

# An Analysis of the Training Content at the Department of English of the Teacher Training School of Constantine

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## Abstract

The teacher training schools in Algeria have taken upon shoulder since 1999 the education and training of teachers in many fields including English as a foreign language. For this to be realized, programs had to be designed taking into account the specificities of each discipline. The program for training teachers of English as a foreign language has been built on the assumption that there should be a focus on three main domains namely: knowledge about the subject matter, development of teaching competencies, and knowledge about the target language culture. These domains are believed to be training strategies that respond to the classroom requirements. Qualified teachers are those who are able to master the subject to be taught, make use of the most up dated methodologies in teaching, and refer to the culture of the target language whenever necessary. The aim of this paper is to critically analyse the current state of teacher education at the teacher training school of Constantine. The pedagogical implication from this study could be a revision of the training strategies.

## ملخص

تولت مدارس تكوين الأساتذة في الجزائر منذ 1999 تلقين وتدريب الأساتذة في شتى الميادين بما فيها اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية. ومن أجل هذا الغرض، تم تسطير برامج تأخذ بعين الاعتبار خصوصيات كل ميدان، فقد سطر برنامج تكوين أساتذة اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية على أساس الاهتمام بثلاث نقاط: - التمكن من موضوع المادة المدرسة؛ تطوير قدرات التدريس؛ الإلمام بثقافة اللغة المستهدفة. تمثل هذه النقاط استراتيجيات التكوين التي تستجيب لمتطلبات تعليم اللغة إذ أن الأساتذة المؤهلين هم أولئك القادرين على التحكم في سيرورة المادة المدروسة من خلال أحدث طرق التعليم وبالاستعانة بثقافة اللغة المستهدفة متى تطلب الأمر ذلك. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التحليل النقدي لواقع تكوين الأساتذة بالمدرسة العليا للأساتذة بقسنطينة بغرض إعادة النظر في استراتيجيات التدريب.

### **Introduction**

It is widely believed that teachers' performance is directly related to their academic qualifications and professional training. "Effective teaching is determined by subject matter knowledge and pedagogical skills", (Schliefelbein and Simmons 1921, quoted in Mahvash Zafar, 2006:4). Evidence has shown a positive link between teacher subject matter and student achievement (Fuller, 1987, quoted in Mahvash Zafar, 2006:5). Highly qualified teachers are those who have command over the subject matter and pedagogy (Darling Hammond 1997, IN UNESCO, 2003 :10); and if the teacher does not possess these skills, it is argued that this affects the educational quality, since student achievement, especially beyond basic skills, depends largely on teachers' command of subject matter.

This paper aims at analyzing a teacher training model (the curriculum of the teacher training school of Constantine). In order to evaluate how the three training strategies (knowledge about the subject matter, development of teaching competencies, and knowledge about the target language culture) correlate and contribute in the training of middle and secondary school teachers in Algeria.

### **Definitions**

Second language teacher education describes the field of professional activity through which individuals learn to teach an L2. These formal activities are generally referred to as teacher training (Freeman, 2001:3). The term teacher education refers to the sum of experiences and activities through which individuals learn to be language teachers. Those learning to teach, whether in pre- or in service contexts, are referred to as teacher learners (Kennedy 1991, cited in Freeman, 2001). Like any type of education, teacher education is based on the notion that some type of input is introduced or created, which then has an impact on the learner (Carter and Nunan, 2001:76).

### **Historical Foundations**

Until the latter half of the 1980s the emphasis was on L2 teacher education. Primary attention was on the contributions of various academic disciplines like linguistics, psychology, and literature- to make an L2 teacher. By 1990, some in the field had begun to argue that it was important to examine how people learned to teach languages. Thus the emphasis began to move to the

relationship between L2 as the content or subject matter, and teacher education (Carter and Nunan, 2001:76).

### **Aim of teacher education**

The aim of teacher education is to prepare teachers for successful classroom practice so that their learners, in turn, successfully learn to communicate using the language. A language teacher education program must integrate the academic study of language and culture, theories of second language acquisition, teaching methods and assessment, at the same time as exposing student teachers to appropriate models of second language pedagogy and providing them with opportunities to experiment with and get feedback on their own teaching (Kathleen Graves, 2009:116).

### **Purposes of teacher education**

Loughran and Russell (1997:134) identified three purposes of teacher education:

- ✓ To assist teachers to learn and apply important ideas about teaching and learning.
- ✓ To achieve some balance between the existing context and role of teaching and the possibilities for improving teaching and learning.
- ✓ To prepare teachers for schools and existing curriculum demands: to encourage a critical perspective on schooling.

