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Professional Development Needs of English Teachers in Kazakhstan

The systematic work in the field of education in the Republic of Kazakhstan to increase the requirements for the quality of teacher training is directly related to advance training courses for teachers. Conducting research before the formation of courses for each group and taking into account individual requests allows us to build the learning process more effectively. The relevance of this study lies in the fact that special attention is paid to the potential benefits of professional needs analysis to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the situation with the study and teaching of English in Kazakhstani schools. This study presents the results of the needs analysis of Kazakhstani English teachers before the beginning of advanced training courses for teachers of English within the framework of the pedagogical development program developed by the Akmola Region English Language Teachers Association (ARELTA) and the Regional English Language Office of the U.S. Embassy in Astana. The purpose of the study is to collect data for the development of a curriculum for an advanced training course for English teachers within the framework of the project. The survey involved 328 respondents, all of them teachers of English from different regions of Kazakhstan. The performed analysis represents the English language teacher's perception of professional development needs and is critical for analyzing the needs and professional development of other teachers.

Keywords: training courses, education, professional development, needs analysis, curriculum, survey.

Introduction

In the field of education in the Republic of Kazakhstan, systematic work is being carried out to increase the requirements for the quality of training specialists in educational institutions. The main goals of advanced training of teachers include the development of their professional competence, the formation of stable skills for systemic reflection on the pedagogical process and its results, and the formation of the structural integrity of the pedagogical activity of each specialist. All of these goals ensure the fulfillment of the requirements for achieving a modern quality of education. To support the advancement of teachers, there is an organization of international, republican, and regional seminars, conferences, webinars, round tables, and competitions.

The professional development of an English teacher is the key to a successful career. The continuous evolution of pedagogy, teaching methods, and language itself does not change the fundamental principles. Still, it introduces new aspects into the work practice per the changing socio-economic conditions of modern society and the world. Notable innovations in the community naturally stimulate qualified professionals to properly explore new ideas and approaches. Given the diversity and evolving nature of workplace requirements, this study attempts to investigate the occupational development needs of English teachers.

The National Centre for Advanced Training "Orleu" is the leading hub for the professional development of teachers in Kazakhstan, adult education, applied research, and the dissemination of leading educational practices [1]. The National Centre represents the top-down approach in professional development and works with implementing the national education demands. The training programs proposed by the Centre framework the general and specific professional competencies of a teacher. Though the Centre welcomes ideas for professional development from its site visitors, the major content is defined by the needs as the State Program of Education Development oversees these until 2025. It is assumed that English teachers represent the professional community that disseminates the global trends in teaching faster than any other professionals due to the absence of the language barrier and the availability of resources.

The abundance of approaches, techniques and ready-made materials on the internet threatens professional competence and confuses career growth. Organized professional development of the language teacher focuses on the individual teacher evolution and meets the needs of the educational context, the institution where the teacher works, and the individual teacher. One of the challenges of professional development, which lacks enough attention, is to combine teaching methodology and language proficiency training. A high level of

language proficiency does not mean teaching mastery, as well as teaching the same level of English learners may seriously damage language proficiency.

The active position of a teacher in professional development ensures success. The survey on professional development needs raises awareness of an individual, stimulates defining one's own professional goals, and chooses forms and ways to implement the determined professional development objectives. Individual needs assessment targets the content and the approach for its implementation, which involves instructional strategy, motivating teachers, building knowledge, and its use in practice.

Needs analysis survey plays a vital role in designing and carrying a course, for it involves activities that will help to collect basic information to meet the needs of a particular group [2]. According to West [3] "pedagogical needs analysis" is a general term, which combines three key elements: knowledge about the learners, their learning environment, and target needs analysis.

According to Watkins, Meiers and Visser (2012) [4; 13] needs assessments or needs analysis to support the earliest stage of any project development with proven methods for obtaining data and making reasonable decisions. Such surveys are offered by the researchers to fill the gaps in knowledge, practice, or experience. Opportunities to start actions can be found in gaps. Watkins, Meiers and Visser [4; 16] consider that gaps lead to improving both personal and institutional performance; they may motivate the learners to enhance their knowledge and demonstrate their best skills.

