

Challenges for in-service english teachers in Quibdó, Chocó in the near future

Retos para los profesores de inglés de Quibdó, Chocó en el futuro inmediato

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Abstract

This article reports the effects of implementing a TDP (Teacher Development Programme) course all over the city of Quibdó, Colombia. The purpose was to make in-service English teachers aware of the necessity to constantly improve and update their teaching practice to meet the students' demands through TDPs. Supported on the mainstream of collaborative teaching and the goal of Colombia Bilingual (2010-2019). The participants involved in this research were 30 in-service English teachers to make a contrast regarding their current teaching practices and language competence. The strategy included interviews, open-ended questionnaires and non-participant observations. Findings revealed that there is a higher level of pedagogical and language competence among teachers taking TDPs than those who are still out of TDPs Programmes.

Keywords: *In-service English teachers TDPs (Teacher Development Programmes), language competence, teaching practice.*

Resumen

Este artículo reporta los efectos un proyecto de investigación enfocado en la eficacia de un TDP (Programa de Desarrollo Profesional) en la ciudad de Quibdó, Colombia como alternativa que busca que los profesores de inglés sean más conscientes de su perfeccionamiento y de la necesidad de mejorar su enseñanza y la práctica a través de los TDP. Apoyado sobre la corriente principal de la enseñanza

colaborativa y el objetivo de Colombia Bilingüe (2010-2019) se llevó a cabo un estudio con 30 participantes para hacer un contraste relativo a las prácticas actuales de enseñanza y competencia lingüística. Para recolección de la información se utilizó entrevistas, encuestas y observaciones no participativas. Los resultados revelan que hay un nivel más alto en el aspecto pedagógico y la competencia lingüística entre profesores que toman TDP que los profesores que aún no hacen parte de este programa.

Palabras clave: *Competencia lingüística, TDP (Programas de Desarrollo Profesional), práctica docente, profesores de inglés en ejercicio.*

Introduction

In recent times, considerable attention has been paid to the role that professional development plays in order to fit the English teaching/learning process. So that all of the school curricula is being heavily impacted specially in the learning needs of students. Professional development has been necessary for all teachers involved in educational reform. Professional development also is essential for school-improvement teams to build a comprehensive framework for ongoing refinement. Every proposal to reform, restructure, or transform schools emphasizes professional development as

the primary vehicle in efforts to bring about needed change Guskey (1994, pp. 42-50).

The purpose of this research was to propose a syllabus for a TDP course intended to foster professional performance and linguistic aspects to meet the National Bilingual Programme Goals for in-service teachers in the city of Quibdó offered by the Universidad Tecnológica del Chocó. Given that, Professional Development keeps teachers updated with regards to current theories, approaches and methodology to enhance English teaching and learning.

This study was based on 30 in-service English teachers belonging to the distinct high schools of Quibdó city. Thus, it was determined to select 15 trained English teachers as well as another 15 non-trained ones randomly, in order to validate a comparative study related to the effectiveness in terms of language and methodology among teachers taking TDP than those who are still out of the program.

The qualitative results from the questionnaire which contained both open-ended questions and observations revealed that the implementation of a syllabus for a TDP course proposed to foster professional performance and linguistics aspects is definitively an urgent need for in-service English teachers in Quibdó led by trainers from la Universidad Tecnológica del Chocó, with a view to uplift and update teachers' instruction to meet the local needs together with the National Bilingual Programme Finally, as a result of the findings some future studies should be conducted to better understand how to adequately implement and integrate both language and methodology courses. So that local curriculum guidelines and pedagogy

can be updated accordingly in the future.

Theoretical Considerations

Teacher development seems to be essential in the education field. Thus, over the last few years, considerable attention has been paid to the role that effective professional development can play in improving the English teaching and learning process nationwide. However, the current situation in Quibdó is still found to be "imbued" with deficiencies regarding the issue of lack of training and development. Consequently, it is essential to draw on some current theories and approaches to underlie this research work.

