

Teachers' Motivation After the Implementation of the Three-term School Calendar in Saudi Arabia

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Received: May 27, 2024

Accepted: August 5, 2024

Online Published: September 5, 2024

doi:10.5430/wjel.v15n1p352

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v15n1p352>

Abstract

This study explored the perceptions of teachers of English as a foreign language regarding the effect of a new three-term calendar on their motivation. Identifying the effects of this new plan would assist the Saudi Ministry of Education in exploring the teachers' perspective. In turn, these viewpoints can be useful for making current choices as well as enhancing and modifying future ones. Through semi-structured interviews, the results of this study found that the majority of teachers perceived the new calendar to have a positive effect on their motivation. Specifically, they reported feeling more motivated to plan and teach lessons, as well as to engage in professional development activities. Furthermore, they felt that the new calendar provided them with ample time for reflection and collaboration with colleagues. The results of this study suggest that a three-term calendar may be beneficial for teachers' motivation levels. This change may provide teachers with more frequent breaks and opportunities for rest and rejuvenation throughout the year, potentially leading to higher overall motivation and job satisfaction.

Keywords: Teachers' motivation, three-term calendar, English language teachers, school teachers

1. Introduction

The success of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) depends on various key factors, including the facilities, curriculum development, and planning. The success of the EFL teaching process is also based on the practices of EFL teachers to achieve the aims of the course. In turn, teachers' performance can be affected by many factors, such as their motivation (Ipek & Kanatlar, 2018), which can be influenced by the atmosphere of teaching, facilities, students, and work effort (Hettiarachchi, 2013)

In the Saudi Arabia context, the Ministry of Education (MOE) is highly interested in the pursuit of excellence in effective EFL teaching. The English language is an essential concern in the 2030 Saudi vision (Alqahtani, 2022). To this end, many modifications have been made to the educational process to improve learning and teaching processes, including EFL teaching. One of the latest modifications is adding a third term to the two-term academic year. In 2020, the Saudi MOE announced that the academic year would be divided into trimesters instead of the usual two terms. The Minister of Education added that the academic school semester would span 13 weeks with seven-day breaks. The Saudi MOE further stated, "This is the first stage in the development process. It is an important one to achieve the targets and goals of the Kingdom's sons and daughters and to reach global competitiveness in various fields and all dimensions." The school year will also include 12 holidays, incorporating long weekends and an increased number of school days, to ensure students benefit from the learning experience as much as possible.

Consequently, all the elements of the educational process will be affected. One of these elements is the teachers' performance, which is essential in the teaching process. With the three-term calendar, teachers must expand their working hours to do their job efficiently. In addition, they will need extra effort to manage the difficulties they face in schools, such as large classes, time constraints, and a lack of support services (Marzulina et al., 2021). The three-term calendar will have many long weekends throughout the year. Moreover, the number of working days will increase, whereas the number of vacation days will decrease. Accordingly, this setup may cause teachers to experience burnout, high turnover rates, and low productivity. Therefore, the three-term calendar may negatively affect EFL teachers' motivation.

However, this situation may not be the actual case in schools. The new calendar may enhance school teachers' motivation because they will have long weekends, a longer time for preparation, and a longer time to spend with students. Therefore, these advantages may reflect on their teaching responsibilities, that is, they can be more motivated to make an organized plan and finish on time. However, we do not know the actual situation on site. Thus, this research has been conducted to explore the perception of Saudi EFL teachers about this three-term academic year adjustment.

Many studies have investigated the effect of motivation on teaching, as well as the factors that affect teachers' motivation. However, none of these studies have investigated the effect of the length of the academic year on EFL teachers' motivation. Moreover, given that research on

Saudi's three-term calendar is scant, further investigation is needed to explore its advantages and disadvantages in the learning process. Research on this topic can delve into teachers' perceptions and reflections on the education calendar changes. Therefore, this article fills the gap by analyzing the effect of the three-term academic calendar on EFL teachers' motivation, which could be related to their performance and productivity. Determining such an effect can provide the Saudi MOE with an overview of teachers' perceptions toward the new calendar. The findings of this study may also help in future decisions and in improving and adjusting some details of the current policies. Given that no feedback from school teachers about the school calendar was given, this study will clarify the actual situation according to teachers' points of view.

