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Professional Development of the EFL Teacher: A Futuristic Perspective

إعداد :

Dr. Aly A Qoura

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Prepared by

Dr. Aly A Qoura

Professor of EFL Pedagogy ,Mansoura University , Egypt.

Nations around the world have undertaken wide-ranging reforms of teacher professional development including curriculum, instruction, and assessments with the intention of better preparing all learners for the higher educational demands of life and work in the 21st century. What are the skills that young people need to be successful in this rapidly changing world and what competencies do teachers need, in turn, to effectively teach those skills to their students? The question that arises from this is, of course, new teacher preparation programs are needed to prepare graduates who are ready to teach well in a 21st century classroom. This question is, however, still difficult to answer with available comparative evidence.

EU priorities for improving Teacher Quality and Teacher Education, mentioning as examples the following teacher requirements (Council of the European Union, 2007, 2008, 2009):

1. A specialist knowledge of subjects
2. Pedagogical skills, comprising the following:

a. Teach heterogeneous classes
b. Use ICT
c. Teach transversal competences
d. Create safe attractive schools
e. Digital competence
f. Learning to learn
g. Cultures/ attitudes of reflective practice, research, innovation, collaboration, autonomouslearning.

Teachers needed key role asfacilitators in promoting autonomous learning and key competences development throughcollaborative and individualized approaches, taking on management and decision-makingroles.

Assessment and Teaching of 21st Century Skills

Starting from the premise that learning to collaborate with others and connecting through technology areessential skills in a knowledge-based economy, the Assessment and Teaching of 21st Century Skills projectbrought together more than 250 researchers across 60 institutions worldwide who categorized 21st-centuryskills internationally into four broad categories:

Ways of thinking. Creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making and learning

Ways of working. Communication and collaboration

Tools for working. Information and communications technology (ICT) and information literacy

Skills for living in the world. Citizenship, life and career, and personal and social responsibility.

The project also outlines the nature of assessment systems that can support changes in practice, illustratesthe use of technology to transform assessment systems and learning, and proposes a model for assessing21st century skills.The following dimensions of a 21st century education, and the related challengesfor curricula:

Knowledge – relevance required: students' lack of motivation, and often disengagement, reflects the inabilityof education systems to connect the content to real-world relevance. There is a need to strike a better balance between the conceptual and the practical.

Skills –higher-order skills ("21st Century Skills") such as the "4 C's"of Creativity, Critical thinking, Communication, Collaboration. Curricula are alreadyoverburdened with content, which makes it much harder for students to acquire (and teachers to teach) skillsvia deep dives into projects. While there is some consensus on what the skills are, andhow teaching methods via projects can affect skills acquisition, there is little time available during the schoolyear given the overwhelming nature of content curricula, and that there is little in terms of teacher expertise

in combining knowledge and skills in a coherent ensemble, with guiding materials, and assessments.

Character (behaviors, attitudes, values) – to face an increasingly challenging world: as complexities rampup, humankind is rediscovering the importance of teaching character traits such as performance-related traits(adaptability, persistence, resilience) and moral-related traits (integrity, justice, empathy, ethics). The authordescribes the challenges for public school systems as similar to those for skills, with the extra complexityof accepting that character development is also becoming an intrinsic part of the mission, as it is for privateschools.

Meta-Layer (learning how to learn, interdisciplinary, systems thinking, personalization, etc.) – often neglected,or merely mentioned and not acted upon deterministically, this "meta-layer" enveloping the other threedimensions is essential for establishing lifelong learning habits, activating transference, building expertise,fostering creativity via analogies, enhancing versatility, addressing individual students' needs, and so on.