### **Teacher education principles**

Loughran and Russell (1997:35) referred to a set of principles which form a basis for an approach to teacher education which is designed to enhance teachers' capacities to affect their situations. Those principles are developed from a set of assumptions about teacher education and those who practice as teacher educators.

- ✓ **Principle 01:** Teacher education programs should model the teaching and learning approaches being advocated and promote the vision of the profession for which they are preparing teachers.
- ✓ **Principle 02:** Teacher education must be based on recognition of the prior and current experiences of teachers and encourage respect for teacher knowledge and understanding.
- ✓ **Principle 03:** Teacher educators should maintain close connections with schools and the teaching profession. They need to be advocates for the profession and supporters of teachers' attempts to understand and improve teaching and learning opportunities for their students.

- ✓ **Principle 04:** Learning about teaching is a collaborative activity and teacher education is best conducted in small groups and networks with ideas and experiences being discussed and shared.
- ✓ **Principle 05:** Teacher education involves the personal development, social development as well as the professional development of teachers. (Loughran and Russel, 1997:35)

### **The curriculum for teacher training**

The second language teacher education curriculum is an interdependent, situated set of educational processes and tools whose aim is teacher training (Kathleen Graves, 2009:116). Planning an educational program focuses on who will be taught, what will be taught, how will it be taught, and how what is learned will be evaluated (ibid).

Any educational program should be qualified as a dynamic system. For Kathleen Graves, it must comprise three main components:

- ✓ Educational aims
- ✓ A plan for achieving those aims and teaching learning experiences (instruction) to meet those aims.
- ✓ Evaluation of program effectiveness.

A language teacher education program needs to prepare teachers to have knowledge and skills in a variety of domains. It is also required "to provide a flexible foundation upon which our graduates can build as they progress through the different stages of their careers" (Crandall 1991:1, quoted in Kathleen Graves, 2009:118).

### **The teacher training curriculum in the TTS of Constantine**

The curriculum for teacher training in the TTS of Constantine has been first implemented in 1999 to be revised in 2008. Its guiding principles articulate the overall purpose and approach of language teacher education (Kathleen Graves, 2009:2). They are responsive to the social and educational context of the curriculum. They derive from sound educational theory. They are appropriate for the teachers who are being trained and the learners they are being trained to teach (ibid). It is articulated around the training of teachers for two main educational cycles: middle and secondary school education. The overall presentation of the curriculum is articulated around a three year common core followed by one year for the PEM profile and two years for the PES. As mentioned earlier, the curriculum is based on three main domains: language, teaching development and professionalism, and culture. In addition to these domains the student teachers are exposed to two other

cross-disciplinary concepts namely French and TICE. Further, an extended essay ends the fifth year and is related to a classroom aspect to be investigated by the fifth year students. The essay mainly aims to initiate those students to the techniques and tools of research. The following table sums up the contents of the curriculum of the teacher training school.

**Table 01: The training curriculum**

1 <sup>st</sup> year PEM/PES	2 <sup>nd</sup> year PEM/PES	3 <sup>rd</sup> year PEM/PES	4 <sup>th</sup> year PEM	4 <sup>th</sup> year PES	5 <sup>th</sup> year PES
Writing	Writing	Writing and Grammar	Applied Linguistics	Applied Linguistics	Applied Linguistics
Grammar	Grammar	Speaking, Listening and Phonetics	TEFL	TEFL	Syllabus Design
Speaking and listening	Speaking And listening	Linguistics	Materials Design and Development	Materials Design and Development	Pedagogical Trends
Reading techniques	Reading Techniques	TEFL	Textbook Evaluation and Syllabus Design	Textbook Evaluation and Syllabus Design	Legislation Scolaire
phonetics	Phonetics	Pedagogical Trends and Educational Systems	Psycho-Pedagogy	Psychology of the Child and the Adolescent	Training
Intro to linguistics	Intro to Linguistics	Communication and Attitude Preoccupations	British and American Literature	British and American Literature	Issues in Culture
Intro to civilisation and literature	Intro to Civilisation and Literature	Introduction to psychology	British and American Civilisation	British and American Civilisation	African Civilisation and Citerature
French	French	British and American Literature	African Literature and Civilisation	African Literature and Civilisation	Extended Essay
TICE	TICE	British and American Civilisation	Legislation Scolaire	Research Methodology in Education	
		Tice	Training		

**a. Analysis of the three domains in the curriculum**

**Domain 01: Language**

Teachers of English as a second or foreign language need to be competent in their field area (language). "A teacher's confidence is most dependent on his or her own degree of language competence", (Murdoch 1994: 258, quoted in Burns and Richards 2009). Further, Kamhi-Stein (2009) argues that language is a skill that needs to be improved for a teacher to be successful. (Berry 1990, Lavender 2002, Mc Donald and Kasule 2005, and Murdoch 1994 – quoted in Burns and Richards 2009:100) all agree that EFL teachers perceive language improvement to be central to their professional development.

