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The Effectiveness of Professional Development Programs in Providing English Language Teachers with The Necessary Skills and Knowledge

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Abstract

This research aims to identify the effectiveness of professional development programs in improving the skills and knowledge of English language teachers and the challenges and prospects associated with it for EFL teachers in the education system of Kuwait, explore the challenges faced by English teachers while participating in professional development programs, and provide recommendations to improve professional development programs to better meet the needs of English language teachers. The methodology employed in this study involves a comprehensive review of existing literature related to teacher education, effective instruction, and professional development. The review encompassed scholarly articles, books, reports, and other relevant sources published in peer-reviewed journals and academic databases. **The study assured** the critical role of professional development and its impact on enhancing the quality of education. By investing in continuous learning and training opportunities for teachers, Kuwait can ensure that its schools offer up-to-date, effective instruction that prepares students for rapid success that changes their lives. This, in turn, can contribute to the country's economic growth and competitiveness on a global scale. **In conclusion**, this study confirmed the critical importance of professional development for teachers in Kuwait. By recognizing its significance, increasing institutional support, leveraging technology, and implementing effective policies.

Keywords; *The effectiveness - professional development programs - English language teachers - skills and knowledge.*

فاعلية برامج التطوير المهني في تزويد معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية بالمهارات والمعارف اللازمة أنوار فهد الدبوس

مدرّب متخصص (ب) - قسم اللغة الإنجليزية - كلية التربية الأساسية - الهيئة العامة للتعليم
التطبيقي والتدريب - الكويت

المستخلص

هدف هذا البحث إلى التعرف على فاعلية برامج التطوير المهني في تحسين مهارات ومعارف معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية والتحديات والآفاق المرتبطة بها لمعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة إنجليزية في النظام التعليمي في الكويت، واستكشاف التحديات التي يواجهها معلمو اللغة الإنجليزية أثناء المشاركة في برامج التطوير المهني، وتقديم توصيات لتحسين برامج التطوير المهني لتلبية احتياجات اللغة الإنجليزية بشكل أفضل مدرسون. تتضمن المنهجية المستخدمة في هذه الدراسة مراجعة شاملة للأدبيات الموجودة المتعلقة بتعليم المعلمين والتعليم الفعال والتطوير المهني. تضمنت المراجعة مقالات علمية وكتب وتقارير ومصادر أخرى ذات صلة منشورة في المجالات وقواعد البيانات الأكاديمية التي راجعها الأقران. **وأكدت الدراسة على** الدور الحاسم للتطوير المهني وأثره في تحسين جودة التعليم. من خلال الاستثمار في فرص التعلم والتدريب المستمر للمعلمين، يمكن للكويت أن تضمن أن مدارسها تقدم تعليمًا محدثًا وفعالًا يعد الطلاب للنجاح السريع الذي يغير حياتهم. وهذا بدوره يمكن أن يساهم في النمو الاقتصادي للبلاد وقدرتها التنافسية على نطاق عالمي. **في الختام،** أكدت هذه الدراسة الأهمية الحاسمة للتطوير المهني للمعلمين في الكويت. من خلال الاعتراف بأهميتها، وزيادة الدعم المؤسسي، والاستفادة من التكنولوجيا، وتنفيذ سياسات فعالة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الفاعلية - برامج التطوير المهني - معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية - المهارات والمعرفة.

I. Introduction and context

I.1. Introduction

Since the 19th century, there has been ongoing debate about the disconnect between theory and practice in the training of elementary language teachers. W. Diester Weg (1790–1866), a self-taught teacher, criticized the inadequate training for elementary teachers given by **Freitag, C. (2002)**. Over time, this issue led to the development of numerous professional training programs for elementary school teachers in the 20th century, including degree programs. Many European countries, inspired by Germany's approach, began focusing on improving teacher education and training according to **Bargen, I. von (2014)**.

