

**BRIDGING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WITH CAREER GUIDANCE IN  
EFL ONLINE COURSE**

**Iryna Liashenko,**

Sumy State University, Ukraine

Virginia Commonwealth University – Davis Centre Harvard University

ORCID: 0000-0003-4211-5116

Corresponding author: [i.liashenko@ms.sumdu.edu.ua](mailto:i.liashenko@ms.sumdu.edu.ua)

**Stuart Carroll,**

The College of New Jersey, Jermantown, NJ, USA

**Abstract.** *The topic of professional development with the teachers has been an integrative part of professional competence shaping, meaning the multifaceted and complex nature of this essence in forms, stages, stakeholders, methods, and many more. This article aims to highlight the shared insights about the online course on professional development, designed for secondary school teachers of English from Ukrainian places in the time of war as a career guidance course and spot the connections between online professional courses and willingness to promote the university to high school students for enrolling. The research was conducted grounding in the continuous flow of research about the teaching and learning process in the time of COVID-19 when the education system urged to switch to the online or blended mode, the period of trial and error in conforming to the demanding requirements for successful communication and in substituting the live communication. The authors claim to enlighten the perceptions of the participants of the course to reveal the ways of improving the course for further usage. The article shares the quantitative and qualitative data to reflect the degree of the teachers' perspective.*

**Keywords:** *online course, professional development, secondary teachers, perceptions, online education.*

**Received:** 18 May, 2024

**Revised:** 25 May, 2024

**Accepted:** 28 May, 2024

**How to cite:** Liashenko I., Carroll St. (2024). Bridging Professional Development with Career Guidance in EFL Online Course. *Philological Treatises*, 16(1).

[https://www.doi.org/10.21272/Ftrk.2024.16\(1\)-12](https://www.doi.org/10.21272/Ftrk.2024.16(1)-12)



Copyright: © 2024 by the authors. For open-access publication within the terms and conditions of the [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/) (CC BY-NC)

**ПОЄДНАННЯ ПРОФЕСІЙНОГО РОЗВИТКУ З ПРОФОРІЄНТАЦІЄЮ  
В ОНЛАЙН-КУРСІ ДЛЯ ВИКЛАДАЧІВ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ ЯК ІНОЗЕМНОЇ**

**Ірина Ляшенко,**

Сумський державний університет, Україна

Університет Співдружності Вірджинії – Центр Девіса, Гарвардський університет

ORCID: 0000-0003-4211-5116

Автор, відповідальний за листування: [i.liashenko@ms.sumdu.edu.ua](mailto:i.liashenko@ms.sumdu.edu.ua)

© Liashenko I., Carroll St., 2024

**Стюарт Керролл,**  
Коледж Нью-Джерсі, Німеччина

**Анотація.** *Тема професійного розвитку викладачів є інтегральною частиною формування професійної компетентності, що означає багатогранність і складність цієї сутності у формах, етапах, зацікавлених сторонах, методах тощо. Ця стаття має на меті висвітлити спільні інсайти щодо онлайн-курсу з професійного розвитку, розробленого для вчителів англійської мови середніх шкіл з різних регіонів України під час війни як курсу профорієнтації, і підкреслити зв'язок між онлайн-курсами професійного розвитку та бажанням сприяти залученню студентів до університету. Дослідження проводилося на основі безперервного потоку досліджень про процес викладання та навчання в період COVID-19, коли освітня система була змушена перейти на онлайн або змішаний режим, що став періодом проб і помилок у пристосуванні до вимог успішної комунікації та заміни живого спілкування. Автори прагнуть висвітлити сприйняття учасників курсу, щоб виявити шляхи покращення курсу для подальшого використання. Стаття надає кількісні та якісні дані для відображення ступеня перспектив викладачів.*

**Ключові слова:** *онлайн-курс, професійний розвиток, вчителі середніх шкіл, сприйняття, онлайн-освіта.*

**Отримано:** 18 травня 2024 р.

**Отримано після доопрацювання:** 25 травня 2024 р.

**Затверджено:** 28 травня 2024 р.

**Як цитувати:** Ляшенко І., Керролл Ст. (2024). Поєднання професійного розвитку з профорієнтацією в онлайн-курсі для викладачів англійської мови як іноземної. *Філологічні трактати*, 16(1).

