



The Actuality, Inefficiency, and Needs of EFL Teacher-Preparation Programs in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

Designing an effective English-teacher-preparation program and the provision of providing ongoing support and professional development opportunities are key compounding factors in preparing knowledgeable and competent English teachers linguistically and pedagogically as well as in facilitating their professional growth throughout their mammoth teaching journeys. This paper presents an in-depth discussion of the current training available to Saudi English teachers and reviews the changes that English-teacher-preparation programs have undergone over the years. Then, a pre-service and in-service teacher-preparation program will be proposed in addition to a continuing professional development program for Saudi EFL teachers. Finally, a number of key issues will be highlighted to ensure the effectiveness of the proposed training program.

Keywords: Continuing professional development program, Modifying the EFL Teacher-Preparation Program, Pre-service and in-service teachers' preparation program, Professional development programs, and Training Saudi English Teachers

1. Introduction

Article Fifty of the Educational Policy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia states that students should learn (i.e., be taught) at least one foreign language to be able to interact with people of other cultures for the purposes of contributing to the message of Islam and serving humanity. This article delineates the rationale for the teaching of the English language in Saudi schools, where the learners' ability to communicate with foreign language speakers ranks as a priority. Hence, it seems reasonable to claim that policy-makers, stakeholders, and other decision-making bodies in Saudi Arabia view the English language as an important tool for the development of the country in terms of both international relations and scientific-technological advancement. In Saudi Arabia, English has the official status as the primary foreign language, and the country continues to show considerable interest in English language programs.

English language currently asserts several functions and enjoys an eminent status in various sectors at all levels within Saudi Arabia's society, politics, and economy. This perceived growing value of English surfaced in conjunction with the rapid economic development of Saudi Arabia, including the rising number of pro-social establishments and significant changes in the social fabric in recent years. In addition, education has expanded in all directions to support economic growth on industrial and commercial bases. The flux of foreign manpower, the ever-evolving positive attitude of the Saudi people toward English, and the presence of various media sources cannot all be left out if an accurate picture of the current status of the English language on the soil of Saudi Arabia is to be presented.

English is the only foreign language taught in Saudi Arabian public schools. It is also mandatory for learning in the majority of private schools and universities. Governmental officials and employees at national industrial institutions are obligated to speak fluent English. At the primary, intermediate, and secondary levels, and in all grade levels in private schools, English is also taught as a core subject. At universities, students whose majors are other than English studies are required to take an introductory English course. English is used as instruction delivery language in most university departments in areas such as science, medicine, engineering, allied health, and technical subjects. This emphasis on the English language is very important to ensure Saudi Arabians are competitively educated and trained on international level.

Regardless of such an important status and multiple functions of the English language in Saudi Arabia, the key players, i.e., Saudi EFL teachers, are inadequately trained to prepare students to be good English learners. It is publicly acknowledged that the proficiency level of the majority of Saudi Arabia's English teachers is insufficient to the degree that they barely understand the materials that they are attempting to teach to students. Questions have also been raised regarding the competency of those who teach at elementary schools. Critics especially question their capability to teach at this particular school level and wonder about the extent to which they can deal effectively with critical aspects of primary school teaching, including classroom management, progress monitoring, clinical assistance, and care giving. A

large proportion of Saudi teachers of English in elementary schools have not received any training in teaching English to young learners.

The goals of the discussion are outlined into the following four guiding questions:

1. Are there changes in the way Saudi English teachers were trained in the past compared with the current training?
2. What are the factors behind the overall inefficiency of the current EFL teacher-preparation programs?
3. What are the most common traits lacked by the Saudi English teachers?
4. What needs to be done to bring constructive improvement to the current EFL teacher-preparation programs in Saudi Arabia?

2. How English Teachers Are Trained in Saudi Arabia

The training of prospective Saudi English teachers initially began in early 1970's, taking a direction distinct from the second phase, which took place in the early 1980's and continues to the present time. In 1970, the Minister of Education developed a training program for those wishing to become English teachers. The program required high school graduates to first study English for one academic year and sit afterward for a comprehensive exam. Upon passing successfully the exam, qualified candidates for English teachers were then offered the opportunity to study in some British universities for 100 weeks to earn a teaching certificate, which qualified them to teach English at the intermediate school level (Ibrahim, 1985). From the early 1980's to the present time, English teachers in Saudi Arabia were trained through programs offered by the English departments at various Saudi university colleges of education and colleges of arts, or in four-year English programs at various colleges. These programs prepare Saudi instructors to teach English at the elementary, intermediate, and secondary levels in public schools. Graduates of these programs are awarded a Bachelor of Arts degree in English.