In the curriculum for teacher training at the teacher training school of Constantine, there is a general agreement that would be teachers should be proficient in the language they are being prepared to teach. English teachers should understand how the language works grammatically, sociolinguistically, and pragmatically (Kathleen Graves, 2009:4). They are not expected to be linguists, rather they are intended to be able to use their knowledge to prepare sound lessons and give clear explanations. The curriculum provides the trainees with the following knowledge and skills:

- Speaking, understanding, reading and writing English.
- Understanding the linguistic system of English together with the major features of grammar, phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon.
- Understanding pragmatic, sociolinguistic and discourse features of English.

The issues appear mainly in the three years common core and makes the majority of the training content (66,66% of the training content in the first and second years, 30% in the third year. In the fourth and fifth years, it is represented only by one subject: Applied linguistics (11,11%) which is considered as a teaching domain due to the nature of its content. Figure 1 shows the place of language in the training curriculum.

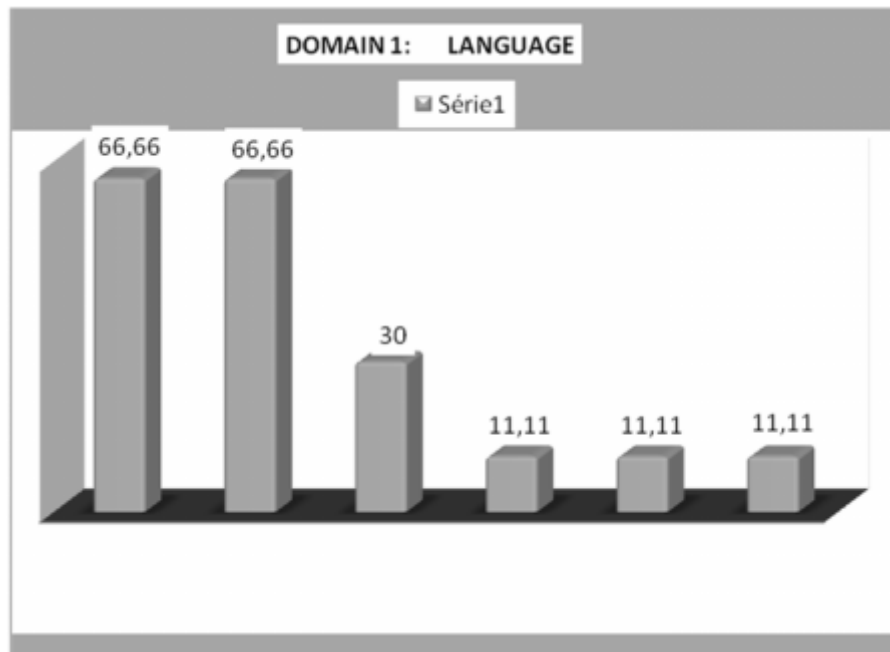


Fig 1. Domain 1: Language

#### Domain 02: Teaching development and professionalism

This domain could also be referred to as professional development. It is believed to be a second critical element in teacher education "Second language proficiency needs to be perceived as one element of professionalism and professional preparation is the second critical element" (Pasternak and Bailey's 2004, quoted in Kamhi Stein 2009:95). In general use, a "professional" is a trained and qualified specialist who displays a high standard of competent conduct and practice (Constant Leung 2009:49). In teacher education, professionalism issues are often addressed through questions such as what should teachers know? And how should teachers go about their business? (ibid). Further, it is believed that this domain is complementary to the first domain: language. "Language proficiency and professional development need to be perceived as continua, rather than an either- or- proposition" (Pasternak and Bailey's 2004, quoted in Kamhi Stein 2009:94).

In the curriculum under study, teaching appears starting from the third year. It is represented in many subjects that introduce the trainees to teaching objectives, goals, theories and approaches, teaching the different skills, assessment, learning styles and strategies (TEFL)...in addition to design and evaluation of materials, textbook evaluation and syllabus design, and applied linguistics. Trainees are also exposed to some psychological theories and principles that are of great importance in understanding the learner, his developmental stages, his cognitive and affective development as well as some aspects of social psychology in the module (Communication and attitudes preoccupations). Besides, there is a view of the different pedagogical trends and educational systems in the modules pedagogical trends and pedagogical trends and educational systems. Professionalism is also addressed in the PEF "legislation scolaire" course which introduces trainees to legal issues of the teaching contexts. It could also be addressed in the training, research methodology in education and the extended essays if we could assume that these areas tackle matters of professional interest.

