# Exploring Challenges of EFL Teachers in Professional Developments in Bani Walid Secondary Schools

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## استكشاف تحديات معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في التطوير المهني في مدارس بني وليد الثانوية

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## Abstract

Teaching is a professional job; professional development programs becomes an urgent necessity to develop and improve teachers' skills frequently. By ongoing learning, teachers' profession and performance can be boosted; professional qualifications are viewed as powerful indicators of teacher professionalism (Leung, 2009). Developing teacher fosters improving student learning, teaching methodology and teaching process itself. The current study utilized mixed method design to explore challenges that EFL Libyan secondary school teachers face regarding professional developments, and investigating the impact of professional developments on students' outcomes. A total of 30 EFL teachers participated in this study. The results showed challenges that Libyan EFL teachers face in professional developments were: poor internet infrastructure and limited digital literacy, ineffective teacher performance evaluation systems, poorly designed PD programs, inadequate training venues, teacher demotivation, teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward professional development, and influence from colleagues. The study also showed the significant influences of PD programs on teacher teaching development and students learning out comes. As abounded areas of research on PD, it is recommended more investigates should be conducted in order to muster tangible evidence on the significance of teachers' PD. Also, classroom observations of teachers should be utilized in such king of study to provide a comprehensive understanding to the barriers and factors of teacher development. It would be another informative research method to investigate the impact of PD on teachers' development. .

**Keywords:** Professional Development, Learning Outcomes**.**

## الملخص

التدريس مهنةٌ مهنية، وأصبحت برامج التطوير المهني ضرورةً مُلِحّةً لتطوير مهارات المعلمين وتحسينها باستمرار. ومن خلال التعلم المستمر، يُمكن تعزيز مهنة المعلمين وأدائهم؛ وتُعتبر المؤهلات المهنية مؤشراتٍ قويةً على احترافية المعلم (ليونغ، ٢٠٠٩). تطوير المعلم يساعد في

تحسين تعلم الطلاب، طرق التدريس، وعملية التدريس نفسها. في الدراسة الحالية اعتمد الباحث تصميمًا مختلطًا لاستكشاف التحديات التي يواجهها معلمو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في المدارس الثانوية الليبية فيما يتعلق بالتطوير المهني، ودراسة تأثير التطور المهني على نتائج الطلاب وتعلمهم. شارك في هذه الدراسة 30 معلمًا. أظهرت النتائج أن التحديات التي يواجهها معلمو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في ليبيا فيما يتعلق بالتطوير المهني تتمثل في: ضعف البنية التحتية للإنترنت، وضعف الثقافة الرقمية، وعدم فعالية أنظمة تقييم أداء المعلمين، وسوء تصميم برامج التطوير المهني، وعدم كفاية أماكن التدريب، وضعف دافعية المعلمين، ومعتقداتهم ومواقفهم تجاه التطوير المهني، وتأثير زملائهم. أظهرت الدراسة أيضًا التأثيرات المهمة لبرامج التطوير المهني على تطوير مهارات التدريس لدى المعلمين ونتائج تعلم الطلاب. ونظرًا لكثرة مجالات البحث في التطوير المهني، يُوصى بإجراء المزيد من الدراسات لجمع أدلة ملموسة على أهمية التطوير المهني للمعلمين. كما ينبغي الاستفادة من ملاحظات المعلمين داخل الفصل في هذا المجال من الدراسة لتوفير فهم شامل لعوائق وعوامل تطوير المعلمين. وستكون هذه طريقة بحثية مفيدة أخرى لدراسة تأثير التطوير المهني على المعلمين.

