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Professional Development Effectiveness: The case of Palestinian EFL Teachers

Adnan Shehadeh

Research Article

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Author for correspondence:
Adnan Shehadeh
adnan@ppu.edu
Palestine Polytechnic University- Palestine

Abstract

Background/purpose. In-service training is essential for EFL teacher development, yet its success depends on impacting motivation, self-confidence, knowledge, and classroom practices. This research was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of a specific professional development program for Palestinian EFL teachers, aiming to understand its impact on these core aspects and identify implementation challenges.

Materials/methods. A quantitative design was employed with a cohort of 50 Palestinian EFL teachers. Data were collected via a validated questionnaire (Cronbach's α = 0.92) measuring perceptions of the program's impact on motivation, self-confidence, TEFL knowledge, and classroom practice. An open-ended question gathered data on challenges. Responses were analyzed using SPSS for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative responses.

Results. Participants reported positive improvements across all measured areas (Mean scores: Motivation=3.39, Classroom Practice=3.22, Knowledge=3.21, Confidence=3.19). The program had the strongest impact on teacher motivation. Significant differences were found based on teaching experience and grade level taught, with early-career teachers and those teaching higher grades (9+) reporting more positive outcomes. No significant difference was found based on gender. Major challenges included logistical issues, long training hours, financial burdens, and inconvenient scheduling on weekends.

Conclusion. The study concludes that the in-service training program was effective in enhancing teachers' professional capacities, particularly their motivation. However, its overall sustainability and effectiveness are hindered by significant contextual and logistical challenges. To maximize impact, future programs require structural modifications to reduce participant burden and better accommodate teachers' specific contexts and schedules.

1. Introduction

Crandall & Miller (2013) consider professional development motivating and rewarding, which leads teachers to stay in the profession. Any good professional development program should aim to promote trainees in three main areas: knowledge, classroom practices, and student learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009).

In-service training programs for teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) are widely recognized as essential mechanisms for fostering professional growth, improving instructional practices, and enhancing student learning outcomes. As the field of language education continues to evolve in response to global educational trends and technological advancements, the need for teachers to stay up to date with contemporary Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) methodology has become increasingly critical (Richards, 2017). However, the success of such programs depends not only on knowledge acquisition but also on their ability to positively influence teachers' motivation, self-confidence, and classroom practices. These aspects are deeply interconnected and play a significant role in determining the overall effectiveness of professional development initiatives (Borg, 2018).

Teacher motivation is a cornerstone of professional engagement and persistence. Motivated teachers are more likely to invest effort in their professional development, experiment with innovative teaching strategies, and maintain a positive attitude toward challenges (Han & Yin, 2016). Similarly, self-confidence, or teachers' belief in their ability to perform effectively, is a key predictor of their willingness to implement new practices and adapt to changing educational demands (Wyatt & Dikilitaş, 2016). Without adequate motivation and self-confidence, even the most well-designed training programs may fail to achieve their intended outcomes. Furthermore, knowledge of TEFL methodologies must translate into practical classroom applications to ensure that training programs have a tangible impact on teaching and learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). This relationship between theory and practice is essential for fostering meaningful and sustainable changes in teachers' professional behavior.

By examining participants' responses, this study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of how the training program influenced their motivation, self-confidence, knowledge of TEFL, and classroom practices. Such insights are invaluable for evaluating the program's overall effectiveness and informing the design of future professional development initiatives.

This research is particularly significant given the growing emphasis on evidence-based approaches to teacher education and the need to ensure that professional development programs are both relevant and impactful (Kennedy, 2016). By investigating the responses of EFL teachers who participated in an in-service training program, this study seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on teacher professional development.

Since the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, the Ministry of Education has worked very hard to improve all aspects of the education system. This effort is particularly challenging given the deteriorated situation inherited from nearly thirty years of Israeli military occupation, which had direct control over the educational system. One important aspect that the authority has invested heavily in improving is in-service teacher training programs.

