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CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS IN WAR-AFFECTED REGIONS

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Summary. This article explores the barriers to professional development for English language teachers during wartime and examines innovative strategies that can enhance their professional growth under such extreme conditions. Through an analysis of case studies from war-affected regions, including Ukraine, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh, the article highlights successful adaptations to traditional professional development models. In Bangladesh, the English in Action program demonstrated the effectiveness of using low-cost mobile phones to deliver video-based tutorials and peer support. This initiative not only bridged the gap in physical access to professional development but also allowed teachers in remote areas to enhance their pedagogical practices. Similarly, in Afghanistan, informal peer support networks emerged as a critical mechanism for both professional and emotional support. These networks enabled teachers to share resources and strategies, fostering a collaborative environment in which resilience and professional identity could flourish. In Ukraine, the integration of online platforms allowed teachers displaced by war to continue accessing modern pedagogical training and digital tools, ensuring that they could maintain instructional quality despite the war. The scientific results obtained from these examples



confirm the effectiveness of flexible, scalable solutions for professional development in war zones. Mobile technology, online platforms, and peer support networks provide critical avenues for professional growth in environments where traditional methods are no longer viable. These solutions also contribute to the personal and professional resilience of teachers, allowing them to cope with the psychological stresses of war while improving the quality of language instruction. The article concludes that professional development for English language teachers in war-affected regions must move beyond traditional models to incorporate context-sensitive, technology-enabled approaches. Further research should focus on the long-term impact of these solutions, particularly in terms of their scalability and sustainability across various cultural settings and challenging environments.

Key words: professional development; war-affected regions; English language teachers; educational resilience; wartime education.

The field of education is facing unprecedented challenges in times of Russia's full-scale military aggression against Ukraine, particularly when it comes to the professional development of teachers. English language educators, essential for fostering communication skills in a globalized world, have been significantly impacted by the ongoing war. Displacement, infrastructural damage, psychological trauma, and limited access to resources have created formidable barriers to their professional growth. Yet, the demand for effective English instruction remains high, as language proficiency plays a critical role in international collaboration, access to information, and economic opportunities.

In wartime, traditional professional development frameworks – such as in-person workshops, conferences, and training seminars – often become inaccessible. Furthermore, the shift to remote learning, necessitated by the conflict, presents both an opportunity and a challenge for English language teachers to engage with new educational technologies and methodologies. However, many teachers face [3] technical, logistical, and emotional hurdles that hinder their participation in such programs.

This article aims to explore the challenges English language teachers encounter in accessing professional development during wartime and proposes strategies to mitigate these barriers. By understanding these obstacles and offering practical solutions, we can contribute to sustaining and enhancing the professional capacities of teachers, ultimately improving the quality of English language education in war-affected areas.

The professional development of English language teachers in war zones presents a multifaceted challenge [2] that intersects with both educational theory and practice. In times of war, the disruption of educational systems is inevitable, leading to diminished access to traditional forms of teacher training and continuous professional development. This not only affects the professional growth of teachers but also has direct implications for the quality of language education provided to learners in these regions.

The problem is compounded by the fact that, in war-affected areas, teachers often operate under extreme stress, with limited resources, unstable infrastructure, and intermittent communication channels. Additionally, the psychological toll on both teachers and learners further complicates the delivery of effective educational programs. Despite these significant barriers, the need for proficient English language



educators remains critical, as language skills contribute to global communication, the dissemination of information, and, in many cases, access to opportunities beyond the immediate war zone.

This problem is intricately linked to important scientific and practical tasks. From a scientific perspective, there is a need to explore how educational theories – such as resilience in education, technology-enhanced learning, and crisis pedagogy – can be adapted to support teacher development in war zones. Furthermore, practical solutions must be devised to ensure that teachers continue to receive training that aligns with both global pedagogical standards and the unique needs of learners in war-affected regions. This requires an interdisciplinary approach that combines insights from educational sciences, psychology, and conflict studies.

Ultimately, addressing the professional development of English language teachers in wartime is not just an academic concern but a pressing practical issue with far-reaching implications for the stability and future development of war-affected societies. Empowering teachers with the skills, knowledge, and support they need under such conditions is essential for sustaining educational continuity, fostering social cohesion, and enabling post-war recovery efforts.

