

هل سنوات الخبرة التي يتمتع بها المعلمون تحدث فرقاً في جودة التدريس  
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## الملخص

هل سنوات الخبرة التي يتمتع بها المعلمون تحدث فرقاً في جودة التدريس؟ تعتبر إدارة الفصل من المهارات الضرورية للتدريس الفعال علي الرغم من عدم وجود اتفاق يذكر حول كيفية القياس أو ما يشكل الفعالية. تهدف هذه الورقة إلى معرفة آراء ووجهات نظر معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية (EFL) المبتدئين وذوي الخبرة تجاه أساليب إدارة الفصل المختلفة. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تسعى هذه الدراسة الي استكشاف العلاقة بين التجربة والفعالية، وكيف يمكن استخدام هذه العلاقة جزئياً لدعم قرار السياسة التعليمية. تتكون عينة البحث من 12 معلماً ومعلمة من 4 مدارس ثانوية حكومية في ليبيا. تم اختيار المدارس المختلفة في هذه الدراسة بشكل عشوائي باستخدام العينات العشوائية الطبقية. تم استخدام مزيج من طرق البحث الكمية والنوعية لجمع البيانات. لا تظهر النتائج أي دليل على انخفاض جودة التدريس للمعلمين المبتدئين (من 0 إلى 10 سنوات من الخبرة)، كما تشير إلى أن جودة التدريس يمكن أن تكون أعلى بشكل عام، وأن الدعم الموجه والتعلم المهني المستنير بالأدلة سيفيد جميع المعلمين. ومع ذلك، كشفت النتائج أيضاً أن إدارة الفصل الدراسي التي يتبناها المعلمون قد ثبت أنها مرتبطة بسنوات خبرتهم في التدريس حيث كان المعلمون الخبراء أكثر فاعلية ومرونة في إدارة فصولهم وكذلك في التنبؤ بأحداث إدارة الفصل الدراسي من المعلمين المبتدئين

## Do teachers' years of experience make a difference in the quality of teaching?

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### Abstract

*Managing the classroom has been considered one of the necessary skills for effective teaching. As there is little agreement on how to measure or what constitutes effectiveness. This paper aims to investigate the attitudes of novice and experienced EFL teachers towards different classroom management styles. It explores the relationship between experience and effectiveness, and how this relationship can be used in part to support an educational policy decision. The research sample consists of 12 male and female teachers from 4 secondary public schools in Libya. The different schools in this study were chosen randomly using stratified random sampling. A combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods was utilised to collect data. Results show no evidence of lower teaching quality for beginning teachers (0–10years' experience), However, Findings also revealed that the classroom management practices teachers adopt have been shown to relate to their years of teaching experience. The expert teachers were significantly more effective at predicting classroom management events than novice teachers. It also suggests that the quality of teaching could be higher overall, and that targeted support and evidence-informed professional learning would benefit all teachers*

### 1. Introduction

Classroom management is an important concern in teacher education, as it has a strong impact on students' participation in classroom activities. Research shows that the way teachers manage their classroom has a strong influence on students' cognitive and behavioral engagement, thus a learning environment that states the limits in an informative way creates a context that helps promote students' intrinsic motivation. Brown's (2004) study on teachers' beliefs and attitudes to teaching and learning revealed that being able to motivate students, which is one of the aims of classroom management,

has a great impact on teaching practices and outcomes inside the classroom. It also explains the extent to which students develop an interest in the subject, because “what teachers do is a reflection of what they know and believe” (Richards & Lockhart, 1996, p.29). This study was conducted due to an interest in discovering what happens inside the classroom and identifying to what extent teachers of English transfer their perceptions and beliefs into practice. This is based on the assumption that teacher’s perceptions and thoughts guide and reflect what they subsequently do in the classroom. Being knowledgeable and skilful is important and needed to complement teachers’ successful practice.

## **2. Purpose of the Study**

The present study aims to uncover the impact of years of teaching experience on classroom management practice. It discovers the perceptions and beliefs of both novice and experienced teachers towards classroom practices. This study also intends to provide the information needed to enhance teaching and learning practices and improve learning conditions. Further, the current research will improve the understanding of the difficulties that face Libyan teachers in secondary schools during teaching and learning processes. It will add empirical data that can be employed by teachers and educationalists through suggesting perceptions and implications for using more effective and applicable activities that help students to involve and speak English language.

