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REFLECTING ON A COMPREHENSIVE TEACHER TRAINING EXPERIENCE

This article aims to analyze the impact of the training experience of university lecturers focusing on its effectiveness for their personal and professional development. Applying mixed-methods research, it examines the experiences and overall performance of university lecturers in the role of teacher trainers based on instructional scaffolding approach. Data collection for the analyses involves the questionnaire survey including open-ended and close-ended questions that provide statistical insights into their instructional practices as trainers. The analysis of the survey held among the participants of the project show the high level of satisfaction with the training experience. The data of the survey help to understand better the challenges of university lecturers who were assigned the role of teacher trainers and experienced professional transformation. Based on the research, the authors identify possible implications and opportunities of meaningful professional development of university lecturers through the experience of training secondary school teachers.

Key words: training course, professional development, lecturer, comprehensive training, training session, professional community

MAIN PROVISIONS

Professional development courses for teachers can have a transformative effect on their pedagogical skills and teaching methods, professional development may lead to enhanced teacher engagement, and assist in creating a more effective organization of education [1]. The involvement of university lecturers in teacher training experiences enhances the professional development of lecturers themselves. Thus, becoming a trainer and cascading the knowledge and experience has changed the contexts and processes of learning for university lecturers, emphasizing non-formal, work-based learning. Conversely, although university lecturers can have a professionally fulfilling experience of becoming teacher trainers, there can also be potential difficulties and obstacles that they may face through such experience. Changing their professional role from being a lecturer in the university setting to becoming a trainer of in-service teachers calls for a different set of skills as well as a shift in mindset. This shift may require university lecturers to take on new responsibilities, such as designing and delivering effective training sessions, managing group work and communication within the group, and addressing diverse professional needs.

This study seeks the answers to the following questions:
- What motivated the university lecturers to become trainers?
- What influence does the training experience have on the development of new skills and professional growth among university lecturers?

In today's ever-changing educational context, where professional development is integrated into full-time professional work and other professional and personal commitments, the organization of professional training programs and the role of trainers and mentors need to be restructured and

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modified. New formats of teachers' professional development rely on a teacher's continuous self-learning and the research-driven content, design, and implementation of effective training courses. Instructional scaffolding is the major approach to professional development in this study and is based on the experience and expertise the university lecturers have and deepening this proficiency by adjusting to the needs of learners. University lecturers perform double roles: learners while creating the materials for secondary school teachers and trainers while teaching and adopting the materials to the needs and competencies of school teachers. This approach to continuous professional development is adopted to the individual needs as well as contributes to a meaningful impact on teaching. Many studies by Kazakhstani and international researchers, such as A.Ibrasheva, G.Qanay, M. Courtney, E.Sharplin (2022), imply the significance of continuous professional development. It can be strengthened through shared experiences, improved teaching strategies, and collaborative efforts to become better teachers [2]. Research in this field by many scholars (C.Gallchoir, O. McGarr, C. Hinchion, P.Benson, J. Othman) defines the positive impact on the teaching experiences of school teachers who are likely to have a supportive attitude towards various forms of their professional growth.

In the last several years, a great number of various international studies and research projects have offered valuable insights into the overall impact of professional development and training programs on teachers. The main focus of these studies is on the types of professional development activities. Moreover, there are many studies describing benefits reviewed by trainees such as the acquisition of new skills, significant personal growth, and enhanced teaching practices [3], [4]. There is a notable amount of studies analyzing reasons for teachers to participate in training courses indicating their motivation and willingness [5].

Our research aligns with the growing interest and recognition of trainers' and educators' professional development which has not been thoroughly researched. We support the opinion of such researchers as Maraanen K., Stenberg K., Sintonen S., Kynäslahti H., Jyrhämä R, R., Byman R., who claim that the professional development of university educators as teacher trainers has been under-researched [6], [7].