Education is the cornerstone of societal progress, and teachers play an important role in shaping students' minds and futures. The quality of education is directly related to the skills and competence of teachers, making their professional growth crucial to any education system. Thus, the pursuit of strategies that elevate the professional development of teachers has become critical for educational policymakers and administrators.

English has become essential in daily life, and teachers must stay updated with the latest trends and skills for their professional growth. Professional development refers to enhancing teachers' skills, knowledge, and teaching methods to better serve students. It's an ongoing learning process, vital for adapting to modern changes in education. Professional development can be achieved through degrees, courses, workshops or seminars. According to **Rajendran and others (2023)** professional development (CPD) is one of the pivotal factors that have emerged as a major contributor to teacher effectiveness, job satisfaction, and longevity in the profession. CPD encompasses a range of activities designed to enhance teachers' knowledge, skills, and competencies throughout their careers. These activities can include workshops, seminars, courses, conferences, collaborative learning, self-directed study, and other forms of structured learning experiences. CPD aims to equip educators with the latest pedagogical approaches, subject knowledge advancements, and instructional technologies, thus enabling them to adapt to the evolving needs of students and the changing landscape of education.

I.2. Research problem:

The research problem is to identify the effectiveness of professional development programs in providing English language teachers with the skills and knowledge necessary to improve their educational performance. Although there are many training programs for teachers, there are questions about the impact of these programs on enhancing teachers' abilities in teaching English, especially in light of the rapid changes in teaching methods and students' needs.

I.3. Research Objectives:

This research seeks and explores the prospects for enhancing the professional development of EFL teachers in Kuwait. Therefore, policymakers, educators, and institutions can collaborate to create a more supportive and effective professional development ecosystem for English language teachers, ultimately improving the quality of English language education in the country. Thus, the findings of this study are significant for teachers, researchers, institutions, and policymakers in Kuwait for enhancing the professional development programs in line with the global standards.

I.4. The importance of research:

The professional development of English language teachers in Kuwait is a critical issue that impacts the quality of English language teaching in educational institutions. As the demand for English proficiency continues to grow in a globalized world, it is imperative that EFL (English as a Foreign Language) educators receive effective training and support to meet the evolving needs of their students.

The importance of research stems from the need to improve the quality of education in the field of English language teaching by developing teachers' skills and knowledge. The results of the research may also contribute to the design of more effective training programs that respond to the needs of teachers and contribute to raising the level of their professional competencies.

I.5. Research Questions:

-How effective are professional development programs in improving the skills and knowledge of English language teachers?

- What factors influence the success or failure of professional development programs to improve English language teachers' performance?
- What challenges do teachers face while participating in professional development programs?
- How can the design and implementation of professional development programs be improved to better meet the needs of English language teachers?

I.6. Research Methodology:

This study uses a comprehensive literature review methodology to explore teacher education, effective instruction, and professional development. The review includes scholarly articles, books, reports, and other relevant sources from peer-reviewed journals and academic databases. The process begins by identifying literature related to enhancing teacher education through effective instruction. Searches were conducted using specific keywords in academic databases like PubMed, ERIC, PsycINFO, and Google Scholar. Literature was then screened to ensure its relevance and quality.

II. Literature Review

Different terms are used by many researchers to refer to teachers' CPD. Examples include staff development, career development, career growth, professional growth, personal development, professional learning, continuing professional development, in-service training, and others. Therefore, the literature refers to various definitions related to teachers' CPD. One of the most comprehensive definitions of CPD is given by **Day, C (2013)** who states that "Professional development consists of all natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school and which contribute, through these, to the quality of education in the classroom. It is the process by which, alone and with others, teachers review, renew and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purposes of teaching; and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills, and emotional intelligence essential to good professional thinking, planning and practice with children, young people and colleagues through each phase of their teaching lives.

II.1. Training teachers

Training teachers is a global phenomenon; with the advent of globalization, the advancement of technology, and an urge for competition, the training of the teachers have become inevitable. The training of the teachers dates back to 1810 when it was realized that the inadequate structure of training and a contradiction between theory and practice had made it difficult to improve the elementary education of Germany according to **Terhart, E (2019)**.