Over the course of four-years, prospective teachers are exposed to linguistics, teaching methodology, English literature, and education courses. At the outset, in some universities, these students must first enroll in an intensive program for one or two semesters. Upon successful completion of this program, students are matriculated in the actual academic mainstream English program, where they take courses in linguistics, phonology, morphology, syntax, English literature, teaching methods, and additional education courses. Therefore, aspiring teachers attending English language preparation programs, as depicted in Figure 1, are required to undertake the following: (a) take basic education courses to fulfill university or college requirements; (b) take courses prescribed by the department of English, including those of skill-building courses, general linguistics courses, applied linguistics courses, and English literature courses; and (c) take elective courses of their choices.

It is noteworthy that the total number of courses and the number of courses in each of these foregoing categories may vary from one institution to another. The methodology courses that come under the category of applied linguistics courses—or, to be more precise, English-teaching methods—constitute no more than three courses, due to the condensed nature of courses depicted above. This includes the introductory and the first teaching method courses, and a teaching practicum course tagged on in the last semester of the English academic program, which accumulates approximately eight credit hours depending on the policy of each individual English department where these courses are offered. The offered English teaching-methods courses represent no more than 10% of the total courses offered by English departments in colleges and universities.

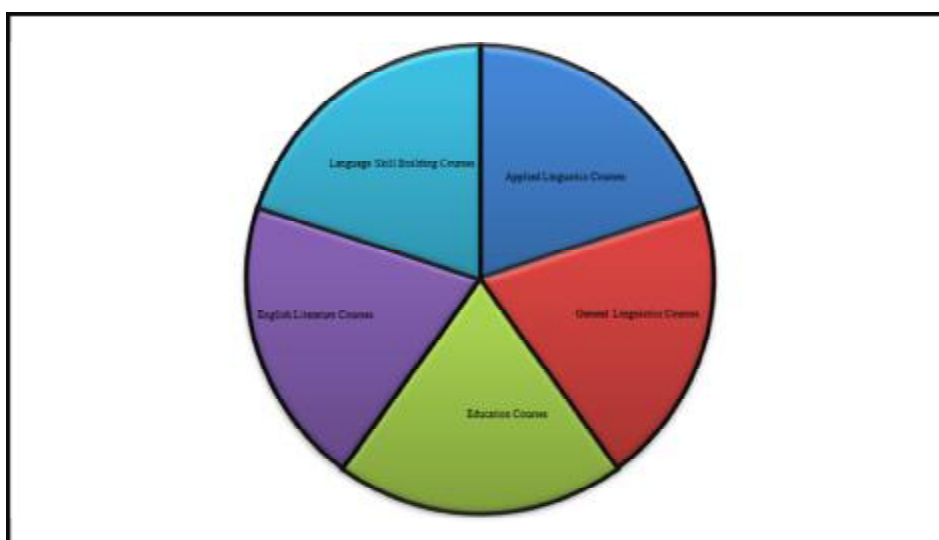


Figure 1. Training programs offered by the English department various Saudi university colleges of education and colleges of arts, or in for-year English programs at various colleges

Generally speaking, the emphases of the English department's courses differ according to levels. For instance, first- and second-year-level courses concentrate on developing candidate teachers' language skills, including listening comprehension, reading, writing, speaking, and language areas, such as grammar and vocabulary development. This focus is based on the assumption that aspiring teachers are not expected to have sufficient competency in English when they first enroll. These courses also contribute to future teachers' abilities to be taught introductory courses on English literature and linguistics. During their third and fourth years, prospective teachers are introduced to more advanced subject area courses together with methodology courses. Students are thereby exposed to English literature courses, including the history of English literature, poetry, novels, drama, and literary criticism, and linguistics courses, such as semantics, syntax, and phonology. They also take advanced courses in translation, advanced writing, and grammar, along with courses in English-teaching methods. The final semester of the preparation program is designated as a practicum, in which prospective teachers are assigned to teach for one semester in an intermediate or secondary school under the supervision of one of their advisors. It is important to note that the faculty members of the English language teaching programs are drawn from many countries. Some of them are Saudis, while others are either from the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia, or various Islamic and Arab countries. Most of the local professors have earned their doctoral degrees in applied linguistics in American and British universities.