There is a significant gap in this field of study relating to the role of university lecturers as teacher trainers in the changing educational landscape. This study aims to reduce this gap by investigating the impact on the professional development of university educators involved in teacher training experiences. Undoubtedly, the teaching community in Kazakhstan is recognising the increasing significance of integrating teacher training experience for the professional development of university lecturers.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of the research is to analyze the effectiveness of training experiences on the professional development of university lecturers. This research was conducted based on the participation of university lecturers who served as trainers within 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 program aimed at enhancing the skills and knowledge of secondary school English teachers in Kazakhstan.

The research aims to analyze the influence of training experience on the professional development of a university lecturer. To achieve the goal the following objectives are to be solved:
- Analyze the university lecturers' satisfaction and overall performance as trainers of secondary school teachers;
- Discuss the influence of training experience on the formation of new skills and professional growth of university lecturers;
- Reveal possible avenues for further research based on the findings to open up new research directions.

For the duration of the four-month training period, the university lecturers were able to gain the experience of working with the secondary school teachers and also improve their skills in the

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area of delivering professional training. This newly acquired experience changed their perceptions towards training of teachers on secondary schools' level, positively.

Data on the extent to which members of the university staff who delivered the training acquired new professional skills is an indicator of the adequacy of the training program as well as the efficiency of the training mode. Besides that, this research can also be used to identify those training strategies and methods that have the greatest effect on lecturers' professional development.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study focuses on the data from a cohort of university lecturers with a view to analyzing and comparing their responses. Many researchers offer different findings relating to school teachers' reflections about training courses and programs. We can find such investigations in the works of international educators (K. Vogt, D. Tsagari, G. Spanoudis, H. Posti-Ahokas, M.Hassan, K.M.Idris,R. Sancar, D.Atal, D. Deryakulu). G.Qanay, D. Frost (2020) focus on transforming teachers' professional learning in mainstream schools in Kazakhstan. L. Karibayeva, A. Nogaibayeva, G.K. Kassymova, M. Nursultan (2023) analyzed Kazakhstani EFL teachers' attitudes and conceptions towards continuous professional development.

This article looks into Kazakhstani university lecturers' reflections on taking the role of school teacher trainers and its impact on their professional development. Fifteen university lecturers from thirteen different regions of Kazakhstan took part in the Pedagogical University Development project. However, the university educators had to follow two conditions. As part of the project, these lecturers designed and delivered teacher training workshops to a cohort of approximately 400 teachers of English from secondary schools and colleges. Before the start of the training period, the university lecturers underwent trainer training courses, during which they developed program outlines, training session content, as well as engaged in team discussions to address any potential obstacles that may arise during the training.

On completing the full course of training, the university lecturers participated in the post-training survey. The group of lecturers turned trainers included both beginning professionals and experienced lecturers, with most of them having little to no prior experience in training in-service teachers.

Qualitative and quantitative analysis was performed with post-training survey's data given by the lecturers. The quantitative analysis elucidated the statistical results into the effects of the teacher training experience on different aspects of the professional development program such as its contents and its delivery mode. And it did show main patterns, sorts of correlation of variables, and inform us on how the training was effective.

The survey was conducted in the form of google form that was divided into four different sections: A) the general information about trainers; B) motivation of trainers for their training; C) the teacher training mode; and D) comments and reflection.

The general information about the trainers helped to reveal the experience of the trainers thus contributing to understanding their motives and possible challenges in their work. Motivated teachers contribute to the success of their learners and this part of the question as well as reflection may suggest new ideas for further study in the field.

The questionnaire contained both the closed-ended and open-ended questions that helped us to collect both the quantitative and qualitative data. The following questions were included:

General background

How many years of teaching experience do you have?

Is this your first experience of training in-service teachers?

Motivation and Trainer Training

What are the reasons you applied for the Scaffolding PUDP project?

Do you agree with the statement: "After the trainer training course I feel confident about the upcoming teacher training course?

Teacher training

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What is your level of satisfaction with your training experience on a scale from 1 to 10?
What was the amount of support provided by the Project team?
What aspects of training did you find most useful for yourself?
What aspects of training did you find most challenging?
Comments and reflection
What impact has the project had on your career?
How is this course different from other professional development courses you conducted/took?