[https://www.doi.org/10.21272/Ftrk.2024.16\(1\)-12](https://www.doi.org/10.21272/Ftrk.2024.16(1)-12)

### **Introduction**

Much has been said about online education in times of crisis. Although some researchers aimed at professional development in online courses in their research (Allen, 2020; Wang, 2012), there is plenty of research on the online transition to teaching in times of crisis (Lie, 2020; Moorhouse, 2022; Ng, 2019; Yan, 2022; Pavlič, 2022), still there is not much research has been conducted about online professional development courses in Ukraine in times of war. The experience gained during the global pandemic in sustaining teaching and learning, as well as in-service development, has created a solid background for the application of the key principles in crisis times, such as the Russo-Ukrainian war with the English teachers in secondary schools.

In an analysis of the literature, the vast majority of research papers consider the use of IT as a key factor for maintaining professional development (Cosgun & Savaş, 2019; Hidayat, 2023; Gonzalez-Vidal, 2024). Etools are in constant updating and their use has a direct impact on developing motivation, accessibility, variety of forms and methods, as well as the educational goals for teaching and learning and in assessment.

The other key factors for successful professional development programs for EFL teachers that matter in online education for professionals, as Satar and Akcan (2018) claim in their research, are participation, interaction patterns, and sense of presence. These aspects create a real communication feeling and lead the process of professional development during the course to successful results. These factors should be considered in the professional development courses when designing group work online.

Recent studies have focused on soft skills, such as socio-psycho factors, particularly attitudes towards learning science, teacher competence, professional development, student characteristics, teaching and learning practices, and classroom management (Khurma, 2024).

Yet, we failed to find research on the connection between the professional development of EFL teachers and university promotion. With this in mind, the Department of Foreign Languages and Linguodidactics at Sumy State University, with the support of the College of New Jersey, has organized a 1 credit course on professional development for secondary school EFL teachers on teaching methodology aimed at professional development and university promotion.

The aim of this work is to enlighten the connection between the professional development course and the readiness of EFL teachers, the participants of the course, to inspire their graduating students to consider enrolling at our university.

More specifically, the research has a threefold objective:

- 1) To overview the experience of organizing the online course for EFL teachers in the framework of a career guidance campaign;
- 2) To explore the teachers' perspectives of the course; and
- 3) To highlight the connection of this course with the engagement of the teachers to promote our institution to their high school students.

### **Methods**

The study was conducted within the framework of the Virtual Educator Program supported by US Department of State by Dr. Stuart Carrol from the College of New Jersey. The online course lasted for 10 weeks and had 5 sessions on Teaching Methodology.

The course was announced among EFL secondary teachers as a professional development course through the social nets. There were 20 participants selected from the overall number of about 100 applicants, 15 of whom have successfully completed the course and received the certificates. The EFL teachers were selected on the principle whether they teach in the last grade to be able to promote university to the students.

The course included sessions on teaching methodology, particularly on the ways and forms of designing classes based on poetry and songs, engaging video vlogging, developing speaking skills, building integrative lessons using the accents aspect, and enhancing overall communicative competence with the students. At the end of the course, the participants were asked to reflect on the questions about their practical implementation with their students. As this was the first course with the EFL teachers online, after completing the course, the participants were asked for their feedback to research the benefits and failures of the course to improve further courses. The questions dealt with the level of satisfaction, methods, and content, along with the open-ended questions about the level of satisfaction with learning outcomes, course content, and instructor engagement. The participants were also asked whether they recommend their high school students for enrolling to Sumy State University.

### **Results**

In the presented population, the data shows a broad range of grades being taught, with a notable concentration in the upper grades (9, 10, 11), which was favorable for participation in the course.

- Grade 2: 1 teacher (10%)
- Grade 4: 1 teacher (10%)
- Grade 5: 4 teachers (40%)
- Grade 6: 3 teachers (30%)
- Grade 7: 4 teachers (40%)
- Grade 8: 4 teachers (40%)
- Grade 9: 5 teachers (50%)
- Grade 10: 5 teachers (50%)
- Grade 11: 6 teachers (60%)

The majority of the participants (90%) indicated that the course either exceeded or far exceeded their expectations, with 40% stating that it far exceeded their expectations and 50% stating that it exceeded their expectations. Only one participant (10%) felt that the

course equaled their expectations. This suggests a high level of satisfaction with the course content and delivery.

The high percentage of participants whose expectations were exceeded indicates that the course was very effective in meeting or surpassing the participants' goals for enrolling. This could be attributed to the quality of instruction, relevance of the material, or the overall structure of the course. The positive feedback reflects well on the course design and implementation, demonstrating its success in fulfilling participant needs and goals.

