The Journal of Applied Linguistics and Applied Literature: Dynamics and Advances, Volume 6, Issue 1, Winter and Spring, 2018, pp. 77-89

The Role of Experience in EFL Teachers' Satisfaction of the In-service Teacher Education Programs

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Abstract

The short-term in-service EFL teacher education programs are assumed to be of crucial importance in upgrading teachers' methodologies and gearing their teaching more closely to the students' needs. Therefore, a dynamic in-service program for EFL teachers is needed to keep abreast of the time. The present study aims to investigate the role of experience in EFL teachers' satisfaction of the in-service teacher education programs in Zanjan city. 200 EFL teachers from Zanjan province (Districts 1 & 2) participated in this study. The data were collected through the Course-evaluation questionnaire with "five-level Likert scale". The results were analyzed through both descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings showed that there is a significant difference between teachers' experience and their satisfaction of in-service programs. Thus, novice teachers and experienced teachers have different expectations of the in-service teacher education programs. This production of significant difference about the relationship between the EFL teachers' experience and their satisfaction of the in-service teacher education programs can contribute to different perceptions of the teachers on the relationship between the EFL teachers' experience and their satisfaction of the in-service teacher education programs.

Keywords: In-Service Teacher Training, Pre-Service Teacher Training, Teacher Education, Teacher Training, and Experience

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received: Tuesday, August 21, 2018
Accepted: Monday, November 26, 2018
Published: Thursday, February 7, 2019
Available Online: Saturday, February 2, 2019
DOI: 10.22049/JALDA.2018.26256.1071

Online ISSN: 2383-2460; Print ISSN: 2383-591x; 2019 © *Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University Press*

Introduction

Educated teachers can play a vital role in educational development. By taking advantage of any existing effective material and providing them with opportunities for continuous and flexible learning, the professional development of in-service teachers can be further facilitated.

As many methodologists have expressed, one of the best and the most practical ways to keep oneself up to date is to attend in-service workshops. Most of these in-service programs are typically designed and sponsored by Teacher Education Departments, English Language Institutes and Ministry of Education.

EFL training program for the teachers will help to build a solid working relationship with teachers. According to Hull (as cited in Allen, 2007), educational training gives the ability for the education to shape new and more productive behaviors that have a positive effect on one's abilities, because the schools or firms that propose strong training and development programs and possibilities will attract the best teachers/staffs. Teacher education programs and trained teachers can influence national development.

Teacher preparation and the urgent need for teacher's development are the most important topics in any educational system. It is believed that pre-service and in-service training courses hold a significant key to solve the obstacles facing teacher's development (Day, 1999; Craft, 2000; Sugrue, 2001; Hammadou, 2004; Lee, 2007).

Holding acceptable and logical pre-service and in-service training courses could contribute to the development of well-prepared teachers. In-service teacher education emphasizes what teachers know instead of what they do, bringing prior knowledge and personal experience to bear on the new learning situations (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001). Through reflection, in-service teachers become more aware of themselves and of the pedagogical context that are contingent directly upon teaching and learning. In order to help in-service teachers gain enough knowledge and expertise it is necessary to motivate both teachers and instructors, and inform them of their weaknesses and strengths. Furthermore, the intended programs should be well-designed to meet the standards required of the teachers (Lee, 2007).

The present study aims to investigate the relationship between the EFL teachers' experience and their satisfaction of the in-service teacher education programs.

Significance and justification of the study

There is an increasing demand for EFL, and there are increasing numbers of EFL teachers. To meet the demand for EFL teachers, a number of teachers are trained in pre-service and in-service programs. In particular, INSET programs are considered as significant sources for EFL teachers' professional development. These programs aim at creating competent teachers to be aware of the innovations in the EFL field, and open to the implementation of these new methods in their classes. In-service training programs can provide a source for professional development if they actually fulfill the EFL teachers' needs.