1.1 Literature Review

In Saudi Arabia, the English language has been taught as a foreign language since the discovery of oil. English was first introduced to Saudi schools in 1943 (Al-Tamimi, 2019) and was taught from grades 7 to 12. Later, in 2003, English was taught from grades 4 to 12 (Alrabai, 2018). Recently, in 2021, the subject was extended to include grades 1 to 12 (MOE Press Conference, 2020). Since English was first taught in Saudi schools, EFL teachers' roles in Saudi Arabia have undergone changes, from being authority figures to class facilitators, with continuous training programs provided by the MOE to assess and improve their performance (Aljuhaish et al., 2020). The curriculum, which is divided into two academic terms each year, focuses on enabling students to communicate in English (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). However, it has recently been adjusted when the academic year was extended to three terms instead of two in 2021 (MOE Press Conference, 2020).

New academic terms entail that the duration of work will be extended. This extension increases EFL teachers' workload, which may affect their motivation. EFL teachers' motivation is an essential factor in their practice, as this motivation helps encourage students. Gbollie and Keamu (2017) demonstrated that when teachers are motivated, students are also likely to be motivated and enjoy the class. Additionally, Ahn's (2014) research in South Korea, involving 697 participants, revealed an interrelationship between teachers' motivation and the motivational levels of students. Hence, teachers' motivation plays a significant role in maintaining students' motivation (Rawal, 2020; Kalyar, Ahmad & Kalyar, 2018). Accordingly, teachers' motivation can help students persist longer, produce better work, learn more thoroughly, and perform better in class and assessments.

Teachers' motivation is crucial for enhancing their performance and preventing burnout. Elrouadi et al. (2020) examined how teachers' motivation influences their performance and the school principal's role in motivating teachers. Through a survey involving 40 teachers, the researchers noted a correlation between teachers' motivation and their performance. In a related study, Dias et al. (2021) recruited 63 teachers to analyze the impact of work motivation on teachers' performance. Their findings demonstrated that motivation at work positively affected teachers' performance. Consequently, teachers become more productive when they are intrinsically motivated in their work.

However, teachers' motivation is a complex process that can be influenced by various factors. Ipek and Kanatlar (2018) examined the factors that may impact EFL teachers' motivation. Specifically, they asked 117 EFL teachers to articulate their perceptions of the factors affecting their motivation. These teachers shared their perspectives on the teaching environment, workplace dynamics, relationships with colleagues, and interactions with students. The results of their study illustrated that these factors could have both positive and negative effects on the motivation of EFL teachers (Ipek & Kanatlar, 2018). Consequently, EFL teachers' motivation could either enhance or diminish job satisfaction, increase or decrease professional competitiveness in fulfilling teaching responsibilities, facilitate or impede the teaching process, improve or reduce teaching quality, and ultimately foster or erode professionalism in teaching.

Additionally, in a study conducted by Hettiarachchi (2013) on the motivation of English language teachers, variables that positively impacted teachers' motivation included students, teaching itself, and the significance of English in the society. On the other hand, demotivating factors included limited resources, large class sizes, school-based assessments, unreliable colleagues, strained relationships with coworkers, lack of parental involvement in students' education, limited opportunities for professional development, inappropriate textbooks, frequent syllabus and textbook changes, teaching other subjects, and challenges with teaching methodology (Hettiarachchi, 2013). Accordingly, EFL teachers' effectiveness in the educational process increases when they are motivated, enabling them to work more efficiently with students, other educators, and colleagues. Conversely, demotivation leads to decreased productivity.