Currently, 14 universities in Saudi Arabia offer foreign language teacher preparation programs for both men and women through the English departments in colleges of education and colleges of arts. Graduates receive a Bachelor of Arts degree in English. In 2008, although there are no official statistics on the total number of graduates, it is believed that this number reached approximately 1,500. In addition, there are 33 preparation programs for English teachers throughout the country. These programs assume the responsibility for training female teachers. In 2008, an estimated 900 female English teachers are believed to have earned bachelor's degrees. Additionally, there are 18 teachers' colleges, each of which is currently attached to a local university, that award bachelor's degrees in English. In 2008, 200 students earned a bachelor's degree in English through such colleges (*Teachers College: From Start to Progressing*, 2009).

It is worthy of note to indicate that although these preparation programs work toward the common goal of preparing and training Saudi English teachers, each has its own unique programs and requirements, leaving no chance for having a common thread of philosophy and developing national standards and guidelines that govern and direct the major issues equated with the process of preparing and training Saudi future English teachers.

According to 2010–2011 statistical figures, as shown in Table 1, there were 21,532 English teachers in Saudi public schools (3,808 at the elementary level; 10,461 at the intermediate level; and 7,263 at the secondary level). There were 3,681 Saudi teachers (97%) and 127 non-Saudi teachers at the elementary level. While there were 9,840 Saudi teachers (94%) and 621 non-Saudi teachers at the intermediate level, the total number of Saudi English teachers in secondary schools was 6,700 (92%), versus the total of 563 non-Saudi teachers (Statistical Department, Ministry of Education, 2009). The average student-to-teacher ratio per class was approximately 20 to 1; typically, the teacher was responsible for approximately 150 to 200 students.

Table 1. Number, Gender, and Nationality of English Teachers in Each School Level

N	Level	Nationality		Gender		Total		
		Saudi	Non-Saudi	Male	Female			
1	Number of teachers in the elementary level	3,681	127	1,400	84	2,281	43	3,808
2	Number of teachers in the intermediate level	9,840	621	4,600	325	5,240	296	10,461
3	Number of teachers in the secondary level	6,700	563	2,770	533	4,000	30	7,263
	Total	21,532						

3. Modifying the Direction of the EFL Teacher-Preparation Program

English-teacher-preparation programs have undergone constant and several significant changes over the years. In the early 1980s, the primary emphasis of such programs was on teaching English literature, while linguistics and English skills received little attention (Sheshsha, 1982). Al-Hajailan (1999) noted that recent directional changes have taken place, whereby knowledge of linguistics and a command of language skills have been emphasized. As a result,

preparation programs have begun to designate a large proportion of credit hours to language improvement and linguistics. Despite these endeavors, other areas should be taken into account as well. In particular, fewer literature courses should be offered, and the number of methods courses for English teaching should be increased.

There should also be a greater emphasis on developing the communicative competence of prospective English teachers during their college careers and linking them to schools where they can gain more experience and learn from in-service teachers (Zaid, 1993). This call was also later echoed by several researchers (Safer, 2002; Al-Hazmi, 2003; Al-Seghayer, 2005, 2011; Khan, 2011; Zohairy, 2012; Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013) who promote the implementation of a systematic approach to Saudi EFL teacher-preparation programs because the current programs are inadequate for the preparation of Saudi EFL teachers, especially with regard to disciplinary knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and technological pedagogical knowledge. Disciplinary knowledge includes, for example, the history of language-teaching methods, second-language acquisition, sociolinguistics, phonology, syntax, discourses analysis, applied linguistics, and other areas as well. Pedagogical content knowledge, on the other hand, includes curriculum planning, assessment, reflective teaching, classroom management, teaching the four skills, and so on. Technological pedagogical knowledge involves the ability to effectively integrate the available technological resources into language teaching.

The necessity of such a need training and professional development for prospective Saudi English teachers lies in the fact that Saudi EFL teachers gain more confidence and enable them to enhance other additional skills that are needed in their profession by talking to colleagues in schools and through working with other experienced teachers. They also develop their classroom competence through their own past experiences as students as they perpetuate the way in which they were taught and by emulating their former teachers, who serve as role models. This emulation arises from the failure to offer aspiring teachers a systematic in-service training program; therefore, aspiring teachers must pursue their own professional development informally while discharging their day-to-day duties.