The following figure shows how people learn

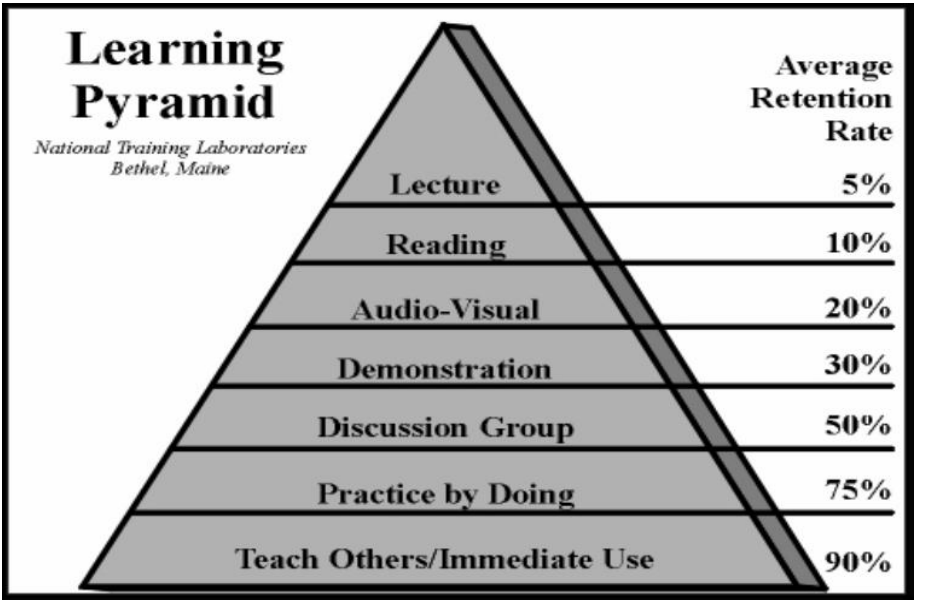

Figure (1) How people learn

Figure (2) shows what type of learning lasts more

Figure (2) Types of learning and outcomes

Professional Development Programs of the 21st Century

In academic literature and debate, the predominant teacher paradigm, globally, seems to be

the clinician-professional model (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Shulman, 1987,2005; Sockett, 2008), which codifies the bases of professional knowledge for practice, andclaims to be based on research and the shared perspectives of experts and educationprofessionals. The model, which takes after medical professionalism, describes the teacheras a reflective practitioner, who actively carries out research and critically deploys scientificknowledge to inform practice. Even though several references to key features of such aparadigm can be traced in most teacher education programmers of teacher educationproviders, as well as in official national documents regarding the competences required ofteachers, the gap between theory and practice, between aims and results often turns out tobe significant in the specific socio-cultural contexts of teachers' professional activities.

Teacher Professional Development in the use of Technology

Many different technologies have been used to support orprovide teacher professional development. Often groupedunder the vague heading, "distance learning," they includebasic correspondence courses, broadcast television, interactiveradio, and video. This section focuses on the potentialof new digital technologies (the Internet, digital radio, CDROMs,DVDs) for teacher professional development.

Professional development of teachers in the use and applicationof educational technology should be designed andimplemented as part of a broader educational reformprogram that, at a minimum, combines technology

accesswith teacher professional development and local content

development. No strategy that ignores any of these threeelements is likely to succeed beyond superficial applications.Ideally, teachers' professional development should not beisolated from other elements of instructional and non-instructionaleducational environments, such as curriculumreform, physical/technological infrastructure, examinations,and research. Simply providing professional development forteachers in the use of computers and the Internet, in a situationwith outdated curricula, traditional standardized testsystems, and insufficient technology access, is unlikely toproduce any systemic improvements in learning. In fact, thehigh-stakes traditional examinations system frequentlyoperates against teachers trying to incorporate technologyand encourage deeper forms of learning, which frequentlyare not measured by standardized tests.Teacher professional development in the use of technologyto improve teaching and learning needs to be:

1. Multifaceted
2. Modular
3. Authentic
4. Collaborative
5. Iterative and ongoing
6. Allocated sufficient time and financial resources
7. Cost-effective
8. Evaluated and revised

While it is neither easy nor inexpensive to design and implementteacher professional development programs in the useof new technologies, it is an absolutely critical element ofany initiative to introduce technology into schools toimprove teaching and learning. Failure to invest sufficientresources in teacher training will result in failure

of school based technology initiatives, which would result in substantialwasted investment that few, if any, developing countriescan afford.

