



## STRUCTURED SUPPORT AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH PATHWAYS FOR NOVICE TEACHERS IN EFL CONTEXTS

**Mirkabil Alimbaev Anvarovich**

Teacher-lecturer, Karakalpak state university

[mirkabil.alimbaev@gmail.com](mailto:mirkabil.alimbaev@gmail.com)

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17519018>

### ARTICLE INFO

Received: 25<sup>th</sup> October 2025

Accepted: 28<sup>th</sup> October 2025

Online: 31<sup>th</sup> October 2025

### KEYWORDS

*continuous professional development (CPD), English as a foreign language (EFL), mentorship in education, novice teacher development, professional identity formation, professional learning communities (PLCs)*

### ABSTRACT

*This article explores the pivotal role of mentorship, professional learning communities (PLCs), and continuous professional development (CPD) in enhancing the instructional practices of novice English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. The research emphasizes the value of collaborative reflection, peer observation, and microteaching as strategies that empower early-career educators to develop adaptive teaching techniques and reflective practices. It also discusses the challenges of fostering collegiality and professional identity in isolated or resource-constrained environments. The findings suggest that teacher induction programs and professional support frameworks tailored to specific educational contexts significantly enhance teacher retention, satisfaction, and pedagogical effectiveness.*

### Mentorship and Professional Learning Communities

Guidance from senior or experienced teachers is widely acknowledged as crucial for new educators to succeed in their roles by offering practical advice and emotional backing to handle the challenges of teaching effectively. According to Mann and Tang (2012) mentorship programs are most beneficial when they follow an approach that offers consistent feedback and personalized support to novice teachers based on their specific growth areas. Their research conducted in Hong Kong highlights the significance of mentorship in assisting new teachers in managing tasks like classroom control and lesson preparation that might otherwise feel daunting without proper guidance. These mentorship initiatives pair up teachers, with seasoned educators who provide valuable advice and tactics beyond what is taught in teacher training programs. These programs help them tackle classroom issues and transition into teaching roles more seamlessly.

Mentorship goes beyond sharing teaching techniques; it creates a supportive bond that helps ease the pressure and loneliness that new teachers often feel in their roles as educators. A lot of novice teachers find themselves swamped with responsibilities and mentorship offers them a place to share their worries openly, seek guidance and get



motivated. This kind of support is especially crucial for new teachers facing challenges in demanding settings like classrooms with diverse languages where catering to different learning needs can seem overwhelming. By receiving guidance from educators and observing their effective teaching methods and approaches to maintaining a healthy professional perspective novice teachers develop self-assurance and perseverance.

In Saudi Arabia, according to Alhamad (2018) the importance of induction programs that incorporate mentorship as an element is emphasized specifically for new EFL teachers. These programs offer mentorship by matching new teachers with mentors who assist them in aspects like engaging students effectively managing classrooms and handling administrative tasks. Given the cultural and language obstacles novice EFL teachers face in Saudi Arabia, mentorship becomes crucial in aiding educators to craft culturally sensitive approaches and grasp the educational norms of the local community. Alhamad's research shows that new teachers who took part in mentorship-oriented induction programs felt better equipped and less alone at work that led to job satisfaction and dedication to their profession. These programs also help create a collaborative teaching environment where new teachers receive support from mentors and are keen to explore further learning resources.

Professional learning communities (PLCs) also provide a structural approach that can help improve the professional growth of new teachers by encouraging the development of a community of learners. According to Chandran et al. (2022), PLCs minimize the isolation that new teachers usually suffer from by encouraging engagement, exchange of information and ideas and group investigation among teachers. In a PLC, new teachers can talk about the problems they encounter in the classroom, exchange ideas for teaching practices and work together to interpret students' performances. These communities help the teachers to become more self-aware and provide them with an opportunity to get feedback and improve their practices. PLCs are beneficial to the concept of mentorship because they provide another source of support for new teachers and thus expose them to more ideas and experiences.