A substantial number of Saudi EFL teachers are professionally and linguistically incompetent and do not have a firm grasp of methods of teaching language elements. They do not possess enough theoretical background knowledge pertaining to the main factors that affect second-language learning, such as motivation, attitudes, aptitude, and age. The same problem is common in the area of knowledge of existing language-teaching methods, particularly modern methods and types of language testing. The incompetency also appears in teachers' insufficient knowledge of strategies to teach language elements, including the four skills, grammar, and vocabulary. In addition, testing techniques and the use of educational aids and technology are insufficiently employed in English classrooms. English teachers also have limited experience in material design, evaluation, adaptation, and implementation.

The problem escalates if one considers that many of the teachers are not proficient in English. An unpublished study carried out by the Ministry of Education (2005) confirmed this claim and indicated that both intermediate and secondary English teachers graduated from college without proper training in EFL, and are therefore neither competent in English nor in the affair of teaching it. The study's results showed that the average TOEFL score of the English teachers who participated in the study was only 430. Furthermore, their average competency in lesson planning was 60%, while it was 64% for classroom management, 54% for assessment, and 52% for language teaching methods.

Al-Harbi (2006) investigated the training needs of in-service Saudi EFL teachers in the province of Al-Qassim and found an alarming lack of competence. A total of 551 participants, including 272 male English teachers, 259 female teachers, 8 male supervisors, and 12 female supervisors, comprised the sample. They were given a questionnaire prepared by the researcher to investigate the training needs of English teachers. The results showed that the current EFL teachers were in need of more training in teaching methods, teaching the four language skills, classroom management, teaching grammar, and utilizing teaching aids and technology.

Along the same line, Alshuaifan (2009) explored the key components of the EFL teacher preparation program in Saudi Arabia. Participants (96 language instructors from both college and grade school levels) expressed dissatisfaction regarding the current Saudi EFL preparation program. They indicated that such programs lack enough courses and linguistics, EFL syllabus design, and cultural awareness.

Similarly, Zohairy (2012) investigated the current status of both professional development and continuous professional development of Saudi EFL teachers in seven state universities and four private universities. The results showed that only two universities out of the eleven offered EFL instructors training opportunities. Additionally, participants were not satisfied with their professional development programs.

These studies reveal that the need for such training and professional development for English teachers must be tackled immediately and cannot wait any longer, especially considering the fact that in-service training programs are currently conducted on a limited scale via the local education departments that are scattered all over Saudi Arabia and are handled in a poor manner. Another disturbing observation is that some English teachers have received almost no in-service teaching training, albeit they have been teaching English in public school for over a decade. Related to this, we find that career advancement is not guaranteed for English teachers other than being promoted to a supervisory position. This situation is worsened through knowing that there is no incentive for English teachers who may engage in professional self-development and that teacher-training resources are scarce.

4. Overview of the Proposed EFL Preparation Program and Its Components

The reality depicted above and the aforementioned thoughts suggest areas of improvement that must be taken to a greater level and translated into a more systematic, thoroughly conceived or planned EFL pre-service and in-service teacher-preparation program along with a continuing professional-development program. Such programs will help

regulate the qualifications and performance of Saudi English teachers. The large-scale pre-service and in-service training program that needs to be implemented should work within the frame of both long- and short-term plans to prepare Saudi EFL teachers, so that both pre-service and in-service teachers can take advantage of such moves or offerings. Through these programs, they can significantly improve their language competency and teaching skills, which puts them in a better position to redress the underachievement of Saudi students in English and as such enhance their level of attainment. Figure 2 delineates, via its visual representation, the long- and short-term plans alongside the four proposed plans with their eighteen component parts.

5. Long-Term Plan: Reconsidering the study plan of the current local EFL preparation programs

The first thing that ought to be considered in the supposedly large-scale or long-term training plan is to reconsider the study plan of the current local EFL teacher-preparation programs. Currently, prospective Saudi EFL teachers are required to take only one or two courses on EFL teaching methodology, and they are assigned to teach English in public schools in the last semester of their undergraduate academic programs for four or eight classes per week under the supervision of their college instructors. This fieldwork experience, requisite to student teaching, accounts for a total of approximately 60 hours of the last year of the elementary level and intermediate and secondary levels over the course of a semester for about 15 weeks. Thus, first and foremost, the structure of such academic programs should be changed or redesigned so that more courses are offered in English teaching methodology, second-language acquisition, general applied linguistics, language testing or assessment, theories of learning with respect to the design of language syllabi, second- and foreign language teaching and learning, language planning and policy, language program evaluation, speech therapy, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, language curriculum design, computer-assisted language learning (CALL), and second-language research.

