

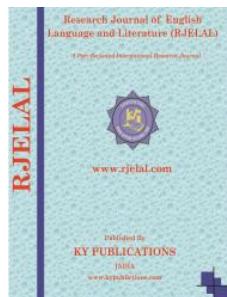
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A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS: PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES**FATMAH ABDULLAH ALAMMARI**

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doi: <https://doi.org/10.33329/rjelal.7119.344>**ABSTRACT**

This study aims to explore the main reasons for Saudi English teachers' low qualifications and the obstacles that hinder their participation in continuous professional development (CPD). It also investigates what the teachers' professional development needs are and potential solutions should be adopted to encourage participation in CPD. To this end, an interview team was organized to meet with teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) working all over Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia. Using 'narrative analysis' technique, teachers' data were analyzed. Results show that most Saudi EFL teachers possess lower authority to decide on joining needed CPD, given the pre-employment preparation they have gone through. Training seems to be rare and, for teachers, the CPD program is not based on what they need or lack. EFL teacher's main obstacles to attend necessary CPD chiefly include lack of motivation, time and lack of support from school leaders. The study provides implications for educational agencies and leadership involved in the professional development of teachers.

Keywords: Continuous professional development, English Language, Teachers, Practices, Perception

1. INTRODUCTION

With the advent of the knowledge economy, the importance of education for individual and social activities grew at a spectacular rate [1]. As a result, more and more countries started to strengthen their education systems, and many countries are striving to improve teacher training and recognize the importance of developing successful teachers who can effectively train large numbers of students, and thus contribute to knowledge economy. English currently performs many functions and occupies a significant position in Saudi Arabia, especially among those involved in the political and economic leadership positions [2]. With the rapid development of the economy of Saudi

Arabia, the growing value of English has increased taking into account it is the main language of international communication, and medium of study and research.

In a globalized world, English has emerged as the lingua franca of all international communication and a sign of development. This is likely to be the reason why English is the only foreign language taught by public schools in Saudi Arabia [3]. English has also become the main subject at all levels of education, in primary and secondary education, public as well as private schools. Moreover, at the university, students who do not study English must follow an introductory English course. In the fields of science, medicine,

engineering, health-related issues and technical subjects, English is used as a medium of instruction for most universities [4]. This status of the English language emphasizes the importance of providing competitive education and training to Saudi Arabians in accordance with international standards and national aspirations.

Irrespective of the significance of English to Saudi Arabia and multiple domains functioning, the stakeholders who are responsible for spreading the language are not sufficiently qualified to prepare skilled users of the English language. It is recognized that some English teachers in Saudi Arabia lack enough experience necessary to deliver and teach the course materials to students [5].

A research study [6] revealed that Arab learners of English in general and the Saudis, in particular, lack communicative competencies. Even after several years of formal English teaching, curriculum developing and teachers training, Arab students and specifically Saudis fail to achieve satisfactory proficiency in English language, and they remain unable to cope with undergraduate requirements. According to these studies' findings, there are many reasons behind poor outcomes. These include inappropriate curriculum, insufficient contact hours, delay of introducing the English language in schools and the number of unqualified English language teachers in the system. The level of English proficiency among Saudi EFL teachers remains far from satisfactory. Researchers believe that many foreign language teachers are incompetent in their profession and languages, and those they do not have a clear understanding of the teaching methods of language elements. They have insufficient theoretical knowledge to relate to the most important factors that influence learning in the second/foreign language such as motivation, attitude, skill and age [7]. In the field of knowledge of existing language teaching methods, the same problems are common, especially modern methods, language test types and learning strategies.

Literature shows that effective career development is a long-term aspect of class learning, which is comprehensive, logical and continuous experience that meets teachers' goals, based on

criteria, assessments and other reforms based on the best scientific evidence initiatives. The National Staff Development Committee has developed a set of nine standards that must be followed for all professional developments. The set includes substantive and high-quality educational knowledge, research foundations, collaboration, various learning needs and learning environments for students, family involvement, assessment, data-driven design and teacher training. The creation of these standards was an effort to encourage not just career/professional development (PD) but more specifically *Continuous Professional Development* (CPD) [8]. CPD involves taking control of one's learning and development by engaging in empowering processes of action, reflection and improved-action. Although CPD is applicable and increasingly becoming a requirement in all professions, research as in [9] pointed out that CPD is generally not well researched and often misunderstood. In the field of education, CPD tends to be carried out through structured/ semi-structured workshops, which are often led by senior professionals or teachers themselves. CPD can also be done externally in the form of short courses, technical and vocational workshops on new technologies or in an informal way individually or in small groups [10].

