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 perspectives related to 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 approach used in this study involves an extensive review of existing literature related to teacher education, effective instruction, and professional development. The review covered academic articles, reports, books, 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 improving the quality of education. By investing in constant learning and training opportunities for teachers, Kuwait can ensure that its schools offer effective and up-to-date instruction that prepares students for remarkable success that changes their lives. This results in, increasing the economic growth in the country and enhancing the competitiveness globally. **In conclusion**, this study confirmed the significance of professional development for teachers in Kuwait. By recognizing its importance, benefiting from technology, enhancing institutional support, and applying 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

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 المجلات 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 تعليما محدثا وفعالا 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 nineteenth century, there has been ongoing discussion regarding the gap between theory and practice in the training of language teachers in primary schools. W. Diester Weg (1790–1866), a self-taught instructor, criticized the improper training for primary school teachers provided by **Freitag, C. (2002).** Over time, this problem resulted in the development of different professional training programs forprimary school teachers in the twentieth century, including degree programs. Many European countries, inspired by Germany's approach, began focusing on enhancing teacher training and education according to **Bargen, I. von (2014).**

Education is a fundamental factor in the progress of the society, as well as teachers have a significant impact on how students think and develop their future path. The quality of education largely depends on the expertise and skills of teachers, which make their ongoing professional growth essential for 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 growth can be fulfilled through courses, degrees, seminars or workshops. According to **Rajendran and others (2023)** professional development (CPD) is one of the essential factors that have appeared as a main contributor to teacher effectiveness, job satisfaction, and longevity in the profession. CPD includes various exercises in order to improve teachers' knowledge, skills, and competencies through their careers. These exercises can encompass seminars, workshops, training courses, conferences, collaborative learning, self-directed study, and other forms of structured learning experiences. CPD aims to provide educators with the most recent academic approaches, subject knowledge advancements, and teaching technologies, enabling them to adapt to

the evolving needs of students and the changing scene of education.

I.2. Research problem:

The research problem is to focus on effectiveness of professional development programs in giving the skills and knowledge necessary for English language teachers in order to enhance their teaching performance. While there are different training programs for teachers, there are questions about the influence of these programs on improving teachers' abilities in teaching English, particularly in light of the rapid changes in teaching methods and students' needs.

I.3. Research Objectives:

This research seeks and explores the potentials for improving the professional development of EFL instructors in Kuwait. Hence, policymakers, teachers, and institutions can work together to form a more supportive and effective professional development environment for English language instructors, ultimately improving the quality of English language education in the country. Hence, the findings of this study are necessary for researchers, teachers, institutions, and policymakers in Kuwait in order to improve the professional development programs to keep pace with the global standards.

I.4. The importance of research:

The professional development of English language teachers in Kuwait is a significant issue that influences the quality of English language teaching in educational establishments. As the need for English proficiency keeps rising in a contemporary world, it is necessary that EFL (English as a Foreign Language) instructors get proper training and support to keep up with the students' changing needs.

The importance of research arises from the need enhance the quality of education in the field of English language teaching through the development of teachers' skills and knowledge. The findings of the research help to design a better training programs that meet the needs of teachers and help to increase the level of their professional competencies.

I.5. Research Questions:

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

-What factors affect the success or failure of professional development programs to enhance the performance of English language teachers?

-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 employs an extensive literature review methodology to explore teacher education, effective teaching, and ongoing professional development. The review encompasses academic articles, reports, books, and other related sources from peer-reviewed journals and academic databases. The process starts by recognizing literature focuses on improving teacher education through effective teaching methods. Searches were done using main keywords in academic databases, such as Google Scholar, PubMed, PsycINFO, and ERIC. Literature was then examined to ensure its suitability and quality.

II. Literature Review

Many researchers use different terms in order to refer to ongoing professional development for teachers, for example career development, teachers development, professional growth, career growth, personal development, ongoing professional development, professional learning, in-service training, etc. Hence, the literature refers to different definitions related to ongoing professional development for teachers. One of these definitions is given by **Day, C (2013)**, and it is considered one of the most comprehensive definitions of CPD, who states that "Professional development encompasses all natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned exercises which are aimed to be of direct or indirect benefit to the group, school or person and which contribute, through these, to the development of education in the classroom. Therefore, teachers through this process, whether alone and with others, can

review, renew and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purposes of teaching; and by which they gain and enhance critically the skills, knowledge, and emotional intelligence necessary to effective professional thinking, planning and practice with colleagues, children and young people through each phase of their teaching careers.

