



Email: [editorijless@gmail.com](mailto:editorijless@gmail.com)

Volume: 7, Issue4, 2020 (Oct-Dec)

**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LAW, EDUCATION,  
SOCIAL AND SPORTS STUDIES  
(IJLESS)**

*A Peer Reviewed and Refereed Journal*

DOI: 10.33329/ijless

<http://ijless.kypublications.com/>

ISSN:2455-0418 (Print), 2394-9724 (online)

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[www.kypublications.com](http://www.kypublications.com)

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## ENGLISH TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS IN-SERVICE TEACHER TRAINING IN NEPAL

**Bhandari Bhim Lal**

Associate Professor in English Language Education  
Butwal Multiple Campus, Butwal, Nepal  
Email:blbhandari2024@gmail.com  
DOI: [10.33329/ijless.7.4.41](https://doi.org/10.33329/ijless.7.4.41)



Bhandari BhimLal

### ABSTRACT

This study aimed at exploring the English language teachers' perceptions towards in-service teacher training. For this purpose, four English teachers were purposively selected as the participants from two community schools of Rupandehi, Nepal. In-depth semi-structured interview and open-ended questions were used in order to draw out the required data from the participants. The study revealed that the participants involved in the study had positive perceptions towards in-service training programme which provided them with practical knowledge about teaching methodology, strategies and professional skills required for their job.

**Keywords:** In service teacher training, perception, professional development, teacher training

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### Introduction

The term training generally refers to the professional preparation of a person in any field of his/her work. Training is regarded as pre-requisite phenomenon for handing any responsibility for anybody. Teacher training is a precondition for teachers to grow professionally in their teaching profession. In fact, it is an ongoing and never ending process which assists them to update teaching skills in their diverse classroom settings. Training provides necessary skill, abilities, methods and techniques to perform particular job/ task successfully and effectively (Bhatia, 2005). Training refers to the preparation of a person in any field to perform his/her job effectively and efficiently. The terms teacher training and teacher development have been often used interchangeably, however they are different. In this regard, Hedge and Whitney (1996) assert, "Teacher training implies training in the skills techniques of teaching whereas teacher development refers to a lifelong process of professional development" (p. 121).

Thus, training involves basic concepts and principles for applying them to teaching and the ability to implement principles and practices in real classroom. It also includes the activities directly focused on teachers' present responsibilities. Teacher Training also involves supervision, monitoring and getting feedback from others on one's practice (Richards, 2010). So, teacher training is a professional preparation of a teacher to face real classroom problems. In this regard, Lazar (2009) states, "Teachers learn the best by being involved actively in the training session. This active involvement might entail participating in a discussion, brain storming, dealing in a group or simply setting aside time to read and reflect on a new idea" (p. 216). Training facilitates teachers to acquire

practical knowledge which implies the ability of teachers to handle the classroom and develop professionally. Therefore, teacher training is useful to learn how to solve practical problems that arise during actual classroom teaching. Richards and Schmidt (2005) state that teacher training deals with basic teaching skills and techniques. Thus, teacher training provides with basic teaching skills and techniques for teaching. Teachers are required to be efficient to impart knowledge with suitable methods and techniques to their learners learn effectively with having certain goals. They must keep up to date with the changes that take place in the field of English language teaching.

In-service teacher training is a supplementary training given to in-service teachers to refresh and improve their existing knowledge, gain newly developed ideas and concepts. Bailey (2006) asserted it as, "teachers who are already employed, as opposed to those who are completing their professional preparation" (p. 267). Pre-service training does not feed teachers with everything they need. So, they require in-service training to keep their knowledge fresh and lively. It is necessary for the implementation of effective teaching techniques in the classroom. In-service training activities support teachers to improve their practical professional knowledge and skills in order to educate their students. Such trainings give teachers opportunities to reflect their knowledge and skills on classroom practices, gain insight into teaching experiences, view education as a long term process and deal with divergence. Ultimately they help to cope with all the challenges that they face in course of teaching. In this line, in-service teacher training engages the teachers in self reflection and evaluation. It also develops many aspects of teaching; supports them to discharge different roles such as supervisor, mentor teacher, teacher researcher, material writer etc (Richards & Farrell, 2010).

In-service teacher training supports to refresh teachers' existing knowledge, gain newly developed ideas and concepts. It keeps their knowledge fresh and lively for the implementation of effective teaching techniques in the classroom. Teacher training and professional development programmes which depend on knowledge transmission models may not be effective in bringing about the desired change (Adey & Hewitt, 2004). It assists to cope with all the challenges that they face in course of teaching.

