



Uzbekistan Team

Case study in progress from the KIX-EAP learning cycle “Teacher Professional Development at Scale (TPD@Scale)” held in collaboration with the TPD@Scale Coalition for the Global South, through the Foundation for Information Technology Education and Development, Inc. (FIT-ED)

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About case studies in progress

This case study in progress was drafted by a national team that participated in the KIX EAP Learning Cycle on Teacher Professional Development at Scale (TPD@Scale). Case studies in progress are ongoing and incomplete studies. As such, the KIX EAP Hub/ NORRAG does not guarantee the quality of the work nor the accuracy of the data.

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About the KIX EAP Hub

The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) is a joint endeavour with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) to connect expertise, innovation, and knowledge to help GPE partner countries build stronger education systems and accelerate progress toward SDG 4. There are globally four KIX hubs or Regional Learning Partners, overseen by IDRC. The hub functions as a regional forum within KIX. NORRAG (Network for International Policies and Cooperation in Education and Training) is the Regional Learning Partner for the KIX Europe Asia Pacific (EAP) hub.

The KIX EAP hub facilitates cross-country knowledge and innovation exchange and mobilisation, learning, synthesis, and collaboration among national education stakeholders in 21 GPE partner countries in the EAP region. The hub also offers opportunities for peer learning and exchange by means of professional development and inter-country visits.

About the learning cycle on Teacher Professional Development at Scale (TPD@Scale)

This case study is a result of the KIX EAP Learning Cycle ‘Teacher Professional Development at Scale (TPD@Scale)’. Organised by NORRAG in collaboration with the TPD@Scale Coalition for the Global South, through the Foundation for Information Technology Education and Development, Inc. (FIT-ED), this professional development course ran from 23 September to 5 December 2022. Across 10 weeks, this Learning Cycle enabled national experts to examine how ICT-mediated TPD programmes can be scaled through adaptation/localisation to improve students’ learning outcomes. Thirteen national teams of educational sector experts from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Georgia, Kyrgyz Republic, Maldives, Moldova, Mongolia, Nepal, Sudan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, and Yemen took part in this Learning Cycle.



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Part 1. Policy Brief: Promoting Continuous Teacher Professional Development in Uzbekistan

Background

Education in Uzbekistan is governed by three ministries - the Ministry of Preschool Education (MPSE), the Ministry of Public Education (MPE), and the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialized Education (MHSSE). the largest employer in the country, the Ministry of Public Education is responsible for employing 506,618 teachers to teach around 6 million students across Uzbekistan every year (MPE, 12 November 2022). Until recently, teacher professional development (TPD) systems for both the MPE and the MHSSE were largely based on the soviet legacy of TPD training events offered top-down once every 3 or 5 years. The approach limits a generation of teachers, who had no other options for professional development. Only a limited number of mainly foreign language teachers occasionally take part in the international education reform projects for TPD. A more inclusive approach is needed to scale TPD and to ensure quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Distance or ICT-mediated TPD for teachers of the MPE and the MHSSE was approved in 2020 and 2021 respectively. This development sparked various TPD reform initiatives emerging at both systemic levels such as credit-based continuous professional development and teachers' needs-based TPD activities to satisfy existing real-life needs. However, very few external evaluations of these initiatives have been conducted so far. In addition, reviews are mainly conducted by ministry-affiliated training organisations and lack competition from external evaluators.

The Agency for Presidential Educational Institutions was established in 2019, to manage 14 Presidential schools (one in every region of the country, including the capital). In 2022, 169 more specialised schools were assigned under the Agency's governance. The Agency and the Centre of Pedagogical Excellence, Research and International Assessment (the Centre) under the Agency are positioned as the education hub which is aimed at innovating education for the Agency schools and sharing best practices with the ministries of education and the private education sector in Uzbekistan. Having more flexible authority and policy generation grounds, the Centre works closely with international partners, such as Cambridge Assessment International Education for example, in piloting ICT-mediated TPD programmes at scale for teachers and school leaders. In addition, the Centre's mission is to build the capacity for wider international and private partnerships, accreditation and capacity building within the education system of Uzbekistan in the future. For instance, there are cooperation agreements with the Council of International Schools and International Baccalaureate which imply extensive CPD at scale needed and this opens new horizons for ICT-mediated TPD at scale.

The private education sector in Uzbekistan has been booming since 2017 when new legislation officially accredited private schools and created a friendly eco-system for international higher educational institutions (HEI) to emerge. This led to a certain degree of competition among the private schools, and they started to offer TPDs at the local level, some even succeeded at launching online schools (Leaders School, 2022). Several international providers such as TESOL and CELTA launched their activities in Uzbekistan as well as some individual private TPD providers emerged with mainly face-to-face approaches to delivery and certification. Going forward, a more public-led approach is needed to scale TPD, including through the use of quality-assured online learning.