Khan, N., Oad, L., & Aslam, R. (2021) believed that teacher education plays a pivotal role in shaping the quality of education delivered to students. As the educational landscape continues to evolve, the demand for highly skilled and effective educators becomes increasingly evident. The effectiveness of teacher education programs directly impacts the ability of teachers to meet the diverse needs of learners, navigate complex classroom environments, and adapt to ever-changing educational paradigms. Therefore, it is imperative to explore strategies aimed at enhancing teacher education to ensure that educators are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and support systems necessary to excel in their roles.

Effective teacher education is essential for preparing educators to succeed in today's dynamic educational environment. Teachers serve as the primary agents of instruction, guiding students through the learning process and facilitating their intellectual growth. Thus, the quality of teacher education directly influences the quality of education delivered to students. Well-prepared teachers are equipped with the pedagogical knowledge, instructional strategies, and classroom management skills needed to engage students effectively and foster a positive learning environment according to **Oad, L., & Alwi, S. K. K (2021)**.

Additionally, providing ongoing professional development opportunities is essential for supporting teachers throughout their careers. Continuous learning and growth are fundamental to effective teaching practice, and teacher education programs should offer a range of professional development opportunities, including workshops, seminars, and mentoring programs, to help educators stay abreast of emerging trends and research in education.

This means that any CPD program should be well-planned by

conducting a needs analysis for teachers as well as preparing suitable materials and resources, and it should lead to a positive result in students' achievement. The effectiveness of any CPD program can be conceptualized as being “composed of training acquisition and transfer of training” as given by **Farjad (2012)**.

According to **Goodwin, A. L., & Kosnik, C (2013)** teacher training contributes as an essential component in the development of the standards of education. Training refines the skills of the teachers on one hand and on the other side, it indirectly influences the learning results of the students through the application of innovative teaching pedagogies implemented by the teacher during the teaching process in the classroom. It is generally believed that the domain of teaching needs to be provided with specific resources, including competent teachers, adequate training, extensive and intensive knowledge, and the resources to impart knowledge successfully along with an environment that could yield motivation for the teachers to perform their roles as professionals in the best possible way.

II.2 Professional Development and Continuous Learning:

In addition to initial teacher education, ongoing professional development is essential for supporting educators throughout their careers. **Darling-Hammond (2017)** emphasized the importance of continuous learning and growth, arguing that effective teaching requires a commitment to lifelong professional development. Professional development opportunities should be tailored to the specific needs and interests of teachers, providing them with opportunities to deepen their subject matter knowledge, refine their instructional practices, and stay abreast of emerging trends and research in education.

According to **Clair and Adger (1999)** effective professional development takes into account teachers' personal and professional needs, encourages critical reflection, and promotes meaningful collaboration. According to this perspective, for teacher development to be successful, it must be internally consistent, rigorous, and sustainable. As both global and local teaching communities increasingly recognize the significance of professional development and its crucial role in achieving high-quality education and maintaining high professional standards, teachers are better able

to appreciate the diverse benefits of various professional development opportunities. These range from formal and informal collaborative learning methods to smaller, individualized initiatives aimed at personal growth.

Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin (2017) listed different characteristics for effective professional development. **They stated that any CPD activity must:**

- Engage teachers in concrete tasks of teaching, assessment, observation, and reflection that illuminate the processes of learning and development.
- Be grounded in inquiry, reflection, and experimentation that are participant-driven.
- Be collaborative, involving a sharing of knowledge among educators and a focus on teachers' communities of practice rather than on individual teachers.
- Be connected to and derived from teachers' work with their students.
- Be sustained, ongoing, intensive, and supported by modelling, coaching, and the collective solving of specific problems of practice.
- Be connected to other aspects of school change.

