# Professional Development and IELTS Training Course: A Case of EFL Teachers in Iran

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# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND IELTS TRAINING COURSE: A CASE OF EFL TEACHERS IN IRAN

By

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*ABSTRACT*

*The current study aimed at investigating the status of Professional Development (PD) through examining teachers' perspectives over how effective they consider exam specific teacher training courses (IELTS in this case) which aim at increasing their PD. To this end, a group of EFL teachers, from different language schools in Mashhad, Iran took part in this study. There existed 30 teachers, most of whom were professional in teaching and had a good English proficiency. This training course consisted of all the skills and sub-skills of IELTS as well as the best possible ways to teach different skills of English. Teachers attended this program three times a week which started in February 2015 and ended in May 2015. As the main data collection mean in this study was a qualitative one, two open-ended questions were employed in the data collection process which aimed at finding what the participants' ideas about the T.T.C course they took were and also what the main motivating reasons for teachers were for taking part in the T.T.C program. The accumulated answers were then analyzed and categorized into different groups and the percentages for each extracted category were calculated through SPSS. Besides, as for the quantitative data collection phase and also in order to check the probable relation of the program and teachers' Professional Development (PD), a researcher made questionnaire was designed and expert validity was employed to carry out the instrument's validation process. Therefore, two experts' opinions in the field were accumulated and further comments and modifications were done accordingly. The questionnaire, using Cronbach Alpha, revealed to possess a high degree of .902 reliability. Afterwards, the PD questionnaire, which mainly focused on teachers' self-declaration with regard to this case specific teacher training program and how effective they believed the program to be on their PD, was administered. Finally, the results were correlated through Cross tabulation and Chi square test. The results exhibited that there exists a significant relation between the two variable i. e. majority of teachers believed the T.T.C program has been "influential" in their professional development.*

*Keywords: Professional Development, Teacher Training, EFL Teachers, IELTS.*

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background and Purpose

During the past few years, professional development and different ways to make it positively happen, have been a hot issue of debate which as a result allocated a vast number of research to itself mainly because teachers' continuing professional development is important for the well-being of schooling (as cited in Knight, 2002). Moreover, in the last four to five decades, teacher learning has become a major research area in the field of teacher education and has been extensively studied and discussed in the scientific and academic community worldwide. And what can be observed as the result, is the increase in research and publications in this field, especially with regard to the teaching practice (Farell, 2007; Richards & Farell, 2011; Ong'ondo & Borg, 2011; Gebhard, 2009; Caires et al., 2012; Daloglu, 2006; Gurbuz, 2006; Caires & Almeida, 2005), which has come to be recognized as one of the most important components of the teachers' initial education and their early development. As with training programs, it is repeatedly observed that between the 1960s and early 1980s effective teaching was associated with the training of the 'right skills' which had to do with the manner in which teachers managed their classrooms, organized activities, planned lessons and

generally the way in which their skills, methods, and techniques affected pupils' learning (Kourieos, 2012).

Moreover; experiences drawn from various educational projects also show that the academic level of the teacher is not in itself sufficient to ensure good quality in the teaching and learning process in class (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2004). Therefore, one can assume that the need of workshops and training programs, held by renown and experts in the field, are considered quite vital to help teachers professionally develop their skills through experiencing, doing and observing handy strategies presented by those who themselves have learnt them the hard way. No doubt there are many ways to explain the alleged ineffectiveness of teacher education and teaching practice. Most likely each of us has a preferred way of accounting for it. What the researchers are supposed to do on this occasion is to find more on the role of training courses in general and a case of IELTS in particular at an English language institute, to see whether they have any significant effect on teachers' professional development or not.

## 2. Significance of the Study

According to Borko, Elliott, & Uchiyama (2002) professional development is essential to individual teachers' growth as well as organizational change in schools, both of which are necessary for true educational reform to occur. They highlight the fact that transformations through Professional Development and the learning that they require are not likely to occur without support and guidance. At the same time, educational scholars such as Hammond (1990) have noted the inadequacy of existing support for teacher learning. Therefore, since IELTS is considered as one of the most prominent areas in the realm of ELT for which many teachers as well as institutions and private organizations feel the need to have more mastery in, turned into the focus of this study and aimed at providing the basis of professional development for these teachers.

