

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' IN-SERVICE TRAINING: A DIAGNOSIS STUDY IN THE SAUDI ARABIAN CONTEXT



Al-Mohanna, Ayedh
Dhawi Mohammed¹

¹King Khalid Military Academy, Academic Studies, English Division, Saudi Arabia



(+ Corresponding author)

ABSTRACT

Article History

Received: 26 July 2017

Revised: 18 August 2017

Accepted: 5 September 2017

Published: 27 September 2017

Keywords

English
Teachers
In-service
Training
Professional
Development.

Foreign language teachers' language competence and knowledge is one of the key factors contributing to the success of instruction as it ensures the provision of a good quality teaching. Therefore, developing this aspect of a teacher's experience is indispensable in in-service teacher training. The present study is a critical diagnosis of in-service training programs and activities offered to English language teachers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It aims to investigate whether those teachers are satisfied with their in-service training programs and activities. English language teachers, school head teachers, and EFL educational supervisors participate in this study. To achieve the aim of the study, the researcher follows the qualitative research method where he uses the interview as an instrument for collecting data from participants. The findings of the study reveal that the EFL teachers are not satisfied with their in-service training programs and activities and that the in-service training offered to them is ineffective and does not fulfill their needs. The study also proposes some developmental recommendations and suggestions.

Contribution/ Originality: This study contributes in the existing literature by providing the information that help in understanding the underlying reasons for EFL teachers' needs, and in turn create possible solutions for EFL teachers' professional development.

1. INTRODUCTION

It is well acknowledged both theoretically and practically that teachers are among the principle components of any educational program influencing students' achievements. Highly qualified teachers produce greater student achievement than comparatively less qualified teachers (Sanders, 1998; Alexander and Fuller, 2005).

High-quality education is based on teacher quality, and continuousness is one of the most important factors in teacher training. Continuous professional development consists of pre-service teacher education and in-service teacher training. However, it is believed that pre-service training may not itself be adequate to help teachers to meet the unprecedented expectations of students, schools, and the society (Rivers, 1975). Studies indicate that the pre-service teacher-training programs are inadequate to provide a sufficient set of skills (Al-Hazmi, 2003; Can, 2005; Lucas and Unwin, 2009; Al-Seghayer, 2011). Thus, teachers need in-service training to fill in the gaps from

pre-service training and for continuous professional development, which keep teachers up-to-date throughout their careers with respect to the skills required in a contemporary knowledge-based society. Good teachers produce good students (Rice, 2003) but teachers do not enter the classroom as professionals. Most teachers develop, improve themselves and grow overtime. Moreover, in-service training programs are essential in providing teachers with professional skills to keep them up-to-date concerning teaching methodology.

The government of Saudi Arabia appreciates the challenges of teaching and it is of the view that teaching is a dynamic field with new methods, techniques and curricula evolving all the time. Therefore, teachers need constant in-service training if they are to keep up with developments in education, in general, and language teaching, in particular. In Saudi Arabian educational system, in-service training is undertaken in two forms, one takes place at schools where EFL teachers often attend either model-teaching lessons or one-day workshops offered by more experienced members of staff or by EFL educational supervisors. The other form involves a full-time study at Centre of Educational Development, which belongs to Department of Education in the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education.

Most authors in the field agree that effective in-service training should be continuous, be supported by practice and feedback, and reinforced by follow up support. In-service training opportunities help teachers become involved in learning activities they are likely to use in their classes and encourage them to develop a sense of professional identity (Uysal, 2012). Garet *et al.* (2001) point out that in-service training programs and activities, which are tailored to the teachers' immediate teaching practices are more likely to affect the instructional practices in a positive way.

What, then, is the nature and quality of the in-service training that EFL teachers, in the Saudi context, receive? What are their perceptions regarding this issue? This is the concern of the present study.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Although students in the Saudi state schools receive nine years (3 years in elementary school, 3 years in intermediate school and 3 years in secondary school) of formal English teaching, their English proficiency remains unsatisfactory and far below expectations (Alhawsawi, 2013; Alrashidi and Phan, 2015). It is well acknowledged in education that teachers have a high impact on students' performance. They are the single most influential factor contributing to the teaching/learning process (Stronge, 2000). Research has found that teachers produce a strong cumulative effect on students' achievement (Wright *et al.*, 1997; Sanders, 1998; Alexander and Fuller, 2005).

According to Javid *et al.* (2012) one of the main causes of ineffective ELT in the Saudi universities is the lack of the required English proficiency among the students, who apply in the English departments of the Saudi universities resulted from the Saudi EFL School teaching standards that should be investigated. The fact is that, present students are future teachers keeps an ongoing circle emphasizing the point of the importance of professional EFL teacher training. The study we propose here is going to focus on the EFL teachers' in-service training as a possible contributor to the problem.

The Ministry of Education supervises language teaching in Saudi Arabia at all levels. It also supervises teacher training offered by the Centre of Educational Development which belongs to the Department of Education. The Centre offers in-service training programs and activities for all subject teachers who teach at state schools (elementary, intermediate and secondary schools).

1.2. Purpose of the Study

This study aims to investigate the perceptions of state school EFL teachers about the in-service training programs and activities offered by the Centre of Educational Development. It is an attempt to improve EFL teachers' in-service training and to support teachers to develop their subject knowledge, gain the required skills,

and become knowledgeable about current developments in the field, which in turn, would help them to achieve effective English language teaching and learning in the classroom. The underlying research question is:

What are the perceptions of English language teachers at Saudi state schools about the in-service training programs and activities offered by the Centre of Educational Development?

1.3. Importance of the Study

The importance of the present study lies in the fact that its findings could be used for the continued development of in-service EFL teacher training, and in turn for increasing the quality in English language teaching at state schools in Saudi Arabia. The study could provide a database for future research in Saudi Arabia, which could provide Saudi authorities and stakeholders such as Ministry of Education, Department of Education, and Centre of Educational Development with the information that help in understanding the underlying reasons for EFL teachers' needs, and in turn create possible solutions for EFL teachers' professional development.

1.4. Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to:

- Riyadh- the capital city of Saudi Arabia.
- Saudi state schools.
- Male EFL teachers, school head teachers and EFL educational Supervisors.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section will shed light on the meaning of in-service training, its importance, and its purpose in the educational enterprise.

In-service training may be referred to as the education intended to support and assist professional growth and development that teachers ought to experience throughout their working lives. Thus, its starting point should be marked by the occasion when the newly qualified entrant to the teaching profession is appointed to a school setting for the first time. Its finishing point coincides with retirement.

Some share the opinion that in-service training should be cast widely to include virtually any type of experience to which a teacher may be exposed, either voluntarily or involuntarily. According to this line of thought, professional development will be strengthened by almost all activities undertaken by the teacher after he/she starts to teach (Morant, 1981). It is dangerous, however, as Morant (1981) emphasizes, to believe that almost any experience or activity will be linked directly to the teacher's work in the classroom or school. "Professional development should be served by something more relevant than educational spin-off that may result from general adult education." The other prevailing view is that which states that in-service training should be closely and specifically aligned to the teacher's professional career (Ibid)

Harris (1980) defines in-service training as, "any planned program of learning opportunities afforded staff members of schools, colleges, or other educational agencies for purposes of improving the performance of the individual in already assigned positions."

Ryan (1987) mentions that in-service training refers to any type of activities such as courses, and seminars related to the job. In this sense, any kind of teacher training activities such as short courses, seminars, workshops, certificate/diploma programs and postgraduate programs, which result in professional development of teachers, are regarded as a part of in-service training.

Morant (1981) also defines in-service training as training, which includes all courses and activities in which a serving teacher may take part, for the purpose of extending his/ her professional knowledge, interest, or skill. In-service training also includes the preparation for a degree, diploma, or other qualification subsequent to initial training.

The British Department of Education and Science defines in-service training as “any activities which a teacher undertakes, after he has begun to teach, which is concerned with his professional work” (cited in [Henderson \(1978\)](#)). On the other hand, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare in the United States describes in-service training as:

“A program of systematized activities promoted or directed by the school system, or approved by the school system, that contributes to the professional or occupational growth and competence of staff members during the time of their service to the school system.”

(Ibid, p. 11)

It will be noticed that the key to this more central and tighter approach to in-service training is the purposive, deliberate nature of the intended experiences. Such programs should be planned deliberately for the purpose of bringing about certain changes that will lead to a subsequent improvement in the teacher performance in school ([Morant, 1981](#)).