**الكلمات الدالة:** التطوير المهني، نتائج التعلم.

## Introduction

One of the vital factors that lead to the success of the teaching and learning process is the professional development for teachers. Also, no one doubts the pivotal role of sustainable teachers' professional development in global. EFL teachers always are encouraged to sustainably sharpen their professional development concerning their knowledge and pedagogical competencies. Recently teacher professional development has been the attention of the Ministry of Education (Avalos, 2011). Baume and Popovic, (2016) define teacher professional development as "Development that encompasses all facets of academic and educational work associated with their role" (p 52). Desimone (2009) also, refers to professional developments as any sort of activity that targets the improvements of educators' knowledge, skills and performance along with the Higher Education Academy. Teachers to become more professional target language, they should engage in varied knowledge-based and efficient practices by being a knowledge impetus, judicious advisors, attentive listeners, and faithful encouragers for learners to continue discovering a wide array of truth on a life basis. Indrawati and Octoria (2016). Consequently, the continuous professional development of teachers enables them to update and promote their performance.

While extensive research supports the benefits of student-centered learning approaches for enhancing students' academic achievement, however the role of teacher is still very fundamental. There are limited studies conducted in Libyan schools on teacher professional development. Furthermore, many Libyan teachers don't realize the actual benefits of professional development, especially regarding how teaching methods, lesson planning, materials, and assessment practices align with teachers' ability to exert work of good quality.

This study aims to fill these gaps by providing challenges that EFL Libyan secondary school teachers face regarding professional developments, besides examination of is the impact of professional developments on students' outcomes in Libyan schools and how this impacts student performance.

**1.1 Research Questions**

This study sheds lights on two main questions:

1- What challenges do EFL teachers face regarding professional developments?
2- What is the impact of professional developments on students' outcomes?

**1.2 Aims of the study**

The aims of this study include:

1. Exploring challenges that EFL Libyan secondary school teachers face regarding professional developments.
2. Investigating the impact of professional developments on students' outcomes.

**1.3 Significant of the study**

This study is significant because it addresses challenges that EFL teachers face regarding professional developments. It highlights how targeted training can empower teachers and enhance literacy outcomes among young students. Moreover, it provides insights into the effectiveness of continuing professional developments in Libya contexts, where resources are limited and ongoing challenges. This study contributes to understanding how such continuing training can be scaled and adapted to support broader educational improvements in the public sector.

**2.0 Literature Review**

**2.1 Professional Development Definition**

Recently continuing professional development becomes an essential element to effective teaching thus a way to progress in the teaching-learning process. To receive an effective outcome from teaching English, the complexity of competencies and skills are necessary for high achievement demands for a structured training programme which provides for a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of EFL teachers. Hence the decision makers should design of CPD programmes to involve teachers in. Teacher development includes all the activities and experiences of formal and informal education/learning that teachers engage. It is a career-long process with the objective of motivating teachers to reflect on their teaching, update and broaden their professional knowledge. It aims mainly at helping teachers not only improve their teaching skills, but also employ meaningful professional learning. According to Richards and Farrell (2005: 9-10) (CPD) comes in different forms, such as: workshops, self-monitoring, teacher support groups, journaling, classroom visitation, teaching portfolios, analysis of critical incidents, case analysis, peer coaching, team teaching, in-service training courses, peer-observation, reflection in practice, attending conferences, engaging in digital and e-learning, networking and conducting action research. These planned activities mainly concentrates on increasing and expanding the capabilities of teachers so that they can successfully handle greater responsibilities and challenges.

The concepts development and training are used interchangeably, however, they can be distinguished one from the other. Obisi (1996) indicated that training is for specific job purpose development includes activities which improve job performance, and bring about growth of personality. It serves a longer-term goal and look for to facilitate teachers understanding of teaching and of themselves as teachers. Hence, teacher development is teacher's comprehension of a process of teacher's self-reflection in

which teacher realizes his vital role in teaching in terms of comprehending, analysing and developing teaching as a whole process.

