

Preparing Pre-service Teachers for Online Teaching in Morocco

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Abstract

Despite the technological advances which have led to increasing integration of web-based courses in EFL, teachers' attitudes still have not been clearly determined regarding the implementation of online in-service training programs. In order to identify factors that hinder successful implementation of online teaching programs in Morocco, a survey for EFL teachers was conducted with the aim of ensuring quality in training programs and learning experiences. Hence, the purpose of this paper is to determine the opinions of the school teachers and teacher trainees on the integration of online in-service teacher training programs in the Moroccan educational system. More specifically, the present study examined the effect of different variables such as gender and years of experience in online teaching programs. A questionnaire and content analysis were employed to collect data. The results depicted the difference between the general perceptions of male and female teachers. Respondents think that such a program is a necessity for teachers' professional development. Implications for future online teaching programs in Morocco were discussed based on the findings.

Keywords: Teachers' attitudes, In-service training, Online teaching, Teachers' professional development.

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I. Introduction

Technological advancement and Internet access have increased interests in personal computing, and they have led to new educational opportunities. More specifically, they have made it possible to go beyond the classroom walls via online classrooms. White (2003) claimed that there were more than 1,300 distance language courses from the 55,000 distant courses enrolled in 130 countries. She also argued that the effectiveness of online courses as far as cost and time are concerned have encouraged more teacher trainers and school teachers into the field of online language learning that engages learners in asynchronously, synchronously and autonomous learning.

Notwithstanding, current research has shown that teacher training is currently ill-considered for visual schools (VS) as it lacks the theoretical and the practical background (Davis & Ferdig, in press; Smith, in press). Therefore, teacher training and education have got to reconsider their teaching objectives for future teachers. Presently, teacher training programs curriculum hardly ever include courses about online teaching. Furthermore, Kessler (2006) reported that most instructional technology introduced in language teacher training programs spotlights attention on hardware and software skills rather than pedagogy. The already mentioned skills prepare teachers to learn how to use technology but do not prepare them to use technology for language teaching.

There are some studies on teacher training programs conducted in Morocco. Literature in this field indicates that researchers have shed light on teachers' motivation, online course projects, social skills instruction, and teachers' beliefs, as different dimensions. Lahmine, et.al (2014) examined the main phases of establishing the program for Improving Training for Quality Advancement in National Education (ITQANE) e-learning project that aims at providing distance-training to the teaching profession workforce in Morocco. Moreover, they outlined how distance-learning environment changed the perception of beneficiaries about Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in education. They also presented some survey results pertaining to the teachers' motivation for this new mode of training.

Another study carried out by Hicham Ziad (2016) in Morocco, which aimed to explore practicing teachers' perceptions of the approach adopted in their pre-service training programs with regard to educational technology. The research also investigated the extent to which the teachers employ technology to accomplish pedagogical goals as well as the instructional methodology they embrace when they use ICT in the classroom. Ziad (2016) argued that the way practicing teachers use educational technology is reflective of the inadequacy of the pre-service training programs that still insist on disentangling ICT from pedagogy and content. Informed by the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK), a four-section, five-point Likert scale questionnaire was administered to 56 ELT practitioners in middle and secondary education in the province of El-Jadida. It was found that the integration of technology, pedagogy and content was left to the discretion of the

teachers. This approach resulted in limited ICT implementation for instructional purposes and inconsistent interpretations of how ICT can best be used in the classroom. Although the teachers reported that they embraced a student-centered methodology while using ICT, they also fell back on teacher-centred instructional principles. Accordingly, this study aims at investigating the attitudes of teachers towards the current teacher training programs. In addition, it aims at analysing the training needs of teachers to inform decision makers about what an ultimate teacher training program should be like.

II. Review of Literature

Teacher education is an essential process. It includes teachers' motivation, pre-service training, observation, practice period, monitoring and evaluation. Both in-service and pre-service programs are vital steps toward professionalization in the teaching domain. Pre-service education programs in Morocco offer special courses for teacher trainees in teacher training centers in order to prepare them to teach and to cope with real language class problems.

