

**Professional Development of EFL Teachers at the
Department of English and Literature, Batna 2
University: Challenges and Opportunities**

التطوير المهني لمعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلفة أجنبية في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية وآدابها بجامعة

باتنة 2 التحديات والفرص

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Received	09-03-2021	accepted	31-10-2021
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Abstract

Academic interest in professional development (PD) of teachers throughout the world is growing as the achievement of quality in education depends to a large extent upon the quality of the teachers in society. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the process of teaching with the rise of e-Learning/Teaching. This study used a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview to EFL teachers in the department of English and Literature at Batna 2 University to gather information about their PD challenges and opportunities. Results show that although the respondents still hold the idea of traditional PD, 94.9% of them share the view of the necessity of PD to improve their knowledge and skills; however, mentoring and guiding less experienced teachers did not receive the attention required. Findings of this study can inform educators and policymakers of the importance of PD in enhancing teacher quality and improving students' learning skills to help the future direction of PD programs for EFL teachers in Algeria.

Keywords: Professional development; EFL teachers; Perceptions; challenges; Needs

المخلص

يتزايد الاهتمام الأكاديمي بالتطوير المهني للمعلمين في جميع أنحاء العالم لسبب بسيط هو أن تحقيق الجودة في التعليم يعتمد إلى حد كبير على جودة تعليم المعلمين في المجتمع. يضاف إلى ذلك أن جائحة COVID-19 قد غيرت عملية التدريس بشكل كبير مع ظهور التعلم / التدريس الإلكتروني. استخدمت الدراسة الحالية استبياناً عبر الإنترنت مصمماً في نماذج Google Forms وتم إرساله إلى إجمالي عدد المعلمين (العدد = 61) عبر رسائل البريد الإلكتروني المهنية الخاصة بهم. أظهرت النتائج أنه على الرغم من أن المشاركين في هذه الدراسة لا يزالون يحملون فكرة التطوير المهني التقليدية، فإن 94.9% من العينة يشاركون الرأي حول ضرورة تطويره لتحسين معارفهم ومهاراتهم. شارك 19 معلماً من أصل 39 في أنشطة التطوير المهني. ومع ذلك، لم يلق توجيه المعلمين الأقل خبرة وتوجيههم الاهتمام المطلوب. يمكن لنتائج هذه الدراسة إعلام المعلمين وواضعي السياسات بأهمية التطوير المهني في تحسين جودة المعلمين وتحسين مهارات التعلم لدى الطلاب. نأمل أن يساعد هذا الاتجاه المستقبلي لبرامج التطوير المهني، خاصةً لمعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلفة أجنبية في الجزائر.

كلمات مفتاحية: التطوير المهني؛ مدرسو اللغة الإنجليزية كلفة أجنبية؛ التصورات؛ التحديات؛

الاحتياجات

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1. Introduction

In the field of education, there is mounting evidence to suggest that PD of practicing teachers is vital in that it helps them update their knowledge and skills continuously throughout their careers and promotes students' learning outcomes and educational effectiveness. Moreover, teachers in universities are expected to respond to the 21st century's ever-expanding global economy, and to address the dynamic nature of learners and society by reflecting upon their own teaching practice and change oriented in order to understand the pragmatics of their classrooms and improve the teaching/ learning process.

Accordingly, a growing recognition in education concerning PD activities and programs, together with their effectiveness, has been reported in the literature (as will be shown in details in the section that follows). Despite this wealth of work, no research has yet been devoted to explore PD practices of EFL teachers in the departments of English in Algeria in general and the department of English and Literature at Batna 2 University in particular. At present, in spite of the innovative language policy reforms that have been put into practice in higher education in Algeria, teacher PD is still outspoken and not yet considered a central part of teacher education for EFL learners. How then, can teachers change their practices, and meet their students' needs and demands? Because teacher PD already exercised so many good minds for so long, motivation for undertaking research on PD arose to determine the underlying challenges and opportunities that EFL teachers at the aforementioned department face in performing their instructional roles and how well they are prepared for these roles in the ever-changing world of the 21st century.

Taking all the above into account, the overarching research questions that this study sought to address were:

1. How do EFL teachers at the Department of English Language and Literature at Batna 2 University describe PD?
2. What are their perceptions of the importance of PD?
3. What PD opportunities did they report as having an impact on their teaching practice?
4. What common challenges did they report that hinder them from pursuing/participating in PD?
5. What aspects do they need to develop during their teaching career?