A scan of literature reveals that in-service training can be seen as an important element, which has a multitude of purposes that assist teachers in becoming aware of and gaining knowledge of different aspects of their professional environment. [Britten \(1973\)](#) advocates that the purposes of in-service teacher training are as follows: (1) to keep teachers up to date with subject knowledge; (2) to keep them abreast of changing teaching methods and techniques; (3) to keep them up-to-date with school organization systems.

According to [Harris and Bessent \(1969\)](#) there are four fundamental reasons for undergoing in-service training: 1) Pre-service preparation of professional staff members is rarely ideal and may be primarily an introduction to professional preparation, rather than professional preparation as such. 2) Social and educational changes make current professional practices obsolete or relatively ineffective in a very short period of time. This applies to methods and techniques, tools, and substantive knowledge itself. 3) Coordination and articulation of instructional practices require changes in people. Even when each instructional staff member is functioning at a highly professional level, employing an optimum number of the most effective practices, an instructional program might still be relatively uncoordinated from subject to subject and poorly articulated from year to year. 4) There are other benefits from in-service training activities. Morale can be stimulated and maintained through in-service training and is a contribution to instruction in itself, even if instructional improvement of any dynamic kind does not occur.

However, [Strevens \(1977a\)](#) argues:

“The general effectiveness of language learning and teaching in any given country is heavily dependent on the nature and quality of the training which teachers undergo before entering their profession.”

The researcher believes that even the best pre-service training program cannot train teachers to be up-to-date in the dynamic educational setting. New materials, curricula and techniques make an in-service training program necessary ([Allen, 1979](#)). Pre-service training helps teachers with specific immediate needs; in-service training, on the other hand, is more aimed to helping teachers grow, develop and exploit new ideas ([Freeman, 1982](#); [Widdowson, 1990](#)). [Brumfit and Rossner \(1982\)](#) are also of the opinion that the pre-service stage serves only to prepare the teachers to begin their career and nothing further. Teachers may begin their teaching professionally well if they are provided with sufficient knowledge and skills in an ideal pre-service program. In a situation where the pre-service program is not an ideal one, and does not give teachers sufficient knowledge and skills to start teaching, they may not be able to commence their teaching careers without problems. In-service in this situation would function as a pre-service training.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1. EFL Teachers in Saudi General Education

The majority of EFL teachers in Saudi state schools nowadays are Saudi. The rest are teachers who come from Arab countries: Egypt, Sudan, Jordan, Palestine or Syria. The qualifications of those teachers range from Bachelor Degree to Diploma, with only a small number of them having Master Degree.

3.2. EFL Teachers' Preparation in Saudi Arabia

The preparation of English language teachers in Saudi Arabia involves a four-year program in either teaching English, English language and translation or English literature introduced in departments of English in colleges of education, colleges of languages and translation, or colleges of arts in the various universities in Saudi Arabia. The four-year English teacher program, offered in departments of English in colleges of education, prepares students to teach English in Saudi state schools. While programs, offered in departments of English in colleges of arts and colleges of languages and translation, prepare students as specialists in English language, although the Saudi education system allows graduates from the latter two programs to teach English in state schools if they wish. The difference between the programs, offered by the colleges of education and those provided by the colleges of arts and by the colleges of languages and translation, is that the colleges of education prepare students especially to be teachers of English and emphasise the educational aspects of their preparation. Whereas the programs at the colleges of arts and the colleges of languages and translation prepare students to be specialists in English language and literature or in English translation, and not necessarily to be English teachers.

3.3. EFL Teachers' Training and Development in Saudi Arabia

The Center of Educational Development, which belongs to the Department of Education in the Saudi Ministry of Education, is responsible for in-service training of both newly appointed and practicing teachers. It organizes in-service training programs and activities with the aim of increasing the quality and the effectiveness of education students should receive. It is also responsible for planning and implementing in-service training programs and activities for all teachers at different levels, teaching different subjects and for different lengths of time throughout the country. Local educational directorates were given the authority to organize local training programs and activities for local needs in corporation with The Center of Educational Development.

4. METHODOLOGY

The present study follows the qualitative approach to the research in which the researcher employed interview as a technique for data collection in order to gain a deep understand of the situation through dense descriptive data. What follow is a description of the design and the methodology of the present study.

4.1. Site for Conducting the Study

The present study was conducted in 27 state schools for boys in Riyadh city- the capital of Saudi Arabia; nine elementary schools, nine intermediate schools, and nine secondary schools. For the purpose of this study and to ensure that these schools were appropriate representatives of other boy schools in Riyadh city, the researcher randomly chose one school of each level from each of the nine Directorates of Educational Supervisory that belong to the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education in Riyadh city.

This study is focused on Riyadh city because it is believed that educational conditions there are similar to those in other cities of the country. The practices in all Saudi schools are controlled by the Ministry of Education, which specifies one EFL program for all state schools. It can be assumed that TEFL in Riyadh area is highly likely to be representative of TEFL in the other parts of the country. This assumption goes in line with Zaid's comments that

“Ministry of Education officials claimed that a single educational district would be representative of the rest of the educational districts in Saudi Arabia” (Zaid, 1993).

4.2. The Study Participants

The data for the present study derive mainly from three sources; EFL teachers, school head teachers and EFL educational supervisors. This is to ensure triangulation and validity (Creswell, 1998). It is assumed that the participants are capable of making reasonable, valid judgments concerning the issue we tackle in this study. This is justified because EFL teachers and EFL educational supervisors are the people involved in teaching and learning English and they are in a better position than anyone else to diagnose the issue tackled by the present study. The participants are all males, ranging in age from 27 to 55 years old. The teachers’ amount of teaching experience differs from five to 30 years. Table 1 shows the distribution of the study participants:

Table-1. The distribution of the study participants

Schools	EFL teachers	School head teachers	EFL Edu. supervisors
9 Elementary schools	18	9	9
9 Intermediate schools	27	9	
9 Secondary schools	27	9	
27 schools	72 teachers	27 head teachers	9 supervisors

4.3. Instrument of Data Collection

This study is a naturalistic inquiry. Therefore, qualitative method such as interview was used for collecting data. Merriam (1998) writes:

“Naturalistic inquiry, which focuses on meaning in context, requires a data collection instrument sensitive to underlying meaning when gathering and interpreting data. Humans are best-suited for this task- and best when using methods that make use of human sensibilities such as interviewing ... and analyzing.”

4.4. Interview

"The interview is the main road to multiple realities" (Stake, 1995). It helps in discovering and portraying the different views of the participants. The present study has depended heavily on interviews and the data generated from the technique. The interviews that the researcher used in this study took different styles as they varied between semi-structured and structured ones (Merriam, 1988). When interviewing EFL teachers the researcher used semi-structured interviews. This was to leave always a space for other questions to be asked as they emerged out based on the flow of the interview. When interviewing school head teachers and EFL educational supervisors, the researcher relied on structured interviews as he took some issues raised by EFL teachers to them, as a kind of triangulation, seeking their points of view about these issues. The interview tackled issues related to the in-service training program and activity content, instructor, and evaluation where the participants were asked to draw a detailed account of their experience related to their participation in the in-service training programs and activities. All the interviews were conducted in a conversational style. They took the form of open conversations in which the researcher tried to involve and allow the interviewees, especially EFL teachers, to talk freely on the subject initiated by him. During interviews, the researcher used probing where interviewees were asked to explain, comment, elaborate their views, and provide new information relating to the questions or issues being raised. Moreover, the researcher tried not to allow his own biases or opinions to affect his behavior. The researcher tried to listen carefully, to talk only when necessary and to encourage the participants to speak freely.

The medium of communication in the interviews was Arabic (the participants' native language). This is to encourage interviewees, particularly EFL teachers, to express themselves naturally and without constraints, which might have been difficult for them had they been asked to speak in English.

4.5. Data Recording

For the purpose of this study and in order to capture the details of the interviews, the researcher relied extensively on a conveniently sized tape recorder. All the tape recordings of interviews were named and dated to facilitate subsequent organization and analysis of the data. None of the participants expressed any objection being tape-recorded. At the beginning of each interview, the researcher emphasized that no one other than him would listen to the tapes, and the information provided would be used only for the purposes of the research.

4.6. Data Analysis

The data collected from the three sources (EFL teachers, school head teachers and EFL educational supervisors) were analyzed following the Grounded Theory procedures to identify recurring and salient themes (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). What follows is a description of how the analysis was done.