Additionally, the amount of time that pre-service EFL teachers spend at practicum sites needs to be further extended in length and intensity in order to allow for more extensive and intensive practical experience for student teachers. Rather than waiting until the last semester to do their practicum, prospective teachers should engage in a gradual and structured apprenticeship to teaching English throughout their university life. These gradually increasing practice opportunities should begin in the first semester of the third year by having candidate teachers indulged in the task of observing experienced teachers of no fewer than five classrooms and complete specific tasks, such as observing closely the amount of teacher talk, questioning techniques, types of classroom tasks, and other instructional techniques. Student teachers should also be assigned the task of assessing the class teacher with class routines and procedures, including preparing lessons, developing and conducting class activities, guiding students' practice, and monitoring students' language use. In the second semester of the third year, student teachers should pay a number of structured visits to the school to become acquainted with the school environment and, most importantly, the day-to-day duties of English teachers. In the first semester of their last year, they can practice teaching in a controlled setting using activities such as micro-teaching or peer-teaching. In the second semester of the last year, they should take full responsibility of a teaching load of no fewer than 15 hours per week.

It is necessary to have a firmly established link between practical courses and the actual conditions under which future teachers will teach English, as well as the norms of practice expected of teachers in schools in general, and classrooms in particular. This goal can be accomplished by making a connection between what is being taught at colleges of English and the English courses that are taught at schools. Such a connection would fill the gap that currently exists between the knowledge base that prospective EFL teachers are receiving while studying in English departments in colleges and universities and the actual teaching experience in English classrooms. To this end, teacher candidates will be able to apply the knowledge they acquired from coursework theory to English classrooms in schools. The suggestion to establish such a link is in juxtaposition with the trend in the EFL profession that calls against limiting student teachers to a solely course-based approach. EFL teachers should, in addition, be trained according to the principles of standards-based approach. This latter approach is recommended alongside the acquired theoretical knowledge gained from the university coursework. Tomorrow's English teachers need to be placed for extensive periods of time in schools where they can gain sufficient English teaching experience before they graduate from university.

The current language-improvement courses should also be prolonged, and their focus should be redirected. At present, the pattern for the offered language-improvement courses is the prescription of a reading text along with some exercises on reading and listening comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, and composition. These courses should instead focus on grammatical accuracy, extension of lexical range, phonological accuracy and fluency, and developing communication and presentation skills. Additionally, courses should be offered on how English works both inside and outside of the classroom, the ways in which language changes and is changing, the language of the media, the relationship between language and culture, classroom language and meta-language, personal pedagogical grammar, and correctness and appropriateness. No less important than these areas is the importance of promoting competence pertaining to the kind of classroom language that English teachers will need to use effectively during English class when they give explanations and instructions in English, elicit ideas and contributions from the students, give correct feedback on the learner's language, and conduct classroom activities and other instructional tasks.

The level of language proficiency for non-native English-speaking teacher candidates is a key trait that once owned leads to increase the efficacy of the process of teaching English due to both the primary role it plays in language teaching and begin fundamental concern in ESL/EFL teacher-preparation programs. A possible way to help Saudi students/English teachers to reach a threshold proficiency level in English is to require them to spend time in an

English-speaking country during the pre-service preparation program part of the bachelor's degree programs. Creating joint university degree-granting programs with foreign universities would make this proposal even more beneficial.

To ensure the effectiveness of the training courses given to the prospective Saudi EFL teachers while they are in college, professors of applied linguistics and English teaching methods courses should participate in training themselves. These professors are no doubt highly qualified academically and have relevant academic qualifications in applied linguistics in particular. However, there is no guarantee that they have the necessary level and type of expertise to deliver effective training in EFL courses instead of merely focusing on disseminating teaching methods and procedural skills to deliver the course materials traditionally. Bearing all of this in mind, such college professors need to enroll in training programs to gain the specific kind of qualifications and expertise as professional trainers of future Saudi EFL teachers. By doing so, they will be in a better position to provide Saudi English teacher candidates with sound, professional pre-service training via linking together theory and practice—or, better said, through attempting to establish a link between what is recommended in the field of language teaching literature and what is actually done in an English classroom.