The collected data were categorized and analyzed to evaluate what positive or negative attitudes trainers had after delivering training sessions and workshops. For data interpretation, we applied both quantitative and qualitative analysis methods. Qualitative data was processed via the use of statistical techniques, including descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. The qualitative data analysis was employed to get a clearer understanding of the experiences, obstacles, and successes shared by the participants.

RESULTS

The first section of the survey represented the years of teaching experience of the fifteen university lecturers - trainers of the in-service teachers and revealed the length of their teaching experience. The findings of the survey are classified into four different categories: highly experienced educators with more than 20 years of experience, mid-career teachers having 10-20 years of teaching expertise, indicators with 5-9 years of experience, and early – career teachers with 0-4 years of working experience.
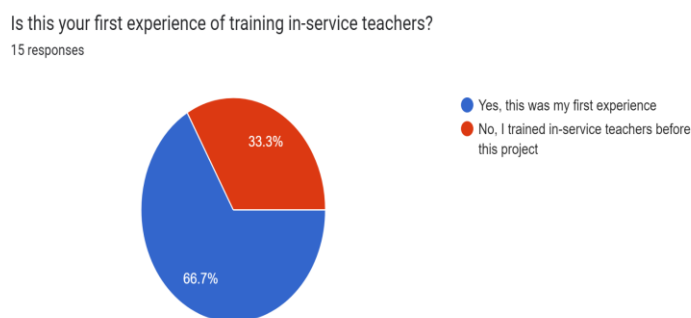

Figure 1. Participants' training experience

The total responses illustrate that the greatest number of survey participants (66.7%) have no less than 20 years of teaching experience including a big group of highly experienced teachers. The data signifies professionals with a vast field of expertise and knowledge of teaching. There is also a noticeable number of teachers with 5-9 years of teaching experience (13,3%), which identifies a mid-career level of experience. In perspective, those trainers could potentially strike up a balance of experienced knowledge and fresh opportunities to the training experiences of the participants. Trainers with 10-20 years of teaching experience fall in between (13,3%), who have acquired a substantial understanding of teaching over the years. Finally, there are respondents with working experience ranging from 0 to 4 years making about 6,7%. Those early-career educators could greatly contribute to the project by bringing fresh ideas and new approaches as they have recently turned into the teaching profession.

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What are the reasons you applied for the Scaffolding PUDP project? Choose 2 reasons that describe your motivation best.
15 responses

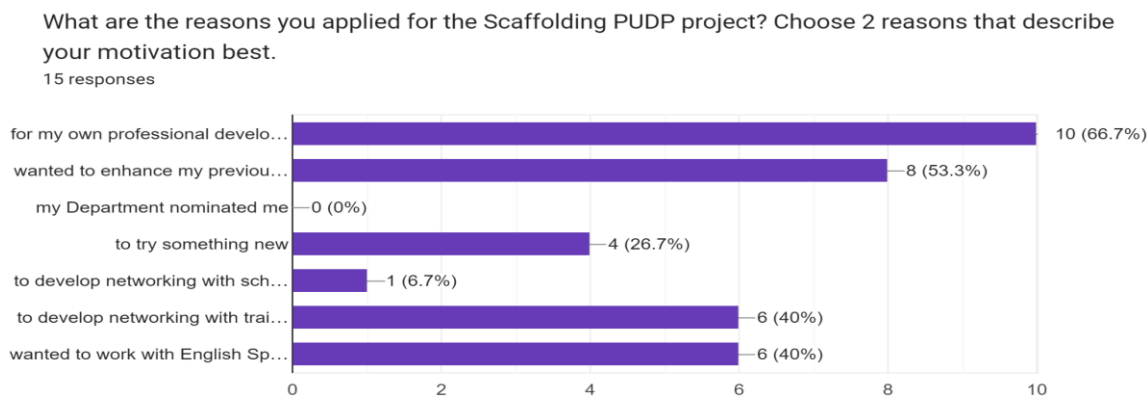|	
for my own professional develo...	10 (66.7%)
wanted to enhance my previou...	8 (53.3%)
my Department nominated me	0 (0%)
to try something new	4 (26.7%)
to develop networking with sch...	1 (6.7%)
to develop networking with trai...	6 (40%)
wanted to work with English Sp...	6 (40%)