In-service training programs imply that pre-service training program may not have been sufficient and that teachers require some support and assistance while helping their students in the process of learning. Therefore, the teachers' preparation phase is not sufficient and that they require an extra learning stage to keep abreast with the task of their work. They need to raise their language proficiency and design different materials and learning tasks.

The short-term in-service EFL teacher education programs are assumed to be of crucial importance in upgrading teachers' methodologies and gearing their teaching more closely to the students' needs. The short-term in-service EFL teacher training provides an excellent opportunity to improve and develop the skills and effective attitudes of teachers to better adjust themselves to the modern methods of teaching and thus become better members of a noble profession. It is an excellent opportunity for the Ministry of Education to offer the new methods, developments and trends in teaching for promising EFL teachers to prepare them for greater responsibility in education, which modern society demands. A dynamic in-service program for EFL teachers is needed to keep abreast of the time. The individual's educational growth should be a continuous process. It begins at birth and extends throughout his life. Therefore, in order to keep abreast of time in the field of foreign language teaching, teacher education programs should be executed so that the teachers become better informed of the professional knowledge, skills, and improve their methods of teaching in the areas of education.

This investigation will provide implications for In-Service Teacher Education Sector, EFL teachers, and students. It will cause the In-Service Teacher Departments, Institutes, and Colleges better evaluate their services and their staffs by summative and formative measures before, during, and after the course in order to assess the improvement in EFL teachers' professional competencies and skills. One of the best and practical ways to keep oneself up-to-date is to attend in-service programs and workshops. Therefore, EFL teachers should improve their pedagogical knowledge and instructional skills, so that their students could do well to take benefits and feel more motivated to learn English more eagerly and efficiently. These facts emphasize even more the need for better trained, if not qualified teachers to meet the fast changing.

Research Question and Hypothesis

1) Is there any relationship between the EFL teachers' experience and their satisfaction of the in-service teacher education programs?

In order to examine the above-mentioned question, the corresponding null hypothesis was formulated:

a. There is no relationship between the EFL teachers' experience and their satisfaction of the in-service teacher education programs.

Definitions of some key terms

In spite of the long research interest in teacher education, either pre-service or in-service, none of the key constructs has an agreed upon definitions. Therefore,

various definitions and interpretations coexist. To make the current study easy to grasp, some definitions of key terms are provided:

In-Service Teacher Training: Hass (1957, p. 13) offers this definition: "In-service education includes all activities engaged in by the professional personnel during their service and designed to contribute to improvement on the job."

Pre-Service Teacher Training: Lippitt and Fox (1971, p. 149) say that "Pre-service education is only the beginning of professional training. Professional development must continue through a teacher's career if he/she is to keep up with changing conditions and new knowledge."

Teacher Education: Freeman (2002, p. 72) defines teacher education as "the sum of experiences and activities through which individuals learn to be language teachers." These experiences can be gained in formal or informal settings, in undergraduate, pre-service, or in-service activities.

Teacher Training: Teacher training is characterized by approaches that view teacher preparation as familiarizing student teachers with techniques and skills to apply in the classroom (Larsen-freeman, 1983, quoted in Bose, 1997). Training prepares the teachers for a specific teaching situation.

Review of Literature

In-Service Teacher Education Programs:

The teacher is the important member in the learning process. There can be learning without books but rarely if ever without a teacher. Also a fundamental requirement for the success of any new school textbook is the teachers who put the book effectively into use. So a teacher should go through two stages of training to become a successful teacher; in the first stage, he/she should attend the faculty of education to be prepared to become a teacher, to be able to teach in a school. In the second stage, during his teaching, he/she should be given in-service training to improve his professional performance.

Some researchers have studied in-service programs rather than pre-service programs (Coladarci & Gage, 1984; Griffin & Barnes, 1986; Carpenter, Fennema, Peterson, Chang & Loef, 1989).

In-service training of teachers is a means of providing pedagogical methods and subject matter content to teachers (Stephens & Hartman, 1978).

Edelfelt and Lawrence (1975) have a broad definition of in-service education of teachers:

"Any professional development activity that a teacher undertakes singly or with other teachers after receiving her or his initial teaching certificate and after beginning professional practice" (p. 5).