It can be noticed that the issues related to teaching development are totally absent in the first and second years, represents 40% of the overall program for the third year, rises to 55,55% for the fourth year ( PEM and PES) and increases to 62,5% in the fifth year. The rates are significant if compared to the other domains within the same levels. The place of teaching in the curriculum is represented in figure 2..

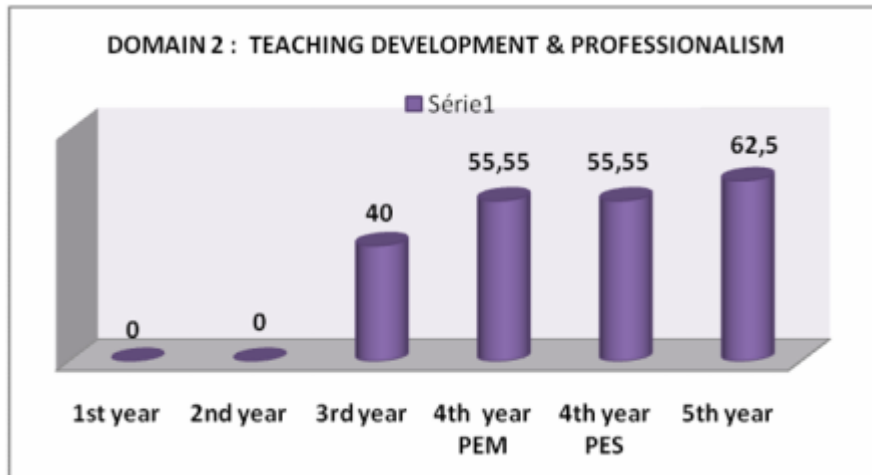


Fig 2. Domain 2: Teaching Development and Professionalism



### Domain 03: Culture

The content of teacher training needs to include not only the linguistic features of English and how these may be taught and learned, but its social and cultural position in the world, and its subsequent impact on the lives of both teachers and language learners. Learning about the target culture guides learners in understanding the cultural aspects of language, the cultural practices and products, and interpreting cultural differences (Kathleen Graves 2009). In the curriculum under study, this domain is prominent in the study of literature and civilisation, lack cultural and intercultural perspectives. The rate of disponibility in the curriculum is fluctuating. There is an introduction to western civilisation and literature in the first and second years (11,11% for each of these years), a rise in the number of related subjects in the third year (British and American literature, British and American civilisation) (20%) and an additional African literature and civilisation in the fourth year (30% for the PEM level and 33% for the PES) to decrease in the fifth year where the domain culture is almost absent if we consider the module issues in culture more pedagogical than cultural (it addresses cultural topics related to the themes tackled in textbooks at the secondary school level) (25%). The cultural issue is tackled in the curriculum but is not given primary concern. The reason could be the amount of content to which the trainees are exposed which gives priority to language and teaching at the expense of culture. We need to acknowledge the importance of culture in the teacher training curriculum and we assume that the cultural issues are addressed as an integrated part in the language and teaching content. It would be irrelevant if language in domain 01 is taught out of its cultural context. Figure 3 represents the cultural domain in the overall curriculum.

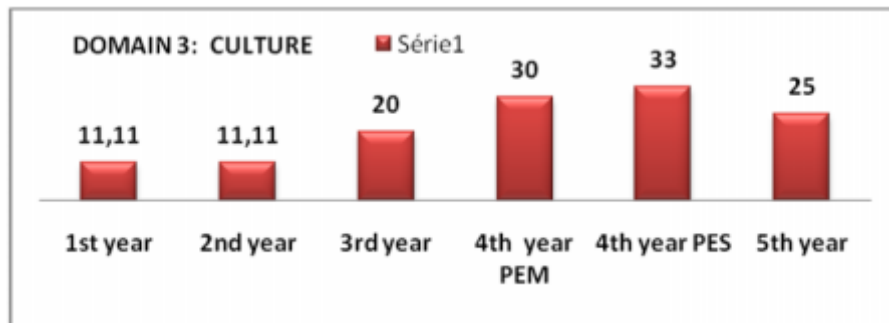


Fig 3: Domain 3: Culture

The following table recapitulates the three domains as they appear in the curriculum