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1. Teacher Professional Development Defined

PD is extensively used across a wide range of occupational fields and has been operationalized in a myriad of ways. Therefore, it is no surprise to find an overwhelming consensus that there is no one agreed upon definition of this term resulting in a number of terminologies such as continuous/continuing

PD/education, lifelong education, in-service training/education, professional learning and so on. Yet, scholars agree on the fact that PD:

- 1) is an ongoing/continuing/ lifelong learning (Schleicher, 2011) and aligned in an ‘ongoing’ change process (Curtis & Cheng, 2001);
- 2) has three objectives: enhancing teachers’ professional growth, students’ learning success and overall institutional development;
- 3) its activities cover any type of learning experiences, be it planned or unplanned, formal or informal and from individual to institutional levels so as to achieve the foundational aim of education (Rogers & Horrocks, 2010) and finally,
- 4) is important for both newly qualified teachers, who have recently arrived to the institution, and for the more experienced practitioners as well.

The ambiguity turns around the components that make up teacher PD. For Tomlinson (1997) and Villegas-Reimers and Reimers (2003), PD refers to whatever activity or process intended to enhance teachers’ professional **knowledge, skills and attitudes** on a daily basis for the sake of improving the learning outcomes of their students. On the other hand, Clarke (1990) adds two more components which he considered the key aspects of change that should be developed through PD; they are **beliefs** and **teachers’ classroom practices**. He maintains that PD is marked by a change in teachers’ perceptions and attitudes, knowledge and classroom practices which might, in turn, boost the learning of their students.

For Killion (2002), PD of teachers would develop their “**knowledge, skills, attitudes, aspiration, and behaviors** to improve student achievement” (p. 11). Owen and Skinner (2004) define it as whatever chances offered to teachers to advance their **knowledge, skills, approaches, and dispositions** to enhance job effectiveness. Day’s (1999) definition seems the most convincing in that it defines PD as **all-natural learning experiences**, be they conscious or unconscious, direct or indirect activities from which the individual, group or school can benefit.

By and large, and throughout this study, the researcher adopted Day's (1999) definition of PD which focuses on the professional growth that a teacher attains as a result of examining his or her teaching systematically through knowledge and experience acquisition either alone and with others within their broader change purposes in EFL instruction.

2.2. Importance of Teacher PD

An exploration of a handful body of research has yielded to the conclusion that the assets of PD for teachers as a way to succeed in their professional job (Diaz-Maggioli, 2003; Desimone et al., 2002; Guskey, 2003) and for students to raise their learning standards and success, as well, abound. Along the same line, teachers' basic pre-service training is no longer sufficient to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills they will need during their in-service and for the rest of their careers (Armour & Duncombe, 2004).

Consequently, the role of EFL teachers has changed; instead of being the only source of knowledge, they are now facilitators who make opportunities accessible for learners to immerse in meaningful communication (Hall, 2011) as themselves being agents for change and those who need to be changed (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). Therefore, this double role makes the teaching required more difficult, and this in turn necessitates a greater teaching effort to ensure performance and guarantee viability within the classroom (Livingston, 2014), as the quality teaching in the lives of students in schools and universities is important.

Built on the results from a review of the literature, a number of reasons why PD is important surfaced, most of which are related to: 1) teachers' increased pedagogical knowledge, skills, and attitude which help improve the quality of their teaching practice in the classroom, as well as staying current with the most recent assets and techniques within the field (Ravhuhali, Kutame & Mutshaeni, 2015); 2) teachers' enhanced self-confidence and self-efficacy which, in turn, increase their willingness and ability to take risks and attempt new strategies and tools (Kneale et al., 2016a); and 3) teachers' enhanced capacities to anticipate students' approaches, predict errors, and decide the best methodology guidelines for particular students (Ravhuhali, Kutame & Mutshaeni, 2015). Note that other factors may indeed give credit and, thus, the list of the selected reasons above is by no means exhaustive.