Thus, an increasing body of research in the field of teacher education and development over the past decade has challenged the process-product notion of language teaching, in which teaching is seen as the exercise of specific ways of acting or a set of behaviors that need to be taught directly (Freeman 1991, Flowerdrew, Brock and Hsia 1996). "Such a criticism on the process-product paradigm reflects the recognition that teaching involves both action and the thinking that underlies it" (Shulman 1986, pp. 3-36) and especially "the higher-level cognitive processes that are less amendable to direct instruction or training than specific ways of behavioral techniques or skills" (Richards and Nunan 1990, p. 12). As we can be noticed, in recent years, "two approaches have emerged in second and foreign language education programs. One is education as "training" and the other one is "development". The contrast between training and development is a useful way of characterizing and describing options in teacher education" (Freeman 1989, pp. 27-45).

In order to clarify the difference between these two approaches and implications for teacher education programs, it is important to examine five aspects of teacher education making a contrast between “training” and “development” perspective for each one, such as: Approach, content, process, teacher education, process, teacher roles and teacher educator roles.

Teacher Education as Training

Approach. This term refers to the conceptual framework or philosophy underlying the program, that is, theory and assumptions about teaching and teacher education that provide the starting point for program development.

The first assumption is that in-service English teachers have been teaching English with deficiencies of different kinds namely low language skills and scarcity of methodology when teaching. In this perspective, Breen, and Gabrielsen (1989, pp. 111-135) point out, “these may be deficiencies of knowledge about the subject matter or lack of specific skill or competences”.

The second assumption is the characteristics of effective teaching are known and can be described in discrete terms as skill or competencies. These characteristic are often identified as a specific method of teaching where in-service English teachers should start to improve their teaching style or by learning what successful teachers do.

The last assumption maintains that the teacher education program is essentially theory driven and top-down. That is, the source of the new information may be experts and theories based on new directions

in Applied Linguistics, methodology and second language acquisition.

Content. Content means goals, topics and subject matter the program addresses. In teacher education, as training, goals are stated in terms of performance, and content is identified with skills and techniques and theoretical framework as for those abilities as techniques. Besides, the teacher educator is who generally pre-determines the content, similarly, the program is addressed to aspects of teaching related to observation, teaching and testing, which are often linked to specifics situations. In the same way, to determine the programmers’ effective pre- and post-training differences than can be measured. For instance, working in a workshop where it is taught how to make their classes more communicative, teachers are observed in their classes to establish how much they have improved in the use group work and on teacher-fronted and teacher directed activities.

Process. It refers to the means by which the content of the program is transmitted or the techniques, activities and experiences which are used to impart new knowledge and skills to the teacher in training.

To a training perspective there are adequate techniques. Some of them are seen in the learning process as “modeling”. So, teachers model the behavior of master teachers or effective teachers or they model proven techniques of teaching. For instance, micro-teaching gives trainers an opportunity to model new behaviors to teachers and later for teachers to learn new skills.

Role of the teacher. According to Zeichner and Liston (1987, p. 27) the teacher as te-

chnician should concern with the successful accomplished of ends decided by others: similarly, an effective teacher is also viewed as a skilled performer of a number of prescribed tasks.

Richard & Nunan (1990) point out that the teacher training deals with basic teaching skills and techniques typically for novice teachers in an In-Service Education Program. These skills include such dimensions of teaching as preparing lessons, plans, classroom management, teaching the four skills (i.e. reading, writing, speaking and listening) techniques for presenting and practicing new teaching items, correcting errors etc. (proposal).

The role of the teacher educator. From a training perspective, the teacher education is an expert, as catalyst for change, as a model teacher, as the source of new ideas and information. Therefore, she or he provides functions: to provide ideas and suggestions, to solve problems and to intervene and point out better ways of doing things.

Teacher education as development approach. Lange (1990, pp. 245-268) describes the term teacher development as “describing a process of continual, intellectual, experiential and attitudinal growth” he distinguishes this term from training as being encompassing and allowing for continued growth both prior to and throughout a carrier”. For Freeman (1989, p. 38) “changes do not necessarily mean to do something different. So, the focus is thus more on expanding and deepening awareness”.

In the fourth assumption, the program is based on discovery oriented and inquiry based, and botton-up rather than top-down.

External input only serves as one source of information of the program. And with teacher input both interact to help teachers understand their own attitude, values, knowledge and practices and their influence in their classroom.