Two types of professional development programs are available in Palestine. The first is a group of workshops designed by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), facilitated by supervisors, and targeting all novice teachers regardless of their major. These workshops cover topics such as teaching strategies, planning for instruction, classroom management, using technology in education, and assessment. The second type is special programs proposed and implemented by national and international NGOs, and in most cases in cooperation with the MoEHE.

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There are three major training programs designed and implemented by AMIDEAST in cooperation with the MoEHE, targeted at in-service teachers who teach five school subjects: English, Science, Mathematics, Arabic Language, and Technology. The programs are: Model School Network (MSN), Leadership and Teacher Development (LTD), and Education for Future (E4F). The three programs followed almost the same philosophy in terms of training procedures and implementation, where they gather education developers from the Palestinian Universities and the National Institute for Educational Training (NIET) to work together in developing the training materials and conducting the training after involving them in a training of trainers (TOT) program. One of these TOT programs was the Teacher Educator Enhancement Program (TEEP), which was facilitated by the University of Massachusetts, College of Education. The goal of TEEP was to prepare teacher educators to deliver the in-service training modules to school teachers.

The goal of these three programs was to develop school teachers' competences via seven modules that were designed to cover the following themes; student-centered teaching and learning, building up partners within and outside school, monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning process, continuous professional development, creating safe and effective environment in the school, designing and using teaching and learning materials and counseling and guiding for learners. They were implemented monthly six-hour meetings at a regional training center, facilitated by an education developer from local universities, in cooperation with a colleague from the National Institute of Educational Training (NIET). In addition, the colleague from the NIET facilitates two learning circles (LCs) for teachers in small groups of 10 at one of the participants' schools during the same month. The LC covers the same theme discussed during the monthly meeting, using more hands-on activities based on the students' textbook as the practice content.

Research questions

1. What are the reflections of participants on the effect of the training program on improving motivation, self-confidence, and knowledge on TEFL, classroom practice?

2. Are there significant differences between the reflections of the participants due to their experience? Gender, or the grades they teach?

3. How do they evaluate the overall impact of the training program?

4. What are the main challenges that the participants faced during the program?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Concepts and Theories on EFL Teacher Training

Teacher training, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL), has received significant attention for its critical role in shaping teachers' competencies and students' learning outcomes. EFL teacher training programs are designed to equip educators with theoretical knowledge, pedagogical skills, and reflective practices necessary for effective language teaching (Richards & Farrell, 2005). These programs are often grounded in sociocultural theory, which posits that learning occurs through interaction and collaboration within a social context (Vygotsky, 1978). This perspective aligns with the professional development model that emphasizes collaborative learning communities, mentoring, and reflective practices.

Darling-Hammond et al. (2009) argue that effective professional development programs should target three core aspects: enhancing teachers' content knowledge, improving classroom practices, and fostering student learning. These programs usually employ a specific pattern that includes needs assessment, training sessions, implementation, and evaluation (Guskey, 2002). Moreover, the concept of reflective practice, as expanded by Schon (1983), is integral to teacher training. It

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encourages teachers to critically analyze their teaching experiences, thereby fostering continuous professional growth.

Motivation and self-efficacy are also central to EFL teacher training. Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy underscores the importance of teachers' beliefs in their abilities to perform teaching tasks effectively. Enhanced self-confidence leads to increased motivation and better classroom performance (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Similarly, Crandall and Miller (2013) emphasize that ongoing learning and professional development sustain teachers' motivation and commitment to the profession.

2.2. Review of Studies on EFL Teacher Training

Recent research highlights the evolving nature of EFL teacher training, focusing on integrating technology, differentiated instruction, and contextualized practices. For instance, Asmari (2016) investigated the impact of professional development programs on Saudi EFL teachers and found that these programs significantly improved teachers' instructional strategies and classroom management skills. Similarly, Liu (2020) explored the role of technology in EFL teacher training in China and concluded that incorporating digital tools enhanced teachers' engagement and effectiveness.

