# Investigating the Effectiveness of Professional Development Presentations in Language Institute: Needs More or Enough

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## Abstract

The concept of professional development has grown immensely in universities especially after the pandemic, with studies showing that presentations improve teacher efficiency, teacher and student motivation, student learning, and teacher involvement in academic activities. They may, however, be viewed as a facilitating device and as part of a culture of 'improvement,' which suggests a lack of interest and commitment, less or no involvement in academic activities, lack of autonomy, and more expectations. However, there is a relatively little known study in this field. This article attempts to fill up the gaps in our understanding by using data from teacher participants who attended presentations as a part of the teacher professional program at the English language Institute, Jazan University. The follow-up survey includes male and female (n=169) teachers working in various colleges. The findings suggest teachers considered the presentations extremely essential and provide significant guidance and support for routine teaching and research. They did emphasize, however, the implication of the professional development initiatives to accomplish teaching and learning outcomes, enhance collaboration and communication between decision-makers and teachers, between teachers, and across institutions, and also create a mechanism that will include topics related to unresolved teachers', students and classroom problems. Also, the article advocates for a PD paradigm in which teachers are actively engaged in teaching and learning activities that push them to apply content, reflect, and solve problems both individually and in groups inside and beyond the classroom.

**Keywords:** professional development, university education, teacher efficiency, learning outcome, academic leaders, presentations

## 1. Introduction

We start with an adage that learning is from womb to tomb and education is a lifelong process. It doesn't have any connection to obtaining any academic or professional degree but continuously updating and upgrading with the existing and forthcoming processes. It allows career-conscious individuals to hone their skills to become more proficient to create niches in their jobs. Likewise, it is equally applicable for academic administrators and senior colleagues to inspire and motivate teachers to pursue professional development, not only to achieve learning outcomes for their students but also to increase their efficacy and satisfaction in various domains.

The goal of this research was to understand more about the precursors of combined efficiency in order to develop programs to develop teacher eruditeness that focus on the group. Teachers' opinions of their collective efficacy are paramount in college influences on student achievement, and it deserves the attention of academic administrators and scholars interested in teacher professional development (henceforth, referred to as TPD). The input was gathered through focus groups with leaders of college-based teams of EFL teachers. The findings of this study speak about the importance of communication skills in teacher leaders, allowing all team members' perspectives to be heard. Teachers can express themselves in a way that mediates and scaffolds their professional development in their proximal development zone in this sporty communicative environment. A spirit of collaborative efficacy among teacher teams is fostered in this type of professional learning setting. The study's findings have ramifications for the next generation of teacher leaders' preparation.

Jazan University is currently focusing on continuing teachers' professional development. Aligned with this motto, the English Language Institute (henceforth, referred to as Eli) has planned to conduct these presentations regularly to enhance and strengthen professionalism in teaching and continue teachers' professional development in university education. Simultaneously, the institute has tried to create its own mechanism to develop and improve teaching and learning strategies, which should visualize for rewarding exceptional teachers and promoting PD. In addition to these activities and advances at the institutional and university levels, University support for academic practice is extensively high. In August 2021, the Planning and Development Unit (henceforth, referred to as PDU) at English Language Institute joined hands with the university to lay the foundation of the new paradigm in teachers' professional development. It is therefore timely to consider the nature of teachers' professional development at Eli and to have a better knowledge of what the institute is doing now to improve its teaching practice. This experience, knowledge, and perceptions of teachers will serve as a base for the modifications in upcoming PD plans.

As part of the PDU, this article outlines a small-scale initiative that looked at teachers' professional development activities last year. Previous similar articles are examined to see how well teachers understand professional development and how effective it is in teaching

and learning. The findings are summarized and compared to those of other studies so that definite guidelines and recommendations for future academic PD support may be made.

## 2. Previous Studies

Teachers' Professional development is vital for developing, enhancing, and keeping teacher quality, as well as students' learning outcomes both within and outside of the classroom. According to Borko (2004), these are indispensable for changing classroom practices, improving schools, and enhancing student learning outcomes. The pandemic has shown teachers' unpreparedness to switch over to online learning, lack of digital skills, resilience, etc., to deliver uninterrupted learning to students. Teachers often find it difficult to cope with changing educational technologies, curriculum and academic standards, and college guidelines, making it difficult to maintain academic best practices. Professional development facilitates teachers to gain adequate knowledge and skills to provide required course instructions to aspiring students, transforming them into good professionals. The previous relevant studies on professional development play an important role in teaching reform and academic leadership programs and can help to optimize the benefits of knowledge sharing among colleagues.

