Esl Teacher Professional Self-development Within Lifelong Educational Environment

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Abstract

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Ever changing socio-economic conditions impose specific requirements to the system of education, starting from general stage and up to the post-professional education. The article discusses the role and place of a diversified, multi-level system of professional ESL teacher training, which provides a variety of characteristics of educational and self-educational programs that actualizes the problem of improving the system of lifelong general and professional educational environment. ESL teachers being eager to develop themselves and their practice will be a great asset to both, their students and themselves. Successful ESL teachers enhance their professional lives by in-service training programs and postgraduate course, studying for higher ESL teaching qualifications and international certifications. Apart from formal training, however, there is a great deal ESL teachers could do to form their own individual professional educational route within lifelong professional educational environment. The introduced ESL Teacher Development Model provides the effective strategy of combining the forms of formal education, professional socialization and individual self-development within lifelong professional educational environment.

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1. Introduction

The problem of modern schooling is that teachers due to continual and mechanical repetition of everyday teaching activities gradually become less and less careful of the modern tasks of foreign

language teaching. More than that, ongoing changes and reforms of the educational system in Russia, including new Federal Educational Standards introduction, teachers being under the administration pressure are more engaged in adopting educational programs, writing reports, giving analytical data to the officials and so on instead of teaching practice and professional self-development are problems.

The other barrier to professional development and self-development is the job qualification demands reforms. Many teachers nowadays face the problem of official qualification status because of changes in the job qualifications requirements. For example, according to the university diploma, a teacher attended courses of Pedagogics and Methods of Teaching and even had the in-service teacher training practice at school, but it turns out to be not enough now to teach at school because a teacher has not got the note in the diploma that he or she is a teacher of the definite subject. So professional formal education could not be a guarantee of getting a job at school.

In addition, teachers could experience financial difficulties being obliged to pay for their additional, further education or professional retraining. They have to search for some grants and it is also a time-consuming activity, sometimes they are not free in their choice of professional training course and educational programs because the government pays their training. Considering that, we can say that there is no place for the teacher individual professional educational route within current state of educational environment.

Apart from formal professional education system problems, there is a great deal of restrictions in the sphere of professional socialization and professional self-development connected with the lack of necessary information and official support, self-organization and time management skills; poor physical state and even health problems.

2. Problem statement

The analysis of ESL teaching experience and educational practice shows that in order to provide sustainable professional and personal growth, teachers should not concentrate only on knowledge and skill approach. There are plenty of opportunities of great assistance in making their professional educational route of development and self-development effective and the lifelong educational environment beneficial. Though there are a lot of research works devoted to the personality and professional development and self-development, introducing lifelong educational system, such as Ushinskii K., Selevko G., Tchoshanov M. and others; the problem of ESL teacher professional educational development and self-development route within lifelong educational environment still needs to be thoroughly considered.

3. Research questions

Is the introduced ESL Teacher Development Model valid or not? Are there significant differences between current educational environment and the innovative one organized according to the introduced model?

4. Purpose of the study

The objective of the research is to present a gist of theoretical analysis of the effective ways of teachers' professional self-development within life-long educational environment in accordance with the new educational standards in the integration of the national education system into the world educational space. Based on that, the Model of ESL teachers' professional development and self-development within life-long educational environment have been introduced and tested (Figure 1).
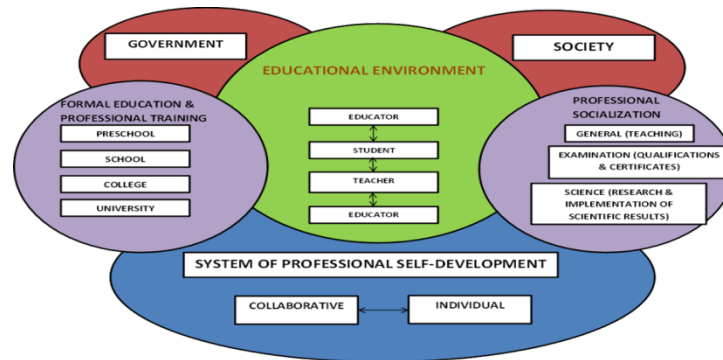

Figure 1. ESL Teacher Development Model

The offered ESL Teacher Development Model should be realized within lifelong educational environment and is based on Federal State Educational Standards of General Education and Professional Education including post professional training programs. The important role of professional socialization should also be taken into consideration when speaking about career opportunities and professional growth of any educator. Any teacher starting the career has to be aware of future perspectives, such as international certification, scientific research activity and so on. Lifelong educational environment supposes the ongoing circle of development and self-development when the student is in the center of learning process, which starts from the educator as an example and rounds up with the student becoming a professional educator. So that, teacher is the first step on the way of becoming an educator, which means not only the possibility to teach at all levels of educational process (from pre-school to university), but readiness to develop within the world standards of education and scientific work. At the same time, the process of self-development has got two main forms to support the educator during all the professional activity: collaborative and individual. Both ways could be integrated into the process of general and professional education, especially in a form of modules into the post professional training.

