# Investigating the role of professional development on Sudanese secondary schools teachers' performance

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**Abstract:**

    *This study tries to investigate the role of professional development on EFL secondary schools' teachers' performance. One of the main objectives of the study is to train teachers on effective teaching techniques and suggest effective professional development programs to secondary schools teachers. A questionnaire is used for the data collection of this study. The samples were drawn exclusively from the teachers of Khartoum State, Omdurman town. The questionnaire was distributed to (65) teachers. The data obtained from the instrument has been analyzed, tabulated and finally interpreted according to the research style. The study results revealed that secondary schools teachers need continuous in-service professional development so as to develop their teaching performance. Moreover, secondary schools need to organize regular workshops for teachers to exchange their experiences. The researcher recommends that the Ministry of Education has to organize regular workshops, support, encourage and motivate teachers to join the professional development programs and adopt modern teaching techniques to help them develop their teaching performance inside their classrooms.*

**Key words:** English Language Teaching-English as a Foreign Language- Information and Communication Technology

## INTRODUCTION

Professional development refers to many types of educational experiences related to an individual's work. Doctors, lawyers, educators, accountants, engineers, and people in a wide variety of professions and businesses participate in professional development to learn and apply new knowledge and skills that will improve their performance on the job.

Many fields require members to participate in ongoing learning approved by the profession, sometimes as requirement for keeping their jobs. In addition, research has show that teaching quality and school leadership are the most important factors in raising students' achievement. For teachers and schools to be as effective as possible, they continually expand their knowledge and skills to implement the best educational practices and teachers also learn to help students learn at the highest levels.

Many people may not be aware of their local school system's methods for improving teaching and students' learning. Professional development is the only strategy school systems have to strengthen to improve teachers' performance and raise students' achievement.

When people use the term "professional development" they usually mean a formal process such as a conference, seminar, or workshop; collaborative learning among members of a work team; or a course at a college or university. However, professional development can also occur in informal contexts such as discussions among work colleagues, independent reading and research observations of colleague's work or other learning from a peer. at the same time people use other names, including staff development. in service training, professional learning or continuing education. Whatever the term the purpose is the same- to improve learning for teachers and students.

Professional development in abroad sense refers to the development of a person in his or her professional role. Glatthorn, (1995: 41) mentions that teacher development is the professional growth a teacher achieves as a result of gaining increased experience and examining his or her teaching systematically. Professional development includes formal experiences such as attending workshops and professional meetings, mentoring, etc. and informal experiences such as reading professional publications, watching television documentaries related to an academic discipline.

Teachers need to deepen their content knowledge and learn new methods of teaching, they need more time to work with colleagues, to critically examine the new standards being proposed, and to revise curriculum. They need opportunities to develop, master and reflect on new approaches to work with students. All of these activities fall under the general heading of professional development. Professional development has a great role in education as Sykes, (1996: 465)

> "What leads urgency to professional development is its connection to reform and to the ambitious new goals for education that are to be extended to all students. Can professional development lead educational reform"?

The question raised by Sykes regarding the critical role of professional development as a mechanism and the contributions of teachers in the process help in fulfilling the educational roles and objectives.

The qualification of teachers has a great role in the attainment of the national educational objectives, but to achieve these objectives, strict criteria about teacher quality must be utilized. However, it is clear that whatever measures are to be adopted to deal with these teaching issues, it is always the teachers who will have to put these objectives into reality.

Due to the international nature of the English language, English language teaching (ELT) professional development

Nor Alhadi Hamad Ali Abdalla,  Abdulgadir Mohamed Ali Adam,  Ienas Ahmed
Abdelrahman Fadel- **Investigating the role of professional development on
Sudanese secondary schools teachers' performance**

programs are being implemented all over the world.
Considerable attention has been given to the process of training
English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher. Some topics have
been discussed at conferences throughout the world, as
Williams (1994) mentions the diversity of these teacher-
training programs which vary in terms of length and
qualifications and discusses the nature of ELT-training
discipline in terms of its uniqueness. Further, he discusses
factors that should be accounted for in a teacher training
model, e.g. cultural appropriateness, political influences,
teacher background and competence, expectations from
students, cost, and accountability. So, in addition to these
issues this chapter focuses on the importance of teacher
professional development and the important methods,
strategies and techniques that enable teachers to achieve
educational objectives and plans beside the significant issues
that have a relation with English language teaching (ELT) in
order to improve teachers' performance as well as students'
achievement.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DEFINITION

Systems are charged with addressing ever-increasing demands
concern the teaching process such as reducing the achievement
gap, adopting teacher's practices, meeting adequate continuous
progress goals, managing the requirements of teachers and
students and following the increasing amount of pedagogical
content area research

Professional development is defined by Hassel, (1999:
20) as: "*the process of improving staff skills and competences
needed to produce outstanding educational results for students*".
Guskey, (2000: 4) also states that one constant finding in the
research literature is that notable improvements in education
almost never take place in the absence of professional

development. Professional development is a key to meeting today's educational demands

The Learning First Alliance's Every Child Reading (2000) maintains that:

> "Professional development is increasingly seen as a systemic process that includes the development of all individuals involved with student achievement from the superintendent to the teaching assistants".

