

Towards an Effective Training Program: Investigating In-Service EFL Teachers' Challenges during the Training Process Case of Secondary School EFL Teachers in Bejaia

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Abstract:

The current research aims to investigate the in-service secondary school EFL teachers' challenges during the training process. Furthermore, the study analyzes the extent to which these challenges compromise the efficiency of the training process. To achieve the research aims, in-service secondary school EFL teachers in Bejaia city were surveyed to share their training experiences, using a likert scale questionnaire. Adopting a quantitative approach, the collected data were analyzed using SPSS. The results revealed that the participants faced many problems mainly an imbalance between theoretical knowledge and its practical implementations, insufficient collaboration opportunities and outdated program content. Therefore, these findings propose a need for a systematic and regular review of the training program components based on trainees' perceptions.

Keywords: in-service training, secondary school EFL teachers, training challenges.

1- Introduction

Many factors contribute to define the quality of education, including teachers, learners and inspectors; however, teachers occupy a central role that connects all educational stakeholders. The sensitivity of teachers' role necessitates a thorough and continuous development to activate teachers' professional identity. Therefore, robust education systems offer opportunities for novice teachers to reinforce their teaching background and contextualize their teaching practices within real classrooms. In-service EFL teacher training (INSET) is considered an indispensable stage in teacher professional development for building solid competence of teaching instruction and updating their methodological knowledge (Önalán & Gürsoy, 2020).

A considerable amount of research has been devoted to evaluate the effectiveness of in-service EFL teacher training programs (Amer & Pourmohammadi, 2020; Malik, Soomro, & Pathan, 2022). The evaluation process of teacher education program adopts diverse frameworks and modes across those studies. Some researchers have relied on document analysis to identify the key strengths and weaknesses of the implemented programs, while others have employed structured checklists of reliable evaluation models to assess the

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quality of training programs. Critically, investigating EFL trainees' perceptions and challenges has been proven as a valuable strategy for analyzing program effectiveness.

Although teacher training has been widely investigated across variant international contexts, limited effort has been devoted to evaluating the impact of training programs on teachers' practices and learners' achievements in Algeria. The existing literature in Algeria primarily evaluates the variant obstacles experienced by teachers in the classroom settings, often neglecting the underlying causes of teaching problems. That is to say, little attention has been given to examine the practicality of training process. More importantly, while acknowledging the significance of previous studies, their scopes are limited to providing general and surface-level examination of the challenges encountered throughout the training process. To address this gap, informal discussions with some secondary school EFL teachers in Bejaia revealed a recognized need for improvement. The results have indicated that teachers appreciate the significance of the training program; however, they highlighted the necessity of refining some aspects to better develop their teaching practices and meet their professional needs. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by investigating the challenges faced by secondary school EFL teachers in Bejaia during the training process.

Following the status of teacher training in EFL context, the current study investigates the challenges of in-service EFL teachers throughout the training process. This study is guided by the following questions:

- What are the major challenges in-service secondary school EFL teachers encounter during their training process?
- To what extent do in-service secondary school teachers experience these challenges during their training process?

Literature Review

1.1- In-service EFL Teacher Training:

The complexities of teaching responsibilities and the diverse competencies challenge stakeholders in the education system to reconsider what teachers should acquire to navigate critical teaching situations. While pre-service preparation is crucial, in-service education presents a key stage in teacher professional development as it simultaneously links the process of building teachers' educational expertise to the practical realities of their professional environment. In this sense, Nouri and Kaouche (2021) defined in-service training as the planned efforts to enhance pedagogical practices of teachers throughout their careers.

Specifically within the context of in-service training programs, many researchers have offered commendable work in amassing a wide-range skill set required for optimizing teaching-learning process (Hiebert, Berk & Jansen, 2007). Pedagogically adept teachers

manage their classroom effectively, structures lessons with clear objectives, uses variety of teaching methods to meet diverse learners' needs, provide constructive feedback, effectively leverage technology into teaching, achieve culturally responsive teaching and engage in ongoing professional learning. By introducing these skills theoretically and practically early in teaching career, novice teachers can confidently bridge the existing gaps and challenges in teaching context (Personn & Yigitoglu, 2015).

1.2– In-service EFL Training's Challenges

Though the significance of ongoing professional development is widely recognized among teachers, careful consideration must be given to practical procedures of its implementation. Another crucial element rests on considering in-service teachers' perceptions regarding the challenges they face in training program design. More importantly, observing teachers' reflection on the skills learned during training process unveils these challenges, and evaluates the training's applicability (Karim, Ahmed, Shahed, Rahman & Mohamed, 2019). That is to say, school-based training programs have been recognized as a means of enhancing the training quality by linking the training components to real classroom practices and teaching requirements.

