

L2 Teachers' Professional Development Management

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Abstract

The article focuses on the issue of furthering foreign language (L2) university teachers' professional development which necessitates viewing in terms of a particular tertiary education institution and the state requirements. Summarizing the experience of the Plekhanov Russian University of Economics (Moscow, Russia) in creating various professional training opportunities for foreign language teachers, the survey examines the L2 teachers' needs and objectives in professional advancement, as well as motivating factors and preferences for professional development activities. The paper lays the foundation for a new a 7+Cs evaluation framework to determine the successful management of university-based language teacher training. Recommendations for further improvement of continuous teacher coaching and enhancing their efficiency are developed upon the analysis of the 7+Cs scale.

Keywords: Tertiary education, teacher training, professional development, foreign language, life-long learning

Introduction

The overall objective to tailor teaching practices to particular contemporary universities' standards accentuates the necessity for teachers to progress far beyond their initial qualifications and cultivate life-long learning culture. Teaching process has always been a highly complex mixture of expert knowledge, field practices as well as professional relationships and values. Globalization pressures in education have put new challenges and demands to the university teacher. The competence-based approach to higher education now accentuates the primary task of creating 'the whole student', which in turn facilitates the need of the professional development of the 'whole teacher'.

A teacher is a key figure and the most valuable asset in the pedagogical process. Myron V. Walwyn (2015) declares that "*Teaching is not merely a profession; rather it is a service to Country.*" Shaping the

generations of the citizens of the nation in general, quality teaching has an overwhelming influence not only on a range of his/her immediate students' outcomes but on increasing the profile of their educational organization. Many ambitious universities aspiring to enhance their both national and international ratings now have to put much emphasis into further development and refining their teaching staff's skills. Foreign language teachers working in economic universities due to the intrinsic nature of their subject are predetermined to be well-rounded personalities and life-long learners. Unlike most subject matter lecturers, the range of topics which the language teachers have to cover is exorbitant. While in classroom communication with the junior students L2 teachers discuss topics concerning their every-day practices and routines, those who progress to senior courses to teach Business English, let alone English for Professional Purposes (EPP), have to focus on such issues as Securities, Accounting, Taxation and the like, where they have no background education and their students are likely to be more professionally knowledgeable than them. So, for every EPP teacher continuous professional learning and development becomes a must. What is more, following the never-ending curricular shifts, triggered by the globalization changes in the tertiary education, L2 teachers occasionally have to switch from one course to another often without having sufficient time for preparation which in turn requires a great amount of flexibility, adaptability and stress-resistance on their part.

Literature Review

In the continuing global call for educational change and reforms, many recent researchers address the critical issue of teacher learning from diverse national contexts and perspectives. Boyd et al. (2003), focusing on the critical role of professional development as one of the key recommendations, note that a primary challenge for large-scale professional development projects lies in attracting teachers and sustaining their involvement so that they can receive the full dose of professional development. They state that “you have to make every effort to get the teachers there and once you get them there, you have to make sure you have something of high quality that will encourage them to come back”. Richards (2005) provides a conceptual framework for teachers' professional development focusing on such strategies for facilitating language teaching professional development as self-monitoring, teaching portfolios, peer coaching, team teaching, support groups, journal writing, classroom observation, case analysis, analysis of critical incidents, and action research, which may be applied in the teachers' own context. Hoban (2002) examines dynamic interplay between learning and teaching when educational change and teacher learning are viewed from a paradigm based on complexity

theory, assuming that change is a nonlinear process that needs to be supported by a framework for long-term teacher learning. Aubusson (2008) synthesizes current practice on teachers' self-study and highlights the complexity, challenges, struggles, solutions and successes in teacher education experience. Thinking about the role of teacher training, Kooy & van Veen et al. (2012) believe that it is "teacher learning that matters" as it shapes and directs pedagogical practices with the goal of improving student learning and view teachers as the portals through which any initiative for change and reform is realized. McNamara, Murray, Jones et al. (2014) exploring teachers' workplace learning from four different perspectives: social policy, international comparators, multi-professional stances/perspectives and socio-cultural theory scrutinizes the inherent tensions between individual, school and government priorities. Drawing on cross-professional analysis the authors cross-fertilise research and practice across the field of education and study how best to conceptualise and theorise learning in the teacher workplace in order to facilitate the development of a more theoretically informed and robust model of learning and teaching.