II.1. Training teachers

Training teachers is a worldwide phenomenon; with the advent of globalization, the latest technology, and the growth of competition, the training of the teachers has become essential. The training of the teachers dates back to 1810 when it was recognized that the improper structure of training programs and a conflict between theory and practice had made it hard to enhance the primary education of Germany according to **Terhart, E (2019).**

Khan, N., Oad, L., & Aslam, R. (2021) believed that teacher education plays is an essential in enhancing the quality of education provided to students. With the development of the educational scene, there is a growing need for teachers who are skilled and effective. The effectiveness of teacher training programs influences the capability of teachers to meet the different needs of students, address complex classroom environments, and adapt to the ongoing changes of educational paradigms. Therefore, it is necessary to improve strategies focused on improving teacher training programs to ensure that teachers are have the skills, knowledge, and support systems required to be proficient and master their roles.

Effective teacher education is significant in order to prepare educators to succeed in today's ever-changing educational scene. Teachers act as the primary factor of teaching process, giving instructions to students through the educational process and promoting their intellectual development. Hence, the quality of teacher education has a direct impact on the quality of education provided to students. Highly-skilled teachers have the required teaching methods, pedagogical knowledge, and classroom management skills needed to engage students effectively and enhance a positive learning environment according to **Oad, L., & Alwi, S. K. K (2021).**

Moreover, providing continuous professional development opportunities is crucial for supporting teachers through their careers. Continuous learning and development are essential to successful teaching practice. However, teacher education programs should provide different professional development options, such as seminars, workshops, and mentoring programs, to help teachers keep pace of the latest trends and research in the field of education.

This indicates that any continuous professional development program should be well-organized by doing analysis for knowing the teachers' needs, and providing proper resources and materials. Additionally, it should impact the students' performance in a positive way. The success of any continuous professional development program can be designed 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 is considered a significant factor in the development of the education standards. Training enhances the teachers' skills on one hand and on the other side, it indirectly impacts the students' learning results through applying various creative teaching methods provided by the teacher during the teaching process in the classroom. It is generally believed that the teaching process needs specific resources, such as skilled teachers, proper training, extensive and intensive knowledge, and the resources to convey knowledge effectively, in addition to an environment that could motivate 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, continual professional development is necessary for supporting educators during their careers. **Darling-Hammond (2017)** emphasized the importance of ongoing learning and development, suggesting that successful teaching depends on continuous professional development. Professional development opportunities should meet the specific needs and interests of teachers in order to have more knowledge, improve their instructional practices, and keep pace with the latest trends and research in the field of 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 realize the importance of professional development and its vital role in delivering high-quality education and maintaining high professional standards, teachers are better able to understand the various benefits of different professional development opportunities. These range from formal and informal collaborative learning methods to smaller, individualized initiatives aimed at personal growth.

Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin (2017) mentioned various features for successful professional development. **They stated that any continuous professional development activity must:**
- Engage teachers in specific activities of teaching, assessment, observation, and reflection that highlight the processes of learning and development.
- Be based on reflection, inquiry, and experimentation that depend on participant.
- Promote collaboration by sharing knowledge among teachers and focus on teachers' communities of practice rather than on individual teachers.
- Be linked to and based on teachers' interaction with their students.
- Be continuous, sustained, intensive, and supported by coaching, modelling, and the collective solving of specific practice issues.
- Be related to other characteristics of school change.

Guskey, T. R (2003) examined 13 lists of the characteristics of effective continuous professional development "to outline if they were derived through similar methodologies, depend on similar frameworks of reference, and encompassed the same characteristics or components. He found that the individual characteristics of effective continuous professional development differed from one list to another based on the objectives of the training program, and the target audiences. Hence, he mentioned several common characteristics **as follows. Programs should:**

- Improve teachers' subject content and teaching skills.
- Provide enough time and resources.
- Encourage collaboration and teamwork.
- Involve certain methods for evaluation.
- Provide a model for effective teaching.
- Be school-based or site-based.
- Build leadership capacity.
- Based on the specific requirements of the educators.
- Be driven by analyses of students learning data.
- Focus on individual and organizational improvement.
- Include follow-up and support.
- Be continuous and embedded in the job.
- Take different forms.
- Encourage ongoing inquiry and reflection.