II.3. Types and Major Characteristics of Teacher PD

Recognizing that PD has been delineated in a number of ways is just the beginning. With so many definitions available, PD can be approached from several of activities; the limitations of one call for the need for a richer repertoire and a broader and diverse set of PD opportunities for teachers (Joyce & Showers, 1988) or just a richer mix of all which will probably result in an improved sense of professionalism for teachers. Among the different characteristics of teacher PD activities, Richards and Farrell (2005) mention the intentional, continuing and systematic process of teacher participation that leads to changes in knowledge and beliefs (cognition) and/or educational practices (behaviour). Villegas-Reimers (2003) asserts that PD directly relates to education reform initiatives and student learning. It starts with the pre-service preparation and only ends when the teacher leaves the profession. Moreover, PD needs to have a well-structured outline with well-defined goals.

It is both individual as well as collaborative and must respond to teachers' professional needs, their personal and professional interests.

However, the most striking models available at the disposal of teachers were those dominated by traditional/teacher-centered/top-down direct teaching (Lieberman, 1996; Murray, 2010) or teachers review audio or video recordings of real-time classroom instruction (Murray, 2010; Richards & Farrell, 2011). Some activities range from formal experiences (as participating in professional workshops or meetings, mentoring, etc.) to informal experiences; such as reading academic articles, watching television documentaries related to their teaching subjects, etc. (Ganser, 2000). Later on, a paradigm shift in thinking has emphasized the idea that PD is not a conference/workshop to attend (Burkins & Ritchie, 2007); instead, innovative types of PD activities/programs have become a critical aspect in the daily life of teachers in their classes. This represents a new era or shift in understanding, designing and implementing teacher PD programs and activities.

II.4. Teacher PD: Opportunities and Challenges

Despite the great importance devoted to PD, it is usually claimed that teachers may have concerns, most of which are related to their lack of ability or willingness to change their beliefs and attitudes about teaching, or their preparedness to use other teaching methods that are based on such criteria (Cohen, 1990). In some cases, teachers may show resistance to change (Fullan, 1991), and this reflects resistance towards PD programs. Another challenge that teachers may face and which may hold their goals hostage is that in case in-service programs exist, they seem to be intellectually shallow and lack in-depth knowledge of effective teaching and the better educational practices that teachers can use in their classrooms to achieve the desired results (Ball & Cohen, 1999). It is, then, possible that PD may fail to meet both teachers' and students' needs if not well planned.

III. Methodology

III.1. Research Design and Sample

In order to find answers to the present research questions, it was judged that restricting the research design to one method exclusively would not have justified the multiple challenges that teachers may encounter and understand their needs to raise their voices to the educational authorities. Therefore, it was thought necessary to use quantitative data and to support them with open-ended questions of a qualitative nature in order to elicit more detailed answers that "...can catch authenticity, richness, depth of response, honesty and candour" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000, p. 255) and allow the possibility to further examine some of the issues and better understand teachers' perceptions of PD, the factors that hinder their engagement in continuous PD, be they at the individual or institutional level.

III.2. Data Collection Tools and Analysis

The data were collected by means of two instruments: an online teacher PD questionnaire and a semi-structured interview with ten (10) EFL teachers. Acknowledging the potential shortcomings of using a questionnaire as the only data gathering tool for this study, the researcher addressed this limitation by using a semi-structured interview to provide explanations rather than descriptions of the situation at hands (Munn & Drever, 2004). The questionnaire was organized into three sections. Some of its items were adapted and rephrased into items related to the study participants from the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) administered by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2009) and Qureshi's (2016) doctoral thesis. The interviews were carried out by the researcher with ten (10) teachers from the department of English using audio recordings, which were later on transcribed and analyzed.

III.3. Results and Discussion

III.3.1 Descriptive Statistics for Respondents' Demographic Characteristics

From sixty-one (61) questionnaires sent online, the number of responses received from teachers was thirty-nine (39), which is equivalent to a response rate of almost (64 %); therefore, this was a good response rate and the analysis was based on this number.

Table (1): Descriptive Statistics for Respondents' Demographic Characteristics

Demographic Variables		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	9	23.1%
	Female	30	76.9%
Age	≤ 30	9	23.70%
	31-40	20	51.28%
	41-50	8	20.5%
	More than 51	2	5.51%
Qualifications	Magister	19	48.7%
	Doctorate	18	46.2%
	Professoriate	2	5%
Teaching Experience	1-5	8	20.5%
	6-10	14	35.9%
	11-15	9	23.1%
	16-20	3	8%
	Over 20	5	12.5%
Total		39	100%

From the results displayed in Table 1, it is clear that there is a gender imbalance in that the majority of the participants were females with thirty (76.9%) of the total, while the remaining nine (23.1%) were male teachers. In addition, the age distributions revealed that more teachers were within the age group 31–40 (51.28%) and 23.07% were less than thirty. This explains that the majority of the EFL teachers at the department of English are relatively young. Qualifications varied across teachers' respondents. Of the total participants, nineteen (48.7%) hold a Magister degree and eighteen (46.2%) are doctorate holders, while only two (5%) hold a professorate title.