Understanding the underlying obstacles compromising training process allows for proactive decision-making and better development for training program. Similarly, uncovering the underlying challenges encourages all stakeholders to assist in refining the process. In the context of training improvement, researchers persistently examine these obstacles from multiple aspects. Li (2024), in his research, examined the institutional challenges, including lack of training support from educational institutions and restricted engagement with practitioners and decision-makers in training programs. In this vein, Aliakbar and Saeedi (2022) stated that teachers frequently face obstacles with respect to students' behaviours and fulfilling learners' needs, reflecting the need for addressing these teaching skills in the training process. Moreover, the swift advancement of technology in education poses another critical challenge for teachers, resting on how these digital tools can be better integrated in teaching process.

To systematically categorize these training-related issues, Uysal and Savas (2021) proposed a meaningful model to facilitate the process of diagnosis and resolve the challenges. Their framework was depicted under five major themes: student-teacher challenges, classroom-related issues, trainee-trainers relationship, challenges specified by pupils and school administrations constraints.

1.3–In-service EFL Teacher Training in Algerian Context

Many researchers have examined various strategies to improve the standards of teacher training in Algeria, working towards the advancement of English integration across all disciplines. In this respect, Ghedjghoudj (2012) expounded how academic restrictions

affect teacher responsibilities in response to the evolving demands of education. To put it differently, rather than relying solely on teachers as primary source of teaching input, teaching innovations call for encouraging learners to actively adapt and apply knowledge using diverse sources (Hadi, 2021). In pursuit of this aim, teacher training curricula must reflect recent shifts in educational practices. In response to recent directives, the Algerian ministry of education requires novice teachers to complete six weeks of theoretical and practical training to enhance their professional and cognitive capabilities (Hadi, 2021).

1.4–Previous Studies

The area of teacher training investigation consistently yields constructive results, seeking to rectify the existing inadequacies in training processes. Some studies have focused on examining the possible challenges trainees encounter during preparatory phase; therefore, the practical recommendations are developed based on research findings (Li, 2024; Nouri& Kaouche, 2021). While other researchers have steered their attentions towards analyzing the aspects of training programs, identifying their main advantages and limitations to thereby propose strategies and models for training curricula (Kazemi & Ashrafi, 2014; Tzotzou, 2016).

Considering trainees' perceptions and challenges as a main method for training program evaluation, Li (2024) carried out a study entitled “EFL Teachers' Professional Development—In-service Training and Support from Universities.” This research primarily examined the effectiveness of training program on teachers' professional development, and investigated the role of institutional support in shaping effective training process. Adopting descriptive and quantitative methods, the researcher gathered data from 244 Chinese university EFL teachers. Based on data analysis, the participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the institutional support for professional development and the number of training workshops and seminars. Li (2024) therefore recommended the adoption of a collaborative approach among institutional staff, trainers and trainees. The study findings called for developing a training program plan with comprehensive examination before the actual implementation.

Another contribution within in-service EFL training context was conducted by Mahara (2024). This research was based on conducting semi-structured interviews with five high school teachers to identify the issues they confronted. The research findings revealed that the participants faced major challenges, including inadequate resources, insufficient expertise, political influences, and time management issues, highlighting how these constraints obstruct the positive impact of the training process.

In the Algerian context, an inquiry by Nouri and Kaouche (2021) investigated EFL teachers' attitudes towards the offered in-service EFL teacher training seminars. To achieve research aims, the researchers implemented a likert scale questionnaire

administered to 90 secondary EFL teachers. Their findings revealed many concerns regarding accessibility to the training facilities, inadequacy of practice-based sessions and excessive training on subject matter and pedagogical knowledge at the expense of practical applications.

Although the reviewed studies offered valuable insights into in-service EFL teacher training, a critical gap remains: offering a thorough and analytical assessment for the quality of training process from the perspectives of trainees. Therefore, the current study endeavors to address this gap by examining the strengths and weaknesses of in-service EFL teacher training and propose recommendations for improvement.

2– Method and Tools:

2.1–Participants

The study sample comprised 39 in-service secondary school EFL teachers in Bejaia city, Algeria. Based on the inclusion criteria (participation in in-service EFL training), the researcher excluded three individuals with no experience in any training organized by the ministry. Furthermore, the participants included both novice and experienced teachers who can express their insights and challenges regarding the training process.