Success in ensuring that teachers acquire the skills andknowledge they need to use technology effectively opens thedoor to all kinds of new educational opportunities for boththeachers and students, and downstream economic opportunitiesfor graduating youth and their countries. It is the key toparticipation in the global knowledge-based economy.Accordingly, teacher professional development in the use andapplication of technology must be given the priority andresources it deserves, while maintaining a constructivelycritical eye on its costs, methodologies, and impact.

Digital Fluency

The results suggest that digital fluency for FL teaching consists of theintegration, implementation and modification of knowledge, skills andattitudes about the educational use of technology for planning lessons throughcollaborative production. Thus, the language teacher should know thepotential of digital technologies, adding to them clear educational objectivesand methods in order to be able to create tasks that match their teachingconceptions. For an effective performance, the FL teacher needs to review hispractice, seeking to develop his authorship and creativity in the production ofhis own digital material.

The proposed collaborative task for the production of digital materialsought to motivate FL teachers to make use of technology as a pedagogical toolin the Information Society, developing, as a result, their autonomy andauthorship. In addition, it had the objective of promoting a perspective oftechnology use for collaborative learning, since the construction of the movieson Windows Movie

Maker was itself a concrete example of how to use it –i.e., as a means of creative expression and production of technology andlanguage with media support. Additionally, Windows Movie Maker wasconsidered a digital tool to be used in students-centric learning tasks that allowsthe exploration and development of skills on language and technology usefrom a variety of media expressions. The collaborative production of themovie on digital fluency in FL teaching enabled the trainee teachers to reflecton the challenges of using technology in education, the need to consider theprofile of their students and change their teaching approach.Finally, on the way to digital fluency, it is noteworthy that the teaching

Digital Content and Instruction

Teachers will know and use appropriate digital tools and resources for instruction.Design technology-enriched learning experiences that encourage all students to pursue their individual interests, preferences, and differences.Lead all students in becoming active participants in setting educational goals, managing learning, and assessing their progress through digital tools.Identify, evaluate, and utilize appropriate digital tools and resources to challenge students to create, think critically, solve problems, establish reliability, communicate their ideas, collaborate effectively.

Immerse students in exploring relevant issues and analyze authentic problems through digital tools and resources.Evaluate and appropriately modify the form and function of the physical learning environment to create a conductive digital learning environment.

Data and Assessment

Teachers will use technology to make data more accessible, adjust instruction to better meet the needs of a diverse learner population, and reflect upon their practice

through the consistent, effective use of assessment.Integrate digitally enhanced formative and summative assessments as a part of the teaching and learning process.Use performance data and digital tools to empower student metacognition for self-assessment & self-monitoring their own learning progress.Utilize multiple and varied forms of assessment including examples of student work products.Utilize technology and digital tools to synthesize and apply qualitative and quantitative data to:

- Create individual learner profiles of strengths, weaknesses, interests, skills, gaps, preferences.
- Inform, personalize, and calibrate individual learning experiences.
- Identify specific plans of action related to weaknesses, gaps, and needed skills as identified in the learnerprofile.
- Reflect and improve upon instructional practice.

Models of Teacher Professional Development Programs

In the following pages I will provide examples of Professional Development programs that take into consideration the requirements for the future in the 21st century and beyond.