Teachers' productivity can be influenced by the duration of their teaching efforts. A prolonged work duration demands additional effort, which can result in reduced motivation. Many researchers consider a decrease in motivation as an energy-consuming underlying mechanism that contributes to burnout, leading to a decline in performance. Salamone et al. (2016) and Syamananda (2017) discussed that efforts causing exhaustion, such as stress, job dissatisfaction, work neglect, and lack of professionalism, can diminish motivation. Consequently, teachers may encounter burnout, a stress-related syndrome characterized by exhaustion, professional alienation, and a decrease in personal performance (Hakim, 2020). This syndrome diminishes motivation as it induces stress among teachers. Furthermore, burnout is typified by prolonged periods of stress resulting from extended work hours and performance expectations (Syamananda, 2017). Therefore, any additional effort may dampen teachers' motivation.

On the contrary, work effort may not directly influence teachers' motivation. Motivation can foster professionalism, reducing the perception of time and effort during a specific duration. In his workplace motivation theory, Pink (2009) highlighted the correlation between motivation and autonomy, emphasizing the importance of choice. When teachers have the ability to make choices, they are more motivated. Unlike traditional theories linking motivation to commitment, Pink (2009) associated motivation with engagement, leading to a state of flow in work. This flow promotes professionalism, enabling teachers to immerse themselves deeply in their tasks to the extent that their awareness of time and place diminishes. Therefore, the time teachers spend working and the effort they exert may not necessarily impact their

motivation if they are professionally engaged in their work

To delve into these aspects, the current study reviews research on teachers' motivation and examines the general effects of this motivation. However, existing studies in the related literature have not thoroughly explored the influence of the duration that EFL teachers spend working on their motivation. Consequently, it is essential to ascertain EFL teachers' perceptions of their motivation following the implementation of the three-term school calendar.

Therefore, the research question for this study is as follows:

RQ1: What are Saudi EFL teachers' perceptions of their motivation after the three-term school calendar?

2. Method

2.1 Approach of the Research

A research design delineates a planned structure outlining the strategies employed to collect and analyze data (Gaya & Smith, 2016). Since the current study aims to investigate EFL teachers' perceptions of their motivation during the three-term calendar, a descriptive research design will be utilized, focusing primarily on gathering data related to developments in the research topic. The study participants comprised five EFL teachers. This design assists in comprehensively covering the experiences of the participants (Thomas et al., 2015).

The current study opted for a qualitative method because this approach is well-suited to address our research question. Additionally, the qualitative method is appropriate for capturing the past experiences of respondents regarding a research topic (Neuman, 2014). It also aids in comprehending the perceptions, feelings, and opinions of individuals concerning targeted phenomena. In the context of the present research, conducting online interviews would facilitate the accurate and easy collection of data.

2.2 Instrument of the Research

Online interviews were utilized as data collection tools. This approach is convenient as it saves time on travel (McGuirk & O'Neill, 2016). Moreover, it is a cost-effective strategy that expedites the data collection process. During the video calls, participants' responses and viewpoints were recorded and subsequently transcribed to extract essential information.

Several factors influenced the use of online interviews in the current study. Firstly, it offered flexibility to both the researcher and the respondents, as they could engage in discussions without leaving the comfort of their homes. Selecting a suitable interview venue can often be challenging, as some respondents may feel uncomfortable in certain settings and may only agree to participate if interviews are conducted in public spaces. By opting for an online platform, the researcher saved costs associated with arranging public spaces for interviews. The choice of online interviews also enabled individuals from various parts of the country to participate and share their perspectives without the burden of travel. Additionally, a significant challenge with face-to-face interviews is the potential for bias, which can be influenced by visual cues such as a person's demeanor, ethnicity, or social status. In this study, the risk of bias was minimized as respondents could see the researcher's face during video calls. Consequently, respondents focused solely on providing information relevant to the interview assessment without veering off into unrelated topics (James, Busher, & Suttill, 2016).