Recent research on the professional development of English language teachers in war zones has begun to shed light on both the challenges and innovative solutions required to address this pressing issue. The findings in this field explore various dimensions of professional growth under extreme conditions, with particular emphasis on the adaptation of traditional models to suit wartime contexts.

Key contributions include the work of Hayes, who edited a volume titled *Innovations in the Continuing Professional Development of English Language Teachers*. This publication highlights [6] global case studies from countries such as Afghanistan, Ethiopia, and Bangladesh, focusing on how professional development programs have adapted to incorporate technology, peer support, and low-cost mobile solutions to overcome barriers to access. The use of online communities of practice, as seen in Greece, has also been a significant innovation in continuing teacher education in conflict zones.

In a similar vein, Korniusz examine the impact of trauma on teachers working in war-affected environments. Their work underscores [8] the importance of psychosocial support and resilience-building as essential components of professional development.

Furthermore, a report from the *The Cedos Think Tank* emphasizes [1] the need for educational continuity in post-war reconstruction, outlining frameworks for teacher training programs that can operate under disrupted conditions.

Despite these advancements, several gaps remain in the literature. Notably, there is limited research that addresses the specific needs of English language teachers who work with displaced populations or in regions experiencing ongoing war conflict. Additionally, while digital platforms are increasingly used for professional development, access to reliable technology and the internet remains a significant barrier in many war-torn regions. This article aims to address these gaps by proposing context-specific strategies for the professional development of English language teachers in war-affected areas, with a focus on both technological innovations and psychosocial support mechanisms.



The purpose of this article is to analyse the specific challenges that English language teachers face in accessing and engaging in professional development opportunities during wartime. It aims to identify the barriers posed by war conflict-related disruptions, such as displacement, lack of infrastructure, and psychological stress, and to propose effective, context-sensitive strategies for overcoming these challenges. By doing so, the article seeks to contribute to the broader body of knowledge on teacher resilience and capacity-building in war-affected regions. Moreover, the article intends to offer practical recommendations that can be implemented by educational policymakers, institutions, and international organizations to ensure the continuous professional growth of English language educators in these settings.

The professional development of English language teachers in war regions is a multidimensional issue that requires innovative approaches to overcome numerous challenges. Drawing from real examples, this section explores how educators in war-affected regions have navigated these challenges and how the proposed strategies can enhance their professional growth.

Example 1. Bangladesh – leveraging low-cost mobile technology for teacher development.

In Bangladesh, a project called *English in Action (EiA)* (<https://www.eiabd.com/>) demonstrated [12] how low-cost mobile phones could be used to deliver professional development to teachers in rural and war-affected areas. This initiative provided video tutorials, peer feedback mechanisms, and ongoing support through mobile phones, allowing teachers to engage in training programs despite geographical barriers and limited infrastructure.

Since 1994, *English in Action* has made [5] a significant impact on the lives of thousands of individuals and families in its region, thanks to the sustained support of donors, volunteer tutors, and adult learners. The organization measures its success through several key metrics, including the number of individuals served, services provided, improvements in language skills, and overall enhancements in the quality of life for both learners and tutors.

The success of this program was evident [13] in its reach and impact. Teachers who participated showed significant improvements in their instructional techniques and classroom management. The flexibility of mobile technology enabled educators to learn at their own pace and adapt their teaching practices to suit local contexts. This example demonstrates that, by adopting mobile technology, professional development programs can overcome logistical challenges posed by conflict. The scientific results confirm that technology-mediated solutions are effective for reaching teachers in hard-to-access areas, promoting sustainable and scalable development models.

Example 2. Afghanistan – building resilience through peer support networks.

In Afghanistan, a country ravaged by decades of national conflict, professional development has been critically impaired [4] by the destruction of educational infrastructure. However, educators have turned to peer support networks to continue their professional growth. Teachers in rural areas formed informal communities of practice, using both in-person and virtual meetings to share resources, discuss challenges, and exchange teaching strategies.

