

## **Investigating EFL Novice Teachers Attitudes toward their Teacher Training**

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### **Abstract:**

This study investigated EFL novice teachers' attitudes towards the adequacy of their teacher training programme based on the challenges they encountered during their first years of teaching. The data analyses revealed that the majority of novices nurture negative attitudes towards their teacher training. Factors like difficult teaching approaches and managing unmotivated students' behaviour contributed to the shaping of their attitudes. Moreover, the study found that a gap still remains between what novice teachers have been taught and the real classroom conditions. Therefore, teacher training programmes should be redesigned in order to provide the necessary professional and pastoral support to well-selected student-teachers.

**Key words:** novice teacher, attitude, teacher training, training programme, English as a foreign language.

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## ***1. Introduction***

Novice teachers are considered to be the cornerstone of any reform or development in the educational system. It is thus of central importance to ensure that they are adequately prepared for the challenges of the teaching profession. However, for decades, the role of the teacher was neglected and what s/he presents is dramatically underexplored. According to Woods (1996), there is “an implicit neglect and disregard for what the individual teacher brings to the learning experiences of the students in the field of second and foreign language teaching” (p. 2). He added that “the role of the teacher has remained relatively peripheral component of language teaching research through the years and of the current theories of second language acquisition” (ibid). This means that the role of novice teachers was not given importance and despite the fact that the first few years of teaching are a critical time for professional development (Farrell, 2009; Warford & Reeves, 2003), investigating novice teachers’ experiences was completely underexplored.

Novice teachers, according to Farrell (2012), start their teaching career within three years of completing their teacher training. During this period, novices might find themselves struggling for survival as they try to adapt to an unfamiliar professional community. In other words, the first teaching experience of novice teachers can be described as a type of “reality shock” (Veenman, 1984) in which they either strengthen the belief that they will become competent teachers or they leave the teaching profession (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007). A study conducted by Beck, Kosnik, and Rowsell (2007) focused on novice teachers’ views of their needs during their first year of teaching. The teachers’ comments indicated areas in their teacher training programs that they wished would have been covered in more depth. These areas included a deeper understanding of theoretical frameworks, procedures for the first weeks of school, practical knowledge and skill, understanding of skill in assessment and evaluation, capacity for comprehensive program planning, and finally

the ability to implement effective group work. Therefore, teacher educators need to find new ways of teaching to best meet novice teachers' needs. This would allow beginning teachers to gain a better understanding of how to implement the knowledge and skills they have studied into practice.

Within the context of teacher training, the ultimate aim of novice teachers is to assume the competencies of an effective teacher in order to increase student achievement. However, defining an effective teacher can vary according to different settings. Usually all teacher educators hold different presuppositions about how someone learns to teach and these beliefs help shape how they interact with and support novice teachers. These differing and often contradictory beliefs often result in different pictures of an effective teacher and various routes that guide professional development toward those ideals. Thus, teachers often find themselves lost because what was learned in their training programs may not transfer explicitly to the real classroom (Buchanan, Lang, & Morin, 2013). Similarly, Sener (2015) indicated that the expectations of teachers, their sensitivity, priorities, and values contribute to the quality of education. This means that the teacher is the most important component when it comes to the quality of education. Therefore, it is essential to adequately prepare teachers and equip them with the necessary skills and resources taking into consideration their needs and expectations to bring about an effective teaching.

Johnson (1996) reported that second language (L2) teacher training programmes are often criticized because they do not convey the sort of knowledge that teachers need most when preparing and teaching lessons in real classrooms. Hence, this research work was intended to investigate the attitudes of EFL novice teachers toward the effectiveness of their teacher training in light of the challenges they have encountered during their first years of teaching.

## **2. Method**

This study is an exploratory case study. It gives way to collecting and analyzing data as well as allowing patterns to emerge to define problems and explain causal links within real-life situation. Exploring can include a range of activities like providing information, giving reasons, and making causal statements (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Patton, 1990; Yin, 1994). This study aims to explore EFL novice teachers' attitudes toward their teacher training and the challenges they faced during their first years of teaching in which a questionnaire was used to collect the necessary data.

## **3. Participants**

The targeted population of the questionnaire has been primarily high school EFL novice teachers of English in the region of Biskra. The choice of this population was motivated by the fact that novice teachers can indicate more clearly the level of preparation that they received. A random sample was chosen from the population. Of the 70 participants, 42 were females and 28 were males. Their ages ranges from 23 to 27.