The recorded tapes were reviewed and were transcribed in full. Upon completion of transcribing all the recorded tapes, the researcher organized the data. He put all the interview data in a number of separate folders; all the data gathered from EFL teachers in one folder with a separate file for each teacher; all the data gathered from EFL educational supervisors in one folder with a separate file for each supervisor and all data gathered from school head teachers in one folder with a separate file for each school head teacher.

After the researcher had transcribed and revised the interview data, he read the transcripts a number of times: the expression is 'staying close to the data' (Radnor, 2002). In order to make overwhelming data manageable, the researcher started to reduce data as he reviewed data gathered from multiple sources. During this process, the researcher discovered common themes and patterns. He listed the main issues that appeared on reading the whole text. He reread the interviews carefully to make sure he drew out all the common issues (the main issues that were revisited several times by the participants) that emerged from the text. Once happy with the issues listed, the researcher used a clean sheet of A4 for each main issue. He wrote the issue name and an abbreviation (identifiable code) at the top of the page, e.g.:

Main issue: shortage of In-Service Training Opportunities.

Code: Sh. INST. O.

The main issue areas were 'holding forms' (Radnor, 2002) that helped the researcher to access the data in a manageable way. This process is at the heart of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) and is expressed by Strauss (1987): "The focus of analysis is not merely on collecting or ordering a mass of data, but on organizing many ideas which have emerged from analysis of the data."

The second step was to code content to main issues. The researcher went through the text and highlighted the main quotes. The quotes, at this stage, did not need to be cut and pasted, but were simply marked and coded so that they could be found again. The code name was written next to the text. However, just in case there was another chunk of data that could go into that issue from the interview, the piece of text was also given a letter (A-Z) to differentiate it from other pieces of text. This means it was possible to locate the quote in the original text easily and quickly. For example, if the text contained a statement about shortage of in-service training opportunities then that part of the text would be highlighted and in the margin 'Sh. INST. O. A' would be written. 'Sh. INST. O.' is the code and 'A' denotes that it is the first quotation under that issue.

The third step was to insert the data under issues. To do so, the researcher had to decide what constituted chunks of meaningful texts. After that, he focused on coherent and thematically related chunks that hang together as a text. In doing so, he reproduced the data chunks of each main issue for one interview in a master file for that

main issue. When he analyzed other interviews using the same issue, he added the other data chunks to this master file. This gave him access to all data in one issue in the same place. Having chunks of data is important. They must make sense out of context or the researcher would have no way of going on to the next stage and interpreting them.

By now, each main issue had a file. Each file had the issue as its heading. Within each file, there were data and quotes relating to the main issue (the heading of the file). All were saved and kept for final analysis and presentation. Upon completion of the initial analysis of the fieldwork data, the researcher came up with six main issues where he, in this study, devoted one whole and separate section to discuss each main issue. What follow is a discussion of these six issues.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The interviews with EFL teachers provided crucial insight into their experiences as teachers. The EFL teachers in the schools under study had many views and complaints in common concerning their in-service training programs and activities. The following are the main common issues that were repeatedly raised by EFL teachers:

- Shortage of in-service training opportunities.
- EFL teachers' willingness to attend in-service training programs.
- The nature of EFL teachers' in-service training courses.
- The availability of academic conferences and in-service workshops for EFL teachers.
- Lack of language learning and teaching resources; e.g. Language Journals and Periodicals.
- EFL teachers' reliance on their experiences and creativity in their teaching.

These highlighted issues will be discussed in sections below.

5.1. Shortage of In-Service Training Opportunities

Concerning the in-service training courses offered by the Centre of Educational Development, some teachers mentioned that they attended only one in-service training course and others teachers had never attended any training course in the center. The interviews with EFL teachers at the twenty seven schools revealed the following: A Saudi EFL teacher said:

“As I said to you I attended only one in-service training course. That was few years ago. It was called a refreshment course. It lasted for ten days. We were presented with some general educational topics. It was good and I wish, as teachers we could be provided every now and then with specialized training courses in our field, English teaching.”

A non-Saudi EFL teacher mentioned that:

“Here, in Saudi Arabia, I have not been offered any in-service training course since I arrived and started my teaching profession in the secondary stage. Believe me I wish to attend training courses to improve myself in the education field in general and English teaching methods and techniques in particular. As a matter of fact, I have BA degree in English literature from the university of Syria-College of Arts, where my learning was concentrated on English literature, which does not help in the process of teaching EFL. That means my educational background is not adequate. So, this kind of training course would be helpful and useful for me.”

Another non-Saudi EFL teacher stated the following:

“I remember the first year I came to Saudi Arabia. My educational supervisor invited a number of newly arrived teachers to the profession, I was one of them, to attend a model-teaching lesson presented by an experienced teacher in one of the Saudi secondary school in Riyadh city. Other than

that model-teaching lesson I was not offered any training course, workshop or even seminars related to English language.”

A Saudi EFL teacher pointed out that:

“I have been in the teaching profession in Saudi Arabia for a few years. During that period of time I have not been offered any in-service training course. As a matter of fact, I attended some workshops and seminars where we discussed some language learning problems and difficulties and such issues, but I did not attend any training course. The evidence is that, when you asked me about language teaching methods, I could remember only two methods; I forget most of them.”

The researcher had the following dialogue with a non-Saudi EFL teacher:

R: There must be in-service training specialized for English teachers. We teachers need to be updated with what is now regarding teaching methods and even dealing with teaching aids and their appropriate use.

T: Have you attended any training course in Saudi Arabia?

R: No, I have not. I have been here for three years and I have not been offered any training course.

T: What about in your home country, Sudan?

R: In Sudan, I attended two in-service training courses, each of which lasted for one month.

T: How did you feel about those two courses?

R: They were designed specially for language teachers. They were very useful and helpful for me. I really got benefit from them in the sense of dealing with the text book/ syllabus I teach to my students, in the sense of selecting and applying the appropriate teaching methods, in the sense of using the appropriate teaching aids and in the sense of exam preparation, etc.

The interview data showed that some language teachers had no opportunity to attend any in-service training course, some teachers attended either model-teaching lessons or works shops and other teachers had attended only one or two in-service training courses during their teaching career in Saudi Arabia. The researcher wondered why is that? Why do some EFL teachers attend some courses but others do not? Is there any reason? If the answer is yes, then what are those reasons? What do the interviews tell us about those reasons?

A Saudi EFL teacher said:

“There is one point I would like to concentrate on, the educational supervisors always choose the outstanding teachers to attend training courses at the Centre of Educational Development. So, you will find the teachers who attend this training course are the same ones who attend the other training courses and they are the ones who attend workshops, participate in some educational events such as meetings or seminars. There are many teachers who are neglected. I believe that there should be specialized training courses for teachers. These courses should be first offered to the new arrivals to the profession and then to the teachers with a degree other than an educational degree, like teachers with a degree in literature or a degree from colleges of arts. I believe, those teachers are the ones who are in need for those in-service training courses. Of course other teachers should be provided with those kinds of courses too.”

A non- Saudi EFL teacher expressed his point of view, stating:

“The in-service training courses are limited in numbers. For example, I have not been offered a training course or invited to participate in a workshop for more than five years. As you know, the field of education is in continuous development. I do not see any harm if a teacher is offered training

courses, workshops and seminars related to his major. I think this will help to improve the quality of his teaching.”

EFL teachers expressed their dissatisfaction with regard to the times when training courses are held which, in their view, hinder some teachers from attending those courses. A non- Saudi EFL teacher had the following view:

“As a matter of fact, I have been offered a training course in classroom management, but I could not make it because it was held in the evening time after the school day, whereas I finish work very exhausted and come back home to have a rest with my family and take care of their needs.”

Looking carefully at the above comments by EFL teachers we can see that they highlight some issues which could be reasons, added to the reason (in some cases) of not being offered training courses, which hinder teachers from attending in-service training courses provided by the Centre of Educational Development:

- The educational supervisors always tend to choose outstanding teachers and neglect other teachers who may be in need of these kinds of training courses.
- The in-service training courses offered by the Centre of Educational Development, for teachers in general and for English subject teachers in particular, are limited in number.
- There is a shortage of specialized in-service training courses for EFL teachers.
- The time allocated for such training courses is inconvenient for some teachers.

So, supervisors’ criteria for selecting training sessions’ attendants, the limited number of training courses, the shortage of specialized training courses and the times when courses are held are obstacles to some teachers attending such courses.