In-service teacher training is essential skill and competency as teachers have difficulties and they face problems in teaching real classrooms regarding the subject areas and the teaching practicum skills. In- service teacher training programme has provided training to the teachers with adequate contents and teaching skills but very few. This study will be a milestone for minimizing teaching related problems and explore secondary level English language teachers' perceptions towards in-service teacher training programme in order to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. Therefore, I hope this study can contribute particularly to fellow teachers, teacher educators and students. In addition, I hope that it can be one of the additional resources for the policy makers, syllabus designers for improving the existing curriculum and suitable policy for 21<sup>st</sup> century education. Furthermore, Future researchers will also be benefited from the study. This research study will provide some ideas for the improvement and open the door for the next research.

Becoming a teacher is really a demanding experience and involves learning how to survive and how to cope with the complex world of the classroom. Employing their practical knowledge and thinking on their feet, teachers learn to handle everyday affairs. Easen (1985) asserts in order to manage the changes to enhance professional development; in-service training can be one of the ways towards such development (as cited in Gyawali, 2004). It will help survive and cope with the complex world of teaching to implement their practical knowledge and gain experience to respond to what they find to various situations. However, along with the changes in curriculum and textbooks, these changes in language teaching and learning get introduced then the teachers may feel threatened. Therefore, they must change themselves to manage and enhance the professional development which

is possible only from in-service teacher training. Teacher educators are able to implement them in real classroom teaching.

I want to see why they are unable to implement and transfer their knowledge and skills in their classroom practice. I am interested in carrying out the research to explore the gap between theory and practice on in-service programme. Less research studies are carried out in it. Therefore, the research attempts to explore English teachers' perceptions towards in-service teacher training programmes in Nepal.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to explore secondary level English language teachers' perceptions towards in-service teacher training programmes in Nepal. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do the English language teachers perceive in-service teacher training programmes in Nepal?
2. How do they practice the acquired skills of in-service teacher training?

### **Methodology**

I carried out this study using a qualitative research method to explore teacher educators' perceptions on in-service training programmes in Nepal. The participants in the study included four secondary level English language teachers from Rupandehi district. The study employed purposeful sampling procedure. I visited the chosen community schools to get permission from the head teachers and. After getting consent, I briefly explained the purpose of the visit and established the rapport for the development of familiarity and trust between me and the participants. The participants had engaged in teaching professions after passing teacher service commission examination. They were ready to share their perceptions on in-service training programmes. I collected the data through semi-structured interview and open-ended questions from them. To maintain ethical considerations, I masked the identities of the participants using pseudonyms. Finally, I edited and coded the collected data properly then organized, analyzed and interpreted them under different themes descriptively.

### **Results and Discussion**

Data obtained from the English teachers were analyzed and interpreted under the following themes and sub-themes:

#### **Opportunities of In-service Teacher Training**

In-service teacher training is crucial for teacher development. It helps teacher to develop their subject knowledge, gain the required skills, and become knowledgeable about current technological developments to be professionally strong and the best teacher in the sense of effective presentation. Teacher training is mainly related to methodology, skills and techniques that enhance teachers to be capable with the contents to be taught. Equally it is concerned with the ways of giving and taking feedback facilitating students in their study, importance of collaborative learning and the ways to solve the professional problems likely to occur in the teachers career and inside the classroom which is obtained through the teacher training so that only the trained teachers are familiar with those aspects, skills, methodology and techniques which help them to impart quality education. Some of the opportunities are discussed as follows:

#### **Developing Competence, Performance and Confidence of Teachers**

In-service teacher training is indispensable for teachers already working in schools for professional competence. It is the education a teacher receives after he/she has entered the teaching profession. It develops a sense of security, a team spirit, uncertainties removed, and exchanges of opinion, quality improvement and a sense of belongingness to the teaching profession. I asked the

participants whether training supports them their classroom teaching. Majority of the participants responded positively that the training helps them improve their performance. Laxman shared, *“Training I san important part of teacher's professional development to develop competence and confidence on the part of teachers in workplace performance. We have to transfer skills of training in classroom performance”*. Laxman shows his positive perception towards in-service teacher training which facilitates teachers to implement the teaching skills he/she has got from the training for better performance.

### **Transfer of Knowledge and Skills in Practice**

Transfer of knowledge and skills in practice is important in in-service training. Until and unless teachers transfer their skills, it is difficult to bring change in teaching and learning. In this line, regarding transfer of training Bhatia (2005) states,

Transfer of training has the close relation and connection between the theoretical concept and their implementation in the real classroom. So, the main and first place of practicing transfers of knowledge and skills gained in the training programme is the classroom (p. 4).

