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EFL Teacher Preparation and Professional Development Needs in Rural Schools

Case study: EFL Teachers in the District of Ain Elhadjel

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ABSTRACT

As the world grows increasingly interdependent. More emphasis is placed on teaching and learning English in both urban and rural settings. In Algeria, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is considered a key subject in the education system, aiming to prepare teachers and provide them with essential professional development opportunities. This study primarily aims to assess the effectiveness of current EFL teacher training programs in equipping educators with the essential competencies, understanding, and resources necessary for teaching in rural settings. It also aims to identify the specific professional development needs of rural EFL teachers that current programs fail to address. A mixed-method approach is adopted, combining qualitative and quantitative data from a questionnaire administered to 32 rural EFL teachers across AinElhadjel district in M'sila. Data are analyzed using thematic analysis and descriptive statistics to identify patterns and disparities. Findings reveal notable gaps between the curriculum of teacher training programs and the realities of rural classrooms. The surveyed teachers report limited availability of local programs, a lack of financial resources, difficulty accessing technology, and content that is not relevant to rural settings. Additionally, ongoing professional development is reported to be limited, particularly in rural settings. The research concludes that EFL teacher training programs require significant reform to address the socio-cultural challenges of rural education demands. It recommends that policymakers and training institutions tailor programs to address the pedagogical needs of rural areas and provide rural teachers with additional incentives and retention strategies. It also recommends that policymakers should adapt curricula to incorporate teaching methods relevant to rural settings, along with mentorship initiatives and ongoing professional development to improve educator preparedness and effectiveness in these areas.

Keywords: Teacher Preparation; Professional Development; Rural Teaching Challenges; Educational Policies.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work first and foremost:

- To the candles of my life: my mother and my father for their support and advice
- To my brothers, sisters, and children
- It is also a pleasure to acknowledge a great debt to my friends and online

Colleagues

- To all my teachers and faculty's staff
- To all educators of English in Ain El Hadjel who took part in our work

DEDICATION

Firstly, I dedicate this work to:

- The memory of my father, May Allah bless him.
- My mother for her endless love and precious help, who always encouraged me, and wanted to see me on this day. May God prolong her life.
- My sisters and brothers.
- My angels: Sirine, Sofiane, and Souzane, my children.
- To the truly exceptional people, Professor Chreit Salahddine, Teachers Fathi Baghdadi,

Badreddine Benhamad and Belkacem Faudil for their support and encouragement.

- To all my teachers and faculty staff.
- To my online colleagues.
- To every person who will have the occasion to read this modest work.

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

We, Adel Aoubid and SidaliKelkouli, hereby declare that all the information in this document has been carried out and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct.

The research project we will present in this dissertation is our own, and it has been read and approved by our supervisor, Pr. ASSIA BAGHDADI. This research project has not been submitted before to any other institution or university for a degree. This work was carried out and completed at Mohamed Boudiaf University of MSILA, ALGERIA.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1. Background of the Study

Teacher Preparation and Professional Development Needs in rural Algeria face significant challenges, including geographic isolation, limited resources, and socioeconomic disparities, which hinder access to quality education and training opportunities. Though the Algerian authorities have devoted a lot of efforts to remedy the situation, rural areas continue to lag behind urban schools in educational outcomes and teacher support. An existing research held by (Deradra & Chaouche, 2016) highlights disparities in teacher training between urban and rural areas, with rural educators lacking access to adequate training facilities and support networks. However, these studies often lack localized data and fail to address the specific professional development needs of rural teachers. This gap emphasizes the importance of adopting more precise, data-based research to understand better and address the specific challenges faced by rural educators, including isolation, lack of resources, and poor infrastructure. The aim is to improve teaching quality and boost student achievement in these areas.

2. Statement of the Problem

Improving rural education in Algeria is a complex challenge that demands thorough research to inform effective policies and practices. Rural areas experience significant inequalities and major differences in access to quality education, infrastructure, and resources, yet these issues haven't received adequate scholarly focus. This scarcity of research and limited evidence hinders policymakers' ability to effectively address these disparities and inequalities, sustaining existing disadvantages and limiting the potential for meaningful educational reform. This study seeks to fill this critical gap by identifying the specific obstacles to rural education in Algeria and offering

practical recommendations to support the development of inclusive and sustainable policies and practices.

3. Aim of the Study

The present research aims to achieve the following objectives:

- This study examines rural teachers' training programs and professional development opportunities
- Investigates the Algerian educational policy's addressing rural schools
- Identifies the perceived challenges faced by rural schools in terms of training programs and professional development needs
- Develops policy recommendations and practical solutions for improving rural education

quality.

4. Research Questions

Aligned with the stated problem and aims of the study, this research aims to address the following questions.

1. To what extent do teacher preparation programs and professional development opportunities exist for EFL teachers in rural areas, and how do they impact teaching effectiveness?
2. How do current educational policies in Algeria address the needs of EFL teachers in rural schools?
3. What challenges do rural schools face in terms of teacher preparation and professional development?

5. Significance of the Study

While teachers in urban schools practice their occupation with fewer challenges, teachers in rural areas face several issues that hinder their teaching-learning process. A lot of support and facilities are offered to urban teachers, providing students with high-quality learning experiences. Whereas rural schools face significant constraints. This study is significant because it highlights the different challenges faced by rural teachers and provides actionable recommendations to

improve teacher preparation, professional development, and overall educational outcomes in rural schools. This will reduce educational disparities, empower rural communities, and advance regional and national education reform.

6. Overview of the Methodology

The present study aims to investigate Teacher Preparation programs and Professional Development Needs in Rural Schools. A qualitative approach is adopted, offering a thorough understanding of the issue and strengthening the study's credibility using adequate data collection methods. The primary research tool we utilize for gathering data is a questionnaire designed to capture both qualitative and quantitative insights by incorporating closed-ended and open-ended questions. This approach allowed for a deeper exploration of teachers' attitudes and opinions. The questionnaire will be administered to 32 teachers working in rural areas within the district of Ain El Hadjel, Msila, as they possess knowledge of the challenges associated with teaching English in such geographically isolated region. The study's sample consists of thirty-two (32) teachers, selected randomly to ensure a representative and unbiased perspective.

7. Structure of the Study

The study is structured into two main chapters, each further divided into two sections. The first chapter consists of two sections. The first one lays the groundwork and addresses the main issues related to teacher preparation programs, professional development, the theoretical underpinnings of professional development, various forms and models of professional development, and the impact of professional development on teaching effectiveness and student outcomes. The second section shifts the focus to the practicalities of Algerian educational policies and the challenges faced by rural schools. Chapter Two delves into the practical aspects of the study, outlining the research methodology with a specific focus on the research design, methodologies, data collection, and analysis procedures employed to explore Teachers' Preparation and professional development needs comprehensively. This chapter presents the analyzed findings, discusses their implications, and concludes with recommendations aiming at improving EFL teacher preparation and professional development needs in rural areas. It concludes by outlining the study's limitations and proposes recommendations for future research.

Chapter One

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter presents the key elements necessary for the exploration of rural education by emphasizing the educational theories that explain the importance of teacher preparation programs and professional development opportunities in rural schools, identifying the current Algerian educational policies that address EFL teachers' needs, and the challenges rural schools face in terms of teacher preparation and professional development.

The chapter begins by defining teacher preparation programs, highlighting professional development opportunities, and explaining some theoretical underpinnings related to teacher training and professional development, as well as covering various forms and models of these programs. This chapter reveals the impact of professional development on teaching effectiveness and student outcomes. Then, it shifts the focus to the practical educational policies in Algeria and their response to the needs of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in rural schools. At the end of this chapter, the focus moves to exploring the challenges that rural teachers encounter, emphasising their significant impact on teachers' retention and students' outcomes.

Section One: EFL Teacher Preparation Programs

1. EFL Teacher Preparation Programs

Teacher preparation is very important in educational system. It plays a crucial role in influencing teaching quality and effectiveness. Today's teachers are not just content deliverers; they are expected to be innovators, mentors, and continuous learners. Therefore, their preparation must be thorough, integrating both theoretical knowledge and practical skills. This section explores the concept of teacher preparation, its key elements, and its importance, highlighting the Algerian context and some viewpoints that emphasize the importance of well-structured teacher training.

1.1 Definition of Teacher Preparation

In Algeria, Teachers are regarded as fundamental pillars of education due to their active involvement in the teaching-learning processes of the educational system and their significant influence on its results. The role of the teacher is not limited to traditional roles; it has also taken

on new roles that require a review of their professional and cultural preparation for the teaching profession to catch up with modern developments. This is what Algeria has worked to implement through its reforms aimed at developing the Algerian education system.

According to Professor Mirou (2015), Teaching is a profession that is the mother of all occupations. He argues that teachers are like sculptors, shaping the minds of the next generation, and their personalities should include the satisfaction of helping others, gathering and sharing information, possessing strong written and oral communication skills, team-building skills, and a positive attitude to bring about valuable change in society. Similarly, Sandholtz (2006), describes a teacher as a potter who delicately shapes our impressionable minds into vessels of knowledge. For this, preparing teachers to fulfil their crucial role in society requires good preparation. To do this crucial role, teachers require comprehensive preparation. Research supports that teachers who are well-prepared and have had high-quality preparation experiences have the most significant influence on students' achievements Wilson (2001). For example, a new teacher who receives effective mentoring learns enough to avoid many mistakes that beginning teachers often make and can produce student gains similar to those of a teacher with three years of experience (Goldhaber et al., 2020).

The National Centre for Education Statistics (NCES) defines teacher preparation as the structured training process that prospective teachers undergo to develop the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies required for effective teaching. This process typically includes academic coursework, pedagogical training, and practical teaching experiences, such as student teaching or internships. In addition, Hammond (2006) considers that teacher preparation programs are designed to provide future educators with a strong foundation in subject content, instructional strategies, classroom management, and assessment techniques. These programs aim to ensure that new teachers enter the profession with the confidence and expertise needed to meet the diverse needs of students. Indeed, Teacher preparation can take different forms, including university-based education programs, alternative certification programs, and on-the-job training. Regardless of the approach, adequate teacher preparation emphasizes both theoretical knowledge and practical application to ensure that teachers are well-equipped to address the challenges of modern classrooms.

Indeed, teacher preparation does not end with initial training; professional development is significant for the ongoing enhancement of teachers' skills and knowledge. As Glathorn (1995) defines it, professional development involves structured learning experiences that stem from teaching practice. It encompasses both formal experiences, such as attending professional courses, seminars, and workshops, as well as informal experiences, including reading research papers and exploring online resources Ganser (2000). Continuous professional development ensures that teachers remain effective educators, adapt to evolving educational challenges, and strengthen student success.

1.2 Historical Overview of Teacher Preparation Programs

Teacher Preparation Programs in Algeria have evolved and developed over time, gaining significance with ongoing educational reforms. While the core objectives of past and present programs remain largely the same, their preparation methods have undergone notable changes. Recognizing the vital role of teacher preparation, educational authorities have increasingly prioritized training programs at all levels of the education system.

1.3 Teacher Preparation for Rural Schools

Algerian schools are updating both pre-service and in-service teacher preparation programs to align with recent innovations. While the core objectives of the older and newer programs remain broadly similar, they differ in training methods, strategies, and areas of emphasis. These programs play a vital role in preparing teachers for their professional careers and in enhancing the quality of language education. The Algerian Ministry of Education recognizes their importance as essential tools for advancing the education system. However, questions remain about how effectively these programs prepare teachers for real classroom practices (Hadi, 2021).

1.4 Importance of Teacher Preparation Programs

Teacher preparation programs play a crucial role in education, as they contribute to professional development and overall educational progress. Both pre-service and in-service training programs are essential for enhancing language education and strengthening the educational system. Their primary goal is to improve teaching performance and, in turn, promote students' academic levels. These programs provide teachers with the necessary qualifications and

experiences while introducing them to effective pedagogical techniques that help achieve broader educational objectives.

Through direct training, new teachers gain practical skills that support their professional growth and contribute to school improvement. According to Mirou (2015), teacher training programs can enhance teachers' performance by developing their skills and performance, which enables them to meet the evolving demands of modern education. It familiarizes educators with modern teaching methods while building strong relationships with students. Through targeted training, teachers are guided toward effective strategies that positively influence student behavior and achievements. Moreover, professional development promotes harmony between teachers' aims and educational goals. It also keeps educators up to date about the latest knowledge and advancements in the field, developing mentoring and collaboration in schools. By offering new insights, professional development enhances teachers' skills, enlarges their knowledge, and prepares them to overcome the diverse challenges they may face in their careers. Additionally, it enhances teachers' abilities by addressing their weaknesses and promoting a culture of curiosity and participation in scientific research while fostering ongoing professional development.

1.5 Types of Teacher Preparation Programs

Teacher training programs refer to the various approaches teachers can take to become educators. These programs are designed to equip teachers with the necessary knowledge, skills, and practices needed to succeed in classrooms. Common types of teacher preparation programs include traditional and modern preparation programs, in addition to curriculum design and adaptation for rural schools. In deed, understanding these programs guarantee that all educators are adequately prepared to support student learning and promote equity in education.

1.5.1 Traditional Teacher Preparation Programs

By 1962, the French colonial education system had established six training schools for primary teachers. At the time of independence, Algeria had between 1,000 and 2,600 French-language teachers, while the school system required around 20,000 educators for the September 1962 academic year. Following more than a century of French colonial rule, most Algerian intellectuals were educated in French.

To address this urgent need, the government issued decree 62/10 on September 27, 1962, allowing for the direct recruitment of teachers without considering their formal educational background. In the period between 1963 and 1967, two key training institutions were established:

1. The National Training Centre for Primary and Middle School Inspectors.
2. The National School of Technical Learning in El Harach, Algiers. (Benmati, 2008).

1.5.2 Modern Preparation Programs

According to Ghedjghoudj (2002), recent educational reforms have had a significant impact on teacher education and training. Changes in curriculum objectives and content have introduced new teaching strategies, instructional tools, and evaluation methods. The rapid advancement of information technology has also transformed the teacher's role—from being the primary source of knowledge to acting as a guide and facilitator. Teachers are now expected to help students navigate, evaluate, and apply information from diverse sources. These evolving teaching and learning methods must be incorporated into teacher preparation programs to equip teachers with the necessary skills to meet modern challenges.

As highlighted by Benmati (2008), the Algerian Ministry of Education established two teacher preparation bodies: Continuous Training Body applied from December 1999 to March 2000, providing in-service training, and Temporary Training Body Designed for basic education teachers who had not completed their secondary studies.

Between 1999 and 2000, teacher training was transferred to universities, specifically to Higher National Schools (ENS). Ministerial Proclamation No. 22/10/2000 introduced three distinct teacher preparation institutions:

- Higher Schools of Teachers (ENS) (1999–2000).
- National Teacher Training Institutions.
- In-Service Teacher Training Institutions

In the 2000s, the Ministry of Education introduced a competitive recruitment process for teacher employment, which included exams in specialization, Arabic language, general culture, and information and communication technologies (ICT). The training programs were structured into nine modules. As part of ongoing educational reforms, since 2015, newly recruited teachers have been required to complete a six-week pedagogical training program. The EFL teacher

training curriculum includes subjects such as Didactics, Educational Psychology, School Legislation, Professional Ethics, Automated Media, School Mediation, the Algerian Educational System, and Training Engineering.

Following reforms in the Algerian education sector, the Ministry of Education now requires university graduates with a license degree as a prerequisite for teaching positions. Teacher recruitment is conducted through national competitive exams, ensuring that candidates meet the required qualifications and competencies.