For the category of years of service, participants' experience of teaching also varies. The highest percentage (35.9%) was reported in the category of teachers who taught from six to ten years. The second largest group (23.1%) contained teachers with experience ranging from 11 to 15 years. The smallest category (8%) consisted of teachers who had teaching experience of 16 to 20 years. To sum up, out of 39 participants, nearly 31 teachers had teaching experiences of more than 6 years; over 8 only had 5 years or even less of experience. This suggests that the participants are experienced and have accumulated extensive teaching experience through years of professional practice.

III.2 Teachers' Perceptions of PD

The purpose of this section was to explore the participants' perceptions of PD to better address their needs; in other words, how EFL teachers at the Department of English and Literature in Batna 2 University describe PD. Based on the results summarized in Table 2 below, an analysis of the frequency of responses will illuminate how the participants ranked the definitions they believe describe PD.

Table (2) : Teachers' Perceptions of PD

Rank	Responses Out of 39	Definitions of PD
1	26	Seeking out new teaching ideas and techniques in books or internet resources
2	24	Attending workshops, seminars and/or conferences organized by the other teachers/experts to dig deeper into a subject
3	22	Training programs organized by the Ministry of Higher Education
4	21	Individual readings of relevant sources (such as: scholarly books and journal articles about language teaching)
5	18	Training programs organized by the department
6	14	Having discussions among colleagues
7	10	Online College/university courses
8	9	Mentoring/coaching of new teachers by more experienced colleagues

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A large majority of the respondents (26) believed that PD is a way to search for new teaching ideas and techniques in books or internet resources and 24 define it as attending workshops, seminars and/or conferences. The most striking of all was that out of 39 answers, only 10 and 9 teachers, respectively; do not see PD through online courses or mentoring new teachers. This could be attributed to the fact that respondents still hold the idea of traditional PD which covers direct teaching and is dominated by conferences, courses, workshops and so on.

When asked whether PD is important to perform their job as a teacher in a better way, thirty-seven (94.9%) out of 39 respondents answered yes while only two (5.1%) responded no.

Later on, the respondents were provided with a list of reasons and had to point out the extent to which they agree/disagree. Their answers came as follows:

Table (3): Reasons to Pursue Professional Development

Options	SD	D	A	SA	No answer
R1: To comply with the directives of my organization	8	13	12	3	3
R2: To meet new friends (improvement of social relations)	6	20	10	3	0
R3: To learn about new teaching methods and techniques	7	1	11	20	0
R4: To advance my own career and professional development	7	0	10	21	1
R5: To reflect on my teaching practice	7	1	15	15	1
R6: To escape from work routine	6	13	13	6	1
R7: To improve my students' knowledge	4	5	14	16	0
R8: For personal satisfaction (joy of learning)	7	7	14	10	1
R9: To have the chance for better payment and get a raise	8	12	13	5	2
R10: To improve my teaching practice and the quality of my work	6	3	11	19	0
R11: To acquire a certificate	6	9	16	7	1

The most striking answer recorded in Table 3 was that among 39 respondents, twenty-one (21) teachers strongly agree with PD as being an opportunity to advance their own careers. Moreover, a relatively less number of teachers (20) see it as a way to learn about new teaching methods and techniques and 19 teachers strongly agree with the fact that PD helps them improve their teaching practice and the quality of their work. Yet, only three to five teachers (options R2 and R9, respectively) see PD as a way to improve their social relations or a chance for better payment. In short, the respondents favour the option that PD helps them improve their knowledge as well as their students'.