Existing Issues and Challenges of TPD

Over the past five years, the swift development of the legislative and economic circumstances for educational reform in Uzbekistan created many opportunities for TPD. However, major challenges hinder the efficiency of these reforms and prevent effective monitoring to understand lessons learnt.

One of the significant issues preventing the TPD at scale in the country is the fact that there is a lack of effective communication between the three existing ministries of education which automatically leads to the employees (the teachers produced by the MHSSE) not satisfying the needs of the major employer (the MPE and the MPSE). This also prevents the MPE and the MPSE from providing timely and accurate guidance to the MoHSSE on emerging changes, developments and requirements for teachers which could potentially influence the positive change.

Another challenge for delivering effective TPD at scale is the absence of well-resourced research and monitoring bodies that could supply the training providers with adequate and up-to-date data on real teachers' and learners' needs across the country, including the most marginalised geographical areas. Existing TPD programmes provided by the ministry-affiliated training centres do not offer a systematic approach to needs analysis, including qualitative and quantitative data analysis. Moreover, these same training bodies evaluate the success of their TPD programmes, which by default leads to a conflict of interest and limits opportunities for externally validated quality assurance.

A related concern is the public perception of TPD. Ministry-affiliated institutions usually deliver one-off training events with no coherent connection. The irregular cycle leads to a broken chain of TPD activities at the national level in Uzbekistan. Thus, it is very difficult to bring about a positive change in the mind-shifts of teachers when it comes to contemporary methodologies or international assessment systems requirements (e.g. PISA and others). Limited continuity of TPD also prevents building on the existing knowledge and developing the reflective mindset in teachers and as a result in learners.


Finally, the restricted, top-down, extrinsically motivated (e.g. limited to salary bonuses) offer of TPD precludes the development of ICT-mediated offers which could help to reach teachers at scale and continuously monitor and address their needs through improved training systems and channels of engagement. One of the obvious challenges posed here is the lack of teachers' ICT literacy or the ignorance of those ICT tools which are used by teachers by default in their daily lives for communication for instance and could effectively be adapted for learning and CPD purposes.

Overall, there has been a strong political will in the country in the recent 5 years emphasising the trajectories for improvement and positive change which automatically creates the grounds for new approaches to TPD at scale through ICT and human-mediated means with the aims of increasing the quality of teaching and learning and overcome the existing challenges.

Proposed Solutions and Policies

Several interrelated solutions and policies are needed to address the current issues and challenges of TPD in Uzbekistan.

Firstly, the coordination between three key players, namely three ministries and other organizations (private) + national and international donors should be established. To fulfil the function, an independent organization/agency to represent teacher interests should be established to coordinate communications between the stakeholders in education. One of the other responsibilities of the agency is to identify the needs of key players and be responsible for finding out the needs of the teachers by doing ongoing and systematic qualitative and quantitative research and communicating their needs to relevant agencies/stakeholders. Consequently, these steps would promote a bottom-up approach to TPD. As the agency is an independent body and will not be under the supervision of any stakeholders, it will be able to analyze the needs of teachers



and students objectively and offer analysis of current issues that exist in the field adequately. The centre must be responsible for continuous research and scholarship activities identifying the needs and demands of CPD.

Additionally, TPD should be perceived as an ongoing activity rather than a single event. ICT-mediated TPD which can address real and diverse needs of teachers at different levels of PD: The TPD must be evidence-based, where the different needs of teachers must be taken into consideration. There must be subject-related, and pedagogy-related courses/training provided. Currently, there are more foreign language-related events organized for teachers, but other teachers are disadvantaged. The level of digital literacy also matters. As some teachers might have issues with the Internet, hardware, digital skills, and overall access issues. TPD should be tailored to the needs of all teacher communities. The creation of those communities is also an important step in maintaining the sustainability of the TPD.

Policy development based on the engagement of all relevant parties must be worked out, outlining key performance indicators for teachers, offering progress inside the CPD, and accumulation of credits thus promotion related. These reforms to expand ICT-mediated TPD can build on existing programmes and providers.

Encouraging a bottom-up approach, specially designated schools are at the centre of TPD and function as the only authorized providers. To meet growing demand, there is a need for a more inclusive approach based on online learning, where ordinary schools can also be included as equal partners in developing and receiving TPD courses. Best practice cases can be developed to encourage other schools to adapt and motivate teachers to take part in TPD through online learning and to see personal value and results.