1.6 Curriculum Design and Adaptation for Rural Contexts

The word "curriculum" comes from the Latin term *currere*, which means a racecourse or a path leading to a specific goal. In education, the concept of curriculum has been interpreted in multiple ways, reflecting its complex nature. (Tanner & Tanner, 1995) describe curriculum as a structured plan including all experiences a student encounters under a school's guidance. This definition extends beyond academic subjects to encompass extracurricular activities, school culture, and social interactions, all of which shape a learner's overall experience. Similarly, Gatawa (1990) defines curriculum as the sum of all experiences schools are responsible for providing to children. This perspective aligns with that of Tanner and Tanner, emphasizing that curriculum is more than just a collection of academic courses—it is an integrated educational experience. (Sergiovanni & Starrat, 1983) support this broad understanding by defining curriculum as everything a teacher is expected to study, practice, and master. Their definition highlights the active role of trainees in the learning process, suggesting that the curriculum does not only involve the content being taught but also the methods of teaching and learning. In contrast, Reinhartz (1989) offers a more traditional definition, viewing curriculum as a structured sequence of courses that trainees must complete. This perspective focuses on curriculum as a formal academic framework that outlines the specific resources necessary for progression within the educational system.

Following Algeria's independence in 1962, the government emphasized education and teacher preparation as the base of national development. This led to regular educational reforms over the course of the decades. The most transformative was the 1971 Higher Education reform, which reshaped teaching methods, assessment processes, academic curricula, and university governance to meet the country's progressive goals. Yet, by 1999, this model was replaced by a

new approach. Critics highlighted its excessive reliance on political influence and its severe, top-down structure—a heritage of the French colonial era—which hindered its effectiveness and adaptability (Saad, 2005).

In 1999, Algeria’s educational reform aimed to transition the nation from a state-controlled economy to a market-oriented system. The reforms also reoriented universities’ mission, focusing on science and technology in both teaching and research to foster the country for global competition (Saad, 2005). Structured around three core pillars—democratization, Arabization, and Algerianization—the changes reintroduced the faculty system as outlined in the Inter-ministerial Order of August 3, 1999. Democratization guaranteed universal access to free higher education, while Arabization and Algerianization prioritized replacing French with Arabic in classrooms to reclaim cultural identity. Moreover, curricula were updated, and teaching methods reshaped to align with Algeria’s socio-economic priorities, marking a significant shift from colonial legacies toward self-reliant progress.

Today, Algeria’s higher education system is modelled after the French academic framework, operating under a License-Master-Doctorate (LMD) structure. Introduced through an executive decree on November 21, 2004, this reform aimed to modernize Algerian universities by aligning them with international standards. The LMD model emphasizes student mobility, providing future teachers with job-ready skills and fostering lifelong learning to meet progressing economic demands (Saad, 2005).

In addition to these educational changes, Algeria revamped its fundamental education system decades ago. The 1976 “fundamental school” reform restructured schooling into a 6+3+3 model—six years of primary education, three years of junior high school, and three years of senior high school. This reform aimed to organize academic stages, bridge gaps between basic and university education, and cater to various specialities. It also prioritized updating curricula, refining teaching methods, and enhancing teacher training while restoring assessment systems to ensure quality (Ordinance No. 76-35, 1976; World Bank, 1993). These reforms reflect Algeria’s efforts to balance global integration with the specific needs and goals of the national education systems.

By the 1990s, the government acknowledged systemic failures, including old infrastructure, unqualified teachers, outdated materials, and overcrowded classrooms, which troubled the

system. This led to the creation of ineffective practices. Expanding access led to a rise in dropout and repetition rates. Though the root causes remained understudied, officials labeled these issues as structural and pedagogical shortcomings (World Bank, 1993).

In 2000, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who had previously described the system as “doomed,” launched a comprehensive reform initiative. On May 13, 2000, he established the National Commission for Reform of the Educational System (CNRSE), appointing 170 educators and policymakers to redesign the sector. After a year of intensive work, the commission submitted its roadmap in March 2001. This culminated in the August 2003 adoption of Ordinance No. 03-08, which updated and expanded the foundational 1976 education laws. The reforms aimed to replace outdated frameworks and provide new life to Algeria’s schools (Gherzouli, 2019).

In 2008, Algeria’s Ministry of National Education established the " National Council of Programmes (CNP)" through " Law No. 08-04", assigning it the responsibility of redesigning curricula across all subjects, including English. The NCP introduced a "competency-based (CB) curriculum", aiming to modernize English language teaching to align with global communication demands. This approach focuses on the English curriculum, known as “Curriculum 2003” (the year it was launched), to explore how it was designed, managed, and implemented.

Algeria’s ongoing educational reform demonstrates its commitment to developing a stronger educational system. However, despite ambitious goals, reforms often fail due to resistance and unsatisfactory outcomes. Scholar White (2013) argues that while curriculum updates were well-intentioned, flaws in implementation reduced their effectiveness. Mohamed Chérif Belkacem, a prominent education leader, attributed these failures to a lack of collaboration between the government and stakeholders, resulting in reforms that were disconnected from realities on the ground (Bedouani, 2013). Furthermore, these issues are compounded by chronic teacher strikes and protests, which have further destabilized the sector, exposing systemic weaknesses that continue to challenge progress.

Algeria’s 2008 Curriculum reform faced strong opposition from educators, unions, parents, and national experts, who argued that it ignored their concerns (Bedouani, 2013). Teachers across the country did not protest only against the reform’s content but also the poor working conditions and their neglected professional needs. Resistance took many shapes, such as strikes, highlighting

the reform's failure to engage educators or build public trust. Critics noted that policymakers implemented the changes without consulting teachers, students, families, or unions, resulting in a notable failure.

2. The Professional Development

Professional development is essential for teacher's career, enabling them to enhance their knowledge, skills, and practices throughout their professional journey. Tomlinson (1997) argues that unlike initial training, professional development represents a lifelong learning process that support teachers in adapting to new educational challenges, integrating innovative teaching strategies, and meeting the evolving needs of students. By investing in professional development, education systems ensure that teachers remain competent, confident, and capable of delivering high-quality education in an ever-changing world.

2.1 Definition of professional development and its goals for in-service EFL teachers

Professional development (PD) is a crucial factor in enhancing teaching quality, particularly for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers working in rural settings, who often face various challenges, such as teacher shortages, a lack of professional initiatives, and difficulties accessing and utilizing technology devices. According to Hammond (2006), well-designed professional development (PD) promotes teacher retention by building confidence, fostering collaboration, and offering opportunities for career advancement. It also introduces new teaching methods tailored for rural schools, helping educators manage diverse classrooms more effectively. Additionally, PD helps rural teachers integrate technology into their teaching process, providing them with authentic techniques and strategies

Moreover, Gay (2010) emphasises that professional development (PD) plays a crucial role in supporting culturally responsive teaching and fostering community ties. Rural communities often possess unique cultural and linguistic characteristics; professional development (PD) enables educators to incorporate local traditions into their lessons and develop teaching methods that are culturally relevant and inclusive. It also fosters stronger relationships with students, families, and community stakeholders. Furthermore, PD enhances teachers' leadership capabilities and prepares them to engage in broader school improvement efforts. This includes

training in leadership roles, strategies for involving parents and local authorities, and techniques for securing grants and other educational resources. Together, these elements highlight the transformative impact of professional development on teaching quality and educational outcomes in rural contexts.

In addition to classroom skills, Muijs (2019) highlights that professional development (PD) enables teachers to design lessons based on local culture, making learning more attractive and meaningful for students in rural areas where traditions and languages are often unique. Therefore, by adapting their teaching to community values, teachers build stronger relations with both students and families. Ultimately, these opportunities don't just affect individual classrooms; they contribute to training entire communities by creating better learning experiences for students.

2.1 Importance of lifelong learning in language teaching

Professional development (PD) is a continuous process designed to enhance teachers' knowledge, skills, and attitudes, thereby improving instructional effectiveness. Steyn (2009), argues that educators and school leaders participate in professional development (PD) activities throughout their careers, either individually or in groups, with the primary goal of fostering both personal and professional growth (Tomlinson, 1997). In line with this, the South African Council for Educators (SACE, 2008) highlights that professional development (PD) strengthens teachers' understanding of the curriculum, refines their instructional techniques, deepens their awareness of students' needs, and enhances their commitment to learners and schools.

One of the key benefits of professional development (PD) is that it enables teachers to acquire up-to-date subject knowledge and implement effective instructional techniques that enhance student learning (Sparks, 1997). However, for PD to be truly effective, it must be an ongoing process that includes well-structured learning programs and individualized follow-up through supportive observation, feedback, staff discussions, and peer coaching (Campbell, 1997). This structured approach ensures that educators not only acquire new knowledge but also receive the necessary support to implement it successfully in their teaching practices.

Moreover, participation in professional development (PD) fosters collaboration among educators, encouraging them to share common challenges and take greater responsibility for their own professional growth (Ribisch, 1999). Research further suggests that PD is most

effective when conducted consistently over a long period, allowing for sustained improvements in self-confidence, knowledge, and teaching skills (Robinson, 2002).

Since professional development (PD) involves continuous learning and skill development with the ultimate goal of enhancing student performance, it is essential to consider the diverse learning styles of individual educators. Studies indicate that adult learners exhibit significant individual differences that can influence their learning process, underscoring the need for professional development (PD) programs to be tailored to accommodate these variations (Burke, 1997). By aligning professional development (PD) initiatives with teachers' learning needs, schools can ensure more effective and meaningful professional growth, ultimately benefiting both educators and students.

2.3 The Connection Between Professional Development and Student Achievement

Teaching is crucial for reinforcing student achievement, as numerous factors influence learning outcomes (previous schooling, parents' educational background, family income, students' self-motivation, students' age, learning preferences, and entry qualification of students) affect student performance at school, college, and even university level (Ali, 2013). Research indicates that a teacher's academic and professional qualifications have a significant impact on student performance (Rice, 2003). However, teacher effectiveness is not solely determined by qualifications but also by their experience, teaching methods, training, and professional commitment. Some researchers argue that while qualifications are essential, other attributes, such as dedication and pedagogical skills, play a vital role in improving student learning.

Professional qualifications are essential for ensuring that teachers possess the necessary skills to educate students effectively. Yet, the education sector does not consistently enforce strict licensing requirements, allowing unqualified individuals to teach (Ashton, 1986). Therefore, Teacher training and ongoing professional development are essential for improving instructional quality and addressing the challenges of contemporary education (Wayne, 2003). In addition to qualifications, teaching experience is a key factor in student achievement. Research suggests that teachers with at least five years of experience tend to produce better student outcomes compared to those with less experience. Effective teaching involves mastering pedagogical techniques, which typically require several years of training. Experienced teachers are more confident in their instructional methods and better equipped to manage classrooms.

Furthermore, in-service training helps teachers refine their teaching strategies, making them more effective in delivering subject content. Thus, *While qualifications ensure foundational knowledge, experience, and ongoing training further enhance teaching effectiveness.* For instance, Hanushek (2005) found that “Students taught by experienced teachers perform better than students of inexperienced teachers.”

3.Theoretical Underpinnings of Professional Development:

3.1 Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky)

According to Cherry (2024), Sociocultural theory, developed by Lev Vygotsky, places significant emphasis on the fundamental role of social interaction and cultural context in cognitive development. Concerning teacher preparation and professional development, especially in rural schools, this theory presents valuable principles on how educators learn and grow professionally through collaborative activities and learning experiences in their settings.

3.1.1 Sociocultural Theory and Teacher Preparation

According to Cherry (2024), Vygotsky's sociocultural theory posits that learning is an inherently social process where knowledge is constructed through interactions within cultural and historical contexts. A key idea in this theory is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which represents the difference between what a learner can do independently and what they can achieve when supported by someone more experienced. Vygotsky defines ZPD as " The distance between the actual development level (of the learner) as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers. Vygotsky (1978). In teacher preparation, this underscores the importance of mentorship and collaborative learning. Engaging in communities of practice permits pre-service teachers to develop their skills by observing experienced teachers, collaborating, and enhancing their professional growth.

3.1.2 Application in Rural School Contexts

Rural schools often face unique challenges, including limited access to resources, a lack of professional opportunities, and diverse teachers' needs. Applying sociocultural theory in these settings involves creating supportive learning communities that strengthen collaboration among teachers (Wass, 2014) . Professional development programs grounded in this theory, encourage

teachers to engage in shared problem-solving, reflective dialogues, and joint curriculum development, which are significant for addressing the specific needs of rural education.

3.1.3 Professional Development through Sociocultural Lenses

According to Johnson (2009), teachers' Professional Development can be improved by using a sociocultural approach, which focuses on learning through social interaction and cultural context. This means that learning occurs not only individually but also through collaboration with others, sharing experiences, and utilizing tools such as books or technology devices. Programs that follow this approach support learning improve teaching skills, and lead to long-term positive changes in education.

To improve professional development outcomes and put this theory into practice, Johnson, (2009) states some strategies that can be used, including integrating cultural artifacts such as books or digital resources to enrich learning, encouraging reflective practices and self-regulation to help educators take control of their development, and using facilitators as mediators to guide and support participants. Additionally, Johnson (2009) argues that the practical application of the sociocultural approach involves collaborating on group projects, participating in professional learning communities (PLCs), and seeking guidance from mentors or coaches. Teachers can also do research and explore topics through questions and investigations to improve their teaching. In general, incorporating sociocultural ideas enhances professional development, making it more active and effective in developing teachers' educational qualities.

3.2 Applying Sociocultural Theory in the Classroom

Rogoff (2003) argues that human development must be understood as a cultural process, not simply a biological or psychological one. Individuals develop as members of a community, and their development can only be fully understood by examining the practices and circumstances of their communities. Similarly, Wenger (1998,) demonstrates that in rural classrooms, sociocultural learning can be enriched by strong community ties, where students engage in local traditions, farming projects, or storytelling guided by elders as they move from observers to active participants. Multigrade classrooms offer peer collaboration, allowing older students to mentor younger ones, which supports learning within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) through social interaction and scaffolding. New teachers also benefit from informal mentoring by experienced colleagues or community members, helping them grow into their professional roles.

Additionally, using local stories, crafts, and environmental knowledge as teaching materials connects learning to students' real-life experiences, aligning with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and making education more meaningful and effective.

3.3 Constructivism in Teacher Learning

Constructivism is a learning theory based on the observation and scientific study of how people learn rather than simply receiving information from a teacher. It states that people construct their understanding and knowledge of the world through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences (Bereiter, 1994). That is to say, learning is not just about memorizing information; learners create meaning based on their experiences, ideas, and interactions. Similarly, Richardson (1997) argues that discussing Constructivism in teacher learning means that teachers learn better when they reflect on their teaching practices, exchange thoughts and strategies with their colleagues, try new methods of teaching, and learn by doing, not just by listening to lectures. Therefore, the best way for teachers' development is to explore, experiment, and reflect on their practice, learn in real-life situations, such as in classrooms, and collaborate with colleagues in groups or workshops.

3.4 Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

We learn best by doing. We had known this in the early times when Confucius observed, "I hear, and I forget. I see, and I remember. I do, and I understand." According to DuFour (2010), Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are small groups of teachers and school staff who regularly meet, share ideas, and collaborate to improve their teaching and help students learn more effectively. Instead of working alone, teachers in a Professional Learning Community (PLC) support each other, solve problems together, and learn from one another's experiences. Additionally, Rosenholtz (1989) considers that teachers' workplace conditions affect the discussion of teaching quality and argues that teachers who felt supported during their own continuous learning and classroom practices are more effective than those who did not. Therefore, the support provided through teacher networks, cooperation among colleagues, and expanded professional roles increases teacher efficacy in meeting students' needs.