## **3. Research Questions**

In order to meet all the above-mentioned aims, the following questions will be addressed:

1. What are teachers’ general conceptions about teaching and learning, beliefs about student motivation, and self-reported practices in classroom management?
2. How is teaching experience related to beliefs and practices?

## **4. Literature Review**

### **4.1.1. Various Perspectives on Classroom Management**

Research indicates that classroom management is very important. It shows that the way teachers manage their classroom has a strong influence on students’ cognitive and behavioral engagement. It insists that being able to motivate students, which is one of the goals of classroom management, is part

of the domain teachers' image of what a good teacher is. According to Kunter, Baumert, and Köller (2007) the degree to which students perceive the learning environment that states the limits in an informative way creates a context that helps promote students' intrinsic motivation and develop an interest in the subject. When classroom-management strategies are performed efficiently, teachers minimize the behaviors that impede learning for both individual students and groups of students, while maximizing the behaviors that facilitate or enhance learning. Generally speaking, effective teachers and teachers who acquired long experience in teaching tend to display strong classroom-management skills, while the hallmark of the inexperienced or less effective teacher is a disorderly classroom filled with students who are not working or paying attention (ibid).

#### **4.1.2. Years of Teaching Experience**

Teaching experience has been considered as an important element, which has its effects on students' performance and achievement. Wiseman et al., (2002) and Ali, (2008) showed that experienced teachers can inspire their students to attain academically more during their learning. Teachers' experience is developed over years of practice. Such development can lead to more success in teaching practice and helps teachers to be more aware of their students' needs and requirements. Experienced teachers "refine and perfect teaching strategies and may become 'experts' in a particular strategy, approach, or philosophy" (Wiseman et al., 2002, p.17).

Teachers acquire experiences when they have taught different textbooks and have been exposed to different situations while teaching. They become more used to various strategies and techniques in their field and considered to be more confident and satisfied than other teachers. Therefore, experienced teachers are likely to create the appropriate environment for their students in which students feel safe and can build positive relationships with their teachers. These teachers might accept to share the responsibility of teaching and learning with their students (Brown.2004). Consequently, they are considered more able to employ different practices that encourage students to engage in classroom activities.

However, "teachers with less experience (under 10 years) are often less strong on leadership and more uncertain and dissatisfied than their more experienced

colleagues” (Harkin et al., 2001, p. 81). These views are supported by Ali’s study (2008) who stated that:

- less experienced teachers did not pay attention to the differences between individual students (p. 270);
- less experienced teachers “were affected by the methods and techniques they learnt when they were students and tried to apply them” (p. 270).
- experienced teachers “mixed different techniques including the ones gleaned from their teaching experiences” (p. 270);
- experienced teachers were “able to encourage students to build their self-confidence by establishing the meaning of communication rather than accuracy” (p.270), and
- experienced teachers believed that “encouraging students’ self-correction or peer correction creates confidence and student-student cooperation” (p.269).

This suggests that with years of experience, teachers develop a better understanding of classroom management, which enables them to anticipate issues and to adapt their classroom management practices accordingly. Therefore, it can be argued that the years of teaching has a positive role in the success of the strategies and practices, beside the materials that teachers select during teaching and assessing students’ achievement.

#### **4.1.3. General conceptions about teaching and learning**

There is still no agreement on a particular theory of teaching and learning and its role in learning a language as there are various philosophical approaches to learning, which have a particular philosophical factor that differs from the others in explaining the process of learning. Therefore, how to learn a second or foreign language has been a controversial topic and has had great debate among researchers and theorists. For example, the socio-cultural point of view considers learning as a socially mediated process through language where interaction plays the central role for learning. It has become influential in the field of education and is applied in many classroom studies. Vygotsky's theory requires an involved teacher who is an active participant and guide for the student. In other words, the teachers’ role is important in creating collaborative activities and facilitates the learning process by encouraging students to work in pairs or groups.