Generally, it is believed that education quality is associated with every country's policies, practices, and standards of achievement that is the product of many factors such as pertinent curriculum, transaction modes, good learning materials, safe learning spaces, governmental support, strong leadership and so on (Ginsburg, 2011). Therefore, to prepare good teachers, certain principles should be considered in the design and implementation of teacher training programs.

In addition, the programs should be suitable to teachers' and learners' needs. As the development of any curriculum should be based on the needs of its students, so do programs of professional teacher training development. To catch up with the changes in the world of teaching and teacher education theories, teachers' needs and experiences, and their opinions about all aspects of teacher education programs have to be considered and reflected upon in such programs.

Some studies have evaluated the needs and expectations of teacher trainees in relation to their professional development as reflected in these programs. An investigation carried out by Lahmine (2013) indicated that given the very positive experience of their ITQANE e-learning project, it is clear that the challenge of developing distance training environments from existing technologies deserves to be noted. The research also revealed that training institutions are now called upon to adapt to the new demands and changing needs of learners and to follow the demands of the changing training markets. It is worth noting that the evaluation conducted at the end of the project, does not reflect the real impact of elearning in trainers' practices in their workplace. It is premature to measure their degree of knowledge acquisition and skills in e-learning engineering. However, the survey responses revealed no doubt, to their great satisfaction with the achievement of expected goals.

Therefore, according to Abras and Sunshine (2008) technology in teacher training should include course design, content, pedagogy, technology as well as methodology and theory of second language learning. In addition, Lily (2009) proposed framework for online language teaching skills that attempts to address the suggested standards. As indicated in the framework, there are three main aspects of online language teaching which are technology in online language teaching, pedagogy of online language teaching, and evaluation of online language teaching. First, technological skills, relates to knowledge of computer hardware and software. Next, pedagogical skills refer to knowledge and ability to facilitate teaching and learning activities. Lastly, the evaluative skills refer to the analytical ability to assess the tasks and overall course and make necessary modifications to achieve language learning objectives. The reviewed literature revealed the importance of engaging educators in in-service training programs to ensure quality in online education.

III. Research Methodology

3.1 Data Collection

For this study, the primary data is used. The primary data for this research study was collected through a self administered questionnaire. The data of questionnaire was collected from 40 trainee teachers from four Centre Regional des Metiers de L'Education et de la Formation CRMEF in Morocco (Tangier, Meknes, Fes, and Rabat). In addition, the collected data led this research study to the exploration of the willingness of trainee teachers to take part in online teaching and factors that motivate them to be online teachers. Data was gathered from 40 EFL trainee teachers, who filled the questionnaire. The data collected were carefully assessed using SPSS.

3.2 Instrument

For the validity and reliability of this research, a close ended questionnaire (test item) was distributed to gather data about teachers' satisfaction with current training programs, their willingness to participate in online teaching, and factors that motivate trainee teachers to participate in online instruction. All instructions

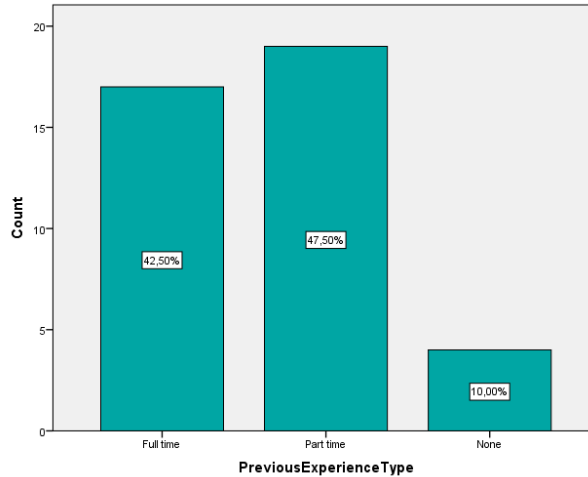
were written in English since our target population was EFL trainee teachers. The instrument took only five minutes to be answered.