One of the most frequently used forms of needs analysis surveys is a questionnaire. A questionnaire is the most practical and helpful method for getting data directly from the learners [5; 104], [6; 73]. The questionnaire provides structured, often numerical data that is easy to analyze and can be conducted without the researcher present [7]. A questionnaire is a research tool, which consists of a series of various question types with the purpose to gather needed information from particular respondents. Questionnaires can be effective means of gathering and measuring information about behavior, experience, attitudes, preferences, opinions, and expectations. The main concern in the process of providing questionnaires is adhering to a methodology. A particular methodology will give the researchers a strict path on how to conduct surveys effectively. In the beginning, the researcher should select and explain the methodological approach. The next step is describing the data collection methods. After that comes the description of the analysis method. The final step is evaluating and justifying the methodological choices. The correctly chosen methodology will give the researchers the guidelines to make the project manageable, efficient, and effective.

The process of collecting data has a direct connection with data analysis. These two processes are connected and aimed at the study of the subject of the analysis. The interrelation of these processes can be seen on different levels of any research. These two processes are not isolated but complete each other in a common desire to study the subject of analysis. The interaction between data collection and analysis can be traced at different levels. Huberman and Miles [8] describe the process of analysis as three interrelated sub-processes: data processing, data presentation, and inference/verification: "These processes occur before data are collected, during study design and planning; during data collection as an interim and preliminary analysis; and after collecting data, during the development and completion" [8; 180].

Experimental

Data collection is a process that provides a large amount of information and requires accurate analysis of the data obtained. When it comes to the stage of data processing and analysis, it may seem that the data collection stage is more productive and efficient. It is important to choose the right method of data analysis and present findings in a way that captures key ideas.

It is important to distinguish between methods of quantitative and qualitative analysis since it is perfectly acceptable for qualitative analysis to use tools for obtaining quantitative data, such as questionnaires or tests. However, the main purpose of their use is to obtain information about a particular subject of research from the surveyed audience. Qualitative data analysis is the explanation of the data obtained and the understanding of the data from the point of view of the participants. An important aspect in the organization of data analysis in terms of qualitative analysis is to take into account themes, categories, and consistency. Two competing strands in the qualitative analysis are best viewed as complementary. On the one hand, researchers doing qualitative analysis have a general idea of what they want to explore in the data and at least some idea of the different areas in which the information they are looking for can be found. This "deductive" approach aims to develop and explore information concerning given topics, which may not be fully defined at the outset but provide a general direction for the development of analysis. On the other hand, the inductive method, used, for example,

by experienced theorists, takes a completely open approach to data and uses themes emerging from the data itself as tools for analysis. Researchers working with quality material usually use a mixture of the two methods [9].

There are many ways to analyze and present qualitative data. Qualitative data analysis is often difficult to interpret, and it should be noted that there is often a need for multiple interpretations of qualitative data. However, following the aim the researcher must clearly understand what information one wants to get from the data analysis. It will determine the kind of analysis performed on the data. This can be a description, interpretation, identification of patterns, evidence-based, demonstration, identification of similarities and differences, etc. [10]

Quantitative data analysis is no more or less important than qualitative analysis. Its use depends entirely on suitability for the intended purpose. Quantitative data analysis is often associated with large studies but can also be used in studies in smaller experiments.

A quantitative approach can be used to describe and analyze your data. An experimental study involves changing a variable (the independent variable) to examine its effect on another variable (the dependent variable) while taking into account other possible variables that could affect the dependent variable. Non-experimental research involves searching for explanations of a given phenomenon by looking for potential causal relationships between variables, taking into account the influence of other variables.

A quantitative method usually involves measuring the property of something or someone. This property is called a variable. Depending on what kind of data is needed for the study, questionnaires or tests can be developed, or data can be obtained by observing the subjects of the study. Variables described by numbers are quantitative. Variables described by categories are qualitative or categorical.

This research aims to collect data for the development of a curriculum for an English Teacher Professional Development course for English Teachers within the Pedagogical University Development program developed by ARELTA (Akmola Region English Language Teachers' Association) and the Regional English Language Office at the U.S. Embassy in Astana.

The object of the research is the process of developing a curriculum for an English Teacher Professional Development course for English Teachers.

The subject is the requirements of the English Teachers for the training program in Kazakhstan.

328 respondents took part in the survey. Among them were English teachers from Almaty (Almaty region), Kokshetau (Akmola region), Pavlodar (Pavlodar region), Aktobe (Aktobe region), Kostanay, and Arkalyk (Kostanay region).

