

THE ROLE OF PRE-TEACHER TRAINING SESSIONS IN ENHANCING NOVICE TEACHERS' QUALIFICATIONS: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

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Abstract

Pre-teacher training is a preparation for teaching that paves the way for novice teachers and opens the door to learn and know the vital skills and ideas to teach successfully. The present study investigated the transition of pre-service teachers from theory to practice; in other words, from university life to a full time teaching in a classroom. It discusses the effectiveness of pre-teacher training as a significant step that enables trainees to deal with predictable situations in the classroom, at ITE (Institut Technologique de l'Enseignement) of Saida with an exploratory research methodology. Furthermore, it focused on how the training of pre-teachers contributes to forming qualified teachers. Teacher training allows trainees to be in a real situation in their classroom to put into practice what they have learned during their training process as prospect teachers. (i.e. mastering how to apply the different theories, methods and strategies discussed in class). To this end, we have observed trainees, as novice teachers, how they assess and interact with learners based on their psychological side, how they learned to attract their students' attention and make them interested in receiving, accepting and memorizing the information. By the end, they will be apt to solve problems in teaching and learning and do action research to improve the necessary skills. Results revealed that pre-teacher training helps trainees work in groups (collaboration) and learn from the former teachers' experiences (trainers) to enhance professionalism. It also increases the productivity of pre-teachers and their expectations of success.

Keywords: *Action research, novice teachers, pre-teacher training, productivity, professionalism.*

1. Introduction

Because education plays a vital role in any society, many efforts to develop novice teachers' teaching skills and knowledge are highly needed. Teachers' competences and qualifications have an impact on teachers themselves and learners as well. For this reason, teacher training and professional development are seen as central mechanisms for the improvement of teachers' content knowledge and their teaching skills and practices to meet high educational standards (Darling Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). In other words, pre-teacher training plays a crucial role in education to form competent students with the

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necessary knowledge and skills in different subject matters. Henceforth, the current study is a pre-teacher training report. It sheds light on university students who become teachers. They move from a theoretical step, learning how to teach successfully and implementing the best theories and methods to a real experience. Since they are novice teachers, they may face some challenges and obstacles, especially at the beginning of their career. Hence, it is mandatory to attend sessions at ITE with inspectors, experienced and formative teachers in order to learn the teaching skills, improve themselves as novice teachers and increase their professionalism. In this research study light is thrown on the first year of teaching that has become crucial and critical for many novice teachers. In this regard, both novice and experienced teacher make use of the same strategies in their classroom to enhance autonomy and improve their teaching skills (Zouar & Sarnou, 2021) because novice teachers need to collaborate with experienced teachers, to be well prepared and ready for teaching. To that effect, pre-teacher training is kindly required to pave the way for future teachers and to develop their four macro skills and ideas to teach successfully.

To this end, the current paper presents a pre-teacher training experience of a university student, which took place at both middle school and ITE. The former was in a more general theoretical context that seeks a high-quality in both teaching and training. The purpose of this study is to highlight the importance of pre-teacher training in raising expectations of achievement not only for the academic success of their pupils but also for their development and professional careers as novice teachers. To know more about the pre-teacher training in the educational setting, we have raised the following research questions:

- To what extent does pre-teacher training contribute to form qualified teachers?
- What are the techniques/ methods used by a novice teacher in a middle school context?

Based on these questions, we hypothesize that:

- Pre-teacher training gives teachers a glance at the world of teaching; moreover, it is an efficient tool to overcome the fear and anxiety in front of any audience simply because it puts the trainee in the real teaching condition.
- EFL Novice teachers, in a middle school context, use more the traditional methods of teaching such as: the grammar translation method (GTM) because they are dealing with beginners; therefore, they are the owners of information and knowledge. Moreover, they have to simplify and clarify all kinds of ambiguities, sometimes through finding the correct equivalents from the target language to the source language (translation).

1. Literature Review

Pre-teacher training is a window to open to the teaching world, in which each prospective teacher should know what is going on in the classroom. Also, it refers to trying different strategies and techniques, such as supervising, monitoring and obtaining feedback from others on one's practice (trainee) in the classroom. The content of the training is usually determined by experts and is often available in standard training format or through prescription in methodology books (Richard and Farrell, 2005, p.03); they identified the following goals from a training perspective:

- To learn how to use effective strategies to deliver a lesson.
- To adapt the textbook to match the class.
- To learn how to use group activities in a lesson.
- To use effective questioning techniques.