## 3. Research Questions

Based on the mentioned purpose and significance of the study, the researchers put forward the following research questions:

Rq1. What are the main motivating reasons for Iranian EFL teachers to take part in programs aimedat developing professionalism (IELTS T.T.C in particular)?

RQ2. What are participants' ideas about the T.T.C course they took?

RQ3. Is there any significant relationship between IELTS T.T.C program and the influence teachers declare it might have on their professional development?

## 4. Research Hypothesis

To come up with reasonable results on the basis of the aforementioned research questions, the following null hypothesis were proposed:

HO1. There is no significant relationship between IELTS T.T.C program and the influence teachers declare it might have on their professional development.

## 5. Limitations of the Study

Like any other study, some limitations are imposed on this research. As the number of teachers who take part in such programs is pretty much few, and institutions which hold these programs do not out number and they are not frequently held, the researchers had to focus on this limited sample of teachers, thus the results would be applicable to similar cases and its generalizability should be applied with care. Moreover, personality factors as well as educational status are not taken into account. Also, as the results of the IELTS examination was considered to be confidential, the information was provided to researchers based on two broad categories (those who scored 5 to 7 and those got 7 to 9). Therefore, the exact score for each teacher was not known to the researchers. Besides, since the number of teachers taking part in this particular and other similar programs is too few, the teachers participating in this study, might not resemble, to a 100 percent, the community of EFL teachers!

## 6. Definition of Key Terms

### 6.1. Professional Development

As the focus of professional development in this paper is mostly shedding light on teachers, development, in this regard, refers to a general growth not focused on a specific job. It serves a longer-term goal and seeks to facilitate growth of teachers' understanding of teaching and of themselves as teachers. It often involves examining

different dimensions of a teacher's practice as a basis for reflective review (Richards & Farrell, 2005). In this study, more particularly, it means teachers' own change in beliefs and teaching style as a result of taking part in IELTS training program which aimed at improving the aforementioned aspects.

### 6.2. Teacher Training

Richards & Farrell (2005) discuss the underlying definition of training as the one which involves understanding basic concepts and principles as a pre-requisite for applying them to teaching and the ability to demonstrate principles and practices in the classroom. Training refers to activities directly focused on a teacher's present responsibilities and is typically aimed at short-term and immediate goals.

## 7. Review of Related Literature

### 7.1 The Importance of Professional Development in ELT

As Borko et al. (2002) puts forward, McDonnell (1994) focused explicitly on the need for professional development related to the new forms of assessment that are frequently a component of reform efforts. He keeps maintaining that professional development is surely of great importance because many new forms of assessment require that teachers play a key role in their design, administration, scoring, and use, these assessments will not work as intended unless adequate training is provided. Moreover, the need for major new investments in professional development is even greater for those assessment policies that are expected to change curriculum and instructional policies.

Moving further, Fullan (1991) tries to clarify the point that "Continuous development of all teachers is the cornerstone for meaning, improvement, and reform. Professional development and school development are inextricably linked" (as cited in Borko et al, 2002). He also highlights the fact that for professional development to cause changes in educational settings including schools, it should serve two purposes "it is both a strategy for specific, instructional change, and a strategy for basic organizational change in the way teachers work and learn together".

### 7.2 Professional Development and Its Effectiveness

The very immediate effects of professional development is said to be observed mainly in changes caused in teachers' cognition, beliefs and practice as well as student learning ( cited in Avalos, B., 2011). Statistics reveal that most of the researches done in the realm of PD were along these thematic areas namely as the learning of practicing teachers: how they learn, what they bring to their learning efforts and how these efforts are reflected in changes in cognition, beliefs, and practices, the embedded or situated nature of teacher professional learning and development: within the school environment and its culture, and in relation to how educational systems and policies affect their work lives , and the role of mediations in the quality of their learning: external facilitation of learning processes provided for example by school university/ researchers collaboration or by other teachers as collaborators, informal and teacher formal networking, and the use of specific teaching tools as sources for self-analysis and change.