Training in Kuwait considers some of the characteristics mentioned in the various lists of successful continuous professional development, which focus on content and teaching methods, as well as individual and organizational improvement. However, there is a concern that the three courses assessed in this study lack many significant factors associated with the effectiveness of continuous professional development, including insufficient follow-up, training needs analysis, and involving teachers in higher-order thinking skills and reflection.

II.3 Models of Continuing Professional Development

Previous research showed various approaches for applying continuous professional development (some researchers indicated them as types rather than approaches, **Campbell, Gilroy & McNamara (2004).** Those approaches encompassed courses, workshops, reading (books, researches, etc.), classroom observations and study groups according to **Richter, Kunter, Klusmann, Lüdtke & Baumert (2011),** in addition to university courses and programs, blended learning, symposia, informal meetings, summer schools and seminars according to **Duţa (2012),** training consultations, conferences inside schools or outside schools as given by **De Vries, Jansen & Van De Grift (2013),** practical research, distance learning, coaching, mentoring, tutoring, peer networks, personal reflection and collaborative learning according to **Herbert**

& Rainford (2013). However, Kennedy (2005) suggested nine models for continuous professional development, which can be considered as the outlines under which the above-mentioned 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 continuous professional development as suggested by Kennedy (2005):

N	Model	Description	Purpose
1	Training	• Helps teachers to enhance their skills and knowledge. • Top-down: created & provided by developers or experts. • Teachers are passive recipients of information. • Standards-focused & provided off-site. • Effective methods to present new information.	Transmissive (Award-bearing modelwas moved by Kennedy in 2014 to the transitional category)
2	Award-bearing	• Depends on the completion of programs of study. • Certified externally (for example by universities). • Reflects particular ideologies.	
3	Deficit	• Handles a perceived deficit in the performance of the teacher. • Criticized for blaming individuals only and overlooking the liability of organizations.	
4	Cascade	• Training sessions provided by individual teachers. • Appropriate when resources are deficient. • Generally, concentrates on knowledge & skill, seldom on values. • Knowledge & Skills are prioritized over attitudes &values. • Ignores the variety of learning contexts.	
5	Standards-based	• Links between teacher efficacy and student learning. • Depends mainly on a behaviorist perspective of learning, emphasizing on the skills of individual teachers.	Transitional

6	Coaching / mentoring	• Collegiate and hierarchical. • One-to-one connection. • Driven by assessment. • Quality of interpersonal connections is essential. • Can facilitate either a transformative CPD or a transmission.	(Later, the group was renamed as (Malleable)
7	Community ofpractice	• Typically includes more than two persons, with no confidentiality. • Social learning theory: interactions and community. • Discussions among participants. • Drawback: interactions are dominated by some members.	
8	Action research	• The main objective is the development and transformation of practitioners. • Enable teachers to ask critical inquiries about their practice. • Results in professional independence and transformative practice.	Transformative
9	Transformative	• Successful integration of various models. • A variety of different conditions are necessary.	

II.4 Strategies for Enhancing Teacher Education:

To improve the quality of teacher education, it is necessary to apply some effective strategies. According to **Oad, L., Khan, N., & Khoso, F. J. (2020);**

First and foremost, teacher education programs should include instructional methods based on evidence that have been proved to improve student learning outcomes. These methods may encompass differentiated instruction, active learning strategies, and the use of formative assessment techniques to measure student progress and adjust instruction accordingly.

Furthermore, enhancing collaboration among teachers can enrich the teacher education experience by providing opportunities for professional development and peer learning. Collaborative activities including co-teaching, lesson study, and professional learning communities enable teachers to share best practices, reflect on their teaching experiences, and help each other in addressing common

challenges. Integrating technology into teacher education is another significant strategy for fostering effectiveness. By benefiting from digital tools and resources, teacher education programs can equip educators to utilize the power of technology to improve instruction, make personalized learning experiences easy, and promote digital literacy skills among students.