Essentially, the data collection tools focused on gathering data on various aspects related to EFL teachers' motivation, such as the expected changes after the implementation of the new academic calendar. In collecting data, the interview questions are :

- 1 .How has the new academic calendar affected your English language teaching?
 - What challenges have you encountered?
 - What strategies have you used to overcome difficulties?
 - How did your training and professional development help you in adapting to the new academic school calendar?
- 2 What do you miss the most about the 2 terms educational calendar? Explain
3. What are the changes to EFL teaching that you think are beneficial after the new calendar?
4. Do you think online classes and strategies should be 30% of the classes?

2.3 Participants of the Study

For this research, five EFL teachers were selected to participate in the study. The participants were randomly chosen from the secondary level. The authors aimed to construct a purposive sample of five EFL teachers. Therefore, they specifically sought EFL teachers who were actively teaching English during the three-term calendar in 2021, excluding those who had taken sick leaves or exceptional leaves during the year. The selection criteria were essential in ensuring that the research objectives were achieved.

2.4 Procedure

The main goal of the current study was to gather and analyze detailed and in-depth data to know more about teachers' perceptions. This information would help in understanding the effect of the new Saudi academic calendar on EFL teachers' motivation.

The participants were contacted online and asked to provide answers to the research questions. Each session lasted for about 20–30 minutes. The consideration of ethical principles in studies involving human subjects is crucial for protecting individuals from psychological and physical harm (Bryman, 2016). Consequently, pseudonyms were employed to reference the participants instead of using their real names.

Moreover, informed consent was obtained by seeking written permission from the selected respondents. Lastly, autonomy was respected by assuring the participants that they had the freedom to withdraw at any point during the interviews if they felt uncomfortable with the questions being posed.

2.5 Thematic Analysis

For the current research, a thematic analysis was primarily employed to analyze respondents’ views on the topic. The first step in the thematic analysis was reviewing responses to be familiarized with the main concepts expressed by the respondents. The second step involved coding the data in which key sentences and phrases were highlighted. The highlighted sentences were given short labels on the basis of the content described. The codes with similar ideas were classified together in a table under the same theme. The themes were reviewed to ensure that they had specific patterns that accurately represented the data (Houghton et al., 2015). After reviewing the themes, suitable names were selected to define the themes. Analysis of data is often critical in understanding the core meaning and implications of the findings gathered.

3. Findings and Discussion

Online interviews were conducted among five teachers. The results obtained from the interviews are explained and discussed in this section. The main interview extracts, codes, and themes for this section are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Generation of codes and themes for teachers’ interviews

Interview Extract	Codes	Themes
<i>A longer period of learning helps us to avoid the huge amount of loss in learning that occurs during summer vacation.</i>	Continuous quality learning	Advantages of the three-term school calendar
<i>In the three terms, there is enough time to organize and plan and adjust, and by that, I am always prepared. It is easier to stay on track in work during the three terms</i>	Commitment	
<i>The long weekends gave me a chance to prepare and plan</i>	Professionalism	
<i>Three-term calendar makes the teachers and students bored and exhausted</i>	Work overload	disadvantages of the three-term school calendar
<i>Due to the short-repeated vacations, some students neglect what they study before the holidays.</i>	Loss of learning	

3.1 Advantages of the three-term school calendar

All the EFL teachers who participated in this study highlighted several advantages of the new three-term calendar in the learning process. The most significant advantage was providing learners with more time to practice what they have learned. Two teachers mentioned that the three-term school calendar helped prevent the substantial learning loss typically experienced over the summer break. One of them also noted that learning became more continuous, leading to an enhancement in the quality of education. Interviewee 1 explained,

“The three terms come with many good things. It gives us and the students a longer period of learning, which helps us to avoid the huge amount of loss in learning that occurs during summer vacation. There are no huge gaps of rest that make students forget what they learned. There is no time for them to do that. That’s why the quality of learning English is much better than when the terms were two. Now, learning is continuous, and teachers have enough time to assess and check the students’ learning. I think that is a good thing about the three terms.”