### 7.3. Professional Development from Teachers' Perspective

Although there may be different unique/individual ways a teacher might approach and implement development, there are some unified suggestions by some renowned researchers in the field that can truly help teachers give rise and implement PD in their profession. The following are among the most fruitful ways by Richards (2005):

- Decide what you would like to learn about your teaching and about the field.

- Identify a strategy to explore the topic you are interest

- Talk to people who have taken part in a professional development activity

- Decide what kind of support you will need

- Select a colleague or colleagues to work with

- Set realistic goals and establish a time frame

- Evaluate what you have learned and share the results with others.

It is highly advisable that once teachers have implemented development while taking these issues in mind, go one step back and reflect on what and how well they have done it and see whether modifications or changes were of essential importance. It would be then

that real development has taken place!

### 7.4 The Essence of Teacher Training Courses

To the knowledge of the researchers, as all of us are experiencing a post method condition, a sudden shift towards ways of developing professionalism is felt among teachers. As Bolitho puts forward in his article "Language teachers, and particularly teachers of English as a second or foreign language, are under ever pressure to acquire a master's degree in addition to a post-graduate teaching certificate, continuing that this trend is persuading far too many teachers to set their sights on professional advancement". He also puts emphasis on managers and principles highly insisting on academic credentials as well as a basic professional qualification. Meanwhile, he and his followers keep stressing that by the time teaching is considered as a lower level, average paid job with long working hours, there will be imbalance in the term profession!

Moving further, the authors can observe renowned applied linguists such as Underhill (1984), to clearly and comprehensibly illustrate what the existing problem is with regard to professional development this way:

> 'What is missing from our thinking about teacher training and teacher development is a real understanding of precisely how teachers grow and change, based not on armchair theory but on the vigorous experience of what actually happens and what could happen inside ourselves, our colleagues and our students' (as cited in Bolitho).

Finally, it is also worth noting here that the fact that all teachers need an advancement and increase in professional development/refreshment as a tool to better tackle the problems encountered in their daily classrooms, is an understandable and at the same time a potentially expensive one for employers and those in charge. But let us bear in mind that if you are one of those in charge of teachers' development and education, reflect critically on the issue that the need for personal development and professional updating remains a key factor if you aim at improving the quality of the education system, in which training courses stand as one of the most crucial steps to be taken!

## 8. Methodology

### 8.1 Participants and Setting

The participants in this study consisted of 30 EFL male and female teachers majority of whom (40%)had a teaching experience of 2 to 5 years in different language schools in Mashhad Iran. Almost all of these participants marked their proficiency in English as Excellent (40%) and very good (40%). Once the program was over, the aforementioned participants were asked to fill in a researchers-made questionnaire checking their attitudes about the IELTS T.T.C program they had taken part in within 20 minutes. In order to control the reliability of the answers a control item was included in the questionnaire. Those who answered positively to this control item, were omitted from the available number of participants. Majority of these teachers' age (80%) ranged between 21 to 30. The aforementioned T.T.C program was held in Mahan Language School as one of the three official centers for administering IELTS examination. Since there were no other such programs being held in Mashhad, Iran at the time of carrying out the study and also because the case of holding such T.T.C programs in educational settings is so limited in number, the type of sampling used in this study was a convenient one.

### 8.2 Instrumentation

The means of gathering data in this research were of both qualitative (open ended questions) and quantitative (researchers made questionnaire) each of which will be discussed briefly.

### 8.2.1 Teachers' Self Declaration on Professional Development Questionnaire

With the aim of checking the teachers' opinion with regard to the effect of the longitudinal T.T.C program they had taken part in, the researchers designed a 30 item questionnaire which asked teachers to mark their opinions on each of the 5 point Likert scale items ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". In order to design the questionnaire, the researchers were present all throughout the T.T.C program and monitored the A-Z of the delivered instruction. Once the questionnaire was designed, three experts in the field commented and reviewed the items for the sake of the validation of the

questionnaire several times and necessary changes were applied accordingly. Afterwards, its reliability was estimated after piloting the questionnaire on 20 of these EFL teachers, using Cronbach Alpha which revealed a high degree of .902 reliability. The amount of time allotted for answering the questionnaire was 20 minutes.