The literature review let us conclude that despite the abundance of research on teacher training there are few studies which are directly related to the present paper.

L2 Teachers' Motivation

In order to identify foreign language teachers' learning goals and to understand what should be done to create pre-requisites for exposing L2 university lecturers to richer teacher experiences 5 key questions were chosen to be addressed in this study:

1. What facilitates and impedes teachers' motivation for further professional development?
2. What are the foreign language teachers' learning needs?
3. To what extent does a university have to embrace teachers' learning drives?
4. What factors determine the success of university-based teacher development activities?
5. What are the likely challenges, pitfalls and lessons for those wishing to implement programmes with the same goals in other higher education contexts?

The need for a L2 teacher's professional learning and development is caused by both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The intrinsic desire for self-actualization and strive for excellence makes many teachers themselves anticipate the gaps in their knowledge and professional skills and seek for opportunities to supplement and contribute to them. Data elicited from

interviews and questionnaires show that individual L2 teacher learning is taking place 7/24 in 360° directions. Individual professional learning comes from the following sources:

- on-hand acquisition through one’s own teaching practice;
- reading pedagogical literature (textbooks, periodicals, scientific articles, etc);
- participating in webinars (e.g. organized by other universities and international publishing houses);
- learning from immediate colleagues and distant counterparts via personal contacts, blogs, etc.;
- professional networking via Linked-in, Academia.edu, ResearchGate, etc.;
- attending guest lectures, in-house teacher-training seminars and workshops;
- communicating with students outside the classroom (e.g. during the extra-curricular activities);
- incidental learning.

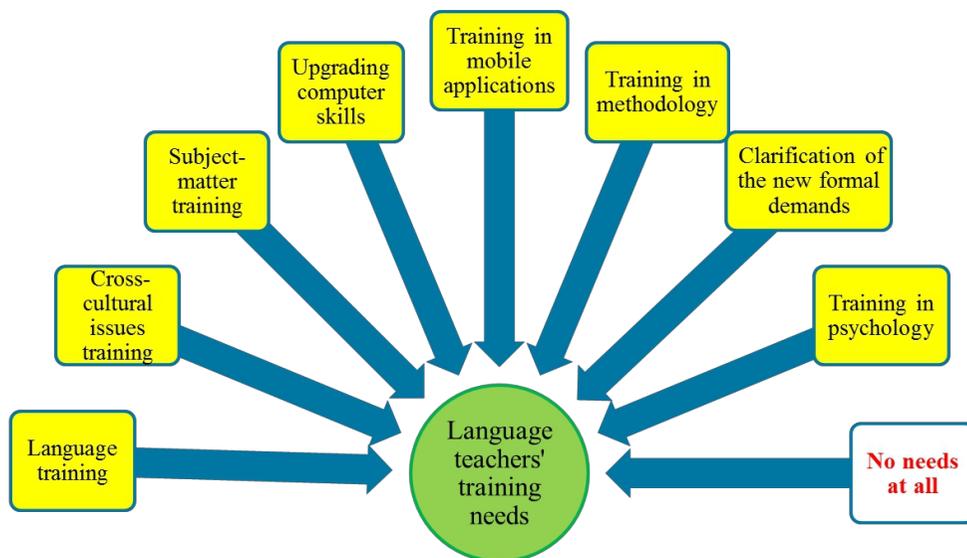
The scope and intensity of these intrinsic individual efforts depend on the personality of the teacher and may be highly systematic, sporadic or missing at all as this form of self-development is purely voluntary and self-regulatory and left to teachers whether to engage in it or not. The teachers themselves identify the issues of special importance, monitor the impact of their drives and adjust their further practical implementation. Suslu (2006) emphasizes that the intrinsic rewards outweigh the extrinsic ones in educator’s motivation and job satisfaction as without the intrinsic motivation, the lack of success is inevitable.