## 2.2 Related Studies to Professional Development

For previous literature that related to teacher development, a recent qualitative study by Eroglu and Kaya (2021) investigated the barriers hindering teachers' professional development (PD). The research employed a semi-structured interview methodology to collect data from twelve high school teachers working in public schools in Elazığ, Turkey. The participant cohort was diverse in terms of gender, age, and educational background, ensuring a representative sample. The study focused on four high schools within the city, with twelve subject-specialist teachers selected as participants.

The findings revealed that obstacles to teacher PD stemmed from three primary sources: institutional inefficiencies, deficiencies in in-service training programs, and teacher-related factors. Key barriers included: Institutional Challenges: Poor school administration, scheduling conflicts, excessive workload, and a lack of structured PD opportunities. Also, Training Program Deficiencies as irrelevant or repetitive training content, ineffective trainers, and insufficient follow-up evaluations. Moreover, Teacher- Specific Factors: Negative attitudes toward PD, financial constraints, and low motivation due to perceived futility of training initiatives. These underscore the multifaceted nature of PD barriers, highlighting the need for systemic reforms in teacher development programs to address institutional, curricular, and motivational challenges.

## 2.3 The impact of PD on Teachers' Performance and Students' Outcomes

Achieving professional development for teacher comprises mutual sharing of thoughts, experiences, and involvement with problem-solving activities. Previous literature showed that many studies results revealed the positive impact of PD on teachers' knowledge and practices. PD develops teachers' curricular knowledge and understanding in academic areas like reading comprehension, and fostering students' learning. Improvement in teachers' knowledge contributed to their increased self-satisfaction and self- efficacy (Tantawy, 2020). Linguists like Coldwell (2017) affirmed that international researches associated teacher PD with teacher efficacy directly. PD also increased teachers' knowledge and self-efficacy, which fostered confidence and motivation demonstrating skills and attributes of teachers. Besides, many of Coldwell's subjects studied other 'mediating outcomes' such as developed classroom practices and improved job satisfaction.

Likewise, a number of studies emphasized there is a positive relationship between employing enacted instructional practise of teachers that they learnt in PD and increasing teachers' content knowledge which had a positive influence on their students 'accomplishment (Pehmer, Groschner, & Seidel, 2015; Polly et al., 2015). Chang et al. (2011) also claimed that the teachers' practical experience and instructional approaches had statistically significant effects on students' reflective, critical thinking, and self-directed skills and student learning outcomes

In general, it is believed that teachers' knowledge has a vital role in fostering and scaffolding students' learning through students' engagement in a productive classroom discourse that improves their critical thinking skills. According to Zone of Proximal

Development theory, the learning progress of the learners strongly influenced by social interaction with adults; thus, teachers were establish to contribute much to such interactions (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000).

This study focuses on foreign language teachers. It is also an attempt to find an answer to the raised question if the teaching profession lack any career or PD plans in Libya. Besides, investigating PD may increase a comprehensive understanding of teaching motivations, PD needs, practices, and challenges in the professional growth.

### 3.0 Methodology

To address the objectives of this study the challenges that face teachers in professional developments need to be investigated. Also to study as given that the effectiveness of professional development on students outcomes.

### 3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a mixed method research design, in which both qualitative and quantitative data collected, to gain a comprehensive understanding of teachers' perceptions and experiences related to continuing professional development. This approach enables the researcher to capture not only measurable patterns through a questionnaire but also deeper insights through semi- structure interviews (Dehalwar & Sharma, 2024). The effectiveness of using this design is supported by (Kartal & Özmen, 2018) who investigate Turkish EFL student teachers' perceptions of the professional development using a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews demonstrated the value of mixed methods in exploring educational experiences.

### 3.2 Participants

For questionnaire data collection, a purposive sampling strategy was employed to select teachers with sufficient experience in teaching which not less than 10 years is. A total of 30 participants (22 females and 8 males) were selected to provide a balanced range of visions. Regarding to interview data, a total of 8 secondary school teachers in Bani-Walid were selected using purposive sampling. The sample size was determined based on the principle of data saturation rather than statistical representativeness. This number was considered sufficient as the data collected began to repeat, and no new themes emerged, which aligns with the concept of theoretical saturation commonly used in qualitative research (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). The aim was not to generalize findings to a wider population, but to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, which justifies the use of a small yet information-rich sample.