Figure 2. Reasons for participating in PUDP

The questionnaire results show a notable variety of reasons and motivations for participation in PUDP starting with professional and personal development (66,7%), improving prior teaching experiences (53,3%), and developing networking opportunities(40%). The analysis defines one of the dominant factors of motivation as the opportunity for collaborative work with experts and professionals(40%). The prevailing motivation among the respondents is the desire to grow as educators through diverse training experiences. The results of the survey highlight the importance of effective collaboration of the trainers' professional community, expert guidance, individual-centered content development, and specialist–guided training sessions. It also signifies the importance of both in-person and online sessions and interactions for an effective training experience. As a result, the combination of these factors greatly contributes to a well-developed and logically – structured trainer-training program.

The results of the survey illustrate the participants' agreement with the statement: *After the Trainer Training (September - December), I felt confident about the upcoming teacher training course*. The responses allow us to draw the following conclusion: the majority of the participants 86,7% expressed agreement with the statement. These data signify that a vast variety of the participants gained a sense of confidence after completing the trainer-training program, and absolutely ready for the upcoming teacher-training course. A smaller group of respondents neither agree nor disagree (13.3%). This means that while some trainers might feel not strongly confident about their readiness, still they also do not actively disagree with the statement. The provided data indicate a certain degree of their dissatisfaction with the trainer-training program or a constant search for perfection. It also may imply their professional ambition to be exceptionally prepared for training school teachers utilizing the materials created while trainer training.

The survey questions in the third section focused on the process of teacher training that the university lecturers were actively involved in during fifteen weeks delivering two sessions per week and totaling eighty hours of intensive face-to-face training. All the respondents reported being satisfied with their training experience, with 40% of the respondents grading their experience as very satisfying (8 on a scale of 0 to 10) and the other 60% were extremely satisfied, giving the experience the maximum score of 10, thus proving that this engagement in training work was a very positive professional experience for all the lecturers.

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Please evaluate your level of satisfaction with your training experience on a scale from 1 (dissatisfied) to 10 (extremely satisfied)
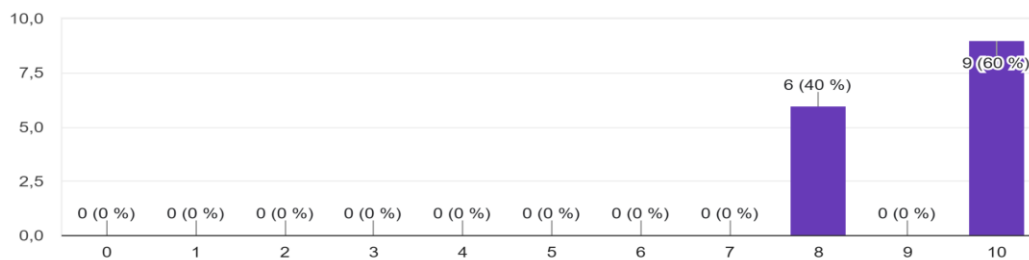15 ответов

Figure 3. Levels of satisfaction with the trainer – training program

To ensure the quality of training and to provide additional support to the local trainers, the project team representatives traveled to the training sites to participate in the sessions conducted by the local trainers in their respective universities where they had discussions with the session participants and provided feedback to the local trainers.

The survey showed that the trainers mostly appreciated the support provided during the training, with 86.7% of the respondents reporting the amount of support was "just right", and 13.3 % stating they got more support than they needed. No respondents said they did not receive sufficient support. The analysis of the responses relating to the comment section of the survey suggests the appreciation of the freedom the trainers had for planning and delivering the program. They report about the balance between the amount of freedom and of support provided by the program team. It is notable that when defining the most rewarding aspects of training and the aspects of the program the trainers found most useful for teachers, there was a strong correlation between the two:
- Which aspects of the training did you find most rewarding for yourself?
- Which aspects of the training did you find most useful for your participants?