Response Frequencies and Percentages:

Far exceeded expectations: 4 responses (40%)

Exceeded expectations: 5 responses (50%)

Equaled expectations: 1 response (10%)

The majority of the participants (70%) characterized the level of difficulty of the course as "appropriately challenging," indicating that the course was suitably demanding and matched the participants' expectations in terms of difficulty. A smaller portion of the participants (30%) found the course to be "easy."

The predominance of responses indicating that the course was appropriately challenging suggests that the course content and structure were well-aligned with the participants' abilities and learning goals. This balance is crucial for effective learning, as it ensures that participants are engaged and stimulated without being overwhelmed.

Easy: 3 responses (30%)

Appropriately challenging: 7 responses (70%)

The majority of the participants (70%) characterized the amount of material covered in the course as "just right," indicating that the course content was well-balanced and manageable within the given timeframe. A smaller portion of the participants (30%) felt that there was "a lot, but not too much" material covered, suggesting that the course was comprehensive without being overwhelming.

The predominance of responses indicating that the amount of material was "just right" suggests that the course was effectively designed to cover an appropriate breadth and depth of content. This balance is essential for maintaining participants' engagement and ensuring that they can assimilate the information without feeling overloaded.

Response Frequencies and Percentages:

A lot, but not too much: 3 responses (30%)

Just right: 7 responses (70%)

In answering the question about the importance of discussions as an inextricable link to communication development and the effect of real-life presence, the majority of participants (70%) rated the discussions as "extremely important" to their learning experience, indicating that the interactive and collaborative aspects of the course significantly enhanced their understanding and engagement. Discussions provided opportunities for participants to clarify concepts, exchange ideas, and deepen their comprehension through dialogue and peer interaction.

The remaining 30% of participants rated the discussions as "somewhat important," suggesting that while discussions contributed positively to their learning experience, other elements of the course (such as lectures, readings, or assignments) might have played a more prominent role for them.

The high percentage of participants who found discussions extremely important highlights the value of interactive learning environments in fostering deeper understanding and engagement. This feedback underscores the importance of incorporating and prioritizing discussions in future course designs to maximize their educational impact.

The responses indicate that discussions were a crucial component of the course, significantly contributing to the participants' learning experience and supporting the achievement of their educational goals.

The direct question of whether the participants felt a lack of live communication was sought to prove the idea that the course was designed to restore communication in online learning. The overwhelming majority of participants (90%) indicated that the course was

organized effectively enough to substitute for live interaction. This suggests that the course's structure, resources, and possibly the use of interactive tools or activities were sufficient to create a sense of engagement and connection comparable to that of live communication. Participants likely found the course's approach to be comprehensive and well-designed to facilitate interaction and learning without the necessity for live sessions.

On the other hand, one participant (10%) felt a strong lack of live communication. This highlights that while the course was effective for most, there may be individual preferences or needs for more direct, live interaction that were not fully met. It suggests that offering optional live sessions or additional interactive components could further enhance the experience for all participants.

Overall, the responses indicate that the course was largely successful in mitigating the absence of live communication, providing an effective substitute through its design and delivery methods. This feedback can be valuable for course developers in reinforcing the strengths of the course while also considering enhancements to support those who still feel a need for live interaction.

In the responses from the questionnaire answering the question about the course's attractiveness, the EFL secondary school teachers presented their responses as follows:

Communication with colleagues: 8 responses (80%)

Instructor's level and methods: 8 responses (80%)

Relevant professional content: 9 responses (90%)

Mixed (university/school) teachers format: 5 responses (50%)

Enough possibilities to express yourself: 4 responses (40%)

Necessity to communicate: 1 response (10%)

The majority of participants found the course attractive due to the relevant professional content (90%) and instructor's level and methods (80%). This suggests that the course was perceived as highly beneficial in terms of the knowledge and skills imparted, as well as the effectiveness and expertise of the instructors.

Communication with colleagues was also a significant factor, with 80% of respondents indicating that it was an attractive feature. This highlights the importance of peer interaction and networking opportunities within the course structure.

The mixed (university/school) teachers format was attractive to 50% of participants. This format likely provided diverse perspectives and approaches, enriching the learning experience.

Enough possibilities to express yourself was chosen by 40% of respondents, suggesting that while a significant number of participants valued opportunities for self-expression, it may not have been a universal priority.