The tasks of the research:

- to get general information about the focus group: pedagogical qualifications, work experience, motivation, and the variety of professional interest areas for English teachers;
- to obtain information about the technical proficiency of English language teachers to understand how comfortable they will feel if trainers use online tools/platforms/apps and what applications and online tools teachers are already familiar with;
- to know how confident teachers are about defining course aims and objectives designing a course, selecting and adapting materials;
- to find out the most important aspects of the training program for teachers.

The purpose and tasks of this study determined a complex methodology to identify the needs of teachers in the formation of the program. Quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data obtained during the survey are necessary for a more accurate description of the choice of themes for the course. Descriptive statistics are used to describe the received data in a study. The descriptive method of data processing allows us to conclude the data obtained, taking into account all the variables.

Results and Discussion

To identify gaps between desired and current results in terms of the teaching methodology of the Kazakhstani secondary school English teachers and their interests and expectations about future training courses, the needs analysis survey was conducted. Respondents also gave recommendations to the project trainers so that they could make a useful and relevant course for them. This survey helped to identify opportunities to improve the performance of the trainers while compiling the course program. The questions of the needs analysis survey are divided into five blocks: general information, technology, language and communication skills, course design and lesson planning, interests, and expectations.

The first block, "general information", was aimed at getting information about the focus group to consider the target audiences and data sources that would help to assess the expected needs.

The analysis of the data showed that the level of pedagogical qualification and the work experience is completely different: 29.27 % of the respondents did not have any pedagogical qualification, moderator/category II — 26.52 %, expert/category I — 23.48 %, researcher/master/highest category — 20.73 %.

Primary secondary school teachers (85.1 %) were interested in the pedagogical development courses. During their pedagogical careers, English teachers in Kazakhstan improve their level of qualification and pedagogical skills. Teachers mostly attend teacher development courses (70.7 %), webinars, seminars, workshops, and conferences organized by the Republic Center of Excellence “Orleu”, Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, universities, or local schools. 22 % of the respondents attend Pedagogical development courses from international organizations (Fig. 1).

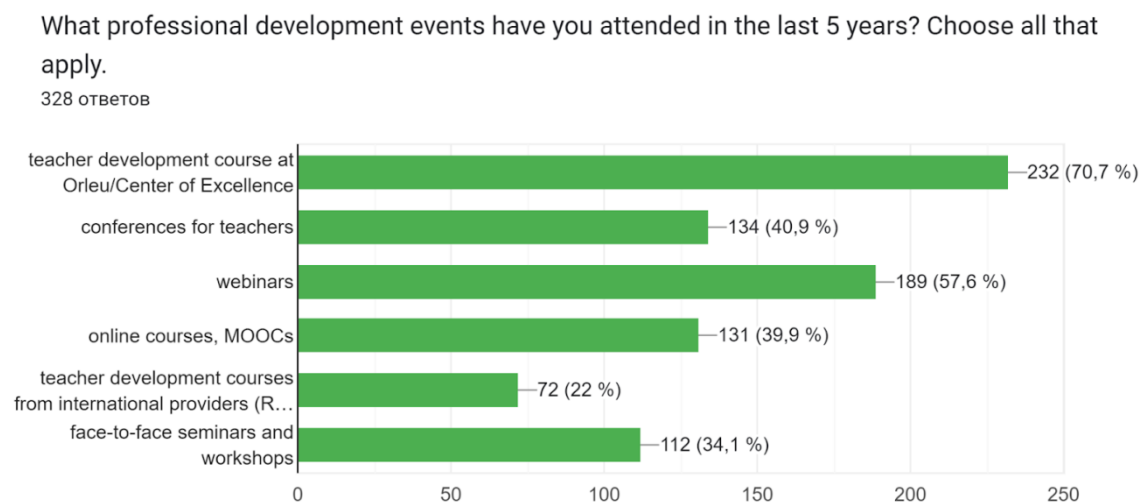


Figure 1. Professional development courses attended by English teachers

The variety of professional interest areas for English teachers is diverse. Generally, they wanted to develop their communication skills (69.8 %). From a methodological point of view, teachers had difficulties creating and adapting materials for lessons (51.8 %) (Fig. 2).