Many writers and educationalists discuss the professional development process in different ways and styles. Hassel, (1999: 22) mentions that high- quality professional development strategies are essential to schools. The days of teacher staff development sessions consisting of *"sit and get"* workshops and expert-delivered awareness campaigns are long gone. People are now moving toward more effective and more engaging professional development models. Also Zepeda, (2012:  11) defines professional development as:

> "Knowledge and competence acquired from highly specialized training and formal education, the respect and trust of community and peers that lead to a degree of autonomy and self-direction."

Professional development in abroad sense refers to the development of a person in his or her professional role. Glatthorn, (1995: 41) mentions that teacher development is the professional growth a teacher achieves as a result of gaining increased experience and examining his or her teaching systematically. Professional development includes formal experiences such as attending workshops and professional meetings, mentoring, etc. and informal experiences such as reading professional publications, watching television documentaries related to an academic discipline. This conception of professional development is therefore, broader than career development which is defined by Glatthorn, (1995:

41) as: "the *growth that occurs as the teacher moves through the professional career cycle.*" And also broader than staff development which is:

> "The provision of organized in-service programs designed to foster the growth of groups of teachers; it is only one of the systematic interventions that can be used for teacher development."

Research and experience help teachers recognize that high-quality ongoing professional development that deepens teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical skills; provide opportunities for practice, research, reflection and includes efforts help in improving teaching and assist in achieving the learning goals. Eventually, professional development is a comprehensive long-term process includes regular opportunities and experiences systematically planned to promote growth and development in the teaching process.

Bioumi, (2013) when he was working in the British council's program (English for teaching (1) as a teacher trainer, he observed that some techniques, terms, activities, games and methods were absolutely new for many trainees and by the end of the first 60 hours he noticed changes in the competence and performance of the teachers while they were doing the micro teaching activities. Therefore, the study aims at investigating the effectiveness of teacher training courses according to the trainees' needs dealing with the case study of the in-service teacher training English for teaching in Khartoum state. The study gains value and significance as it tries to give feedback to the federal ministry of education to give more concern to teacher training and professional development programs. Moreover, it tries to reflect to the British council to focus on the training need of the Sudanese teachers and find national training organizations to deal with, so as to have effective investment on teacher training in Sudan and provide clear

course design framework for teacher training. Bioumi's study focused on three main terms as:

1- **Teacher education**: the field of the study which deals with the preparation and professional development of teachers within the field of teacher education, distinction is sometimes made between teacher training and development.

2- **Teacher training**: deals with the basic teaching skills and techniques. Typically for novice teachers in pre-service education program. These skills include such dimensions of teaching as preparing lesson, plans, classroom management, teaching the four skills reading, writing listening, speaking, and techniques for presenting and practicing new teaching items, error correction.

3- **Teacher development**: looks beyond initial training and deals with the ongoing professional development of teachers, particularly in-service education programs. This includes a focus on teacher self- evaluation, investigation of different dimensions of teaching by the teacher and examinations of teacher's approach to teaching. Bioumi's recommendations based on the finding are:

- It is very important to provide clear outlines for selecting and designing teacher-training programs by the federal ministry of education for English language teachers in Sudan.

- It is very crucial to provide opportunities for the cooperation between leading organizations on teacher-training such as the British council and the federal ministry of education

- It is useful to adopt "*cascade training*" in schools. In other words, the teachers who attended training sessions should extend them to their colleagues.

- It is necessary to provide teachers with training sessions on Information Communication Technology (ICT) in

order to enrich their knowledge and skills in teaching using on-line teacher training programs.

Herzallah, (2011) conducted a study on professional development obstacles facing primary English language teachers in northern Gaza. The researcher as a teacher noticed English language teachers face in-class problems in a daily basis since some young learners of English suffer from language learning difficulties and so require a professional teacher who is able to overcome such problems. The researcher has also noticed primary English teachers do not have effective solutions for the problems they face inside their classrooms.