The final section of the survey revolved around the possible impact the project had on the trainers' own professional development and career development opportunities. This section gave another proof of the successful transition from a lecturer to a teacher trainer and the integration of this teacher training experience into their professional repertoire. 73.3% of the respondents reported that the training experience in the project inspired them to look for opportunities to proceed with their in-service teacher training experience within other projects, while 53.3% said they wanted to deepen their expertise in the field. The same proportion of the respondents (53.3%) said that they had developed new ideas for improving their work as university lecturers working with pre-service teachers in training, 60% reported integrating new techniques in their teaching practice, and 13.3% had new ideas for research.

DISCUSSION

The overall analysis of the provided data suggests a notable variety of teaching experience levels of the participants. The project involved a mix of highly – performing professionals and those at various stages of their teaching careers ranging from young teachers to mid-career educators. This range of teaching experiences pertains to a dynamic educational environment with cascading of knowledge and exchanging innovative teaching practices. The project greatly enhances the educators' prior experience by collaborating and training in-service teachers. The responses are classified into two categories:
- *Yes, this was my first experience*
- No*, I trained in-service teachers before this project*

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The biggest amount of the participants admit that this training project was their first experience in training in-service teachers. This suggests that the most part of the trainers is relatively new to this transformative educational role. However, a smaller number of university educators indicate their having prior experience in training in-service teachers before this project. These professionals share their pre-existing expertise to the project by brining insights and effective approaches based on their prior engagements.

The provided findings of the survey illustrate the collaboration of less-experienced trainers and experienced ones. The diverse number of participants might contribute to the overall training program introducing a wide range of potential benefits and strategies. The presence of both first-time trainers and those with previous experience can facilitate knowledge sharing and the implementation of effective teaching methodologies during training the trainers' sessions and the development of the curriculum to train in-service teachers.

The most frequent, and arguably the most important impact of the training experience reported by the respondents was a collaborative network with secondary school teachers that the university lecturers developed during the project. The trainers cited examples of such collaboration in the comment section giving evidence of establishing professional connections and opportunities for further professional development: *I reviewed teachers' author's courses and school scientific projects*, *...worked with school teachers in conferences, invited them as guest speakers*, *I invited a teacher to our university to be an advisor on diploma papers*, and many more. Citing examples of self-development and expansion of their professional area of expertise, the respondents reported having been selected to be a trainer in another teacher training project, applying for a professional development course, and having been awarded travel grants to be speakers at a national English teacher conference.

The provided data suggest the motivations behind university educators' participation in the Scaffolding PUDP project. The survey offers questions defining the participants' motivation and reasons for participation. The responses provide the following patterns:

1) Enhancing Prior PUDP Experience: A notable amount of the respondents applied for the program to upgrade their previous experience with the PUDP. They considerably recognize the value of continuing growth in their educational careers.

2) Personal and Professional Development: Most participants indicate their personal and professional growth as the predominant factor of motivation. This can illustrate their active approach to improving their teaching practices and enhancing their career prospects.

3) Professional Networking with Trainers from Other Universities: Most trainers are interested in the opportunity to expand their professional network by interacting with trainers from different universities. Their main priority is collaboration and sharing experiences beyond their immediate academic environment.

4) Working with English Specialists from the Department of State: A considerable amount of participants is encouraged to collaborate with English specialists from the Department of State. The participants highly appreciate the chance to enhance their knowledge by working with foreign experts.

5) Trying Something New: A small group of trainers express a curiosity for exploring new experiences by leaving their comfort zones and being engaged in new teaching approaches and potential challenges.

Discussing the successes of the project, the lecturers commented on why this project experience was special for them: *The course gave us a lot of opportunities for professional development, we interacted closely with English teachers from schools and we could use our knowledge in practice*, *it gives a final product; it builds both trainer and teacher network - and a strong one; it gives a feeling of accomplishment*, *it's purely practical, no dull lecturing, just practical implementation of new skills*, and many more positive comments.

As part of the survey questions, the trainers gave examples of their major accomplishments and proudest moments, most of which revolved around teachers' professional successes during the training and building professional networks within cities. To cite just a few examples: *My trainees*

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got a lot of new ideas and teaching techniques during the training which they incorporate successfully in their teaching practice, my trainees not only could learn the steps of the course design but could also establish rapport, find new friends, could cascade acquired knowledge from the course to their colleagues and apply to the open class lessons, we managed to build a strong community- even though the project ended, the participants keep in touch with me and each other.