Training is concerned with the acquisition of skills and using standardized learning procedures and sequences. In-service education is bound up with the notion of bringing about teachers' professional academic and personal development through the provision of

a whole series of study experiences. So, in-service training considers as a part of the total framework of in-service education. So the phrases "in-service education and training" are often abbreviated to (INSET).

In-service training means any activity which a teacher undertakes after s/he has begun to teach which is concerned with his professional work (Henderson, 1978). It includes all those activities in which teacher may participate for the purpose of developing his/her professional knowledge, interest or skill, attitudes, preparation for a degree or other qualification subsequent to initial training (Morant, 1981).

In-service teacher education programs when conducted in the traditional face-to-face mode allow access to those who can afford to take leave from their jobs and domestic responsibilities (Abbasi & Millar, 1996).

In-service education and training (INSET) programs have the major role in increasing the quality of teachers and quality of education (Hayes, 1997). They provide life-long support for teachers when appropriately designed. Moreover, these programs are seen as a prerequisite for job satisfaction and career development of teachers and are designed as a part of their teaching activity (Ur, 1996; Coşkuner, 2001).

INSET programs are generally designed to create changes in teachers' teaching practice and according to the feedback they get; they make necessary changes in their style of teaching. It should also be designed to help teachers to become well-adjusted members of a society in the process of change and keep institutions, programs and individual teachers, up to date (Palmer, 1993).

The design of in-service programs should be based on an assessment of needs of teachers. A prior consideration of needs will establish priorities to meet the participants' goals and define content areas. Effective in-service programs must reflect the unique and special needs of various educational settings. Care must be taken in adapting content to preschool, elementary, secondary, and postsecondary level requirements. The success of in-service programs ultimately will depend on the clear and consistent support of administrative officials. A well-organize in-service program helps the teachers to become familiar with new knowledge and to use it in practice (Ahrens, 1957).

Puglaar (1957) proposes to use needs assessment for guidance of those responsible for teacher training and improvement programs. It is clear that there is a need for in-service programs to consider the real needs of teachers. This procedure has proven the most useful and reliable tool for identifying the needs of the teachers in the most objective manner.

Teachers' needs, expectations, and perceptions must be taken as a basis for the development of INSET programs and such interests must be given priority in the design of INSET programs. Also, teacher educators should not be given an excessive authority to recommend what teachers should do to increase their effectiveness, because it makes the

teachers passive receptors of orders. In this case, teachers instead of being passive receivers of knowledge will become active participants. Therefore, employing a trainee-centered approach causes to get more fruitful results (Murdoch, 1994).

Teachers are the major participants of in-service training programs. Their needs should be recognized to determine the content of the program appropriately (Dubin & Wong, 1990). Disregarding the participants' needs, expectations, skills, attitudes and concerns in designing an in-service program is one of the reasons that cause professional development fails

As Koç (1992) mentions, the needs of the teachers who will participate in in-service education programs should be determined before the courses are designed. Therefore, a systematic needs analysis procedure is required and the teachers' needs should be determined before the in-service education programs are designed. Moreover, ongoing evaluation of the training is essential too.

Safaei Asl and Safaei Asl (2014) indicated that while the ITCs programs offered to EFL teachers were, though not completely, in parallel with their needs, they did not satisfy the teachers' desires. So, the EFL teachers' both needs and desires need to be taken into consideration in any in-service training programs by the ITCs planners.

INSET programs are implemented during the service or in special periods, such as summer schools. They may take place in a target language country, in the same institution where the participants work, or in another institution in the country that provides required resources for the program (Palmer, 1993). These programs are delivered through workshops, conferences, courses, or lectures, by combining theory and practice.

In-service teacher training (INSET) is a formal means through which teachers are constantly updated with the new findings in the field.