The core issue this study seeks to address is the low competency level of EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia in relation to CPD. This study aims to identify the myriad of causes that discourage Saudi teachers from taking part in CPD and thus developing themselves once they are in employment. It is the contention of this study that the lack of professional development uptake in the ELT community is a key factor in the low acquisition levels among Saudi students. This study will thus seek to find out why EFL teachers shy away from taking part in or taking charge of their own professional development.

1.1 Aims and objectives of the study

The focused aim of this qualitative research is to explore the perceptions of teachers about reasons behind Saudi English teachers' low competencies, the barriers that stop them from developing themselves, what they need from

teacher development programs, and how to encourage them to engage in Continuous Professional Development (CPD).

The objectives of this research are;

- To evaluate perceptions of teachers about the reasons behind Saudi EFL teachers' low competencies.
- To investigate the barriers that stop English teachers from developing themselves, either by attending the general training programs that set by English Departments or by applying to paid developmental courses.
- To identify the teachers' attitude toward teachers' professional development provided by the Ministry of Education
- To identify the professional needs of Saudi English language teachers

1.2 Questions of the study

The research questions for the present research are:

- a. To what extent is professional development implemented in Saudi schools?
- b. What barriers do teachers face in taking part in professional development with respect to perceptions of teachers?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The potential causes of such a problem of this study have been reported in literature. Seemingly, there are many reasons behind the poor outcomes of students in the English language. Some of the reasons relate to the students themselves, for example motivation, attitude, aptitude, parental influence, culture and background. Other reasons relate to the teaching environment such as curriculum and teaching materials. However, one of the most important aspects that can affect students' level is teachers' qualifications and competency [11]. The reasons of ineffective ELT include lack of sufficient financial support. This had a knock-on effect resulting in low salaries, the absence of teacher-training programs, unequipped classrooms and lack of teaching resource, which seemed to have greatly impacted the acquisition and learning

of EFL. Another major factor is the discrepancy between EFL curriculum and examination syllabus.

A research study investigated Saudi students, teachers and parents to elicit their attitudes towards English and the majority of their sample group stated that the English language is very important, has international relevance and is not possible for one to go for higher education without having a good command of it [12]. This, however, does not always translate into satisfactory effort placed in ensuring effective ELT standards are met across all the EFL teaching grades. Arabic is the official language of Saudi Arabia. Apart from some universities, this is a university-level learning environment and medium of teaching. Nevertheless, although English is taught as a foreign language, the importance of teaching and learning English has increased throughout the entire education system of Saudi Arabia. It has been introduced as a compulsory course in the last seven years, but only a few students emphasized an increase in the effectiveness of the English language; on the contrary, they considered it an optional subject of study [13].

Contrary to the past, the English status in the kingdom is completely different today. Due to the global demand and the relation with "science, technology, business and commerce" language, the importance of English has rapidly increased. Currently, it is considered one of the most important subjects in the education system of Saudi Arabia. That is why it is listed as a compulsory subject at level 4 at the university level.

Although students spend nine years in public schools, Saudi Arabia allocates a large education budget and college teachers get better salaries (even more than in developed countries such as the USA, United Kingdom, Canada and Australia), faculty members stress on students' lack of the necessary English language skills; their level is still unsatisfactory and lower than expected [14]. According to the same study, this low level is driven by a number of reasons, including: teachers using the Arabic language to learn English, traditional teaching methods, students lack of motivation, and negative attitudes of students towards the language

associated with the low competitiveness of ELT teachers [15].

It is the purpose of this study to focus on the last point highlighted above and really expound on the issue of low competency among teachers. Specifically, since there has been some degree of standardization as regards entry into the teaching profession, this research will seek to find out what happens in the area of PD once a teacher has become 'qualified' to enter the ELT field.

2.1 Training Programs

Training programs are very important to develop teachers' work in the classroom. However, more light needs to be shed on the type of training required. If this is not done clearly, introducing untrained teachers into classrooms to meet increased demand or to expand access to schooling will yield no results whatsoever and will actually incur costs in terms of the negative effects of a bad education and increased education budget [16].