On the other hand, behaviourism theory believe that, learning takes place by acquiring knowledge of the natural world and teachers communicate this knowledge to their students in the classroom. Students learn the knowledge by the imitation and repetition of the same structure (Brown, 2004).

#### **4.1.4. Teachers' Beliefs and Classroom Management**

##### **Practices**

The analysis of the relationship between teachers' beliefs and classroom management practices has been neglected (Kunter, Baumert, and Köller (2007)). As a result, little is known about what drives teachers to adopt one practice or another. Recently there is a growing body of research on teachers' beliefs, in which the relationship between beliefs and teaching practices is viewed as significant (Brown, (2004)

Understanding teachers' perceptions and beliefs towards the methods of teaching may play a crucial part in the processes in both learning and teaching English as a foreign language. Therefore, this study has chosen to research what practices teachers use and the influence of teachers' perceptions and experience on the process of teaching and learning. Teachers are highly influenced by their beliefs which in turn affect their view and the decisions they make on classroom practices, and the way they behave in the classroom (Brown, (2004)). That is to say "Teachers' beliefs about what learning is will affect everything that they do in the classroom, whether their beliefs are implicit or explicit" (ibid, 1997, pp.56-57).

According to Richards & Lockhart, (1996, p.29) "what teachers do is a reflection of what they know and believe". Brown, (2004) confirmed this view and argued that teachers' beliefs and attitudes to teaching and learning have a great impact on teaching practices and outcomes inside the classroom. This means that these beliefs have a great effect on the teachers' decision-making and action. However, research shows that teachers' lack of a good strategy of how to manage their classroom in a successful manner can have a negative effect on students' learning. Orafi and Borg, (2009) Therefore, teachers are required to prepare well before employing these strategies to avoid wasting their time. To conclude the general beliefs teachers hold about teaching and learning could explain why they adopt certain teaching practices.

## **5. Instruments for Collecting Data**

### **5.1. The Sample of Participants**

In social science, it is important to select the sample properly as it is not possible to observe the whole population. Therefore, selecting the right sample helps researchers to obtain valid and accurate results. Sample selection for the current study was based on the fact that the researcher had access to the 4 schools because she lives in that area and she has a good relationship with some staff that could assist her in conducting the study (Cohen et al., 2007). The target population were second-year secondary school students and their teachers who were teaching them English.

### **5.2. Questionnaires**

The questionnaire was used in the current study as a tool for data collection because it has probably been the most commonly used data collection tool in social research. This is confirmed by Cohen et al., (2007) who mentioned that, we can get large number of responses in a standard form easily. It was used to elicit information to triangulate other instruments, namely semi-structured observations and semi-structured interviews.

Questionnaire as a tool for data collection can be seen as a suitable instrument in the current study to obtain data from a large sample. It is used to triangulate other instruments, namely semi-structured observations and semi-structured interviews. The first step in designing a questionnaire was to have clear research questions that helped the researcher to focus her attention to form questions or statements that further answer the research questions of the investigation. Therefore,, a questionnaire was distributed to 12 teachers with an equal balance of level and gender. Questionnaire was given by the researcher in order to ensure that they was distributed in the best way to represent the target population. Distributing the questionnaire started immediately after the permission for entering the schools was formally obtained from the Committee of Education.

All the head-teachers were helpful and cooperative. In each school, full explanations about the nature and the aims of the study were provided to the head-teacher and to one of the teachers who was nominated to help distribute and collect the questionnaires. The head-teachers and those volunteered teachers were also informed about the nature of the second method of data

collection (observations and interviews) and were asked to encourage at least one teacher from each school to participate in the interview. The high response rate (100%) in this study indicates that good timing and purposive selection of contexts where it is possible for researchers to depend on people they know in administering questionnaires can significantly increase the response rate of their participants. Achieving this high rate could be also related to the researcher's good relationship with many of the stakeholders in the area. Cohen et al., (2007, p.224) believed that the researcher's status and prestige can be an influential factor for persuading the participants to return their questionnaires.