To elaborate further, modern studies pay much attention to the importance of collaboration and shared responsibility in improving teaching practices. Hord (1997) argues that thriving Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) foster an environment of trust, shared values, and

group inquiry—essential for continuous improvement in education. Therefore, When educators engage in continuously discussing teaching methods and student progress, they do not only deepen their professional knowledge but also create more responsive learning environments. This shows that collaboration enables teachers to address diverse classroom challenges better, resulting in higher student achievement and stronger school environments."

3.5 Human Capital Theory in Education (HCT)

Becker (1964) defines Human Capital Theory as the intention to invest in people's education and improve skills to help them become more productive and succeed in their work. Just like a company invests in machines to improve work. The researcher notes that authorities and individuals invest in education to enhance people's knowledge and skills. In schools, this means helping students and teachers grow so they can succeed in life and make meaningful contributions to the economy. So, HCT highlights that education is an investment for teachers, students, and society. Their learning enables them to become more skilled and capable individuals. Indeed, those skills help them secure better jobs, earn higher incomes, and contribute to educational and economic growth.

Additionally, Human Capital Theory highlights the long-term advantages not only at the individual level but also at the societal level. (Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2004) argue that a higher level of education is closely linked to economic growth, poverty reduction, and greater opportunities for social mobility. This suggests that when policymakers invest in high-quality education and professional development for educators, they build a more skilled workforce capable of driving innovation and strengthening economic competitiveness. Thus, education plays a fundamental role in national progress and long-term sustainable development.

4. Forms and Models of Professional Development

4.1 Workshops, seminars, in-service training.

Workshops, seminars, and in-service training play an essential role in professional growth by offering well-organized platforms for teachers to enhance their skills, knowledge, and abilities Silberman (1996). These initiatives aim to encourage continuous learning, benefiting both teachers and students. Silberman (1996). defines a workshop as a short-term, interactive learning

session designed for a small group of participants to develop specific skills or knowledge. Workshops usually involve practical activities and encourage active participation from teachers or students. Another type of professional development is seminars. Bonk. (2006), highlights that a seminar is an interactive learning session where teachers engage in discussions, presentations, and exchange of ideas. A seminar involves a group of teachers and a more experienced educator. In-service training refers to the education and training offered to teachers while they are working. It aims to help teachers enhance their skills and knowledge to perform more effectively during their teaching process. Studies done by Thompson (1992) reveal that in-service training leads to positive changes in teachers' attitudes, increases self-confidence, and promotes teachers' readiness to solve various classroom challenges.

4.2 Peer collaboration, coaching, mentoring.

Collaborative professional development strategies, including peer teamwork, coaching, and mentoring, play an important role in fostering teaching quality and boosting student success. Through peer collaboration, educators exchange classroom insights, share design lessons, and reflect on instructional methods, facilitating mutual growth. Research by Vescio (2008) demonstrates that teachers who participate in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) improve their teaching strategies and promote student performance. Such cooperation fosters a culture of shared responsibility and continuous professional development.

According to Knight (2007), coaching is another powerful professional development strategy in which experienced coaches collaborate individually with teachers to offer guidance, demonstrate teaching techniques, and support the implementation of effective teaching strategies. In his research, he highlights that successful coaching relationships require personalization, non-evaluative feedback, and are rooted in mutual trust. His research indicates that coaching enables teachers to adopt new methods more effectively than traditional workshops or seminars.

Teacher mentoring programs, particularly for new teachers, have a significant impact on both teacher retention and professional growth. Research by (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011) demonstrates, through a comprehensive analysis, that structured mentoring leads to measurable benefits, including enhanced teaching confidence, improved classroom instruction, and better student performance. Effective mentoring provides novice teachers with valuable advice and psychological support, improving the quality of education.

Together with peer collaboration and instructional coaching, mentoring fosters a supportive professional network that encourages teaching innovation, enhances educator capacity, and improves the quality of education.

4.3 Online courses, webinars, and continuing education programs.

In today's digital age, online courses, webinars, and continuing education programs play an important role in supporting lifelong learning and professional development. These platforms offer flexible, accessible, and diverse learning opportunities, catering to the needs of learners worldwide.(Walker, 2025)

According to Walker (2025), Online Courses have transformed education by making high-quality learning from top universities accessible to everyone. Platforms such as Coursera and edX host thousands of courses in diverse disciplines, supporting learners to advance their knowledge and skills.On the other hand, Coursera offers a great opportunity for teachers to collaborate with over 275 universities and organizations, providing more than 10,000 courses, professional certificates, and degree programs. On the other hand, edX offers courses from renowned universities such as Harvard and MIT. It offers specialized programs such as MicroMasters and MicroBachelors, allowing learners to gain new knowledge (Walker, 2025).These platforms enable learners to enhance their skills, reskill, or followacademic interests flexibly, offering both free learning and paid certification options.

According to Inal (2023),Webinars serve as interactive platformsthat provide dynamic, real-time learning opportunities for professional growth. They are valuable for teachers looking to enhance their teaching strategies.British Council, for instance, hosts monthly free webinars for English language teachers, addressing topics such as lesson design, inclusive education, and the impact of AI on writing. Participants receive certificates upon completing each session. Similarly, the TESOL International Association offers webinars that focus on various aspects of English language teaching, provide research insights, and showcase classroom innovations (Inal, 2023).These educational opportunities facilitate ongoing professional development, allowing teachers to stay up-to-date withthe latest trends and techniques in their discipline.

Similarly, Peter (1995) highlights that Continuing education programs are designed for individuals seeking to advance their careers, change professions, or personal growth. Leading

institutions, such as the Harvard Extension School, deliver adaptable learning solutions for working adults. Additionally, Harvard Extension School offers flexible learning options, including online courses, degree programs, professional certificates, and microcredentials. With evening and online course options, these programs are designed to fit busy schedules while maintaining academic accuracy. Such initiatives empower teachers to acquire new skills and knowledge that align with their personal and professional objectives.

By integrating the strategic combination of digital courses, online courses, webinars, and continuing education programs, teachers and learners can participate in this worldwide movement toward advancing their personal and professional development.

5. The Impact of Professional Development on Teacher Effectiveness and Student Outcomes

5.1 The relationship between teacher quality and student achievement in Rural Schools

Teaching is crucial for reinforcing student achievement, as numerous factors influence learning outcomes (previous schooling, parents' educational background, family income, students' self-motivation, students' age, learning preferences, and entry qualification of students) affect student performance at school, college, and even university level. Ali (2013). Research indicates that a teacher's academic and professional qualifications have a significant impact on student performance (Rice, 2003). However, teacher effectiveness is not solely determined by qualifications but also by their experience, teaching methods, training, and professional commitment. Some researchers argue that while qualifications are essential, other attributes, such as dedication and pedagogical skills, play a vital role in improving student learning.

Professional qualifications are essential for ensuring that teachers possess the necessary skills to educate students effectively. Yet, the education sector does not consistently enforce strict licensing requirements, allowing unqualified individuals to teach (Ashton, 1986). Therefore, Teacher training and ongoing professional development are essential for improving instructional quality and addressing the challenges of contemporary education (Wayne, 2003). In addition to qualifications, teaching experience is a key factor in student achievement. Research suggests that teachers with at least five years of experience tend to produce better student outcomes compared to those with less experience. Effective teaching involves mastering pedagogical techniques,

which typically require several years of training. Experienced teachers are more confident in their instructional methods and better equipped to manage classrooms. Furthermore, in-service training helps teachers refine their teaching strategies, making them more effective in delivering subject content. Thus, While qualifications ensure foundational knowledge, experience, and ongoing training further enhance teaching effectiveness. For instance, (Hanushek et al., 2005) found that *“Students taught by experienced teachers perform better than students of inexperienced teachers.”*

5.2 Comparative Studies Between Rural and Urban Schools

In Algeria, the educational landscape exhibits significant disparities between rural and urban areas, particularly in terms of teacher qualifications, resource availability, and pedagogical approaches. These differences have a significant impact on the quality of education and student outcomes nationwide.

According to Sahawal (2024), urban schools in Algeria generally benefit from a higher availability of qualified teachers compared to their rural counterparts. This imbalance is due to deployment strategies that favour urban schools, leading to a scarcity of skilled teachers in rural regions. Such disparities contribute to educational inequalities, as students in rural areas often receive instruction from novice or underqualified teachers. Addressing this issue requires rethinking teacher deployment policies to ensure a more equitable distribution of qualified educators nationwide.

Indeed, urban schools have access to better infrastructure and educational resources, including modern facilities, teaching materials, and technological tools. In contrast, rural schools face challenges such as inadequate facilities and limited access to modern teaching tools. These resources hinder the implementation of teaching strategies and negatively affect student learning outcomes. Investing in rural educational infrastructure and providing necessary teaching materials are essential steps toward bridging this gap.

Sarnou (2024) highlights that the teaching methods employed by teachers can vary between urban and rural schools. Urban teachers may have more opportunities for professional development and exposure to innovative pedagogical techniques, enabling them to adopt more interactive and student-centered approaches. In contrast, rural teachers might rely more on traditional methods due to limited access to training and resources.

The disparities in teacher qualifications, resources, and teaching methods between urban and rural schools have a direct influence on student performance. Studies have shown that students in urban areas often outperform their rural counterparts, reflecting the advantages of better-equipped schools and more qualified teachers. Addressing these educational inequalities is essential for ensuring that all students, regardless of their geographic location, have access to quality education and equal opportunities for academic success (Deradra, 2024).

5.3The Impact of Professional Development on Rural Education

Professional development (PD) is a continuous process designed to enhance teachers' knowledge, skills, and attitudes, thereby improving instructional effectiveness (Steyn, 2002). Both educators and school leaders engage in professional development (PD) activities throughout their careers, either individually or in groups, with the primary goal of fostering both personal and professional growth (Tomlinson, 1997). In line with this, the South African Council for Educators (SACE, 2008, p. 3) highlights that professional development (PD) strengthens teachers' understanding of the curriculum, refines their instructional techniques, deepens their awareness of students' needs, and enhances their commitment to learners and schools.

One of the key benefits of professional development (PD) is that it enables teachers to acquire up-to-date subject knowledge and implement effective instructional techniques that enhance student learning (Sparks , 1997). However, for PD to be truly effective, it must be an ongoing process that includes well-structured learning programs and individualized follow-up through supportive observation, feedback, staff discussions, and peer coaching (Campbell, 1997). This structured approach ensures that educators not only acquire new knowledge but also receive the necessary support to implement it successfully in their teaching practices.

Moreover, participation in professional development (PD) fosters collaboration among educators, encouraging them to share common challenges and take greater responsibility for their own professional growth(Ribisch, 1999). Similarly, Robinson (2002) suggests that PD is most effective when conducted consistently over a long period, allowing for sustained improvements in self-confidence, knowledge, and teaching skills.

Since professional development (PD) involves continuous learning and skill development with the ultimate goal of enhancing student performance, it is essential to consider the diverse

learning styles of individual educators. Studies indicate that adult learners exhibit significant individual differences that can influence their learning process, underscoring the need for professional development (PD) programs to be tailored to accommodate these variations (Burke, 1997). By aligning professional development (PD) initiatives with teachers' learning needs, schools can ensure more effective and meaningful professional growth, ultimately benefiting both educators and students.

Section Two: Educational Policies and Rural Schools' Challenges

6.1 National Policy Initiatives

Due to their critical role in education, the Algerian government has initiated numerous national and regional policies to support rural teachers and promote educational quality in these regions. One key initiative is the National Plan for the Development of School Infrastructure (PNDIS), which aims to improve working and living conditions for teachers in isolated areas by providing better housing, transportation, and school facilities (Ministry of National Education, Algeria, 2020). Moreover, the government increases salary bonuses to attract and retain teachers in rural regions (Official Journal of the Algerian Republic, 2018). These measures are part of broader efforts to reduce disparities between urban and rural education under Algeria's "Education Reform Strategy 2016–2030", which prioritizes teacher welfare and equitable resource distribution.

6.2 Regional and Local Support Programs

At the regional level, some local regions have introduced additional measures to help rural teachers. For example, in 2021, the state of Adrar launched a special program providing free housing and transportation to teachers assigned to remote schools (Adrar Directorate of Education, 2021). Similarly, NGOs like the Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights (LADDH) have called for improved teacher rights, leading to localized initiatives such as mobile training units to support rural educators (LADDH Report, 2022). These efforts reinforce national policies and address regions' challenges, though implementation gaps remain.

6.3 The Role of Technology in Enhancing Teacher Preparation and Professional Development in Rural Areas

Technology has a profoundly positive influence on education and how teachers access and obtain information. It has helped teachers to grasp and explain concepts more effectively through digital tools, Microsoft software, educational websites, and other digital programs. Additionally, digital literacy in the education sector has diminished geographical barriers, making education more accessible to everyone (Tarhini, 2019).

Multiple universities and schools now offer online courses, certifications, and degree programs, which permit educators to grasp and share knowledge without being present in the same room. This has enabled teachers to join meetings from anywhere in the world. Additionally, digital skills enable teachers to stay more engaged in education. Students, on the other hand, can utilize creative tools like Adobe for projects, thereby improving their learning and communication skills through visuals (Oyetade, 2020).

6.4 Innovative Approaches to Overcoming Geographical Barriers

Due to its vast territory and diverse topography, Algeria faces significant geographical challenges in delivering equitable education across all regions. So, the country has increasingly turned to innovative approaches to bridge these gaps. Among the most effective strategies is the integration of educational technology to reach teachers and students in remote areas, transforming geographical challenges into opportunities for inclusive learning. Below are some innovative approaches that Algeria has started adopting to overcome these barriers:

1. National educational platforms, such as the E-Learning Platforms and Distance Education, offered by the Ministry of National Education. Distance education enables teachers to access information quickly, with minimal effort and maximum benefit. It is considered one of the most essential modern learning methods, helping to provide a significant amount of knowledge and mitigate congestion in seminar rooms (Ben Dumi, 2010). According to the Oxford Dictionary, E-learning, or electronic learning, is described as "learning conducted via electronic media." In the field of learning and education, e-learning encompasses new technologies, including computers, digital technology, networked digital devices, and related software. In this context, e-learning refers to learning facilitated by information and communication technology (ICT) technology. Challis (2003) considers that e-learning requires the primary use of Information and

Communication Technology (ICT) within educational settings to facilitate teaching and learning processes.

2. Improving Telecommunications and Internet Infrastructure

In 2021, the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications announced fiber-optic expansion projects targeting southern and highland provinces. Enhancing access to high-speed internet in rural and mountainous areas is key to bridging the educational gap.

3. Training Teachers in Isolated Regions

Training teachers working in rural districts will reduce the dependency on teachers from urban areas. Additionally, it enhances learners' performance and positively impacts the quality of their learning.

7. Challenges Faced by Rural Schools in Teacher Preparation and Professional Development.

7. Teachers' Challenges in Rural Areas

Maraf (2012) identified that teacher preparation is one of the biggest challenges facing Algeria's education system. Several studies emphasize the importance of English teachers staying current on relevant issues and actively pursuing their professional development. Similarly, he goes on to say that while officials often discuss the importance of teacher training—official discourses—it hasn't been a priority in policy decisions. As a result, there's often a gap between new education reforms and properly preparing teachers to implement them. Maraf (2012) added, despite innovation, Teacher Training programs in Algeria are still facing several issues, among them:

First, there is a gap between what teachers learn in university and what they encounter in the classroom. Second, their training focuses heavily on theory and neglects to strike a balance between theory and practice. We cannot train teachers to teach effectively in theory only without incorporating practical activities. A proverb says: "You cannot teach swimming without a swimming pool." Finally, there is an imbalance in preparation; teachers coming from regular universities and those from specialized teacher training schools (ENS) don't have the same level of readiness, and for university graduates, just six weeks of training is insufficient to bridge that

gap. Several challenges must be overcome to establish efficient teacher training programs (Maraf, 2012). Developing 21st-century tertiary education: Implementing 21st-century soft skills through workshops for better performance in Algerian government-backed projects (ANSEJ) (MA thesis).