2.2–Sampling Technique:

The researcher adopted a non-random, convenient-purposive sampling technique by selecting participants who were available and have willingness to share their experience. This technique also enabled the researcher to target EFL teachers who have participated in the in-service training program established by the ministry, aligning with the research objectives. Therefore, the sample size was based on achieving representativeness to make statistical inferences about the population.

2.3–Research Setting

This study was conducted in secondary schools in Bejaia city, Algeria, during the 2024–2025 academic year. Additionally, some parts of the investigation were carried out via online platforms.

2.4–Research Design:

The study was framed within exploratory-descriptive design. This means that, the investigation explored the in-service EFL teachers' challenges in the training process, and described the characteristics of these teachers: teaching experience, number of participation in training process, etc. Foremost, analyzing further statistical factors, including the mean and standard deviation helped to quantify and describe the severity of training process difficulties. The study also employed a case study design inasmuch the researcher investigated specific category of individuals (EFL teachers with selected criteria: secondary school teachers who already involved in in-service training process program) within a particular context (secondary schools in Bejaia city).

2.5–Research Approach

Unlike the qualitative approach, the quantitative approach refers to the process of generating numerical data to be quantitatively analyzed through rigorous measurement of research variables (Kothari, 2004). In this sense, the investigator adopted the quantitative approach to define the most challenging aspects of the training program, and measure precisely the level of severity across the 16 challenges using statistical factors (means and standards deviations). This allowed the researcher to classify the challenges from the most to the least severe using SPSS. Furthermore, one of the main goals of the research is to generalize the findings to a broader extent through using a quantitative instrument (a questionnaire) that facilitates the operation of collecting a broad range of data.

2.6–Data Collection Method

The researcher employed the questionnaire to collect the quantitative data. This tool is commonly used to conduct investigations that require large data set for generalization purpose (Kothari, 2004). The researcher relied on Peacock model (2009) to design the questionnaire, adapting some items and developing others. The questionnaire was designed to investigate the various challenges encountered by EFL teachers in the training process, identifying the common and major problems with its main classifications. It included two parts: the first gathered demographic information of the participants (teaching experience, educational level, teachers' involvements, etc.), while part the second focused on the problems experienced during the professional development.

2.7–Data Analysis:

The quantitative data obtained from the likert scale questionnaire were analyzed using SPSS version 22. The latter allowed producing the statistical analysis, including frequency distributions, percentages, means, standard deviations, and Cronbach's alpha (reliability coefficient). More importantly, SPSS facilitates the process of regulating the missing data that do not exceed 5% to not affect the general results

3– Results and Discussion

3.1–Reliability

According to table 1 (see the appendix), the results revealed a Cronbach's coefficient of 0.883. This indicates that the 21 items of the questionnaire are highly consistent and interrelated. Therefore, the scale is deemed reliable for measuring the in-service secondary school EFL teachers' challenges during the training process.

3.2–Validity

To establish the content validity of the research tool, the investigator requested feedback from three experienced EFL teachers specializing in applied linguistics. Based on their review, the following remarks were provided as guiding suggestions to enhance the relevance and clarity of the questionnaire items:

- The gender related item was omitted as it has no significant on answering the research questions.
- The negative statements were revised to facilitate the analysis process of results.
- The order of the demographic information items was revised.

3.3-In-service EFL Teachers' participation

Figure 1 (see the appendix) displays the participation rating of teachers in the training program organized by the ministry. The results reported a substantial majority of teachers (52.8%) participated in the training more than five times. On the other hand, only 2.8% of teachers reported moderate level of engagement from three to five times. The remaining participants (9 teachers) had limited engagements in the training process.

The high participation rate across the majority of participants refers to the teachers' level of expertise in providing meaningful and fruitful evaluation for the quality. Conversely, considering the role of novice teachers, with minimal participation, provides important data on examining the effectiveness of the training process in shaping the beginning teachers' professional identity.

3.4-EFL Teachers' Participation in Special Training

Figure 2 (see the appendix) presents data on teachers' engagement in special training programs as supplementary resources for teacher professional development. The analysis indicated almost even split division between who did and did not participate in special training courses. For more details, 14 teachers (38.9%) reported their involvement in extra training courses. This might reflect their dissatisfaction towards the quality of the training organized by the ministry or their commitment to seek further learning opportunities. Otherwise, the other participants (47.2%) reported no engagement in any of this type of training program. This might be attributed to the lack of awareness towards the importance of extensive training, teachers' personal issues, such as time and financial constraints or their satisfaction with the ministry-led training.