III.4 Teachers' PD: Challenges and Opportunities

In response to whether teachers were involved in any kind of PD activities, and if any, what kind (s) of PD they participated in; there were variations in their responses, which came as follows:

Table (4): Participation in PD Activities

Responses	Yes	No	No answer	Total
Participants	19	14	6	39
Percentage (%)	57.6%	42.4%	15.38	100%

Nineteen teachers (57.6%) out of (39) answered 'yes', they participated in PD activities. 14 respondents (42.4%) said they did not while 6 teachers did not provide any answer at all. Accordingly, for those who replied with 'yes', they were directed to fill in Table 5 below, where they had to select one response in each row and tick next to the degree of the impact of each upon their development as teachers.

Table (5): Impact of PD activities

Activities	No impact	A small impact	A moderate Impact	A large Impact	Nber of answers
Act 1: Courses/workshops (e.g., on subject matter or methods and/or other education related topics)	3	3	3	6	15
Act 2: Engage in discussions about the learning development of specific students	1	5	6	4	16
Act 3: Education conferences or seminars (where teachers and/or researchers present their research results and discuss educational issues)	1	4	4	7	16
Act 4: Observation visits to other teachers	7	0	3	3	13
Act 5: Participation in a network of teachers formed specifically for the professional development of teachers	5	4	0	5	14
Act 6: Work with other teachers to ensure common standards in evaluations for assessing student progress	2	4	3	6	15
Act 7: Individual or collaborative research on a topic of interest to you professionally	3	2	4	5	14
Act 8: Exchange teaching materials with colleagues	2	5	1	8	16

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Act 9: Mentoring, i.e. guiding a less experienced or novice teacher to learn the skills and knowledge of teaching required to develop professionally	1	7	1	3	12
Act 10: Reading professional literature (e.g., journals, evidence-based papers, thesis papers)	2	2	3	9	16
Act 11: Engaging in informal dialogue with your colleagues on how to improve your teaching	2	2	3	8	15
Act 12: Conducting action research to explore your own teaching practices and reflect on your work	1	4	3	7	15

Although answers varied, the most striking of all was that teachers participated in informal PD activities like seminars and workshops, courses, conferences and discussion round tables on related subject matter topics or methods in education. Out of 39 teachers, 16 were engaged in Act 2, Act 3, Act 8 and Act 10, all of which are informal ways of learning. For instance, among the 15 teachers who were involved in such activity, 6 were engaged and benefited from it to a large extent while only three responded with no impact. The other opportunity was to participate in education conferences or seminars, where 16 informants presented their research results and discussed educational issues and 7 were impacted to a large extent. From the above-mentioned results, out of 39 teachers, 15 were engaged in research and 7 of them found it very useful and impacted them to a large extent. Only one teacher reported that it had no impact. Act 9 did not receive much attention from teachers. Out of the 12 who participated in mentoring a novice/ less experienced teacher to learn the skills and knowledge of teaching required to develop professionally, only one teacher found it moderately impactful.

Respondents were also asked to give their opinions for/against the common barriers that would hinder them from pursuing PD. The respondents ranked the suggested challenges as displayed in Table 6 below. In the 'rank' column, the numbers are arranged from '1' being the extremely challenging barrier to '9' as being the least challenging. Their concerns came as follows:

Table (6): Participants' Main Concerns

Participants' Concerns	Rank
Personal problems/obstacles (e.g. family, lack of time)	1
Lack of personal financial funds (Expenses of professional development activities)	4
Lack of interest on my part	3
Lack of encouragement/support by my colleagues and/institution	9

Unavailability of professional development programs and educational opportunities	7
Lack of resources/educational material	6
Inappropriate training opportunities	5
Lack of information about the existing opportunities, either in Algeria or abroad	8
Lack of confidence in participating in educational activities	2

The results revealed that the main concerns and challenges raised by EFL teachers and which were considered to be the most frequently mentioned obstacle to PD were personal problems, lack of time, lack of confidence in participating in educational activities and lack of personal financial funds due to the high expenses of PD activities. They also mentioned a lack of interest on their part. Lack of encouragement and support by their colleagues and institution was considered as the least challenging obstacle.

During the semi-structured interviews, teachers were further asked about the most important barriers in their PD. One interviewee mentioned:

‘Motivation/200 master’s students in Hall lead to ZERO motivation. If you have guts and take the challenge, it’s mission impossible.’

Another teacher confirmed the results from the questionnaire and stressed the fact that:

‘Lack of interest on the part of teachers and lack of ongoing and inappropriate training was cited as a challenge to research and PD.’

A third teacher, who had some administrative responsibilities, said:

‘As far as I am concerned, with administrative duties which are time-consuming, I see PD a challenge.’