Singapore's TE21 Model of Teacher Education

Singapore's National Institute for Education as a university-based teacher education institution seeks to provide the theoretical foundation to produce the "thinking teacher" whilst concurrently having strong partnerships with key stakeholders and the schools to ensure strong clinical practice and realities of professionalism inteacher development. Its new TE21 Model seeks to enhance key elements of teacher education, including the underpinning philosophy, curriculum, desired outcomes for our teachers, and academic pathways. Theseare considered essential prerequisites in meeting the challenges of the 21st century classroom. The model (see figure 3 below) focuses on three

value paradigms: Learner-centered, Teacher Identity and Service to theProfession and Community. Learner-centered values puts the learner at the center of teachers' work by being aware of learner development and diversity, believing that all youths can learn, caring for the learner, striving for scholarship in content teaching, knowing how people learn best, and learning to design the best learningenvironment possible. Teacher identity values refer to having high standards and strong drive to learn in view of the rapid changes in the education milieu, to be responsive to student needs. The values of service to the profession and community focuses on teachers' commitment to their profession through active collaborationsand striving to become better practitioners to benefit the teaching community. The model also underscores the requisite knowledge and skills that teachers must possess in light of the latest global trends, and to improve student outcomes.

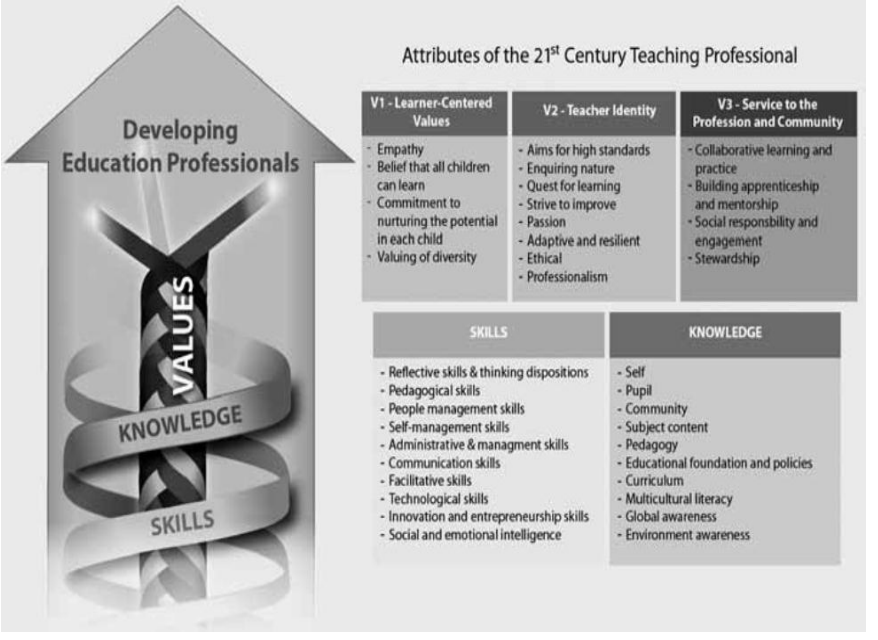

Figure (3)Teacher education elements

For example, in order to be most effective, learning environments should:

- Make learning central, encourage engagement, and be the place where students come to understand themselvesas learners;
- Ensure that learning is social and often collaborative;
- Be highly attuned to students' motivations and the importance of emotions;
- Be acutely sensitive to individual differences, including in prior knowledge;
- Be demanding of every student, without overloading students;
- Use assessments that emphasize formative feedback; and
- Promote connections across activities and subjects, both in and out of school.

Teacher education in Finland

Teacher education in Finland has at least four distinguishing qualities:

- Research based. Teacher candidates are not only expected to become familiar with the knowledge base in education and human development, but they are required to write a research-based dissertation as the final requirement for the master's degree. Upper grade teachers typically pick a topic in their subject area; primary grade teachers typically study some aspect of pedagogy. The rationale for requiring aresearch-based dissertation is that teachers are expected to engage in disciplined inquiry in the classroom throughout their teaching career.
- Strong focus on developing pedagogical content knowledge. Traditional teacher preparation programs too

often treat good pedagogy as generic, assuming that good questioning skills, for example, are equally applicable to all subjects. Because teacher education in Finland is a shared responsibility between the teacher education faculty and the academic subject faculty, there is substantial attention to subject specificpedagogy for prospective primary as well as upper-grade teachers.