2.1.1 Pre-service Training

With this type of training, employees can take on specific professional jobs, such as agriculture, medicine or engineering. They must attend regular schools and must successfully complete specific courses to obtain an officially recognized diploma. If they cannot obtain a certificate or a diploma from the institution concerned, they are not entitled to professional work [17].

2.1.2 In-service Training

This type of training promotes the professional growth of individuals once s/he has entered their chosen field. It is a program designed to strengthen the competencies of extension workers while they are on the job. Further training provides a student-centred and time-limited collection that is meant to develop a sense of purpose, broaden the perception of the client and enhance the ability to acquire scientific knowledge and the ability to master. The English teacher training, from the early 1980s to the present, is a training course offered in Saudi Arabia by giving four-year English courses through various colleges

and Saudi universities English departments. Preparing these programs based on the English of Saudi Instructors, these programs are awarded to graduates of the Bachelor of Arts in English for four years, and the students are exposed to linguistics, teaching methods, English literature and educational programs that are supposed to address the needs of schools and more [18].

The average ratio of students and teachers per class is about 20 to 1; usually, the teacher is responsible for about 150 to 200 students. This leaves no opportunity to establish a common philosophical approach, develop national norms and guidelines, and manage and direct key issues that equate to the preparation and training process for future Saudi English teachers. The educatorshosts of these courses are also mainly English teachers and supervisors who are not qualified to undertake the subtle tasks of this teacher training [18].

A study of the status of professional development and continuing professional development of Saudi EFL teachers at seven state universities and four private universities shows that only two of the 11 universities offer training opportunities for EFL coaches. In addition, participants are not satisfied with their career development plans. "An academic administrative limitation is lacking local and foreign training centres that strengthen the qualifications and skills of English teachers and pave the ways to provide partnerships with best on-site practices for aspiring Saudi English teachers, in universities and education. The partnership between the Department of Foreign Languages and Academic English courses exists at this time. Therefore, the future of Saudi English teachers is not systematic, and the basic education practice before the school enters the professional community [19] can also initiate such partnerships and cooperation. Efforts should be exerted to implement a capacity building training program and work closely with the EFL department to determine the priorities of the sustainable pre-service EFL training program that can generate the priorities.

Related to this strategy, universities and colleges that offer similar EFL training programs are not involved in establishing a system to exchange

information about the applied training processes and training graduate performance. This is why universities and colleges do not understand the first-hand experience of real education, creating a gap between theory and practice. Related to this is the unfortunate attention that, with local private training institutions and pre-training courses for textbooks, issuers and publishers with different content and quality do not have any performance partnerships [18]. These studies show that the need for such training and professional development of English teachers must be addressed immediately, and no longer wait.

2.2 EFL Teachers' Needs from Training Programs

Training programs are crucial for providing teachers with the experience to keep them informed. Research, analysis and documentation can be used to find and analyze the needs of targeted teachers, including the appropriate language level, classroom management skills, planning and preparation of lessons; however, these are not the only things to possess. It should not be the case of depending on the teacher's assessment and reflection per se. other skills teachers want to possess and want to develop at a professional level include new educational strategies and e-learning. Having found a reasonable balance between absence and will, designers can come up with a program to develop what teachers want to learn [19]. Although the teachers are the main beneficiaries of these training programs, it is often the case that their design takes a top-down approach that does not take into consideration teachers' prior knowledge, experiences, challenges and needs. However, there are few programs, which take teachers as prime sources of information in a 'bottom-up' like approach.

2.3 Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of Teachers

The development of education is a process of vocational training, formal education or in-depth vocational training, with the aim of providing teachers with the opportunity to improve and improve their professional knowledge, skills and efficiency [20]. In Saudi Arabia, policy makers and

management education institutions and teachers need to know more about the needs of teachers as students if they (do not) want to avoid advances in technology and methods. In addition, the Ministry of Education as well as teachers and educators must develop incentives and motivate teachers to implement DSP.

Teacher changes can be described and achieved by learning, developing, socializing, growing, improving, realizing new things or other things, cognitive and emotional changes, and self-learning. To achieve the goal of CPD, the personal professional development of teachers is very crucial. CPD increases the standard of learning quality to enable students to successfully train and learn. CPD includes education, training and professional support activities in which teachers participate after the initial certification [21]. These activities are primarily aimed at increasing professional knowledge, improving professional skills and helping them to explain their professional values so that they can develop students more effectively.