**Table 02: A recapitulation of the different domains in the curriculum**

Domain	1 <sup>st</sup> year	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	4 <sup>th</sup> year PEM	4 <sup>th</sup> year PES	5 <sup>th</sup> year
Language	WG	WG	WG	ALing	ALing	ALing
	SLPh ILing	SLPh ILing	SLPh			
Teaching Development and Professionalism			IPsy PTES CAP TEFL	TEFL MDD TESD PsyP LSco Tr	TEFL MDD TESD PsyCA RME	SDes PTES LSco Tr EEssay
Culture	IWCL	IWCL	BAL BAC	BAL BAC ALC	BAL BAC ALC	IC ALC
Cross- disciplinary Concepts	-TICE -Fr	-TICE -Fr	TICE			

(WG: Writing and Grammar; ALing: Applied Linguistics; SLPh: Speaking, Listening and Phonetics; IPsy: Introduction to Psychology; TEFL: Teaching English as a Foreign Language; SDes: Syllabus Design; PTES: Pedagogical trends and Educational Systems; MDD: Materials Design and Development; CAP: Communication and Attitude Preoccupations; TESD: Textbook Evaluation and Syllabus Design; LSco: Legislation Scolaire; PsyP: Psychpedagogy; RME: Research Methodology in Education; Tr: Training; EEssay: Extended Essay; IWCL: Introduction to Western Civilisation and Literature; BAL: British and American Literature; BAC: British and American Civilisation; ALC: African Literature and Civilisation; IC: Issues in Culture; TICE: ....; Fr: French.)

The table lists fifty five (55) modules to be taught in the whole curriculum. The number represented here concerns the whole training cycle (from first to fifth year). The rates per domain are demonstrated in the following table:

**Table 03: Rates per domain for the whole cycle**

Total Nb of Modules	Domain	Number of Modules	%
55	Language	18	32,72%
	Teaching development and professionalism	20	36,36%
	Culture	12	21,81%
	Cross-disciplinary concepts	05	09,09%

According to table 03, the domains could be ranked as follows/

- 1- Teaching development and professionalism
2. Language
3. Culture
4. Cross- disciplinary concepts

However, it is significant to say that these rates are relatively balanced. There is no specific subject which dominates the training cycle. The classification seems to be logical if we consider that the general aim of teacher training is to prepare professional teachers who are proficient in the target language and who can deal with the cultural concepts of that language. However, it would be more significant to tackle the same distribution according to the two cycles: PEM/ PES.

**Table 04: Rates per domain for the PEM cycle**

Total Nb of Modules	Domain	Number of Modules	%
38	Language	16	42,10%
	Teaching Development and Professionalism	10	26,31%
	Culture	07	18,42%
	Cross-disciplinary Concepts	05	13,15%

Table 04 ranks the domains as follows:

1. Language 2. Teaching development and professionalism  
 3. Culture 4. Cross-disciplinary concepts  
 The ranking reads that teachers with a PEM profile develop the domain of language more than the teaching development and professionalism and culture domains.

**Table 05: Rates per domain for the PES cycle**

Total Number of Modules	Domain	Number of Modules	%
45	Language	17	37,77%
	Teaching Development and Professionalism	14	31,11%
	Culture	09	20,00%
	Cross-disciplinary Concepts	05	11,11%

Table 05 classifies the domains as follows:

1. Language
2. Teaching development and professionalism
3. Culture
4. Cross-disciplinary concepts

The rates read that language (like for the PEM profile) is prominent. However, the numbers reveal that there is a sort of balance between the domains for the PES profile.

**Conclusion**

The teacher training model at the teacher training school of Constantine can claim to be one of the most serious and systematically based propositions in teacher training. It reflects a balance between the three domains that build up an integrated strategy to teacher training. Yet, it is always recommended to seek for improvement and updating according to the recent findings in the field of teacher training. This cannot take place without an ongoing evaluation of content, an essential part in any curriculum development. The following suggestions could contribute to a more comprehensive design and practice in teacher training.

The domain of language should be taught in a way to provide models for how to teach the different aspects of language: reading, writing.... The trainee teachers will automatically gain proficiency in the language but also get exposed to significant models they can later adapt in their own teaching practice.

Cultural and intercultural aspects of language, taking into account the global role of English should be emphasized.

The use of technology in teacher preparation should be encouraged in the curriculum. Trainee teachers should be allowed to receive feedback from their teaching practice during training via the use of technology (video recordings...). In addition, the use of technology by teacher educators will generate the use of those devices by the trainees.

Above all, teacher training should address a need from the part of trainees. This entails that they are not to specialise in one or another approach or methodology in language teaching. The vehicle should be training teachers who are able to adapt to any approach and any emerging methodology and design in language teaching.

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