Finally, partnerships between EFL academic programs at colleges and universities and the EFL Department at the Ministry of Education need to be established to give prospective Saudi EFL teachers systematic, school-based teaching practice before they enter the professional community. The initiatives of such partnerships and collaborations could also undertake to conduct capacity-building training programs and should work closely with the EFL Department to identify priorities that will result in sustainable pre-service and in-service EFL training programs. Related to this strategy, colleges and universities that offer similar EFL training programs should set up a system through which they exchange information concerning the training processes that are employed and the performance of program graduates. Hence, universities and colleges must be aware of the experience of real-life teaching firsthand; in turn, schools need to move beyond merely the business of teaching practice to become more up-to-date with respect to teaching practices from the initial trainers of prospective EFL teachers. Such collaboration will pave the way to providing best field practices for aspiring Saudi English teachers.

6. Establishing a National EFL Training Center

Another crucial element of the large-scale plan is to establish a national EFL training center or institution and be built at strategic locations, equipped with modern technology, fully funded, and adequately staffed. This center would undertake the responsibility of overseeing and organizing all matters pertaining to the training of Saudi EFL teachers, including applying a single set of standards for pre-service and in-service teacher-training programs across Saudi Arabia, conducting long-term training seminars and workshops within Saudi Arabia and abroad, offering continuing professional development opportunities, and awarding certificates upon completion of the designated training programs. Additional responsibilities would be the accreditation of pre-service preparation academic programs and the development of pre-service standards. Such centers must be established by the Ministry of Education and kept independent of universities.

In addition, the suggested national EFL training center should form a national teacher-training committee, which would set standards for the competencies expected of English teachers' subject knowledge and pedagogical skills and of the quality of English language teacher education. The national EFL center should also establish a standardized system of accreditation for Saudi EFL teachers that is based on well-known international models and would work toward creating standards for advanced teacher certification. Additionally, the center should establish a professional association of Saudi EFL teachers that attempts to link, develop, and support Saudi English language teaching professionals throughout the country, as well as to enhance EFL teaching, profile, and practices. Having such an organization would make it easier to hold regular national and international seminars to disseminate updated information about trends and issues in the field of teaching English as a foreign language. Furthermore, such an organization could serve as an informal forum for teachers to exchange ideas and offer mutual assistance among members.

The proposed EFL national training center must also provide professional development and career growth and development opportunities agenda for all Saudi English teachers throughout the country, so that they can remain abreast of new developments in EFL. Moreover, the center needs to allocate funds to the schools to assist in the process of implementing professional development programs. It is recommended that an in-service coordinator be appointed at every school and teacher training college.

Finally, the proposed national training center ought to consider establishing partnerships with other world-renowned EFL educational centers. By teaming up with a number of well-respected, long-established schools and language institutes, the center can enhance the development and execution of national plans and training activities pertaining to the training of Saudi EFL professionals, including design, documentation, evaluation, and strategic assessment of a wide variety of EFL training programs. This strategy could also include forming platform partnerships between experienced EFL teachers in these institutions, especially with those who are familiar with the Saudi EFL context, and their Saudi counterparts so that teaching methods, teaching materials, techniques for evaluation, and other related issues can be discussed and exchanged. The center could establish partnerships with local private training institutions and textbook publishers to conduct pre-service and in-service training courses that should vary in terms of both content and quality.

7. Short-Term Plan

7.1 Long-term professional development

Conversely, the short-term training plan should work toward the goal of providing ample professional development and training opportunities or programs for pre-service and in-service Saudi EFL teachers. It should systematically be planned to promote growth and development in the profession of EFL teaching for prospective Saudi EFL teachers. The suggested short-term training plan should offer both long-term professional development and one-shot training programs.

The long-term professional development track is regarded as a culture-building and collaborative process. Thus, its aim should be to provide both formal and informal opportunities or experiences. The formal experiences could include completing an initial teacher-preparation program and attending workshops covering key factors in effective teaching, including classroom management, the roles of teachers and learners, alternative approaches, and ways of combining some of the best aspects of more “traditional” teaching with more innovative procedures involving task-based, learner-centered, interactive methods, as well as language-teaching innovations, including participatory language teaching, sheltered language instruction, and authentic assessments. Such a program should also include required attendance at professional meetings or local, regional, or international conferences, study visits overseas, mentoring programs under the leadership of an experienced senior development professional, collaborating with university-based researchers, and conducting research or, more precisely, action research to closely examine and analyze their own classroom practices.