Sessions on teaching techniques were rated as the most rewarding for the trainer and one of the most useful aspects for participants from the trainers' perspective, while the process of course design was voted as the most useful aspect for teachers and a considerably rewarding part for the trainers. The third most useful and rewarding aspect was the use of new educational technology and tools, more than half of the respondents called it most rewarding and almost the whole cohort of trainers rated this aspect as most useful.

The questions revolving around the skills the teachers developed during the training program revealed a further agreement between the program goals and the outcomes reached: the overwhelming majority of the respondents believe the teachers developed the skills of course design, and the same number of trainers state the teachers improved their communicative skills in English as the training program was delivered in English. Most of the respondents said the teachers learned about other professional development opportunities and programs, moreover, there was a significant improvement in teachers' digital literacy. Many other aspects including presentation skills, teamwork, and lesson planning were also rated high by the respondents. However, the trainers believe that teachers need to continue working on such skills as action research, assessment strategies, and further improvement of course design skills. The data provided by the questionnaire reveal that the trainer-training program had a positive impact on the participants' levels of confidence. This most likely highlights that the program equipped the trainers with the necessary skills and knowledge to participate in the upcoming teacher training course with a high level of motivation and assurance.

Overwhelming schedules were mentioned as the main challenges the lecturers had to face when designing and delivering the training. They had to perform their training work in addition to their regular full-time university lecturer jobs and a need for further development as trainers. As part of their post-training reflection, the lecturers mentioned a need to continue working on their methodology skills, time and session management, presentation and communication, as well as action research skills.

Another important aspect to consider was the amount of external support the university faculty needed in delivering the training program and switching their traditional roles of being university lecturers to being trainers for secondary school teachers. During the whole training period, the project team provided their support by engaging the project in-country coordinator, four local coordinators, and the project facilitator to answer questions in the project's group and individual chats on social media as well as discussing various issues during zoom meetings.

Regarding the overall success of the project, the respondents emphasized that the practical nature of the course and the extensive duration of the training that lasted the entire academic year was the key factor. Such other aspects as teacher - trainer training, curriculum development, revision and review, and the delivery of training to teachers contributed greatly to the successful outcomes of the training. The training program is described as practical, focused on developing skills, and aimed at producing measurable outcomes. Among the skills taught, curriculum design through the creation of original, author courses and the implementation of innovative active learning techniques were found particularly important and beneficial for teachers. Additionally, the project resulted in creating and/or developing teacher professional communities in different cities and regions that participated in it. Besides, the training also facilitated the personal and professional growth of individual teachers throughout the training process. In spite of the challenges and obstacles the trainers had to face, such as time management issues, the training experience had a positive impact on university educators, enhancing their professional development, expanding their teaching experiences, and influencing their perspective career plans.

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CONCLUSION

The analysis of the results illustrates the positive impact of training experience on the university lecturers' career perspectives and training benefits both for experienced educators and less experienced ones. The diversity of the trainers greatly contributes to the success of the training program by sharing a variety of viewpoints and approaches. It was beneficial for knowledge cascading, the application of efficient teaching techniques during the training sessions, and the creation of the curriculum for in-service teacher training.

The survey data highlights that trainers recognize the importance of continuous growth in their educational practices. The results imply their active approach to improving teaching skills and advancing career prospective. The participation in the project demonstrates their desire to build strong professional and academic environments, to collaborate with specialists and to grow in the field of their knowledge expertise. Moreover, it motivates and stimulates to explore innovative teaching approaches by stepping beyond comfort zones.

Additionally, the training practices highlight the importance of cooperative endeavors, personalized content creation, and trainee-focused training sessions. It also emphasizes the effectiveness of training experience through the balance of face-to-face and virtual interactions. The mix of these factors appears to contribute to a comprehensive trainer-training program. The trainer training program had a positive influence on participants' confidence in the field of training.