In the Palestinian context, recent studies have examined the challenges and successes of professional development programs. For example, Abuhmaid (2020) analyzed the effectiveness of in-service training programs offered by international organizations in Palestine. The study found that while these programs improved teachers' content knowledge and classroom practices, participants often faced logistical and institutional challenges. Similarly, Khalil and Abed (2021) examined the role of AMIDEAST programs in enhancing teachers' competencies and reported positive outcomes in terms of motivation and self-confidence.

Earlier studies provide foundational insights into EFL teacher training. Richards and Lockhart (1994) emphasized the role of reflective practice in teacher training, advocating for the inclusion of journal writing, peer observations, and feedback sessions. These practices have been widely adopted and adapted in modern training programs.

Moreover, Sharkey (1994) conducted a study on the needs and challenges of EFL teachers in under-resourced contexts. The findings revealed that teachers often struggle with limited access to resources, large class sizes, and insufficient professional development opportunities. These challenges remain relevant today, particularly in regions like Palestine, where political and economic instability impacts educational activities.

Another notable study by Freeman and Johnson (1998) redefined the knowledge base of language teacher education, emphasizing the interplay between teachers' prior experiences, contextual factors, and professional training. This framework has influenced subsequent research and program designs, particularly in settings where teachers work under challenging conditions.

3. Methodology

3.1. Sample of the study

The participants in this study are 50 school teachers who teach English in Public Palestinian schools in Hebron district, and each pair is from the same school. This means that they are teaching in almost 25 schools. Thirty of them are females and 20 are males. All of them have graduated from local Palestinian universities in the Department of English Language and Literature with a BA degree. Most of them have between 5 and 9 years of experience in TEFL.

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3.2. Instrument

This research utilized a mainly quantitative design, with a questionnaire comprising five parts and a separate WH question to elicit participants' responses. The questionnaire was divided into five sections; the first has 13 items and aims to elicit respondents' reflections on the effect of the training program on their motivation as EFL teachers. The second has 12 items and it aims to have their responses on the effect of the program on their self-confidence, the third has six items for the impact on knowledge about TEFL, the fourth has five items to elicit what they think is the impact of training on their classroom practice, and the last section has four items for general evaluation of the program. To validate the questionnaire, it was sent to three colleagues who are specialists in TEFL for review and any necessary suggestions. However, its overall reliability, as measured by Cranach's Alpha test, was .92. The open-ended question aimed to elicit information about the challenges they faced during the training programs.

3.3. Procedures and Data Collection

The data was collected on the last day of the training program by the researcher, who was himself a trainer in this program. After signing a consent form, participants were asked to fill in the questionnaire first, then, when they finished, they were asked to answer the open-ended question in writing:" What are the challenges you faced during the training program?". The questionnaire data were analyzed using the SPSS program. However, the answer to the open-ended questions was analyzed thematically.

4. Results and Discussion

The results of the study will be presented in this section in the same order as the research questions.

4.1. Research question one

What are the responses of participants on the effect of the training program on improving motivation, self-confidence, knowledge on TEFL, classroom practice, and the overall effect?

Table 1. Means and Stander Deviations of the Participants' Responses on the Five Aspects

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Motivation	50	2.77	4.00	3.3908	.33614
Confidence	50	2.17	4.00	3.1983	.35829
Knowledge	50	2.50	4.00	3.2133	.37952
Practice	50	2.20	4.00	3.2240	.37393
Overall	50	2.75	4.00	3.1500	.33882
Valid N (listwise)	50				

This table shows that although the average responses on the four targeted aspects are high, the trainees believe that their motivation has improved the most through the training program (M=3.38), followed by classroom practice (M=3.22). However, the lowest mean is for the overall evaluation (M=15), followed by self-confidence (M=3.19) and enhancing knowledge (M=3.21). This could reflect the nature of the training program that emphasized improving participants' skills in effective classroom practices and competencies. It also reflected teachers' general desire for a training program that emphasizes practical activities rather than providing them with knowledge about teaching. It could also show the encouraging training atmosphere that led to improved motivation.

