of reading.

School leaders may encounter a variety of challenges when selecting and providing professional development opportunities. For example, one common obstacle is finding adequate time during the school day for teachers to participate in professional development. Securing sufficient funding is another common complication, particularly during times when school budgets are tight or being cut. The amount of funding allocated for professional development by states, districts, and schools may also vary widely—some schools could have access to more professional-development funding than they can reasonably use in a given year, while other schools and teachers may be expected to fund most or all of their professional development on their own. Other common challenges include insufficient support for professional development from the administrative leadership, a lack of faculty interest or motivation, or overburdened teacher workloads.

As for me, I “never stop learning, because life never stops teaching.” Experience changes my perspective. When your perspective changes that is called development. I am an active teacher and like to participate in a lot of places mentioned above, I am also an UzTEA member, I have visited different cities in

Uzbekistan and I hope to go abroad for experience exchange and my professional development. Catch the spirit of your time and be in harmony with your time.

My participation in Zoom conferences also helps me go with the time. Teachers from different countries share their experience of holding on-line lessons, publishing articles, making lesson plans, textbooks, presentations and also about recourses for different tasks for teaching on-line. They help participants, I mean teachers, to show their own abilities and make a step forward. And I think it does not matter how old you are.

Professional Learning also allows for the creation of professional learning communities and online discussions where teachers share their knowledge and expertise. These discussion groups help teachers learn from peers, develop comradery, and approach challenges as a team.

Since teachers are the most important factor in student success, it makes sense for any district to develop their teachers' strengths and support opportunities for growth. This means focusing on professional skills like subject matter expertise, instructional methods, and classroom management, in addition to personal growth goals such as organization, communication, and patience.

Every teacher, like every student, has unique learning needs and aptitudes. Professional development should be personalized for teachers just as they work to teach to each student's individual learning needs.

Teachers' development can be very personal and one may choose several different paths. It all depends on how a teacher envisions her/his individual capacity. Development is ongoing and change is inevitable; it comes in several ways and in combination of the following: They imagine attending short term practical/functional seminars or conferences; getting involved in long term projects and research; and following current publications, trends and the latest technology.

Teachers signal the need to coordinate the stakeholders, meaning a) what teachers need and want, b) students –how they change according to the times they live in, and c) the administration to organize experts or academics to prepare

seminars that are addressing to both students' and teachers' needs. They criticize the "one size fits all" approach.

Teachers all elaborated on the idea that individual capacity is very important and that this capacity affects a teacher's development. For many, development is actually a kind of investment where teachers "equip themselves with knowledge". One of the teachers once said,

'Teachers need to stay updated all the time and it is a personal endeavor.'

'If a teacher is aware of what she is doing, this makes her powerful.'

'Teachers need to become aware. I mean your job is the area you belong to.'

'If something is intentional, if something is professionally worked on, this makes teachers more powerful. I mean power teaching, learning and teaching professionally.'

I want to be one of the teachers, teacher-trainers to further the development of our country because the fate of the future generation, the fate of our entire nation, people and the state depends on our esteemed teachers.

In conclusion, I would like to say that the modern development of society, economy and education calls for the development of mechanisms for the formation of human of the 21st century — a person who is capable of analysing the current situation, actively participating in sociocultural activities, independently and responsibly making decisions under constantly changing conditions.

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