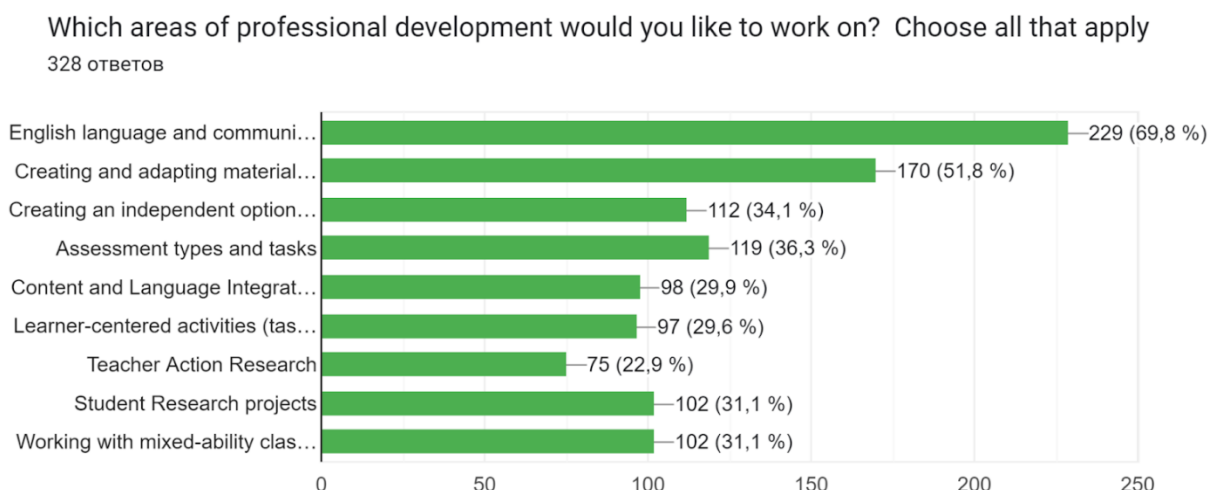


Figure 2. Professional interests of English teachers

The second block, “Technology” aimed at obtaining information about the technical skills of English language teachers in order to understand how comfortable they would feel if trainers used online tools/platforms/apps and what applications and online tools teachers were already familiar with.

According to the research, almost all teachers used tools or applications during teaching. 65.2 % of teachers are confident in integrating online tools and apps into their lesson plans (Fig. 3).

How confident do you feel when you use online tools/apps for teaching and/or lesson planning?

328 ответов

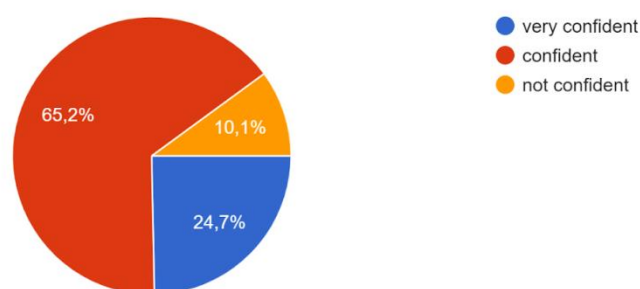


Figure 3. Technical skills of English teachers

Teachers confidently use Google Docs, Google Forms, and communication platforms like Zoom, Google Meets, and Microsoft Teams. However, they are not confident in using COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English) (2.7 %) (Fig. 4).

Which of these tools/resources do you use with confidence? Choose all that apply

328 ответов

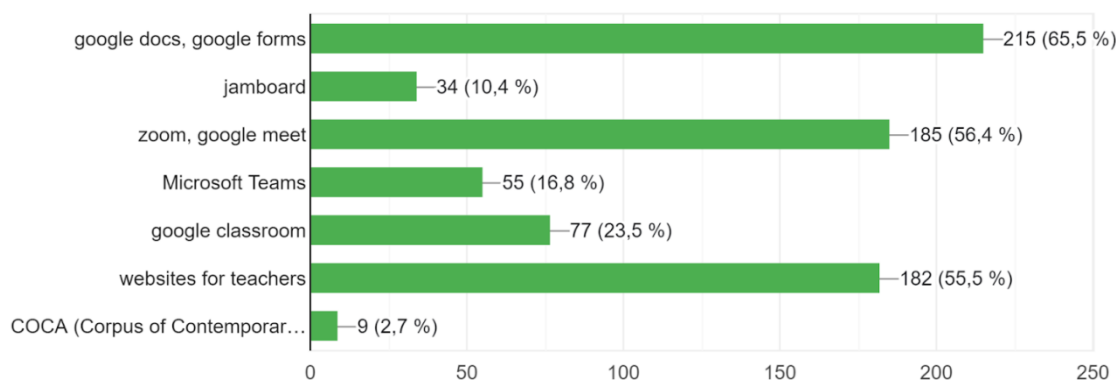


Figure 4. Applications used by English teachers

In the questionnaire, teachers listed a large number of applications that they frequently use in the classroom: Kahoot, Wordpuzzle, Jamboard, Liveworksheets, Wordwall, Online Mektep, Quizizz, YouTube, Progress Booklet, Engvid.com, busyteacher, Edmodo, Nearpod, ZipGrade, Socrative, and others. However, the same applications were listed as the answer to the question: “Which applications would you like to know more about?” This shows that although teachers know about online apps and tools, they realize that they do not fully use all the capabilities of these applications in their lessons.