Teachers believe that there is a link between the development of teachers, specialization and improved learning. Most teachers recognize the crucial role of educational development in improving teaching and achieving professionalism. They believe that such a process makes them experienced and creative teachers. This shows that the problem is that teachers are not aware of the importance of CPD; also, at policy and management level, CPD is not a mandatory requirement for teachers [22]. To help teachers, they could be given adequate time during the teaching week to solely focus on CPD. Incorporating CPD in a teacher's timetable will inevitably normalize it and make it part of his/her duty [23]. Furthermore, as in the case of Saudi Arabia, these adaptive experts need to be able to gauge how the language they are teaching intersects and differs from their students'.

Some researchers suggest that professional development efforts designed to facilitate change must be practitioner specific and focus principally on day-to-day activities at the classroom level. Other experts stress that reforms in professional

development must be initiated and carried out by individual teachers and school-based personnel. In the initial implementation of CPD in Saudi schools, perhaps one can delay the voluntary aspect of participation and make CPD part of one's employment. In other words, teachers can be made to build portfolios of workshops participated in and these would be reviewed at the end of the term. In this way, a culture of growth could be instilled into the teachers [24].

The literature also reveals the notion that most teachers do not engage with CPD if it has a top-down approach which would remind them of their initial teacher training and school. Rather, the best way is to develop personal growth cultures and attitudes which will push CPD to be instilled in general being of a teacher. The study at hand comes to support and is in line with most of the reviewed literature, giving more emphasis to the speciality of the requirements needed to grow teachers who are always enhancing their students' learning experience, and not just in class, to pass on linguistic proficiency. Moreover, there is a severe shortage of research into EFL teaching and teacher development as a whole and in Saudi Arabia, in particular, as these are recent introductions into the Saudi education system [25]. Therefore this study's long-term aim is to contribute to knowledge base in this field of EFL teacher CPD in the context of Saudi schools.

3. METHODOLOGY

This a qualitative research that collected data by means of semi-structured interviews, which is a method that was found favoured over structured interviews due to the concept of 'social desirability' that would otherwise hinder the findings by influencing the interviewees' responses. Data were collected from by means of questionnaire. Besides, focus group as an instrument of data collection was used. In a focus group interviewees were interacted and discussing a topic supplied by the researcher. In short, if planned and delivered well, focus groups are believed to generate a large amount of data in a very short amount of time.

Focus group-semi structured interviews allowed teachers to express their thoughts in a relaxed manner and to exchange different points of views and build on each other's ideas. The data generated a collective rather than an individual view. The focus group interview was meant to include EFL teachers from different offices to support the questionnaire and gets a deeper understanding of the problem. A group of six English language female teachers from different educational settings in Riyadh and with different certificates participated and discussed their perceptions, attitudes and beliefs about professional developments, their needs and the barriers that hinder them from developing themselves. The narrative analysis approach was used for the analysis of data collected from the teachers.

Population of the study consisted of EFL teachers from all over Saudi Arabia working in governmental schools during the second semester of the academic year 2015-2016. The sample of the study was made up of participants from different cities, different stages, with different years of experiences and holding different English language certificates (Diploma, Bachelor and Master), but they were all working in Riyadh.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results

After gaining an initial understanding of teachers' thoughts surrounding the subject matter of this study, a detailed focus group interview was conducted with six English language teachers. Below are the teachers' responses to the interview in the focus group. These responses are arranged in the chronology of the questions they responded to, as in the following.

4.1.1 How well do you feel your pre-service program has prepared you to be a qualified teacher, and what are some of the area you feel you were not prepared for when you started teaching?

Teachers in the focus group were graduates of different universities and colleges and they had different English language certificates and qualifications. Needless to say, in Saudi Arabia each

college/ university has its own program/course for teaching English. For those who graduated from the pedagogical college, they were very satisfied with their program. They thought it was a well-prepared program that concentrated on teaching methods. Also, they were very satisfied because they had a practicum course for one year, one semester in an intermediate school and the second one in a secondary school. That practicum course gave them the chance to teach in real classrooms under the supervision of the English language school teachers and supervisors from the college. However, when they started actual profession of teaching they were only surprised by the schools' rules that hindered them from developing themselves.

Unfortunately, for those who graduated from translation/literature or linguistics departments, they were not satisfied with the pre-service program because it was not meant to prepare them for working as teachers. When they actually started teaching English, they faced a lot of problems in dealing with many teaching issues such as lesson planning, classroom management and students' individual differences.

