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**ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER DEVELOPMENT AS A  
CONDITION FOR IMPROVING THE EDUCATION QUALITY**

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**Abstract**

The author considers the issues and problems of continuous professional development of a teacher of English at a maritime university by the example of the Sedov Institute of Water Transport. The author substantiates the necessity of professional development of a teacher of English at a maritime university, taking into account the common interests and co-operation relations with employers. The author pays the main attention to the peculiarities of professional growth of the English language teacher, which should be developed in 3 directions within the concept of lifelong learning. Scientific novelty consists in the development of the project of creation of information and communication educational environment for cooperation of teachers of English language and cadets of maritime university with employers for the purpose of professional development. As a result, the author has determined the need for continuous professional development of the teacher of English at a maritime university, caused by the growing requirements of business to the quality of English-language training of seafarers. There is also the demand for quality educational services, which entails an increase in the rating of teachers and, accordingly, the university, as well as the development of higher education towards the introduction of new information technologies and opportunities to create a virtual space for communication.

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## 1. Introduction

The processes taking place in modern business and in higher professional education require the actualisation of the personal, creative and professional potential of the teacher. This is why recently so much attention has been paid to the continuous professional development of university teaching staff, offering a wide range of professional development courses, online conferences, internships, seminars, round tables, mass online courses and professional schools (Dokuchayeva et al., 2024; Tang & Yang, 2024).

Professional growth and development of university teachers contribute to the quality of educational services in response to the challenges of the time, based on the objective requirements of the employer to the university graduate. Teachers are the building blocks; they have a huge responsibility to integrate students with real life, which makes their professional development essential.

Moreover, educational programmes are increasingly filled with information and communication and professional content in accordance with the requirements of FSES 3++ and with an emphasis on the formation of professional competencies on an interdisciplinary basis.

Higher maritime education, namely the training of seafarers at the operational and management level, is not exempt from this issue. Representatives of shipping companies and crewing companies are interested in competent seafarers who are capable of continuous learning. Such training of seafarers is possible only by instructors who are themselves ready to improve their competence on a permanent, continuous basis.

Foreign language, namely English, is one of the disciplines of the professional cycle in a maritime university. Consequently, the English language teacher is increasingly responsible for quality training of personnel for the maritime industry and deep involvement in the process of formation of professional competence of the graduate as a whole (Lipich & Balahura, 2024; Regnerová et al., 2024; Shumilina & Antsiferova, 2024).

In the maritime university, English language is integrated with the main disciplines of the professional cycle and is "professionally oriented", the knowledge of which is a professionally important quality and qualification requirement for specialists in the maritime industry (Borodina, 2010). It should be noted that English is globally recognised by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and is mandatory for communication between seafarers in mixed crews. In order to form and develop the professional competence of a future seafarer, a teacher should realise that his/her professional competence is also subject to objective assessment and further development.

## 2. Problem Statement

The research problem is how continuous professional development of an English language teacher contributes to improving the quality of education at a maritime university.

## 3. Research Questions

During the research process, we need to answer the following questions:

- i. what are the features of continuous professional growth of an English language teacher at a maritime university;
- ii. what educational strategies help stimulate the continuous professional growth of an English teacher;
- iii. how justified is the continuous professional development of an English teacher to improve the quality of education at a maritime university?

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to substantiate the need for continuous professional development of an English language teacher in accordance with the growing business requirements for the quality of seafarer's language training and the demand for the provision of quality educational services, which entails an increase in the rating of teachers and the university (Ahmad et al., 2024; Singh et al., 2024; Waite, 2024).

#### **5. Research Methods**

The profile of any university determines the content of the discipline "Foreign Language" and provides full immersion of the teacher in the professional field. An English language teacher is a specialist whose professional activity presupposes not only linguistic knowledge, competences in the field of theory and methodology of professional education, but also certain knowledge in the field of students' future profession. Maritime, basic professional, business English are not an exception in this case. The peculiarity of maritime English is not only special professional terminology, but also pronunciation, slang, special specificity of communication, negotiation. Therefore, in order to prepare a student of a maritime university for real professional communication, a teacher needs to have skills of such communication, "to have a multi-disciplinary competence". In some maritime universities, it is considered appropriate to organise swimming practice not only for students, but also for English teachers (Makashina, 2017).

It will also be quite effective for English teachers to co-operate on an ongoing basis with teachers of specialised disciplines and, crucially, with potential employers.

Such cooperation is carried out through mutual visits to classes, joint seminars, webinars, integrating English language and communication skills with the professional competence of teachers of disciplines. These are navigation and pilotage, life safety, ship theory and design, manoeuvring and steering, collision avoidance, search and rescue at sea, and other disciplines of the professional cycle. This happens through the involvement of social partners in joint projects, participation in conferences, and the participation of teachers in the development and implementation of joint projects.