### 8.2.2 Open-Ended Questions

In order to come up with a richer and more profound data and also to answer the first and the second research questions, two open ended questions were employed in the process of qualitative data collection. As for the first question, which asked about the reasons the participants had attended the program, 18 out of 30 candidates were chosen randomly (mostly based on their willingness) and they were asked to provide brief explanations to the question. The second question, which needed a more sophisticated, critical outlook towards the program, was answered only by 12 out of 30 who were willing to discuss and share their opinionson what they thought their ideas about the T.T.C course they took are and how their attitudes as a teacher had changed as a result of this program!

### 8.3 Procedure

As for the T.T.C program to commence, all the teachers who participated in the study were asked to take part in IELTS sample examination in order for the instructor of the program to adjust his level of teaching as well as the way he approached the program! Once the exam was taken by all the teachers, they were divided into two groups, those who managed to get 5 to 7 and those who could achieve above 7 to 9. Next after this, the T.T.C program for both groups was commenced by the same instructor, at the same hour, same place and with the same duration on odd and even days. The program largely focused on familiarizing teachers with the most effective ways of teaching the four skills needed for IELTS program namely as Writing, Reading, Speaking and Listening. Next after this, a researchers-made questionnaire was designed which asked teachers about their opinions with regard to the program they had attended.

### 8.3.1 Data Collection

The IELTS T.T.C program started in February 2015 and ended in May 2015 in Mahan Language School which is one of the three official centers for IELTS examinations to be administered in Iran. The data collection means in this study were of both qualitative (open-ended questions) and quantitative (researchers made questionnaire). The questionnaire was administered at the end of the T.T.C program. The researchers were present all throughout the administration so as to ease the process for the participants and keep the conditions consistent.

### 9. Data Analysis and Results

Once the T.T.C program was brought to an end, the researchers aimed at investigating teachers' opinion with regard to how influential and significant the effect of this program has been for them in general and their professional development in particular. To this end, all these thirty teachers were divided into 4 groups (highly influential, influential, less influential, and not influential) based on their achieved score (a total of 1150) on the questionnaire and the results were computed through Cross tabulation and Chi-square test. The two open ended questions were also utilized to extract the main reasons teachers had for taking part in the program as well as the participants' ideas about the T.T.C course they took! With this intention, the answers were thoroughly examined and analyzed and 'some common categories and themes were extracted and the frequency was computed through SPSS 16 software. And finally, the results were discussed in the teaching and learning setting.

With the aim of answering the research questions, the data which were accumulated through the administration of the questionnaires were analyzed through the use of Chi-square test and Cross-tabulation for the obtained quantitative data and frequencies were used as for the obtained qualitative data i.e. the open ended questions.

The researchers aimed at going through the analysis of the of teachers' answers with regard to how effective the IELTS T.T.C program has been for them and following that, the same teachers' ideas in the qualitative phase of this paper were analyzed and finally the researchers came up with concluding points regarding the relation between this IELTS T.T.C program and its relation with teachers' professional development.

### 9.1 Qualitative Data Analysis

With the aim of answering the first and the second research questions, two open-ended questions were included to the end of the questionnaire. The purpose of the first question was to highlight the main motivating reasons these teachers had for taking part in this T.T.C program. A total number of 20 EFL teachers among these 30 were chosen randomly and were asked to answer the two open ended questions. Once it was done, the responses were analyzed and as a result, two of them were excluded mainly because their responses were not relevant to the research question. Once the analysis of the responses was done, the researchers grouped the obtained answers into four categories to make the data quantifiable: those who attended the program to "improve aspects of their English", "improve their knowledge", "prepare and know more about IELTS", and finally those who attended the program for "personal reasons". Table 1 indicates the responses the participants revealed in this case.