Additional formal training opportunities would enable Saudi EFL teachers to take advantage of multiple and varied growth opportunities through options, such as distance education, audio and video conferencing, asynchronous and synchronous communications, participation in threaded discussions with colleagues and experts, access to online seminars, and enrollment in online EFL professional-development programs. Exposure to such technological advances would equip EFL teachers with the skills needed to exploit computer-based teaching resources, making them better able to adequately and appropriately use online and offline computer application tools in their English classrooms. In more specific terms, this will enhance their technological and pedagogical content knowledge, enabling them to use certain technology, and create materials and activities using technology, thereby increasing their ability to teach with technology.

Informal or self-directed learning experiences that enable teachers to engage in an appropriate range of professional practices may include encouraging prospective Saudi English teachers to read and respond to professional publications, submit comments, book reviews, method-neutral techniques, including dialog journals, long-distance collaboration, and to join study groups with fellow teachers to exchange information on instructional issues of concern, such as course planning or developing tests, materials exploitations, and so on. In-house training sessions could be conducted in schools, so that knowledge and skills are passed to less-proficient English teachers from their more experienced colleagues. Furthermore, cooperation, sharing of creativity, innovation, and best practices and forms of inquiry-based teaching and exploratory teaching should be promoted among Saudi EFL teachers, as should other forms of independent professional development opportunities to enable them to develop a better understanding of the teaching and learning that takes place in English classrooms.

7.2 One-shot training programs

In contrast to the long-term professional development described above, one-shot, or short-term, training programs pertain to the skills-training process. As a result, their aim should be to provide opportunities to learn particular skills, such as developing teachers’ skills in teaching speaking, listening, reading, writing, grammar, and culture. Other potential areas in need of skill enhancement are creating lesson plans, promoting classroom interaction, performing student assessment, teaching vocabulary and pronunciation, designing communicative activities, using technology in language teaching, developing classroom management, establishing a comfortable classroom atmosphere, managing class time, giving clear directions, and meeting students’ needs.

7.3 Key Designing Issues

A number of key curricular and administrative design issues need to be considered to ensure the driven goals of scoring excellence in the affair of the teaching of English as well as the accessibility and effectiveness of integrating the proposed EFL pre-service and in-service teachers preparation programs and the continuing professional development program. First, the content of such programs should consider the needs of teachers and schools in the area of English language teaching and learning. Second, the courses to be offered through the proposed programs should not be too theoretical; therefore, high-quality grammatic content should be maintained with practical applications in the Saudi EFL classroom. Third, teachers should have the freedom to determine their own professional-development plans. Fourth, the training programs should be prepared and conducted by knowledgeable specialists. Fifth, customized training and development opportunities should be offered. Sixth, local and overseas training opportunities should be offered. Seventh, these opportunities should be diverse in terms of topics and length. This would allow teachers to select varied, yet challenging, training opportunities. Eighth, such a training program should be designed in such a way as to allow for deeper and more sustained engagement with primary, intermediate, and secondary English school teachers in order to turn training programs into lasting development. Finally, the effects of such training programs on teachers throughout the academic year need to be closely examined and evaluated.

Incorporating these elements into the proposed training program is expected to provide effective, efficient, and lasting development of pre-service and in-service training and professional opportunities that will adequately prepare Saudi

EFL teachers for the classroom and will enable them to continue their development expediently and effectively throughout their careers.

