



MAIN OBJECTIVES OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES FOR EFL TEACHERS

Yusupova Dilnavoz Utkir kizi

Urgench state university, Foreign philology faculty

Trainee teacher at "Roman-German" faculty

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ABSTRACT

Professional development for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers is crucial for enhancing their teaching skills and ensuring the effectiveness of language instruction. This article explores the main objectives of professional development activities for EFL teachers, emphasizing both theoretical underpinnings and practical applications. Through a blend of scholarly insights and real-world examples, the article delineates how these activities contribute to teacher growth and improved student outcomes.

Teachers who teach English as a foreign language (EFL) should constantly develop their skills and knowledge by taking part in professional development programs (PDPs) which keep them aware of the most recent teaching trends. This mixed method study seeks to explore how PDPs influence EFL teachers' teaching practices in activating skills, and therefore their students' acquisition of these skills. It also examines the correlation between EFL teachers' activation of skills and their students' acquisition of these skills. During the study a sequential explanatory research design has been used by utilizing questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The results have revealed that the two dimensions of skills that got the highest level of activation were the collaboration and communication skills. Furthermore, the results showed that the students acquire all skills with different levels of acquisition. Finally, the results showed that EFL teachers' activation of skills had no significant direct correlation with students' acquisition of these skills. These findings could provide insights on the area of PDPs that need to be researched more in different contexts. They also suggested that PDPs designers should incorporate all dimensions equally to be activated accurately by teachers in higher education institutions.

Professional development (PD) for EFL teachers is an ongoing process that aims to improve educators' knowledge, skills, and practices to enhance student learning outcomes. The theoretical foundation of PD is grounded in several key concepts:

1. Continuous Learning:

PD emphasizes the importance of lifelong learning for teachers. The theory posits that teaching is a dynamic profession that requires ongoing adaptation and growth. As new



teaching methods and technologies emerge, EFL teachers must continuously update their knowledge and skills.

2. Reflective Practice:

Central to effective PD is the concept of reflective practice, introduced by Donald Schön. Reflective practice involves teachers critically examining their teaching methods and classroom interactions to identify areas for improvement. This reflective process helps teachers develop a deeper understanding of their teaching practices and their impact on student learning.

3. Collaborative Learning:

Theories of social learning, particularly those of Lev Vygotsky, highlight the importance of collaboration in PD. Learning in a social context allows teachers to share experiences, insights, and strategies, thereby enriching their professional growth.

4. Constructivist Approach:

Constructivist theories, inspired by Jean Piaget and Jerome Bruner, suggest that PD should be an active process where teachers construct new knowledge based on their experiences. This approach encourages hands-on activities, peer collaboration, and real-world problem-solving.

The main objectives of professional development activities for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers may vary depending on the context and specific needs of the teachers and their students. However, some common objectives of professional development activities for EFL teachers include improving language proficiency, enhancing teaching skills, staying up-to-date with the latest teaching methodologies and materials, developing cultural competence and building a professional network each of which is explained further below.

EFL teachers need to have a high level of proficiency in the language they are teaching in order to effectively teach their students. Professional development activities can help teachers improve their language skills, including grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation.

These activities can help EFL teachers improve their teaching skills, including lesson planning, classroom management, assessment, and the use of technology in the classroom.

Moreover, EFL teachers can benefit by the help of these activities in order to stay informed about the latest teaching methodologies and materials, which can help them, create more effective and engaging lessons for their students.

EFL teachers need to be aware of cultural differences in order to effectively teach their students, therefore such kind of activities can be efficient for teachers to develop cultural competence and sensitivity, which can improve their ability to communicate with and understand their students.

They can provide opportunities for EFL teachers to connect with other teachers and experts in the field, which can lead to collaboration, sharing of ideas, and ongoing learning.

Practical Application of suggested activities:

1. Workshops and Seminars:

Workshops and seminars are common PD activities that provide EFL teachers with opportunities to learn about new teaching strategies, technologies, and research findings. For example, a workshop on incorporating technology in the classroom might introduce teachers to tools like interactive whiteboards or language learning apps. Practical sessions where



teachers can experiment with these tools enhance their confidence and proficiency in using them.

2. Peer Observation and Feedback:

Implementing peer observation programs allows teachers to observe their colleagues' teaching practices and provide constructive feedback. This practice not only fosters a culture of collaboration but also exposes teachers to different instructional techniques. For instance, an EFL teacher might observe a peer's successful use of task-based learning and subsequently integrate similar activities into their own lessons.

3. Mentoring and Coaching:

Mentoring and coaching programs pair less experienced teachers with seasoned mentors. This relationship provides novice teachers with guidance, support, and practical advice. A mentor might help a new EFL teacher develop lesson plans, manage classroom dynamics, or navigate cultural challenges specific to language instruction.

4. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs):

PLCs are groups of educators who regularly meet to share knowledge, discuss challenges, and develop solutions. For example, an EFL PLC might focus on improving student engagement through innovative teaching methods. By collaborating on action research projects, teachers can implement new strategies, assess their effectiveness, and refine their approaches.

5. Online Courses and Webinars:

Online platforms offer flexible PD opportunities that allow EFL teachers to learn at their own pace. Courses covering topics like second language acquisition theories, classroom management, or assessment techniques can be highly beneficial. Webinars featuring experts in the field provide insights into cutting-edge research and best practices.

There are some practical examples of using these activities:

Case Study 1: Integrating Technology:

An EFL teacher in South Korea attended a PD workshop on digital tools for language teaching. Inspired by the workshop, she started using a language learning app to supplement her lessons. As a result, her students showed increased engagement and improved language skills, particularly in vocabulary retention.

Case Study 2: Reflective Journals:

In a PD program in Spain, EFL teachers were encouraged to maintain reflective journals. One teacher noted that by reflecting on her classroom interactions, she became more aware of her tendency to dominate conversations. She consciously made efforts to allow more student talk time, leading to a more interactive and student-centered classroom environment.

Case Study 3: Collaborative Lesson Planning:

A group of EFL teachers in Brazil formed a PLC focused on collaborative lesson planning. They met bi-weekly to design lessons, share resources, and discuss student progress. This collaborative effort resulted in more cohesive and well-structured lessons, benefiting both teachers and students.

Professional development activities are vital for the continuous improvement of EFL teachers. By engaging in workshops, peer observations, mentoring, PLCs, and online courses, teachers can enhance their skills, stay updated with the latest educational trends, and



ultimately improve their students' learning experiences. Theoretical foundations such as continuous learning, reflective practice, collaborative learning, and constructivist approaches underpin these activities, ensuring they are both effective and meaningful.

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