In-service training for language teachers focuses on the use of new techniques, materials or equipment, or on the upgrading of individual classroom skills or areas of knowledge. They are intended to upgrade and expand teaching capabilities and enable teachers to cope with changing conditions in their field or in the society (Ferguson & Donnon, 2001).

In order to keep abreast of changes in the field of foreign language teaching, teacher education programs should be exposed to continuous assessment in relation to the needs of the teachers and the society. Therefore, care must be taken to ensure that the program offered provide the prospective teacher with the needed skills, knowledge and experience.

Freeman (1982) and Lopriore (1998) believe that in-service classes can be optimized provided that:

- Teachers and instructors enjoy having a high level of motivation.
- Both teachers and instructors are involved in the process of develop themselves and their prospective learners.
- Teachers and instructors aim at progressing not only in theory but also in practice.

- Both teachers and instructors have a strong interpersonal relationship with each other and exchange their views and experiences with other fellows.
- Instructors make teachers aware of their weaknesses and strengths.
- Teachers with different levels of experience and education receive different in-service programs.

A continual connection and relationship between theory and practice is an important component of teacher development. Moreover, this aspect is important if teachers are themselves to be performers rather than consumers of theories. So the effectiveness of both the educational and the practical training aspects of the teacher preparation program can be increased by maintaining ongoing connection between these two components.

Every teacher should have the flexibility in his/her teaching approach (Arends, 1989). S/he should know that every teaching approach is not appropriate for every situation. Therefore, they should be equipped to a wide range of knowledge and skills to meet the needs of their students or classroom situation.

Methodology

Two hundred EFL teachers participated in this study. They consisted of 97 male and 103 female teachers, with the teaching experience of 2 to 30 years ranging in age from 20 to 45 years, with different levels of social and economical status from Zanjan city. The participants represented two different L1 backgrounds. These included Turkish and Persian who were currently teaching English in schools of districts 1 and 2 of Zanjan province. Zanjan province has10 parts and two districts, but due to ease of accessibility the subject pool was selected only from 1 & 2 districts. The participants with different academic degrees held different percentages within the population. Moreover, all of the participants of this study were those who have attended the in-service EFL teacher education programs. The criteria such as teacher's familiarity with the in-service courses at least during the last two years and their proficiency level were all taken into consideration.

122 participants out of 200 participants returned the questionnaires which consisted of 67 females and 55 males receiving percentages of 55 and 45, respectively. The participants of the study were those who had got their university degrees in Ph.D., M.A., B.A., and A.A. 10 percent held Associate degree (Post-Diploma), while 79 percent of the teachers, being the majority group, held a Bachelors' degree at the time of the investigation. Finally, 11 percent of them had a Masters' degree and 2 percent of the teachers held a doctorate degree (See Appendix, A).

The number of male teachers holding an Associate degree who answered the questionnaires was 3 in secondary level. This number for the male teachers holding a Bachelors' degree was 10 in secondary level, and 20 for high school and pre-university level teachers. The number of the teachers, teaching in high school and pre-university level that held a Masters' degree and answering the questionnaires was 12. 3 females with an Associate degree teaching in secondary level, 15 females

holding a Bachelors' degree teaching in secondary level, and 35 females with a Bachelors' degree teaching in high school and pre-university level, and 2 females with a Masters' degree teaching in high school and pre-university level took part, shared their ideas through filling the forms and returning them to the researcher.

Materials

Two types of instruments were specifically selected and adapted for this study: a background questionnaire and a course-evaluation questionnaire. The course-evaluation questionnaire itself included seven sections; each section was composed of different statements aimed to obtain the required information for analysis. The questions were supposed to extract data on the efficiency of EFL in-service teacher education programs on the EFL teachers teaching and class performance. For collecting the required data, we used the "five-level Likert scale" questionnaire. Then the choices were tabulated and given values: strongly disagree = 1, disagree = 2, undecided = 3, agree = 4 and strongly agree = 5 to have a clearer outlook of the in-service EFL teacher education programs.