Effective marketing and outreach activities are needed to enhance the role and attractiveness of TPD and to promote teacher education in principle. Broadly teachers are not motivated to take part in TPD in Uzbekistan, which is a common concern in many countries. Teachers are required to attend training because it is imposed on them, thus creating the wrong perception of professional development. There is a need for public relations outreach among teachers, so they see how it can help them and ease their jobs. Marketing and advocacy targeting the management of the schools and management institutions at different levels are also key – this can help to increase the value of the teaching occupation in general with the aim to support their needs and demands for continuous professional development. Marketing and public outreach can help to create a cultural shift and increase the value of the teacher profession. For this to happen, the extreme workload of teachers must be revised, paperwork reduced, and the teacher profession must be valued and respected both in monetary and nonmonetary terms.

Undergraduate and postgraduate programs for teacher education must be revised and aligned with the contemporary issues and trends in education to promote national social and economic development. Leadership in education as a subject/theme/pathway must be introduced, as TPD is a part of the leadership skills of any teacher. Teacher education must be offered at different levels – pre-service and in-service, taking into consideration the needs of the community and aligning with contemporary research and scholarship in the subject area. These issues are critical for Uzbekistan to remain competitive at home and abroad.

Prioritised Area for Scaling TPD

Teacher professional development is a key priority to strengthen public education in Uzbekistan, including all schools in the country. The first phase to address this can involve at least one school from regional centres that will be responsible for scaling TPD to other schools in the area. A regional centre will be responsible for continuous professional development delivery at all schools, closely monitoring pioneer schools first and offering support at the next levels.



Part 2. Project Proposal: Developing public school teachers' assessment competencies

Introduction

Of the country's close to 11,000 public schools, the vast majority (almost 9,000) teach in Uzbek. In Uzbekistan 11 years of education are compulsory and free, beginning with 4 years at primary school, and followed by 2 phases of secondary education taking 5 and 2 years respectively. Primary school begins at age 6 and there is no specific leaving examination after the 4 years are complete.

The next 5 years are spent at general secondary school from ages 10 to 15. Following that, there is a choice of between 2 to 3 years of upper education at either general or technical vocational schools. The former provides a certificate of completed secondary education and the opportunity to enter university, the latter a diploma of specialized secondary education, through a network of secondary vocational institutions.

The National Program for the Development of Public Education for 2022-2026 was approved by the Presidential Decree of May 11 this year. It identifies 6 key areas: improving the quality of education based on advanced foreign experience, increasing the authority of the teaching profession, developing inclusive education, the professional orientation of students, improving infrastructure, and digitalization of the sphere. Each of these areas consists of dozens of specific tasks. The main attention in the national program is paid to raising the authority of teachers in society. This requires the training of highly qualified, modern teaching staff.

Currently, many educational reforms are taking place in Uzbekistan to improve the quality of education and transition from a teacher-centred learning approach to a student-centred one by providing our students with the knowledge and practical skills which will help them to succeed in their lives after education. This can be achieved only through helping all teachers across the country to improve their professional skills and personal growth. A successful economy has a workforce capable of operating industries at a level where it holds a competitive advantage over the economies of other countries. In order to prepare a well-rounded workforce with 21st-century skills, they have to be provided with the best education and resources.

President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev signed a decree "On approval of the Concept of development of the public education system of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030" on 29 April 2019. The Decree approved the Concept of development of the public education system of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030 and the roadmap for its implementation.

Within the concept, Uzbekistan plans to enter into the 30 leading countries of the world according to the rating of the PISA (The Program for International Student Assessment) by 2030.

It is planned to implement measures to update the content of the system of continuing education, as well as training, retraining and advanced training of professional personnel. There are also plans to improve teaching methods and the phased introduction of the principles of individualization of the educational process.

Massive foreign language teaching and learning reforms have taken place in Uzbekistan. Unfortunately, they totally ignored the assessment and teachers' and other stakeholders' assessment literacy. The current proposed project will complete this gap by focusing on school teachers and will attain the following objectives.

Objectives of the project/Expected outcomes

By the end of the project, successful participants will be able to:

- Learn to align their teaching (learning outcomes) to assessment.
- Choose an assessment method appropriate for instructional decisions.

- Set an assessment task following all the principles of assessment.
- Give constructive oral and written feedback to students.
- Develop effective reading/listening/speaking/writing tests (language teachers).
- Learn about academic honesty and ways to avoid plagiarism.
- Communicate assessment results for relevant stakeholders.
- Identify unethical, illegal, and other inappropriate methods.

Key issues and challenges

“Education in developing countries faces significant challenges in achieving the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goal # 4 of ensuring access to quality education and lifelong learning for all” (Lim, Juliana, and Liang, 2020). One of the main reasons for that may be the improper assessment in the education system. “With a few notable exceptions, colleges of education continue to produce new teachers and administrators who are poorly prepared to face the increasingly complex challenges of classroom assessment” (Stiggins 1995, p239). Mukhammedov (2020) argues that it is because ‘assessment has been treated as ‘slave’ in education, which means very little attention is paid”. It had never been part of the syllabus until recently in many higher education establishments in Uzbekistan. In fact, assessment is a ‘driver’ or in other words, a driving force that can bring changes to teaching and learning (Mukhammedov 2020).