However, it is the extrinsic motivation for L2 teacher professional learning that is more relevant for our research. The official ‘effective’ contract system of university teachers’ employment makes it obligatory for them to comply with the competitive selection criteria on a regular basis and update their qualification to fit harmoniously into the highly-qualified teaching staff. For instance, a special appraisal committee in Plekhanov Russian University of Economics (PRUE) studies the achievements of every lecturer over a certain period of time (1-3 years) and adjudicates on the teacher’s qualifications compliance with the university’s requirements. The demands being very tough, even the teachers with a very good command of the foreign language and wide teaching practices may fail to meet the standards unless they provide a well-timed documentary proof of their professional progression thus making them more competitive in comparison to other candidates in the openly announced vacancy contest.

L2 Teachers' Professional Development Needs Analysis

Timperley et al. (2007) have shown that quality professional learning comes from providing opportunities for each teacher to engage at a deeper level with ideas and approaches. They must have extended time to do this, they need access to external expertise, they need to have their thinking challenged, they need to learn alongside their colleagues, and their leaders need to provide the stimulating environment for the learning.

In line with Suslu's (2006) standpoint that every teacher is not motivated entirely by the same demands and needs, and job satisfaction of each employee is different from another, a questionnaire was collected from 53 L2 teachers to summarize their professional needs in the PRUE's setting. PRUE, being the biggest economic university in Russia, now has 3 departments of foreign languages with 135 members of staff. For our survey we selected only those teachers who had more than 3-year experience in PRUE and no less than 5-year teaching experience in general within the age group of 27 to 55 (the retirement age in Russia). A specially designed questionnaire was distributed to 67 teachers complying with the selected criteria with the return rate of 79%. The questionnaire contained 9 categories of training needs where the respondents were asked to rate the importance of a particular form of teacher training from 1 to 5, where 1 was the least important. Every category enclosed an agree-disagree question to classify the possible problem issue or/and an open-ended question with a request to comment on the training type and identify an area of particular concern. A set of questions to pinpoint the motivation for training was added at the end of the question block. The questionnaire (see Appendix for an adapted to English variant) was distributed in Russian language as the foreign languages department staff comprises teachers of various foreign languages, ranging from Chinese to Spanish, not all of whom comprehending English. The responses revealed a wide variety of individual needs as illustrated in the figure and commented below.



Language training

Language immersion into the target language was mentioned by L2 teachers working outside natural linguistic surrounding as one of the most highly desirable opportunities to upgrade their qualification. 93% of the respondents are eager to visit English-speaking countries on a regular basis both as a part of inter-university staff exchanges and as proficiency language programs participants.

Subject-matter training

Language teachers delivering courses of English for Professional Purposes highlighted subject-matter training as an absolute necessity (100% of those interviewed) since the subject of their teaching shifts from the comfortable zone of teaching grammar and general vocabulary to ‘murky’ areas of Securities, Accounting, Economic Theory and the like where they at best have only basic knowledge.

Upgrading computer skills

Modern process of education at a university level is increasingly becoming more and more computer-based with the never-ending flow of new teaching materials, departmental instructions, memos and reports flooding on a teacher in high tides. Only 12% of respondents rank themselves close to digital natives while others are to some extent digital immigrants and let alone technophobes. Those L2 teachers who are proficient computer users stand out among their less technically-minded colleagues since they can enjoy all unlimited facilities provided by ICT. So, the majority of L2

teachers need instructing on the use of the latest versions of both hard- and software in a university.