The study aims at investigating primary English language teachers' professional development obstacles from their point of view in order to:

- Determine the professional development obstacles that primary English language teachers face.
- Measure if there are significant differences in teachers' perceptions due to gender, the academic qualification, experience and the age variables.
- Suggest solutions for primary EFL teachers professional development obstacles.

The findings show that most teachers who participated in the study agreed that the sudden and rare visits of supervisors are the greatest institutional professional development obstacles. In addition to that money and financial issues are the main self-directed professional development obstacles and the majority believed that the unbearable heavy teaching load, lack of time, overcrowded classes and absence of promotion are the most important professional development obstacles. In addition, teachers suggested decentralizing professional development programs, appreciating teachers' good work and associating professional development with career development and they

proposed increasing the number of periods allocated for each class in a week and publishing a domestic journal.

Eventually Herzallah recommends carrying out further researches on the obstacles facing EFL teachers in one specific development. He also recommends conducting evaluation studies for already existing EFL teachers' professional development programs.

## STATEMENT OF THE STUDY

The problem of this study is to examine how professional development of teachers can help them improve their teaching practice, as well as to promote the teaching process to enable their students achieving the effective learning. Consequently to that, there are many teachers teach without having professional development in the beginning of their career as well in-service professional development.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims to:
  a. Train teachers on effective teaching process.
  b. Suggest effective professional development programs to secondary school teachers

## QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY

  a. Are secondary schools' teachers well trained and developed to    lead effective teaching process in their schools?
  b. How far ministry of education offers enough professional development sessions and workshops to secondary schools teachers?

## HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

a- Secondary schools' teachers need extra professional development programs so as to develop their teaching.

b- Ministry of education does not offer enough professional development sessions and courses for secondary schools teachers.

## METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY:

The research based on descriptive analytical approach aims to analyze the role of professional development on teachers' performance which automatically reflect on students' achievement.

### Instruments of the Study:

The researcher used a questionnaire to collect the data of this study. The questionnaire was distributed to sixty five teachers in Khartoum state.

### Tools of the Data Analysis

The researcher used Statistical Analytical Method and (SPSS) program to analyze the data of this study.

### Reliability and Validity of Questionnaire:

In seeking the validity of the questionnaire, the researcher consulted some experts in the field of teaching English language such as Dr. Ibrahim Abdulla Ahmed, Hail University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Dr. Hassan Mahil, Sudan University of Science and Technology. Dr. Ahmed Ibrahim, translator for Ameer Dewan-Qatar. Dr. Hillary Marino Pitia, Sudan University of Science and Technology "on part-time basis". They agreed that the tool is comprehensive, adequate, suitable as well as it is useful for the purpose of the study. In addition,

they advised that some of the statements should be changed to suit the study. The researcher has made some changes according to the experts' advice.

The reliability of the questionnaire was calculated by SPSS program, the Cronbach's Alpha and found the reliability which was **(0.76)** and indicates high reliability of the questionnaire.
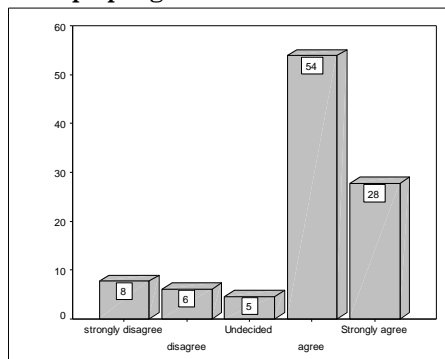
## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

**Hypothesis One:**
**Secondary schools teachers need extra professional development programs so as to develop their teaching.**

**Table (1) Secondary schools teachers need extra professional development workshops programs.**

| Answers | Frequencies | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly disagree | 5 | 7.7 |
| Disagree | 4 | 6.2 |
| Undecided | 3 | 4.6 |
| Agree | 35 | 53.8 |
| Strongly agree | 18 | 27.7 |
| Total | 65 | 100.0 |

**Figure (1) Secondary schools teachers need extra professional development workshops programs.**
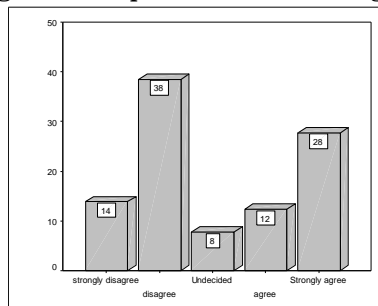
Results in table and figure show the responses made by participants as indicated by the Likert-type scale and rearranged from the highest to the lowest percentages as follows: " agree "strongly agree " strongly disagree " disagree " and Undecided ,(53.8%)," (27.7%)," (7.7%) "(6.2%) "(4.6%) Respectively, this is in line with what has been stated in the hypothesis. Most of the participants agreed that teachers need extra professional development workshops programs so as to develop their teaching performance.