The “Language and Communicative Skills” block contained two questions. The answers to the first question show a high level of confidence of teaching in English (20.1 % – very confident and 48.5 % – confident), whereas 29.3 % have some struggles with difficulties.

Educators are always striving to develop and improve their linguistic and professional skills. 62.8 % of the respondents consider participation in the courses a good opportunity for them to improve their language skills as well (Fig. 5).

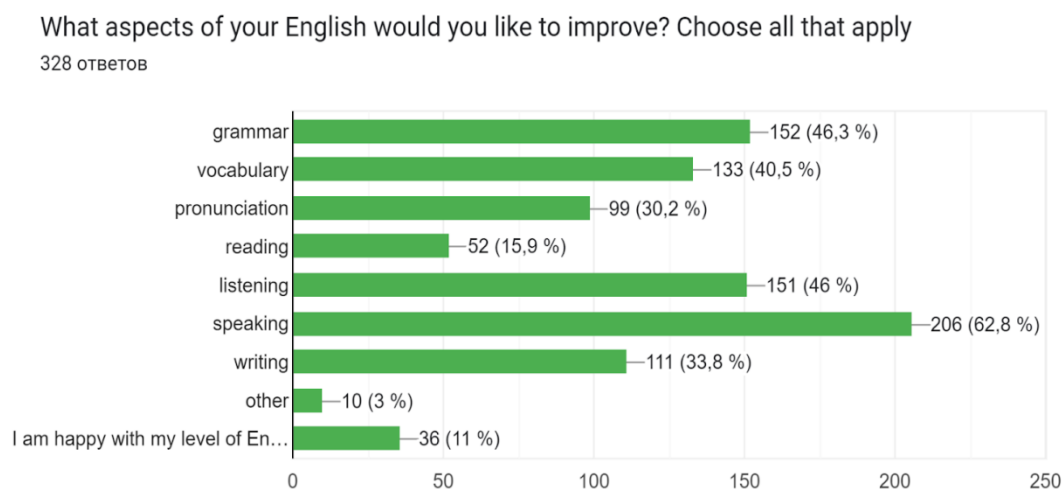


Figure 5. Language and Communicative Skills

The “Course Design and Lesson Planning” block consisted of seven questions. 74.1 % have never designed a new optional course for their schools, and 25.9 % have the following experience, which is a good data point for the project. About 55.5 % of respondents were confident about defining course aims and objectives designing a course, and only 39 % were not confident (Fig. 6).

When designing a course, do you feel confident about defining course aims and objectives?

328 ответов

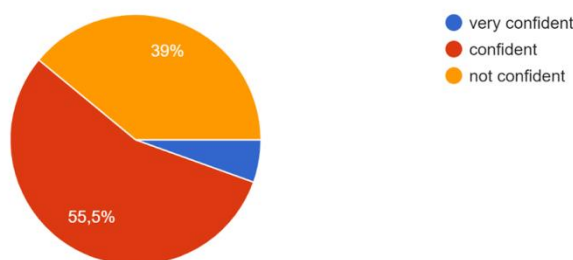


Figure 6. Course Design and Lesson Planning

In regards to confidence in material selection and adaptation, 64,3 % were confident and only 29,9 % were not. The three other questions within the survey that asked teachers about creating their own materials and setting up modules, developing sequences of lessons, developing assessment types and tasks, and grading schemes and matrices gave similar results: nearly 60 % were confident and approximately 36 % were not. The analysis showed that secondary school teachers are interested in designing a course even if they do not have experience in the area. The basic components of course design that the respondents indicated they would like to learn more about included assessment, digital learning, producing worksheets and handouts, and interactive techniques.

A course's design must take into account the preferences and goals of both the trainers and the teachers. This block enabled the further development of the work in light of the demands and expectations of the teachers. Teachers typically select a curriculum based on its relevance to their unique competencies, as well as their personal and professional interests. However, sometimes the course material falls short of their expectations.