3.5-Training's Challenges

Table 2 (see the appendix) presents the variant challenges faced by a sample of 39 in-service secondary school EFL teachers. The statistics present the frequency, the percentage, the mean and the standard deviation for each individual challenge and the general statistics across all challenges. The inclusion of these statistic factors aims to quantify the severity of each challenge category, though knowing the level of agreement.

- Prevalence of challenges: the results showed that all sixteen challenges identified in the likert scale questionnaire were reported by the participants as common issues occur during the training process experience with variant frequencies. To account the less reported issues, no part of the training process was approved to be satisfactory by all participants.

This is an indication of the wide-ranging barriers that obstruct the seamless execution of the training process and limit how teachers can benefit from the training.

– Frequencies and percentages analysis: though the participants outlined their experiences with all challenges, ranking them from the most to the least challenging should be highlighted to emphasize the areas of training program that require decisive resolutions. The most frequently reported challenges included “theory over practice emphasis”, “insufficient collaboration” and “outdated program content”. On the other hand, the participants raised minor concerns towards lack of clear objectives, lack of motivation and lack of qualified trainers. These results highlight that the most challenging issues should be handled urgent and thoroughly, without neglecting the other aspects.

– Mean score analysis: using a 5-point likert scale (1=strongly agree, 5= strongly disagree), the higher mean score corresponds to greater disagreement with the issue. Whereas lower scores reflect high level of agreement. Based on this scoring rule, the findings indicated diverse scores of mean from the higher 2.89 and 2.78, reflecting strong disagreement towards the lack of clear of objectives and lack of motivation respectively. Otherwise, lower mean scores (1.86., 1.97 and 2.00) indicated high level of agreement towards theory over practice emphasis, insufficient collaboration, and heavy workload hindrance respectively. That is to say, the latter are considered more critical and challenging than the other issues. In summary, the average rating of the mean for the 16 challenges is 2.22. This indicates that the participating teachers generally acknowledged (agree) the existence of these challenges during their training process.

– Standards deviation analysis (SD): the standard deviation scores varied considerably across challenges, including lack of motivation (SD=1.31) and lack of qualified trainers (SD=1.27). This highlights the differing training experiences among the participating teachers. This suggests significant heterogeneity in teaching experience, level of education and training participation rate among trainees.

The current research offered statistical results stating that in-service secondary school teachers faced numerous challenges during their training process, directly affecting their teaching practices. The sixteen challenges were identified as hindering factors for the trainees’ learning experience. To be more precise, theory over practice emphasis, insufficient collaboration, heavy workload, and outdated content program were reported as the prominent obstacles that impact the training outcomes. These challenges were classified under external issues “institutional-related factors” and internal issues “individual challenges». This can be attributed to the complex requirement of practical training, including training equipment, sufficient time, appropriate space and skilled trainers. Also, there was often no continuous assessment and review for the training program aspects which results to the delivery of outdated materials.

The results of this study largely align with those of Nouri and Kaouche (2021) who reported that the research participants complained about the inadequacy of practice-based sessions. Similar to the findings stated by Li (2024), this research also emphasizes that most training-based obstacles stem from institutional shortcomings, embracing the imbalance between theoretical knowledge and its practical implementation and the delivery of outdated materials. Furthermore, the findings of Yang (2019) and Mahara (2024) highlighted the impact of motivation on hindering teachers' willingness and regular participation in the training sessions. The present study, in contrast, suggests that most training obstacles may arise from external factors more than internal issues. That is to say, the participants demonstrated minimal regard to the lack of motivation as a challenge. It is unexpected that the participating teachers did not regard technological skills for teaching purposes as a central issue. This stands in contrast to the claims of many researchers (Budianto, Arifani, Wardhono, & Poedjiastutie, 2023) who have stated the emergence of digital literacy deficiencies as a prominent gap among in-service EFL teachers due to the over reliance on traditional content delivery.

4- Conclusion

The results of this study revealed that the current in-service secondary school EFL teacher training inadequately addresses the requirements of teachers for effective teaching practices. That is to say, the identified challenges can be used as guiding indices to provide clear picture how the training program should be reviewed to improve training effectiveness.