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4.1.1. Motivation

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations of Participants' Responses Regarding the Effect of the Program on their Motivation

Motivation- items	N	Minim.	Max.	Mean	Std.
1. The training program is useful for me to be an effective English teacher.	50	1	4	3.28	.573
2 . My interest in improving my English language abilities has increased	50	2	4	3.34	.557
3. I think the teacher training program is important for teachers.	50	3	4	3.40	.495
4. I feel motivated to participate in other training Programs.	50	1	4	3.02	.869
5. I am interested in using English in teaching my Students.	50	1	4	3.48	.614
6. I have the desire to improve my students' abilities in the English language.	50	3	4	3.60	.495
7. I have the desire to motivate my students to Use English more in the classroom.	50	3	4	3.54	.503
8. I have a new desire to use English in various other situations besides the classroom	50	2	4	3.44	.644
9. I am interested in helping my students in learning English more than before.	50	2	4	3.40	.535
10. I intend to improve my English language skills beyond the school's English program.	50	2	4	3.36	.631
11. I have a new desire to use new resources in TEFL	50	2	4	3.26	.600
12. I have the desire to use new teaching methods & techniques.	50	3	4	3.48	.505
13. I intend to keep in touch with the colleagues I have met during the training program.	50	2	4	3.48	.544

Although motivation may not be stated as a goal in most training programs, it is one of the most important aspects of almost all of them, as it is a key to successful teaching. As shown in Table 1, most participants (M=3.39) believe the training program has improved their motivation. Table 2 shows that the highest items in the motivation aspects are those related to improving students' abilities (items 6, 7, and 12, with means of M=3.60, 3.54, and 3.48) and having relations and cooperation with training mates (item 13, M=3.48). This shows that the program has motivated them to improve their interest in their students and shows that they care about them.

The lowest means were for the participants' desire to join another training program (items 4, 11, and 1 with M=3.01, 3.26, and 3.28, respectively). We need to keep in mind that most of these teachers have more than 5 years' experience and may have attended several training programs in addition to this one, so they are not motivated to attend further training. Another reason is that their school schedule is very busy, in addition to their teaching loads of about 30 hours a week. They have to handle a lot of paperwork, including keeping student records, following up on academic progress, staying in touch with parents, marking assignments, and grading tests. All of this load makes training programs a big burden on teachers. This is in addition to the fact that they have no incentive to join

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such programs. The fact that the majority of participants are women with families to take care of makes it very hard for them to attend the training that used to take place on weekends.

4.1.2. Self-Confidence

Table 3. Means and Standard Deviations of Participants' Responses Regarding the Effect of the Program on their Self-Confidence

Self-confidence-items	N	Min.	Max.	M	Std.
1. After attending the training program, I am confident in my own English language skills.	50	2	4	3.20	.495
2. After attending the training program, I feel confident in helping and teaching my students.	50	2	4	3.22	.545
3. After attending the training program, I feel that I can improve my English language skills.	50	2	4	3.34	.557
4. After attending the training program, I am confident that the program will positively influence my teaching in the future.	50	2	4	3.28	.536
5. I think the training program helped to build my confidence as an EFL teacher.	50	2	4	3.16	.584
6. After attending the training program, I feel more confident in teaching my English classes.	50	2	4	3.24	.517
7. After attending the training program, I feel that I could serve my students better.	50	2	4	3.24	.555
8. After attending the training program, I am fully confident in my English language skills.	50	2	4	3.24	.517
9. After attending the training program, I feel that I do not need much help to teach English.	50	2	4	2.90	.647
10. After attending the training program, I feel confident in using English more than before in my classroom.	50	2	4	3.14	.572
11. After attending the training program, I think that I will use more appropriate teaching methods and techniques.	50	2	4	3.24	.517
12. After attending the training program, I think that I will use more appropriate assessment methods.	50	2	4	3.18	.523