Teacher training helps teachers teach effectively in classrooms by transferring the knowledge and basic skills acquired in classroom setting. Regarding the role of training, Krishna inserted,

*After getting a short-term training regularly from British council in English language teaching, I am using the new techniques in my class. My students like the way I teach them. I do not only implement the teaching skills that I learnt myself in my class; I also assist my colleagues to practice the new techniques in the class.*

In fact, Krishna's experience shows that short-term and long-term teacher trainings provide teachers opportunities to learn, share and disseminate their professional experiences on various skills, language aspects and topics. They can discuss their common problems and share learning remedial materials and teaching techniques.

### **Enhancing Quality of Teaching and Learning**

Teaching is a skill which can be developed and improved through teacher training. Teachers' teaching activities can be enhanced through effective training received by them. Trained teachers are expected to contribute to quality of learning and teaching. But we have to implement our skills in teaching learning activities in the classroom. In this context, Gopal emphasized, *“I frequently learn teaching skills being involved in in-service teacher training. I use the skills during the classroom teaching. It helps me bring variety in my teaching. I have learnt the way of using project works and tasks in class”*. For Gopal, in-service teacher training helped him for quality teaching. What he knew from training, transformed him in engaging his students in different project works and tasks in classroom activities.

### **Keep up to Date with Theory and Practice**

Teachers are generally interested in adding to their professional knowledge and keeping up to date with theory and practice in the field of teaching in improving their teaching skills so that they feel more confident about what they teach and achieve better results with their students. Krishna insisted, *“After getting training, I am able to motivate my students in learning. It has also helped me get practical ideas and skills to be a better teacher. Now, I can use different strategies for teaching the same subject matter”*. He shared his experience that in-service training enhanced his understanding to know about different strategies of teaching English because of which he could teach his students confidently applying the practical skills.

### **Keep their Knowledge Fresh and Lively**

In-service teacher training supports teachers to update and keep their knowledge fresh and lively. The training activities support them to improve their valuable practical professional

knowledge and skills in order to educate their students naturally. In this regard, Gopal inserted, *"In-service training supports me to refresh my existing teaching knowledge, and gain newly developed ideas and concepts to keep my knowledge fresh and lively for the implementation of effective teaching techniques in the real classroom"*.

Gopal believes that in-service trainings give teachers opportunities to reflect on classroom practices, gain insight into teaching experiences, view education as a long term process and deal with divergence. Ultimately, it helps cope with all the challenges that they face in course of teaching. He further insisted, *"It makes me aware about child psychology, instructional tools, and evaluation tools as well to improve my professional knowledge and skills"*. He claims that in-service teacher training programme has supported his professional development as he has the knowledge of teaching skills along with child psychology.

A teacher must have a demanding experience to survive and to cope with the complex world of teaching to implement their practical knowledge and gain experience to respond to what they find to various situations.

### **Integration of ICT in ELT**

Information Communication Technology (ICT) is one of the advanced resources for teaching and learning in the classroom and beyond the classroom. Today, the application of ICT can be very useful for language teaching and learning. It has drastically changed the scenario of ELT. If teachers always use the same method of teaching in the class, slowly and gradually, students start losing their interest but when he uses this technology, the students give more attention to his teaching. Both teachers and students can learn collaboratively if they have knowledge of ICT. One of the participants claimed that he had a good knowledge of using ICT in teaching. It enhanced him in teaching and learning new information. So, he regularly uses ICT into English class and he also makes his students use it. In this line, Krishna shared, *"Knowledge of ICT has helped me update my skills and knowledge to enhance my professionalism effectively and efficiently. I prepare slides and use power point slides through multimedia"*. The illustration exhibits that he has the idea of integrating ICT in teaching.

His perception of integrating ICT in English language teaching is positive so he claimed that the use of ICT in the class has motivated his students to be creative and transformative because his students are involved in group interaction and discussion on the topic that he presents in the class.

### **Challenges of In-service Teacher Training**

In-service teacher training programme has some challenges which are discussed as follows:

#### **Lack of Collaborative Culture among the Teachers**

Collaboration is significant for better learning. However, many teachers do not share their problems and experiences of their teaching with their colleagues. They rarely attend the national and international ELT conferences and workshops and do not present their work in teachers' journal. Until and unless teachers regard teaching as a noble profession, they cannot enjoy teaching. In order to achieve professionalism teachers need to understand the use of various methods to English language teaching and learning and apply those which are most appropriate to their context while teaching different contents to their students. In this vein, Laxman asserted, *"Last month, I took part in a two day's seminar where I got chances to share my teaching ideas and experiences with friends. We interacted on certain issues and were able to come up with solution"*. From the above explanation it is clear that the collaboration in teaching and learning is crucial but he is unable to do so in the real context. He further added, *"I understood that interaction and sharing enhanced both teaching and learning. I found drastic change in my teaching. However, the school where I have been teaching does not have collaborative culture among colleagues"*. He believes that knowledge is constructed through interaction and sharing but there is no culture of sharing in his school.