A longer period of learning can enhance the quality of education as it allows for increased practice and repetition, facilitating the reinforcement of concepts and improvement of students’ understanding. Neary (2000) proposed that practice and experiences should be continuous over a specific duration. Similarly, Chanani and Wibowo (2019) argued that a conducive learning environment can enhance the productivity of its participants by providing continuous opportunities for performance improvement and knowledge application. Evidence-based research suggests that continuous learning contributes to progress in virtually every setting (Chanani & Wibowo, 2019).

Researchers strongly advocate for a learning culture that promotes a heightened capacity for adaptation to change and the creation of new knowledge. They advocate for taking risks, fostering creativity, learning from setbacks, and developing a greater sense of personal control over one’s life (Chanani & Wibowo, 2019). These factors help individuals feel more connected to their colleagues and the broader world. Consequently, teachers are motivated when the learning environment supports a continuous learning approach. Therefore, the interviewee expressed confidence that the three-term school calendar would enhance teachers’ motivation.

Furthermore, one of the teachers expressed that the three-term calendar improved her commitment to teaching because she had enough time to be more organized and prepared. Thus, she became more motivated. She explained,

“I remember the first plan I designed for the curriculum in the three terms, I cared about timing and organization, and in the three terms, the long weekends give me time to organize, plan, and adjust. Because of that, I am always prepared. It is easier to stay on track at work during the three terms.”

Commitment and motivation are closely intertwined, with commitment having a positive impact on motivation. Meyer et al. (2004) conducted a meta-analysis and indicated that commitment fosters motivation. Consequently, while commitment relates to an individual’s dedication to achieving a goal, motivation represents the drive to attain that goal. Therefore, when teachers exhibit commitment to their work, they are more likely to be motivated to exert effort and maintain focus on their objectives.

Furthermore, as per Meyer and Herscovitch (2001), commitment is defined as a "force that binds an individual to a course of action" (p. 302). This definition implies that commitment serves as one of the motivating factors that contribute to intended behavior. Based on the perceptions gathered in the present study sample, the three-term school calendar is perceived to have a positive impact on the motivation of EFL teachers.

More than half of the EFL teachers sampled expressed that their professionalism improved after the three-term school calendar. They were able to maintain a positive attitude, became more punctual, and arrived to class prepared. Interviewee 3 explained,

"The long weekends gave me a chance to prepare and to plan. I take my job as a teacher very seriously and strive to be professional in all aspects of my work. I come to class prepared. I demonstrate my knowledge of the subject matter by staying up to date with current trends in education and research related to the subject area. I create a safe learning environment for students by establishing clear expectations for behavior, providing consistent consequences for misbehavior, and encouraging positive interactions among students in the classroom"

Professionalism and motivation are closely intertwined. Professionalism encompasses behaviors and attitudes that reflect respect for one's job, employer, and colleagues. It can serve as a source of motivation by instilling pride in one's work and fostering a drive for excellence. Professionalism entails traits such as punctuality, adherence to instructions, taking initiative, and organizational skills, all of which contribute to increased motivation.

Pink (2009) associated professionalism and motivation in his motivational theory. His theory posits that involvement in work leads to professionalism, which in turn acts as a motivator. Therefore, the time teachers invest in their work and the effort they exert during that time may not directly impact their motivation as long as they are professionally engaged in their tasks. Consequently, as the three-term school calendar promotes professionalism among teachers, it has a positive effect on their motivation. *3.2 Disadvantages of the three-term school calendar*

All the EFL teachers participating in the study mentioned some drawbacks of the three-term calendar, including work overload. Two EFL teachers highlighted that the three-term calendar could lead to an excessive workload, making it challenging for them to allocate sufficient time for lesson planning. One of them further noted that the increased workload negatively impacted their performance, causing feelings of struggle and a sense of burden when going to work.