It is crucial to regularly review the components of the training program to define the evolving demands of teaching profession. This stage serves to avoid many potential challenges. Another point worth of mentioning in this context is the importance of incorporating all concerned individuals in the process of training curriculum design. This maximizes the academic collaboration among trainees, trainers and program developers. Consequently, this allows trainees to gain the opportunity to discuss their problems and requirements, and the trainers to have access to all technical and physical facilities to establish productive environment for the training. At the institutional level, there should be a call for the ministerial stakeholders to extend the training duration for novice teachers and provide ongoing professional development for experienced teachers. This will pave the way for thorough learning and enhance teaching skills applications. Finally, a strong emphasis should be directed to diversify the training activities to encourage greater collaboration among teachers.

Appendix of Tables and Figures:

Table (1): Reliability

Cronbach' s alpha	Number of elements
0.883	21

Table (2): Training's Challenges

Frequency/Percentage	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagreed	Mean	SD
Challenge' s types							
Needs analysis gap	11 30.6%	15 34.7%	7 19.4%	3 8.3%	0	2.06	0.92
Lack of clear objectives	5 13.9%	8 22.2%	10 27.8%	12 33.3%	1 2.8%	2.89	1.11
Outdated program content	11 30.6%	17 47.2%	3 8.3%	3 8.3%	1 2.8%	2.03	1.01
Theory over practice emphasis	16 44.4%	13 36.1%	3 8.3%	4 11.1%	0	1.86	0.99
Over reliance on lectures	12 33.3%	12 33.3%	7 19.4%	2 5.6%	2 5.6%	2.14	1.14
Lack of reflective practice	6 16.7%	16 44.4%	9 25.0%	4 11.1%	0	2.31	0.90
Inadequate classroom preparedness	10 27.8%	11 30.6%	9 25.0%	5 13.9%	0	2.26	1.03
Lack of continuous assessment	8 22.2%	15 41.7%	9 25.0%	2 5.6%	1 2.8%	2.23	0.97
Insufficient collaboration	16 44.4%	10 27.8%	6 16.7%	3 8.3%	1 2.8%	1.97	1.10
Inadequate technology integration	10 27.8%	14 38.9%	5 13.9%	5 13.9%	2 5.6%	2.31	1.19
Short-term training	14 38.9%	9 25.0%	7 19.4%	4 11.1%	2 5.6%	2.19	1.23
Lack of classroom issue discussion	13 36.1%	13 36.1%	6 16.7%	4 11.1%	0	2.03	1.00
Heavy workload hindrance	13 36.1%	11 30.6%	11 30.6%	1 2.8%	0	2.00	0.89
Lack of resources	12	13	6	3	1	2.09	1.06

	33.1%	36.1%	16.7%	8.3%	2.8%		
Lack of qualified trainers	11 30.6%	9 25.0%	7 19.4%	7 19.4%	2 5.6%	2.44	1.27
Lack of motivation	9 25.0%	4 11.1%	13 36.1%	6 16.7%	4 11.1%	2.78	1.31

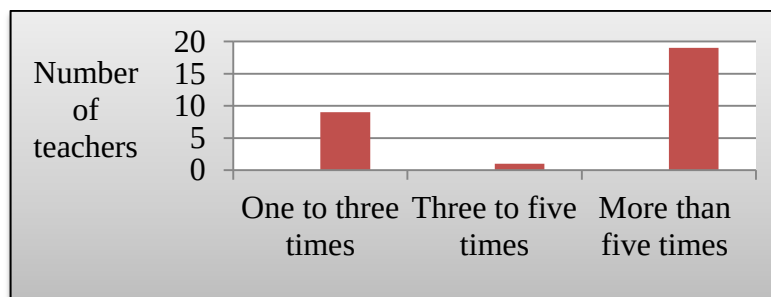


Figure (1): Participation Rate in In-service EFL Training

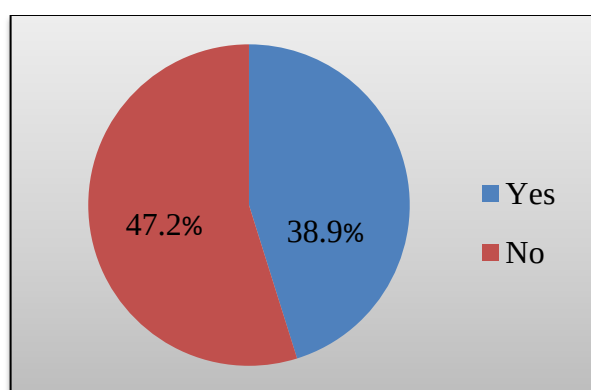


Figure (2): Participation Rate in Special Training

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