### **5.3. Observations**

In the current study, non-participant observation using audio-recording and note-taking tools was utilised in collecting data. The rationale behind observation was to look at the teachers' behaviour and what is going on inside the classroom more closely along with capturing any missed information from interviews. Observation was an important tool and could produce clear information in terms of the evaluative behaviour of people (Kumar, 2014). It is not only important in classroom research but also more generally in supporting the process of school development (Kumar, 2014). We use observation because "direct observation of people's actions, behaviour and attitude is an alternative to asking them about it" (Newby, 2010, p.286). Therefore, observations could be an effective instrument in the current study to obtain as much information as possible about the phenomena, which was aimed to be observed and was a selective way of watching and listening to it as it takes place (Kumar, 2014, p.173). According to McDonough et al., (2013) learning does not always take place through what teachers teach or how much they have planned the lesson. However, a carefully planned lesson sometimes can restrict rather than help students in their learning as interaction which occurred inside the classroom cannot be prepared and it can occur without any preparation. This kind of interaction can determine the learning opportunities that students get. This kind of interaction, which involves both teacher and learners, requires both teacher and student to manage things together that help in shaping the environment of the classroom.



The co-operation between the teacher and the learners includes what opportunities can be allowed for each one of them, e.g. what / who and when to speak. Hence, in the current study, it is important to observe the classroom, to find out to what extent the students are offered the opportunity to speak and involve in the learning process. In addition, through observation, we can find out what materials both experienced and non-experienced teachers are used in their classroom, and in what manner they are used in the classroom. Therefore 12 teachers were observed. However, the researcher in this study did not depend only on observation, as the research interpretation may or may not be completely correct and needs another instrument to support the explanation. As emphasised by Corbin & Strauss, (2015, p.41), it is beneficial to combine observation with interview or leave open the possibility to verify interpretations with participants”.

#### **5.4. Interviews**

The semi-structured interviews were conducted with the same subjects who were observed in their classes. The researcher started the semi-structured interviews with the teachers after the classroom observations finished. The first step in conducting the interviews was contacting all the volunteers to arrange for the time and the place for each interview. It was not easy to fit in the times that suit all the interviewees as a conflict in their options was experienced. As most of the Libyan secondary school teachers are female and, in many schools, there were no male teachers, the majority 66% of the sample teachers were females. In fact, I got advantages of this situation. This facilitates my role as an interviewer as well as an observer, in that; I could meet the teachers at any time and at any place. Hence, the interviews and the observations were more accessible. Those teachers whose teaching experience ranged from 0 to 10 years were labelled as group ‘A’ and referred to as ‘less experienced’, and those who had a teaching experience more than 10 year were labelled as group ‘B’ and referred to as ‘experienced teachers’. For qualitative data, an appropriate sample was identified that could statistically represent the characteristics of the population, including male and female participants and more and less experienced staff. Their background information data guided the selection of the participants for observation and interview (Cohen, 2007, p. 114). 12 teachers were chosen from 4 schools.

They were interviewed using the semi-structured interview guide. The interviews were set up when the participants contacted indicated they were willing to be interviewed.

In this study, it was intended to observe and interview 15 teachers; however, the researcher was satisfied with 12. After 12 interviews, no new data was revealed. Therefore, the researcher decided not to continue expanding the sample size as the level of saturation was achieved. This means that no more observations and interviews were needed (Cohen, 2007). Hence, the sample size was determined by considerations of theoretical saturation. This occurs when “no new or relevant data seems to emerge regarding a category” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 212). The teachers were Arabic native speakers and from the same social, cultural and religious backgrounds holding Teachers’ Institute Certificates in Teaching English Language or Bachelor Degrees (BA) in Education or Arts. After the samples of teachers and students were selected, their participation in the study was voluntary. Although, the gender of participants was not equal, the researcher tried to make a balance to achieve a diversity views.

This study focuses on 4 secondary schools in Libya which means that there are limits to the degree to which the findings can be generalised. However, considering the similarities, problems and learning environment among the Libyan secondary schools, the findings of this study may not be generalised to all but “could provide a springboard for further research or allow links to be forged with existing findings in an area” (Bryman, 2004, p.100). Thus, it is important to appreciate that data collected in this way, although interesting, is not representative of the whole study population.