Interviewee 5 explained,

"It simply causes some struggles, as I have to repeat what I have tackled in the previous terms when we return from a holiday between the terms. The three-term calendar makes me and the students bored and exhausted. I don't have time to plan, and I don't have time to rest and brainstorm. The short weekends are not enough to rest because I rush to finish the work. How can I think and be creative when I am stressed? It is hard to focus during this time."

Being exhausted in the workplace can have a negative impact on the professionalism of teachers. Salamone et al. (2016) and Syamananda (2017) investigated how factors leading to exhaustion, such as stress, job dissatisfaction, work neglect, and a lack of professionalism, can diminish motivation. Consequently, this exhaustion can lead to teacher burnout, which in turn reduces motivation due to the significant stress it imposes. Prolonged periods of stress resulting from extended work hours and performance demands are characteristic of this syndrome (Syamananda, 2017). Therefore, any additional effort is likely to decrease teachers' motivation.

Another drawback highlighted in the findings is that during the three-term school calendar, students may neglect their studies, leading to a decline in learning outcomes.

Interviewee 4 explained,

"Due to the short-repeated vacations, some students neglect what they study before the holidays. Additionally, the last term comes during religious occasions, so teachers struggle to keep their students on track. Students were also counting the days to finish studying and spend their vacations. Most of them are absent in the last weeks of the term. They are already bored and feel like they have studied too much. That is disappointing. I try to encourage them, but they rarely come to class. They aren't able to study the last two units, which is frustrating."

Students might neglect their studies because boredom can diminish motivation and engagement in learning, potentially resulting in learning loss. Boredom can also lead to a lack of focus, making it challenging for students to absorb and retain information, thereby impacting the learning process.

According to the findings from Kanevsky and Keighley's (2003) three case studies, an engaging classroom environment can help prevent boredom. However, individual student characteristics and interests play a significant role in how they perceive certain activities as inherently dull. Furthermore, Gätz, Frenzel, and Pekrun's (2006) qualitative study concluded that specific aspects of instructional design (e.g., lack of variety), teacher-related factors (e.g., teacher burnout), and student behavior can contribute to boredom. Therefore, if teachers are already experiencing burnout due to excessive work demands, students may also experience boredom.

Vogel-Walcutt (2007) highlighted that boredom can lead many students to disengage from educational activities, significantly impairing their ability to learn. When students are bored, they often lose interest in the subject matter, disrupt other students' work, and may interrupt the teacher, causing annoyance.

The primary findings of the study indicate that Saudi EFL teachers believe their motivation has significantly improved following the implementation of the three-term school calendar. They highlighted three advantages compared to only two disadvantages. On one hand, teachers expressed their challenges when students neglected their studies and how they experienced burnout due to excessive workloads and long hours. On the other hand, the majority of teachers perceived the new three-term calendar as having a positive impact on their motivation.

Teachers reported feeling more motivated to plan and deliver lessons, as well as engage in professional development activities. They also felt that the new calendar allowed them more time for reflection and collaboration with colleagues. Therefore, their statements suggest that a three-term calendar may enhance teachers' motivation levels and should be further investigated in future research.

4. Summary of findings and conclusion

Following the conclusions, the researchers present their final recommendations regarding the implications of the study and suggestions for future research. The key conclusions drawn from the teachers' responses to the interview questions are outlined below:

The three-term school calendar facilitates learners in cultivating a deeper understanding of their coursework. Teachers believe that with more time for engagement provided by the three-term school calendar, learners can enhance their comprehension of the presented concepts and ideas. This extended period enables them to establish connections between various pieces of information and apply their knowledge in novel contexts. Increased learning time empowers students to apply their knowledge practically, aiding them in recognizing the practical relevance of their studies and how it can be implemented in real-world scenarios. Furthermore, the new calendar enhances retention as prolonged learning periods allow for more repetition and practice, contributing to better information retention over time.