The results of this survey are used as a basis for critical reflection on pedagogical competencies and academic qualifications.

The introduction of new resources and materials, as well as new knowledge and skills, were the most important aspects for future training program participants (77.1 % and 66.5 %, respectively). The creation of a course, a module, or lesson plans that they can use in their teaching practice, according to 54.9 % of the 180 survey respondents, would be the most significant item for them. Out of 328 respondents, less than half (151, 46 %) believed that collaboration with colleagues and trainers would be a significant issue in the future project. About 123 people (37.5 %) believed that engaging in interesting sessions will be the most important aspect of the program (Fig. 7).



Figure 7. Important aspects in training program

For the secondary school teacher, personal growth development (70.2 %) and professional growth development (56 %) are of great importance. Although demands of the educational institution (37.9 %) and the mandatory participation assigned by the educational policy (29.5 %) also play a vital role for teachers to take professional development courses. The reason can be rooted in the idea that most teachers are obliged to attend courses that are not directly connected with their personal professional interests (Fig. 8).

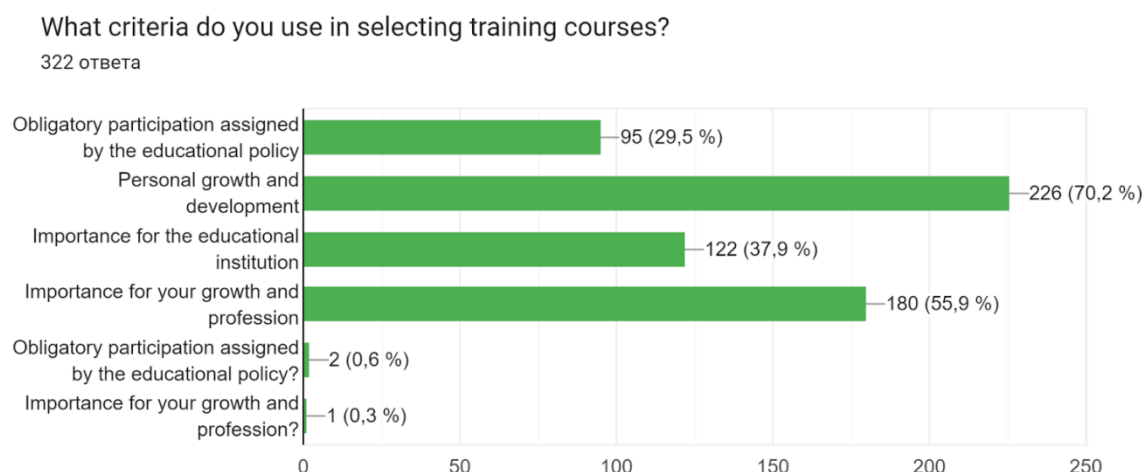


Figure 8. Criteria for selecting courses

Exactly 224 (69.6 %) participants think that planning and managing are one of the necessary aspects of organization. Innovation was chosen by 61.5 % of respondents. Cooperation and communication were

important aspects for almost 58 % of people. 47 % of participants thought flexibility was important, and 38.5 % thought monitoring and evaluation were important organizational topics. The least number of participants was 92, or 28.6 %. According to the survey, leadership and coordination should be properly developed. Relying on the background knowledge, teachers understand that the trainer should not only give information since the desired result and success is possible only in cooperation with the learners (Fig. 9).