- Strong focus on developing pedagogical content knowledge • A very strong clinical component. Teachers' preparation includes both extensive course work on how toteach – with a strong emphasis on using research based on state-of-the-art practice – and at least a full year of clinical experience in a school associated with the university. These model schools are intended to develop and model innovative practices, as well as to foster research on learning and teaching.Within these model schools, student teachers participate in problem-solving groups, a common feature in Finnish schools. The problem-solving groups engage in a cycle of planning, action, and reflection/evaluationthat is reinforced throughout the teacher education program and is, in fact, a model for what teachers willplan for their own students, who are expected to use similar kinds of research and inquiry in their ownstudies. The entire system is intended to improve through continual reflection, evaluation, and problem solving,at the level of the classroom, school, municipality, and nation.

Scotland and Sweden: Curriculum-embedded assessments

Curriculum-embedded assessments address several of the challenges of developing assessments that are instructionally useful. Curriculum-embedded assessments avoid problems of generalizability and reliability associated with teacher-designed assessments. Well-designed

curriculum embedded or on-demand assessments may also improve the validity of teachers' assessments – helping to ensure that teachers areable to make appropriate inferences about student learning in relation to learning goals – while providing information in a timely manner.Both Sweden and Scotland have developed "on-demand" assessments. Teachers may decide when students are ready to take a test in a particular subject or skill area, drawing from a central bank of assessment tasks. Control over timing of tests means that teachers are able to provide students with feedback when it isrelevant to the learning unit. In Scotland, a central system maps assessment tasks to standards and critical skills, topics and concepts in the curriculum. The assessments are usually designed, administered and scored locally, based on central guidelines and criteria. Centrally developed assessments are also available. The on demandassessment results may comprise up to 50% of final examination scores.

Teacher Professional Development in the Netherlands

(Teacher collaboration in cyberspace)

In the Netherlands, a 2008 report on open educational resources spurred interest in developing a way for teachers across the country to collaborate on educational materials and practices. The result is Wikiwijs, literally "Wikiwise", an Internet-based platform where teachers can find, download, develop and shareeducational resources. Developed by the Open Universities Nederland and Kennisnet at the request of the ministry of education, the platform is based on open-source software, open content and open standards. The Wikiwijs platform was launched in December 2009; then, after eight months of testing, a revised version waslaunched in September 2010. Teachers can freely use anything they find in the Wikiwijs database in their classrooms. While the scope of Wikiwijs covers the entire Dutch education system, from primary schools to universities, during this trial phase, the only school subjects

examined on the platform are mathematics and the Dutch language. All documentation on Wikiwijs is in Dutch.

The Learning Federation, Australia and New Zealand

A joint venture called The Learning Federation was developed as a major digital content project for Australian and New Zealand schools. The Learning Federation developed learning objects for schools as well as learning and content management systems. Some initiatives involved the development of content to meet the curriculum, professional development, and other educational priorities of education systems.The Learning Federation began as a major digital content project for Australian and New Zealand schools. It developed specifications for educational soundness and new delivery systems such as web portals, learning management systems, and content management systems. A number of schools implemented major softwarepackages to support these functions. The Learning Federation also developed a "Basic E-Learning Tool Set" to provide schools with the basic functionality for managing learning objectives, until comprehensive learning content management systems could be implemented within jurisdictions. State and territory education authorities also operated various initiatives for providing their schools with digital content.