Table 3 shows that the highest means are for items that indicate improvement in participants' confidence in their ability and skills to teach their students better (items 3, 4, and 8, with M=3.34, 3.28, and 3.24, respectively). This shows that they have greater confidence in their skills and personality to teach their students. However, the lowest means are for items 9, 10, and 5 (M=2.90, 3.14, and 3.16, respectively). These items show that participants still feel they need help, even though they believe they are good teachers and use English in class as experienced teachers.

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4.1.3. Knowledge

Table 4. Means and Standard Deviations of Participants' Responses Regarding the Effect of the Program on their TEFL Knowledge

Knowledge-Item	N	Minim	Max.	M	Std.
1. The program was successful in conveying new knowledge about approaches to TEFL	50	3	4	3.24	.431
2. The program increased my understanding of the importance of theories of TEFL	50	2	4	3.22	.582
3. The training program was a useful forum for exchanging and developing ideas about TEFL	50	2	4	3.34	.519
4. The handouts were useful for me	50	2	4	3.22	.545
5. My English-speaking skills acquired during the training A program can help with my career Advancement	50	2	4	3.10	.544
6. The program was effective in improving my English Language skill	50	2	4	3.16	.584

Table 4 shows that the highest means are 3 and 1 (M=3.34, M=3.24), indicating that participants believe exchanging ideas about TEFL and the knowledge they gained improved their understanding of the main themes in EFL. However, the lowest mean was for items 5 and 6 (M=3.10, M=3.16) respectively. Both items address improvements in language skills, indicating that the training program's activities did not include any module aimed at improving participants' language skills. However, it could be argued that most participants improved their language skills by having the opportunity to use English in a communicative context during the training program.

4.1.4. Classroom practice

Table 5. Means and Standard Deviations of Participants' Responses Regarding the Effect of the Program on their Classroom Practice

Classroom Practice - items	N	Min.	Max	M	Std
1. The training program was appropriate for my teaching situation	50	2	4	3.16	.422
2. The program was successful in introducing me to new ideas for teaching English	50	2	4	3.30	.580
3. The overall effectiveness of the English teacher training program improved my English teaching classroom	50	2	4	3.18	.482
4. I could serve my students better after attending the Program	50	2	4	3.26	.527
5. The program helped to improve my skills in using technology in TEFL	50	1	4	3.22	.582

Table 5 shows that the highest means are for items 2 and 4 (M=3.30, M=3.26), which are about having new ideas to help them teach their students better. This again reflects the program's core aims: providing participants with skills and competencies to be implemented and practiced in the classroom. The lowest mean was for item 3 (M=3.18), which reflects the overall effectiveness of the

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program on their classroom practice in general. It seems they can reflect more clearly on the different aspects of training and their effects on classroom practices in a specific classroom.

4.1.5. Overall evaluation

Table 6. Means and Standard Deviation of Participants' Overall Evaluation of the Training Program

Overall- items	N	Min	Max.	M	Std.
1. The program in general was satisfactory	50	2	4	3.16	.422
2. The program objectives were clear	50	2	4	3.14	.495
3. Time management was properly observed	50	2	4	3.02	.515
4. I was fully involved in the training activities	50	2	4	3.28	.497
Valid N (listwise)	50				

Table 6 shows that the highest item mean (M=3.28) reflects learning engagement in the program. The majority of participants were involved in the program, and as we noticed, they found it motivating. However, the lowest mean was for item 3 (M=3.02), indicating that the schedule and timing of the training program were not convenient for the participants. This could be understandable, as most of them were female teachers and had to leave their homes on weekends, which are supposed to be family days, to participate in the program.

4.2. Research Question Two

Are there significant differences between the responses of the participants as a result of gender? Grades they teach or experience?