Alike, many institutes plan and organize such programs for teachers under different names, as Timperley (2011) mentioned as professional development programs, teaching research groups, and formal mentoring programs. Conversely, learning also takes place in collaborative planning, peer teaching, and mentoring each other (Little, 2012). Moreover, the two cited scholars believe that learning does take place during workplace learning which is dynamic and ongoing in formal and informal interactions. Some studies carried out in teachers' development encapsulate specific domains, such as only education that ultimately changes classroom practices (Fullan, 2007); professional integrity (Smylie, Mayrowetz, Murphy, & Louis, 2007), perceived self-reliance (Scribner, Sawyer, Watson, & Myers, 2007); learning in schools as the ambiance for improvement (Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008); Learning is most effective when it takes place in the subject areas of the teachers. (Darling-Hammond, Chung, Andree, & Richardson, 2009); higher student accomplishment is linked to robust teacher communities. (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010; Horn & Kane, 2015); teacher collaboration testimonial to instructional improvement (DuFour & Fullan, 2012); and expressing disagreement in instructor co-action (Dobie & Anderson, 2015).

Furthermore, many studies on teachers' professional development in Saudi Arabian context did appear in the last two decades addressing the needs of English teachers at the tertiary level. The models and methods evolved over a period from traditional methods that were rare and ineffective focusing on 'one size fits all' (Al-Hazmi, 2003) and one-shot training events and workshops (Al-Seghayer, 2011) to modern TPDs that consider an array of activities for teachers. Additionally, a few studies claimed to reject Saudi teachers' voices, and not realize teachers as real partners in the educational process (Al-Seghayer, 2011; Alfahadi, 2012; Alnefaie, 2016; Alsalahi, 2015; Assalahi, 2016); and consider teachers' role merely as of curriculum implementer and inactive technicians (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Conversely, Sharma (2022) conveyed that some of the best practices used by EFL teachers include structuring tasks and activities based on learners' interests and proficiency levels, setting goals, innovative teaching practices, motivational techniques, feedback and evaluation, and a learner-centered classroom environment, as well as the use of cutting-edge technology in the language learning process.

The pre-and-post pandemic situations have prompted the researcher to delve deeper into the understanding of TPD, which requires teachers to adapt their current practices to incorporate innovative practices, acquire new skills and knowledge, take on new roles, and teach using technology in ways they have never experienced before. According to Sharma (2019), carefully constructed tasks, activities, and projects based on the use of social media that are integrated with the curriculum, workshops, and faculty development programs on social media usage can have a good impact on the language learning process. Likewise, the study makes a seminal attempt to undertake the Teacher's Professional Development presentations at the English language institute. Furthermore, the aforementioned studies provided a springboard for the current analysis of recent research on teacher professional development in educational institutions, which led to these two research questions.: "How do teachers perceive teachers' professional development presentations in the institute, and how does this development influence their professional skills?"

The goal of this study is to summarize new research results on teachers' professional development in educational institutes, as well as to analyze and discuss these findings in terms of teacher professional development, students' learning outcomes, and improvement throughout the courses and campuses under Jazan University.

## 3. Statement of Problem

Presentations for professional development are made to fulfill the demands of EFL teachers, who are expected to have the information, abilities, and attitudes necessary to raise the standard of language instruction. Consequently, a detailed evaluation of the effectiveness of providing presentations on important difficulties instructors confronts in language teaching, learning, and assessment is required. Therefore, it is essential to understand teachers' opinions, perceptions, and requirements because doing so leads to fresh perspectives on how to close a serious educational gap and advance both personally and professionally. By incorporating changes in the teaching profession and running professional development programs in both general and specific subject competencies, this identified gap can be closed. The future directions of efficient PDPs can be recognized in order to achieve this goal. Additionally, given that teacher professional development takes place in situated contexts of practice, decision-makers in EFL learning would be better able to raise the standard of teaching, learning, and assessment initiatives in regional contexts of practice with a better understanding of the unique difficulties teachers face when teaching students. As a result, there is still much to explore regarding how EFL teachers perceive teaching

EFL courses. In view of the aforementioned concerns, the current study attempted to address the following research issues.

1. What do teachers think of the institute's presentations on teacher professional development?

2. How do these presentations on professional growth affect their professional skills?

## 4. Method

**Research Design**

Since the purpose of this study was to ascertain EFL teachers' opinions on professional development based on their experiences in the recently held presentations, it was developed as quantitative method research. Creswell (2003:153) states that quantitative research involves the collection of data so that information can be quantified and subjected to statistical treatment in order to support or refute "alternate knowledge claims". The goal of the study was to supplement the aforesaid studies by examining the experiences of attendees (male and female teachers with over five years at the university) from the English language Institute across different campuses in Jazan University, Saudi Arabia, and to draw together some common concepts and conclusions.