IV. Discussion

The results obtained from the descriptive statistics yielded the following results.

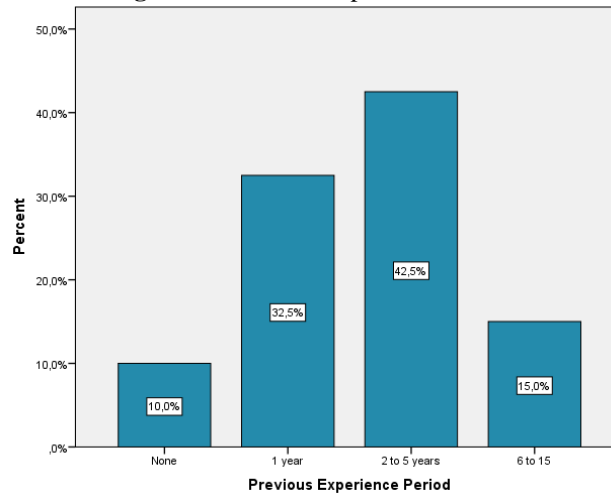
Figure 1 presents information about trainee teachers' teaching experience before entering CRMEF centres.

Figure 1: Respondents' Previous Experience



The results showed that a percentage of 42.5 of the respondents had a full time experience; a percentage of 47.5 had part time experience while only 10% of the respondents reported that they did not benefit from any experience before engaging in CRMEF training centres.

Figure 2: Previous Experience Period



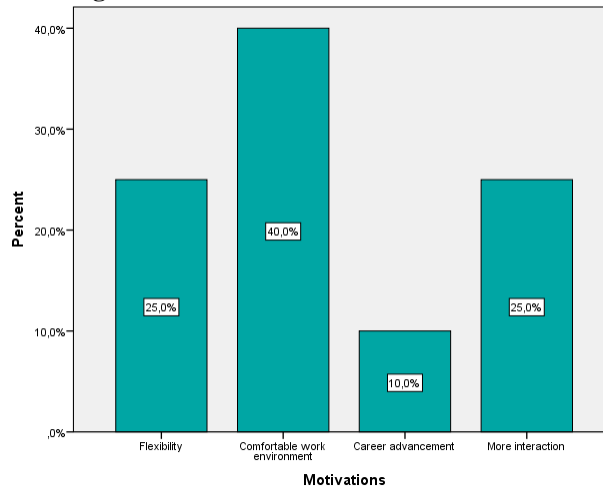
The results demonstrated in figure 2 show that a percentage of 42.5 of the respondents have benefited from a teaching experience that ranges from 2 to 5 years. 32.5% of the respondents had a one year experience, 15% had an experience that ranges from 6 to 15 years while 10% of respondents didn't have any previous teaching experience.

Table 1: Benefit from Previous Online training
Benefit from Previous Online training

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid No	40	100,0	100,0	100,0

Trainee teachers were questioned about their participation in any previous online training and the results demonstrated that none of the teachers had the chance to benefit from an online training. The table shows that 100% of the respondents reported that they do not have any online training.

Figure 3: Motivations for Online Instruction



Respondents were asked to explain their motivations for taking part in online instruction. Their answers were classified into four main categories. 25% of the respondents reported that ‘Flexibility’ is their main motivation for their willingness to take part in online teaching. A majority that represents 40% of the respondents said that their main motivation is ‘Comfortable working environment’. 10% of the respondents explained their motivation for online teaching as having ‘More interaction’ while only 4% of the respondents opted for ‘Career advancement’ as their main motive.