Another challenge is that there is no well-set master’s degree course in Testing and Assessment that prepares would-be-teachers with a good understanding of the assessment system in education.

Rationale

Only well-set assessments may have positive washback. Green defines (2013) ‘washback’ as an “impact that a test has on teaching and learning done in preparation for it” (p40). The word ‘test’ is used here to mean different types of assessment set in the classroom. Washback can be positive or negative. To illustrate the point, let us give an example. Many applicants to higher education institutions take an IELTS examination as a part of admission requirements. While preparing for this examination, a test taker will have to work hard to develop all four language skills. This is a good example of a test that has a positive washback. Therefore, Gibbs (2006) argues that “Assessment frames learning, creates learning activity and orients all aspects of learning behavior” (p 23). Quite a similar opinion was given by Biggs and Tang (2011) who state students’ position arguing that “what and how students learn depends to a major extent on how they think they will be assessed” (p.163).

We believe that assessment-literate teachers will be able to set assessments that facilitate learning effectively. As the assessment literacy is the key word. Let us define it before we proceed. Fulcher (2012) defines it as follows:

“The knowledge, skills and abilities required to design, develop, maintain or evaluate, large-scale standardised and/or classroom based tests, familiarity with test processes, and awareness of principles and concepts that guide and underpin practice, including ethics and codes of practice. The ability to place knowledge, skills, processes, principles and concepts within wider historical, social, political and philosophical frameworks in order understand why practices have arisen as they have, and to evaluate the role and impact of testing on society, institutions, and individuals” (p. 125).

This definition is very good, but it is very generic and school teachers may not need some of the mentioned skills. Wisely, Stiggins (1991) differentiates assessment levels needed for different stakeholders in the education system. Anthony Manning in his work put this as follows:

Level 1 - (functional literacy) for users of assessment data produced by others such as students, parents, school board members and legislators. This group need to be able to interpret assessment information and know how to relate assessment data to decision-making.

Level 2 - (practical literacy) - individuals who produce and use data, including teachers, managers, teacher trainers and academic advisers. This group needs the functional skills, as mentioned above but also needs to be able to produce assessments which provide useful and trustworthy information which encourages ongoing student learning. The skills of this group also include understanding the limitations of different assessment types.

Level 3- (advanced literacy) for the creators of high-stakes tests and individuals who work in the field of educational measurement. These individuals must develop the skills associated with Level 1 and Level 2 but must also develop key skills in standardised test development and evaluation along with an understanding of the challenges presented by large-scale test administration and the maintenance of validity and reliability.

The proposed project will focus on practical literacy which is handy for school teachers.

TPD scale approach

To scale up the teacher professional development program, the course will be organized in a blended mode. his will be a self-paced course and can be taken during 4 months. When teachers enrol on the online course, they will be invited for a short face-to-face training (induction) by mentors selected from 13 regions of Uzbekistan. A short training is conducted for trainers before they start their roles. Teachers enrolled on the course may not be tech-savvy. During the induction training mentors will explain the online system works.

Proposed project will consider three core principles of TPD@Scale:



- **Equity:** fair access to learning for teachers that helps them respond to the learning needs of all their students so that student participation, learning and achievement will increase.
- **Quality:** movement in teachers' practice that will enable greater student learning.
- **Efficiency:** the use of resources to ensure that desired outcomes are achieved in an equitable way (Open University, 2022).

As the course will mainly be placed in Moodle Cloud learning management system, it will be possible to use it through desktop computers, tablets, and mobile phones.

Estimated budget

#	Activity	Cost
1	Training course development	10 hrs*150USD = 1500 USD
2	Course technical maintenance	1000 USD
3	Internet mobile traffic for teachers	1000 teachers (pilot)*10 USD sim card with 5GB mobile internet
4	Course evaluation costs	20 hours * 150 USD
5	Experts cost – quality assurance	3 experts *200 USD per day = 10 days
6	Total	17 500 USD

Project evaluation

Assessment literacy of teachers are primarily will be tested through the assessment results and achievements of their students. Assessment statistics will be one of the blocks in the training modules. Teachers will be taught how assessment data can help them to enhance their teaching and learning of students. Data such as mean, standard deviation, and comparison of the previous year's data will be used to see the progress of students and alignment of the assessment to the content of teaching and learning.

Participants will complete questionnaires after face-to-face mode and then give feedback after online mode. Also in a year's time, we will ask their students to complete a questionnaire and interview some of them to find out any changes introduced in testing and assessment. Hopefully, results will be shared through the publication of an article.

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