4.2.1 Are there significant differences between the responses of the participants as a result of gender?

Table 7. Group Statistics

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Male	20	3.2100	0.21981	0.04915
Female	29	3.2138	0.29243	0.05430

Table 8. Independent Samples Test

Assumption	Levene's Test		t-test for Equality of Means				95% CI	
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	1.112	0.297	-0.049	47	0.961	-0.00379	-0.15903	0.15144
Equal variances not assumed.			-0.052	46.590	0.959	-0.00379	-0.15117	0.14359

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An independent-samples t-test was conducted to determine whether there were significant differences in participants' reflections by gender. The independent samples t-test revealed no statistically significant difference in reflections between male (M = 3.21, SD = 0.22) and female (M = 3.21, SD = 0.29) participants (t(47) = -0.049, p = 0.961). This lack of a significant gender difference suggests that the training program was perceived similarly by all participants, likely because they experienced it under a uniform set of conditions and within a common professional framework.

4.2.2. Are there significant differences between the reflections of the participants as a result of the grades they teach?

Table 9. Group Statistics

Grades Taught	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
4 to 8	36	3.1611	0.25666	0.04278
9 & More	14	3.3286	0.24315	0.06498

Table 10. Independent Samples Test

Assumption	Levene's Test		t-test for Equality of Means				95% CI	
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	0.000	0.989	-2.101	48	0.041	-0.16746	-0.32773	-0.00719
Equal variances not assumed.			-2.152	24.966	0.041	-0.16746	-0.32770	-0.00722

A t-test was conducted to evaluate differences in reflections across grade levels taught by participants. Levene's test confirmed the assumption of equal variances (F = 0.000, *p* = .989). The results indicated a statistically significant difference between teachers of grades 4–8 (M = 3.16, SD = 0.26) and teachers of grades nine and above (M = 3.33, SD = 0.24), *t*(48) = -2.101, *p* = .041. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference of -0.167 ranged from -0.328 to -0.007.

This finding suggests that the training program resonated more strongly with trainees teaching higher grade levels. This disparity can likely be explained by the program's content and pedagogical approach, which appear to have been more directly applicable to the advanced curricula and instructional strategies typically employed in grades nine and above. For teachers in lower grades, the material may have required more amendments to fit their context.

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4.2.3. Are there significant differences between the reflections of the participants as a result of the experience?

Table 11. Descriptive statistics

Experience	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	Minimum	Maximum
1 to 4 Years	13	3.3077	0.32265	0.08949	3.1127	3.5027	2.60	3.80
5 to 9 Years	14	3.0571	0.19890	0.05316	2.9423	3.1720	2.60	3.40
10 to 14 Years	10	3.3000	0.23570	0.07454	3.1314	3.4686	3.00	3.80
15 & More Years	13	3.2000	0.21602	0.05991	3.0695	3.3305	3.00	3.60
Total	50	3.2080	0.26174	0.03702	3.1336	3.2824	2.60	3.80

Table 12. ANOVA analysis

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	0.533	3	0.178	2.896	0.045
Within Groups	2.824	46	0.061		
Total	3.357	49			

The one-way ANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference in participants' reflections based on their years of teaching experience, $F(3, 46) = 2.896$, $p = .045$. Post-hoc analysis of the means indicates that the training was perceived most favorably by early-career teachers (1-4 years, M = 3.31) and those with 10-14 years of experience (M = 3.30), while the group with 5-9 years of experience reported the lowest mean score (M = 3.06).

This result suggests that teachers' career stages mediated the training effectiveness. The high valuation by novice teachers likely stems from the provision of essential foundational strategies they lacked. The low perceived value during the 5–9-year period may reflect a mid-career phase where teachers have moved beyond basics but may not yet feel a strong need for the kind of training that those with 10-14 years of experience actively seek. This latter, more experienced group may have found the training instrumental for professional renewal.