*Table 1: Participants' Demographic Data*

| Total number 30 | Teacher Degree | Teacher's Age | Teaching Experience | Teaching Hours | PD Participation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Females 22 & Males 8** | 30 BA | 26 youngest | 10 min | 6 min | 0 min |
| | | 48 oldest | 15 max | 20 max | 10 max |

### 3.3 Date collection.

In the quantitative stage, the study data were collected through two phases of data collection to align questionnaire was distributed to 30 secondary school teachers. This instrument provides measurable data to identify general and common experiences among participants. Regarding to the reliability of the questionnaire Mahmoud (2022) conducted a pilot study to test the reliability of this questionnaire, his results showed that it is reliable with a Cronbach''s Alpha score (0.72).

In the qualitative stage, semi-structured interviews of approximately 15 to 20 minutes was conducted. They were conducted in person. The interview guide includes open-ended questions focusing on the teachers' teaching experiences and profession training. Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent for later transcription. To insure the validity of the interview questions, it was check by two EFL professors who teach English in Faculty of Arts and Languages in Tripoli.

### 3.4 Data analysis

Quantitative data were analysed statistically, and qualitative data was analysed thematically to identify patterns and emerging themes.

### 4. Discussion of Findings

### 4.1 Findings Related to Research Question 1

The findings reveal several difficulties that secondary school teachers face in developing their professional development. Among the most significant challenges identified in the study are that teacher's promotion is not linked to attendance in professional development activities or programmes with (Mean=4.5000, Std. Deviation= 0.50252). Course enrolment is not compulsory for teachers (Mean=4.4900, Std. Deviation= 0. 6589). This problem stems from the fact that participation in professional development programme is voluntary and not connected to teacher evaluations. Although performance assessments are vital for professional growth, the current system does not reward teachers for engaging in training or related activities. According to the study's findings, promotions are not based on the number of hours teachers spend on professional development, making the appraisal process ineffective and demotivating. This aligns with Eroglu and Kaya (2021) findings. They discovered that weak evaluation systems significantly discourage teachers from taking part in PD programs.

The next key issues identified are the teacher's opinions are not taken into consideration in designing professional development programmes (Mean=4.4300, Std. Deviation= .49757), and the low motivation of teachers to participate in professional development activities (Mean=4.140, Std. Deviation= 1.414). Also, the study highlighted issues that showed this weakness off PD programme, which represented in ignoring teachers' input (Mean=4.4300, Std. Deviation= .49757), inconvenient scheduling (Mean=4.3300, Std. Deviation= .63652), and lack of digital follow-up systems (Mean=4.320, Std. Deviation= .6567), field supervision and variety in the material (Mean=4.3500, Std. Deviation= .649157). This contrasts with previous research on professional development, which often overlooked the role of teacher feedback and did not address this issue directly. Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, and Birman (2002) asserted that PD

programme provides good opportunities for enhancing teachers' instruction and classroom practices, besides, it is an urgent necessity to help teachers in increasing their capacity to teach to high standards (p. 81).In term of the inconvenient scheduling of training sessions that hinder teachers' participation in professional development activities. This finding is consistent with studies by Eroglu and Kaya (2021), who also emphasized how unsuitable training times negatively affect teacher engagement.

Another important finding of this study is the lack of continuity in professional development programs (Mean=4.2500, Std. Deviation= .6092). Many of these programs are short-term and fragmented, which limits their effectiveness in supporting English language teachers. This observation aligns with Meng and Tajaroensuk (2013), who also noted that brief and disconnected training sessions fail to produce meaningful professional growth.