Roles of the teachers and learners in the classroom. Zeichner and Liston (1987, pp. 23-48.) point out:

A reflective curriculum predetermines that which is to be learned, but also includes provisions for the negotiation of content among teachers and learners. Hence, “goals and content are required to engage teachers in reflecting critically their own teaching and on own roles in the classroom” (Roderick 1986, p. 308).

According to Richard and Nunan (1990) [to move beyond skill-training teacher education, different kinds of learning experiences are being employed. They are: values, clarification, observation, self-reflection, self-reporting, project work, problem solving and action-research]. Freeman (1989, pp. 27-45) considers the teacher educator role as “primarily triggering change to the teacher awareness rather than to intervene directly”. In the same way Roderick (1986, pp. 305-315) describes teacher educator and student teachers as “cooparticipants in and co-constructors of educational experience” ICT.

In addition to what has been looked at, another relevant component to bear in mind is widely known as ICT. Nowadays with the new technological trends and gadgets teachers need not only to address learners-centered classes, but also to raise awareness of developing technological skills.

Given that information technologies and global access to information. As a result, language teachers have to be ready to embark upon the digital world. The crucial fact is not that of reaffirming the benefits of ICT in general terms along with the education and the evident benefits these have brought in the past decades evidenced worldwide in different settings. But, more importantly, is how the specific subject of foreign languages as particular case is surrounded in the current world by many inventions that have witnessed substantial growth, and that have impacted both how we teach and how we learn.

With the avenue of ICT, e-mail, possibilities to use collaborative platforms, multimedia, and the internet the teaching of foreign languages have tremendous influenced the processes of using them in everyday classroom activities as expressed by (Brown 2000, Hardwick 2000, Rice 2003) ICT offer ample opportunities for fostering and treating teaching and learning as truly social activities where the knowledge is built through interaction and dialogue rather than lectures and recitation (Stevens 2004).

Haddad (2002) state that ICT help to increase the quality of education in three focus issues:

1. increasing learner motivation and engagement
2. by facilitating the acquisition of basic language skills
3. by uncovering the need to enhance teacher training.

Lastly, No matter the hindrances faced with regards the use of technology and the teaching during last decades in different setting

worldwide, nowadays, the acceptance of ICT and their benefits are more widespread for developing language students` skills.

Methodology of the Study

This study followed the principle of qualitative research. Since, the data was collected through classroom observations, interviews and questionnaires. Cresswell (1994, p. 20) defines a qualitative study as an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting.

Participants. The study involved 30 in-service English teachers of public high schools. As the total number of trained teachers is fifteen, ranking the 15 %, then other fifteen non- trained teachers were also chosen randomly to complete the representative sample of 33%, the third part of all of the target population. Thus, the decision to include all the target population in the study is rounded to that percentage above mentioned. In sum, it was determined to take a sample randomly equivalent to the non-trained teachers for a total of 30 teachers as a representative sample in order to validate a comparative study among teachers taking TDP than those who are still out of the program.

The participants were interviewed to find out mainly how both trained and non-trained EFL teachers` perceptions informed practice along their classes. In addition, classroom observations were carried out attempting to witness teacher`s methodology in terms of planning, use of the target language, implementation of materials, language Skills and classroom management. Furthermore, an

open-ended questionnaire was conducted to find out teachers' experience, frequency of attending TDPs, language skills and standards integrations to teach their lessons.