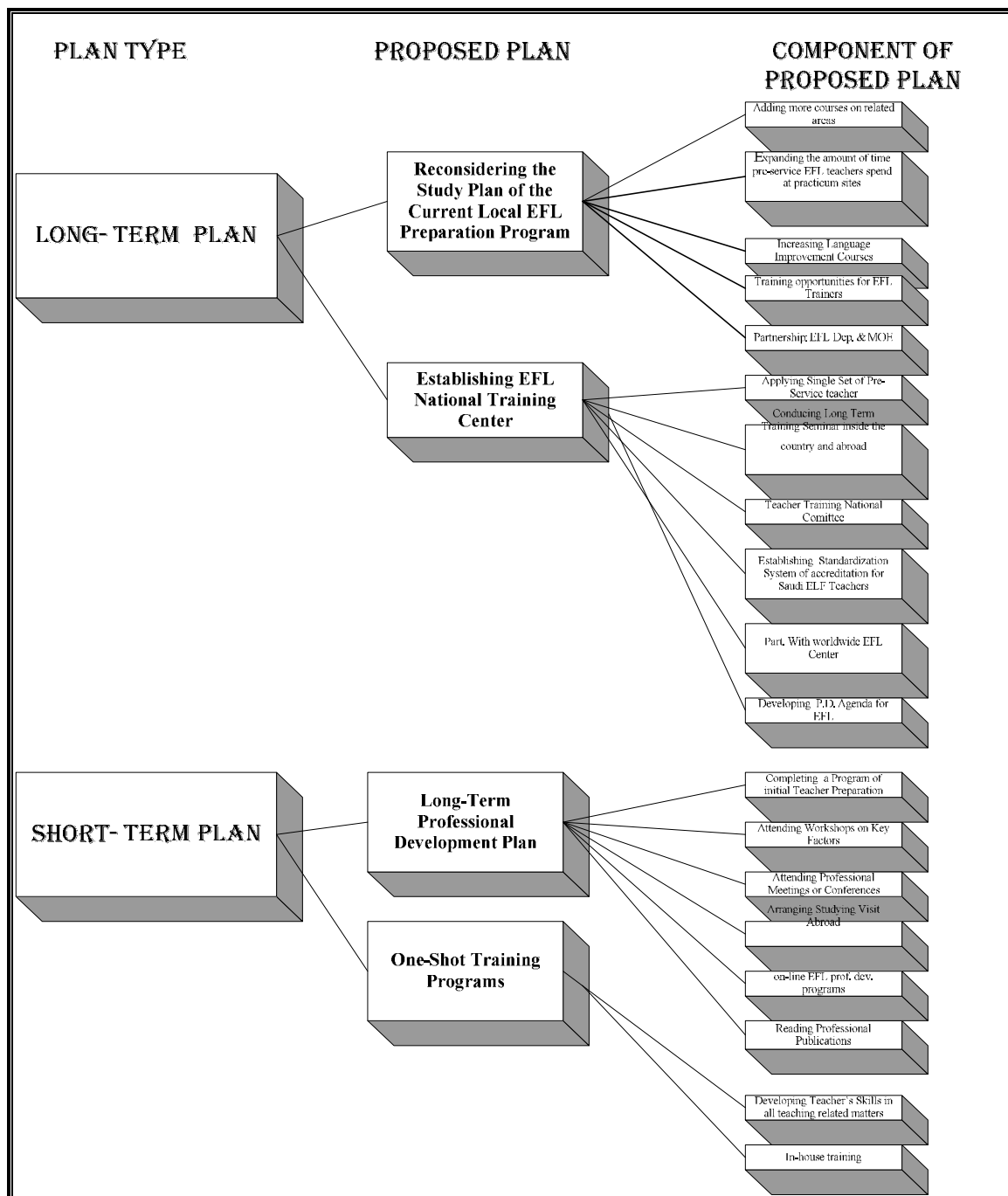


Figure 2. The Suggested EFL pre- service and in-service Teacher's Preparation Program

8. Closing Remarks

This paper was written to address a number of issues with reference to Saudi EFL pre-service and in-service teacher's preparation program. Specifically, the aims were to closely examine the reality and needs of EFL teacher preparation programs in Saudi Arabia, and to propose areas of improvement to the current EFL teacher-preparation programs in Saudi Arabia.

The discussion has demonstrated that the English proficiency level of English teachers in Saudi Arabia is expected to remain at its current level and same as the inadequate preparation of English teachers unless all relevant factors are considered. Teacher training and development need to be greatly considered. Additionally, having national standards in place along with nationwide programs for EFL teacher training must be facilitated.

Positive results are anticipated in the competency of English teachers with the implementation of these measures, which should eventually lead to the development of a strategic plan to cultivate Saudi citizens with English abilities. As a result, the fulfillment of such aspirations is expected to transform the teaching of English in Saudi schools, thereby transforming Saudi society by establishing the English language as an indispensable skill deemed necessary in the era of globalization and a new knowledge-based economy driven by the forces of knowledge and information.

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