4.1.2 How important are modal lessons/workshops/training programs to you?

The majority of teachers think that modal lessons/workshops and training programs are very helpful tools to update teachers with the new teaching strategies and other pedagogical theories, especially for those who did not graduate with pedagogical certificates. Nevertheless, they thought the timing of these lessons and programs was very important which should be at the beginning of the semester not at the end in order to ensure usefulness for teachers in application and use. Only very few teachers thought that those modal lessons and training programs were not practical and a waste of their time.

Responses that will be supported in more results ahead indicate that preparedness for the future dictates a better organized and standardized education system in Saudi Arabia will have to be. This will ensure uniformity in preparing teachers and, thus, contributing to a harmoniously educated society. This could also be of a great importance if

the Saudi society would like to wean itself off the heavy reliance on expatriates as a readily available workforce.

4.1.3 Do supervisors/trainers ask you about what you need to train in? Do you think they should?

Only two teachers replied that their supervisors asked them about their training needs. The majority of teachers replied that no one asks them about what they need from training programs or workshops. No one ever distributed surveys to discover what they lack. They thought that they should be asked about what they need to make these programs more useful and practical, and not a waste of time.

Although this might depend on the time of the year and location of the school, this clearly is an unprofessional manner in which to carry out CPD programs. Teachers, supervisors and heads of schools will have to work closely together if CPD is to become a meaningful aspect of education.

4.1.4 Do you believe in the teacher's self-development? How do you develop yourself?

All teachers agreed on the importance of continuous teacher's self-development, given the rapid changes taking place in the world around us. They said that students change, curriculum change and strategies keep changing, so the teachers should be updated to be ready to face and cope with those changes because, as they said, each time needs its suitable tools.

They also believed that English teachers should keep practising English in and outside the classroom because they believe that if you do not use it you will lose it. According to how they develop themselves, some of them depend only on the training programs/workshops held by the Ministry of education or by supervisors. But others do not depend only on those programs, because sometimes they are not tailored for them, so they use also the Internet and social media to develop themselves. This is particularly good for researching particular methods, classroom management techniques and grammar items.

4.1.5 What is the impact of teachers' development on students and on the teachers themselves?

All of the teachers agreed that their continuous development has positive impact on students and themselves as well. They thought that this development would raise students' competencies and enhance outcomes. For its reward on teachers, they tended to believe that such a development would raise teachers' self-confidence and competencies, and help teachers to face the rapid changes that happen regularly in dealing with students or curricula.

4.1.6 A study done by the Ministry of Education proved that many English teachers show low competency in speaking English. What do you think the reasons that are behind the low competency of English language teachers?

Most teachers refuse to admit that their community has weak English teachers despite the Ministry of Education's findings which I supplied them with. They thought that if they were diagnosed as weak teachers, that might be related to the difficult (i.e. above level) tests that the Ministry of Education would use. Others gave the suggestion that perhaps this might be a matter of differences in multiple intelligences, which means that there might be weakness in linguistic intelligence but not in general. Only two teachers replied that 'this weakness is there because of the pre-service programs', which were not prepared very well to prepare them to teach English. Another reason that was given by these two teachers was that 'sometimes a teacher refuses to change or develop oneself'.

4.1.7 Is it important for English teachers to have earned well known practical ELT teaching certificates such as TESOL/TEFL/ CELTA?

The teachers in focus group agreed that it is not essential for an English teacher to have those certificates to be qualified. They think that what they learn by experience is much more important from filling their CV with certificates that may be of no use at all. They believe that teachers should develop themselves in a way that suits their time, environment and needs but it is not necessary to

have so many certificates. These replies may not be established on teachers' awareness of the quality and accreditation of such a Cambridge certificate as CELTA, for example, which is a sign of needed development.

4.1.8 What are the barriers that hinder teachers from attending training programs or developing themselves in general?

Most teachers in this focus group agreed that 'transportations and time are the main reasons that prevent them from developing themselves'. By 'time' here they mean that they have a heavy curriculum schedule which must be covered in specific time so they cannot waste their classes to attend training programs. Others added the incentive reason. Unfortunately, we do not have incentives in the Ministry system. A teacher who works for self development will have the same salary and privileges as that teacher who refuses to develop or change. We do not have any incentives for those who develop themselves and we do not have punishment for those who refuse to change. They also added, as a reason that stops them from developing themselves, the schools' managers who sometimes refuse to allow them to attend training programs to finish their school works.