5.2. EFL Teachers’ Willingness to Attend In-Service Training Programs

The interviewed teachers expressed an overwhelming willingness to attend in-service training programs, workshops and seminars related to their field of specialization. To quote a few:

A non- Saudi EFL teacher expressed his point of view saying:

“We language teachers wish to have such courses and workshops, let’s say, every year. It is not necessary to be on the level of the Department of Education as it would be difficult and impossible but it might be possible on the level of the educational areas as the number of English teachers will be reasonable. I think, there is no harm if the Directorate of Supervision in each educational area in Riyadh city hold workshops or in-service training courses for teachers, belonging to this educational area, twice a year, once over a term. But, unfortunately, such things are rare. For example, I had the opportunity to attend only one 10-day refreshment course and that was seven years ago. My colleague has attended only one workshop during all his years in the profession.”

Another non-Saudi EFL teacher commented:

“In-service training is of great importance, because it is carried out while the teacher is practicing in a real situation. It will provide the teacher with new ideas and methods to implement in his teaching as well as answering any queries that he might have. Further, it will help in solving any problem a teacher might encounter in his teaching. Unfortunately, I have not attended any training course. The in-service training courses offered by the Centre of Educational Development are usually held in the evening time, when some teachers could not attend for one reason or another. I think holding two or three- weeks intensive courses during the daytime and giving teachers leave to attend these courses

with making arrangement and coordination among teachers would not affect the teaching and the learning process, and at the same time would help teachers to attend and benefit from those courses.”

A Saudi EFL teacher stated:

“Specialized in-service training courses have an important role in improving and developing the quality of teachers’ teaching and performance inside their classrooms. They also draw teachers’ attention to some issues they may not have thought about before. Therefore, I think there must be specialized training courses for the new arrivals teachers to the profession. Furthermore, there must be follow-up courses to keep teachers abreast of the development and improvement in education, in general, and English language teaching in particular.”

It seems that no regular in-service training is provided for English language teachers. Interviewed teachers suggested that they should have in-service training at least once or twice every year. They added that they would like to attend in-service training sessions presented by experts in methodology and curriculum instructions at suitable times in order to benefit from attending such courses. EFL teachers also are eager to have continuous in-service training aiming to up-date their knowledge of their subject and the associated teaching methodology and pedagogy.

From the above comments, it is clear that EFL teachers are aware of the need for adequate knowledge of language, which can only be acquired by training and further study. The situation is that after EFL teachers graduate from university they will have no systematic access to language materials except those of the language course. Therefore, the need for in-service training is crucial. Furthermore, when teachers were asked, during interviews, to list names of language teaching methods they knew or had come across most teachers listed only one or two methods of teaching the language, while others did not list any. In looking at this point, it is clear that EFL teachers are not fully aware of the concepts of language teaching methodology. This raises the demand for introducing an in-service teacher training, where teachers explicitly discuss their problems in teaching English, and will be exposed to experts and tutors of language teaching, drawing from these discussions suitable answers. EFL teachers in schools under study are in desperate need of an in-service refreshment language courses. [Dubin and Olshtain \(1986\)](#) write, “The teacher population is the most significant factor in determining success of a new syllabus or materials. The attitudes of the teachers and their abilities to adjust to new thinking and what it involves in practical terms are crucial.”

The interviewed EFL teachers are in favor of attending in-service training courses. This might suggest that EFL teachers should be given opportunities to attend in-service training sessions and should be awarded certificates and these credentials should be recognized by the Ministry of Education in order to motivate teachers and improve their quality of teaching. [Al-Ansari \(1995\)](#) in his study stresses that in-service training courses should be introduced by experts of curriculum and teaching methods, and teachers should be accredited with certificates or rewards in order to improve and develop their performance of teaching and encourage them to attend such courses.

5.3. The Nature of EFL Teachers’ In-Service Training Courses

When the researcher asked the EFL teachers, who had the opportunities to attend training courses, about the nature of these courses, they all agreed that these in-service training courses are poorly handled. One criticism raised concerned the lack of thought given to course content, resulting in an incoherent mass of information and ideas, uninformed by any clear objective or policy.

A Saudi EFL teacher drew on his experience with the only one in-service training course he attended. He stated:

“I started my career as an English language teacher 14 years ago. During that period of time, I attended one in-service training course. That course lasted three weeks. It was held in the evening

time of the day. It was a mixture of educational topics, none of them concerned with English as a foreign language or its teaching methods. It was presented by a number of educational supervisors. Each supervisor presented a topic. Generally, it was good but it was merely personal attempts by some supervisors. There was no organized mechanism for presentations. There was no kind of coordination among the trainers with regard to their presentations. Each trainer came and did his presentation without having any idea about what his colleague has already presented. ... Therefore, the benefit we gained from that course was limited and unsatisfactory. The idea of conducting this kind of in-service training courses for teachers was very good but the way of delivering the course was poor.”

EFL teachers also criticized the training methods used, specifically, the reliance on the lecture method and lack of opportunity for teacher participation. A non- Saudi EFL teacher recounted this experience:

“I joined an in-service training course three years after I started teaching. After attending the course, it did not add much to my experience. I say so because the trainers in that course were themselves in need of a course on how to train. However, the course followed the lecturing style where each trainer lectured his topic on us without giving any chance for discussion, exchanging ideas and experiences. Each trainer came with certain information on a topic, which he wanted to pass on to us and that was all. It made me recall my school days when we were students sitting on chairs and teachers lectured at us. I believe, as teachers, we would prefer the course to be based on discussion and exchanging ideas and experiences among those present. We need to participate in giving information and exchanging idea and having a sort of discussion about these ideas. We need the trainers to give the participants the chance to reflect on their experiences and share ideas and information with others.”

A Saudi EFL teacher elaborated:

"The course trainers are language educational supervisors and some of them do not really differentiate between teaching and training. Actually as teachers we attend the course to become more skilled in how to do thing in the classroom. This is what some trainers can not differentiate between teaching/knowledge and training/skill. Thus there is a need to train those trainers to be able to handle the training process."

The key point here is that trainers are lecturing and passing information theoretically to the course's participants. Would it have been more effective if an opportunity for discussion and sharing ideas and experiences among teachers was given? [Cullingford \(1989\)](#) argues: “One of the most creative uses of in-service training courses is to enable teachers to work alongside others, to share their experiences and to define what they observe.”

The Saudi Center of Educational Development offers in-service training courses, most of which are in education. It offers specialized courses for educational supervisors, school head teachers, school deputy heads, student advisors and teachers of most school subjects. Among these are courses specially designed for EFL teachers.

During interviews, EFL teachers were asked to indicate whether they were introduced to research and theoretical issues related to language learning and teaching during their in-service training courses. The question posed to EFL teachers was:

Q. During your in-service training, were you introduced to theoretical issues on the teaching of English as a foreign language at secondary school level? (For example, issues related to the stages and process by which a foreign language is acquired; the debate for and against teaching grammar; the theory and practice of the

Grammar-Translation method, of the Direct Method, of the Audio-Lingual method, and of the Natural method; the argument for Communicative approach to English language teaching, etc.).

The interview data, in this respect, showed that the EFL teachers were not introduced to the already-mentioned theoretical issues during their in-service training courses. This result suggests that components dealing with theoretical issues on language learning and teaching are not among those of the in-service training courses provided for EFL teachers. Below is an extract taken from an interview with a non-Saudi EFL teacher who stated:

"I attended only one in-service training course. It was titled "listening and speaking teaching skills". It lasted for three days. We were presented with some basics. It was good and I wish, as teachers we could be provided every now and then with advanced specialized training courses in our field, English teaching....there must be frequent in-service training specialized for English teachers. We teachers need to be updated with what is now regarding teaching methods and even dealing with teaching aids and their appropriate use."

When the researcher asked the school head teachers about in-service training courses for EFL teachers, they all confirmed the EFL teachers' points of view above, as one of them commented saying:

"... as a matter of fact, the Ministry of Education through the Centre of Educational Development offers a number of in-service training courses for education staff; teachers, head teachers and even educational supervisors. Personally, I attended some courses in school management which were useful and helpful for me. As far as I know, this center offers some training courses for EFL teachers but, if we compare them with other courses offered for teachers of other subjects, they are infrequent, a few in number and short in length "

When the researcher took the issue to the EFL educational supervisors as a kind of triangulation, they made similar points of view regarding that issue. Below is a comment stated by one of the interviewed supervisors.