Another interviewee added: *‘Dealing with students individually and meeting their needs is in itself an obstacle to PD for its time-consuming nature.’*

Another item was designed to develop a picture of the sample participants' perceived needs for PD. The results reported in Table 7 below indicate that positive responses captured the majority of respondents (66.7%) who reported their need for PD activities while ten (25.6%) teachers responded that they did not need PD and three (7.7%) were not sure.

Table (7): Participants’ Need for PD Activities

Responses	Yes	No	Not sure	Total
Participants	26	10	3	39
Percentage (%)	66.7%	25.6%	7.7%	100%

Later on, the researcher set seven possible areas where the 26 respondents may feel that they need urgent continuous support through PD opportunities and had to indicate the degree to which they currently need PD.

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Table (8): Respondents' PD Needs

Perceived Needs	1 SD	2 D	3 A	4 SA
Student assessment strategies/ test preparation and administration	2	5	9	10
Mixed ability classes (different levels of learners)	2	2	15	7
Integration of educational technology and ICT (information and communication technology) skills for teaching	3	1	7	15
Student behaviour and classroom management skills	4	1	12	9
Teaching methods and techniques	4	1	12	9
Knowledge and understanding of my subject field (s)	6	2	6	12
New pedagogical competencies in teaching my subject field (s)	3	1	9	13
Total Frequency	26			

Although no clear consensus exists in the results provided by the respondents, the highest number, (15), reported their urgent need to have educational technology and ICT skills for teaching integrated within class subjects, and thirteen (13) out of 26 strongly agree with renewing their pedagogical competencies in teaching their subject field (s). Other prerequisites were also highlighted, some of which were related to teachers' need to be trained on student assessment strategies and test preparation and administration. Another urgent demand was to raise their students' interest in the subject field. One more need was related to teaching methods and techniques with a frequency answer of 12 teachers who agreed and 9 strongly agreed.

When asked whether PD is only useful to new/novice teachers or those with experience and who have been teaching for a long time, the majority (74.4%) were against PD and training to concern new teachers only; and (79.5%) said that experienced teachers needed training and PD activities.

Table (9): The Extent of Reflective Thinking

Questions	Yes	No	Not sure
Do you think that PD is only useful to new teachers who don't have much experience?	15.4%	74.4%	10.3%
Do you think teachers with experience and who have been teaching for a long time do not need training and professional development activities?	12.8%	79.5%	7.7%
Do you think that teachers need to take the initiative to develop professionally?	92.3%	5.1%	2.6%

A further question relates to the extent of reflective thinking as far as teachers taking the initiative to develop professionally. 74.4% of them believed

that PD is useful to both novice and experienced teachers and 79.5% of the respondents answered that being experienced in teaching did not prevent these teachers from pursuing PD activities. Moreover, 92.3% of the sample believed that teachers should not totally rely on their institution to provide them with training but have to assume responsibility for their own development and step forward to advance professionally.

During the interview, more positive responses were captured concerning the fact that teachers should feel responsible for their own development and do not totally rely on the university's programs. Their answers came in this way:

- *Teachers have to always seek activities and programs that develop their professional abilities in order to improve their professional level each time opportunities are given.*
- *In the absence of opportunities by the Ministry or the department of English, teachers should take the initiative so as to create such opportunities.*
- *All teachers, be they novice or professional, are concerned with PD as teaching is a life-long process.*
- *The activity of teaching is limitless especially after the emergence of technology. Thus, educators are always in need of developing their skills and competencies of teaching to meet their students' needs and cope with the recent methods of teaching.*
- *Teaching is a skill, and skills can always be improved. PD gives teachers a chance to gain knowledge and improve student outcomes.*
- *Since students learning challenges exist, teachers need to develop the needed knowledge and skills to address them.*
- *Teachers need to be responsible for their own PD and keep abreast with the latest trends in teaching as to become better versions of themselves and adapt to learners' needs and aspirations.*

To further inquire about how reflective teachers are concerning PD and training, the researcher asked the interviewees one more open question: 'Do you have plans for your PD in the next two years?' and their responses were gathered as follows:

- *Currently, I want to improve my time-management skills, participate in various workshops and seminars, and accept increased responsibilities in my actual job.*
- *Stay up to date on our teaching skills. Besides, being a teacher-researcher, one can write new articles in the field, participate in seminars, conferences, workshops to gain knowledge and develop professionally.*
- *I am intending to participate in many programs that improve my skills regarding the integration of technology in my class as well as the*

management of my digital identity as a researcher in social and academic networks like 'Research gate' and 'Academia'.