In their study published in 2016 by Zakeri, Rahmany and Labone, the authors delve into the advantages of support systems by pointing out that teachers' confidence in themselves and their ability to persevere professionally are boosted when they engage in mentorship programs and professional learning communities (PLCs). The concept of self-efficacy – a teacher's belief in their capacity to make an impact on students' progress – plays a role for new teachers who often grapple with doubts about their abilities as they navigate their roles. Research conducted by Zakeri et al. it was noted that new teachers who have access to networks like mentorship programs and PLCs tend to feel more confident in their teaching skills. This boost in confidence leads to classroom management, increased student participation and a greater openness to trying out new teaching methods. Moreover, teachers who feel backed by a community are more inclined to overcome obstacles which in turn lowers turnover rates and nurtures an enduring dedication to the field of education.

Enhancing self-belief and skills is one advantage of participating in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). For novice teachers, specifically PLCs provide a platform



for collaborative reflection within a group setting. According to Lave and Wenger (1991)'s theory on "communities of practice" learning is viewed as a social process where individuals grow by being a part of a community that shares common interests or objectives. In the context of a PLC, new teachers not only gain insights from their mentors but also learn from fellow novice educators facing similar hurdles. Through participating in group conversations and exchanges of ideas with educators who are new to the profession can provide valuable perspectives on various ways to solve problems and incorporate reflective techniques into their teaching practices effectively develop and enhance their own instructional strategies. The collaborative aspect of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) enables teachers to perceive obstacles as opportunities for growth that are collectively faced than individual burdensome tasks that may lead to feelings of being alone; in turn fostering a culture of support that promotes ongoing enhancement and development.

A study conducted by Avalos (2011) demonstrates that Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are effective because they empower teachers to engage in their professional growth through collaborative reflection and shared inquiry practices instead of relying solely on externally mandated and broad-spectrum professional development programs typical in traditional settings. PLC settings which are led by teachers themselves and tailored to address needs identified by participants rather than imposed from outside sources, offer novice educators the autonomy to steer their learning journey within a supportive community framework that fosters a sense of agency and ownership over their growth process. This personalized approach within PLC environments enhances the relevance and meaning of the learning experience, also makes it more directly applicable to the everyday teaching practices of educators. According to Avalos's study, findings show that inexperienced educators are inclined to implement techniques in their teaching when they engage in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). This is because they have a group to seek advice from and improve their methods alongside.

### **Collegial support in teaching**

Support from colleagues in the field of education plays a role in boosting teacher morale and development while improving the overall quality of teaching practices (Shah 2011). This type of support involves backing as well as teamwork in planning and providing professional feedback to create an environment where teachers can exchange ideas to improve teaching methods and enhance educational results collectively. Studies have shown that fostering a culture of collaboration among educators leads to problem solving skills and innovative approaches, to teaching (Hargreaves & Dawe 1990). The collaboration of peer coaching and casual interactions boosts teachers' self-assurance and teaching skills for better personal and group effectiveness (Gingiss, in 1993).

New teachers greatly benefit from the support of their colleagues when navigating the world of teaching. Research indicates that receiving quality mentoring and being part of networks help alleviate common obstacles new educators encounter such as managing workload and feeling isolated (Pogodzinski, 2014). These networks promote conversations and constructive criticism that enable teachers to shift from depending on formal mentorship to fostering independent yet collaborative professional development



(Charner Laird et al., 2016). In the realm of education and professional development communities (PLC), the power of collaboration is showcased in promoting ongoing growth and progress beyond mere formal interactions to genuine teamwork (Owen, 2014). These efforts have been successful in boosting the morale and longevity of teachers' careers within challenging educational environments with high expectations.