Teachers in rural areas face several challenges that significantly impact their professional growth, instructional effectiveness, and overall job satisfaction. Some of the key challenges include:

7.1 Limited Professional Development Opportunities

Rural educators often lack access to regular training and workshops. In addition, Professional development programs may not be tailored to the specific needs of rural schools. Teachers in rural areas often lack access to ongoing professional development and training workshops. Even when professional development opportunities exist, they often fail to address the unique challenges these schools face.

7.2 Shortage of Qualified Teachers

Most rural schools employ teachers with little to no training. In rural regions, problems regarding a severe shortage of trained teachers are reported in (Nunan, 2003). Bulter (2005) added that since teachers may receive only basic preparation in supportive theory and practical applications, they may then struggle to implement teaching methods effectively. Similarly, Emery (2012) explains that the lack of training results from inadequate preparation for teaching, leaving teachers unable to handle the challenges that arise in the classroom. These difficulties are particularly evident in rural areas, where there is a shortage of essential teaching and learning resources. Furthermore, the English teaching process can be challenging in terms of teachers' qualifications and training, as these factors can impact teachers' confidence (Emery, 2012). To sum up, Littlewood (2007) argued that teachers whose teaching training is insufficient may spend considerable effort and time to adopt effective teaching methods.

7.3 Lack of Resources and Infrastructure

Rural schools often face a lack of adequate facilities, old materials, and insufficient technological tools. Internet connectivity and access to digital learning resources remain another serious issue. Many types of educational resources can help teachers deliver lessons more

effectively. Some examples of resources commonly available for English teachers include Wi-Fi, a projector, a copier, textbooks, whiteboards, computers, other technologies (such as CD players), art supplies, and educational posters. In rural schools, teachers may find themselves completely without these resources, or they may end up in a situation where the supply is limited or not functioning correctly, which hinders teachers from implementing an effective teaching process (Fatiloru, 2015).

7.4 Language and Cultural Barriers

After gaining independence in 1962, Algeria declared Arabic the national language, and by 1963, it had become the official language. This shift marked the beginning of the Arabization policy across government and education systems, promoting the status of Arabic and replacing French, which had previously dominated public life (Benrabah, 2007). Over time, Arabic became the dominant language taught in classrooms, heard in the media, and used in everyday communication. However, cultural barriers often arise in education due to differences between a teacher's cultural background and the local culture of students, especially in rural areas. These barriers can lead to misunderstandings or a lack of connection between teachers and learners (Gay, 2010). Algerian teacher training programs typically emphasize national curricula and standardized pedagogy, but they give limited attention to culturally responsive teaching. In rural regions, while students commonly speak Arabic at home, the lack of exposure to foreign languages negatively affects teachers' efforts to develop students' proficiency in English.

7.5 Limited Government and Administrative Support

In Algeria, limited government and administrative support continue to be significant obstacles to improving the quality of education in rural areas. Although several national reforms have been introduced, current policies often fail to address the specific challenges faced by remote and underserved regions. This lack of differentiation has led to systemic disparities, particularly in the allocation of financial resources. According to the World Bank (2020), rural schools typically receive less funding than their urban counterparts, resulting in inadequate infrastructure, a shortage of teaching materials, and limited access to essential services, including electricity, transportation, and internet connectivity. In many rural communities, both schools and households face a severe shortage of internet access. Sarnou (2020) identifies this digital divide as the most pressing issue for teachers, emphasizing that many rural schools lack the budget to

acquire any form of educational technology. These deficiencies significantly hinder teacher preparation and professional development, ultimately contributing to lower student performance.

7.6 Difficult Working and Living Conditions

A research by (Sarnou & Belatrech 2018) shows that teachers in rural Algeria face significant challenges due to poor infrastructure. In their work, they declared that many schools lack necessities such as electricity, heating, internet access, and adequate classroom facilities, which directly impacts teaching quality. The researchers argues that many teachers working in remote areas struggle with inadequate or unavailable official housing and lack of reliable transportation. This forces them to travel long distances, often daily. The combination of psychological stress, logistical challenges, and professional instability has a significant effect on teaching performance.

Conclusion

Addressing the challenges faced by teachers in rural Algeria requires serious policy measures that go beyond temporary solutions. The following interventions must be implemented to ensure long-term impact. First, enhanced teacher training programs should be implemented to better prepare teachers for the realities of rural classrooms, with a focus on innovative pedagogical strategies for local challenges. Second, significant investment in infrastructure is essential; schools must be equipped with basic necessities such as electricity, internet connectivity, and adequate teaching materials to ensure both teachers' and students' success. Additionally, models of professional development need to be established to reduce professional isolation among rural teachers by fostering organizing workshops, peer collaboration, and ongoing professional development. Finally, introducing targeted incentive structures, such as housing subsidies and transportation assistance, would make rural postings more attractive and improve teacher retention. By integrating these measures into national education policy, Algeria can significantly improve both teaching conditions and educational outcomes in rural areas.

Chapter Two

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This present chapter will detail the research design, methodologies, data collection, and analysis procedures employed to comprehensively explore Teachers' Preparation and Professional Needs, based on the theoretical framework and research questions established in the previous sections. By integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches, the study seeks to provide a thorough understanding of teachers' perceptions regarding effective Professional Development, persistent challenges, educational policies, and the impact of training programs on their teaching quality. The findings gained from this practical investigation will contribute to the development of more effective PD programs and policies, ultimately enhancing the quality of English language teaching in Algerian rural schools.

8. Research Design

The research design used in this study is a mixed-method approach which combines both quantitative and qualitative data collection. This approach allows for a comprehensive exploration of rural schools' EFL teachers' perceptions and practices regarding their preparation and professional development needs.

Quantitative data was collected through a paper-based questionnaire, which included statements related to teachers' experiences with rural schools. This quantitative data involves analyzing data that resulted from the closed questions by using statistics techniques. The researcher relies on the use of descriptive statistics, which includes percentages, tabulations, graphs, representation and measurement of central tendency, frequency and percentage are introduced within the text, in tables or through graphs which involve the use of bar graphs or pie charts.

Qualitative data was collected through open-ended questions included in the questionnaire. These questions allowed teachers to provide explanations, suggestions, reflections and insights about the availability of teacher preparation programs and professional development opportunities, educational policies in Algeria addressing the needs of EFL teachers in rural schools, as well as challenges rural schools face in terms of teacher preparation and professional development.

Participants of the study are EFL teachers who are currently teaching English as a foreign language in rural schools. The sample was selected using a combination of purposive and convenience sampling techniques. The criteria for participant selection included teachers who are still teaching in rural areas.

Data collection involved distributing the paper-based questionnaire to the selected participants. The questionnaire was designed to be clear, concise, and easy to understand. Participants were provided with instructions on how to complete the questionnaire and submit it within a specified timeframe.

In the present research, quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, charts, and graphs, to examine the overall trends and patterns in teachers' responses. As far as qualitative data is concerned, it was subjected to objective analysis, where recurring themes, patterns, and insights were identified and categorized.

The mixed-method approach fits better as it allows for a comprehensive understanding of EFL teachers' preparation and professional development needs in rural regions. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data provided a general view of the research topic and ensured the credibility and reliability of the findings.

8.1 Population and Sampling:

To accomplish our research, we selected middle school teachers of English as our target population, since they can express their professional development needs and the challenges they face in their preparation. The total population consists of 32 middle school English teachers in the district of Ain El Hadjel. Out of these, 29 teachers agreed to participate in our study, representing more than 90.62 % of the total population.

- *Demographic Information on Teachers completing the Questionnaires*

Variables	Sub-variable	Number	%
Age	Under 25	4	13.8%
	25 – 34	21	72.4%
	35 – 44	1	3.4%
	45 – 54	3	10.3%
Gender	Male	3	10.3%
	Female	26	89.7%
Educational Qualifications	Bachelor's degree	11	37.9%
	Master's degree	17	58.6%
	Doctorate	0	00.00%
Years of Experience	Less than 1 year	5	17.2%
	1 - 5 years	15	51.7%
	6 - 10 years	5	17.2%
	More than 10 years	4	13.8%

Current Position	Full-time teacher	28	96.6%
	Part-time teacher	1	3.4%
	School administrator	0	00.00%

8.2 Research Tools

For the sake of scientific data validity, the use of a questionnaire appears to be the most appropriate method for collecting data, which enables the strengthening of research conclusions. In other words, the findings derived from this research tool provide more substantial evidence. Thus, a questionnaire was administered to middle school English teachers in rural schools. It should be highlighted that the question- items focus on the preparation and professional development needs in rural schools. In doing so, a voice is given to rural teachers to express their needs, challenges and suggestions.

8.3 Description of the Questionnaire

. The questionnaire is composed of 22 items classified under Five (05) sections. Each one focused on a particular aspect. The first section of the questionnaire, entitled "Demographic Information", consists of five questions and describes the participant's information. The second section, " EFL Teacher Preparation ", consists of five (05) questions and enquiries to teachers about the importance of their preparation. The third section, which is entitled " Professional Development Needs", consists of six (06) questions and explores what professional development teachers need to address in rural areas. The fourth section is under the title " Education Policies addressing Rural Schools "and consists of five (05) questions focusing on the solutions the authorities provided to overcome rural schools' challenges. The fifth section is devoted to teachers' suggestions regarding their working conditions in rural schools. The researchers designed the questionnaire structure and content after reviewing previous related literature with

the help and guidance of the supervisor. The questionnaire was distributed to English teachers in Ain El Hadjel district

The data collected through the survey questionnaire will provide both quantitative and qualitative data. The combination of both types of data will offer a thorough understanding of rural schools' EFL teachers' perspectives on their preparation and professional development needs.

8.4 The Administration of Teachers' Questionnaire

The questionnaires were administered using a paper-based format presented hand to hand for completion. Data collection occurred from February to March 2025 by visiting the surveyed teachers in all middle schools of the district of Ain Elhadjel. A portion of the questionnaires were distributed directly to participants, while the few remaining questionnaires were left at the headmasters' offices within the targeted middle schools. This approach permitted teachers to pick up the questionnaires at their convenience and complete them at their own pace.

9. Data analysis and interpretation

1- Age :

The following statistics provide insights into the age distribution of the participants:

Table 01: Age

		Age			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Under 25	4	13.8	13.8	13.8
	25-34	21	72.4	72.4	86.2

35-44	1	3.4	3.4	89.7
45-54	3	10.3	10.3	100.0
Total	29	100.0	100.0	

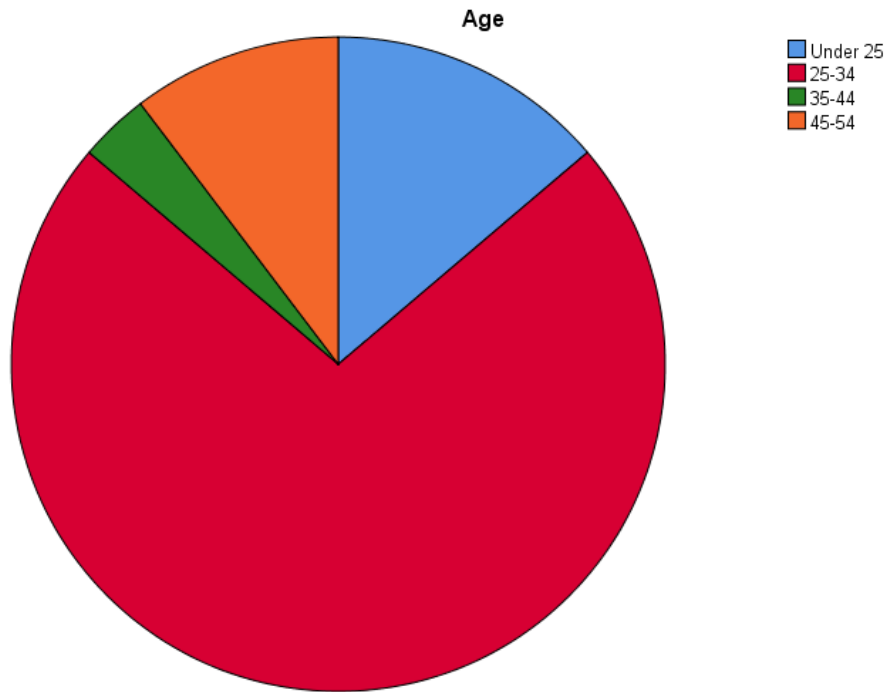


Figure (01): Age

As shown in table 1, the majority of the participants fell into the age group of 25-34, accounting for 89.7% of the total participants. This predominance suggests that the research comprehends the teaching workforce, including young teachers. The following age groups are most represented: those under 25 and those aged 45-54, comprising 10.3% of the participants. Meanwhile, a smaller number of participants, covering only 3.4%, belonged to the age group of 35-44. No participants indicated an age over 50. This shows that there are no older educators within the rural setting under investigation. The above statistics indicate a relatively different age range among the participants, with a higher representation in the 25-34 age group. According to the previous statistics, we can notice that the teachers of the district under study are relatively young and can effectively participate in various preparation and professional development programs, reflecting their perspectives and expectations as young teachers. That is to say,

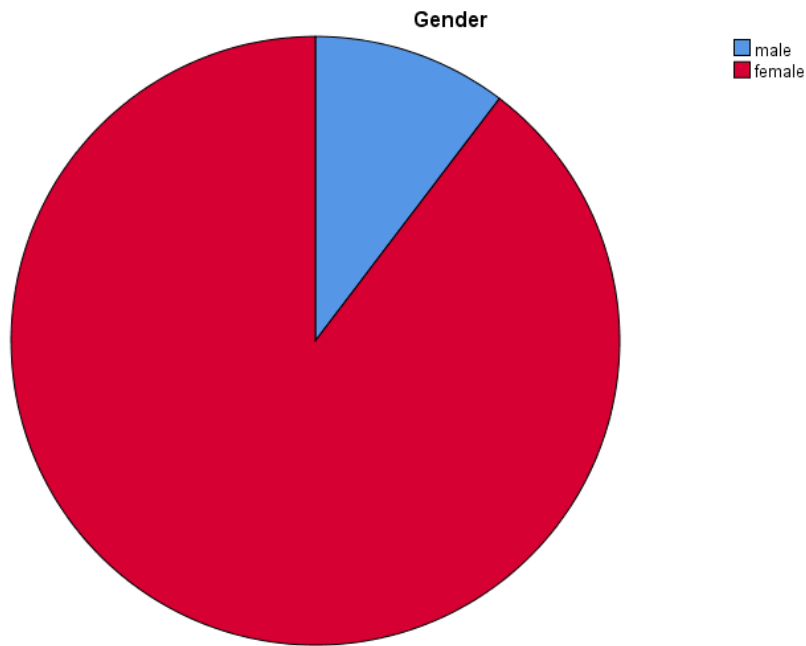
effectiveness is more applicable to participants in the 25- 34 age range. Additionally, the lack of older teachers could indicate difficulties in retaining educators or obstacles that discourage or prevent experienced teachers from working in rural schools. This highlights of tailored support strategies that not only maintain the motivation and vitality of younger teachers but also foster an environment that encourages lasting retention and career development.