Additionally, the three-term calendar enables teachers to enhance their confidence and competence in their roles. Through this calendar, they develop a deeper understanding of their subject matter and their students' requirements. This advancement can foster a heightened sense of job satisfaction and commitment. It also promotes greater job security, which in turn can bolster commitment to the profession. Teachers who feel secure in their positions are more inclined to invest in their work and maintain their commitment over the long term.

Moreover, the three-term calendar provides additional opportunities for professional development and growth. Teachers who continuously enhance their skills and knowledge are more likely to demonstrate commitment to their profession. As teachers accumulate more experience, they deepen their understanding of the subject matter and effective teaching methodologies. They also become more attuned to their students' requirements and adept at meeting them. Experienced teachers develop the capacity for reflective practice, enabling them to adjust their teaching methods based on what proves most effective for their students. To summarize, the three-term calendar can result in heightened experience, increased professional development prospects, mentorship, and reflection, all of which contribute to enhanced professionalism among teachers.

However, a three-term calendar can have a demotivating effect on students. When students are subjected to prolonged periods of learning without breaks, they may suffer from burnout. This burnout can lead to a lack of motivation and interest in their studies, potentially resulting in boredom and disengagement from the material being taught. Consequently, students may lose focus and neglect their academic pursuits. If students receive an excessive amount of information all at once, they might feel overwhelmed and struggle to process the material effectively. This information overload can impede their progress as they may perceive difficulties in keeping up with the pace of the lessons.

With an extended teaching period, the workload increases, and teachers may encounter challenges in effectively managing their time. Throughout the three-term calendar, teachers are tasked with preparing lesson plans, grading assignments, and providing feedback to students. Teaching is a demanding profession that necessitates significant energy and dedication. A prolonged teaching duration can contribute to burnout, potentially impacting the quality of teaching and student learning outcomes. Teachers may face stress stemming from deadline pressures, classroom management, and administrative responsibilities. A lengthier teaching period can escalate this stress and lead to adverse health effects. Elevated workload and stress levels may diminish teachers' effectiveness in their instructional practices, resulting in reduced student engagement and achievement.

4.1 Recommendations and further studies

Several suggestions are proposed in light of the preceding analysis, discussion, and key findings of this study. These recommendations aim to enhance educational guidelines and procedures concerning the three-term school calendar. The earlier analysis delineates the advantages and disadvantages of the three-term calendar. These strengths and weaknesses can serve as focal points for the Saudi Ministry of Education (MOE) to address the shortcomings of this new calendar and enhance it. Furthermore, the ministry can evaluate the strengths of the curriculum and fortify them. This study can also aid the Saudi MOE in gaining insight into teachers' perceptions of this change. Given that prior studies have not delved into teachers' feedback regarding the shift in the school calendar, this study will elucidate the actual sentiments from the teachers' standpoint.

Overall, the three-term calendar can offer opportunities for growth, development, and stability, which can enhance teachers' dedication to their profession. It also presents additional chances for learners to interact with the material, practice their skills, and apply their knowledge meaningfully. This advantage contributes to a higher quality of learning that students are more likely to retain over time.

However, the three-term calendar can have adverse effects on teachers and students if not managed effectively. Schools should establish support systems for teachers to prevent burnout and ensure high-quality education for students. Educators should be mindful of the

potential negative impacts of prolonged periods of learning and take measures to alleviate them by incorporating breaks, engaging activities, manageable information loads, and sufficient support for students.

Future research in the field of education should emphasize longitudinal studies on the influence of teacher motivation on student learning outcomes within the context of the three-term school calendar. Additionally, a comparative study on the duration of learning and teacher motivation across various educational systems could prove advantageous for the Saudi educational system. Researchers should also undertake a qualitative study on the experiences of teachers who have maintained elevated levels of motivation throughout the three-term calendar.

Acknowledgment

We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Hashim Alsamadani, Dr. Najla Hawas, and Dr. Manal Alshareef for their invaluable assistance in judging the instrument of our study. Their expertise and insights greatly enhanced the quality of our research tools.