## **4. Data gathering tools**

This research work relied on the collection of data through a semi-structured questionnaire. According to Cohen et al. (2005), questionnaires are useful instruments for survey information; they provide structured often numerical data which allow the researcher to quantify people's observations, attitudes and interpretations. Therefore, this questionnaire helped us investigate novice teachers' attitudes toward their teacher training as well as determine the different challenges they encountered during their first years of teaching. The questionnaire used in this study was simple, clear and straight forward to be understood by the participants. The most frequent questions used in this questionnaire were (closed-ended) questions since they were easier to answer and their coding and tabulation is straight forward and leaves no room for the rater's subjectivity. This kind of questions is suited for quantitative, statistical

analyses. Only few questions were open-ended because they take more time, patience, thought and concentration to answer (Sudman & Bradburn, 1983, p. 154). In addition, these questions are generally left unanswered although they are invaluable when the researcher wants to explore deeply a particular topic.

### **5. Procedure**

For this study, a semi-structured questionnaire was developed. Extensive readings were undertaken in order to refine the wording and content of the questionnaire. In addition, a pilot form of the questionnaire was first administered to some novice teachers before producing the final version. The novice teachers' questionnaire is a (31) item instrument that includes rating scale, multiple choice, yes/no and open-ended items. This questionnaire was developed to examine novice teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward their teacher training and how well prepared they are to teach and manage 21<sup>st</sup> century classrooms. The questionnaire took approximately 10-15 minutes each to complete. Moreover, novice teachers were informed that the participation in this study is voluntary and that the collected data would be analyzed and reported in a way that their confidentiality and anonymity would be ensured.

### **6. Research questions**

The present study was an attempt at answering a set of questions related to the topic under inquiry, investigating EFL novice teachers' attitudes toward teaching training. The objectives of the study were guided by the following research questions:

- 1- What are Algerian EFL novice teachers' opinions regarding their teacher training?
- 2- What are their opinions regarding their training in classroom management?
- 3- What are the challenges they have encountered in their first years of teaching in the secondary school?

### **7. Hypotheses**

A hypothesis is by definition a supposition or an explanation of the causes and effects of the phenomena under investigation.

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Developing a testable research hypothesis requires skill. Therefore, the researcher is required to identify the problem and explore it from different angles in order to propose an adequate solution or at least some recommendations. During this research, we have attempted to frame workable hypotheses that are in accordance with the identification of secondary school novice teachers of English attitudes.

This research was designed to test the following hypotheses:

- 1- EFL novice teachers are dissatisfied with their teacher training.
- 2- EFL novice teachers perceive themselves to be less prepared in dealing

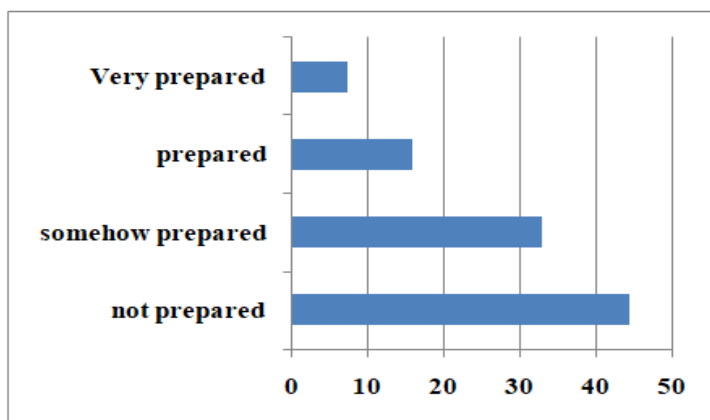
**8. Analysis and interpretation of results**

**Table: Participants characteristics**

		N	%
Gender	Female	42	60
	Male	28	40
Pre-teachings study institute	University	60	85,71
	ENS	10	14,29
The variety of English used	RP	64	91,43
	American English	0	0
	A combination	6	8,57

The targeted population of the questionnaire has been primarily secondary school novice teachers. It is not surprising to disclose that the female participants comprised the majority (60%) while male participants comprised the minority (40%), which may be attributed to their temperament to work with children. As for the in-service years all of the participants have less than 5 years of teaching. All of them are non- native speakers. While the majority of the participants (91.43%) report to use Received Pronunciation, (8.57%) prefer to use a combination of both RP and American English as it can be observed from the above table.

3- With classroom management and discipline problems.



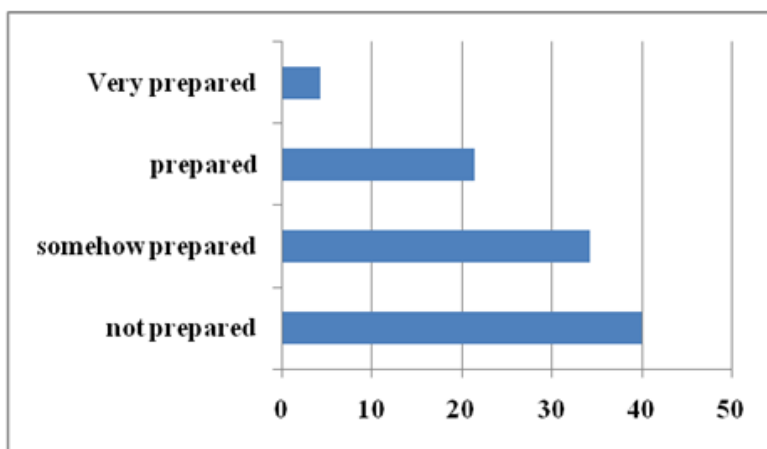
**Fig. I: Novice teachers rate of preparedness for teaching in the secondary school**