Open Access College, South Australia

Those who are not able to attend regular schooling are given the opportunity to continue their education in the Open Access College. This innovative distance education alternative features mixed-aged grouping, effective use of ICT, and collaborative and individualized learning. All learning within the program is personally tailored to meet the diverse needs of individual students. Individual learning plans are developedfor all students, and ongoing contact occurs between teachers and individual students, interdisciplinary themes are developed based on student

interests and resources are accessible for each student online to access in their own time. Both quantitative and qualitative data reveal improved student engagement and attendance.

Preparing teachers to lead improvement in Japan and China

The Japanese tradition of lesson studies in which groups of teachers review their lessons and how to improve them, in part through analysis of student errors, provides one of the most effective mechanisms for teachers' self-reflection as well as being a tool for continuous improvement. Observers of Japanese elementary school classrooms have long noted the consistency and thoroughness with which a mathematics concept is taught and the way in which the teacher leads a discussion of mathematical ideas, both correct and incorrect, so that students gain a firm grasp on the concept. This school-by-school lesson study often culminates in large public research lessons. For example, when a new subject is added to the national curriculum, groups ofteachers and researchers review research and curriculum materials and refine their ideas in pilot classrooms over a year before holding a public research lesson, which can be viewed electronically by hundreds of teachers, researchers and policymakers.

The tradition of lesson study in Japan also means that Japanese teachers are not alone.They work together in a disciplined way to improve the quality of the lessons they teach. That means that teachers whose practice lags behind that of the leaders can see what good practice is. Because their colleagues know who the poorperformers are and discuss them, the poor performers have both the incentive and the means to improve their performance. Since the structure of the East Asian teaching workforce includes opportunities to become a master teacher and move up a ladder of increasing prestige and responsibility, it also pays for the goodteacher to become even better.

In China Teachers are trained to be action researchers in effective practice, with the best teachers going on to support new teachers and helping to improve lesson quality.The authorities in the Shanghai province of China emphasize giving prospective teachers the skills they will need for action research, and their method for improving their education system over time relies on researchperformed by teachers. As in Finland , all students in Shanghai are expected to perform at high levels and teachers are expected to make sure that no student, literally, will be allowed to fall behind. This makes it essential that teachers identify students who are just beginning to flounder, diagnose the problem, and have the skills and knowledge needed to create a large and constantly updated reservoir of solutions for the student performance problems they have diagnosed.During the course of their careers, teachers in Shanghai are involved in subject-based "teaching-study groups" to improve teaching at the grassroots level on a day-to-day basis. There are timetabled sessions when the study group meets, often with related personnel, such as laboratory assistants, to draw up very detailed lesson schemes for a particular topic for the following week. The lesson plan serves not only as a guide for the teacher during the lesson, but also as documentation of the teacher's professional performance.

During actual teaching, teachers may observe each other or may be observed by peers. For example, when a change in curriculum introduces a new teaching topic, teachers may be observed by new teachers, so these can learn from more experienced colleagues; by senior teachers, for mentoring purposes; or by the school principal, for monitoring or to provide constructive development assistance. Sometimes, teachersare expected to teach demonstration lessons, called public lessons, for a large number of other teachers to observe and comment upon.

This structured organization of teaching in Shanghai is not only a means for administration; it is also a major platform for professional enhancement. Teachers in Shanghai are classified into four grades that indicate theirprofessional status. Promotion from one grade to the next often requires the capacity to give demonstration lessons, contribute to the induction of new teachers, publish in journals or magazines about education or teaching, and so forth. The provincial office often identifies the best teachers emerging from evaluation processes and relieves them of some or all of their teaching duties so that they can give lectures to their peers, provide demonstrations, and coach other teachers on a district, provincial and even national level.

With its famous "lesson studies" or "teaching research sessions" (jugyokenkyuu), Japan provides a good illustration of the fact that certain distinctive characteristics of work organization in the education sector can help to establish a culture of ongoing development and allow for an intense exchange of knowledge. Other organizational routines or models based on "communities of practice" have the same aim, namely to create a web of professional relations that will generate a continual dynamic of learning and improvement within establishments.