4.3. Research Question Three

What are the main challenges that participants faced during the training program?

This is an open-ended question that participants answered on a separate paper. The main challenges expressed by participants could be grouped into a number of categories. The first is challenges related to logistics and accessibility. This category includes transportation problems and checkpoints that affect almost all roads in the West Bank. Some teachers have to travel for hours to reach the training centers. The second type of challenge is the long training day. Most participants said the training day, which is usually 6-8 hours, is very long, with breaks that are very short, making the training exhausting and demotivating and leading to fatigue. The third category is the financial

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burden and lack of incentives. The participants assert that this training program imposes a financial burden on them, as they need to pay for transportation, and some of them used to have a second job on this day. They also said it is not rewarding, as they are not given any financial incentives or promotions for participating in this training program. The fourth category is the poor conditions of the training centers. Most of them said that the training centers are not well-equipped for such activities. Moreover, they lack proper seating and air conditioning, and their rooms are small. In many cases, a regular classroom at a particular school adjacent to the training centers is used for training. They also said that these classrooms have unsuitable chairs and are not clean. The fifth category is the time of training, which took place on a weekend day. All of them complained that this day is not suitable for training. They, especially female teachers, emphasized that the weekend is a family day and that they have family responsibilities that can be done only then.

5. Conclusion

This study explored the effectiveness of a professional development (PD) program for Palestinian EFL teachers, focusing on its impact on their motivation, self-confidence, knowledge of TEFL, and classroom practices, as well as the challenges they encountered during training. The findings demonstrated that despite significant logistical, financial, and personal obstacles, the program had a positive overall effect. Motivation and self-confidence showed the most notable improvement, with teachers reporting increased enthusiasm for teaching and greater belief in their abilities. However, the study also revealed critical challenges, including exhausting training schedules, travel difficulties, a lack of incentives, and struggles with work-life balance—particularly among female teachers, who constitute the majority of participants.

The results indicated that while the program successfully fostered professional growth, structural and contextual barriers limited its full potential. Teachers expressed a need for shorter, locally accessible training sessions, as well as financial compensation and other incentives for their time and effort. Additionally, the program was perceived as more beneficial by early-career teachers and those instructing higher-grade levels, suggesting that tailored PD approaches may be necessary to address teachers' varying needs at different career stages.

These findings carry important implications for policymakers and training providers. First, training logistics should be redesigned to reduce burdens on participants—shorter, more frequent sessions held in local schools would minimize travel difficulties. At the same time, stipends or transportation support could alleviate financial strain. Second, scheduling adjustments, such as holding sessions during school hours with substitute coverage or offering hybrid (online/in-person) options, would better accommodate teachers' work-life balance, particularly for female teachers with family responsibilities.

Ultimately, this study highlights the potential of PD programs to empower EFL teachers, even in challenging contexts such as Palestine. However, sustainable success requires systemic changes that address teachers' real-world constraints and prioritize their well-being. Future research should investigate the long-term retention of PD gains, explore blended learning models to improve accessibility, and examine the role of school leadership in facilitating teacher development. By refining PD initiatives based on these insights, Palestinian EFL teachers can be better equipped to overcome obstacles and drive meaningful progress in English language education.

Declarations

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About the Contributor(s)

Adnan Shehadeh is an Assistant Professor of TESOL & Teacher Education at Palestine Polytechnic University, where he currently teaches and also previously served as Dean of the College of Humanities and Educational Sciences and Director of the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. With over twenty-five years of experience as an EFL expert, consultant, and teacher trainer, he holds a Ph.D. in TESOL from The Ohio State University, an MA in Applied Linguistics from the University of Salford, and a BA in English from Bethlehem University. He has extensive involvement in national teacher development projects as a lead trainer, syllabus designer, and assessor, has taught and supervised at both undergraduate and graduate levels, and has published and presented research on motivation, age in SLA, reading strategies, and academic development.
Email: adnan@ppu.edu