Taking into consideration the lack of public transportation and the way some training/workshops are centralized, it is important that teachers (specifically female) are given all the support they need to be able to attend these workshops. Alternatively, these CPD programs can be delivered in the teachers' workplaces.

4.1.9 What recommendations would you give to support the idea of teachers' continuous development?

When asked for their recommendations, the focus group was not short on such suggestions. The first thing that they mentioned was the ad-hoc manner in which the ministry of education does things. Most teachers stated that the first thing that should be done is to prepare teachers for the sudden changes in decisions made by the Ministry of Education (i.e. the organization mood). Here, teachers wanted to be kept up to date and given

amble training to implement the ministry's directives in time.

The focus group participants also wanted to introduce an incentive/punishment clause relating to the teachers' participation in CPD. Along with this, they also wanted there to be a more bottom-up approach to the way CPD programs are designed. In other words, teachers want ownership and to inform and participate directly in decision making about their own CPD. Lastly, teachers recommended that the ministry of education invest more money in schools. This was especially in regard to upgrading the classrooms with smart boards and other similar technologies that would bring Saudi classrooms into the twenty-first century.

4.2 Discussion

The findings from the focus group teachers revealed that most teachers either did not know that there are some Saudi EFL teachers with low competencies or they did not want to admit it. For those who answered the relevant question, they blamed the pre-service training for being not well prepared to create qualified English teachers. In addition to that, they added that there are many Saudi EFL teachers who are hired to work as teachers while they are graduates of translation, linguistic or literature department, with no idea about how to teach English [21]. According to the participants, those teachers find it too difficult to teach English properly especially if they do not get proper support from their managers or supervisors; they, otherwise, do not find adequate in-service programs.

Therefore, one of the main reasons behind some Saudi English language teachers' low competencies is because there is a significant portion of Saudi English teachers who graduated from programs at colleges of languages and translation or colleges of arts that prepare them to specialize in translation or English literature. Those teachers who graduate from the college of arts they neither take courses in English teaching methods nor go through a practical teaching course for a semester in public schools; thus, they get inadequate pedagogical preparation and that makes them unqualified for the job of English teaching [22].

The results from the teachers' focus group interviews added time and transportations to the ineffectiveness of the in-service programs. They also claimed that these in-service programs are sometimes boring, repetitive, not suitable for what teachers need and not practical, because they are built more on theories than practice.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Training, alone, cannot make miracles; teachers awareness of what they need, want and lack is very important to help them develop themselves no matter what barriers they find in their teaching environment. A teacher's change and development requires an all-important initial awareness of a need to change, and to consider reflection on the inputs/outputs of development. It is important to consider the role of the pre-service programs and how well they should be prepared to help in graduating qualified teachers. Each teacher pre-service training program in Saudi Arabia has its unique program and requirements, leaving no chance for having a national common ground for development, regardless of the many standards and guidelines.

This might not be conducive to have a uniform approach to preparing and training future Saudi English teachers. Undoubtedly, well designed CPD will have to be a key pillar of the Saudi education system if it aspires to become a world-class education system. To achieve this, all the recommendations mentioned above, and notes of teachers, are be seriously considered. Additionally, more in-depth classroom-training centre level research will have to be conducted to learn more about the best way to approach incentivizing teachers to take CPD serious.

Although this study was not wide-reaching in its scope, it is the belief of the researcher that the study has reached its aim and answered its research questions. In addition to answering its first question on competencies, the findings of the study also showed that most participants agreed that the non-qualifying pre-service programs that teachers had in their universities and colleges were the main reason behind English teachers' low competencies. It is essential to design the in-service programs with

teachers' needs in mind. Other stakeholders also pointed to the needs of having a standardized approach and stronger links between all the education bodies in Saudi Arabia. Regarding the barriers that hinder teachers from developing themselves, all participants agreed that lacking: time, transportations, managers' support, incentives and the ineffectiveness of in-service programs are the main barriers that stop English language teachers from developing themselves.

It was noted in the discussion that the identified inadequacies will have to be addressed if Saudi society is to meet its 'Saudization' goals and transition from heavy oil and expatriate workforce dependency. To help English teachers engage in CPD we should redesign our pre-service programs, encourage and facilitate English teachers to have accredited certificates (such as CELTA) that will update their knowledge and raise their teaching competencies. CPD and effective pre-service training needs to be institutionalized across the whole education system and made part of a teacher's life-long career.

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