- *Each academic year, I take notes of the deficiencies and difficulties I face and try to enhance everything related to it to avoid falling into the same mistakes once again.*

VI. Conclusion, Implications and Recommendations for Research, Policy, and Practice

This study, whose overarching aims were to investigate EFL teachers' perceptions of PD, the opportunities available to them, what challenges they face in their PD in general and their professional needs in particular, used a questionnaire supported by a semi-structured interview, for the sake of understanding the phenomena under study and strengthen the trustworthiness of the research findings, from which some conclusions were drawn.

Firstly, teachers still hold the idea of traditional PD. It has been delineated that participants appear to support the traditional view about PD. This belief echoes what Lieberman (1996) put as types of PD which specifically cover attending seminars and formal search for new teaching techniques in books or internet resources. In light of what the data collected in the present study shows, it can be said that respondents' predominated belief is far from supporting the continuous nature of PD. Conversely, new ideas have emerged concerning what teacher PD really is.

Secondly, there is overwhelming evidence in both the questionnaire and the interview results corroborating the importance of PD. Findings were contingent on the view that many researchers share in support of the necessity of PD for teachers as already stated in the literature review.

Thirdly, as for challenges, teachers' questionnaire and interview painted a picture of the themes that were kept emerging in the teachers' answers in terms of the barriers to PD. Informants highlighted some issues including personal problems, lack of time, lack of confidence in participating in educational activities. They also shared their concerns about the lack of personal financial funds due to the high expenses of PD activities. Respondents also shared their concerns for limited research support and had to draw on their own initiatives. These results strongly support many of the research studies concerning teachers' PD as described in the literature review. Fourthly, although teachers had some individual opportunities to develop professionally, they highlighted their urgent needs to build an understanding of ICT skills and review their pedagogical competencies in teaching.

The main concerns raised in this research may also provide a baseline for policy implication with regard to future reforms if one thinks to implement PD activities. They should be carefully planned, supported, funded and included in current and future educational reforms (Villegas-Reimers, 2003) and respond to teachers' needs as well.

The findings of this study may hopefully contribute for far-reaching pedagogical implications since they confirm the perception held by many educational experts that teachers' PD is related to improving educational quality and bringing about improvements in student learning. Therefore, this study may serve as a source of information on PD for teachers of English within the aforementioned department, as well as in other departments which have a similar context; and its results may suggest directions for future PD programs and initiatives. The headings listed below summarize the research implications for the current study:

- In the future envisioned by the Ministry of Higher Education in Algeria and teachers alike, PD should be viewed as a must more than a necessity if they seek students' better outcomes.
- Teachers and policymakers should look to PD as a key strategy if they seek to assist students with the complex skills they need to be prepared for further education and work in the 21st century.
- In case PD activities are provided, teachers should be given equal opportunities regardless of their experience. Meanwhile, it is crucial that experienced teachers support novice colleagues and take advantage of their substantial experience and research by engaging in collaborative research topics of interest to them and where knowledge instruction and inquiry-based teaching occurs. In so doing, both novice and more experienced teachers would certainly improve their students' outcomes.
- Whilst part of the responsibility may lay within the university to provide PD programs, individual teachers should take the initiative over their own continuous learning in order to develop professionally and create opportunities to improve their knowledge and skills.

Because of the unique characteristics the participants described in this specific instructional research setting, it is not possible to generalize the findings of this case study to the wider population; therefore, it cannot be claimed that they are typical for all the departments of English in Algeria. This is to say that the present study can be related rather than generalized to similar contexts.

Yet, the results obtained can stimulate further larger research to be conducted and some of their aspects might still ring true in other contexts. Moreover, identifying teachers' PD challenges and needs can assist teachers and those working in the teacher education field to deepen their understanding if they plan to design PD programs for EFL teachers. Insights gained within this study may provide those interested in educational reforms with evidence of empirical understanding about teachers' needs if well-designed PD training would be implemented. Therefore, how teachers develop professionally should

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occupy an important position in education thought in Algeria to try to find appropriate solutions which would meet their students' educational goals.

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