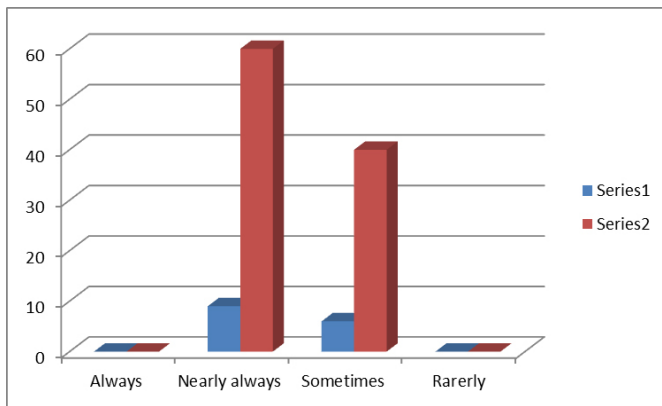
Data analysis. Examining the data, concentrated on both the trained and non-trained teachers, some conclusions could be drawn underlining the following aspects: In terms of Planning, classroom management, Language skills, use of the target language, implementing materials. As for trained teachers the professional growing and commitment to plan well balanced lessons is evident in the same as more appealing and meaningful activities for learners and most important stressing on students'-centeredness class. Also, in terms of classroom management trained teachers privileged learners -centeredness class, through interaction patterns such as: pair work, individual and group work together with the time allotted for activities appropriately. Thus, the use of the target language also came to play when they instructed and explained their learners using 50% English and the remain 50% in Spanish combining the four language skills, focusing more on speaking and listening to promote communication. Hence, the use of audiovisual aids was effective the same as learners participation and rapport on tasks. Evidence of this was provided when trained teachers used technology inside the classroom for watching videos or listening to conversations. They were also able to engage students outside the classroom for writing emails to foster writing. Though the use of technology is limited in classrooms, most teachers used text books and realia to sort through In contrast, non-trained teachers did not show any evidence of planning not even in Spanish which is the core to assess the outcomes for a lesson. Subsequently,

in terms of classroom management, there was not clear procedure to group learners, or do they showed techniques for checking student's understanding along the lessons. As for the language skills integration, non-trained teachers did not emphasize on the combination of skills but on grammar patterns which is still their favorite method to teach.

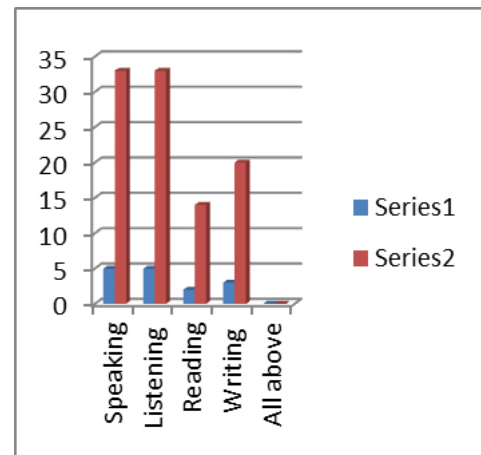
Another crucial issue to mention here is that students were instructed in Spanish all the time. Furthermore, textbooks were used to make copies from and assign text to be translated from English to Spanish and write up sentences in isolation. Nevertheless, it is pivotal to mention that non-trained teachers have also contributed to the teaching and learning process of English in any case. Yet, they haven't impacted their environment completely due to the lack of regular training programmes support and lack of clear criteria to implement materials to meet students' linguistic needs. Another relevant data emerged from this study in relation to the open-ended questionnaire. These are some graphic excerpts from the open-ended question Questionnaire to compare both trained and non-trained English teachers' report.

Question: How often do you integrate the standards based on CEFR in your lessons?

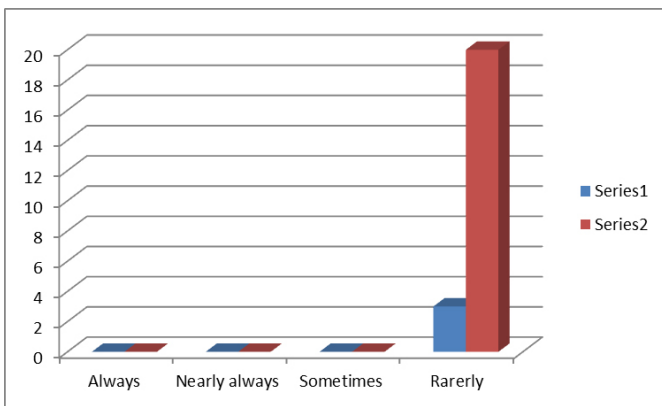
The Graph 1 a, b, show that trained teachers include standards reaching a peak of 60% and the remaining falls 40% when integrating basic standards into their lessons. In contrast, non-trained teachers include them at around 20% which is still being low and care for the need to refresh their teaching to meet the students' demands. Otherwise, trained teachers try to fit The National