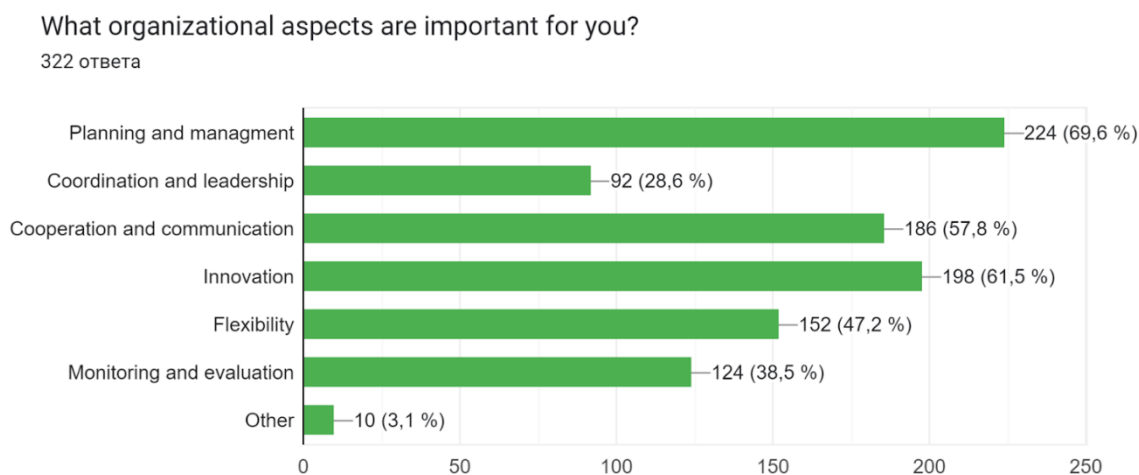


Figure 9. Organizational aspects

Recommendations/advice/tips were given by respondents to make the course useful and relevant: equal involvement of all the participants, but different roles and responsibilities, comfortable sessions based on the learners' oriented approach, collaboration with more experienced colleagues delivering an input session or giving feedback were all mentioned.

From the point of view of respondents, it is important for them to understand the goals and outcomes of the course, which should coincide with the problems of secondary schools in our country. It demands from the trainer to create each session accurately by choosing appropriate didactic materials and creating a bank of resources to support learners.

To create a comfortable atmosphere, respondents asked not to create a competitive environment within a methodical union at educational organizations, support recently arrived teachers, and let them develop their teaching skills freely. However, among respondents there were some teachers who did not have any recommendations or could not give any recommendations.

To ensure that the needs analysis provided accurate guidance for curriculum development, the group of project researchers interviewed project trainers and collected information from multiple perspectives. Focusing on the interview process itself, the following steps were taken. The interview was conducted via Zoom. The interviewees in the focus group were all university educators, some of them were experts in teacher training and some were novices. The interviewers are project researchers. The purpose of the interview was to obtain information about the effectiveness of the needs analysis survey, and whether it provided justification for decisions about the course program before they were made.

A structured interview protocol included closed-ended questions: "Did you take into consideration the results of the needs analysis from 328 secondary school English teachers? Was this data effective for the development of the curriculum?" and open-ended questions like "How would you integrate the results of the survey into the course program? Which blocks did you consider the most helpful and why? What blocks/questions will you add to your local survey?". Questions were repeated to elicit the same type of information across different interviewees.

The interview questions were sent to the interviewee before the interview so that the trainers were able to discuss them and make some group decisions. The interviewers followed the interview protocol carefully and provided notes to each group.

Analyzing the answers of the interviewees, the following data was obtained. All the interviewees noted that they considered the results of the survey and "it was good to know what areas of teaching practices teachers

wanted to improve or wanted to study more thoroughly”. The second question “How would you integrate the results of the survey into the course program?” was generally answered that the modules of the training program were developed around the teachers' needs indicated in the survey.

The respondents considered the “Interests and Expectations” block to be most helpful as the results gave them a clear idea of the reasons and goals of the teachers' professional development. The question “Which areas of professional development would you like to work on?” was the most helpful block as it gave the program trainers guidance for curriculum development. The last question “What blocks/questions will you add to your local survey?” commonly addressed an issue of the final product the participants were going to develop during the course. Some interviewees admitted that they would use the same blocks in their local surveys as in the needs analysis but change the last block called “Interests and Expectations” for “Future Product Expectations” to collect data about the final product teachers were eager to develop.

Conclusions

The present study focuses on the potential benefits of professional needs analysis to obtain a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the learning and teaching of English in Kazakhstan schools. It illustrates the perceptions of professional development needs of English teachers. This investigation has wide implications for needs analysis and professional development design for other teaching professionals. The results presented highlight methodological difficulties that secondary teachers had in compiling the course and within adaptation of the material in the educational process.

The survey on the needs analysis among Kazakhstani secondary school English teachers within the framework of the project allowed the trainers to carry out efficient preparation work to foster a motivational environment and ensure active participation in the process of formation and development of professional competencies. The careful planning of the program of each stage of the lesson and the choice of methods and technologies, and taking into account the data obtained from the study helped to build the learning process more effectively.

Successful teaching starts with the educator that needs to be well-prepared. It is important to keep in mind that each educational process is driven by unique interests and expectations that are relevant to how teachers will develop their professional identities. Thus, to promote effective teaching and learning in the context of teacher education and training, it is necessary to focus on interests and expectations of a given educator. Interest and expectations from their studies and profession determine how they study and behave in their daily working life. Moreover, this knowledge is fundamental in the formation of advanced training courses. The development of teachers' competences will depend on their individual characteristics; therefore, it is important to take into account interests and expectations during courses.