The open information and communication platform is an educational environment for partnership and co-operation for objective assessment of graduates' professional qualities. Its main task is to communicate students, graduates, teachers, social partners, employers' representatives in English and to improve the skills of business professional communication. This platform provides an excellent opportunity and conditions for online meetings and round tables involving students and English teachers

of other universities to exchange experience and fulfils the role of a unified educational space. In universities, including maritime universities, such unified educational space is an electronic information and educational environment (EIE), which we consider as a condition for the successful implementation of English language programmes. We would like to emphasise that by involving the employer in regular internal quality assessment of educational activities and cadets' training, we, first of all, have the opportunity to monitor the professional activity of the teacher, which contributes to the need for his/her further growth and professional development (Solovova & Bogolepova, 2017).

With the creation of the EIOS in the maritime university, it was possible to achieve certain results regarding the quality of professional language training, namely, the possibility of continuous work with students using the Internet and a wide range of Internet resources. That is, learning, including independent work, became interesting, productive and motivated for success. In the conditions of the EIOS the maritime university has an opportunity to develop the ideas of social partnership more actively, which led to certain achievements, in particular, the participation of the employer in the interim certification of students, interviews in English, round tables, conferences, seminars/webinars on employment and swimming practice. In order to work effectively with students in the EIOS, many teachers had a need to improve their skills in the field of information and communication technologies. And here the university faced the first problem. Not all teachers were ready to learn, justifying it by their adherence to traditional forms and methods of teaching (Galieva et al., 2018). However, time dictates its own rules and sometimes everything new is perceived with difficulty. But in this case, in our opinion, internal motivation, aspiration to develop, love for our profession and responsibility for the quality of training of those we teach play a big role.

All of the above emphasises, to a greater extent, the personal activity and initiative of an English language teacher, his/her desire to improve his/her competence through self-education, methodological associations, external evaluation of his/her professional activity. However, is desire alone sufficient for the professional development of a teacher of English at a maritime university? Undoubtedly, intrinsic motivation leads us to recognition and success, and each of us strives to be interesting for our students. But what is intrinsic motivation for a teacher? When you are self-motivated, you do more of what you are required to do, more than just crossing things off a to-do list. Being self-motivated means having enough self-awareness and understanding of what works for you and what doesn't. Instead of depending on other people to give you a reason to act; in other words to motivate you from the outside, your personal motivation comes from within, from your interests, values and passions, not from a checklist created by someone other than yourself (Eatough).

Intrinsic motivation is a powerful tool for professional growth. But there are also standards that oblige us teachers to fulfil our qualifications.

The professional standard "Teacher of vocational training, vocational education and additional vocational education" ceased to be in force from 2020, but the job duties and qualification requirements for teaching staff of higher vocational and additional vocational education continue to apply.

A modern higher education teacher is obliged to meet the above-mentioned requirements, to promote the acquisition of additional skills in work and to undergo training on additional professional programmes in the profile of teaching activity at least once every three years. Therefore, the issue of

improving professional competence to promote their own brand and the brand of the university always remains relevant.

We cannot leave without attention the most important and objective assessment of the professional activity of a maritime English teacher, which is given by university students. According to the survey conducted among the students of the Sedov Institute of Water Transport, a good English teacher should be active and non-standard in his/her teaching style. One must show interest in their future profession, motivate students to form communicative skills, interest them, be able to create an atmosphere favourable for communication, reducing emotional tension. An individual approach, attention to each student, ability to master the voice, even the pace of speech and clear diction of the teacher are very important for them.

The students undoubtedly give the first place to communication skills, followed by tolerance and leadership qualities, by which they mean keeping discipline in the classroom. Accuracy, clarity, organisation, commitment, tactfulness and correctness in communication, artistry, individual style are the qualities they want to see in an English teacher.

It is important to note that students closely follow the professional growth of their teacher, his desire to develop, to be in the trend. Maritime English is very specific, new words appear every day, grammar dissolves into vocabulary, the need for its detailed study arises from specific situations, actions. It is learnt using examples from real life and work of a seafarer.

## 6. Findings

Based on all of the above, we conclude that the following factors can contribute to the professional development of a maritime university English teacher at the initial stage, in our opinion:

- i. Internal motivation, the desire to be always on trend (Alekseeva, 2023).
- ii. External evaluation of our activities and educational services provided by the employer.
- iii. Objective evaluation of our activities by students. The constant monitoring of this evaluation should be taken into account, which is a powerful incentive for professional growth and development.
- iv. Mandatory qualification requirements (standards).