Training in mobile applications

The same concerns various state-of-art mobile applications which are widely used by all students in their gadgets and especially those who study at the faculty of Distant learning which is one of the biggest in PRUE. Modern mobile devices are perfectly suited for using them as a learning tool as there are a number of apps designed for both Android and iOS to help a learner not only memorize new words and expressions, but to study grammar, practice writing and pronunciation as well. Gadgets let their users download and read any e-book formats thus turning their smart-phones into personified digital linguistic libraries. Watching YouTube videos or foreign movies with subtitles in a foreign language can also be helpful in an educational process. Sharing applications can enhance overall students' involvement in a particular classroom activity even in the cases when the classroom is not fully equipped for the presentation sessions or there is a need for immediate video input. A L2 teacher who is in the know of all opportunities provided by mobile apps can skillfully capitalize on them and increase their students' classroom and out-of-campus exposure to foreign language practices.

Training in the latest methodology

Seeking to improve the quality of teaching, practicing L2 teachers try to find out which method or approach is the most appropriate and effective for their university setting and particular classroom. However, still being an ambiguous concept in language teaching, the notion of method embraces a too wide range of techniques. Naturally, many L2 teachers need extensive drilling in them.

Clarification of the new formal standards

Fitting Russian tertiary education programmes into the framework of Bologna process still creates some confusion and misinterpretation of new requirements. Thus a number of L2 teachers emphasize the necessity of being regularly 'put into the picture' and not 'left in the dark' of the newest red tape demands and specifications.

Cross-cultural issues training

Like many other universities, PRUE has an international student and teacher body from different parts of Russia and other countries with various ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds. Therefore, deep and keen awareness of numerous cross-cultural issues helps the teacher avoid possible cultural pitfalls or embarrassing situations and create a cozy

atmosphere of creativity and knowledge acquisition in the classroom and in-campus.

No needs at all

The picture wouldn't be complete without approximately 8% of departmental 'couch potatoes', i.e. teachers who sincerely consider themselves the best teachers they know and thus any idea of some additional training efforts is inconceivable to them. Moreover, some L2 teachers especially those with a high language proficiency are so professionally over-confident in their expertise level that they hold the opinion that their knowledge and skills do not need any further improvement.

So, teachers have different learning needs and styles and a "one size fits all model" is as inappropriate for teacher professional development and the task of the university is, on the one hand, to systemize these seemingly diffused training drives into a more or less coherent co-regulatory structure within the university learning environment and, on the other hand, offer diversified coaching activities to suit them.

Controversies

Despite the evident success and popularity of teacher development programs we must admit that the whole picture doesn't look so rosy. Feedback received from the colleagues gave us some food for thought because about 15% of respondents' replies revealed the tendency to reject any form of training pressure imposed from above. These data support Suslu's (2006) observation that unreasonable demands of administrators are perceived by the teaching staff as demotivators. So, contrary to expectations, overabundant training menu may produce the opposite results.

Besides, teaching is considered as one of the most stressful professions as Kottler and Zehn (2000) note that "burnout is a professional hazard" and define three reasons why teachers burn out. The first element is emotional exhaustion and physical overextension. The next factor is depersonalization, which means being cynical, frustrated and critical when teachers have negative attitudes towards their colleagues. The lack of personal accomplishment is the third one. Feeling discouraged and disillusioned is the signs of burned-out teachers as they are dissatisfied with their own needs for challenges, recognition and appreciation. There is no full satisfaction in their job. Humphreys (1996) says that burnout is the reason for personal vulnerability and occupational stress. Regrettably, according to the data collected, in this day and age frustration is still the issue to be overcome.

Lack of intellectual challenge is another de-motivating factor. Without discovering and acquiring new knowledge and skills, many teachers

can “lose spark” (Dörnyei, 2001) having to teach the same subject and repeat the same things for many years. So, the prescribed requirements and fixed, imposed training course content do not let teachers have leeway to create variations and intellectual detours.