2- Gender:

Based on the questionnaire results, the following statistics provide insights into the gender distribution of the participants:

Table 02: Gender

		Gender			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	male	3	10.3	10.3	10.3
	female	26	89.7	89.7	100.0
	Total	29	100.0	100.0	



Figure(02): Gender

The statistical data above demonstrate that females outnumber male teachers. In fact, females represent the majority of the whole number with 89.7% (n= 26), while 10.3% (n= 03) of them are males. As presented in the numerical data, it is obvious that the majority of the sample chosen for the questionnaire is dominated by females. Twenty-six (26) of the whole teachers are women. On the one hand, this is due to the fact that the number of graduated females is more than that of males. In addition, Females are more interested in learning languages than males, especially in rural areas. On the other hand, Male are more likely tending to scientific branches, simply because rural male learners do not prefer learning foreign languages due to many reasons such as: waste of time, boredom, lack of interest and misunderstanding the language itself.

3- Educational Qualifications

According to Dewey (1963) educational qualifications represent the official certifications, degrees, or diplomas an individual has obtained through academic or professional study. These qualifications demonstrate a person’s level of knowledge, skills, and competence in specific fields, and they are often required for employment. Examples include high school diplomas, bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, and doctoral degrees.

Table 03: Educational Qualifications

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Bachelor's degree	11	37.9	37.9	37.9
	Master's degree	17	58.6	58.6	96.6
	Other	1	3.4	3.4	100.0
	Total	29	100.0	100.0	

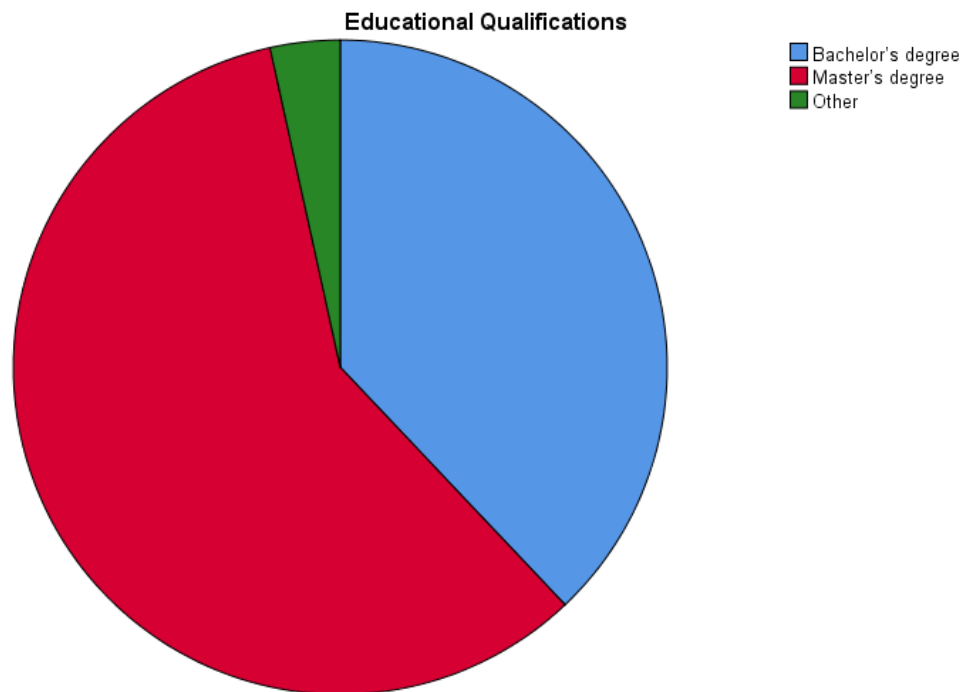


Figure (03): Educational Qualifications

As Table (03) depicts, the dominant level among the participants is " Master's degree " with a percentage of 58.6% of 17 participants while 11 (37.9%) of them got " Bachelor's degree. One teacher declared that he holds ENS ((École Normale Supérieure) degree while no participants had a doctorate degree.

Figure (3) suggests that the majority of participants had advanced level of education, with a strong presence of postgraduate qualifications. This means the participants possess higher education and research skills which positively affect how they understand and respond to different preparation programs. However, The absence of doctorate teachers reflect limited access to training support and professional development programs, and require more educational policies to provide teachers with opportunities to develop their effectiveness and quality.

Table 04: Years of Experience in Teaching EFL:

Years of Experience in Teaching EFL

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than 1 year	5	17.2	17.2	17.2
	1-5 years	15	51.7	51.7	69.0
	6-10 years	5	17.2	17.2	86.2
	More than 10 years	4	13.8	13.8	100.0
	Total	29	100.0	100.0	

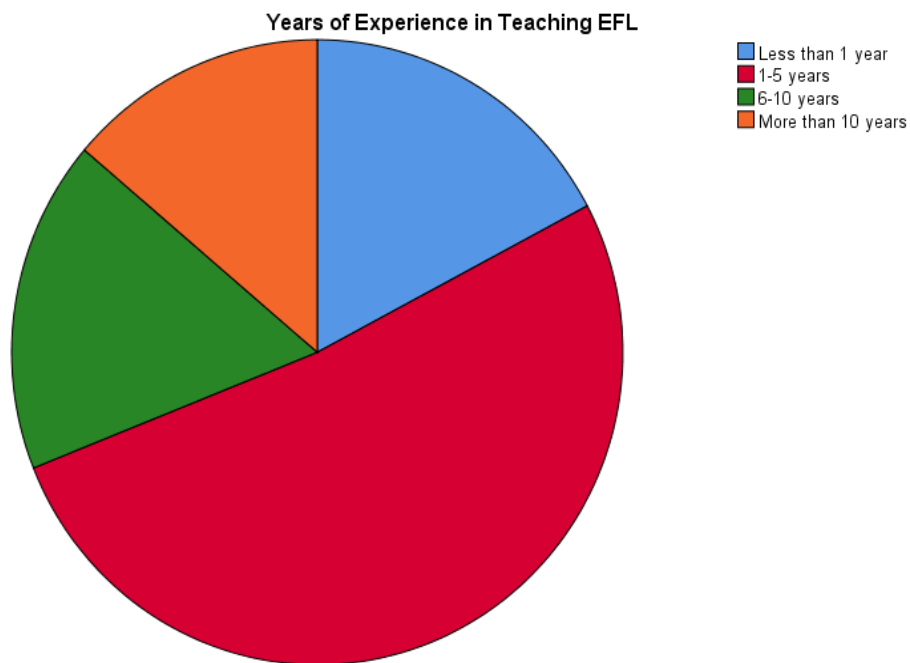


Figure (04): Years of Experience

The above statistics suggest that a great number of participants fall within the 1-5 years of experience range in teaching English as a foreign language. They are relatively inexperienced (51.7%) this means that they are in the early stages of their teaching career and need to develop

their teaching techniques and strategies. . In addition, 17.2% of teachers have less than 5 years of experience. This means that 69 % of the total participants are young teachers. Similarly, participants with 6- 10 years of experience, represent 17.2%, while few participants indicate they have experience of 10 years or more. The findings in the table above show that training and professional development programs in the district of Ain El Hadjel has the foundation to be fruitful and improve teacher's quality and students' outcomes.

Table 05: Current Position:

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Full-time teacher	28	96.6	96.6	96.6
	Other	1	3.4	3.4	100.0
	Total	29	100.0	100.0	

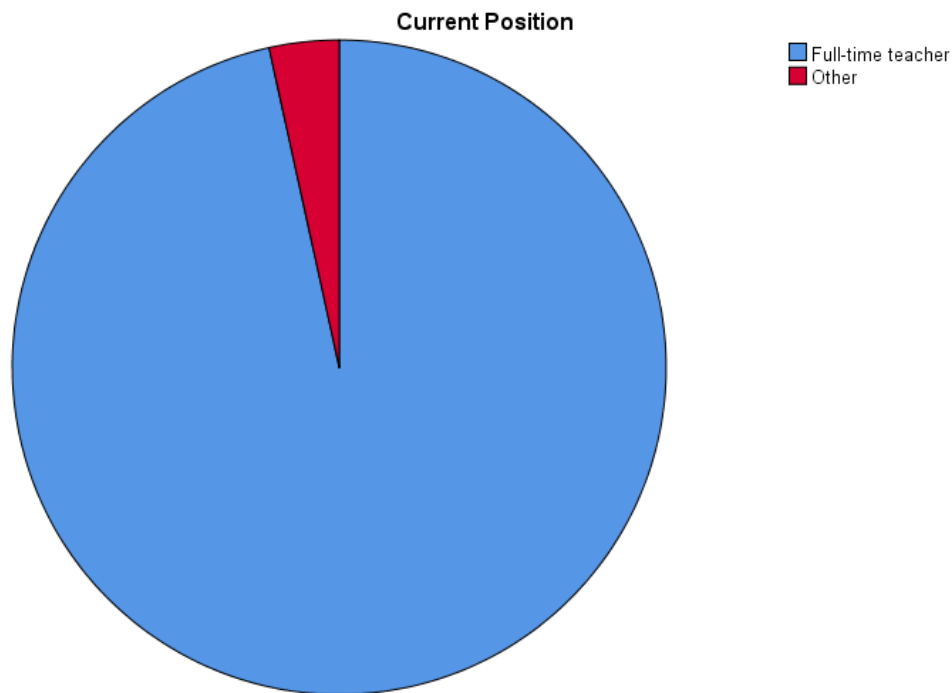


Figure (05): Current Position

The table shows the distribution of current position among EFL teachers working in rural schools of Ain El Hadjel, based on frequency and percentage. Almost all participants are full-time teachers with a percentage of 96.6%, this implies that the sample is useful for decisions addressing teachers' professional development, curriculum reforms and workload management . On the other hand, only one person works in part-time, making this a rare position in our findings. The data highlights that no administrators or other roles are represented. From a sociocultural theory perspective, which focuses on the role of social interaction, cultural context, and the exchanged practices in developing learning (Vygotsky, 1978). The above distribution has significant implications. Since the sample comprises full-time teachers, the findings are particularly relevant to the professional learning communities formed within school settings, where collaborative, peer mentoring, and shared cultural practices influence teacher development and pedagogical improvement.

Table 06: Initial Training for Teaching English as a Foreign Language

What was your initial training for teaching English as a foreign language?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	University degree in Education or EFL	24	82.8	82.8	82.8
	In-service teacher training	3	10.3	10.3	93.1
	No formal training	2	6.9	6.9	100.0
	Total	29	100.0	100.0	



Figure (06): Initial Training

The above statistics highlight that there is a firm reliance on university degrees for initial training 82.8%, while in-service training 10.3% and no formal training 6.9% are rarely standard. Indeed, the high percentage of university degrees shows that the majority of teachers possess both theoretical and practical competencies in teaching the language. This is due to teacher preparation programs designed in universities to provide educators with a strong foundation in subject content, instructional strategies, classroom management, and assessment techniques. In addition, the dominance of high-degree participants reflects the authorities' efforts to invest in higher education. This aligns with the principles of Human Capital Theory in Education, which emphasizes the importance of investing in people's education and improve skills to help them become more productive and succeed in their work. By providing teachers with advanced degrees, the authorities aim to improve the quality of education and ensure that educators are well- prepared to address challenges. As Mirou (2015) argues, teacher training programs can enhance teachers' performance by developing their skills and performance, which enables them to meet the evolving demands of modern education. In contrast, the low percentage of in-service training and no formal training 17.2% indicate that there are still some serious obstacles hinder teachers' preparation after graduating from university.

Table 07: Participation in any Teacher Training Programs

Have you participated in any teacher training programs specifically focused on teaching English

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	14	48.3	48.3	48.3
	no	15	51.7	51.7	100.0
	Total	29	100.0	100.0	

Have you participated in any teacher training programs specifically focused on teaching English

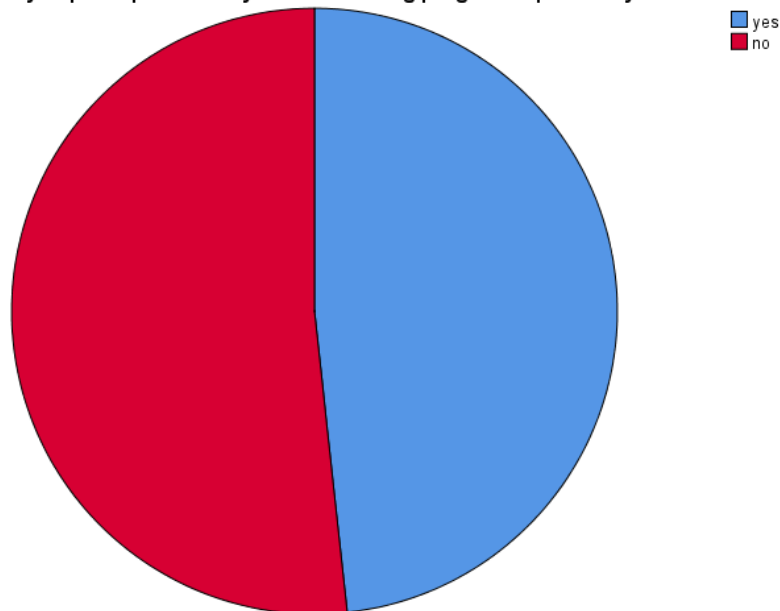


Figure (07): Participation in Training Programs

The biggest remark we get from the data in the table is that more than half of the participants 51.7% have not received training tailored to teaching English which indicate that many teachers may be relying on general teaching experience rather than research and training opportunities which shows a remarkable gap in professional development. Therefore, stakeholders should increase efforts to expose all teachers to various training programs. In

contrast, the data above show that almost half of the surveyed teachers, 48.3%, have taken part in training programs. This indicates that there are some training programs in which teachers have taken profit of them and sufficient awareness that training is helpful in professional development.

These findings highlight the importance of establishing Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in the educational context of Ain El Hadjel. PLCs, which are collaborative groups where teachers engage in reflective dialogue, share practices, and carry on ongoing learning, enhance teacher effectiveness and student achievement. By encouraging teachers' interactions and collaboration for improvement, PLCs can help bridge the current training gap. Moreover, they provide adequate model for professional growth by encouraging a culture of continuous improvement and mutual support among teachers. Therefore, educational authorities should not only expand formal training programs but also support the development of PLCs as a supporting platform to professional development.

Table 8: If yes, please specify the type of training.