Even though there are advantages of collegial support, difficulties in creating support among colleagues continues to exist. Research emphasizes the challenges presented by insincere collegial relationships where surface level cooperation does not tackle fundamental educational and cultural requirements (Massy & Wilger 1994). Moreover, the lack of defined collaboration structures frequently hampers the extent of professional interactions leading to fewer chances for meaningful learning experiences (Makopoulou & Armour, 2014). Innovative methods such as collaborative quality improvement procedures have proven effective in recognizing and overcoming these obstacles to establish lasting and meaningful teaching methods (Carbone et al., 2019). The progressing field of research highlights the significance of integrating collegial support as an element of educator enhancement approaches.

### **Continuous Professional Development and Reflective Practice**

Novice teachers greatly benefit from professional development (CPD) as they navigate the challenges of the classroom and develop in their careers as educators. In language environments adapting teaching methods to address different linguistic requirements is crucial. According to a study by Jiang et al. (2020) continuous professional development that centers on curriculum design and language teaching approaches greatly enhances the confidence and effectiveness of new teachers in their instructional practices. New teachers are equipped with resources and techniques through these programs to effectively handle the challenges of teaching language that includes catering to various skill levels and cultural differences in learning styles.

Jiang et al, (2020) suggest that continuing professional development (CPD programs) which include aspects of curriculum innovation enables educators to explore alternative methods and teaching strategies beyond conventional practices that might not cater adequately to the diverse needs of students. For instance, blending technology with language education and implementing task-based language teaching (TBL) educators are able to create engaging and applicable lessons. Teaching approaches like Task Based Language Teaching (TBTL) known for its emphasis on language application in tasks rather than traditional teaching methods alone have proven to boost language learning (Ellis 2003). However, inexperienced educators struggle to utilize this method without proper training and support in innovative teaching techniques through Continuous Professional Development (CPD). By engaging in CPD sessions that prioritize teaching strategies and approaches novice teachers can develop the necessary expertise to deliver more interactive and stimulating lessons resulting in increased student participation and improved language acquisition outcomes.

Effective continuous professional development (CPD) relies heavily on practice to empower new teachers to evaluate their teaching approaches thoughtfully and enhance their skills based on insightful adjustments for better outcomes. Tajik et al. (2019)



research underscores the significance of practice in regions such as Iran where beginner educators frequently face demanding circumstances amidst resource constraints and inadequate assistance. Reflection enables teachers to evaluate the efficacy of their teaching methods and respond effectively to unexpected obstacles. In Iran as an example; new teachers who practice self-reflection mention feeling more flexible and competent in addressing students' needs by recognizing areas for enhancement and adjusting their approaches accordingly. Through constant reflection on their experiences, educators can connect theoretical concepts with practical application by creating effective solutions to classroom obstacles that may not have been covered in their formal education.

The research conducted by Tajik et al. (2019) is backed by the idea of the "reflective practitioner" emphasizing the significance of self-reflection in novice teachers' professional development journey. Engaging in reflective practice empowers educators to hone their "professional artistry" enabling them to adeptly handle challenging and uncertain classroom scenarios. This process proves beneficial for new teachers as it pushes them to go beyond simply applying teaching techniques and instead cultivate adaptable skills that sharpen over time. Teachers can boost their confidence by reflecting on their practice and realizing they have the power to improve learning outcomes by making changes to how they teach.

Microteaching is also effective in developing reflective practice since it creates a risk-free setting for practice. Some of the questions that teachers can ask include; "Was the lesson interesting to the students?" or "Did the approach used enable the students to practice language skills?" This is because through this structured form of reflection, the novice teachers are able to understand the various aspects of language teaching and therefore be in a better position to make changes that would be suitable for the students. A review of the work of Amobi (2005) shows that microteaching also helps to develop a growth mentality since it makes the teacher view feedback and the process of improvement as a positive thing in the workplace.