The combination of this study with high-quality professional communication and participation of experienced, technically and pedagogically advanced colleagues will aid in solving and discussing design problems, analyzing cases, and studying new educational resources; thus, it will be an opportunity to gain new knowledge in the field of the methodology of teaching foreign languages.

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Қазақстандағы ағылшын тілі мұғалімдерінің кәсіби даму қажеттіліктері

Қазақстан Республикасының білім беру саласында педагог кадрларды даярлау сапасына қойылатын талаптарды арттыру бойынша жүйелі жұмыс жүргізу педагогтердің біліктілігін арттыру курстарымен тікелей байланысты. Жеке сұраныстарды ескере отырып, әрбір жеке топ үшін белгілі бір курстарды қалыптастыру алдында зерттеу жүргізу оқу процесін тиімді құруға мүмкіндік береді. Бұл зерттеудің өзектілігі мынада: қазақстандық мектептерде ағылшын тілін үйрену мен оқытудағы жағдайды тереңірек және жан-жақты түсіну үшін кәсіби қажеттіліктерді талдаудың әлеуетті артықшылықтарына ерекше назар аударылған. Зерттеуде Ақмола облысының ARELTA ағылшын тілі оқытушыларының қауымдас-тығы және Астана қаласындағы АҚШ елшілігінің жанындағы ағылшын тілі Аймақтық кеңсесі әзірлеген педагогикалық даму бағдарламасы шеңберінде ағылшын тілі мұғалімдерінің біліктілігін арттыру кур-тары басталар алдында қазақстандық ағылшын тілі мұғалімдерінің қажеттіліктерін талдау нәтижелері ұсынылған. Зерттеу мақсаты жоба аясында ағылшын тілі мұғалімдерінің біліктілігін арттыру курсының оқу бағдарламасын әзірлеу үшін мәліметтер жинау. Зерттеу нысаны курстың оқу бағдарламасын әзірлеу процесі болып табылады. Зерттеу пәні — мұғалімдердің оқу бағдарламасына қойылатын талаптар. Сауалнамаға Қазақстанның әртүрлі аймақтарынан 328 респондент, яғни ағылшын тілі мұғалімдері қа-тысты. Жүргізілген талдау ағылшын тілі мұғалімдерінің кәсіби даму қажеттіліктерін қабылдауды көр-сетеді және басқа мұғалімдердің қажеттіліктері мен кәсіби дамуын талдау үшін үлкен маңызға ие.

Кілт сөздер: біліктілікті арттыру курсы, білім беру, кәсіби даму/ біліктілікті арттыру, қажеттіліктерді талдау, оқу жоспары, сауалнама.

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Потребности в профессиональном развитии учителей английского языка в Казахстане

Системная работа в сфере образования Республики Казахстан по повышению требований к качеству подготовки учителей напрямую связана с курсами по повышению квалификации учителей. Проведение исследований перед формированием определенных курсов для каждой индивидуальной группы с уче-том индивидуальных запросов позволяет более качественно и эффективно выстроить процесс обуче-ния. Актуальность данного исследования заключается в том, что особое внимание уделено потенциа-льным преимуществам анализа профессиональных потребностей для получения более глубокого и все-стороннего понимания ситуации с изучением и преподаванием английского языка в казахстанских шко-лах. В настоящем исследовании представлены результаты анализа потребностей казахстанских учите-лей английского языка перед началом курсов по повышению квалификации учителей английского языка в рамках Программы педагогического развития, разработанной Ассоциацией преподавателей ан-глийского языка Акмолинской области ARELTA и Региональным офисом английского языка при По-сольстве США в г. Астане. Цель исследования — сбор данных для разработки Учебной программы курса повышения квалификации учителей английского языка в рамках проекта. Объектом исследова-ния является процесс разработки учебной программы курса. Предметом — требования учителей к про-грамме обучения. В опросе приняли участие 328 респондентов, учителей английского языка из разных регионов Казахстана. Проведенный анализ иллюстрирует восприятие потребностей в профессиональ-ном развитии учителей английского языка и имеет большое значение для анализа потребностей и про-фессионального развития других педагогов.

Ключевые слова: курсы повышения квалификации, образование, анализ потребностей, учебная про-грамма, опрос, педагогическое развитие.

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