A short questionnaire was prepared for the attendees to fill out online. The researcher created the six-item questionnaire that listed many types of different attainable questions, one of which was an open-ended question. The questions underwent some changes as a consequence of consultation with experts (an expert from professional development, assessment and evaluation, and language respectively). Then the questionnaire was administered to three EFL teachers as a prototype application before it was finalized. Besides, expert opinions and the deployment of the model were used to guarantee content validity.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

The quantitative method was used to conduct a more thorough statistical analysis of EFL teachers' perspectives on professional development. The questionnaire was administered online to over 240 attendees and they were requested to respond to presentations they had attended in the first semester of the academic year 2021-22. Attendees were also asked to respond by choosing one among 'Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree', on the topics of the presentations, web links and details, presenters' knowledge and preparedness, time management, supplementing to new learning or knowledge, and suggestions for such presentations in the future. 169 responses were received (70%) and proved to be a reasonable representation of the population.

Table 1. Status of participation in professional development presentations

| Type of PDP (in numbers) | Number of Respondents | Percentage of respondents to average attendees |
|---|---|---|
| Faculty Development (total 10- once in fortnight) | 169 | 73 |

Table 2. Teachers' opinions on how well professional development sessions satiated their educational needs

| Questions | Total number of Respondents with positive response | Total number of respondents | Mean | Standard deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. All the presentations were aligned with the teaching goals | 160 | 169 | 157.4 | 8.142481 |
| 2. The topics, links, and associated details were clearly disseminated | 161 | 169 | 157.4 | 8.142481 |
| 3. The presenters' knowledge and preparedness were adequate. | 163 | 169 | 157.4 | 8.142481 |
| 4. The content provided was relevant, comprehensive, and helpful in new learning | 160 | 169 | 157.4 | 8.142481 |
| 5. Presentation duration (50 minutes) and timings were good. | 143 | 169 | 157.4 | 8.142481 |

Respondents were also asked to respond if the topics of the presentations were aligned with their teaching goals for which 160 (94.6%) had opined positively and only eight didn't agree with this question. The second question was regarding whether the topics, links, and associated details are clearly disseminated, to which 161 (95%) gave their consent on this; however, only eight had shown their concerns. The questionnaire included feedback on the presenters' knowledge, and preparedness, which got humongous support (96.4%) in favor, and only six (3.6%) differed in their opinion. The next questions were on utilization of the time and if the content provided were relevant, comprehensive, and helpful in new learning or knowledge to which 160 (94.6%) stated that they enjoyed the quality content and the presentation. The large population preferred and wanted to learn more about the topics presented; however, 25 (15%) of the participants had reflected their resistance regarding the presentation duration (50 minutes) and timings, which were at 8 p.m., which needs due care while conducting presentations in the future. The Standard Deviation (8.142481) herein table 2 is low that expresses the respondents differ very less from the mean value (157.4) for the group of attendees.
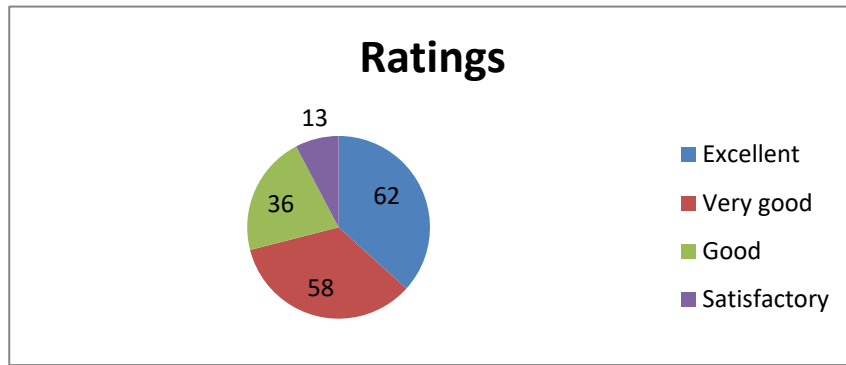
Figure 1. Ratings of the Presentation

A total of 62 had rated the presentation as excellent, 58 as very good, 36 as good and 13 as satisfactory means all the participants had received the TPD presentation in a positive spirit.

The descriptive and open-ended questions were responded to by most of the participants. They were asked to suggest some topics of their choice that need a significant probe to which forty-five (27%) shown in figure 3 had mentioned as latest responses that included: writing to learn and learning to write, teacher influence on the learning environment, assessment of language acquisition, etc. Furthermore, a majority of the total stated that the topic should be on 'students', such as; interpersonal skills, presentation skills, motivation, language teaching, the four skills, teaching, and learning, etc., and many more. More focus on academics, and interests. Twenty-four (14%) had written 'thanks' in response to this question.