## **6. Results and Discussion**

The findings from the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data regarding the views that teachers held about teaching and learning, beliefs about student motivation, and self-reported practices in classroom management revealed that the majority of the teachers tend to agree with the view that teacher’s role is to facilitate and guide students. However, the qualitative data analysis contradicted these findings. From the classroom observation, it was clear that the majority of the teachers were controllers at the beginning of the lesson, presenting the new topic and given instructions.

They were also-trying to discipline their classrooms with only few of them facilitating the process of learning whenever their students were provided with the opportunities to work together. Teachers rarely changed their roles to provide students with the feedback on what they have achieved.

The quantitative findings revealed that 58% of the teachers' questionnaire responses stressed using various resources that fulfil students' interests. On the other hand results from the qualitative data revealed that five out of twelve teachers stated that they tend to provide their students with different topics that motivate them to engage and participate in classroom activities. However, these findings contradict what was observed in that, most of these teachers, who were observed, were focusing mainly on the topics, which were included in the textbook. In particular, the analysis of the data from classroom observations revealed that experienced EFL teachers were found to be more flexible in their approach to classroom management and were more likely to provide space for student modification. In addition, experienced teachers were observed to allow students to become more involved and active in classroom interactions and dialogues empowering the students to create a common voice for the classroom procedures and routines. In contrast Novice EFL teachers were more concerned with implementing the lesson plan according to set procedures. It can be argued that effective teaching include skills in communication, adaptability, empathy and collaboration.

These findings indicated that the notion of the role of the teacher being as a facilitator seemed to be very demanding on the majority of teachers (nine out of twelve), who were used to dominating their classroom instructions and preparing their lessons in advance. The qualitative findings of this study revealed that three out of twelve teachers employed group activities. They were the same teachers who have been mentioned earlier. During these activities, their roles were to guide and scaffold students to achieve the goals of the activities. These teachers applied various oral questions and created a classroom discussion. Students were observed to respond to their teacher in a positive atmosphere that motivated them more to use English language when communicating with their teacher.

Findings also revealed that the classroom management practices teachers adopt have been shown to relate to their years of teaching experience. The

expert teachers were significantly more effective at predicting classroom management events than novice teachers. This suggests that with years of experience, teachers develop a better understanding of classroom management, which enables them to anticipate issues and to adapt their classroom management practices accordingly. Along the same line, Morris-Rotschild and Brassard (2006) reported that years of teaching experience were positively associated with *compromising* and *integrating*—two positive conflict strategies within classrooms that are conceptually close to autonomy support—and negatively associated with *obliging*, which is conceptually close to control.

However, it can be concluded that the findings of this study revealed a contradiction between the teachers' views and practices of the teacher's role. Despite their positive views and their understanding of the effectiveness of acting as a facilitator, most of the teachers acted as a controller who dominated the learning process in the observed classrooms. This contradiction could be attributed to many factors. Teachers who participated in this study reported different reasons for their avoidance of changing their role to become a guide and organizer of students' learning. These factors such as huge number of students in each class and shortage of time are among the difficulties that teachers face during teaching and learning process. However, these factors should not form excuses for not providing students with more opportunities to engage and involve in classroom activities. It should not act as a barrier that hinders teachers from acting as a facilitator who shares the responsibility of teaching and learning with their students

## 7. Conclusion

The focus of this study was to find out factors related to teachers' perceptions towards teaching and learning, beliefs about student motivation, and self-reported practices in classroom management, and identify major influences that could have effects on these practices. It sought to identify how teaching experience is related to beliefs and practices.

It was also intended to raise awareness to the authorities and stakeholders such as students, teachers and decision makers of the importance of involving students in the learning process. A combination of quantitative and qualitative

research methods was utilised to collect data in order to evaluate the perceptions and views of teachers.

Based on the results, it was clear that both of experienced and novice teachers had concerns about teaching and learning process. They clarified that engaging students in the learning process can be very beneficial to students' learning. Teachers explained that students should be given varieties of activities which can attract their attention and help them to be creative learners.

Finally, the results draw attention to the impact of various significant factors that shape teachers' current teaching practice. Some of the issues that had been raised by the participants were; the limitation in the resources and facilities provided for secondary schools. They also complained of the imposing of classrooms with its large number of students. These factors besides many others affect in one way or another teachers' ability to employ useful strategies and techniques to assist and improve students' performance.

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