Table 2: Instructional Method Effectiveness: Online versus In-class instruction
Instructional Method Effectiveness: Online vs In-class instruction

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Online instruction	40	100,0	100,0	100,0

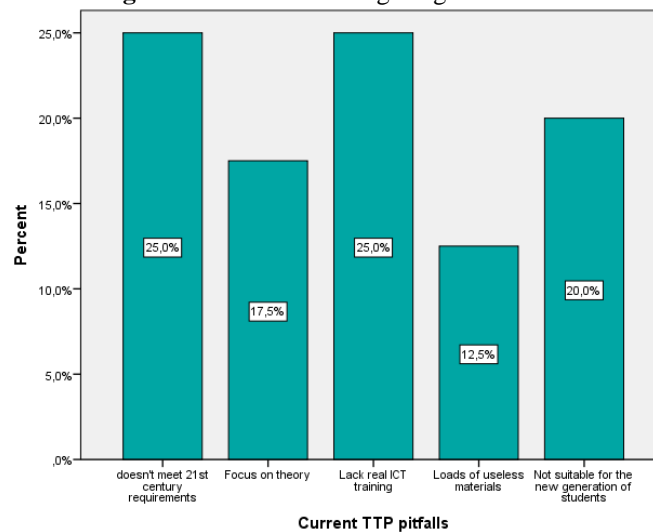
The above table represents the percentages of respondents’ choice among the most effective teaching method for 21st century learners. As represented in the table, all the respondents view online instruction as the most effective method.

Table 3: Trainee Teachers Satisfaction with Current Training Program
Trainee Teachers Satisfaction with Current Training Program

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Dissatisfied	40	100,0	100,0	100,0

Respondents were asked about the effectiveness of their current training program. The results demonstrated that all the respondents are dissatisfied with their current training program at CRMEF training centres.

Figure 4: Current Training Program Pitfalls



In order to identify the main pitfalls of the current training program, trainee teachers were asked to explain why they find their current program ineffective. The results demonstrated that 25% of the respondents found that the actual program does not meet the demands of the 21st century; the same percentage of the respondents reported that lack in real ICT training represents the main pitfall of the current program. 8% of the respondents agreed that the actual program is not appropriate for the new generation of students, 7% of the respondents reported the main pitfall as focusing more on theory rather than real practice while only 5% of the respondents view the main pitfall as employing loads of useless materials.

Table 4: Willingness to Take Part in Training Program for Online Instruction
Willingness to Take Part in Training Program for Online Instruction

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid yes	40	100,0	100,0	100,0

The above table shows the number of trainee teachers who are willing to take part in a Program of Online Instruction. It is obvious that all the trainees are willing to benefit from training on online instruction.

V. Results and Discussion

The results of our study were interpreted in the light of current innovations in the ELT field. The respondents under the study are trainee teachers who are being prepared to teach a new cohort of learners in a global modern world. The results obtained from questioning the trainee teachers satisfaction are alarming in the sense that all the respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with the current training program which lacks the essential training tools that the 21st century teachers must be equipped with to carry out a fruitful teaching experience that addresses the needs of learners as well as the changing demands of the 21st century job market.

The necessity to devise a training program for Online Teachers springs from the respondents' strong willingness to take part in online instruction as their responses reflected that they have more motivations for online teaching because it offers more flexibility, a comfortable working environment for both teachers and learners, and it allows more interaction between learners and teachers. This shows that the current mode of teaching has run its course and that a new mode must be devised based on recent innovations and findings in ELT and taking into consideration the needs of the new generation of learners.

VI. Conclusion

The main objective of this paper was to investigate the effectiveness of current teacher training programs and the need for a transition to a new training program that prepares teachers for a fruitful experience that meets their needs as well as their learners' changing demands. Most participants in our study described their current experience as ineffective in the light of current innovations in the domain of ELT. Moreover, their strong willingness to take part in online teaching shows that decision makers are required to analyze the needs of future teachers and devise programs that meet these needs and at the same time that are likely to prepare learners for the new global modern world. To this end a bottom up model of development must be adopted by decision

makers. Online instruction was implemented in this study as a more beneficial mode of teaching based on the results of previous studies which reported fruitful outcomes of online classrooms. Therefore, the results of our study should be taken into account when reforming the existent training program in Morocco to devise the ultimate teacher training program.

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