### **Difficulty in Converting Theory into Practice**

In-service teacher training programmes, in Nepalese context are not as effective as they are expected. Both students and teachers do not take it seriously although it provides them with the chances to apply theory into practice. In this line, Gopal emphasized,

*In-service teacher training programmes are supportive and beneficial for developing the required skills in us because they provide us appropriate teaching methods and techniques, practical knowledge and professional skills that are indispensable to teach different teaching items in our daily classroom.*

The above opinion of Gopal illustrates how training programmes address the present need of the teachers. We have learnt many teaching skills from in-service training programme; however, we need regular guidance and feedback from our experienced colleagues to put theory into practice during classroom teaching. He further stated, "However, it is not easy to apply them in real classroom teaching to upgrade quality of teaching with proper knowledge and skills". His experience reveals that without proper skill, teacher educators cannot implement it in real situation.

### **No Need Assessment and Demand Collection**

Before providing in-service training, need assessment and demand of teachers need to be collected so that trainers can provide the training accordingly. Without any specific plan and identification of need, the trainers provide training to the teachers. Training session design makes the training functional and practical. Training that does not consider to the real classroom problems, local context and trainees' needs and expectations and the desired goals cannot be achieved. In this line, Ram shared, "In the training, our trainer never asks us about our demand, teaching problem and needs relating to our job settings in the classrooms. Instead, he or she gives the training on what he is familiar with." His lived experience reveals that in the name of training, the trainers should not provide the training without exploring their need and real classroom problems in certain areas of the subject matter. Impersonal and unrelated activities to their jobs may not be practical and real. Therefore, assessing teachers' need, expectations and demands is highly crucial to achieve the desired goals in training.

### **Ineffective Teacher Training and Monitoring Mechanism**

Most of the trainings are not effective as the trainers do not have enough competencies. Moreover, after training, there is not any monitoring mechanism whether they are implementing the skills that they learn from the training. So, it is quite difficult to convert theory into practice. In this regard, Ram said,

*Two years ago, I participated in a three day seminar on 'Teaching Writing'. I found it partially useful. I do not think the content of the training was different from the content I received during my postgraduate education at the university.*

The above illustration exhibits that inadequate teacher training programme and its effective implementation is another problem of in-service programme. Without strict follow up and monitoring mechanism on teacher teaching and students' learning, in-service programme cannot be effective. He further reported,

*We cannot exchange ideas as the group is very big. I think it would be more effective if the group size is smaller nevertheless it helps develop my teaching skills in some extent. The training cannot address my real classroom teaching problems. My class context is totally different and unique from the trainer's perspective.*

The authorities do not monitor and supervise the teachers for effective implementation of their training knowledge in the schools where they have been teaching. Without making strict policy for effective implementation of training knowledge with the provision of supervision and monitoring

knowing how effectively the teachers are working in their working place, it is impossible to apply in real classroom.

### **Conclusion and Implications**

Almost all the participants involved in the study had positive perception on in-service training programme. The study supports in-service teachers to have a new perception of their teaching materials, update their knowledge and share their teaching strategies to other colleagues. Moreover, the study provides them with practical knowledge and skills to develop their competence, performance and confidence about teaching methodology, strategies and professional skills for their job according to their need, demand; expectation, interest and keeps them update and enhance quality of teaching. The results of this study provide insights for teacher educators to improve their perception of their beliefs about language learning and direct them in order to promote professionalism. However, lack of collaborative culture among them difficulty to convert theory into practice, no need assessment and demand collection, ineffective teacher training and monitoring mechanism and little time for their professional development and preparation for teaching related activities are realized as the challenges of in-service teacher training programme.

In order to make in-service teacher training effective, a collaborative culture among teachers and learners and supportive network should be established to share ideas and experiences among teachers. Training packages should be developed in such a way that they can certainly address and meet the real needs of the teachers. The process of need assessment and demand collection should be made effective. A team of trained, skilled, qualified, competent and dedicated trainers should be involved in delivery of in-service teacher training. An effective mechanism of regular and close follow-up support and supervision should be established so that teachers would get appropriate and timely feedback. There should be provisions of reward and punishment so that teachers can work towards implementation of training skills. The sample size of the study is relatively small so the results of the study cannot be generalized throughout the country to provide the clear picture of perception of in-service teacher training programmes.

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