If yes, please specify the type of training

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Workshops/seminars	10	34.5	71.4	71.4
	Online courses	4	13.8	28.6	100.0
	Total	14	48.3	100.0	
Missing	System	15	51.7		
Total		29	100.0		

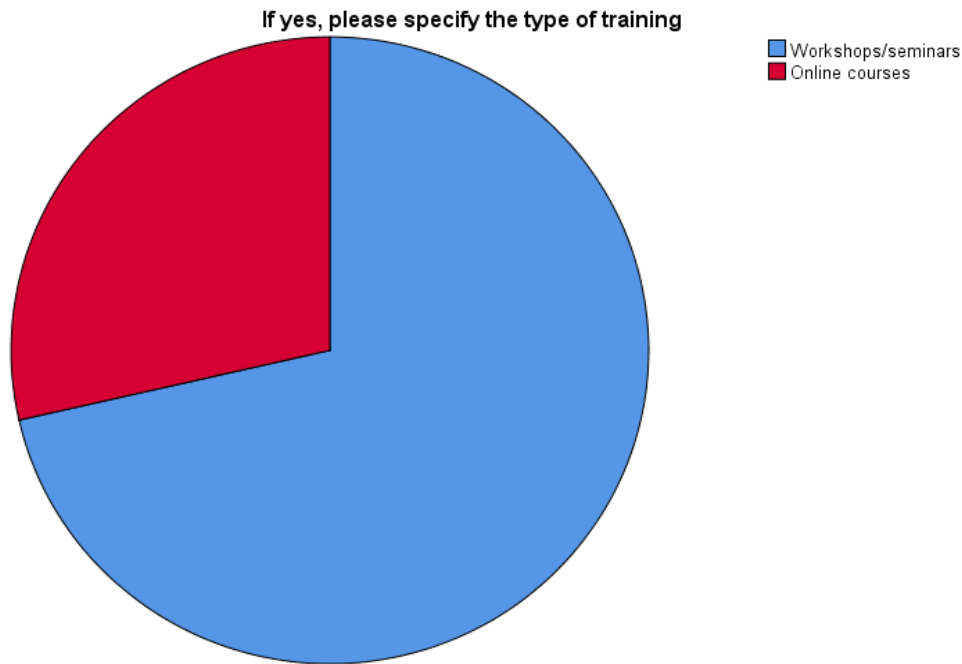


Figure (08): Type of Training

Table 8 shows that only 14 out of 29 teachers engaged in professional development. Ten (10) of them participated in workshops and seminars due to the ease of participation and the preference for meeting colleagues. In contrast, few teachers (4) declared their participation in online training programs. This may be due to certain obstacles, such as cost, time constraints, or limited availability. Moreover, from the data above, we notice that fifteen (15) teachers do not express their favourite type of training. This may indicate that they are not interested in promoting their teaching skills and practices, following training programs and getting more certificates. Their refusal to talk about their preferred type of training is related to the long duration of training programs, which requires technological tools and some digital knowledge, or even difficulty accessing specialised institutions. In deed, the surveyed teachers show stronger preference for workshops/seminars over online courses. Overall, their best type of training indicates that they focus on practical, collaborative, and instructor-led sessions. Overall, they clearly show a preference for practical, collaborative, and direct guidance from instructors.

Table 9: Initial Training Adequacy

Do you feel that your initial training adequately prepared you to teach

English in rural areas

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	4	13.8	13.8	13.8
	No	4	13.8	13.8	27.6
	Partially	21	72.4	72.4	100.0
	Total	29	100.0	100.0	

Do you feel that your initial training adequately prepared you to teach English in rural areas

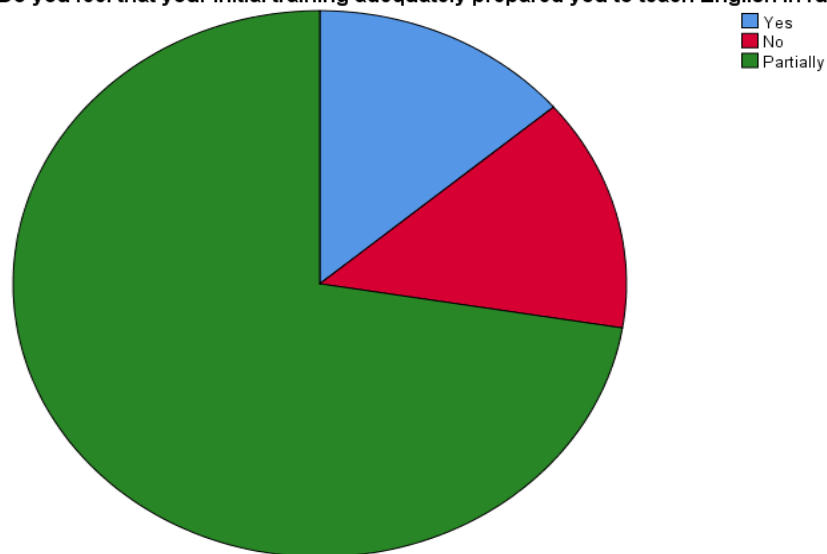


Figure (09):Initial Training Adequacy

According to the results, The great majority of teachers 72.4%, feel their participation in training programs has partially equipped them for teaching English in rural schools. This implies that training programs lack a rural focus, and curricula must be revised to meet rural

needs by including rural teaching modules. The above results confirm that four teachers (4) feel that they benefitted from their training, while a similar number declared that they did not find their training fruitful. That is, teachers need high-quality training programs to overcome all barriers and improve their impact on students' performances.

Table 10: Training Improvement Needs

Training Improvement Needs

	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Classroom management	7	15.9%	53.8%
Teaching methods and techniques	13	29.5%	100.0%
Technology integration	13	29.5%	100.0%
Cultural adaptation and awareness	11	25.0%	84.6%
Total	44	100.0%	338.5%

From the data above, we notice that educators lack great improvement in teaching methods and techniques as well as technology integration with a percentage of 29.5%. In addition, 25% of teachers declare that they need cultural adaptation and awareness which highlights the importance to be familiar with local culture and traditions. Some teachers show that they need less classroom management improvement 15.9% and assessment methods, while few of them state that their initial training did not cover all the problems they are facing during their teaching process.

Table 11: Professional Development Participation

Have you participated in any professional development programs in the last year?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	3	10.3	10.3	10.3
	No	26	89.7	89.7	100.0
	Total	29	100.0	100.0	

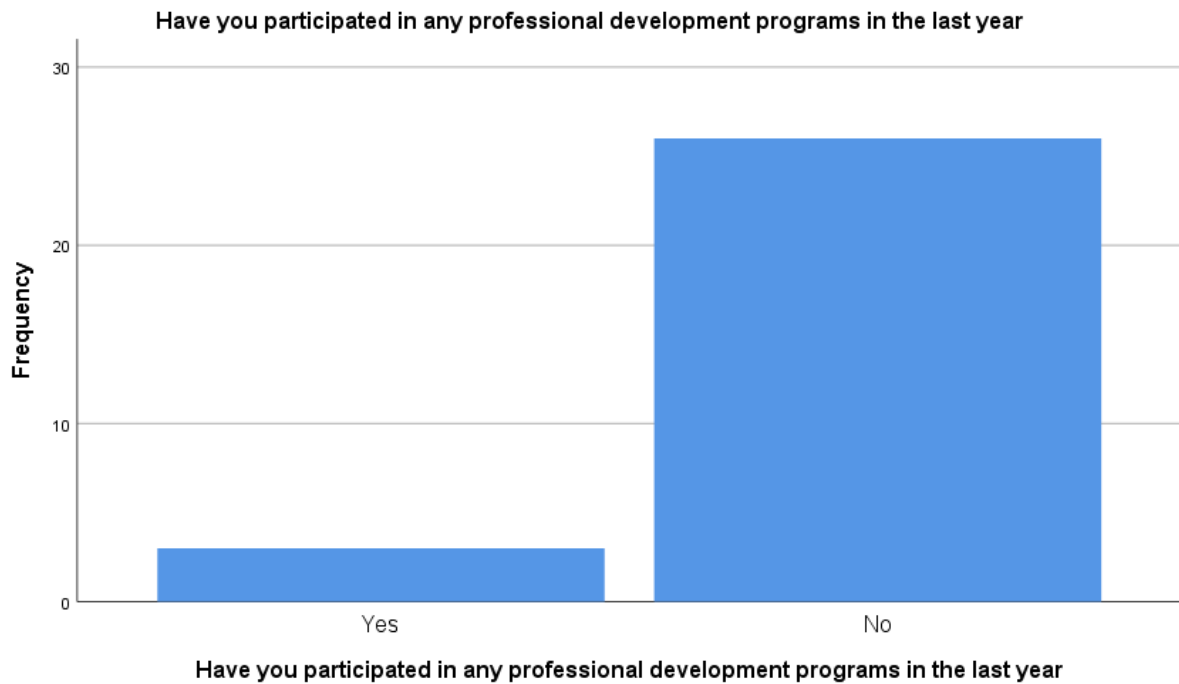


Figure11: Professional Development Participation

In the above question about whether the surveyed teachers in our district participated in professional development, 89.7% of them said No, whereas only 10.3% agreed that they have participated in professional development programs. This shows that there is a strong need to provide teachers with more opportunities and encourage them to take part in professional

development programs. According to Hammond (2006), well-designed professional development (PD) promotes teacher retention by building confidence, fostering collaboration, and offering opportunities for career advancement. It also introduces new teaching methods tailored for rural schools, helping educators manage diverse classrooms more effectively. Additionally, PD helps rural teachers integrate technology into their teaching process, providing them with authentic techniques and strategies. Similarly, Ribisch (1999), argues that participation in professional development (PD) fosters collaboration among educators, encouraging them to share common challenges and take greater responsibility for their own professional growth

Table 12: If yes, what type of programs did you attend?

If yes, what type of programs did you attend

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Workshops/seminars	1	3.4	33.3	33.3
	Online courses	2	6.9	66.7	100.0
	Total	3	10.3	100.0	
Missing	System	26	89.7		
Total		29	100.0		

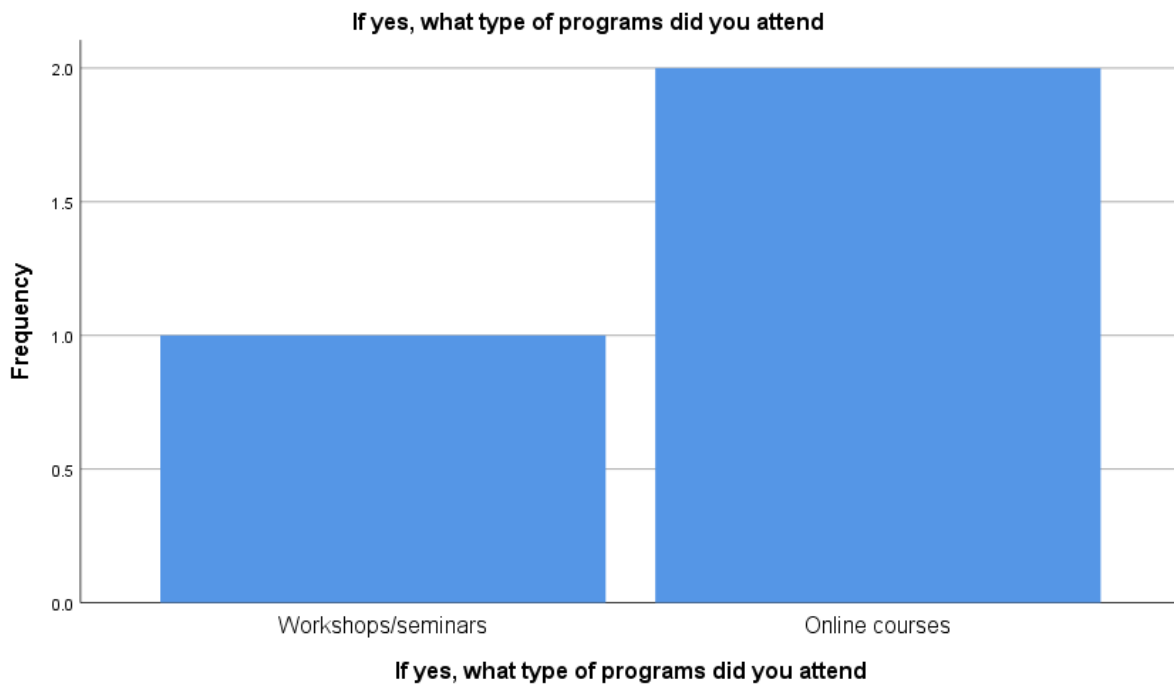


Figure12: Type of Programs

The statistics regarding participation in professional development programs prove that teachers do not attend conferences or practise peer collaboration or mentoring due to the absence of these opportunities or lack of interest. Indeed, we discover that only 3.4% of teachers focus on workshops and seminars. Similarly, a few of them, 6.9%, utilize online courses. Overall, we notice that teachers try to overcome the professional development gap by relying on their personal efforts and limited resources. Therefore, to prepare teachers for rural settings and develop their performance, the authorities are required to cover their professional development needs.

Table 13: Access to Professional Development

	Responses		
	N	Percent	Percent of Cases
School-organized workshops	10	27.8%	100.0%

Online platforms (e.g., Coursera, Udeemy)	10	27.8%	100.0%
Government or educational institution programs	7	19.4%	70.0%
Peer collaboration or networking	9	25.0%	90.0%
Total	36	100.0%	360.0%

These statistics indicate that the most common methods of accessing professional development are school-organised workshops and online platforms, with 27.8% and 25%, respectively. Some teachers (19.4%) believe that government or educational institution programs are less utilized due to accessibility issues. In general, teachers in rural settings consider schools and online platforms to be the most suitable tools for improving their teaching performance. In contrast, others view peer collaboration as the best alternative for their professional growth.

Table 14: Types of Professional Development

Types of Professional Development

	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Pedagogical training	11	37.93%	57.9%
Technology integration in teaching	19	65.61%	100.0%
Classroom management strategies	12	41.37%	63.2%
English language proficiency improvement	8	27.58%	42.1%
Curriculum development training	15	51.72%	78.9%
Student assessment and evaluation	6	20.68%	31.6%
Psychological support and stress management	9	11.3%	47.4%

Total	80	100.0%	421.1%
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According to the statistics in the table above, the majority of rural teachers consider technology integration in teaching a priority, at 65.61%, and curriculum development training a priority, at 51.72%. Classroom management strategies, at 41.37%, are also identified as the best opportunities needed for them to improve their teaching in rural settings. The surveyed teachers show moderate interest in pedagogical training (37.93%) and psychological support and stress management (11.3%). In contrast, English language proficiency improvement (27.58%) and student assessment and evaluation (20.68%) are less emphasized but still relevant.

Table 15: Professional Development Frequency

How often do you feel professional development should occur for EFL teachers in rural areas?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Monthly	4	13.8	13.8	13.8
	Quarterly	5	17.2	17.2	31.0
	Annually	6	20.7	20.7	51.7
	As needed (on-demand)	14	48.3	48.3	100.0
	Total	29	100.0	100.0	

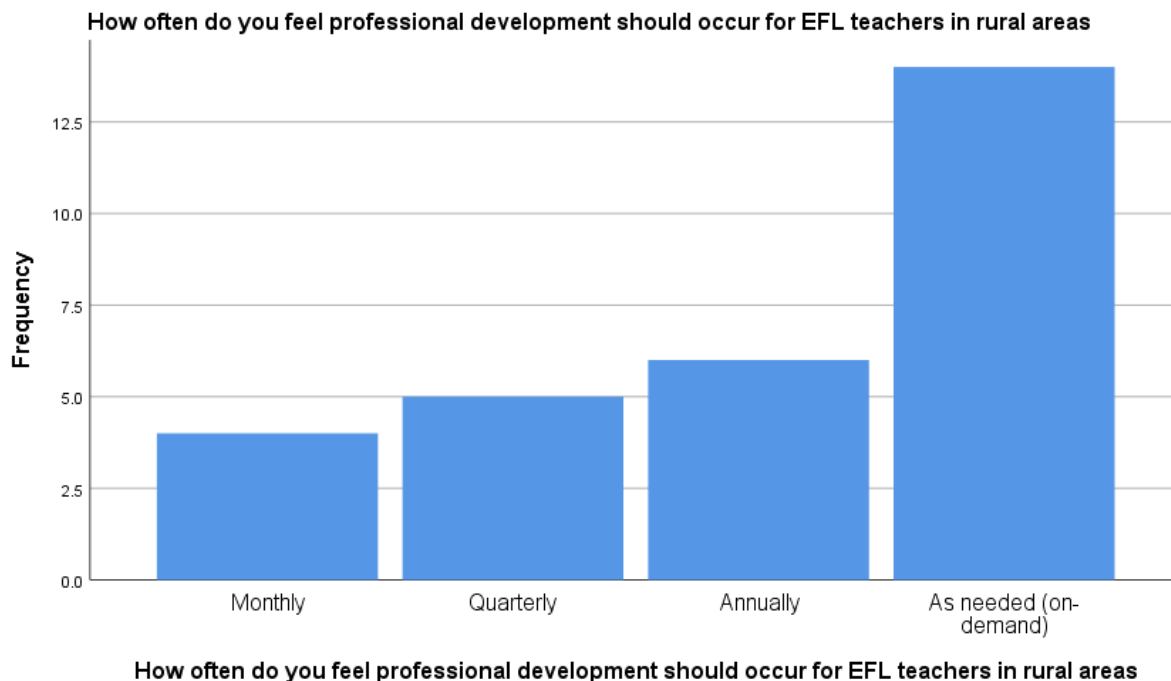


Figure15:Professional Development Frequency

The above table shows that the surveyed teachers prefer adaptable, just-in-time learning over strict timetables because of their fixed teaching schedules and sometimes administrative duties. Overall, the majority prioritize flexibility learning 48.3%, while some of them prefer Annually 20.7%, Quarterly 17.2%, and Monthly 13.8% professional development programs reflect a balanced view regarding professional development frequency.