University lecturers often have overwhelming schedules. The responsibility to take on the role of a trainer can add much to their workload. That professional shift demands to balance between teaching responsibilities and the preparation and delivery of training sessions. Besides, it requires very careful time management and discipline. Trainers need to be very mindful of the diverse learning styles and preferences of school teachers. More than often they may need to change their classroom management and instructional strategies, incorporate interactive and collaborative activities, and create engaging learning atmosphere to foster a greater output of the participants. Not all participants may be easily engaged in the educational practices during the training sessions. Trainers may face reluctance of the trainees who may not be equally receptive. Overcoming such difficulties may require patience, building effective communication strategies and rapport among the participants, and the ability to address challenges and concerns.

In can be concluded that there is a great need for trainers to follow the tendencies of the latest research, pedagogical and teaching practices, and technological advancements in their field. It is important to constantly update their knowledge and skills to provide meaningful professional development experiences for teachers. When university lecturers experience that transformative transition into trainers, they can experience personal and professional growth. It provides increased job satisfaction, leads to improving training practices, and results in developing a stronger sense of leadership within the teaching community. Overall, training experience develops the skills of balancing time and workload, adapting to different learning styles, and staying updated with educational tendencies and trends.

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Мұғалімдердің кәсіби даму тренингтерін өткізу тәжірибесін жинақтау
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Бұл мақаланың мақсаты жоғары оқу орындары оқытушыларының мектеп мұғалімдерін жаттықтырушылары ретіндегі жұмыс тәжірибесінің тұлғалық және кәсіби даму тиімділігіне назар аудара отырып, оның әсерін талдау болып табылады. Аралас әдісті пайдалана отырып, зерттеуде жоғары оқу орындары оқытушыларының жаттықтырушылар рөліндегі тәжірибесі мен жұмысының жалпы тиімділігі зерттеледі. Талдау үшін деректер жинау жаттықтырушылардың жұмысы туралы статистикалық ақпарат беретін ашық және жабық сұрақтарды қамтитын сауалнама жүргізуден тұрады. Қатысушылар арасында жүргізілген сауалнама нәтижелері жаттықтырушы ретіндегі жұмыс тәжірибесіне қанағаттанудың жоғары деңгейін көрсетеді. Сауалнама барысында берілген мәліметтер мектеп мұғалімдерінің жаттықтырушылары ретінде жұмыс жасай отырып, трансформациялық ауысуды бастан өткерген университет оқытушыларының алдында тұрған және кездестіру мүмкіндігі бар қиындықтарды атап көрсетеді. Жүргізілген зерттеуді негізге ала отырып, авторлар орта мектеп мұғалімдерімен кәсіптік оқытуды жүзеге асыратын жоғары оқу орындары оқытушыларының кәсіби дамуының ықтимал жағдайлары мен мүмкіндіктерін анықтайды.

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Кілт сөздер: оқыту курсы, кәсіби даму, университет оқытушысы, кәсіби дайындық, оқыту семинары, кәсіби қоғамдастық.

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Обобщение опыта проведения тренингов профессионального развития учителей
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Целью данной статьи является анализ влияния опыта работы преподавателей вузов в качестве тренеров школьных учителей с акцентом на его эффективность для их личностного и профессионального развития. Используя смешанный метод, в исследовании изучается опыт и общая эффективность работы преподавателей вузов в роли тренеров. Сбор данных для анализа представляет собой анкетирование, включающее открытые и

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закрытые вопросы, которые дают статистическую информацию о работе тренеров. Результаты опроса, проведенного среди участников, свидетельствуют о высоком уровне удовлетворенности опытом работы в качестве тренера. Данные, предоставленные в ходе опроса, подчеркивают трудности, с которыми столкнулись преподаватели университетов, которые пережили трансформационный переход в тренеров школьных учителей. Основываясь на проведенном исследовании, авторы определяют возможные последствия и возможности профессионального развития преподавателей вузов, осуществляющих профессиональное обучение учителей средней школы.

Ключевые слова: обучающий курс, профессиональное развитие, преподаватель университета, профессиональная подготовка, обучающий семинар, профессиональное сообщество

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