III. Previous studies and research related

This study examined strategies to improve teacher education through effective teaching and professional development. It emphasized the importance of strong teacher education programs in preparing educators to meet the evolving needs of learners. The study explored approaches, such as using teaching methods based on evidence, enhancing collaboration among teachers, providing continuous professional development, and integrating technology into teaching. Therefore, by applying these approaches, teaching centers and institutions can provide teachers with the skills, knowledge, and support needed in more effective way to succeed in the field of education according to **Asad Abbas (2024).**

This meta-analysis examined the efficacy of language learning through using technology in English language teaching. The study reviewed various research to assess the effect of using technology on language learning. Findings showed that modern technologies, particularly mobile learning and ICT tools, positively enhance the learners' proficiency and skills. Language learning through using technology is proved to be as successful as traditional methods with teachers, providing personalized learning experiences. However, proper teacher training and support are essential for successful technology integration. Teaching centers and institutions should provide inclusive training and enough time for teachers to improve their technological skills. The study illuminated the significance of technology in enhancing language learning and emphasized the necessity of continuous teacher growth and support according to **Ira Nurmala, Sugeng Irianto, Sherly Franchisca, Helfany Amsa, Ratna Susanti (2023).**

This study explored the professional development of higher education teachers in Bangladesh, highlighting both the opportunities and difficulties that impact the development of

teachers in the higher education system. Main challenges involves huge workloads, financial constraints, resistance to change, and limited access to growth opportunities, and resistance to change, all of which influence the quality of higher education and impede teachers' professional growth. Nonetheless, the study highlighted considerable expectations, including creating curricula to be proper for industry needs, qualifying graduates for the worldwide employment market, and improving teaching skills. Strategies, such as technology integration, institutional support, needs assessments and faculty collaboration are recommended to overcome these challenges. The study concluded that while obstacles exist, there are promising opportunities 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 efficacy of three Continuous Professional Development (CPD) courses for English language teachers in Oman and investigated the difficulties teachers meet when implementing what they learned in their classrooms. The findings, according to the quantitative and qualitative data, indicated that the rigid top-down training method negatively influence course effectiveness. Instructors also met challenges, including huge workloads, time constraints, and crowd classes, impeding them from applying new skills and knowledge. The findings showed implications for practice and policy, relevant not only to Oman but also to different educational systems in Arab countries and Asia, particularly in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries as given by **Al Hasan Ali Al Ofi (2022).**

This study examined the impact 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, carried out 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 apply the methods they acquired 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 identified the importance of continual professional development in teaching English and suggested that professional development programs result in 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. Although traditional professional development methods, including further education and participating in forums, have limitations, such as not allowing teachers to control over their learning, this study concentrated on a mentoring program in an English training school 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 EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia participate in professional development (PD) activities and the effectiveness of these activities for their teaching. A random sample of 77 teachers in Riyadh completed questionnaires. The findings showed that teachers most frequently engage in talking over lessons with supervisors and informally exchange ideas with peers. In contrast, traveling abroad for PD and participating in international

conferences were the least common activities. The most helpful activities of professional development recognized were lesson discussions with peer observation and supervisors. Additionally, two-thirds of teachers were dissatisfied with their school's PD activities. Most teachers is considered the professional development activities play a vital role in order to enhance the skills of teaching and recognized teaching as a continual learning process according to **Yousif A. Alshumari, Fahad M. Almohaisen (2017).**

This paper examined EFL instructors' perceptions of the efficacy 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 utilized to collect information from 76 instructors. The results displayed that teachers generally had a negative attitude towards the current programs, although they valued 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. Teachers recommended carrying out a needs assessment and providing 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).**

IIII. results and Recommendations

The study on the teachers' professional development has a number of significant consequences for the country's education system, educational institutions, instructors and policymakers.
Firstly, it emphasized the essential role of professional

development in improving the quality of education. By providing ongoing learning and training opportunities for instructors, Kuwait can guarantee that its schools offer effective and up-to-date instruction that qualifies students for a rapid success that changes their lives. This, in turn, can support the country's economic growth and competitiveness on a worlwide scale.

Secondly, the study emphasizes the necessity for increased institutional support for professional development. Educational centers or institutions should take into account the importance of resources and how to use it in a better way, and create a supportive environment for teachers to participate in continuous learning. **Furthermore**, the study highlights the advantages of technology in broadening the accessibility of professional development opportunities. Online courses, digital resources, and webinars can reach all teachers, supporting to bridge professional gaps and guarantee that professional development is available to instructors 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 in order to make it simpler for teachers to participate in development activities. **In conclusion**, this study recommended the essential role of professional development for instructors in Kuwait. By realizing its significance, benefiting from technology, increasing institutional support, and implementing effective policies, Kuwait can enhance a dynamic and highly skilled teaching workforce that will support the country's educational and economic advancement. Ultimately, enhancing professional development is an investment in the future of education in Kuwait.

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