Table 16: Accessing Challenges

Accessing Challenges

	Responses		
	N	Percent	Percent of Cases
Lack of time	16	55.17%	100.0%
Limited availability of local programs	13	44.82%	81.3%
Lack of financial resources	5	17.24%	31.3%
Lack of access to technology (e.g., internet)	9	31.03%	56.3%

Lack of relevant content for rural settings	9	31.03%	56.3%
Total	52	100.0%	325.0%

The above findings of the survey indicate that more than half of teachers (55.17%) suffer from workload constraints and time shortages, followed closely by limited local programs (44.82%) due to geographical isolation. Poor technology access and irrelevant training content for rural schools (31.03%) are considered as another barrier that hinders teachers from participating in professional development opportunities. Additionally, the surveyed teachers declare that financial resources (17.24%) also have a significant effect on pursuing their training and professional growth opportunities

These results highlight the urgent need for targeted interventions by the educational authorities. Expanding access to online training platforms, aligning training content with rural conditions, and providing incentives or financial support can help overcome these challenges. Addressing these issues is significant for ensuring equitable access to professional development and enhancing rural teachers' effectiveness, motivation, and long term retention (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Table 17: Educational Policies

How well do current educational policies in Algeria support rural schools

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very well	1	3.4	3.4	3.4
	Somewhat well	7	24.1	24.1	27.6
	Not well	20	69.0	69.0	96.6
	Not at all	1	3.4	3.4	100.0
	Total	29	100.0	100.0	

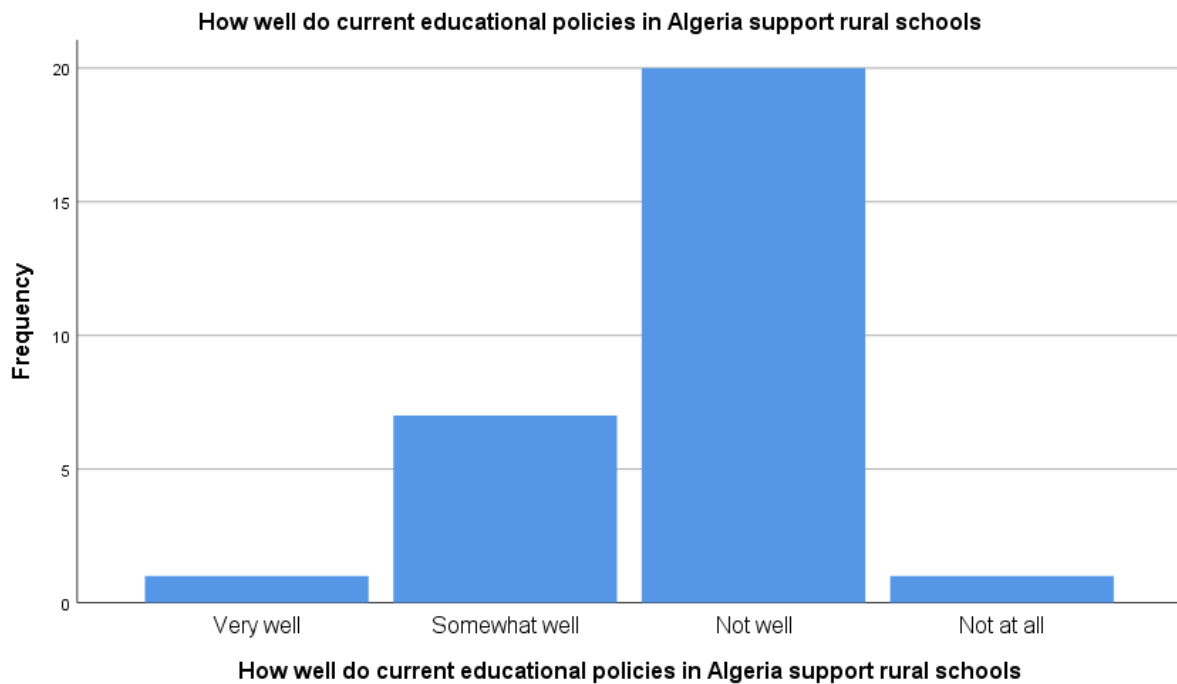


Figure 17: Educational Policies

The above statistics prove that a great majority of teachers 20+ 1 (72.42%) consider that current educational policies in Algeria do not support rural areas at all. This shows that current policies are not clear enough, and their influence is inadequate. The surveyed teachers believe that rural settings need much attention and support to develop teachers' professional growth and improve students' learning quality. However, (24.14%) of teachers think that rural areas benefit somewhat well from current educational policies. The near-absence of "Very well" responses (3.4%) reinforces the urgency for systemic reforms.

Table 18: Aspects Need Improvement

	Responses		
	N	Percent	Percent of Cases
Teacher incentives and retention strategies	8	13.6%	38.1%
Infrastructure development	9	15.3%	42.9%

Curriculum adaptation for rural contexts	21	35.6%	100.0%
Digital and technological access	21	35.6%	100.0%
Total	59	100.0%	281.0%

Most of the surveyed teachers, 21 out of 29, which means (72.4%) believe that the integration of technology and curriculum adaptation for rural schools are essential in developing rural teachers' performance. Other teachers (15.3%) consider school infrastructure, and even internet access needs more development in rural settings. Similarly, 13.6% of surveyed teachers consider that incentives are significant in retaining experienced teachers in rural schools.

These findings highlight the need for a general approach that addresses both instructional and infrastructural gaps. By focusing on curriculum relevancy, digital access, and teacher incentives, rural education authorities can create a more supportive environment for teachers, thereby improving their performance and long-term commitment. In turn, this can lead to higher quality education and better learning achievements for rural students.

Table 19: Government Initiatives

Are there government initiatives specifically aimed at improving teacher training in rural schools

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	7	24.1	24.1	24.1
	No	13	44.8	44.8	69.0
	Not sure	9	31.0	31.0	100.0
	Total	29	100.0	100.0	

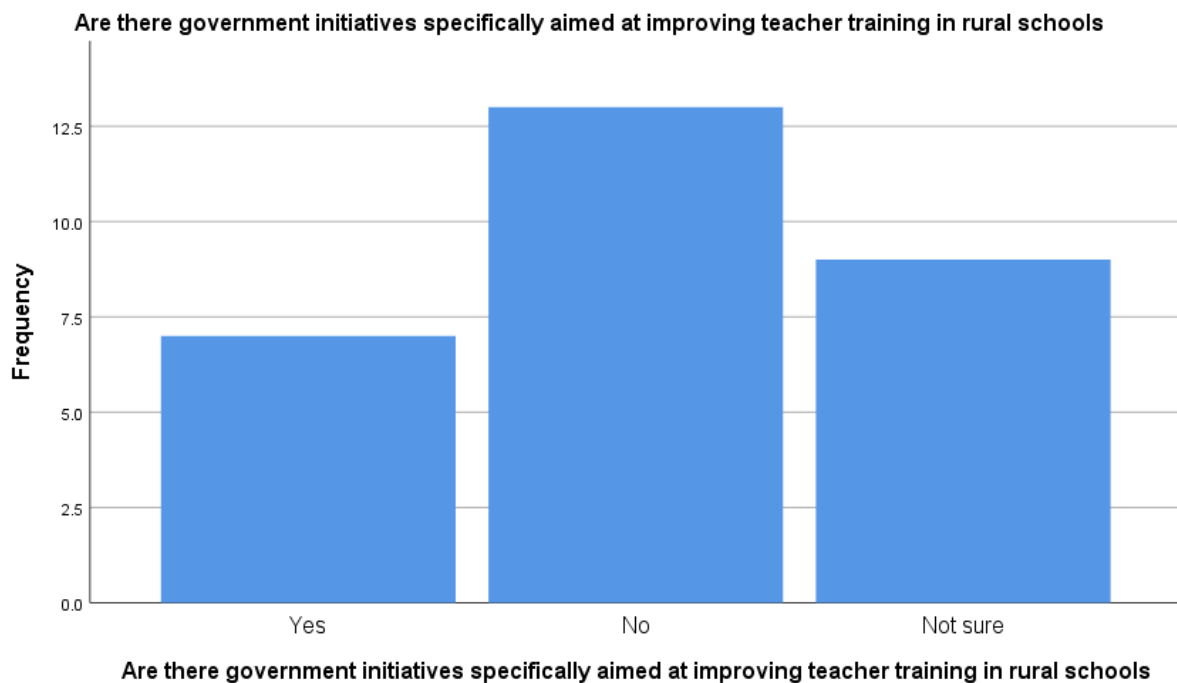


Figure: 19 Government Initiatives

According to the above statistics, it is noticeable that the majority of surveyed teachers (44.8%) claim there are no government initiatives addressing the improvement of teacher training in rural schools. Another respected number of teachers (31.0%) are unsure whether that initiatives exist or not, which reflects a lack of awareness regarding the topic and a lack of such initiatives in their settings. Meanwhile, almost a quarter of teachers (24.1%) believe that there are some initiatives to develop teacher training in rural schools. Overall, the statistics in the table reflect a lack of teacher's awareness related to government initiatives.

These findings show a critical gap in communication and support between rural teachers and policymaking authorities. To establish a stronger rural teaching force, it is vital for stakeholders to design and clearly communicate targeted teacher training programs, making sure rural teachers are fully informed and have access to relevant professional development opportunities. Such efforts establish greater equity in teacher preparation, ultimately leading to improved instructional quality and student outcomes in rural areas (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Table 20: Sufficient Funding

Do you think rural schools receive sufficient funding compared to urban schools?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	4	13.8	13.8	13.8
	No	25	86.2	86.2	100.0
	Total	29	100.0	100.0	

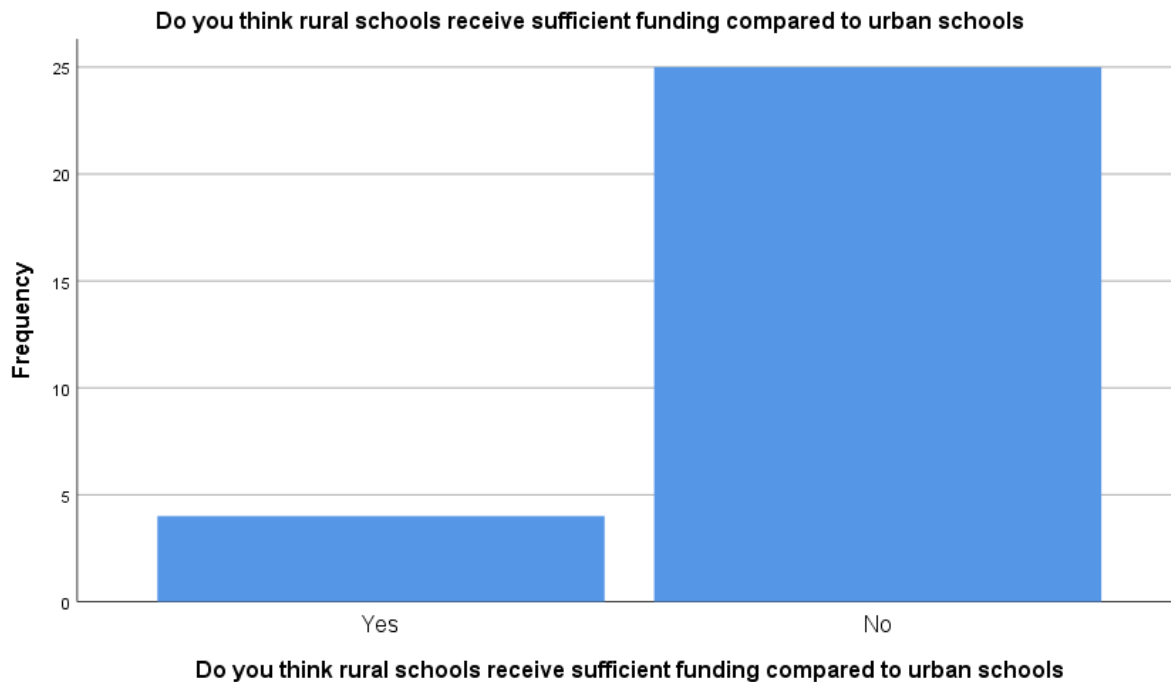


Figure 20: Sufficient Funding

The data show that there is a remarkable inequity regarding funding between rural and urban schools. The majority (86.2%) of the surveyed teachers believe that rural schools do not receive sufficient funding compared to urban schools, whereas (13.8%) of teachers believe that rural schools receive sufficient funding. The data highlights a significant perception of funding inequity between rural and urban schools, with 86.2% of teachers indicating that rural schools are

underfunded compared to their urban counterparts. This requires the authorities intervention to address the financial disparities affecting rural education because insufficient funding can hinder the quality of teaching, availability of resources, and overall student achievements in rural settings.

Table 21: Teachers' recommendations

What policies would you recommend to improve teacher training and development in rural areas?

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
\$q21 ^a	More funding for teacher training programs	16	29.1%	88.9%
	Collaboration between universities and rural schools	18	32.7%	100.0%
	Incentives for teachers to work in rural areas	11	20.0%	61.1%
	Establishing teacher mentorship programs	10	18.2%	55.6%
	Total	55	100.0%	305.6%

The table shows four policy recommendations to improve teacher training and development in rural areas. The majority of teachers recommend collaboration with universities (32.7%) and providing teachers with more funding to improve their training programs. This reflects teachers' need to work with universities to improve their teaching qualities. Other teachers recommend giving incentives for teachers to work in rural areas (20.0%) and establishing teacher mentorship programs (18.2%). The data imply that improving teacher training and development in rural schools needs serious support from the part of the authorities. This can be done through collaborations with universities and increased funding, as mentioned by the majority of the surveyed teachers (32.7%). The findings show a clear need for collaboration to enhance teaching quality. Additionally, the recommendations for incentives (20.0%) and mentorship programs

(18.2%) suggest that addressing motivation and professional guidance is also important for keeping teacher effectiveness and retention in rural settings.