"The Ministry of Education has a Centre for Educational Development which offers in-service training courses for almost all educational fields of specialization. For English language and its teaching, the center holds, from now and then, in-service training courses specialized for EFL teachers. These courses are of 3-day courses ... unfortunately, there are no follow up courses for EFL teachers to keep them up to date with the constant developments in the field of language and its teaching"

A follow up question asked the EFL teachers to indicate whether they had found the information acquired during their in-service training useful or not for teaching purposes. The results for this question showed that there was a feeling that such information continues to be useful for teaching purposes for new comers to the profession but they were basics as a Saudi EFL teacher expressed: "... *what was offered was the basics. I wish the center was able to give more advanced and specialized training courses to help teachers handle more advanced topics and issues*". Another EFL teacher commented:

"... the course was more like a work shop or a seminar than a training course. It was like taking us back to university days. I think, it reminded us with what we studied and confirmed what we still remembered. I think that was all".

A non-Saudi EFL teacher talked about the content of the in-service training he attended. He said:

"I think that the content of the course was more beneficial to a teacher with a BA in English language and literature. But for a teacher who obtains a BA degree in English language and education the content was a repetition for undergraduate courses".

A very significant finding of this study, in this respect, is that the majority of the EFL teachers indicated that the in-service training content was not relevant to their needs. Many studies have come to the same conclusion: teachers' real needs have not been met by in-service training activities (e.g. (Gokdere and Cepni, 2004; Onen *et al.*, 2009; Cimer *et al.*, 2010; Koc, 2016)). Content-focus is one of the most important features of an effective in-service training program and activity (Birman *et al.*, 2000; Aminudin, 2012). In the same line, content-specific in-service training programs and activities are reported to be their most beneficial professional development experience by teachers in a variety of studies (Aminudin, 2012; Atlan, 2016). Most of the interviewed EFL teachers indicated that the content covered in the in-service training courses was not motivating and did not allow for active participation. These findings are supported by similar research, which has found that the methods applied during in-service training are neither efficient, nor proper, nor are they motivating (Cimer *et al.*, 2010; Wati, 2011; Baleghiadeh and Gordani, 2012). The reason that the in-service training courses are not motivating and interactive could be related to the lecturers' teaching approaches and teaching abilities in the field. This assumption is supported by research that finds that in-service training instructors are not necessarily leading experts in the field (Kusumoto, 2008; Cimer *et al.*, 2010). In this line, Harland and Kinder (2014) suggests that in-service training based on constructivist approaches is more effective. Similarly, related literature reveals that the tools and materials used in in-service training have not been updated to meet recent scientific and technological developments. This could provide another reason that in-service training is not motivating.

In general, the message is that the in-service training courses do not fulfill the EFL teachers' expectations and feed their curiosity to know more information. They felt that the courses were merely an opportunity to brush their memories with information most of which they have experienced as part of the methodology courses they had as student teachers, or from the pre-service practice they performed.

Stevens (1977a) however, suggests three components of a training course that will lead to the creation of the ideal teacher: the skills component, the information component, and the theory component. The following are his comments on these three components:

1. The skills component embraces the teacher's command of the language he teaching, teaching techniques and classroom activities, including the 'management of learning', through which the teacher assesses the progress of each individual and adjusts his teaching accordingly. Training for these skills essentially requires great practice, in both simulated and genuine teaching situation, and careful analysis of the trainee's successes and failures.
2. The information component includes information about education, about the syllabus he will be following, the materials he will be using, and about the nature language.
3. The theory component brings in an appropriate selection of the theoretical findings from educational philosophy, psychology, linguistics, applied linguistics, etc."

Robin (1978) elaborates and says that in-service training should be directed towards extending the knowledge of teachers in general, and the subject taught in particular and have the aim of helping teachers to acquire the latest teaching skills and techniques. In this respect, Peacock (1993) reports that effective in-service training should begin by providing teachers with basic information, including practical examples of appropriate materials and activities; followed by opportunities within the in-service program for 'safe practice' of these new skills. This is because

teachers in simulated conditions do not feel unduly at risk in trying out new techniques, and will not lose face and can feel less threatened than in a real-life teaching situation.

Given that language journals and periodicals are very often used to communicate research findings, interviews with EFL teachers went further to establish whether they used these kinds of materials during their in-service training courses. The EFL teachers were asked if they had the opportunity to read such materials or if the in-service training course lecturers did refer them to language journals or periodicals. The interview data, in this respect, revealed that language learning and teaching journals and periodicals were not used or provided to in-service training courses' attendants to read. Furthermore, the attendants were never referred to such materials by the course lecturers.

5.4. The Availability of Academic Conferences and Workshops for EFL Teachers

Academic conferences and in-service workshops are considered as other possible ways of exposing teachers to new ideas in language learning and teaching. In this study, the EFL teachers were especially asked, during interviews, to indicate how often they had attended academic conferences and in-service workshops. The interviewees' comments on this issue revealed that most of the EFL teachers had never attended any academic conference; some of them had attended in-service workshops.

A non-Saudi EFL teacher talked about the issue saying:

“... during my first year in Saudi Arabia, my supervisor offered me, among other newly arrived teachers to the profession, to attend a model-teaching lesson presented by an experienced teacher in one of the Saudi secondary school in Riyadh city. I still remember that lesson. It was useful for me, but unfortunately, other than that model-teaching lesson I was not offered any training course, workshop or whatsoever related to English language and its teaching”

Another non-Saudi EFL teacher elaborated stating:

“As a matter of fact, I have not been offered any academic conference or workshop since I arrived and started my teaching profession in the Saudi secondary schools. I have a Bachelor Degree in English literature where my learning was concentrated on English language and its literature, which does not help in the process of teaching EFL. Therefore, I believe attending in-service training courses, conferences and workshops would help in improving me in the education field in general and English teaching methods and techniques in particular.”

A Saudi EFL teacher pointed out that:

“I have been in the teaching profession in Saudi Arabia for about 16 years. During that period of time I attended some workshops and seminars where we discussed some language learning problems and difficulties and such issues, but I did not attend or offered to attend any academic conference.”

On the issue of creating and encouraging professional development, the interview data indicates that there are some workshops attended by some EFL teachers, but they are rare and limited in number. For example, one of the interviewed EFL educational supervisors mentioned that, “if workshops are available, they are for a very limited time, or involve night or day meetings for a large number of teachers”.

Interview data, in this area, gives us an idea of the issue of professional development of EFL teachers in the Saudi Arabian context. EFL teachers are not kept up-to-date on developments in language learning and teaching. They need to keep abreast of issues in language learning and teaching. The EFL teachers believed that attendance at academic conferences and in-service workshops are useful for purposes of acquiring information on recent developments in language learning and teaching. They identified academic conferences and in-service workshops as

sources where they can inform themselves on matters pertaining to the latest developments in language teaching. They also raised the issue that they need some refresher training courses to enable them to catch up with the latest developments in language teaching. The in-service workshops that were provided were said to be infrequent and inadequate.

The EFL teachers were further asked to indicate whether they were members of any research associations. All of them said that they did not belong to any research associations. The need for EFL teachers to participate in research was highlighted by one of the interviewed EFL teachers, who said that:

"A lot of research is needed to improve the quality of language teaching in the secondary schools. EFL Teachers should be fully involved in research and they need support from the Ministry of Education to achieve this – it is very essential."

There were also other EFL teachers who recommended that in order to improve language teaching in the Saudi Arabian context, EFL teachers need to be given training on action research and given the necessary support to undertake research activities such as classroom-based research.

Although some micro workshops are provided from time to time, these do not give the appropriate training that teachers need. The effectiveness of such workshops is limited, since a large number of teachers take part; thus, there is little opportunity to participate in discussion. Rivers (1975) maintains that it is time that the ESL/EFL profession as a whole realizes that with all the demands which will be made on future teachers, a pre-service training period alone will not be enough, no matter how well organized. In any planning, primacy should be given to the continuing development and consequent emotional serenity of classroom teachers, who will remain the key figures in any projected advance for the profession. Rivers later on writes:

"There are many ... requirements for the language teacher in this modern age. Many need to improve their own skills in the language, others need opportunities to keep their communicative ability at a high level. As priorities or objectives change, so do techniques. New technological discoveries bring into the classroom new aids which the teacher must learn to use effectively. There may be new discoveries in linguistics or psychology which are relevant to language teaching. The teacher must keep abreast of developments and achievements in countries where the language is spoken. In some cases, important changes are taking place in the language itself ... The teacher should also be alert to re-evaluate techniques, even seemingly indispensable ones, and be ready to change and adapt them from year to year to increase their effectiveness." (Rivers, 1981).