Finally, the necessity to communicate was a factor for 10% of participants, indicating that for a few individuals, the requirement to communicate within the course added to its appeal.

The data indicates that the most attractive aspects of the course were its professional content, the quality of the instructors, and the opportunities for communication with peers. The mixed format of teachers and the ability to express oneself were also valued by a substantial portion of the participants. This information can guide future course designs to emphasize these highly valued elements, ensuring the course remains appealing and effective for a wide audience.

Additional comments highlighted practical classes, interesting exercises, and the easy format of communication and cooperation as highly attractive elements.

1. Practical classes, interesting exercises, and easy communication format:

Mentioned twice, emphasizing the importance of practical, hands-on learning and straightforward communication.

2. Inspirational and educational:

Highlights the motivational and educational value of the course.

3. Rich in practical issues, tips, and recommendations:

Indicates the course's practicality and immediate applicability for teachers.

4. Real communication with teachers:  
Appreciates the authentic interaction and engagement with educators.
5. Conducted by a non-Ukrainian specialist:  
Valued the opportunity to learn from an English-speaking specialist who provided real-world expertise.
6. Chance to communicate with colleagues:  
Appreciates the networking and peer interaction aspects.
7. Adequate time for socializing in breakout rooms:  
Points out the value of dedicated time for informal interaction and networking.
8. Useful resources for the educational process:  
Highlights the practical resources provided by the course, which are already being implemented at work.

9. Improvement of pedagogical skills and non-standard methods:  
Focuses on the development of teaching skills and innovative methods.  
The analysis of the responses can be categorized into several tracks:  
Practicality and Applicability: Many respondents appreciated the practical nature of the course, with specific mention of practical classes, tips, recommendations, and resources that can be implemented in their teaching practice. This indicates a strong preference for content that can be directly applied in the classroom.

Inspirational and Educational Value: The course's ability to inspire and educate was a common theme, suggesting that it successfully motivated participants and enriched their professional knowledge.

Authentic Communication: The emphasis on real communication with educators and peers was a significant positive aspect, highlighting the value of interaction and networking within the course framework.

Expertise of Instructors: The fact that the course was conducted by a non-Ukrainian specialist from an English-speaking country was particularly valued, providing participants with insights and experiences from a different cultural and professional background.

Innovative Methods and Skill Development: The course was appreciated for introducing non-standard methods and improving pedagogical skills, indicating a preference for innovative teaching approaches.

The additional comments underscore the importance of practical, inspirational, and interactive elements in making the course attractive to participants. The ability to learn from international specialists, engage in real communication, and apply new methods and resources in their teaching practice were particularly valued. This feedback can guide the design of future courses to include these highly appreciated aspects, ensuring they meet the needs and expectations of participants.

These answers come along with the research of Satar and Akcan (2018) about the importance of participation, interaction patterns, and a sense of presence.

More than that, in answering the question about the level of connection with colleagues and instructor, the vast majority of respondents (90%) felt very or extremely connected to the community of colleagues and the instructor, which proves the correct choice of methods, strategies and technologies in the course.

The challenges, which the respondents mentioned, were presented as follows:

Poor internet connection: 50%

Unstable power supply: 20%

Psychological anxiety: 30%

Lack of time: 30%

Lack of English: 20%

Unconfidence in positive outcome: 10%

Struggling with the Zoom platform: 10%

The primary challenges anticipated by participants include technological issues (poor internet connection and unstable power supply), personal and psychological barriers

(psychological anxiety and lack of confidence), and practical difficulties (lack of time and language proficiency). Addressing these challenges by providing robust technical support, psychological support, flexible scheduling, and language assistance will be crucial in ensuring the course's success and participant satisfaction.

All participants of the course expressed willingness to share their experience and knowledge gained from the course with senior school students as part of a career guide. This indicates that the goal of organizing this event was met, and proved the efficiency of this kind courses.

The responses indicate a high level of interest and willingness among the course participants to engage in career guidance for senior school students. A significant majority (60%) are unequivocally ready to share their insights, while the remaining 40% are open to the idea if appropriate opportunities are provided. This positive response underscores the potential for leveraging the knowledge and experience of these participants to benefit senior school students through structured career guidance programs.

In answering the questions “How likely are you to recommend Sumy State University as an educational institution due to its modern approaches in teaching?” and “How likely are you to recommend this course and Sumy State University as the option for professional development to another colleague?”, 100% of respondents were unanimous in their top-graded answer “Very Likely”.