As Table 1 depicts, majority of the participants who took part in the qualitative phase, 7 out of 18 (38.90 percent), claimed that the main reason for attending the T.T.C program was to improve aspects of their teaching. Some of the reasons underlying this category included:

- Learning new methods of teaching

- Solving problems related to managing their students during the class.

- Making further progress in teaching process.

- Getting to know useful techniques to approach teaching different skills.

- Solving problems related to teaching some special teaching strategies.

- Watering down high expectations from students.

Since the purpose of the second question was to investigate the participants' ideas about the T.T.C course they took, 15 teachers were selected randomly (based on their willingness). The answers were analyzed and categorized based on 12 of these teachers and the rest of the 3 teachers were removed from the analysis mainly because their responses were not complete in scope or rather in comprehensible or not completely in line with the purpose of the research question. As a result of the analysis of the answers for the second research question, two categories were extracted: "a change in teaching" and "a change in personal attitudes". The results are depicted in Table 2.

Based on the presented results, about half of the teachers (58.30 percent) believed that once they took part in this program and it was over, a significant change occurred in their teaching style, and some of the changes they could observably notice in their teaching style were as follows:

- How and when to teach skills and sub-skills.

- Being able to manage students' behavior in the classroom.

- Examining new methods of teaching.

- Assessing students' progress better than before.

- Deciding on what I am going teach in class.

### 9.2. Quantitative Data Analysis

Regarding the third research question focusing on whether there exists any significant relation between IELTS T.T.C program and the influence they declare it might have on their professional development, the results of the obtained data through the questionnaire was entered and analyzed through SPSS. Chi test as well as Cross-tabulation were employed to check the existence of any significant relationship. Moreover, to provide further outcomes for this study, the relation of the T.T.C program and other factors, such as teachers' English proficiency and their teaching

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Improve aspects of my teaching | 7 | 38.9 | 38.9 | 38.9 |
| | improve my knowledge | 4 | 22.2 | 22.2 | 61.1 |
| | prepare and know more for IELTS | 4 | 22.2 | 22.2 | 83.3 |
| | personal reasons | 3 | 16.7 | 16.7 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 18 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Table 1. Frequency: Reasons for Taking Part in IELTS TTC Program

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | A change in Teaching | 7 | 58.3 | 58.3 | 58.3 |
| | A change in Personal attitudes | 5 | 41.7 | 41.7 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 12 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Table 2. Frequency: In What Ways Has Your Attitude Changed

experience, were also taken into consideration.

For this further investigation to happen, the researchers categorized the obtained scores of the teachers on the questionnaire, into four groups of highly influential (112.50-150), influential (75-112.50), less influential (37.50-75) and not influential (1- 37.50). The analysis revealed that most of these teachers (18 out of 30) were placed under the category of "influential" which is an indicating factor of teachers considering this T.T.C program an effective one in their professional development.

The relation between their performance on the questionnaire and other factors including their English proficiency, and teaching experience were also estimated. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 exhibits that 18 (60 percent) of the total participants of this research declared that this T.T.C program has been "influential" with regard to their professional development. And 11 of these teachers (36.07 percent) considered the program as "highly influential" and there was no teacher placed under the category "not influential".

The data in Table 3 indicated the relation between the teachers' categories on Self Declaration Questionnaire (Highly influential to Less influential) and their general proficiency. Majority of the teachers had an English proficiency of Excellent and very good (80 percent), 60 percent of which (18 teachers) were placed under the second category "influential". And there existed no one who had an English proficiency of below good i.e. weak or too weak. The significance of the relation is depicted in Table 4.

The Pearson Chi-Square value in Table 4 is 6.364. Its Asymp. Significance (two-sided) is .174 which is smaller than

Pearson value. Thus, there is a significant relationship between the influence of the T.T.C program and the influence teachers declare it might have on their professional development is rejected. Therefore, it can be claimed that if teachers participate in teacher education programs in general and T.T.C programs in particular, it will influence their perspectives in terms of their career as well as their professionalism.