Guskey, T. R (2003) analyzed 13 of the lists of the characteristics of effective CPD "to determine if they were derived through similar procedures, based on similar frames of reference, and included the same elements or characteristics. He found that the individual characteristics of effective CPD varied from one list to another depending on the purposes of the training program as well as the audiences to be targeted. Thus, he came up with the following characteristics **as the most common ones. Programs should:**

- Enhance teachers' content and pedagogical knowledge.
- Provide sufficient time and resources.
- Promote collegiality and collaboration.
- Include procedures for evaluation.
- Make a model for high-quality instruction.
- Be school-based or site-based.
- Build leadership capacity.
- Be built on the identified needs of the teachers.

- Be driven by analyses of students learning data.
- Focus on individual and organizational improvement.
- Include follow-up and support.
- Be ongoing and job-embedded.
- Take a variety of forms.
- Promote continuous inquiry and reflection.

Training in Kuwait takes into account some of the characteristics given in the different lists of effective CPDs, which include the focus on content and pedagogical knowledge and the focus on individual and organizational improvement. However, there is a concern that the three courses evaluated in this study lack many important factors related to the effectiveness of CPDs, such as training needs analysis, lack of follow-up, and engaging teachers in higher-order thinking skills and reflection.

II.3 Models of Continuing Professional Development

Previous research reported different methods for conducting CPDs (some researchers refer to them as types rather than methods, **Campbell, Gilroy & McNamara (2004)**). Those methods included workshops, courses, reading (books, research studies, etc.), classroom observations and study groups according to **Richter, Kunter, Klusmann, Lüdtke & Baumert (2011)**, university courses and programs, blended learning, informal meetings, symposia, summer schools and seminars according to **Duța (2012)**, conferences, training consultation in or outside schools as given by **De Vries, Jansen & Van De Grift (2013)**, action research, distance learning, peer networks, coaching, mentoring, tutoring, personal reflection and collaborative learning according to **Herbert & Rainford (2013)**. Nevertheless, Kennedy (2005) proposed nine models for CPDs, which can be considered as the umbrella under which the above-discussed methods can be placed, Al-Aofi adapted and summarized it in the following table as given by **Al Hasan Ali Al Ofi. (2022)**.

Models of CPD as Proposed by Kennedy (2005):

N	Model	Description	Purpose
1	Training	Supports teachers to update their skills & knowledge. Top-down: prepared & delivered by developers/ or experts. Teachers are passive learners. Standards-based & delivered off-site. Effective means of introducing new knowledge.	Transmissive (Award-bearing model was moved by Kennedy in 2014 to the transitional category)
2	Award-bearing	Relies on the completion of award-bearing programs of study. Validated externally (usually by universities). Reflects particular ideologies.	
3	Deficit	Addresses a perceived deficit in teacher performance. Criticized for blaming individuals only and ignoring the responsibility of organizations.	
4	Cascade	Training events disseminated by individual teachers. Suitable when resources are limited. Generally, focuses on skill & knowledge, rarely on values. Skills & knowledge are given priority over attitudes & values. Neglects the range of learning contexts.	
5	Standards-based	Connects between teacher effectiveness and student learning. Relies heavily on a behaviorist perspective of learning, focusing on the competence of individual teachers.	Transitional (The category was later renamed as (Malleable))
6	Coaching/ mentoring	Collegiate, but also hierarchical. One-to-one relationship. Assessment driven. Quality of interpersonal relationships is crucial. Can support either a transmission or a transformative CPD.	

7	Community of practice	Usually involves more than two people, with no confidentiality. Social learning theory: community and interactions. Negotiations among participants. Drawback: some members dominate the interactions.	
8	Action research	The main aim is practitioner development and transformation. Allow teachers to ask critical questions about their practice. Leads to transformative practice and professional autonomy.	Transformative
9	Transformative	Effective integration of different models. A range of different conditions required.	

II.4 Strategies for Enhancing Teacher Education:

To enhance the quality of teacher education, it is essential to implement a range of effective strategies. According to **Oad, L., Khan, N., & Khoso, F. J. (2020);**

First and foremost, teacher education programs should incorporate evidence-based instructional methods that have been shown to enhance student learning outcomes. These methods may include active learning strategies, differentiated instruction, and the use of formative assessment techniques to gauge student progress and adjust instruction accordingly.