Data analysis

H0: *There is no relationship between the EFL teachers' experience and their satisfaction of the in-service teacher education programs.*

Table 1 displays the mean, standard Deviation and standard Error of the answers on the six questions.

Table 1. One-Sample Statistics on EFL teachers' experience and their satisfaction of in-service programs

Std. Error Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	N	
0.973	10.529	42.98	122	Satisfaction from the Programs

To examine the hypothesis, one-sample t-test was conducted. Table 1 shows the results of statistical analysis of applying One-Sample Test to test the hypothesis. The results of SPSS at df = 121 and α = .05, suggested that there is a significant differences between teachers' experience and their satisfaction of in-service programs. So the hypothesis claiming that there is relationship between the EFL teachers' experience and their satisfaction of the in-service teacher education programs is confirmed.

Tables 1 and 2 displayed that there was a significant difference between these two variables ($\rho \leq 0.05$). (M = 42.98, SD = 10.529), t (121) = -9.773, p = .000. Overall, the participants had a different perceptions about the in-service courses, because the mean of their scores (42.98) was meaningfully lower than the assumed mean (50).

Table 2. One-Sample Test on EFL teachers' experience and their satisfaction of in-service programs

Test Value = 50						
95% Confidence Interval of the Difference						
Upper	Lower	Mean Difference	Sig. (2-tailed)	df	t_{obs}	
-7.23	-10.97	-9.12	.000	121	-9.773	Satisfaction from the Programs

t (crit) = 1.98; $\rho \leq 0.05$

Thus, there was a significant difference between these two variables ($\rho \leq 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Additionally, the amount of $t_{ob} = -9.773$ in comparison with $t_{crit} = 1.98$ at $\rho \leq 0.05$ also confirms the refutation of the null hypothesis.

There was a significant difference between teachers' experience and their satisfaction of in-service programs. (M = 42.98, SD = 10.529), t (121) = -9.773, ρ = .000.

Conclusion

Considering the research hypothesis, "Is there any relationship between the EFL teachers' experience and their satisfaction of the in-service teacher education programs?" proved there was a significant difference about the relationship between the EFL teachers' teaching experience and their satisfaction of the in-service teacher education programs, i.e. the EFL teachers had different opinions about the relationship between the EFL teachers' experience and their satisfaction of the in-service teacher education programs.

The findings of this study are in line with Habibi Todeh (2000) who found that there was a significant difference between the opinions of female and male teachers in terms of their teaching experience and the frequency of very high, high and medium answers in less-experienced teachers was more than the experienced teachers.

Also, the findings of this study are in line with Freeman (1989) who found that there is a significant difference about the relationship between the EFL teachers' experience and their satisfaction of the in-service teacher education programs. Freeman (1989) declared that novice teachers and experienced teachers have different needs. It means the two groups' needs are different. While the novice teachers group looks for what to teach, the experienced group searches find answers to how and why questions. So, when two groups have different needs, therefore, the level of satisfaction of in-service programs should be different.

Experienced teachers have more knowledge about contextual factors and linking their content knowledge to the environment and class conditions. The

experienced teachers hold more student-centered orientation than less experienced teachers (Isikoglu, Basturk & Karaca, 2009). Experienced teachers have higher self-efficacy in comparison with their novice ones (Akbari & Moradkhani, 2010).

Experienced teachers have difficulty following the innovations in the EFL field and stick to the old-fashion teaching methods. Sometimes teacher education programs do not provide inexperienced teachers with experiences that would help them to organize their knowledge similar to experienced teachers (Gess-Newsome &Lederman, 1993; Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997), and this makes inexperienced teachers' quality of teaching less effective than experienced teachers.

Also, the findings of this study are in line with Rahimi and Nabilou (2010) who found that there was a significant difference about the relationship between the teachers' teaching experience and their satisfaction of the in-service teacher education programs.

This production of significant difference about the relationship between the EFL teachers' experience and their satisfaction of the in-service teacher education programs can contribute to different perceptions of the teachers on the relationship between the EFL teachers' experience and their satisfaction of the in-service teacher education programs.

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