

Published Date: - 18-10-2023

Continuous Professional Development: A New Vector for New Actions

The rational and some incentive examples of the British Council pilot project

By Nodira Isamukhamedova and Elena Volkova

Elena Volkova, MEd in Trainer Development from the University of Exeter, UK. Elena is leading an MA in Learning and Teaching at WIUT. She is an active member of professional community and a part of many projects directed at reforms in education in Uzbekistan. Elena is supervising Active Learning and Teaching of Foreign Language in Uzbekistan (ALT FL) magazine as a chief editor. The area of her current professional interest rests in teachers learning opportunities with specific focus on Practitioner Action Research and Workplace Learning.

Nodira Isamukhamedova, PhD, MA in TESOL from the University of Leeds UK. Nodira is a Senior Lecturer at WIUT. She is a founder of Mentor Hub aimed at connecting and empowering teachers. Nodira is actively engaged in many different projects and research in teacher education and their continuous professional development, assessment literacy and online learning and teaching.

Abstract

The article demonstrates the inception of the project aimed at gaining deeper insight at how Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for school teachers in Uzbekistan can be approached. CPD in an ever-evolving professional landscape that calls on a shift towards a different perspective in understanding its nature. We explore a new philosophy of CPD that focuses on three important things - the notion of ‘continuous’, the notion of ‘professional’ and the notion of development. Schools in this paradigm are seen as hubs of development to serve as a powerful catalyst for teachers to undertake new actions and achieve sustained success.

Introduction

The number of teachers in general education grew accordingly from 454,400 in 2001 to 476,900 in 2004, but in the same period the qualification of teachers decreased from 70.5% with HE qualifications in 2001 to 68.6% in 2004. With the prospective continued growth of the student intake, the staffing pressures increased. In particular the qualification of the teachers became a concern, where close to a third of all teachers only had secondary pedagogical educational qualification. Thus, increased focus was placed on vocational in-service training of staff across Uzbekistan with 170,407 staff members trained in 2004 (including 66,899 in training institutes, 16,972 in training centres of HEI,

“TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: BEST PRACTICES, PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES”

Published Date: - 18-10-2023

and 73,251 in other forms of training courses). A need for a structured approach to staff INSET and professional development grew in importance. The issue was particularly acute in rural areas and regions, where the percentage of staff with secondary pedagogical qualifications were higher than in the capital (Table 3. Educational qualifications of teachers in regular general education schools by region). This created a need for the INSET and professional development activities to outreach to the regions and distant rural areas.

Between 2002 and now there were numerous projects in the Education Sector aimed to address the quality of basic education and sector management practices. Many reforms tried to address policy, legal, and institutional challenges to solve the problems of public sector primary and secondary education quality and specifically, the issue of staff qualifications and professional development. In 2016 Order no. 281 of the Ministry of Public Education was signed to enhance Distance INSET of secondary school teachers and currently reporting, the distance approach to teacher training has been fully adopted only in the areas of ELT and Senior Educational Management Skills Enhancement.

The Government of Uzbekistan gives high priority to human development. After gaining independence in 1991, Uzbekistan continues to provide quality education to its citizens. It developed a National Program for Personnel Training (NPPT) in 1997, which has been implemented in three stages and is coming into full effect from 2010. In 2002-2010 Education Sector Development Project developed the distance education capacity through a network of the Distance Education Development Centre (DEDC) located in Central Institute for Education Staff Development (CIESD) in Tashkent; 14 regional coordinating units (RCUs), one in each region; and 70 pilot LRCs in five selected districts of each region. The buildings of all distance education centres were renovated and equipped with furniture, computers, and other necessary communication equipment.

Surveying the situation in schools now, we need to confess that it has not changed much. Teachers, though, were released from the unnecessary burdens and bureaucracy and they are now given a bit more freedom of choice in terms of their professional development. The model of their professional learning is seen as a combination of recognition of teachers' efforts in the 18 different areas. some of which are only remotely connected to professional development.

Attention is needed by all the stakeholders and thus the British Council has launched a pilot project that aims to align the vision of the Ministry to prioritise professional growth of teachers in public schools in Uzbekistan and make their professional development journey meaningful and relevant to their individual needs and the needs of their learners. It is stated in the project concept note that many teachers and other stakeholders in Uzbekistan still consider CPD mainly in terms of training. It is envisaged that this view needs to be extended and at the same time we want to encourage teachers to take control of their own development based on the notion of schools as hubs of CPD activity.

We look at Continuous professional development (CPD) that is associated with workplace learning and growth, but its importance in educational settings cannot be overstated. We

“TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: BEST PRACTICES, PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES”

Published Date: - 18-10-2023

highlight the significance of implementing CPD within schools, emphasizing the benefits it brings to both teachers and students.

The new vision of CPD highlights the evolving role of teachers as facilitators of learning in the modern educational landscape. With advancements in technology and shifting educational paradigms, teachers must continuously update their skills, knowledge, and pedagogical strategies to effectively engage their students and foster optimal learning outcomes.