Furthermore, fostering collaboration among educators can enrich the teacher education experience by providing opportunities for peer learning and professional growth. Collaborative activities such as lesson study, co-teaching, and professional learning communities allow teachers to share best practices, reflect on their teaching experiences, and support one another in addressing common challenges. Integrating technology into teacher education is another critical strategy for enhancing effectiveness. By leveraging digital tools and resources, teacher education programs can prepare educators to harness the power of technology to enhance instruction, facilitate personalized learning experiences, and foster digital literacy skills among students.

III. Previous studies and research related

This paper examined strategies to enhance teacher education through effective instruction and professional development. It emphasized the importance of strong teacher education programs in preparing educators to meet the evolving needs of learners. The paper discussed approaches such as using evidence-based instructional methods, promoting collaboration among educators, integrating technology into teaching, and offering continuous professional development. By adopting these strategies, educational institutions can better equip teachers with the knowledge, skills, and support needed to succeed in the changing field of education according to **Asad Abbas (2024)**.

This meta-analysis examined the effectiveness of technology-enhanced language learning in English language teaching. The study reviewed various research to assess the impact of technology on language learning. Findings showed that new technologies, particularly mobile learning and ICT tools, positively contribute to learners' skills and proficiency. Technology-supported language learning is found to be as effective as traditional methods with human teachers, offering personalized learning experiences. However, proper teacher training and support are essential for successful technology integration. Educational institutions should provide comprehensive training and allocate time for teachers to enhance their technological skills. The study highlighted the importance of technology in improving language learning and stressed the need for ongoing teacher support and development according to **Ira Nurmala, Sugeng Irianto, Sherly Franchisca, Helfany Amsa, Ratna Susanti (2023)**.

This study explored the professional development of tertiary teachers in Bangladesh, highlighting both the challenges and opportunities that impact the growth of educators in the higher education system. Key challenges included heavy workloads, financial constraints, limited access to development opportunities, and resistance to change, all of which hinder teachers' professional growth and affect the quality of higher education. However, the study also identified significant prospects, such as enhancing teaching skills, aligning curricula with industry needs, and preparing

graduates for the global job market. Strategies like institutional support, technology integration, faculty collaboration, and needs assessments are recommended to address these challenges. The study concluded that while obstacles exist, there are promising prospects for improving professional development in Bangladesh's higher education, which will ultimately lead to better-prepared graduates and a stronger economy according to **Younus, M. A. A (2023)**.

This study evaluated the effectiveness of three Continuous Professional Development (CPD) courses for English language teachers in Oman and examined the challenges teachers face when applying what they learned in their classrooms. The results, based on both quantitative and qualitative data, showed that the rigid top-down training approach negatively impacts course effectiveness. Teachers also faced challenges such as crowded classes, heavy workloads, and time constraints, which hinder them from implementing new knowledge and skills. The findings offered implications for policy and practice, relevant not only to Oman but also to other Arab and Asian educational systems, particularly in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries (GCCCs) as given by **Al Hasan Ali Al Ofi (2022)**.

This research examined the role of teacher training in the development of English language teachers. It aimed to understand elementary ESL teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness and practicality of the pedagogies introduced in training programs. The study, conducted through structured interviews, analyzed the data qualitatively. The findings showed that teachers enjoyed the training sessions, which were engaging and resource-rich. They are considered these trainings essential for professional development and suggested that they be held regularly to update teachers on new teaching skills. Teachers also emphasized the need for better resources and a supportive environment to practice the techniques they learned according to **Akifa Imtiaz, Uzma Imtiaz, Asma Kashif Shahzad (2021)**.

