CONTINUOUS TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

Approaches that Foster Teacher Engagement

The Challenge

The Uzbekistan Ministry of Preschool and School Education (MoPSE) has embarked upon an ambitious reform agenda to bring the Uzbek public education system in line with twenty-first century international standards and skills and is enshrined in several Presidential Decrees.[1] The reform agenda includes numerous initiatives, including developing a new national curriculum framework and a laser focus on increasing information and communication technology and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) skills through the IT Nation and English-Speaking Nation initiatives. Reform efforts also include participating for the first time in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study in 2021 and in the Program for International Student Assessment in 2022. MoPSE has committed to reaching a ranking of 30 or higher by 2030, but reform takes time and challenges persist. At the onset of the Uzbekistan Education for Excellence Program, the teaching culture in many schools in Uzbekistan was still quite teacher-centric with only a modicum of observable student-centered instructional strategies promoting critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration. Although basic reading and mathematics scores were within the international mean, students struggled with reading comprehension and more complex mathematics.

To improve the quality of instruction and learning, a challenge that many ministries must confront, is the need to provide teacher professional development at scale. Uzbekistan has approximately 10,104 schools, 502,687 teachers, and 6,336, 933 students.[2] In 2022, when MoPSE rolled out the new EFL teacher and student books, it struggled to reach and train all teachers. Moreover, conducting training at scale often entails a cascade model, which has weaknesses in the quality of knowledge transfer and training delivery. This is especially the case when the training objective is to introduce and strengthen teaching strategies that are student-centered and promote students' critical, independent thinking, and creative skills. These teaching strategies can be challenging to master and require changes in teachers' behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes, which can be achieved mostly through continued practice and reflection.

AN EVIDENCE-BASED CONTINUOUS APPROACH AND PROCESS TO TPD

In Year 3 and based on Year 2 lessons learned, the Program designed and piloted a continuous teacher professional development (CTPD) approach. This approach sought to improve classroom instruction for Uzbek Language Arts and mathematics teachers via effective implementation of teacher guides with student-centered strategies. The approach was implemented via a 3-tiered cascade model where 80 Tier 1 coaches taught 752 Tier 2 trainers who in turn trained over 8,386 Tier 3 teachers. Trainings were comprised of 8 monthly 2–4-hour sessions. Over 95% of participants completed 75% or more of the trainings thereby meeting Program targets. Training sessions included evidence-based practical instructional techniques such as modeling, role-playing, small group practice, and discussion. The Program approach used existing methodological days (MDs) within the Uzbek education system to conduct the monthly sessions rather than one-off, multiday training events. All trainers were provided with facilitator guides, slides, and scripts. The Program initiated the CTPD pilot through the implementation of a series of readiness steps such as ensuring correct administrative documentation was in place; informing and engaging ministry leadership at national, regional, district, and school levels; and providing teachers with informative messages in the weeks leading up to the first trainings.

To minimize dilution effects of the cascade process, the Program implemented a rigorous quality assurance (QA) instructional feedback loop whereby each month Program Technical Specialists observed trainers conducting trainings and teachers applying new skills. The Program used these monthly training data to inform future trainings and content. For example, if trainers were struggling to conduct role-playing activities, this was reenforced in the following training session. The Program also established an ambitious action research agenda to help determine the degree to which teachers were applying new techniques[3] and whether the CTPD approach was effective. The action research process evaluated the quality of training and was based on existing training research models.[4] In addition to monthly observations, the Program administered three types of surveys on a quarterly basis: satisfaction, posttest, and self-efficacy.

The CTPD approach was implemented via three concurrent processes of readiness and training, follow-up and QA, and action research. These three processes are described in greater detail in the table below and are organized in terms of what steps need to be completed before, during, and after training.