Following this, with the intention of checking what teachers declare about the influence of the T.T.C program and their teaching experience, the probable relationship between the two was estimated. These teachers' teaching experience ranged from less than 2 years to over 8 years and they were categorized accordingly. The results are depicted in Table 5.

As Table 5 shows majority of these teachers had a teaching experience of 2-5 years (40 percent) which were mostly placed under the category "influential". Next after this, the teachers who had over 8 years of teaching experience (30 percent) topped the chart, most of whom, once again, believed the program to be "influential" for them. The significance of the relation is depicted trough Chi-Square test in Table 6.

The Pearson Chi-Square value in Table 6 is 11.479. Its Asymp. Significance (two-sided) is .075 which is smaller than Pearson value. Thus, there is a significant relationship between the influence of the T.T.C program and teachers' Teaching Experience.

As another further finding of the present study, it is worth mentioning that the same process was carried out to check if the program being compulsory had any relation with the program being considered influential. Surprisingly, almost all the teachers, 26 out of 30 (86.70 percent), claimed that they had taken part in the program because of their own personal will and not because it was compulsory and accordingly these 26 participants were placed under the category "influential". Moreover, Chi-Square test revealed that there exists a significant relation between the two variables (Its Asymp. Significance,.215, is smaller than Pearson value, 3.077).

All in all, the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the gathered data in this paper revealed that there existed a

| | Highly Influential | Influential | Less Influential | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Excellent | (6)20.0% | (6)20.0% | .0% | 40.0% |
| Very good | (5)16.7% | (6)20.0% | (1)3.3% | 40.0% |
| Good | .0% | (6)20.0% | .0% | 20.0% |

Table 3. Frequencies: English Proficiency

| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 6.364a | 4 | .174 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 8.587 | 4 | .072 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 3.187 | 1 | .074 |
| N of Valid Cases | 30 | | |

Table 4. Chi-Square Tests: English Proficiency

| | | | sum2 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Highly influential | influential | Less influential | Total |
| Years of teaching experience | less than 2 years | Count | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| | | % within years of teaching experience | .0% | 100.0% | .0% | 100.0% |
| | | % within sum2 | .0% | 5.6% | .0% | 3.3% |
| | 2-5 years | % of Total | .0% | 3.3% | .0% | 3.3% |
| | | Count | 3 | 9 | 0 | 12 |
| | 5-8 years | % within years of teaching experience | 25.0% | 75.0% | .0% | 100.0% |
| | | % within sum2 | 27.3% | 50.0% | .0% | 40.0% |
| | | % of Total | 10.0% | 30.0% | .0% | 40.0% |
| | over 8 years | Count | 6 | 1 | 1 | 8 |
| | | % within years of teaching experience | 75.0% | 12.5% | 12.5% | 100.0% |
| | | % within sum2 | 54.5% | 5.6% | 100.0% | 26.7% |
| | | % of Total | 20.0% | 3.3% | 3.3% | 26.7% |
| | | Count | 2 | 7 | 0 | 9 |
| | | % within years of teaching experience | 22.2% | 77.8% | .0% | 100.0% |
| | | % within sum2 | 18.2% | 38.9% | .0% | 30.0% |
| | | % of Total | 6.7% | 23.3% | .0% | 30.0% |
| Total | | Count | 11 | 18 | 1 | 30 |
| | | % within years of teaching experience | 36.7% | 60.0% | 3.3% | 100.0% |
| | | % within sum2 | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| | | % of Total | 36.7% | 60.0% | 3.3% | 100.0% |

Table 5. Crosstabulation: Years of Teaching Experience

| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 11.479a | 6 | .075 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 12.464 | 6 | .052 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .062 | 1 | .804 |
| N of Valid Cases | 30 | | |

Table 6. Chi-Square Tests: Years of teaching experience

significant relation between taking part in teacher education programs in general and this IELTS T.T.C program in particular and the direct relation teachers believe it possesseson their professional development in general and changes in their teaching style and perspectives in particular.