The last category concerns the repetitive and impractical nature of professional development program content. The findings showed the training focused heavily on theory, with little connection to real classroom practice. As a result, the programs were often seen irrelevant by teachers. This challenge was noted in other contexts. For instance, Eroglu and Kaya (2021) highlighted the lack of engaging, relevant content and the repetitive nature of training sessions. Likewise, Meng and Tajaroensuk (2013) emphasized the overall inappropriateness and limited usefulness of such programs in their research.

In summary, the findings of the current study are largely consistent with those of previous research. These barriers include poor internet infrastructure and teachers' limited digital literacy**,** as well as the flawed design of professional development programs, which encompasses other issues such as the lack of an electronic follow-up system and absence of field supervision. Additionally, this study revealed that some factors that influence teachers' participation in PD programs such as teaching experience, academic qualifications and teaching load.

### 4.2 Findings Related to Research Question 2

The second research objective was investigating the impact of PD on teachers' performance and students' outcomes. To achieve that aim, six of secondary school teachers who enrolled to training programs, were interviewed, the results of semi-structured interviews revealed that most respondents were very motivated to PD programmes, and they asserted on the significant influence of PD programmes on students' academic performance.

Regarding to the effect of PD on teaching in general, respondent 1 affirmed that PD has augmented his knowledge of teaching methods *"to always look for effective and enjoyable teaching styles"* which results in improved students' motivation as "they started enjoying learning English even if the topic was hard." Moreover, he noticed that there is strong relation between PD and his awareness of foreign language learners' needs, and his skill in adapting the curriculum accordingly. Likewise, respondent 3 mentioned that attending ongoing training programmes or workshops, "*helps most teachers to understand learners needs and select the best teaching method in*

*classrooms"*. She added that PD programmes scaffold teaching experience of teachers, and keeping up teachers with updated teaching methods.

The findings also revealed there is a major connection between PD and classroom management skills. Respondent 6 declared classroom management skills are mostly influenced by PD: "*because of the shared experiences that I gained through ongoing workshops, my classroom management skills have greatly developed*"

Moreover, respondent 2, respondent 5 stated same answers. They both believed that PD effects on content knowledge and teaching methodologies, and applying various teaching approaches which help learners to learn high level. Respondent 2 declared: "PD sessions have widened my perception of the effectiveness of various teaching methodologies. They helped me identify the different strategies of teaching…my subject knowledge also increased and so did my students'." Respondent 5 said "*attending online workshops, assisted me in releasing the different teaching approaches, it also improved my self-efficacy as teacher*"

All respondents noticed that after applying what they learnt from PD programmes and workshops in classrooms, students' motivation and students' learning outcomes increased.

Respondent emphasized "PD provides a good opportunities to understand more about the syllabus and teaching methods, which enhance in increasing students learning". These findings are in line with Sahlberg P, Hasak J, Rodriguez (2017) results. The improvement of communication behaviour of teachers in PD programmes, have an effect on the professional development of teachers and students. Learning becomes very effective, when it is linked to the individual needs and developments of teachers. When teachers reflect their performance in terms of student performance. (Abdollahi, 2018).

**5.0 Conclusions**

The current study identifies a wide range of challenges that impede English language teachers from participating in professional development activities or training courses during their in-service period. These barriers fall into several key categories: poor internet infrastructure and limited digital literacy, ineffective teacher performance evaluation systems, poorly designed PD programs, inadequate training venues, teacher demotivation, a shortage of qualified English language trainers, , administrative bureaucracy, economic hardship, teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward professional development, and influence from colleagues. The study also showed the significant influences of PD programs on teacher teaching development and students learning out comes. It also helps students in reaching learning to high level.

While the findings of this study are in line with previous research on barriers to professional development, it also uncovers several new factors, including poor internet connectivity, ineffectiveness of trainers, and unsuitable training venues, offering fresh insights into the challenges faced by English language teachers.

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