



## MENTORING NOVICE ENGLISH LANGUAGE SCHOOL TEACHERS IN UZBEKISTAN: CHALLENGES AND CONCEPTUAL SOLUTIONS.

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### ABSTRACT

*Novice English language school teachers often encounter significant challenges during their professional journey, such as reluctance to engage in exploratory action research, misconceptions about its complexity, and risks of demotivation. In Uzbekistan, these issues are compounded by systemic factors, including limited institutional support and a lack of resources. This conceptual paper examines the challenges novice teachers face and proposes mentoring-based solutions informed by relevant literature. Strategies such as structured guidance, regular feedback, classroom observations, and leveraging digital tools are highlighted as key mechanisms to address these barriers. The paper concludes that tailored mentoring programs can enhance novice teachers' professional development, equipping them to overcome challenges and contribute effectively to classroom learning outcomes..*

### Introduction

The transition from pre-service teacher training to active classroom teaching is often challenging for novice educators, particularly in high-demand contexts like Uzbekistan. English is a key language in the nation's globalization efforts, and the need for skilled English language teachers has grown significantly. Despite their academic preparation, many new teachers face difficulties adapting to classroom realities. Issues such as classroom management, lesson planning, and addressing diverse student needs often overwhelm novice teachers, reducing their confidence and effectiveness.

Mentoring programs can serve as a bridge between theoretical knowledge and practical application, helping novice teachers address these challenges through guided support. A particularly promising approach involves incorporating exploratory action research into mentoring, encouraging teachers to reflect on and systematically address classroom problems. However, novice teachers in Uzbekistan often exhibit reluctance or anxiety about engaging in research due to systemic and personal barriers.

This paper identifies the key challenges faced by novice English teachers in Uzbekistan and proposes a mentoring framework to

overcome these barriers, drawing from relevant studies in the field of teacher development.

## **Literature Review**

### **Challenges Faced by Novice Teachers**

#### Reluctance to Engage in Research

Research skills are essential for teachers to identify and address classroom challenges. However, many novice teachers view research as a daunting task unrelated to their day-to-day responsibilities. Borg (2013) highlights that this reluctance stems from a lack of exposure to practical research during pre-service training. Furthermore, novice teachers often perceive research as requiring advanced skills or academic expertise that they do not possess.

#### Misconceptions About Complexity

Farrell (2016) notes that misconceptions about research complexity exacerbate novice teachers' reluctance. Many teachers believe that research is time-consuming and incompatible with their already heavy workloads. These misconceptions discourage teachers from exploring research as a tool for professional growth.

#### Demotivation and Burnout

Unrealistic expectations, combined with a lack of support, often lead to burnout among novice teachers. Richards and Farrell (2005) emphasize that failed attempts to address classroom challenges without proper guidance can result in demotivation, negatively affecting both teachers and students.

#### Systemic Barriers in Uzbekistan

In Uzbekistan, systemic barriers such as limited access to professional development resources and insufficient institutional support further complicate novice teachers' efforts. Burns (2010) argues that a lack of resources and recognition for teacher-led research initiatives undermines efforts to foster a research-oriented teaching culture.

#### The Role of Mentoring

Mentoring is a widely endorsed strategy for addressing the challenges faced by novice teachers. Burns (2010) highlights that mentoring programs that emphasize exploratory research can bridge the gap between theory and practice. Mentors provide not only emotional support but also practical guidance, helping teachers develop reflective and evidence-based teaching practices. Digital platforms such as Padlet have also emerged as effective tools for maintaining continuous interaction and feedback between mentors and mentees (Borg, 2013).

## **Methods**

### Proposed Mentoring Framework

This conceptual framework synthesizes findings from existing studies to address the challenges faced by novice English teachers in Uzbekistan. Key strategies include:

#### Simplified Research Training

Mentors should provide hands-on training that simplifies the process of exploratory research. Practical examples and real-life case studies can help demystify research, making it accessible and relevant to classroom challenges (Burns, 2010). The trainings conducted in NETRUZ (Network of English Teacher Researchers of Uzbekistan) has played a significant role in enhancing English language teaching in Uzbekistan through a series of initiatives, including online and offline workshops and training courses on teacher-research mentoring and exploratory action research. By encouraging educators to examine their teaching practices

and adapt to evolving educational demands, NETRUZ has significantly contributed to improving the quality of English language education in the country (NETRUZ, 2024).

#### Regular Feedback and Classroom Observations

Many teachers particularly, new teachers don't like their classes to be observed in Uzbekistan context. Developing classroom observation culture is crucial for professional development as classroom observations enable mentors to identify specific areas where novice teachers need improvement. Feedback should be constructive, actionable, and supportive, helping teachers implement incremental changes (Farrell, 2016).

#### Consistent Communication

Mentor presence is crucial like weekly face-to-face meetings, either in person or via Zoom, create opportunities for mentors to address ongoing challenges and celebrate successes. These interactions foster a sense of accountability and community (Richards & Farrell, 2005).

#### Use of Digital Tools

Platforms such as Padlet provide a collaborative space where teachers can document their research progress, share reflections, and receive feedback in real time. These tools promote continuous engagement and foster a culture of collaboration (Borg, 2013).

#### Institutional Support

Mentoring programs require institutional backing to succeed. Schools must allocate resources, provide time for professional development, and recognize the contributions of novice teachers engaged in research (Burns, 2010).

### **Results and Discussion**

#### Addressing Reluctance to Research

Simplifying research processes can help overcome teachers' reluctance. Burns (2010) found that teachers who received clear and practical guidance were more likely to engage in research and view it as a valuable tool for improving classroom outcomes.

#### Challenging Misconceptions

Mentors play a crucial role in debunking misconceptions about research complexity. Farrell (2016) suggests that breaking down research into manageable steps and demonstrating its practical benefits can motivate novice teachers to participate actively.

#### Preventing Demotivation

Regular feedback and positive reinforcement are essential for maintaining teacher motivation. Recognizing small successes and framing setbacks as learning opportunities can reduce the risk of burnout (Richards & Farrell, 2005).

#### Overcoming Systemic Barriers

Institutional support is critical for sustaining mentoring programs. Policies that prioritize professional development, allocate resources for research, and reward teacher innovation can create an environment conducive to growth (Borg, 2013).

### **Conclusion**

Novice English teachers in Uzbekistan face significant challenges, including reluctance to conduct research, misconceptions about its complexity, and systemic barriers. Mentoring programs that incorporate exploratory research, regular feedback, and digital tools can address these challenges effectively. By fostering a culture of reflective practice and providing targeted support, mentoring programs can enhance teachers' professional development and classroom effectiveness.

Future research should focus on evaluating the long-term impact of mentoring programs in Uzbekistan, particularly their role in fostering a sustainable research-oriented teaching culture.

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