**DATA ANALYSIS
AND
INTERPRETATIONS**

9. Discussion of Findings

This study investigated the challenges and implications that rural teachers in the district of Ain Elhdjel face in terms of teacher preparation and professional development. The research employed a mixed-methods approach. The key findings from the data collected through questionnaires provide valuable insights into teacher preparation programs and professional development opportunities in rural schools.

The analysis of teachers' questions revealed that the majority of teachers in rural schools in the district of Ain Elhadjel are young, with most being female. All surveyed teachers hold Master's and Bachelor's degrees, which indicates that the sample can implement any training policies. A research done by Omar (2021) found that young teachers are more likely than experienced ones to adapt training into their daily practice, especially when they perceive it as practical and goal-oriented. No participant reported having a doctorate, indicating that EFL rural teachers need academic training. Based on their teaching experience, we notice that the majority of teachers working in the district of Ain elhadjel are novice full-time teachers and need more training and professional development.

Hammond (2017) argues that “Teachers who are well-prepared before they enter the classroom are far more likely to be effective and to remain in teaching.” Therefore, for their teaching preparation, surveyed teachers declared that they rely on online courses as well as seminars and workshops they attend with their inspector. Most of them believe that such training programs are insufficient for their professional development. However, for better effectiveness, they express their need for improvement in methods and techniques, technology integration, cultural adaptation and awareness, classroom management, and assessment and evaluation methods.

As mentioned in the theoretical part above, Du Four (2010) encourages Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) as a crucial opportunity for teacher collaboration and growth. He argues that when teachers are given structured time to work together, examine data, and reflect on practices, their teaching improves significantly. Regarding their professional needs, an overwhelming majority declared that they did not attend any professional development program during the last year. They emphasize just online courses and rare workshops and seminars. In their responses, teachers show a significant preference for accessing workshops on online

platforms and peer collaboration. They revealed their need for technology integration, curriculum development, and pedagogical training. Due to the lack of time and limited availability of local programs, as well as limited opportunities for accessing technology and relevant content, teachers often prefer just-in-time learning over strict timetables.

The majority of teachers in rural schools believe that neither the current funding levels nor the present educational policies addressing their setting are sufficient. They declared that they need more improvement in curriculum adaptation, digital tools, infrastructure development, and the provision of incentives to support the retention of experienced as well as novice teachers.

Hammond (2010) argues that education policies are essential for promoting equity and quality in education, highlighting the importance of policies that respond meaningfully to diverse educational contexts.

9.1 Limitations of the Study

This study has some limitations. The research focused solely on teachers from one district, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other rural contexts in Algeria or beyond. Additionally, data were collected primarily through self-report questionnaires, which may introduce bias or limit the depth of understanding regarding complex challenges. Future research should broaden the scope to include multiple rural districts and employ mixed-method approaches, such as interviews and classroom observations, to capture a richer, more nuanced picture of rural teacher development needs over time.

9.2 Teachers' Recommendations for further studies

In light of the findings, several recommendations emerge. Educational authorities should prioritise the development and implementation of accessible, flexible, and contextually relevant professional development programs specifically designed for rural English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. Partnerships between rural schools and higher education institutions should be strengthened to facilitate collaborative learning and mentoring opportunities. Furthermore, policymakers must consider introducing incentives, such as financial rewards or career advancement pathways, to retain skilled teachers in rural areas. Ultimately, investment in digital infrastructure is essential to facilitate the widespread adoption of online learning platforms, which can overcome geographical barriers and provide ongoing professional support.

9.3 Pedagogical Implications

The findings of this study highlight several critical pedagogical implications for improving EFL teaching in rural schools. First, professional development programs should be tailored to address the specific challenges faced by rural teachers, such as managing diverse classrooms and adapting teaching methods to local contexts. Integrating technology into teaching practices is also essential, enabling teachers to engage students with authentic materials, even in the face of geographic isolation. Furthermore, fostering collaborative learning communities among rural teachers can provide valuable peer support and facilitate the sharing of effective strategies. Curriculum flexibility is crucial to accommodate limited resources and large class sizes without compromising learning goals. Encouraging reflective practice can empower teachers to continuously evaluate and improve their teaching, even with limited formal training. Additionally, incorporating local culture and context into lessons can make language learning more relevant and motivating for students. Finally, professional development initiatives should be sustained with ongoing support and follow-up to ensure effective implementation and lasting impact.

Conclusion

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of data gathered through questionnaires from EFL rural school teachers. The latter presented detailed data about participants' perceptions, attitudes, and experiences related to their training programs, professional development opportunities, and various educational policies, as well as the challenges they face in rural schools. The investigation revealed that teachers' current training programs are inadequate and require considerable effort and support from stakeholders. Indeed, exposing EFL rural teachers to regular professional development opportunities affects students' outcomes positively. Regarding teaching challenges in rural schools, the findings indicate that authorities should support the retention of qualified teachers by providing more funding and incentives, facilitating access to digital and technological resources, and organising collaborative meetings between universities and rural school educators.

Furthermore, the findings underscored the enormous gap between urban and rural teaching conditions, highlighting a significant discrepancy between the policy's aspirations and the

realities on the ground. Overall, this chapter presents an attempt to understand and evaluate the relationship between teachers' training programs, professional development opportunities, and rural school conditions. Moreover, the interpretation of results leads to additional recommendations for further studies and suggestions intended for educators and policymakers.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

The ultimate objective of this research is to explore EFL teachers' preparation and professional development needs in rural schools using a questionnaire addressed to teachers working in the district of Ain elhadjel. Aligned with the stated aim of the study, this research aims to address the following questions.

1. To what extent do teacher preparation programs and professional development opportunities exist for EFL teachers in rural areas, and how do they impact teaching effectiveness?
2. How do current educational policies in Algeria address the needs of EFL teachers in rural schools?
3. What challenges do rural schools face in terms of teacher preparation and professional development?

This work consists of two chapters. The first chapter is divided into two sections the theoretical one dealt with teachers' preparation programs, types of teachers' preparation programs, professional development needs, some theoretical underpinnings of professional development as well as forms and models of professional development focusing on teachers' attitudes. The second section was devoted to highlighting Algerian educational policies and challenges rural EFL teachers encounter . Chapter One paved the way for a study that allows a better understanding of teaching conditions in rural areas, highlighting the complex connection between rural teachers' attitudes and educational policies. Chapter Two in its first part, outlined the research methodology, findings and discussion elaborating the research design, population and sampling methodologies, data collection, and description and administration of the questionnaire analysis procedures employed to comprehensively. The second part, showed the results of the study, emphasizing the importance of understanding teachers' perspectives, resources and practices on their preparation and professional development.

The findings reveal serious issues teachers in rural schools encounter during their teaching process, despite the efforts they make, which require tailored PD programs that address

teachers' specific needs, such as teaching methods and techniques, classroom management and technology integration. The surveyed teachers recommended easy access to PD opportunities, online platforms, collaborative learning with universities, and more incentives and motivations to retain experienced teachers and improve teaching quality in rural schools. By providing rural teachers with these recommendations, rural schools retain experienced teachers, improve teaching quality and develop the English language in isolated settings.

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Appendix

The questionnaire

Teacher's Questionnaire

Questionnaire on EFL Teacher Preparation and Professional Development Needs in Rural Areas

Dear teachers,

This questionnaire is designed to gather teachers perspectives on their preparation, challenges, and professional development needs in rural areas. Your insights will help identify gaps in training, resources, and support systems, and inform strategies to improve the quality of education for both teachers and students in rural contexts. Your responses are highly valued and will remain confidential. We appreciate your honest feedback and contribution to this important discussion. Thank you for your participation!

Section 1: Demographic Information

1. Age:

- Under 25
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55 or older

2. Gender:

- Male
- Female

3. Educational Qualifications:

- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctorate
- Other (Please specify):

4. Years of Experience in Teaching EFL:

- Less than 1 year
- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- More than 10 years

5. Current Position:

- Full-time teacher
- Part-time teacher
- School administrator
- Other (Please specify):

Section 2: EFL Teacher Preparation

6. What was your initial training for teaching English as a foreign language?

- University degree in Education or EFL
- In-service teacher training
- No formal training
- Other (Please specify):

7. Have you participated in any teacher training programs specifically focused on teaching English?

Yes

No

8. If yes, please specify the type of training:

Workshops/seminars

Online courses

Certificate or diploma programs

Other (Please specify):

9. Do you feel that your initial training adequately prepared you to teach English in rural areas?

Yes

No

Partially

If no, please explain:.....

10. Which areas of your training do you feel need improvement for better effectiveness in a rural setting?

Classroom management

Teaching methods and techniques

Technology integration

Cultural adaptation and awareness

Assessment and evaluation methods

Other (Please specify):

Section 3: Professional Development Needs.

11. Have you participated in any professional development programs in the last year?

- Yes
- No

12. If yes, what type of programs did you attend?

- Workshops/seminars
- Online courses
- Conferences
- Peer collaboration or mentoring
- Other (Please specify):

13. How do you access professional development opportunities?

- School-organized workshops
- Online platforms (e.g., Coursera, Udemy)
- Government or educational institution programs
- Peer collaboration or networking
- Other (Please specify):

14. What types of professional development opportunities do you think are most needed for EFL teachers in rural areas? (Select all that apply)

- Pedagogical training
- Technology integration in teaching
- Classroom management strategies
- English language proficiency improvement
- Curriculum development training
- Student assessment and evaluation

- Psychological support and stress management
- Other (please specify):

15. How often do you feel professional development should occur for EFL teachers in rural areas?

- Monthly
- Quarterly
- Annually
- As needed (on-demand)
- Other (Please specify):

16. What challenges do you face in accessing professional development opportunities?

- Lack of time
- Limited availability of local programs
- Lack of financial resources
- Lack of access to technology (e.g., internet)
- Lack of relevant content for rural settings
- Other (Please specify):

Section 4: Education Policies Addressing Rural Schools

17. How well do current educational policies in Algeria support rural schools?

- Very well
- Somewhat well
- Not well
- Not at all

**18.What aspects of education policy do you believe need improvement for rural schools?
(Select all that apply)**

- Teacher incentives and retention strategies
- Infrastructure development
- Curriculum adaptation for rural contexts
- Digital and technological access
- Other (Please specify)

19.Are there government initiatives specifically aimed at improving teacher training in rural schools?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

20.Do you think rural schools receive sufficient funding compared to urban schools?

- Yes
- No

21.What policies would you recommend to improve teacher training and development in rural areas?

- More funding for teacher training programs
- Collaboration between universities and rural schools
- Incentives for teachers to work in rural areas
- Establishing teacher mentorship programs
- Other (Please specify)

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- No

9. If yes, please specify the type of training:

- Workshops/seminars
- Online courses
- Certificate or diploma programs
- Other (Please specify):

10. Do you feel that your initial training adequately prepared you to teach English in rural areas?

- Yes
 - No
 - Partially
- If no, please explain:.....

12. Which areas of your training do you feel need improvement for better effectiveness in a rural setting?

- Classroom management
- Teaching methods and techniques
- Technology integration
- Cultural adaptation and awareness
- Assessment and evaluation methods
- Other (Please specify):

Section 3: Professional Development Needs.

13. Have you participated in any professional development programs in the last year?

- Yes
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22. What policies would you recommend to improve teacher training and development in rural areas?

- More funding for teacher training programs
- Collaboration between universities and rural schools
- Incentives for teachers to work in rural areas
- Establishing teacher mentorship programs
- Other (Please specify)

Section 5: General Suggestions

27. What suggestions do you have for improving teacher preparation and professional development for EFL teachers in rural areas?

- Teacher training is essential for enhancing
..... the quality of education in rural areas.
..... We should focus on training to help
..... bridge this gap and improve teacher
..... preparation.

Questionnaire on EFL Teacher Preparation and Professional Development Needs in Rural Areas

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- Limited availability of local programs
- Lack of financial resources
- Lack of access to technology (e.g., internet)
- Lack of relevant content for rural settings
- Other (Please specify):

Section 4: Education Policies Addressing Rural Schools

18. How well do current educational policies in Algeria support rural schools?

- Very well
- Somewhat well
- Not well
- Not at all

19. What aspects of education policy do you believe need improvement for rural schools? (Select all that apply)

- Teacher incentives and retention strategies
- Infrastructure development
- Curriculum adaptation for rural contexts
- Digital and technological access
- Other (Please specify)

20. Are there government initiatives specifically aimed at improving teacher training in rural schools?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

21. Do you think rural schools receive sufficient funding compared to urban schools?

- Yes
- No

22. What policies would you recommend to improve teacher training and development in rural areas?

- More funding for teacher training programs
- Collaboration between universities and rural schools
- Incentives for teachers to work in rural areas
- Establishing teacher mentorship programs
- Other (Please specify)

Section 5: General Suggestions

27. What suggestions do you have for improving teacher preparation and professional development for EFL teachers in rural areas?

-
.....
✓ Invest in high quality teacher educators
.....
✓ provide teachers with ongoing support
.....
✓ create professional development opportunities
.....
that promote teacher collaboration
.....
.....

ملخص

إن توفير احتياجات اساتذة تعليم اللغة الانجليزية في المناطق الريفية و تطويرهم مهنيا يعد عاملا جوهريا لتقدم جودة التعليم و تحقيق نتائج افضل .تستكشف هذه الدراسة احتياجات اعداد معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية و تطويرهم المهني في المدارس الريفية بالجزائر.وتهدف أيضا إلى تحليل تصورات و ممارسات المعلمين بما يتعلق بطرق تدريسهم، اساليب تطويرهم، مدى نجاعة السياسات التعليمية الموجهة لمناطق عملهم و كذا أهم العراقيل و المشكلات التي تعترض تحسين جودة ادائهم و تطوير نتائج طلابهم.أعتمد في هذه الدراسة علىاستبيان قدم للاساتذة قصد مساعدتهم على التعبير بوضوح و موضوعية حول ظروف عملهم و سير عملية تطويرهم و تحسين ادائهم.تم تحليل البيانات النوعية باستخدام الإحصاءات الوصفية والاستدلالية .كشفت النتائج أن المعلمي رغم إقرارهم عموما بأهمية التطوير المهني المستمر، يظهرون حسرتهم على ضعف فرص التطوير المهني و المشكلات العديدة التي تواجههم في مناطق عملهم .أوضحت الدراسة بشكل بارز أن الخصائص الديموغرافية للمعلمين تساعد بشكل ممتاز اي سياسات لتحسين اعداداهم و تطويرهم مهنيا. تشكل عوائق التطوير المهني المستمر مثلقيود الوقت، العبء الوظيفي، صعوبة استخدام الوسائل التكنولوجية والقيود الجغرافية تحديات مستمرة أمام مشاركتهم في برامج اعدادهم و تطويرهم المهني على قلتها.في ختام الدراسة، تقدم الدراسة توصياتو اقتراحات لتحسين اعداد معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية و تطويرهم المهني في المدارس الريفية، تشمل تخصيص تحفيزات و استراتيجياتلائق الاساتذة ذوي الخبرة البقاء في المناطق الريفية، توفير الوسائل التعليمية المساعدة على تعليم اللغة الانجليزية، توفير فرص مرنة و متاحة للتطوير المهني من خلال مشاركة الجامعة في تأطير الاساتذة و تكوينهمبالاضافة الى تكييف البرامج للمناطق الريفية. بالرغم من قلة الاعتمادات و الفرص غير المتكافئة بين المدارس الحضرية و نصيرتها الريفية الا اننتائج الدراسة تثمن جهود الدولة الجزائرية القيمة لتحسين ظروف التدريس و تطوير الكفاءات المهنية في المناطق الريفية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اعداد المعلمين، التطوير المهني المستمر، التحديات، اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة اجنبية