Figure 2



Figure 3

The second last (ninth) question sought suggestions (at least one) that would help us make future presentations/workshops better. We always need to improve over time and will likely get much more from attendees when the approach is positive and focused on improvement. Alike, they preferred to have three days for presentations, seeking handouts and dedicating more time to presentations.



Figure 4



Figure 5

A total of forty-three (26%) participants had submitted responses that included presentations very good; nevertheless, they need to be more practical, effective and provide more time for discussion. They also stated that presentations should be more interactive but less academic and sought recordings of the presentations.

The last and final question was to seek their additional opinion or suggestion to which only ninety had responded. Mostly gave 'thank you with no comment' and only twenty-forty mentioned presentations as very useful, effective, successful, good jobs, thanks for efforts, etc.

From the above responses, It can be deduced from some respondents' further comments that the presentations intended for teachers'

professional development had accomplished their core purpose; however, the suggestions given need to be considered carefully while planning future programs.

## 5. Discussion

If the findings of this study are indicative, they imply that, despite COVID restrictions, situations, time constraints and other objectives such as research, a pack of English Language teachers found presentations to be very helpful in developing their teaching and learning skills. Despite the fact that the presentations were held online after college working hours due to pandemic restrictions late in the evening, the response from attendees was overwhelming. Institutes may hold TPD programs in a variety of formats, including peer discussions, peer reviews, symposiums, seminars, workshops, and conferences, in addition to online presentations in academia. We expect such diversity from a majority of people since they have a variety of learning styles.

These results are comparable, but not identical, to those of previous researchers who analyzed samples of interdisciplinary academic institutions in depth. Eli management, for example, inspired, supported, and motivated faculty members to stay positive despite the unusual circumstances by creating a healthy and constructive learning environment on campuses to meet their needs and providing necessary resources such as TPD presentations to help them develop their technical, innovative, and teaching skills, which supports the findings of previous studies (Thoonen, Sleegers, Oort, Peetsma, & Geijsel, 2011; Vanblaere & Devos, 2016). The administration also values its teachers by providing opportunities for them to contribute and share their knowledge in their areas of expertise, which fosters a sense of belonging to the institute and profession. One such initiative was the TPD presentations, in which ten faculty members shared their ideas and knowledge by presenting on various topics. Teachers, according to Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2005), are at the center of decision-making when it comes to building ownership in adult learning. Furthermore, the talks brought together teachers from several campuses on a single platform, encouraging collaboration and teamwork. The study's findings revealed teachers' keen interest, participation, and interaction in presentations, which was backed up by Vangrieken, Dorchy, Raes, & Kyndt (2015), who discovered that teacher collaboration is always beneficial to their professional lives and is integral part of any vocational teacher development approach. Furthermore, Sharma (2021) stated that the department may hold workshops or seminars on intercultural training as well as develop formal or informal rules before teachers enter the classroom.

Since classes have resumed on campus, teachers have needed the necessary support and social and informal gatherings to brainstorm and freely discuss teaching and learning concerns, as well as student issues with peers or in group meetings, as supported by Dobie & Anderson (2015) who opined that in teacher collaboration, openness in voicing disagreement is critical for positive communication and learning. The administration provided such opportunities through TPD presentations where they were free to interact and ask questions on various issues, which eventually created a good environment, improvement in instructional practices, and positive learning outcomes. The finding was in line with DuFour & Fullan (2012) who suggested that teacher collaboration contributes to professional development and instructional improvement. Such practices often lead to developing teachers' interest to work together as a team that teams have a favorable impact on teacher engagement in terms of new teaching approaches, (Garet et al. (2001). The survey started with its first question if the topics of the presentations were aligned with their teaching goals to which the majority of participants (94.6%) responded affirmatively. It aligns with Lewis et al. (2013) who state that in lesson setting, the learning and development goals of the students should be connected with the school's growth goals.

Furthermore, the administration believes in the competence and talent of its teachers and provides equal opportunity for all to grow, develop, and flourish in the ELT field. Overall, the findings demonstrate teachers' significant interest, involvement, and subsequent adoption of innovative and new concepts in their classroom instruction, all of which have proven to be successful. This contradicts Ermeling & Yarbo's (2016) findings, which said that The resulting modifications in teaching are usually minor, and major changes are rare. The teachers created an ecosystem that allowed all teachers to collaborate on a single platform, cultivating a sense of teamwork and leadership, which is consistent with Alexandrou and Swaffield's (2014) findings, which demonstrate how teacher leadership may aid in the development of broader professional skills in school communities.