**Table (2). Secondary schools organize regular workshops for teachers to exchange their experience in teaching**

| Answers | Frequencies | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly disagree | 9 | 13.8 |
| Disagree | 25 | 38.5 |
| Undecided | 5 | 7.7 |
| Agree | 8 | 12.3 |
| Strongly agree | 18 | 27.7 |
| Total | 65 | 100.0 |

**Figure (2) Secondary schools organize regular workshops for teachers to exchange their experience in teaching.**
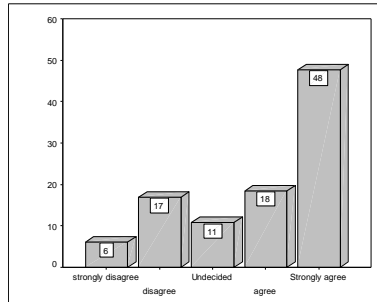


Results in table and figure show the responses made by participants as indicated by the Likert-type scale and rearranged from the highest to the lowest percentages as follows: " disagree "strongly agree " strongly disagree " " agree

" and Undecided ,(38.5%)," (27.7%)," (13.8%) "(12.3%) "(7.7%) Respectively, this is not in line with what has been stated in the hypothesis. (38.5) disagreed that secondary schools organize regular workshops for teachers to exchange their experience in teaching while (27.7%) strongly agreed. So the opinion is in between. Organizing training workshops in the schools is important for teachers and secondary schools have to organize regular training workshops for teachers so as to improve their performance.

**Table (3) Secondary teachers develop themselves in an isolated way**

| Answers | Frequencies | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly disagree | 4 | 6.2 |
| Disagree | 11 | 16.9 |
| Undecided | 7 | 10.8 |
| Agree | 12 | 18.5 |
| Strongly agree | 31 | 47.7 |
| Total | 65 | 100.0 |

**Figure (3) Secondary teachers develop themselves in an isolated way.**



Results in table and figure show that responses made by participants as indicated by the Likert-type scale and rearranged from the highest to the lowest percentages as follows: " strongly agree " agree "  disagree " Undecided" and strongly disagree ,(47.8%)," (18.5%)," (16.7%) "(10.8%) "(6.2%) Respectively, this is in line with what has been stated in the

Nor Alhadi Hamad Ali Abdalla,   Abdulgadir Mohamed Ali Adam,   Ienas Ahmed
Abdelrahman Fadel- **Investigating the role of professional development on
Sudanese secondary schools teachers' performance**

hypothesis. Most of the participants in a percentage of (47.8%)
strongly agreed that secondary schools teachers develop
themselves in an isolated way. The researcher thinks that it is
not a positive point, because it is the role of schools and the
Ministry of Education to develop their teachers and offering
participation and discussion opportunities for teachers to share
information.

**Hypothesis Two:**
**Ministry of education does not offer enough professional
development sessions and Courses for secondary schools
teachers.**

**Table (4). Ministry of education initiates enough professional
development workshops to secondary schools teachers**

| Answers | Frequencies | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly disagree | 13 | 20.0 |
| Disagree | 21 | 32.3 |
| Undecided | 6 | 9.2 |
| Agree | 9 | 13.8 |
| Strongly agree | 16 | 24.6 |
| Total | 65 | 100.0 |

**Figure (4) Ministry of education initiates enough professional
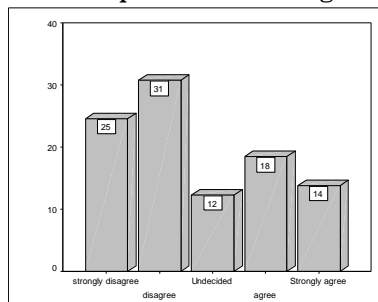development workshops to secondary schools teachers**
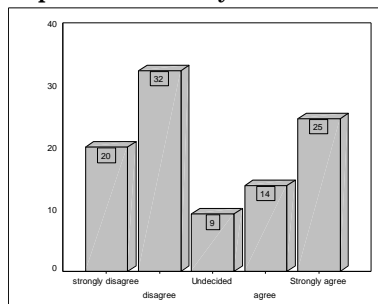
Results in table and figure show the responses made by participants as indicated by the Likert-type scale and rearranged from the highest to the lowest percentages as follows: "disagree" strongly agree "strongly disagree  agree" and Undecided,  (32.3%),  "(24.6%),  "(20%),  (13.8%)  (9.2%)". Respectively, this is not in line with what has been stated in the hypothesis. (32.3%) of the participants disagreed that Ministry  of  Education  initiates  enough  professional development workshops to secondary schools teachers while (24.6%) strongly agreed. So, the ministry has a great role in initiating  regular  and  enough  professional  development sessions so as to help teachers develop their teaching skills.