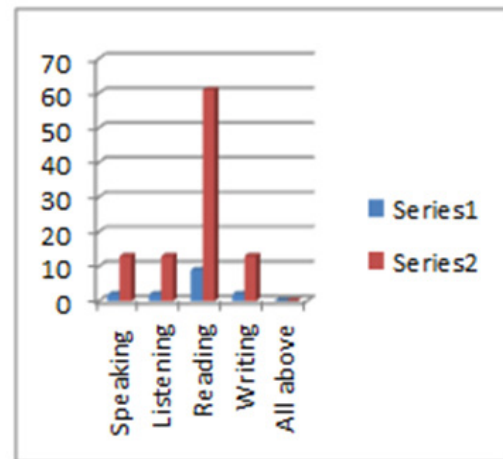
Graph 1a. Trained teachers' reports



Graph 2a. Trained teachers



Graph 1b. Non-trained teachers' reports



Graph 2b. Non-trained

Standards for Foreign Language Learning in their lessons in a high percentage. Yet, they should include standards in every single lesson to determine what is learned and how learning takes place.

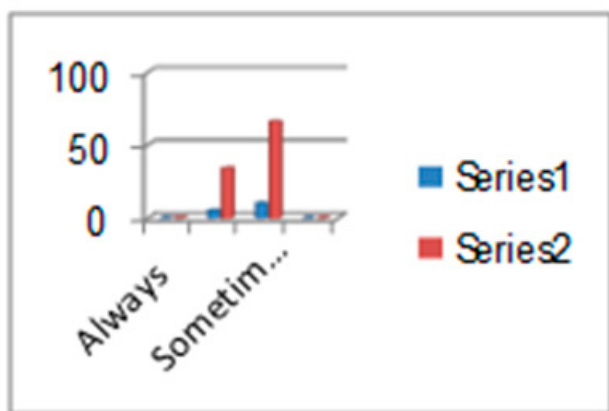
Question: What are the skills you develop the most on your students? Listening, writing, reading or speaking?

The Graph 2 a, b, show how both trained and non-trained teachers emphasize most on the language skill. The formers focus most on speaking and listening reaching a peak of 33% each one then, the average drops slightly in writing 20% and reading 14%.

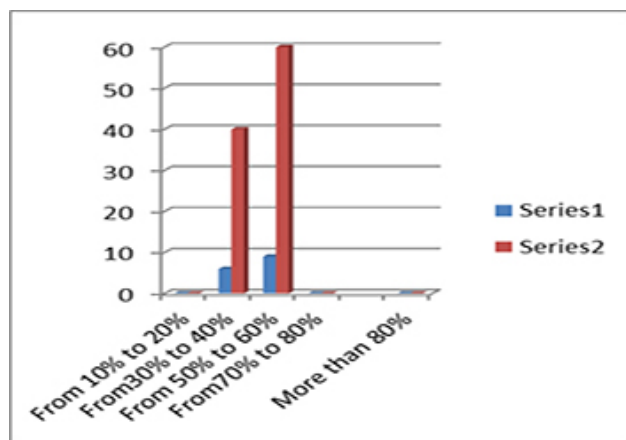
While the latter's concentrates the most on the reading skill ranking 61% and the remaining fall noticeable 10% in the average. Accordingly, both groups should overlap all the skills to empower students and help them succeed in the target language.

Question: How often do you attend TDPs based on language and methodology?

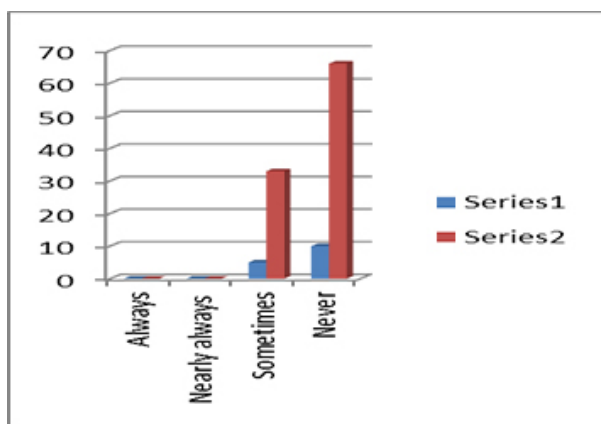
Based on the Graph 3 a, b, it can be seen that 66% of trained teachers sometimes attend TDPs. Differently the other 34% attend TDPs frequently. Otherwise, 70% of non-trained teachers never join TDPs, while the remain-