5. Research methods

The key research methods are the analysis of national educational standards, professional educational programs and scientific resources, modeling and pedagogical experiment. Base of the research was provided by means of approbation of ESL Teacher Development Model of teaching and learning, professional training and self-development within lifelong educational environment during

the implementation of the experimental model in accordance with the new educational standards of general, professional and post-professional education. In the experiment, there have been schools of Kazan and Republic of Tatarstan (Russian Federation) under the scientific and educational management of Kazan Federal University; Institute of Philology and Intercultural Communication of Kazan Federal University; Volga Region Center for Further Training and Professional Retraining of Kazan Federal University. Experimental (200) and controlled group (200) of the respondents were formed from the senior school children (School 122, 75, 9, 165), university students, postgraduates, school teachers and university lecturers who passed different courses (formal education and additional collaborative and individual tasks), took part in workshops and project work via distance learning and within problem-solving projects, methodology seminars and scientific conferences. The research was conducted within one academic year (from September to June 2015-2016).

6. Findings

ESL teacher development and self-development could be successful when breaking the well-known teaching rules or norms as a way of challenging what has been taken for granted. More than that, it should involve trying out new ideas or changing the ways of using the old ones; investigating something unknown or even bewildering and frustrating. Overall, in these cases the idea is not only to improve teacher's individual performance, but also to learn more about teaching and about the educational environment itself.

From the Table 1 you can see that schoolchildren and teachers (75% both) are in greater need of improvement than educators (60%) and lecturers (45%). That means low level of reflection and self-assessment; the reason might be in the lack of monitoring and management from the side of school and university administration staff. Nevertheless, such criterion as "understand the necessity" varies greatly comparing with "in need of improvement" in all groups. For example, senior schoolchildren who should be ready to choose their educational route show very low level of understanding their needs and weak points. In this case they could not be ready to both formal educational development and self-development as the highest level of personality progress. The most problematic is the last criterion "ready to improve" which shows stable decrease in all groups.

Table 1. Data analysis of the current situation within the educational environment

Formal education status	In need of improvement	Understand the necessity	Ready to improve
Educators	60%	95%	65%
Senior school children	75%	35%	25%
Teachers	75%	80%	60%
Lecturers	45%	100%	75%

Analyzing the given data we could denote that low level of readiness to develop and self-develop is the result of the discrete system of general, professional and post professional education. Only a well-

balanced lifelong educational system could provide sustainable growth of development and self-development intention and readiness.

When speaking about the level of language competence of ESL teacher, we should mention the tendency to prove that level with the help of international exams. As one of the most popular international exams in Russia is IELTS, it was used as the instrument for assessment and interpretation of the research results. Table 2 shows the dependence of the level of English language competence (given in numbers 1-9 according to the IELTS levels of language competence within Common European Framework of Reference, level "0" is excluded as most of the experimental and controlled group respondents have at least level B1) on the level of individual self-development. The dependent level is typical for all groups; it means that the entire respondent could not continue their development on the level of self-mode. The educators and lecturers are potentially ready to improve, whereas teachers and senior school children usually stop when reaching the level which suits them at the moment. At any rate in all groups, the level of self-development is dependent, so there would not be any significant progress in English language competence in all groups of respondents. In case of teachers and senior school children it even could be followed by general digress of the professional competence in future. When implementing the experimental model of ESL Teacher Development, the results in the experimental groups have changed greatly within one academic year (the results are shown in green and orange). As we can see from the table the experimental groups show the stable tendency to develop their language competence within the formal educational institutes and the level of self-development has changed to active due to the introducing of the new strategies and educational technologies into the process of teaching and assessment of the subject, meta-subject and personality results.

Table 2. Language level competence

Formal education status	Level of development									Level of self-development		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	active	dependent	stopped
Educators	-						-	-	-	-		
senior school children	-							-	-	-		
Teachers	-							-	-	-		
Lecturers	-	-					-	-	-	-		-

The main educational objective of ESL Teacher Development Model realization is the professional competence development through different types of professional activities. Creation of conditions for motivation to further training and development remains to be of paramount importance. For this purpose, the curriculum of school, university and postgraduate programs of further training and retraining should include additional disciplines or modules. So, there have been introduced such school courses for gifted children at schools (senior school children) like "Olympiad training", "International Exams training"; constant workshops for school teachers "Main issues of school scientific research", "Modern educational technologies in teaching English"; new courses for university students "Interactive technologies and methods in teaching English", "CAE course", "TKT course"; scientific

conferences for educators and lecturers dedicated to the problems of modern testing system, methods of assessment of language competence. Some of the results of these activities are:

1) Winners of English Language Olympiads at the regional and federal levels;

2) High results in IELTS and TOEFL tests (schoolchildren and university students);

3) Winners at the scientific conferences at the regional and federal levels;

4) Creation of web resources for students and teachers for further self-development

One of the examples of the project work of the students (experimental group) within the university courses "Interactive technologies and methods in teaching English", "CAE course", "TKT course" is the English Language Teaching – Kazan Federal University blog (http://elt-kfu.blogspot.ru). It could be a great resource for any educator to gain both motivation to development and experience of professional activity.

7. Conclusion

Formation of system of professional development and self-education of ESL teacher within lifelong educational environment is based on promotion of pedagogical experience at all levels. ESL teacher experience takes place in the different forms reflected in the experimental model. Thus, the actions are directed on comprehensive increase of competence and professional skills of ESL teacher, carried out for mastering teachers technologies and techniques of teaching and educational work, their creative application on occupations and in extracurricular activities, search of innovative, new and most rational and effective forms, and methods of the organization, carrying out and analysis of educational process.

Considering internal and external factors of the lifelong educational environment, the existing result of experimental training allows to speak about the created competence of ESL teacher carrying out types of professional activity on the level of active self-developing competence.

Acknowledgements

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