The results of the questionnaire were analyzed quantitatively and descriptive analyses were run. The obtained results from the questionnaire revealed that the majority of participants were not satisfied with their teacher training. When they were asked whether they felt prepared by their teacher training, the majority answered negatively (44.29%). They indicated that teacher training did not provide them with the necessary foundation to meet the demands of the profession as well as face the challenges encountered in the secondary school level. Only (7.14%) said that that the program helped them learn a variety of teaching strategies. One of the participants commented that teacher training was based on the ideal classroom and the given assignments were based on those ideal situations, but what was needed most was actual classroom experiences. All of these data confirm that teacher training is still traditional and that a treatment is needed.

When asked about the weaknesses of their teacher training program, all of the participants (100%) indicated that there was more emphasis on theory rather than practice. Therefore, they emphasized the need for more practice teaching starting from the beginning rather than saving it to the end. This finding is in line with those reported by

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participants in a study undertaken by Akcan (2016). In addition, they wished they had more opportunities to teach in real classrooms so that they better learn how to cope with the difficulties under their mentor's supervision. These findings rhyme with those of Faez and Valeo (2012) who indicated that novice teachers found practice teaching experiences that approximate real teaching are the most helpful for their training. However, it should be noted that both theory and practice are important. Therefore, novice teachers need to be trained how to integrate them for effective and efficient teaching performance.



**Fig. II: Novice teachers rate of preparedness for managing secondary school classrooms**

As fig. II shows, most of the participants (40%) indicated that they were not adequately prepared to manage classrooms and deal with students' behavior problems. Therefore, they wished for better instruction in dealing with classroom management problems. This finding supported the results of a study undertaken by Freeman et al. (2013). A review of literature reveals that even experienced teachers have ranked classroom management as one of their major concerns (Martin et al., 2006; Evertson & Weinstein, 2006; Meinck & Meister, 2008). Classroom management is considered to be one of the most important determinants of effective teaching (Enzi, 2007). A well-



managed classroom provides an environment where effective teaching and learning can take place. However, as a novice teacher, this takes a great deal of effort to create. Therefore, teacher training programs must ensure that completers have adequate training in classroom management so that they can effectively manage students' behaviors in their classrooms.

In their evaluation of university teachers and supervisors, the participants gave varied responses. 22.86% of the novice teachers found that their teachers had been resourceful and helpful providing them with clear feedback and suggestions while the majority (70%) thought that their teachers and supervisors could have been more collaborative with them to evaluate their performance in the classroom. In addition, they reported that some of their university teachers have little or no teaching experience in the secondary school and thus lack the necessary practical knowledge of real classroom practice. Therefore, they stressed the need for teachers and supervisors with work experience at the secondary school so that they can learn, adapt quickly and achieve consistent results.

### ***9. Conclusion and implications***

Adequate training in all aspects of teaching is vital to ensure novice teachers make positive difference in the lives of students they teach. In the context of this study, it has been discovered that novice teachers nurture negative attitudes towards their teacher training. This means that they are not satisfied with their preparation which calls the need for additional training to refresh as well as update their teaching methods. With regard to areas needing more attention, Novice teachers' concerns are primarily related to classroom management, teaching practicum and the implementation of competency based teaching approaches. Therefore, teachers as key stakeholders are encouraged to evaluate program requirements, course offerings and components of teacher training to ensure that prospective teachers are provided with the necessary knowledge and skills to teach effectively in 21<sup>st</sup> century classrooms.

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The novice teachers also reported that their relationships with mentor teachers could have been more fruitful when they were student teachers. This means that the role of mentors could have been more influential and resourceful by providing more time to give feedback and establishing an environment where the student teachers question and reflect on their own teaching. Orland (2001) indicated that “learning to become a mentor is a conscious process of induction into a different teaching context and does not emerge naturally from being a good teacher” (p. 75). This means that being a good teacher is necessary but it’s not sufficient for being a good mentor. Therefore, a better training and a careful selection process is recommended to identify capable and interested mentors.

Since the quality of education is directly related to the quality of teachers, it must be ensured that teacher training programs are reviewed and upgraded to better prepare novice teachers for today’s classrooms. This means that university coursework and lecturing approaches need to be enhanced for secondary schooling including specific subjects and practices suitable to this level. In addition, a short supervision training programs for mentor teachers can be conducted to help them with their supervisory roles. Such programs can use support groups through emails and discussion boards to help mentors communicate with one another and engage in collaborative reflection.

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