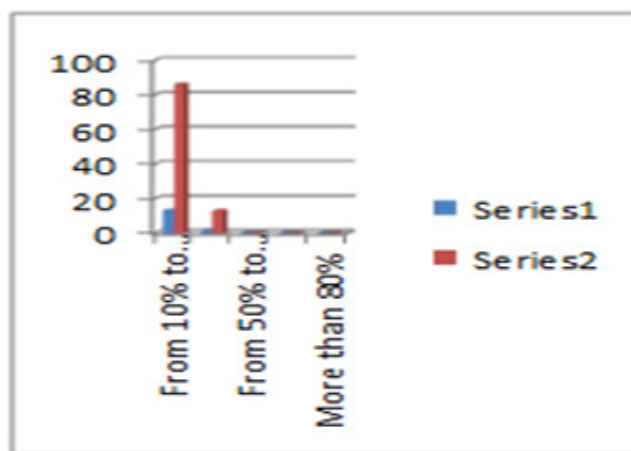
Graph 3a. Trained teachers



Graph 4a. Trained teachers



Graph 3b. Non-trained teachers



Graph 4b. Trained teachers

ning 30% do sometimes attend TDPs.

If one examines the above table clearly, it can be concluded that both groups need more encouragement and opportunities for attending steady TDPs, seminars and/ workshops to be more effective and efficient teachers.

Question: Check the average of English you use during your classes?

Research Findings

This research investigated the necessity to constantly improve the English teaching practice through TDP by making a contrast between trained and non-trained in-service

English teachers. By conducting this study, findings suggested that there is a higher level of pedagogical and language competence among teachers taking TDP than those who are still out of the programme. Evidence of this is provided sifting through data gathered from observations, interviews and questionnaires

It can be noticed from the Graph 4 a, b, that 60% of trained teachers use English in the classroom between 50% and 60%, and then the other 40% falls slightly from 30 to 40% in the average. Noticeably, 85% of non-trained teachers use English dropping from 10% to 20%. Differently, the 10% increases in use of English at around 30% and 40%.

Ideally, the use of English in the classroom by both the teachers needs to be increased in order to engage students to interact and communicate in English. Thus, using the target language can be beneficial to both for learners and teachers alike. As illustration learners can ask for repetition, if they do not understand and teacher can model to improve the language instruction. The study also revealed that teachers who were able to attend seminars, trainings and workshops become more effective and efficient educators in terms of using current techniques for planning, integrating the language skills, grouping students, using the target language to instruct, classroom aids and resources and provide feedback. In consonance, this kind of training will surely be beneficial to the teachers if their desire is to uplift their teaching practice to inspire their learners and better influence their settings with thought-provoking lessons.

Conclusions

This research has been crucial to support the idea behind the implementation of ongoing professional development as a path way to learn more about learning strategies and explore new and effective ways into the teaching practice. Thus, based on the qualitative results some conclusions can be drawn regarding both trained and non-trained in-service English teachers. The formers evidenced professional growing after attending trainings and seminars becoming more efficient and effective teachers. Nevertheless, the latter need to attend TDPs sustained overtime to provide them with renewing knowledge of teaching and professional skills in terms of planning well-balanced lessons, use the target language to engage and instruct students as to select appropriate materials

to better orient today's learners. Thus, the implementation of TDP favor pedagogical and linguistic competences, as a response to support in-service English teachers in meeting the local needs together with the National Bilingual Programme. In this spirit, one of the major tasks of the administrators and the SEDS (Secretarías de Educación) is to provide opportunities for such development to take place, by encouraging the teachers, even the old ones to regularly attend trainings and seminars. Consequently, for further research, it is worth to explore the effects of raising English teachers' awareness of renewal pedagogical and language competence and how their teaching practices impact students' learning.

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