**Table (5) Ministry of Education has clear professional development strategies for teachers to help them achieving their goals.**

| Answers | Frequencies | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly disagree | 16 | 24.6 |
| Disagree | 20 | 30.8 |
| Undecided | 8 | 12.3 |
| Agree | 12 | 18.5 |
| Strongly agree | 9 | 13.8 |
| Total | 65 | 100.0 |

**Figure (5) Ministry of Education has clear professional development strategies for teachers to help them achieving their goals.**
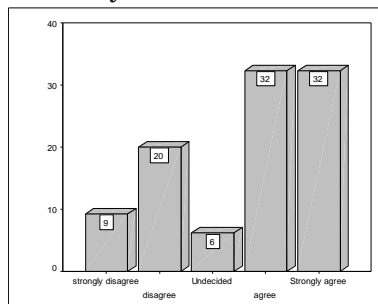
Results in table and figure show the responses made by participants as indicated by the Likert-type scale and rearranged from the highest to the lowest percentages as follows: " disagree "strongly disagree ,agree strongly agree and" Undecided ,(*30.8* %)," (*24.6*%)," (*18.5*%) "(*13.8*%) "(*12.*3%)". Respectively, this is not in line with what has been stated in the hypothesis. In a percentage of (30.8%) of the participants disagreed and (24.6%) strongly disagreed that Ministry of Education has clear professional development strategies for teachers to help them achieving their goals. Without clear strategies and plans for developing teachers, education will not be developed. Teaching needs clear strategies.

**Table (6) Developing secondary teachers is one of the huge challenges that face ministry of education**

| Answers | Frequencies | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly disagree | 6 | 9.2 |
| Disagree | 13 | 20.0 |
| Undecided | 4 | 6.2 |
| Agree | 21 | 32.3 |
| Strongly agree | 21 | 32.3 |
| Total | 65 | 100.0 |

**Figure (6) Developing secondary teachers is one of the huge challenges that face ministry of education**

Results in table and figure show the responses made by participants as indicated by the Likert-type scale and rearranged from the highest to the lowest percentages as follows: " strongly agree " agree ", disagree , strongly disagree and "Undecided "(32.3%) " (32.3%)," (20%) "(9.6%) "(*12*.3%) Respectively, this is in line with what has been stated in the hypothesis. Most of the participants strongly agree and agree with the statement that "developing secondary teachers is one of the huge challenges that face ministry of education". It was clear from the table No (13) that the Ministry of Education has not clear strategies for developing secondary schools teachers' performance, so it is normal to face challenges and difficulties.

## FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The researcher has come out with the fallowing findings:
1- Secondary schools teachers need continuous in-service training so as to develop their teaching performance.
2- Secondary schools need to organize regular workshops for teachers to exchange their experiences in teaching.
3- Ministry of education does not have clear strategies for developing teachers' performance.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher has come out with the fallowing recommendations:
1- Regular in-service training is important for secondary schools English language teachers. So, the researcher recommends that regular in-service training workshops should be held in the schools.
2- Ministry of Education has to motivate and encourage secondary schools teachers join and participate in the training programs.

3- The Ministry of Education should have clear professional development strategies for teachers to help them achieving their goals.

4- Teachers are the main element of the educational process, so there should be a sustained support to them so as to develop their teaching performance as well as the education in general.

## CONCLUSION

The results of the study revealed that secondary schools teachers need extra and massive efforts to help them develop their teaching performance. The ministry of education also does not initiate enough professional development sessions to secondary schools' teachers so as to enable them improve their teaching performance. Most of the participants strongly agreed that most of secondary schools teachers develop themselves in an isolated way, this point reveals that there is no clear role for the ministry of education in developing secondary schools' teaching performance. Most of the participants also disagreed that ministry of education has clear professional development strategies for developing secondary schools' teachers. In addition, most of the participants agreed that developing secondary schools' teachers is one of the huge challenges face the Ministry of Education.

From all the points mentioned above, it is clear that secondary schools' teachers need real support from all aspects so as to enable them develop their teaching performance, which automatically reflects positively in the educational process in general.

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