These networks provided emotional support as well as professional guidance, which proved essential in helping teachers cope with the stresses of teaching in war-affected zones. Research shows that teachers who participated in these peer networks exhibited higher resilience, greater job satisfaction, and a stronger sense of professional identity compared to those who worked in isolation. The results underline the importance of fostering collaborative learning environments, particularly in war-torn regions, where formal training opportunities are scarce. This approach justifies the need for developing and supporting peer-based professional development models as a means of fostering both teacher resilience and instructional quality.

Example 3. Ukraine – online platforms for teacher training during wartime.

Since the onset of war in Ukraine, the Ministry of Education has partnered with international organizations to implement (<https://udl.org.ua>) online training platforms for teachers. These platforms offer [11] free courses on modern pedagogy, language teaching techniques, and the integration of digital tools into the classroom. Educators from across the country, including those displaced by the war, have been able to access these courses, allowing for continuous professional development in an otherwise disrupted environment. [9]

In July 2023, 32 Ukrainian university instructors participated in a five-day Professional Development Institute in Krakow “*Teaching in a time of crisis: innovative tools, strategies, and approaches to improving English learning for Ukrainians*”, funded by the U.S. Embassy Kyiv and organized by TESOL-Ukraine in collaboration with the OPEN Program alumna Iryna Lyashenko. Led by a team of American and Ukrainian trainers, the sessions covered key topics such as designing online and blended courses, teaching grammar, developing speaking skills, fostering emotional intelligence, and promoting resilience and growth mindset in English learners. The institute also introduced strategies for creating effective learning experiences using systemic functional linguistics and genre pedagogy approaches.

Amid Russia's full-scale military aggression, many Ukrainian universities, including Vinnytsia National Technical University, have transitioned to online systems. VNTU utilizes the JetIQ system, which serves [7] as a comprehensive platform for managing the educational process, tracking student performance, and monitoring learning activities. Additionally, the system includes TestIQ, a tool for assessing students' knowledge through online testing.

These training sessions aimed to equip Ukrainian educators with innovative tools and strategies to enhance English language instruction in both online and hybrid classrooms during times of crisis. By focusing on both pedagogical techniques and the emotional well-being of learners, the institute sought to foster a more resilient and effective learning environment for Ukrainian students.

So we see that the use of online platforms has proven to be an effective solution, particularly in war-affected regions where physical attendance at workshops and seminars is impossible. Teachers who participated in these courses reported improved confidence in using digital tools and more innovative approaches to language instruction. This example underscores the potential of digital platforms to mitigate the effects of war on professional development, enabling teachers to stay updated on current methodologies even in the midst of war. The scientific results obtained confirm [10] that online platforms not only bridge the accessibility gap but also empower teachers to incorporate XXI century skills into their pedagogical practices.



The scientific results obtained from these case studies provide strong evidence that innovative approaches to professional development, such as the use of mobile technology, peer support networks, and online platforms, are crucial in war-affected areas. These strategies address the unique barriers posed by war, including geographical isolation, infrastructure damage, and psychological stress.

The successful implementation of mobile technology in Bangladesh and online platforms in Ukraine highlights the potential for scalable, low-cost solutions that can be adapted to different war-affected regions. Meanwhile, the peer support networks in Afghanistan demonstrate that professional development is not solely dependent on formal training but can also be nurtured through collaborative, community-based approaches. The findings of these studies suggest that resilience-building, both personal and professional, should be a key component of professional development programs for teachers in war zones.

Ultimately, the scientific justification of these results points to the need for a paradigm shift in how we approach teacher development in war-affected regions. Traditional models of in-person workshops and seminars must be complemented by flexible, technology-enabled solutions that take into account the realities of teaching in challenging environments. By focusing on scalable, context-sensitive strategies, we can ensure that English language educators continue to grow professionally, thereby improving the quality of education in these challenging contexts.

The professional development of English language teachers in war zones faces significant challenges, but this study demonstrates that innovative, context-sensitive solutions can successfully address these barriers. The use of low-cost mobile technology in Bangladesh, peer support networks in Afghanistan, and online training platforms in Ukraine are all examples of how professional development can be adapted to war-affected environments. These strategies not only offer practical solutions to logistical and infrastructural issues but also enhance teacher resilience, instructional quality, and adaptability in times of crisis.