Last but not least, restricted autonomy is believed to be one of the negative influences on teacher motivation and need further self-development. Nationwide standardized tests, national curricula, growing centralized control and general mistrust reflected by the increasing administration demands are obvious obstacles for teacher autonomy and motivation to upgrade their qualification.

The 7 Cs of L2 Teacher Training

Research analysis of L2 teaching staffs’ questionnaires, intensive reading on the subject and data received from consultations with counterparts from like-minded universities let us conclude that success of any L2 teacher further training rests on 7 Cs.

Customization

As every university is a unique educational organization with its own mission and goals, any activity aimed at further teacher training is to be carefully tailored to fit the needs of the particular audience.

Compatibility

This point stresses the essentiality of combinability of teacher’s own goals with the training agenda offered to him/her. Unless they coincide, teachers are very likely to view them as another form of pressure imposed on them and such training will have zero effect.

Clarity

University teaching staff are one of the most difficult audiences to handle and many speakers make a mistake of trying to overload their lectures with lots of recondite words and ideas in order to make them look more scientific. Conversely, feedback from our colleagues articulates that they are more interested in practical seminars and workshops without plunging themselves too deep into twilight zones of theoretical issues.

Consistency

In order to raise their national and international rating contemporary universities now adhere to a philosophy of continuous improvement which is an ongoing effort to improve educational programs and pedagogical processes in an incremental mode rather than breakthrough improvement all at once. Thus, L2 teacher training should be offered as a sequential flow of

interrelated events on more or less regular and consistent basis. If the overall policy of getting better all the time permeates the university's corporate culture, it makes the teaching staff more loyal.

Convenience

As L2 teachers are chronically work-overloaded people with too many commitments, they are more likely to attend training events conveniently located for them, where the venue of their own university is the lead runner. What's more, events held in their own university usually painlessly fit into the study timetables and teachers don't have to reschedule classes to attend them.

Culture

Culture permeates any organization, let alone educational establishments. Creating a supporting learning environment for teachers promotes for a democratic rather than authoritarian style of organizational culture when highly-qualified staff are nurtured as the most valuable assets and are in the focus of university's aspirations. Cultivating the paternalistic attitude to teacher development can result in a notable shift from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation which is much stronger and doesn't wear off even when the external pressure weakens.

Cost-effectiveness

Neither people nor organizations like to input their time, money and efforts into actions which do not lead to positive outcomes and bring tangible results. So, universities inviting outside fee-paid guest lecturers need to be sure that they really can contribute to the teacher development. Or, for example, when installing new expensive interactive equipment in the classrooms, it's wise to organize teacher training first, so that nobody could accidentally damage it due to the technical illiteracy.

Conclusion and Recommendations for further research

Skillfully-managed and teacher-friendly professional development in modern higher educational environment may bring plentiful benefits both to the L2 teachers and the university. First and foremost, it directly reflects on their professional well-being giving them more confidence even in the most challenging classroom and adding new dimensions to their teaching. Then, regular on-site professional learning and further application of new interactive methods to L2 teaching substantively enhance the effectiveness of student learning and outcomes. In addition, certificates, diplomas and the like documentary proof increase the teachers' individual profiles among

colleagues within their university, as well as employability opportunities and career options in case the teacher undertakes another job search.

To be successful, any L2 teacher training session or event should meet the following requirements:

- to pursue sustainable strong university policy in developing their teachers: a truly caring institution gets more staff commitment;
- to conduct a thorough pre-event needs analysis of the audience: a series of occasional non-professionally related compulsory events distorts the intended outcome;
- to demonstrate high proficiency in the subject by the key-speakers and moderators: those who chair or organize the event must command the respect of others and possess higher expertise in the delivered matter;
- to cater visual aids customingly: despite the globalization tendency towards L2 teaching the perceptions of local audience may show variance;
- to offer free hand-outs: an advertising campaign for a new coursebook with the sales target is often disguised as a teaching development event, while free resource packs are more encouraging;
- to arrange for a variety of activities: monotonous routine does not stimulate creativity;
- to provide cross-departmental exchange: L2 teacher training for EPP needs deep collaboration and various forms of support from subject-matter departments in the format of individual and group consultations or even short induction courses;
- to establish and maintain deep collaboration with faculty authorities because if the event involves all L2 teaching staff curricula changes or provision of a special venue may be necessary, etc.;
- to focus on quality not quantity: training courses should not be too intensive otherwise a reaction may set in against them. Rare but bright events will make a more positive impact on L2 teachers' professional growth.