### **Discussion**

This study investigated the connectedness of the online professional course with further willingness to promote the host university to the high school students for enrolling. To our knowledge, it is the first study that researches the relation of courses for staff with their willingness to assist the university in career guidance work.

The study provided the description of the online professional course for EFL secondary school teachers with details in organization and the course components. It also presented the analysis of the respondents answers to the questions of the questionnaire sharing insights about their perception of the course. The responses proved the theory, presented in research of Satar and Akcan (2018) about significance of participation, interaction patterns, and sense of presence – the factors that make online communication the closest to the real-life live communication with positive outcomes in learning. Overall, the results of the exit survey have proved the importance of communication in the professional development course. The overall results obtained from the participants proved the high quality of a range of methods and strategies which provided a sense of presence, feeling of live communication, and interactivity.

Among the challenges, presented by the respondents in their answers, there were those linked to the IT issues, which also found a proof in the literature (Cosgun & Savaş, 2019; Hidayat, 2023; Gonzalez-Vidal, 2024).

What's more important, our study validated the relationship we sought to highlight from attendance professional development courses to engagement in career guidance with complete willingness to promote university to students for enrolling.

The limitations, related to this study, might refer to collecting data and interpreting our results. The population size can be not representative enough, but it expresses the general idea.

### **REFERENCES**

- Satar, H. M., & Akcan, S. (2018). Pre-service EFL teachers' online participation, interaction, and social presence. *Language Learning & Technology*, 22(1), 157–183. <https://dx.doi.org/10125/44586>
- Cosgun, G. E., & Savaş, P. (2019). Use of information and communication technology by in-service English teachers for self-directed professional development. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 230–249. <https://hdl.handle.net/11511/79697>

- Hidayat, N. (2023). Do EFL Teachers' Digital Literacies Reflect Sociocultural Frameworks during Their Online Professional Development?. *Language Related Research*, 14(1), 193-217, <https://doi.org/10.52547/LRR.14.1.8>
- Zhong, W. (2019). The Strength and the Correlation Between English Learning Attitudes and Professional Development Needs of Secondary-School English Teachers in Multilingual Areas of China. *Lecture Notes of the Institute for Computer Sciences, Social-Informatics and Telecommunications Engineering, LNICST*, 299, 347-367, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-35095-6\\_39](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-35095-6_39)
- Gonzalez-Vidal, T. (2024). Technology-enhanced language and culture teaching in Chile: the perceptions and practices of in-service EFL teachers. *Journal for Multicultural Education*, 18(1), 25-37, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JME-08-2023-0073>
- Wang, Q. (2012). A case study of using an online community of practice for teachers' professional development at a secondary school in China. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 37(4), 429-446, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2012.685077>
- Allen, L. (2020). Computer science education: online content modules and professional development for secondary teachers in west tennessee—a case study. *Lecture Notes in Networks and Systems*, 70, 523-532, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-12385-7\\_38](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-12385-7_38)
- Clayton-Code, K. (2015). Show me the money: Evaluating the impact of an online professional development course for middle and secondary classroom teachers. *Journal of Economics and Economic Education Research*, 16(1), 19-30,
- Lie, A. (2020). SECONDARY SCHOOL LANGUAGE TEACHERS' ONLINE LEARNING ENGAGEMENT DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN INDONESIA. *Journal of Information Technology Education: Research*, 19, 803-832, <https://doi.org/10.28945/4626>
- Moorhouse, B.L. (2022). The COVID-19 Pandemic as a catalyst for teacher pedagogical and technological innovation and development: Teachers' perspectives. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 42, 105-120, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2021.1988511>
- Ng, D.T.K. (2019). Business (Teaching) As Usual Amid The Covid-19 Pandemic: A Case Study Of Online Teaching Practice In Hong Kong. *Journal of Information Technology Education: Research*, 19, 777-802, <https://doi.org/10.28945/4620>
- Yan, C. (2022). Experienced EFL teachers switching to online teaching: A case study from China. *System*, 105, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2021.102717>
- Pavlič, L. (2022). Towards a novel catalog of assessment patterns for distant education in the information technology domain. *Computers and Education*, 182, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2022.104470>
- Khurma, O.A. (2024). Inquiry skills teaching and its relationship with UAE secondary school students' critical thinking: Systematic review of science teachers' perspectives. *Eurasia Journal of Mathematics, Science and Technology Education*, 20(2), <https://doi.org/10.29333/ejmste/14155>