For many teachers, then, as Rivers (1975) emphasizes:

"There is a continuing need for in-service workshops, institutes, and training sessions for the maintenance and development of language skills, and for practical training in materials development and in pedagogical techniques to enable them to implement a variety of approaches and courses for the types of students in their groups."

5.5. Lack of Language Learning and Teaching Resources; e.g. Journals and Periodicals

During interviews, EFL teachers were asked to give names of language teaching methods and approaches they knew or had come across. Some teachers gave only two or three methods of teaching the language, while others could not name any. The EFL teachers were further asked to indicate whether they refer to language learning and teaching resources (e.g. Language Journals and Periodicals) in their teaching. Results for this further inquiry revealed that most, if not all, of the EFL teachers rarely ever referred to language journals or any resources of language learning and teaching. A follow up question asked the interviewees about the reasons behind not referring to or reading this kind of materials. The consensus among EFL teachers was that the reason why they failed to

refer to or read language learning and teaching resources was because such materials were not available in their school libraries. In this regard, some comments of EFL teachers are quoted below:

A non- Saudi EFL teacher raised this issue, stating:

“We, English teachers, in this school lack specialized reading materials such as references related to English language teaching, articles and the like. Even an English dictionary is not available. As there is a library in this school, then there should be some reference materials for English language to which teachers and students as well can refer to any time. I think, it is the responsibility of the Department of Education and the Directorate of Educational Supervision to provide such specialized reading materials for each school, because these materials are important for us as EFL teachers.”

A Saudi EFL teacher reflected on that issue. He commented:

“I believe that specialized reading material would help in enriching our knowledge about the language we teach to our students. It would keep us up-to-date with the latest improvement and developments in the field of education in general and the field of TEFL in particular. But unfortunately, these kinds of materials are not provided for us either by school, our supervisor nor the Ministry of Education. They only supply us with the English textbooks and say ‘teach them.’”

In the above comments, EFL teachers expressed willingness and desire to have specialized reading materials available for them as these kinds of materials are useful and important to keep them abreast of issues in language learning and teaching. They also indicated that they had no access to such specialized reading materials, and that their provision is the responsibility of the school and the Directorate of Educational Supervision. A follow up question asked the interviewed EFL teachers to indicate the type of materials available for them in their schools. Most of the interviewees acknowledged the availability of teachers' guides besides the prescribed textbooks.

Not only do teachers lack training opportunities, but they also lack resources for individual self-development through reading. With regard to supplying specialized reading materials for EFL teachers, school head teachers and EFL educational supervisors played no such roles. The researcher took the issue of the specialized reading materials to the school head teachers. One of the head teachers commented:

“The Department of Education supply schools with text books and some teaching aids. With regard to specialized reading materials, such as articles, periodicals and books and the like, we receive from them occasionally some for the Arabic language, but for English language and its teaching methods and applications we do not receive any from them.”

Another head teacher confirmed this, saying:

“There are some periodicals in education that we receive from the Department of Education, for instance, Maarifa magazine, Al-maarifaa magazine and some magazines related to computer programs and application. Other than these magazines we do not receive any from them.”

It seems that journals and publications related to the teaching of English as a foreign language are not available in the Saudi Arabian context. School head teachers and EFL educational supervisors have no role to play in this matter. Then whose responsibility is it to provide EFL teachers with specialized reading materials? Before blaming our teachers for not reading enough, other than the school course book, we should ask ourselves what resources we supply them with. In the world of TEFL there are many new titles coming into the market every day, containing fresh ideas, techniques and research findings related to TEFL. The teachers should be given access to these resources in order to develop their career. Teachers as individuals cannot do a great deal in looking for resources. It is the Ministry of Education, which should take the responsibility of providing the teachers with the necessary

resources connected with language teaching profession. This could be done through a central library with a good loan system, or even an up-to-date library in every educational area, provided these libraries are supplied regularly with materials.

5.6. EFL Teachers' Reliance on Their Experiences and Creativity in Their Teaching

The interviews with EFL teachers revealed that, they relied heavily, in their teaching, on the prescribed textbooks and teacher's guides. The following comment from a non-Saudi EFL teacher is a typical view. It expresses other EFL teachers' point of views:

"School supplies us with textbooks and teacher's guide which we follow and rely on in our teaching. Specialized reading materials related to language learning and teaching are not available in our school for us to look at and get ideas from ..."

In the researcher's opinion, textbooks and teacher's guides will continue to constitute a crucial part of teachers' resources because, as discussed earlier, they had limited access to other materials that could be used in the classroom. EFL teachers seem to rely excessively on textbooks and teacher's guides when they lack sufficient training (Williams, 1983) and in a context, like the Saudi Arabian context, where EFL teachers have to cover a set syllabus, a textbook becomes not only the main resource but also the driving force. Williams (Ibid, p. 251) points out that:

"The textbook can be a tyrant to the teacher who, in his or her preoccupation with covering the syllabus, feels constrained to teach every item in exactly the same sequence and context in which presented by the textbook writer."

The interviews with EFL teachers also revealed that they relied, in their teaching, on their learning and teaching experiences. In addition, they exploited their individual creativity as part of the teaching process.

Johnson (1995) reminds us about the influence of the early experience on how language teachers perceive their profession and their tasks. He points out:

"... teachers' frames of reference encompass the range of their prior experiences as students and as second language learners, the nature of their professional knowledge and how that knowledge develops over time, the theoretical beliefs they hold about how second languages are learned and how they should be taught, and the ways in which they make sense of their own teaching experiences."

This suggests that teachers bring with them to the profession their beliefs, and past experiences on how teaching should be and how they perceive their roles in the classroom. Interviewed EFL teachers made the same point.

A non-Saudi language teacher said:

"Looking back to my school days, I remember my English teachers ... I still remember the way they used to teach us the language. I still remember my classmates and the classroom atmosphere."

A Saudi language teacher elaborated, stating:

"I started learning English when I was 13 years old. I still remember my secondary school language teacher. I still remember him well. He was an old man but a hard worker. He was always trying to make it easy for us to learn the English language. He used to use occasionally Arabic (students' native language) in his teaching during lessons. He used to give us handouts for each unit of the syllabus, which we had to keep in files. These handouts included the unit's new English words, general

questions and grammar rules with some examples. I like the idea of the handouts and I am planning to apply it with my students as I am in the process of preparing some handouts for them.

A non-Saudi language teacher reflected:

"... I like English. My intermediate and secondary English teachers made me love it. I still remember the way they used to teach us and the way they used to encourage us to learn. I liked their way of teaching the language. Our teacher, at that time, was always asking us questions related to our daily life. He was always trying to be closer to us. By the way and believe me, his way of teaching was positive and effective."

Given the wide-ranging experiences and creativity of the EFL teachers interviewed, this study went further to explore whether EFL teachers exchanged and shared their experiences as part of the teaching process. The interview data indicated that this was one of the predominant modes employed by the EFL teachers included in this study. Comments such as these indicate that the EFL teachers obtain most of their ideas for teaching from their learning experiences and from classroom practice, which encompasses their own way of doing things and how other teachers do it. They also rely on their individual talent and ability to react to different classroom challenges, and this translates into what they see as their creativity. Kumaravadivelu (1994) argues that the effectiveness of teaching methods tends to vary with learning context, and this has compelled teachers to creatively devise pedagogical strategies that will suit their classroom conditions, in their view. Canagarajah (2002) also supports the issue of experience and creativity as he asserts that the unavailability of language teaching resources for teachers justifies the need for them to derive their teaching "... from their years of accumulated experience, wisdom, and intuitions about what works best for their students". He continues stating that:

"Though terms like experience, wisdom, and intuition are unscientific to base pedagogy upon, in the post-Enlightenment period ... [applied linguists] are comfortable with them. After all, empirical research hasn't produced ... the best method that answers with finality the challenges of learning another language."

6. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This study aimed to investigate English language teachers' perceptions of the in-service training programs and activities offered by The Center of Educational Development, which belongs to the Department of Education in the Saudi Ministry of Education. Significantly, this study's findings are consistent with the findings of similar studies in related areas and reveal that the in-service teacher training programs and activities run by the Center of Educational Development are ineffective and do not fulfil the needs of state school English-language teachers. The following is a summary of the findings of the present study in relation to the main common issues emerged from the interviews with the participants in the twenty seven state schools.