Faculty professional development leads to career advancement and opens up new opportunities for student learning; increases faculty self-esteem and confidence; encourages a professional growth mindset; improves organisation and planning abilities; and enhances understanding of the discipline being taught. Students expect their instructors to be experts in the disciplines they teach. This means that instructors should be able to answer any question a student may have. Professional development programmes can help teachers expand their knowledge in various subject areas. The more professional development opportunities teachers receive, the more experience and knowledge they gain.

The ability for continuous professional development is one of the most important competences that any modern specialist should possess, and for a teacher of English at a maritime university it is the leading competence. To be the best in the profession today is possible only if one remains a continuous learner. Here we should emphasise the relevance of implementing the concept of lifelong learning in the system of continuous professional development of an English language teacher as a task of paramount importance (Nichols).

And again we come back to intrinsic motivation. Among the above-mentioned factors contributing to the professional growth of a teacher, in our opinion, at the initial stage of career, we put it in the first place. It is intrinsic motivation that is the basis for lifelong learning.

There is no standard definition of lifelong learning; it usually refers to learning that takes place outside a formal educational institution such as a university or corporate training. However, lifelong learning need not necessarily be limited to informal learning. It is best described as voluntary learning with the aim of achieving personal fulfilment. Both informal and formal learning can be the means of achieving this goal. Formal learning includes conferences, courses, seminars, retreats and workshops. Informal opportunities for teachers' professional development include independent research or investigation, peer learning initiatives, or even just talking with colleagues at conferences and workshops.

Lifelong learning is a continuous and self-motivated approach to learning in both personal and professional contexts. Teachers who continuously learn are more competitive in the labour market. This is one of the conditions under which teachers can improve the quality of higher education teaching.

A teacher of English at a maritime university learns continuously in the course of his/her professional activity, being intrinsically motivated he/she moves up the career ladder faster and easier, but most importantly, he/she is in demand and competitive. Yes, of course, the standards oblige to meet the qualifications, strictly fulfil their job duties. But no standard will make an English teacher to be creative, to develop creatively, to create and apply new methods, techniques and technologies of teaching, to achieve success of his students through co-operation, to be responsible for the quality and result of his work.

The concept of lifelong learning, namely Lifelong Learning, is at the heart of English language teacher's continuing professional development, which is gaining momentum due to the variety of conferences, courses/programmes and published materials supporting and justifying it (Nichols). It is no longer relevant to work "as always", "as it was taught in the institute", the trend is "to work as time and employer require". A teacher is, first of all, a role model. We learn, students learn, the quality of education improves, demand for graduates grows.

## **7. Conclusion**

In view of the above-mentioned, the necessity of continuous professional development of the teacher of English language of a maritime university is due to:

- i. Growing requirements of modern business to the quality of seafarer's language training. Competitiveness nowadays acts as the main criterion for assessing the seafarer's readiness for professional activity. English language proficiency at the level necessary for competent solution of professional tasks, coherent and effective communication on board, work with documentation, negotiation, as well as the ability to find a solution in situations of uncertainty and force majeure, remains the main indicator of seafarer's competence.
- ii. The demand for providing quality educational services, which entails an increase in the rating of teachers and promotion of the university brand. It is prestigious and reliable for students to enter a university, where there is a first-class teaching staff and an objectively

functioning system for assessing the quality of teachers' labour (Yanovsky & Malov, 2005).

- iii. The development of maritime higher education towards the introduction of new information technologies and opportunities to work remotely, creating a virtual space for communication, which is extremely important for seafarers who are on voyages for a long time. Here we note the creation and implementation of online English language courses by maritime university teachers, which requires the teachers to have formed digital competences and the need to develop and improve them.
- iv. Competitiveness of teachers. A higher education teacher is a "hero of our time"(Shibanova, 2015), a pedagogue, methodologist, scientist, researcher, educator. Certainly, with such variety of activities, the criteria for assessing the quality of professional activity are enough to compete with colleagues. Involving students in scientific activities requires painstaking labour and the ability to create appropriate conditions for such work and cooperation. And this can only be done by highly qualified teachers who are capable of their own scientific and professional development. It should also be emphasised that teachers who have not mastered the methodology of teaching, who "have not found their way in the difficult science of human relations"(Shibanova, 2015, p. 63) experience dissatisfaction with their work and, as a consequence, lack of demand.

Continuous professional development of a maritime university teacher, in our opinion, is an important condition for improving the quality of education. And in a teacher's career there will always be opportunities to develop and improve their pedagogical and professional competences, there will always be something new to learn, new skills to acquire.

Due to the ability and willingness of English language teachers to constantly develop in the profession, the EIOS created at the maritime university works effectively, online courses, new methods of teaching English are implemented, and new technologies are introduced. As a result, the students of the maritime university successfully pass the interview in English in crewing companies and go to the sailing practice, working in mixed crews, improving their knowledge and acquiring skills of professional communication.

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