- To use classroom aids and techniques, e.g. video (Richard and Farrell, 2005, p.03).

Pre-Teacher training is about observing the way the teacher teaches, how he/she interacts with students, how he/she plans the lesson and how he/she uses the board as a learning tool. On the other side, qualifications are defined as a special skill or type of experience or knowledge that make someone suitable to do a particular job or activity. Therefore, teachers' qualifications are special skills that teachers use to create the appropriate setting to exercise their job.

According to Richardson (2008), teachers' qualifications could also be all the required knowledge to teach effectively and to influence the academic achievement of students, and these skills include:

- Teachers' formal education.
- Teachers' education in the subject matter of teaching (experience).
- Subject matter knowledge, teachers' education in pedagogical studies and training.

2. Methodology

This research study is exploratory; we passed through observation to notice all that was going on in the classroom with a teacher, either positive or negative. We found this observation more appropriate to gain the relevant data and generate new ideas on teaching methods.

2.1 Context

This study presents a pre- teacher training experience that took place at both middle school and ITE. The former was in a more general theoretical context that seeks a high-quality in both teaching and training. This study will show three stages. They are (1) the first part was at Institut Technologique de l' Enseignement (ITE) as a preparation and formation process which consists of attending some sessions with experienced teachers and inspectors of English language in the sake of having the basic rules for being a good teacher, (2) the second part was about attending some sessions in middle school as an observer (observation period), and finally, (3)the third part was about the experience of teaching in middle school and being on the ground which was the basic objective of the training.

2.2 Participants

Middle school EFL trainee teachers, who graduated from the University, were deliberately selected in order to notice how they teach and the challenges they face because the University contributes in forming foreign language learners who can opt for other professions, therefore, they may not have enough baggage to do the job professionally.

3.3 Procedures

The middle school phase was purposefully selected as a case in this research study because, at this particular step, EFL teachers are the sole source of knowledge and the owners of information; they have to be qualified and competent teachers though they are novice teachers. We chose first and fourth-year middle school classes due to two main reasons: first, despite pupils' young age, they are learning two foreign languages, French and English, knowing that pupils did not achieve yet an advance level in French as the first foreign language as well as there are similarities between both languages, in addition to other important subjects. Therefore, it is difficult for pupils to make a balance between the diverse subjects in foreign languages. Second, EFL teachers should double their efforts to

teach their students about the importance of the English language by applying the best teaching methods and strategies to study the language with passion. Thus, the main goals focused on how well students would acquire knowledge of a foreign language within four years and what a novice teacher should do to succeed in the teaching assignment.

3. Results

While Sitting at the back of the room during the first and fourth- year sessions, we have noticed the silence covered all the class, and everything was arranged when the teacher entered. Pupils were ready to start a new session by putting their textbooks and copybooks on the table. Every time pupils show that they were involved through participation. We have remarked that a trainer was kind to her pupils; she did her best when explaining the lesson. Since students were beginners, sometimes they couldn't understand her, so she used many methods to send the message as such: she translated hard words by using gestures, even she showed photos to best illustrate ideas to them. We have also observed that the teacher was fair with her pupils. During the observation sessions, the light was thrown on the following tips:

3.1. *Planning a Lesson*

A lesson plan is a mirror for teachers to anticipate what students will need to learn and how effectively the lesson will be implemented during class hours by designing appropriate learning examples and activities and developing strategies for obtaining feedback on student learning. Details differ according to the topic covered and the needs of the pupils. It includes:

- The objective: what pupils are supposed to learn?
- How will the goal be reached? (the method and the procedure).
- Assessment to check pupils' understanding.

Therefore, a lesson plan provides the teacher with a general outline of his teaching goals, learning objectives and means to accomplish them. To sum up, a productive lesson is not the one in which everything goes as it was planned, but when both novice teachers and pupils learn from each other.

3.2. *Classroom management*

Classroom management is an issue of motivation, respect, and discipline. It is the techniques that the teacher uses to maintain control in the class. Managing the learning environment is both responsibility and an on-going concern for all teachers, even those with years of experience. If the students enjoy studies at school, it is because the teachers worked hard to make the class comfortable and enjoyable, and pupils became motivated. Therefore, teachers have succeeded in creating and maintaining a positive learning atmosphere through competent management (Chandra, 2015).