We are also deeply appreciative of Dr. Hadi Aljabri, Dr. Yousef Althaqafi, and Dr. Shereen Mahdawi for their critical evaluation of our study. Their constructive feedback and suggestions were instrumental in refining our work.

Their contributions were vital to the success of this study, and we are sincerely grateful for their support and guidance.

Authors' contributions

This study looked at how EFL teachers perceive the effect of the new three-term calendar on their motivation. Discovering such an impact would help the Saudi Ministry of Education (MOE) investigate the viewpoint of the teachers about this new calendar. No research has looked at the impact of the length of the academic year on the motivation of EFL teachers, even though many articles and studies have explored the impact of factors that affect teachers' motivation. Furthermore, there isn't much research on the Saudi three-term calendar, therefore this topic needs to be looked at further to determine its benefits and drawbacks for the educational process. It would be vital to conduct a new study that examines teachers' impressions and comments on the changes in the educational calendar because there haven't been studies that have looked at that. Thus, this study addresses a gap in the literature on EFL teachers' motivation during the three-term academic year.

Funding

Not applicable

Competing interests

We have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

Ethical Approval

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Principal investigator: Dalal Alamrani, TESOL lecturer at Tabuk University, a Ph.D. student at Umm Alqura University.

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Project title: Teachers' Perspectives of Their Motivation After the Implementation of the Three-term School Calendar in Saudi Arabia

Email: dalamrani1@gmail.com

Institution: Umm Alqura University

Dear teacher, I am a Ph.D. student in ELT at Umm Alqura University. Recently, the Saudi MOE decided to change the academic school calendar and extend the educational terms to 3 instead of two. I am conducting research to investigate the effect of this new school academic calendar on Saudi EFL teachers' motivation. Your participation will help in understanding the effect of this new academic calendar and will help Saudi MOE to recognize some consequences of this decision according to teachers' points of view which act as feedback after a year of application. That may help in future decisions, and in improving and adjusting some details of the current one.

The purpose of this email is to ask for your participation which involves simply doing a web-based interview as honestly and openly as you can. The interview includes questions about teachers' performance, teaching time, and motivation. Also, it may have implications for teachers' training and preparation. The interview may take 20-30 minutes.

Regards

Dalal Alamrani

Pre-statement

Project title: Teachers' Perspectives of Their Motivation After the Implementation of the Three-term School Calendar in Saudi Arabia

I appreciate your decision to contribute to this research. I believe that you have understood the purpose of the study as indicated in the title above. However, before the start of the interviews, I would like you to go through and complete the form below that guarantees your decision to participate. You may sign your name at the bottom to confirm that you agree with each of the statements outlined.

Pre-statement:

- I agree to contribute this research through responding to interview questions. I am aware that the research is designed to collect information on the effect of the new Saudi academic school calendar on Saudi EFL teachers' motivation.
- I am aware that my participation is voluntary, and I will not receive any form of remuneration as a result of my contribution.
- I understand that I may wish to withdraw from this study at any time, without any intimidation whatsoever.
- I am aware that the interview will seek to know my personal information such as age, working experience, or level of my education. However, I understand study results will not identify me by my name or according to my physical appearance.
- I understand that my contribution will be strictly anonymous, and my views will not be associated with me personally. I also understand that my contribution will be strictly confidential.
- I understand that I may decline to respond to some questions that I may feel sensitive
- I am aware that data will be recorded in tapes and transcribed in notebooks. However, I understand that the collected data will be used for this research and educational purposes only. Data will also be stored in secured computer hard drives.
- I understand that I am allowed to contact the interviewer in the future in case I require clarifications about my participation.
- I have significantly read and understood all the statements outlined above.

Agreement

Respondents' Signature:

Date:

Researcher's Signature:

Date:

Provenance and peer review

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

Availability of data and materials

The interview questions are included in the manuscript. The data used is protected by the interviewees' privacy. Please address all correspondence concerning the data used to me at dalamrani1@gmail.com

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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