## 10. Discussion and Conclusion

According to the data analysis and illustrating the results obtained through Cross-tabulation and Chi-square test, it was revealed that there is a statistically significant correlation between what teachers declared about the benefits of the IELTS T.T.C program and its relation on their professional development. Moreover, the qualitative phase of the study, open ended questions, depicted that teachers mostly believed this program to be "influential" for them with regard to the apparent change which is caused in different aspects of their teaching as well as the observed improvement in their teaching style. All in all, the qualitative phase stressed the issue that teacher education programs in general and this very IELTS T.T.C program in particular has got its immediate impact on teachers' teaching habits and styles which perfectly results in

teachers' professional development and thus there can be located a very one to one correspondence between the two i.e. the more care teachers place on their own education and well-being as a teacher the more perfectly developed their professionalism would be.

## Conclusion

The present study aimed at uncovering the importance of one of the teacher education programs, T.T.C programs, for teachers' professional development. Also, other researchers, as well, have done a bit of the great to help revealing this prominence and they also have come up with ways of developing PD and also why and how it could be important to teachers as well as learners. For instance, Knight (2002) in his paper, "A Systematic Approach to Professional Development: Learning as Practice", maintains that "common sense reliance on the event-delivery models of continuing professional development which are located in managerialist discourses is not good sense because it is a poor fit with learning theories that appreciate the significance of non-formal learning in communities of practice". He further continues that this alternative account of learning gives priority to some departmental practices, such as building a shared pedagogical repertoire, and implies giving lesser priority to other common sense claims on attention.

Identifying success in online teacher education and professional development, is the area which has been

deeply investigated by King (2002). The concluding point he emphasizes on is the fact that online courses and specifically hybrid classes offer teacher education, a format that is content rich, flexible, personalized, facilitated by informed instructors, and nearly technology transparent holds the possibility of developing not only vibrant explorations of knowledge and practice in the content area, but also communities of learners and practice, and lifelong learning perspectives and skills within this field of application which clearly leads to educators' professional development.

After all, although the present study is a small scale representation of how teachers' professional development can be maintained through time and how significant its relation can be with regard to different kinds of teacher education programs including T.T.C programs, the researchers closely tried to bring the mind and vividly monitor a real-life case of PD related issues and therefore come up with the apparent fact that its outcome is greatly in line with other studies as well as what renown researchers and language specialists have long been stressing. On top of all, a T.T.C program can be considered a great help for teachers' professional development, since as Fullan (1995a) argues, professional development is "the sum total of formal and informal learning pursued and experienced by the teacher in a compelling learning environment under conditions of complexity and dynamic change" (p. 265). Day (1999) also, through a more descriptive interpretation of professional development, defines the term as "the process by which, alone and with others (T.T.C program in this case) teachers review, renew and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purposes of teaching; and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills, planning and practice with children, young people and colleagues through each phase of their teaching lives" (p. 4). Also, Bredeson (2002) perceives the notion of professional development through three interdependent concepts: learning, engagement and improved practice, and defines professional development as "learning opportunities that engage educators' creative and reflective capacities in ways that strengthen their practice" (p. 663) all of which can be achieved through a community of practice, and a T.T.C program can be a

horizon for all these to be met. Of great importance in this area, one can refer to the idea Richards and Farrell (2005) put forward believing that "the need for ongoing teacher education has been a recurring theme in language teaching circles in recent years and has been given renewed focus as the result of the emergence of teacher-led initiatives such as reflective teaching, action research and team teaching".

Besides all the discussed issues, the most prominent implication of the current study would be a horizon through which researchers and practitioners are enabled and reassured to take actions for more varied teacher education programs to be held in educational settings and to give greater priority and importance to ways of developing teachers' professionalism. Therefore, suggestions for further studies are raised so as to carry out researches which compare and contrast the influence of two or more other teacher education programs on teachers' professional development in contexts other than EFL. Also, similar studies can be taken into consideration for contexts such as Universities or other higher education settings which are playing important roles in twenty first century's educational scope.

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