Additionally, management issues are important, complex, and deserve serious attention because they reduce or eliminate management problems if and when they occur. There are two management features: *Preventing problems because they occur* and *Responding to them when they occur*. It is important because it is unpredictable, and teachers respond to pupils' actions in diverse ways depending on the situation. Hence, classroom management is the coordination of lessons and various activities to make learning as productive as possible. When attended some session (first and fourth- year), the teacher controlled everything, even arranging the tables, and the board should be cleaned and well organized (divided into four parts). Pupils were asked to work individually in order to know their weaknesses, as she uses to avoid their punishment.

3.3. Time management

Time management is about consciously taking control of the time spent on specific activities. It is just a matter of choosing what to do or not to do and what to focus on or avoid when performing tasks. Also, giving learners too much time will not lead to this.

Teacher talking time and students talking time:

Researchers agree that STT (Student Talking Time) must be maximized in the classroom because it is the chance when pupils have to practice their English, especially EFL students. However, there will be moments when the teacher has to explain complex words and activities that may require more time talking. Besides, learners need language input and comprehension that only the teacher can provide in the classroom just in these cases, TTT (Teacher Talking Time) will work. In general, there are some cases when TTT must be maximized over STT and vice versa (Harmer, 1998)

3.4. Respect of the Curriculum

Curriculum is the official pedagogical instructions published by the ministry of education. Educators follow the program step by step, because it is national; in contrast, teachers sometimes make some changes depending on: learners' level; if they are advanced, they may skip some information and learners' needs to follow all the steps that should be presented and covered.

3.5. Error Correction

Students make mistakes because they are part of the learning process. However, the teacher must know how to correct the students' mistakes without making them feel inferior in front of their peers. Writing and pronunciation errors are the most common ones, but some students take them for granted. So what should a teacher do? Does he or she correct all mistakes or only the major ones? To know these questions, we must understand that they differ from one teacher to another according to their method. Some teachers argue that every time a learner makes a mistake, it must be corrected immediately, while other teachers claim that only errors related to the lesson must be corrected. Finally, some teachers prefer to write and correct common mistakes at the end of the lesson to help learners benefit from their mistakes.

3.6. Assessment and Evaluation

Assessment is the process of gathering information on students' learning. Evaluation is the process of analyzing and summarizing assessment information and making judgment and decisions based on collected information (Baranovskaya & Shaforostova, 2017). Assessment and evaluation play a crucial role in the teaching and learning processes; they help the teacher to know whether the lesson has been better explained and understood or not.

To assess students, a teacher should ask the following questions: What should I focus on in students' assessment? What are the strategies I should use? So, through tests and examinations, the teacher evaluates each work of the pupil. During this correction step, the teacher knows his or her students who are good but shy.

There are other several methods to evaluate students, such as home works, activities, projects, and remediation, to know which kind of instructions pupils did not understand to lead them to false answers. To conclude, evaluation and assessment serve some purposes and are very important to improve pupils learning.

4. Discussion

The skill of teaching is not something teachers master from the first or the second time they teach; it is an acquired skill through practice and understanding. For this reason, pre-teacher training allows novice teachers to adapt to the educational program, deal with different types of learners, give the lesson, introduce its subject, use the board as a learning tool and understand the whole teaching concept.

Findings revealed that EFL novice teachers have to organize the objectives and the lesson plan (from easy to more complex) and make them explicit. In this way, they develop the metacognitive process in students and allow each student to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge.

5. Conclusion

Pre-teacher training is a crucial phase for any teacher, particularly university students who become teachers, to understand the world of teaching and learning. In addition to this, pre-teacher training allows teachers to learn many other things about the teaching process. First, (1) if most pupils show that they have understood the lesson, it means that the teacher has achieved his goal. Second, (2) the teacher must know how to correct pupils mistakes because it is psychologically significant to make them feel comfortable when correcting mistakes. Third (3) and the last point, the teacher should remove the obstacle that paralyzes pupils, such as "stress"; this phenomenon makes pupils unable to speak in front of their peers, mainly in a foreign language. To conclude, teaching is not only having a quantity of information and concepts and transmitting them to the learners; teaching is about getting pupils' attention and making them interested in receiving, accepting and memorizing information. So, qualitative education is more necessary than quantitative education.

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