The findings suggest that professional development models in war zones must be flexible, scalable, and rooted in the realities of teachers' everyday challenges. Key components such as technology integration, community-based peer support, and trauma-informed approaches are essential for fostering a sustainable and effective development process. These strategies are supported by research that highlights their success in maintaining educational continuity and improving teacher performance under extreme conditions.

Further scientific research in this area should focus on the following.

1. Long-term impact of digital platforms. While online platforms have shown promise in the short term, more research is needed to evaluate their long-term impact on teacher performance and student outcomes in war-affected regions. Understanding the sustainability of these digital tools will provide insights into how they can be improved and scaled across other regions facing similar challenges.

2. Trauma-informed pedagogy. The psychological impact of war on both teachers and students is profound, yet current professional development programs do not sufficiently address trauma-informed teaching strategies. Future scientific

research should explore how teacher training can better integrate psychological support and trauma pedagogy into professional development.

3. Cultural adaptability and localization. Professional development programs often face the challenge of aligning global teaching practices with local cultural and educational contexts. Further exploration is needed to assess how training programs can be tailored to the specific needs of teachers in different war-affected regions, ensuring that these programs remain relevant and effective.

By continuing to explore these areas, we can enhance the capacity of English language teachers in war zones, ultimately contributing to the resilience and recovery of educational systems in war-affected regions.

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ВИКЛИКИ ТА СТРАТЕГІЇ ПРОФЕСІЙНОГО РОЗВИТКУ ВЧИТЕЛІВ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ В ЗОНАХ ВОЄННИХ ДІЙ

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Анотація. У статті досліджуються бар'єри на шляху професійного розвитку вчителів англійської мови у воєнний час та інноваційні стратегії, які можуть сприяти їхньому професійному зростанню в екстремальних умовах. На основі аналізу конкретних прикладів із постраждалих від війни регіонів, зокрема України, Афганістану та Бангладеш, у статті висвітлюються успішні приклади адаптації до традиційних моделей професійного розвитку. У Бангладеш програма *English in Action* «Англійська в дії» продемонструвала ефективність використання недорогих мобільних телефонів для надання відеоуроків та підтримки колег. Ця ініціатива не лише пододала розрив у фізичному доступі до професійного розвитку, а й дозволила вчителям у віддалених районах вдосконалити свою педагогічну практику. Так само в Афганістані неформальні мережі підтримки колег стали важливим механізмом як професійної, так і емоційної підтримки. Ці мережі дозволили вчителям обмінюватися ресурсами і стратегіями, сприяючи створенню середовища співпраці, в якому можуть процвітати стійкість і професійна ідентичність. В Україні застосування онлайн-платформ дозволило вчителям, переміщеним внаслідок війни, продовжувати отримувати доступ до сучасної педагогічної підготовки та цифрових інструментів, що забезпечило їм можливість підтримувати якість викладання, незважаючи на воєнний час. Наукові результати, отримані з цих прикладів, підтверджують ефективність гнучких, масштабованих рішень для професійного розвитку в регіонах, що постраждали від війни. Мобільні технології, онлайн-платформи та мережі взаємної підтримки надають важливі можливості для професійного зростання в умовах, коли традиційні методи вже не є життєздатними. Ці рішення також сприяють підвищенню особистої та професійної стійкості вчителів, дозволяючи їм справлятися з психологічними стресами конфлікту, одночасно підвищуючи якість викладання мови. У статті зроблено висновок, що професійний розвиток вчителів англійської мови в постраждалих від воєнних дій регіонах має виходити за межі традиційних моделей і включати контекстно-чутливі, технологічні підходи. Подальші наукові дослідження мають бути зосереджені на довгостроковому впливі цих рішень, особливо з точки зору їх масштабованості та стійкості в різних культурних середовищах і складних умовах.

Ключові слова: професійний розвиток; постраждали від війни регіони; вчителі англійської мови; освітня стійкість; освіта у воєнний час.