TPD presentations or similar programs aim to develop and enhance teachers' motivation, positive attitude toward teaching, learning innovative practices, and socialization; however, in the Saudi context, these programs have failed to produce the desired and effective results, resulting in tangible differences in teachers' perceptions of teaching and learning.

The current methods employed in the subject study included online presentations using state-of-the-art technology, which were useful and helpful in improving teaching skills, in contrast to Al-(2003) Hazmi's approaches, which were uncommon and ineffectual, relying on a 'one size fits all' approach. There were several topics linked to teaching and learning that addressed most of the problems of teachers, in contrast to Al-Seghayer's (2011) one-time teacher training seminars and workshops. Furthermore, the findings reveal teachers' keen interest and participation in interaction during or after presentations addressing their concerns and also refuting the findings of studies (Al-Seghayer, 2011; Alfahadi, 2012; Alnefaie, 2016; Alsalahi, 2015; Assalahi, 2016) that claim Saudi teachers' voices aren't heard or realized as true partners in the educational process. Furthermore, the feedback received after the presentations confirms that their concerns are taken seriously, and the new knowledge and skills they get and develop as a result of these TPDs enable them to be active contributors and actual drafters and designers of curriculum, which are otherwise considered passive technicians and merely curriculum implementer (Kumaravadivelu, 2003).

## 6. Conclusion

The preceding explanation concludes by defining the need for well-designed and implemented Teacher Professional Development programs that support teachers in updating, developing, and gaining new knowledge, skills, and competencies they need to teach generation Z students in the twenty-first century. The study's findings reveal that each institute should establish a consistent mechanism that helps teachers throughout their teaching careers. According to Sharma (2021), teacher training and workshops on teaching methods, curriculum design, course specification, students' needs analysis, teaching style and strategies, continuous teacher evaluation, students' feedback, developing 21st-century skills, use of tools and websites in teaching plans, multiple intelligences, integrating ICT, understanding educational goals and objectives in national policies for education, and usability of ICT can address nearly all of the problems. Academic learning should be made a regular event that is linked to their personal portfolio as well as teaching expectations and appraisal. It should also connect to leadership possibilities in order to build a comprehensive framework centered on teacher growth and development.

The extensive conversation revealed that teachers had a positive and constructive attitude toward the institute's professional development presentations for teachers. Moreover, they not only influenced their professional skills but also instilled in them a desire to learn more and adopt new teaching and learning approaches. Thas become a facilitating device that induces a culture of 'improvement' to develop and enhance teachers' interest and commitment, full involvement in academic activities and become autonomous to fulfil students' expectations. The researcher has been successful to fill up the gaps that earlier existed to support and motivate teachers to develop their pedagogical skills through these presentations as a part of the teacher professional program at the English language Institute, Jazan University. TPD also directs ways using such professional development initiatives to accomplish teaching and learning outcomes, enhance collaboration and communication between decision-makers and teachers, between teachers, and across institutions, and also create a mechanism that will include topics related to unresolved teachers' and students' classroom problems. Also, such projects in teaching and learning activities domains set a PD paradigm that pushes teachers to apply content, reflect, and solve problems both individually and in groups inside and beyond the classroom. Therefore, we may reason that the findings override earlier studies' findings in the Saudi EFL setting, which revealed a negative opinion of TPD since its attempts fell short of an expected model (Alharbi, 2011; Alsalahi, 2015; Al-Seghayer, 2011; Alshaikhi, 2018; Assalahi, 2016; Elyas & Al Grigri, 2014; Sywelem & Witte, 2013). The TPD presentations in any other form, planned and executed carefully, will always fulfill teachers' expectations and result in good teachers, leaders, and keen learners who adopt the new learning, technology, and teaching strategies to support students in any odd-or-even situations to achieve learning outcomes and develop competencies required to meet 21st-century challenges.

## 7. Recommendations

Despite the several problems that Teachers Professional Development (TPD) faces today, the study recommends that such programs be planned and prepared in response to the pressing demands of teachers. Second, the teachers are given full support by the administration in order to spark their interest and provide a conducive environment for such initiatives to take place. The findings also revealed a problem with time constraints, which was only mentioned by a few participants; however, it is something that needs to be addressed in order to ensure that TPD is held at the appropriate time and place with adequate learning materials and that teachers are eager to learn and take advantage of available development opportunities. Finally, the TPD should be linked to teacher and student concerns, teacher profile and evaluation, institutional contexts, and institutional rewards, as well as provide possibilities for cooperation, collaboration, and practice development.

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