Our discussion takes a deeper look at benefits of CPD within schools, including enhanced collegial collaboration, a culture of continuous improvement, and increased school performance. The implementation of CPD initiatives encourages teachers to share best practices, engage in peer observations, and engage in reflective practice, fostering a supportive and collaborative learning community.

While professional development opportunities are currently mandatory in Uzbekistan, relative to high-performing countries, these seem limited. Teachers are expected to engage in 144 hours of career learning for five years, carried out over a span of 36 hours per week over four weeks. The teaching material involves both subject-knowledge and pedagogical ability (ibid).

In 2016 Order no. 281 of the Ministry of Public Education was signed to enhance Distance INSET of secondary school teachers, reviving the activities relating to Component 2 of the aforementioned project.

In 2017 the restructuring of the INSET framework was introduced, transferring the overall responsibility for implementation from the Ministry of Public Education to the Ministry of Higher and Specialised Education.

Literature review

Different aspects of CPD have been studied heavily. Literature highlights certain principles and approaches among which are self-efficacy and meaningfulness, autonomy and academic freedom, employment and deep approach to learning and most of them are underpinned by Kolb's concept that 'continuous development, just as reflection does, holds learning to be a continuous process grounded in experience that requires the resolution of conflicts relating to or resulting from experience' (Kolb, 1984).

Majority of projects seeking to see effectiveness of encouraging teachers CPD highlight reflection when teachers should be engaged with learning by doing and then analysing their experiences and perceptions as well as the impact on student leaning (Kayapinar, 2016, Mertler, 2012, Dehghan and Sahragard, 2015, Kabaroglu 2014)

Most of the reviewed projects suggest that 'the true benefit of engaging in classroom- or school-based reflection is that educators can truly focus and direct their own professional

“TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: BEST PRACTICES, PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES”

Published Date: - 18-10-2023

growth and development in specific areas that they want to target, as opposed to having professional development topics thrust upon them’ (Mertler, 2012)

It is highlighted that teaching is a complicated professional activity that requires more than initial and further training and thus a reflection model can be helpful to ‘deal with genuine problems creatively in real classroom contexts.’ (Cabaroglu, 2014)

The amount of advocates that teachers learn more meaningfully and thus more willingly when engaged in personal inquiry about professional practice has grown. (Kincheloe (2003), Kitchen & Stevens (2008), Levin and Rock (2003), Mertler (2012).

Discussions

The pilot has started and the group of 6 national consultants and 20 school champions are ready to engage with the activities. At the moment, there are many questions that guide our activities. We are not yet certain that we have answers to these questions. This reflects the nature of CPD through reflection and this makes us seekers for the best options.

It is absolutely clear now that there is support from the Ministry, the school principles and the school champions. This indicates the degree of understanding of the need for a change. National consultants are now set to visit the locations selected for the pilot and the outcomes of these visits will form better springboards for actions. On some occasions, these will be interventions in the form of training events, seminars and workshops. We also aim at empowering school champions to own the processes in schools. The most important message that we are carrying with us is that the CPD needs to show a host who is a teacher himself/herself. This needs to be understood, recognised and reinforced at all levels. ,

References

Bolam, R. (1990) Recent developments in English and Wales, in B. Joyce (Ed.)(1990) *Changing school culture through professional development*, the 1990 ASCD Yearbook, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

Cabaroglu, N. (2014) Professional development through action research: Impact on self-efficacy. *System* 44 (2014) 79-88 available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2014.03.003>

Day, C. (1997) In-service Teacher Education in Europe: conditions and themes for development in the 21st century. *British Journal of In-service Education*, Vol 23, No 1

Guskey , T. R. (2002) Professional Development and Teacher Change. *Teachers and Teaching: theory and practice*, Vol. 8, No. 3/4, 2002. Garfax Publishing

“TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: BEST PRACTICES, PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES”

Published Date: - 18-10-2023

Kayapinar, U. (2016) A Study on Reflection in In-service Teacher Development: Introducing Reflective Practitioner Development Model. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*. 16(5)

Kincheloe, J. (2003) Teachers as researchers: *Qualitative inquiry as a patch to empowerment*. London: Routledge

Kitchen, J., & Stevens, D. (2008). Action research in teacher education: two teacher-educators practice action research as they introduce action research to

preservice teachers. *Action Research*, 6(1), 7e28.

Kolb, D. (1984) *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice –Hall.

Levin, B. B., & Rock, T. C. (2003). The effects of collaborative action research on pre-service and experienced teacher partners in professional development

schools. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 54(2), 135e149.

Mertler, C. (2012). *Action research: Improving schools and empowering educators* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ramani, E. (1987) 'Theorizing from the classroom' *ELT Journal*, 41/3

Volkova, E. (2016) Action research as a direction in teacher professional development – reflection on the project ‘Teachers’ Learning through Action Research’, Conference proceedings