This research aimed to explore EFL teachers' professional development through Continuous Professional Development (CPD). The study involved 83 teachers from diverse backgrounds, and data

were collected using a questionnaire. The results revealed that teachers are proactive in managing their CPD, but to achieve better results, they need opportunities for shared experiences, reflective teaching, and a sense of community to meet global education standards. The study emphasized the importance of CPD in teaching English and suggested that professional development programs lead to higher educational achievement. Teachers' confidence and belief in their CPD were key to their success, highlighting the importance of teachers taking responsibility for their development to improve their teaching and help students succeed according to **Balachandran Vadivel, Ehsan Namaziandost and Abdulbaset Saeedian (2021)**.

This study highlighted the importance of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for English teachers, especially new ones, to improve their language skills and teaching methodology. While traditional professional development methods, such as attending forums and further education, have limitations, such as not allowing teachers to control their learning, this study focused on a mentoring program in an English training institution in East Java, Indonesia. The findings indicated that teachers responded positively to the mentoring program, with improved self-confidence and enhanced professionalism as English teachers as given by **Zuliati Rohmah (2018)**.

This study investigated how often Saudi EFL teachers participate in professional development (PD) activities and how useful these activities are for their teaching. A random sample of 77 teachers in Riyadh completed questionnaires. The results showed that teachers most frequently engage in discussing lessons with supervisors and informally sharing ideas with colleagues. In contrast, traveling abroad for PD and attending international conferences were the least frequent activities. The most useful PD activities identified were lesson discussions with supervisors and peer observation. Additionally, two-thirds of teachers were dissatisfied with their school's PD activities. Most teachers viewed PD as activities that improve teaching skills and recognized teaching as a lifelong learning process according to **Yousif A. Alshumari, Fahad M. Almohaisen (2017)**.

This paper examined EFL instructors' perceptions of the effectiveness of professional development programs at Taif University English Language Center (TUELC) in Saudi Arabia and suggested improvements. A questionnaire with a Likert scale and open-ended questions was used to collect data from 76 teachers. The results showed that instructors generally had a negative attitude towards the current programs, though they appreciated the interactive discussions on professional knowledge and assessment strategies. Issues included the lack of consideration for their actual needs, passive learning experiences, unprofessional presenters, and insufficient focus on practical classroom solutions. Instructors recommended conducting a needs assessment and offering electronic professional development as an alternative according to **Tha'er Issa Tawalbeh (2015)**.

This paper explored the concept of 'professional development' from the perspectives of ELT teachers and the strategies they prefer for their careers. The researcher used a questionnaire with three open-ended questions, answered by 50 language teachers, and analyzed the results using descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that most ELT teachers recognized the importance of professional development, but only 30% prioritized ongoing development, using strategies such as participatory practitioner research, professional development portfolios, and study groups as given by **Murat Hisman oglu, Gemikonagi Lefke (2010)**.

III. results and Recommendations

The study on the teachers' professional development has several important implications for the country's education system, teachers, educational institutions, and policymakers.

Firstly, it underscores the critical role of professional development in enhancing the quality of education. By investing in continuous learning and training opportunities for teachers, Kuwait can ensure that its schools offer up-to-date, effective instruction that prepares students for a rapid success that changes their lives. This, in turn, can contribute to the country's economic growth and competitiveness on a global scale.

Secondly, the study highlights the need for increased institutional support for professional development. Educational institutions must recognize the importance of allocating resources and creating a conducive environment for teachers to engage in ongoing learning. **Furthermore**, the study emphasizes the potential of technology in expanding the accessibility of professional development opportunities. Online courses, webinars, and digital resources can reach all teachers, helping to bridge professional divides and ensure that professional development is available to educators across the country. **Additionally**, the study's findings have implications for policymakers. They suggest that there is a need for strategic planning and policy formulation to prioritize and facilitate professional development initiatives. Policymakers can work towards creating a supportive framework that addresses challenges such as financial constraints and resistance to change, making it easier for teachers to engage in development activities. **In conclusion**, this study recommended the critical importance of professional development for teachers in Kuwait. By recognizing its significance, increasing institutional support, leveraging technology, and implementing effective policies, Kuwait can foster a dynamic and highly skilled teaching force that will contribute to the nation's educational and economic advancement. Ultimately, investing in professional development is an investment in the future of education in Kuwait.

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