The results of the present study, discussed above, suggest that:

- In-service training for EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia is found to be given insufficient attention, in spite of its crucial role in improving educational provision.
- Although EFL teachers express an overwhelming willingness to attend in-service training courses, workshops and seminars related to their field of specialization, they have limited opportunities for attending such programs and activities. There are also no regular and adequate specialized in-service training courses nor follow-up courses provided for the EFL teachers. Furthermore, the in-service training courses attended by those EFL teachers are poorly handled and presented.
- Academic conferences and in-service workshops that are provided for EFL teachers are said to be infrequent and inadequate.

EFL teachers in the Saudi Arabian context, therefore, have little opportunity for contact with the most up-to-date developments in the field.

The results of the study also indicate that:

- There is a gap between classroom practice and research as the EFL teachers in the present study are concerned.
- The EFL teachers in the present study value research but they do not have access to it. One of the factors that have been identified as militating against the use of research is the non-availability of specialized reading materials such as research journals and periodicals in school libraries in the Saudi Arabian context. Furthermore, language learning and teaching journals, periodicals and the like are not provided to in-service training courses' attendants to read and they are not referred to such materials by the course lecturers.

EFL teachers, therefore, have little opportunity to familiarize themselves with recent research and theory in language teaching. For this, there is perhaps a need to develop a conducive environment that will enable EFL teachers in the Saudi state schools to undertake research activities that will enable them to critically review available research on language teaching, as well as reflect on their own teaching practice. There is also a need to avail modern technology to the schools in the form of personal computers, so that they could access the internet.

The discussion of the results, cited above, also points out that:

- In-service training in its broader sense is not available for EFL teachers. Although some workshops and general training courses are provided from time to time, they are infrequent and limited in number.
- In the absence of adequate specialized in-service training, the key contributing factors in the teaching of English in the Saudi state schools appear to be the EFL teachers' experiences and creativity, the prescribed textbooks and teacher's guides.

This trend is in agreement with the arguments raised in literature which suggest that teachers tend to rely more on doing things the way that they are used to in the absence of adequate in-service training and language teaching resources to resort to. To conclude, support for in-service training is not available to EFL teachers. Without such experience and the effect it could have on the improvement of their performance as teachers of English, some teachers may have believed that they were doing a good job, and thus were not in great need of professional development programs and activities, most, however, recognized a need for this kind of support. Lally *et al.* (1992) point out that in order to accomplish any major changes in the quality of teaching, and to meet identified economic, cultural and individual needs, attention must be paid to teachers; they must be supplied with knowledge, skills, resources and encouragement to develop approaches that are capable of accommodating changes in learning and teaching styles.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the findings and issues highlighted above, it is useful to put forward some recommendations and suggestions. It is hoped that they may contribute to improving the EFL teachers' in-service training in the Saudi Arabian context which, in turn, may contribute to improving English language teaching and learning in the Saudi state schools.

- The data of the present study reveals that there is a limited number of specialized in-service training courses, workshops and seminars for EFL teachers. This study stresses that adequate specialized in-service training courses, workshops and seminars for EFL teachers should be conducted frequently and more extensively.

- EFL teachers' willingness to attend more in-service programs and activities for professional development and participate in such programs and activities is highly encouraging and should be taken seriously in order not to lose their interest and eagerness. Therefore, carefully and systematically planned in-service training programs and activities by qualified and professional staff to promote growth and development in teaching profession should be the ultimate goal of the Centre of Educational Development.
- In order to improve EFL teaching, pre-service and in-service EFL teacher training programs should be based on the hard data obtained from the systematic analysis of what goes on inside the EFL classroom. Therefore, planning for in-service training of EFL teachers should take into account the real needs of those teachers as defined by a thorough assessment and analysis of these needs. In this endeavor, ample consideration should be given to the active involvement of teachers in defining the existing problems and identifying current needs. Teachers should also be given a chance to participate in the organization and execution of in-service training programs and activities.
- The findings of the study reveal that the in-service training courses were poorly handled. The study stresses that course trainers need to have training skills to help teachers gain maximum benefit from those courses. Teachers need to acquire practical skills and be given new ideas that they can apply in the delivery of their lessons, and not merely a theoretical idea of what teaching is. The important thing to remember is that if EFL teacher-trainers are to be effective, they must emphasize the practical aspect of teacher training. This means that training of EFL teachers should always be centered on classroom practice, on the tasks that the classroom teacher needs to perform (Lee, 1974).
- There should be follow-up training courses to keep teachers abreast of recent developments in the field of education in general and of English language teaching in particular. Smith *et al.* (1969) remind us, "As long as knowledge about education continues to increase and new techniques and devices are contrived, there will be something new for the teacher to learn, regardless of his degree or years of experience. The continuum of preparation can, therefore, cover the teacher's entire career."
- For the timing of courses, this may be somewhat controversial. If they are held during the school day instead of after it, some teachers may be prevented from attending, as some head teachers will not release them from their classroom duties. But, does it have to be either during the school day or after it? The researcher thinks if there were a range of courses- some during the day, some at weekends, some in evenings, teachers would have flexibility to attend in the way that best fitted their circumstances.
- In-service training should be made more widely available for EFL teachers, so that they may perform their duties more effectively and keep up-to-date with the pedagogical and academic knowledge and skills they require. Additionally, teachers should be encouraged to attend and participate in conferences, symposiums, and seminars, whether national or international, so that they become more aware of the experiences of other schools in their own country, and abroad.
- It seems that reading materials related to the profession are not available for EFL teachers. Therefore, teachers should be provided with reading materials tackling contemporary TEFL issues to keep them informed and attached to their profession and kept up with the new developments in the field. The Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education should establish language resource centers in the schools and in the Directorates of Educational Supervisory and equip them with resources that can be used to facilitate and improve language teaching. Furthermore, EFL teachers should be encouraged to read in their field in order to extend their professional knowledge. The Ministry of Education can take a leading role in encouraging and motivating teachers by setting out incentives and rewards for self-development.
- EFL teachers should be encouraged to undertake research activities, such as classroom-based research, which will enable them to critically review their own teaching practice, as well as ideas presented in applied linguistics journals and periodicals.

- In-service training should no longer be reduced to model-teaching lessons or workshops. Instead it should be considered a long-term process which includes regular opportunities and experiences. Activity types should both be varied and designed according to the needs of the participants. Otherwise, as revealed by the data, the more the participants attend to one type of activity the less they benefit from them.
- After the in-service training activities, feedback provision in terms of evaluating and measuring the positive or negative outcomes should definitely be part of the process in order not to leave the participants in a swim or sink situation since training activities followed by follow-up monitoring support will result in a better involvement of the teacher.
- Becoming a good teacher is a long process. The teachers who attend the in-service training programs have already made a lot of observation hours and already have some beliefs about what teaching is. Sometimes these beliefs are so deep that basic training is unable to bring about a desired change in them (Pajares, 1992; Richardson and Placier, 2001). Therefore, more effective in-service training programs and activities are needed to make such paradigm shifts.
- This study suggests that a line of cooperation and collaboration should be built between the Ministry of Education and related departments of the universities to develop and implement new in-service teacher-training models. The application of more effective models for in-service English-language teacher training will both improve the quality of the teachers and increase the achievements of foreign language students.

6.1. Suggestions for Further Research

Although it has reached its aims, the present study suggests the following for further research:

- This study was conducted only in Riyadh city. Similar studies could be undertaken in other cities of Saudi Arabia.
- The participants of this study were all working at state schools. A future study could include participants who work at private schools.
- This study investigated the perceptions of male EFL teachers, school head teachers and EFL educational supervisors. A future study could also examine the perceptions of female participants.

Funding: This study received no specific financial support.

Competing Interests: The author declares that there are no conflicts of interests regarding the publication of this paper.

REFERENCES

- Al-Ansari, I., 1995. In-service education and training of EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia: A study of current provision and future needs. Unpublished PhD Thesis: University of Southampton.
- Al-Hazmi, S., 2003. EFL teacher preparation program in Saudi Arabia: Trends and challenges. *TESOL Quarterly*, 37(2): 341-344. [View at Google Scholar](#) | [View at Publisher](#)
- Al-Seghayer, K., 2011. English teaching in Saudi Arabia: Status, issues, and challenges. Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Hala Print Co.
- Alexander, C. and E. Fuller, 2005. Effects of teacher qualifications on student achievement in middle school mathematics in Texas. Paper Presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting.
- Alhawsawi, S., 2013. Investigating student experiences of learning english as a foreign language in a preparatory programme in a Saudi university. Unpublished PhD Thesis. UK: University of Sussex.
- Allen, S., 1979. Guidelines for in-service programmes. *Teacher Education*, 40(1): 86-90.
- Alrashidi, O. and H. Phan, 2015. Education context and english teaching and learning in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: An overview. *English Language Teaching*, 8(25): 33-44. [View at Google Scholar](#) | [View at Publisher](#)
- Aminudin, N., 2012. Teachers' perceptions of the impact of professional development on teaching practice: The case of one primary school. Unpublished MA Dissertation: Unitec Institute of Technology.