Too many policies have focused on individual teachers and leaders instead of trying to improve and change how teachers work. A lot of time can be wasted "waiting for superman", when small changes that put improvement, professional discussions and collegiality at the center of the schools are actually achievable. In Ontario, for example,improvement has been based on a change in teachers' working conditions and school routines.

It is important to identify the conditions in which different types of learning organizations can emerge and how teachers can share the knowledge that they have accumulated during their working lives. Some policy

programs have managed to influence work organization in the business sector. In education, which is predominantly publicin all OECD countries, there is no reason why public authorities should not try to do so.Carefully picked schools are often asked to pilot new programs or policies before they are scaled-up, and the best teachers in those schools are enlisted as co-researchers to evaluate the effectiveness of the newpractices. The practices described here for Shanghai are similar in other East Asian countries. The East Asian countries

taking part in PISA all provide interesting models for building on professional teacher collaboration to make the most of their top-performing teachers.

The 21st Century EFL/ESL Teacher

Teachers more than ever have a vital role to play in helping students realize their futures by providing them with instruction that gives direction and allows them to hone their new cognitive and technological skills. In a nutshell, (Daggett, 2010) suggests that students need facilitated content to be fully capable citizens, whether its blogging on a social network site or solving a math problem. They may have limitless technology and information at their disposal, but can they access that information efficiently and effectively? Can they evaluate it critically and competently and identify objective facts from propaganda? Do they understand the real ethical, legal, and moral issues concerning access to and use of information? Can they create meaning from data? In essence, do they know the value of information, aside from what is needed to pass a test? When teachers start asking these questions, they begin to look at education in the larger context of today's society. That context includes helping students solve real-world current problems and prepare for a future of unknowns.

What Do EFL Teachers Need to Know and Do?

If we commit to a vision of 21st century knowledge and skills for all students, it is vital that we support EFL teachers in mastering the competencies that ensure positive learning outcomes for students. These include:

- Successfully aligning technologies with content and pedagogy and developing the ability to creatively use technologies to meet specific learning needs.
- Aligning instruction with standards, particularly those standards that embody 21st century knowledge and skills.
- Balancing direct instruction strategically with project-oriented teaching methods.
- Using a range of assessment strategies to evaluate student performance and differentiate instruction (including but not limited to formative, portfolio-based, curriculum-embedded and summative).
- Acting as mentors and peer coaches with fellow teachers.
- Designing developmentally appropriate learning opportunities that apply technology-enhanced instructional strategies to support the diverse needs of learners.
- Applying current research on teaching and learning with technology when planning learning environments and experiences.
- Mastering basic hardware and software operations, as well as productivity applications software, a web browser, communications software, presentation software, and management applications.
- Knowing how, and under which conditions, students learn best, and teachers must anticipate and be able to effectively respond to the difficulties students encounter.
- Thinking Creatively through :

a. Using a wide range of idea creation techniques (such as brainstorming).

b. Creating new and worthwhile ideas (both incremental and radical concepts).
c. Elaborating, refining, analyzing and evaluating their own ideas in order to improve and maximize creative efforts.

- Working Creatively with Others through:

a. Developing, implementing and communicating new ideas to others effectively.
b. Being open and responsive to new and diverse perspectives; incorporating group input and feedback into the work.
c. Demonstrating originality and inventiveness in work and understanding the real world limits to adopting new ideas.
d. Viewing failure as an opportunity to learn; understanding that creativity and innovation is a long-term, cyclical process of small successes and frequent mistakes.

- Implementing Innovations through:

a. Acting on creative ideas to make a tangible and useful contribution to the field of EFL.
b. Going beyond basic mastery of skills and/or curriculum to explore and expand one's own learning and opportunities to gain expertise
c. Demonstrating initiative to advance skill levels towards a professional level.
d. Demonstrating commitment to learning as a lifelong process.
e. Reflecting critically on past experiences in order to inform future progress

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