1 Presidential Decrees No. PF-05538 and No. PQ-3931 dated 05.09.2018; and No. PF-5712 dated 29.04.2019.
2 www.uzedu.uz
3 TLM Uptake Study Briefer
4 D. Clark & H. Hollingsworth. (2002). Elaborating a model of teacher professional growth. Teaching and Teacher Education 18, 947–967; Kirkpatrick, D. L. (1994). Evaluating training programs: the four levels. San Francisco: Emeryville, CA: Berrett-Koehler; Publishers Group West; Jordan, R., Pouezevara, S., & Strigel, C. (2022). A monitoring, evaluation, and learning framework for technology-supported remote trainings. Research Triangle Park, NC: RTI International. Retrieved from

CTPD APPROACH

Circular diagram showing three segments around a central figure:

3. Follow-Up & Support
- Quality Assurance (QA)
- Trainers and teachers
- Peer coaching

1. Readiness
- Supportive leadership
- Messaging
- Infrastructure, resources, and logistics

2. Practical Learning
- Modeling, small group practice, discussion
- School-based
- Monthly, 2-4-hour sessions

Outer ring labels: Action research · Monthly QA feedback loop · Quarterly training evaluation · Monthly QA feedback loop · Monthly QA feedback loop · Quarterly teacher satisfaction & self-confidence

CTPD IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

Readiness and practical training	Follow-up and support with QA and peer coaching	Action research to inform quality training
Before training: • Conduct learner analysis • Establish practical learning objectives • Develop content that includes student-centered strategies with modeling, small group practice, discussion • Design and develop training plan, guides, slide decks, scripts • Confirm leadership support • Confirm logistical inputs • Ensure participant readiness through messaging **During training:** • Implement training • Monitor attendance • Administer surveys **After training:** • Conduct post-training follow-up	**Before training:** • Develop electronic QA classroom observation tools for trainers and teachers/participants • Develop peer coaching tool • Confirm logistical inputs • Confirm leadership support • Implement QA training for assessors to ensure consistency of observations **During training:** • Deploy trainer QA tool at all cascade levels • Monitor QA process **After training:** • Deploy teacher observation at classroom level • Facilitate peer coaching • Monitor observations, peer coaching • Collect, analyze QA data • Share QA finding with subject matter experts • Use QA findings to inform next training	**Confirm research agenda as follows:** • Participant satisfaction • Participant learning • Participant self-confidence, beliefs, and attitudes • Support to participants • Participant knowledge and skills • Student learning outcomes • Develop concept note, analysis plan • Develop, pilot tools • Train assessors • Collect, code, analyze data • Write and disseminate findings

ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL CTPD DESIGN

After eight months of implementing the above-described approach and based on preliminary findings, the Program concludes that a successful CTPD approach should include the following key elements:

- A learner analysis of teachers to determine knowledge, skills, and beliefs about new content and strategies
- Substantial opportunities for teachers to practice newly learned skills through modeling, role-playing, small group practice, and discussion
- Offered in shorter chunks (2–4 hours maximum) and at regular intervals (monthly, quarterly, or a combination of both) such as during MDs
- Instructional elements such as learning objectives and formative assessment at each step
- Located as close to teachers' schools as possible
- Short, regular trainings coupled with opportunities for teachers to experiment and reflect on new practices in a safe environment, such as through peer coaching
- Rigorous QA feedback loops to inform future training and peer coaching
- In-person training opportunities whenever possible

RECOMMENDATIONS

Ensure all training is student-centered and practical and includes modeling, role playing, small group practice, discussion, and reflection.

- Conduct shorter trainers but on a regular, monthly basis.
- Reinstate MDs to offering practical, school-based training to teachers.
- Establish a "feed-forward" information loop to guide future trainings.
- Conduct trainer and teacher QA observations to inform trainings.

PROGRAM IN BRIEF

USAID partners with the Government of Uzbekistan to enhance student learning in English, information and communication technology, reading and mathematics. The USAID Uzbekistan Education for Excellence Program supports the Ministry of Preschool and School Education to revise student learning standards, new teaching and learning materials, provide comprehensive teacher training and conduct rigorous monitoring and research. Working closely with the Ministry, our consortium – led by RTI International includes Florida State University and Mississippi State University – brings the experience and expertise of international and local experts to drive effective program implementation. Together, we aim to foster student engagement and improve learning outcomes.

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