- Atlan, M., 2016. The need for more effective in-service training for professional development of english language teachers. *British Journal of Education, Society & Behavioural Science*, 15(2): 1-12. [View at Publisher](#)
- Baleghiadeh, S. and Y. Gordani, 2012. Motivation and quality of work life among secondary school EFL teachers. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 37(7): 30-42. [View at Google Scholar](#) | [View at Publisher](#)
- Birman, B., L. Desimore, A. Porter and M. Garet, 2000. Designing professional development that works. *Educational Leadership*, 57(8): 28-33. [View at Google Scholar](#)
- Britten, E., 1973. Teachers and in-service training. In R. Watkins (Ed.), *In-service training: Structure and content*. London: Ward Lock Educational. pp: 19-32.
- Brumfit, C. and R. Rossner, 1982. The decision-pyramid and teacher training for ELT. *ELT Journal*, 36(4): 226-231. [View at Google Scholar](#) | [View at Publisher](#)
- Can, A., 2005. Evaluation of english language teaching program in regards of the competencies gained. Unpublished PhD Thesis. Turkey: University of Ankara.
- Canagarajah, A., 2002. Globalization, methods and practice in periphery classrooms. In D. Block and D. Cameron (Eds.), *Globalization and language teaching*. London: Routledge. pp: 134-150.
- Cimer, S., I. Cakir and A. Cimer, 2010. Teachers' views on the effectiveness of in-service courses on the new curriculum in Turkey. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 33(1): 31-41. [View at Google Scholar](#) | [View at Publisher](#)
- Creswell, J., 1998. *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Cullingford, C., 1989. The teacher and the purpose of primary education. In C. Cullingford (Ed.), *The primary teacher: The role of the educator and the purpose of primary education*. London: Cassell. pp: 7-15.
- Dubin, F. and E. Olshtain, 1986. *Course design: Developing programmes and materials for language learning*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Freeman, D., 1982. Observing teachers: Three approaches to in-service training and development. *TESOL Quarterly*, 16(1): 205-212. [View at Google Scholar](#) | [View at Publisher](#)
- Garet, M., C. Andrew, D. Laura, F. Beatrice and S. Kwang, 2001. What makes professional development effective? *American Educational Research Journal*, 38(4): 915-945. [View at Google Scholar](#)
- Glaser, B. and A. Strauss, 1967. *The discovery of grounded theory*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Gokdere, M. and S. Cepni, 2004. A study on the in-service needs of teachers of the gifted students. *Journal of Education Faculty*, 24(2): 1-14. [View at Google Scholar](#)
- Harland, J. and K. Kinder, 2014. Teachers' continuing professional development: Framing a model of outcomes. *Professional Development in Education*, 40(4): 669-682. [View at Publisher](#)
- Harris, B., 1980. *Improving staff performance through in-service education*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Harris, B. and W. Bessent, 1969. *In-service education: A guide to better practice*. Englewood: Prentice-Hall.
- Henderson, E., 1978. *The evaluation of in-service teacher training*. London: Croom Helm.
- Javid, C., M. Farooq and M. Gulzar, 2012. Saudi english-major undergraduates and english teachers' perceptions regarding effective ELT in the KSA: A comparative study. *European Journal of Scientific Research*, 85(1): 55-70. [View at Google Scholar](#)
- Johnson, K., 1995. *Understanding communication in second language classroom*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Koc, E., 2016. A general investigation of the in-service training of english language teachers at elementary schools in Turkey. *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education*, 8(3): 455-466. [View at Google Scholar](#)
- Kumaravadivelu, B., 1994. The postmethod condition: (E)merging strategies for second/ foreign language teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, 28(1): 27-48. [View at Google Scholar](#) | [View at Publisher](#)
- Kusumoto, Y., 2008. Needs analysis: Developing a teacher training program for elementary school homeroom teachers in Japan. *Second Language Studies*, 26(2): 1-44. [View at Google Scholar](#)
- Lally, V., S. Knutton, M. Windate and J. Henderson, 1992. A collaborative teacher-centred model of in-service education. *Educational Review*, 44(2): 111-126. [View at Google Scholar](#) | [View at Publisher](#)
- Lee, W., 1974. On getting down to grass roots in EFL teacher training. *English Language Teaching Journal*, 29(1): 35-42. [View at Google Scholar](#) | [View at Publisher](#)

- Lucas, N. and L. Unwin, 2009. Developing teacher expertise at work: In-service trainee teachers in colleges of further education in England. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 33(4): 423-433. [View at Google Scholar](#) | [View at Publisher](#)
- Merriam, S., 1988. *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach*. San Francisco; London: Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam, S., 1998. *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. 2nd Edn., London: Sage.
- Morant, R., 1981. *In-service education within the school*. London: George Allen and Unwin.
- Onen, F., H. Mertoglu, M. Saka and A. Gurdal, 2009. The effects of in-service training on teachers' knowledge about teaching methods and techniques. *Journal of Faculty of Education*, 10(3): 9-23. [View at Google Scholar](#)
- Pajares, M., 1992. Teachers' beliefs and educational research: Cleaning up a messy construct. *Review of Educational Research*, 62(3): 307-333. [View at Google Scholar](#) | [View at Publisher](#)
- Peacock, A., 1993. The in-service training of primary teachers in science in Namibia. *British Journal of In-Service Education*, 19(2): 21-25. [View at Google Scholar](#) | [View at Publisher](#)
- Radnor, H., 2002. *Research your professional practice: Doing interpretive research*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Rice, J., 2003. *Teacher quality: Understanding the effectiveness of teacher attributes*. Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute.
- Richardson, V. and P. Placier, 2001. Teacher change. In V. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching*. Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association. pp: 905-947.
- Rivers, W., 1975. Students, teachers, and the future. *Foreign Language Annals*, 8(1): 22-32. [View at Google Scholar](#) | [View at Publisher](#)
- Rivers, W., 1981. *Teaching foreign language skills*. 2nd Edn., Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press.
- Robin, L., 1978. Continuing professional education in perspective. In L. Robin (Ed.) *The in-service education of teachers, trends, processes, and prescriptions*. Boston; London; Sydney: Allyn and Bacon Inc. pp: 3-40.
- Ryan, R., 1987. *The complete in-service staff development program: A step-by-step manual for school administrators*. NJ, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Sanders, W., 1998. Value added assessment. *School Administrator*, 11(55): 24-27. [View at Google Scholar](#)
- Smith, B., B. Saul and P. Arthur, 1969. *Teacher for the real world*. Washington: The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Educators.
- Stake, R., 1995. *The art of case study research*. London: Sage.
- Strauss, A., 1987. *Qualitative analysis for social scientists*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Strauss, A. and J. Corbin, 1998. *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. 2nd Edn., Thousands Oaks; London: Sage.
- Stevens, P., 1977a. *New orientation in the teaching of english*. Oxford: OUP.
- Stronge, J., 2000. *Teacher evaluation and student achievement*. Washington, DC: National Education Association.
- Uysal, H., 2012. Evaluation of an in-service training program for primary-school language teachers in Turkey. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 37(7): 14-29. [View at Google Scholar](#) | [View at Publisher](#)
- Wati, H., 2011. The effectiveness of Indonesian english teachers training programs in improving confidence and motivation. *International Journal of Instruction*, 4(1): 80-104. [View at Google Scholar](#)
- Widdowson, H., 1990. *Aspects of language teaching*. Oxford: OUP.
- Williams, D., 1983. Developing criteria for textbook evaluation. *ELT Journal*, 37(3): 251-255. [View at Google Scholar](#) | [View at Publisher](#)
- Wright, S., S. Horn and W. Sanders, 1997. Teacher and classroom context effects on student achievement: Implications for teacher evaluation. *Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education*, 11(1): 57-67. [View at Google Scholar](#)
- Zaid, M., 1993. *Comprehensive analysis of the current system of teaching english as a foreign language in the Saudi Arabian intermediate schools*. Unpublished PhD Thesis. University of Colorado.

Views and opinions expressed in this article are the views and opinions of the author(s), International Journal of Publication and Social Studies shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability etc. caused in relation to/arising out of the use of the content.