CPD programmes that encompass collaborative reflective practice, for example peer observation and mentoring, enable novice teachers to gain from other people's experience. A study by Farrell (2018) shows that peer observations can enhance reflection because it helps novice teachers to see other ways of doing the work and use the new ideas in their practice. In Farrell's study, the participants of peer observation said that they felt more confident in implementing new strategies and were more ready to overcome classroom difficulties. It is also important that peer observations create a certain atmosphere where novice teachers do not feel isolated as it is quite common in the first years of teaching.

Another key aspect of CPD that strengthens reflective practice is mentorship, which provides novice teachers with support from their peers. Mentors are able to provide information on the most efficient language teaching practices, managerial skills, measures to address language needs in specific contexts and make the new teachers feel ready for the task. According to Hobson et al. (2009) in a study on mentorship in teacher education, the participants who were mentored improved their instructional practices while at the same time enhanced their professional pride and commitment to teach.



## References:

1. Alhamad, R. (2018). The role of mentorship in the professional development of novice EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 9(2), 278–286.
2. Amobi, F. A. (2005). Preservice teachers' reflective practices: Findings from a microteaching experience. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 32(1), 115–130.
3. Avalos, B. (2011). Teacher professional development in Teaching and Teacher Education over ten years. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(1), 10–20.
4. Carbone, A., Evans, C., Ross, B., & Sheard, J. (2019). Developing a framework for improving teamwork skills in engineering and computer science education. *Australasian Journal of Engineering Education*, 24(1), 49–63.
5. Chandran, R., Uzir, M. U. H., & Amran, A. (2022). Empowering novice teachers: The role of professional learning communities. *Educational Research for Policy and Practice*, 21, 315–333.
6. Charner-Laird, M., Ng, D., Johnson, S. M., & Kraft, M. A. (2016). The motivating force behind a principal's actions. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 52(4), 566–601.
7. Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-Based Language Learning and Teaching*. Oxford University Press.
8. Farrell, T. S. C. (2018). Reflective practice for language teachers. In *Reflective Practice in ESL Teacher Development Groups* (pp. 21–40). Springer.
9. Fernandez, M. L. (2010). Investigating how and what prospective teachers learn through microteaching lesson study. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26(2), 351–362.
10. Gingiss, P. L. (1993). Peer coaching: Enhancing teacher instructional practices. *The Journal of School Health*, 63(5), 182–185.
11. Hobson, A. J., Ashby, P., Malderez, A., & Tomlinson, P. D. (2009). Mentoring beginning teachers: What we know and what we don't. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 25(1), 207–216.
12. Jiang, Y., Renandya, W. A., & Zhang, L. J. (2020). Teachers' continuous professional development in China: A review and critique. *RELC Journal*, 51(1), 3–17.
13. Laghari, A. A., Kakepoto, I., & Arshad, A. (2021). Microteaching as a tool for reflective practice and professional development. *International Journal of Educational Research Review*, 6(2), 223–231.
14. Larsen-Freeman, D. (2017). *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching* (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press.
15. Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge University Press.
16. Makopoulou, K., & Armour, K. (2014). Teachers' professional learning in a period of policy reform: The case of physical education in England. *Professional Development in Education*, 40(3), 416–433.
17. Mann, S., & Tang, E. H. (2012). The role of mentoring in supporting novice English language teachers in Hong Kong. *TESOL Quarterly*, 46(3), 472–495.



18. Massy, W. F., & Wilger, A. K. (1994). Overcoming 'hollowed' collegiality. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 26(4), 10–20.
19. Owen, S. (2014). Teacher professional learning communities: Going beyond contrived collegiality toward challenging debate and collegial learning and professional growth. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, 54(2), 54–77.
20. Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2014). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
21. Shah, M. (2011). The dimensionality of collegiality and its relationship with teacher performance. *International Journal of Education*, 3(2), 1–17.
22. Tajik, L., Zarei, G. R., & Esmaeili, F. (2019). Investigating the effect of reflective teaching on Iranian novice EFL teachers' teaching effectiveness. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 10(2), 350–360.