Many L2 teachers are less likely to engage themselves in teacher development activities unless they are provided the university support. Exposing L2 teachers to new experiences and perspectives and sustaining opportunities to reflect on those in dialogues with others, after-events publications, etc. transfers learning experiences into new dimensions and offers new opportunities for job enlargement and job enrichment.

Life-long and quality professional development is not only formal 'training'. It must integrate theory with practice, enabling L2 teachers to make ongoing decisions about their classroom practice within the context of deeply understood relevant theory. It therefore engages with teachers as thinking professionals, as intellectual workers, rather than treating them as technicians who merely need to be instructed what to do and then subjected to compliance measures to ensure that they do it. Unless the university

supports their teachers with professional learning opportunities, they will act in isolation from the wider knowledge that is available in the world and which could enhance their effectiveness.

However, there exist some limitations which may affect this research applicability. Firstly, despite the universal nature of the teaching profession, notable differences in approaches exist on different geographical locations. Our research conclusions concern mainly the venue of Russian economic universities, taking into account the corporate culture of a particular university. Secondly, the 55+ age group of L2 teachers was intentionally excluded as the motivation and training needs of the teachers who have reached their retirement age may be very different from their younger colleagues. Moreover, such factors as pay, duration and content of L2 courses, student body and other variables may have significant impact on university teachers' desire for self-development. Therefore, further researchers may be recommended to collect and systematize data on other geographical locations, within more narrow age groups and genders. Also, analysis of interrelation between the work experience and the corresponding shifts in teachers' training needs may be found noteworthy. Further research can focus on some other Cs vital in teacher-training such as Change, Content, Communication, Cross-cultural Communication, Collaboration, etc.

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Appendix

QUESTIONNAIRE (adapted from Russian)

Please mark the importance/necessity of the training type
(1 as the least high for you, 5 as the highest for you)

Your personal need in					
Language training	1	2	3	4	5
I would like to take part in the inter-university exchange program. Yes / No					
I would like to study at a proficiency language course here. Yes / No					
I would like to do a proficiency language course abroad. Yes / No					
Subject-matter training	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Please, answer only if you are an ESP/EPP teacher:</i>					
What subject would you like to get training in?					
Would you like to attend a course in this subject? Yes / No					
Suggest any other way:					
Upgrading computer skills	1	2	3	4	5
Can you call yourself a 'digital native'? Yes / No					
Are your students more efficient computer users than you? Yes / No					
What IT training would you like to get?					
Training in mobile applications	1	2	3	4	5
Do you use any mobile devices in teaching? Yes / No					
If yes, then what devices and Apps do you use?					
Training in the latest methodology	1	2	3	4	5
Training in what methodology would you like to have?					
Clarification of the new formal standards	1	2	3	4	5
Do you understand the new bachelor/master/post-graduate system of education? Yes / No					
Are you aware of the competence-based system of education? Yes / No					
What can be done to help you understand it better?					
Cross-cultural issues training	1	2	3	4	5
What nation/country would you like to understand better?					
Suggest a number of training kinds you would like to attend to get more understanding in cross-cultural issues:					
I do not need any training	1	2	3	4	5
Why do you think you need no training?					
Would you rather look for training opportunities yourself?	1	2	3	4	5
Would you like to have training organized for you?	1	2	3	4	5
Would you attend a course you are recommended by the administration?	1	2	3	4	5