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I AM NOT READY FOR TEACHING! EFL GRADUATES' CHALLENGES AND EXPECTATIONS OF THE PROFESSION

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Abstract

Every school year, Algerian Ministry of Education recruits hundreds of university Masters' graduates to occupy job vacancies in teaching English both in Middle and Secondary schools. However, student teachers who eventually become novice teachers are often blamed of being unprepared and unqualified for the profession. Student teachers alike express their dissatisfaction with the quality of teacher education they have received and the lack of training in different areas of teaching. This exploratory paper seeks to investigate the level of readiness and preview the forecasted challenges that university graduates of English may encounter as they enter the school life. To do so, a questionnaire was administered to 136 Masters' graduates of English at Biskra University to survey their major challenges and expectations of the teaching profession. The results revealed that a considerable number of student teachers are reluctant to join schools as they feel ill-equipped and untrained to become teachers though they see teaching as a promising job for the future. They also express their need to have pre-service teacher training sessions along their studies in which core elements of teaching need to be practiced and simulated especially lesson planning, classroom management and teaching language skills. The surveyed student teachers expressed their uncertainties of dealing with learners' discipline problems in large classes

especially in Secondary Schools, and preparing lessons from a textbook they have never trained to work with. For better insights into novice teachers' challenges, a classroom observation-based enquiry and one-on-one interviews with beginning teachers may reveal further difficulties and suggest better recommendations.

Keywords

University Graduates, EFL Teacher Education, Teaching Challenges, Profession Readiness

1. Introduction

Becoming an EFL teacher in a non-native country as Algeria is a truly challenging profession in many areas. First, the status of English in Algeria as a foreign language with very limited usage and almost no speakers makes teaching it a sweaty job as teachers have to make more efforts than any other subject area teacher to acquaint learners with the ABC's of the language and its culture . Second, the dominance of Arabic and French in official domains makes the utilization of English in public areas unnoticeable. Third, the social and political community is still unprepared to replace English as a language of national and /or international communication, which reflects negatively on the status of teachers of English in the society. For these reasons, studying to become a teacher of English requires considering all these constraints. In practice, to be an EFL teacher in Algeria, student teachers in Teacher's Training Colleges need to go through a five year period of teacher education for Secondary School teacher and a four year period for Middle School teacher which ends with a graduation project and a training period. While at university, teacher education programmes end with a final achievement test and a graduation project (Master's dissertation) with no training period. In both contexts, the focus is on language proficiency and pedagogy to prepare them for the profession. As any other profession, student teachers often expect certain scenarios to happen in their first days at school; however, they get confronted with some challenges and hindrances that could demoralize them in their early career. To cope with this feeling, the Ministry of National Education obliges any novice teacher to join an induction phase to be acquainted with the school legislations, learners' psychology and class environment. Therefore, this study attempts to investigate the level of readiness of student teachers (N= 136) and reveal their challenges and expectations vis-à-vis the teaching profession.

2. Teacher Education: An Overview

Teacher education aims principally to prepare teachers to practice schooling and encourage them to have a critical role in class to help learners achieve better results (Kessinger, 2009). Tucker and Stronge (2005, p. 3) state that “effective teachers not only make students feel good about school and learning, but also that their work actually results in increased student achievement”. In addition, teacher education builds foundations for teacher professional development since it aims to support teachers to improve their language proficiency and empower them to look forward to occupying higher positions in schools. Teacher education, thus, is the “teachers’ *career ladder*” (Skinner, 2005, p. 109) towards professional development.

Effective teachers follow a lifelong education, an endless journey of learning, a *never-ending* process (Celani, 2006; Kessinger, 2009) to develop their linguistic and pedagogical skills, and they are committed to constant progressive development (Murray & Christison, 2010). Moreover, Gunstone and Northfield (1997, p. 48) stated that teacher education is of a twofold purpose.

Firstly it must be concerned with assisting teachers to learn and apply important ideas about teaching and learning. Secondly, teacher education must be presented in ways that achieve some balance between the existing context and role of teaching and the possibilities for improving teaching and learning.

As learners at university or college, student teachers acquire a number of skills and competencies in terms of subject area and pedagogy to be practiced in the field later on when becoming teachers. This implies a true dedication and determination to bring some positive change into school environment in which developing learners’ level is the ultimate goal of teachers. This change that happens in schools nowadays requires a change in the education of teachers as well. Teachers are meant to educate generations of learners who witness an increasing change in the nature of education and its goals especially in the information era and global economic revolution. Therefore, a mere knowledge of the subject matter and pedagogy of learning remains insufficient to meet the unexpected changing needs, behaviours and attitudes of learners inside and outside the class. Richert (1997, p. 73) believes that “in school, change is the only thing we can predict with certainty. Yet change makes the work of teaching in school difficult. It makes teaching teachers hard work as well”. This mutual relation makes revising teacher education objectives a priority for decision makers in education.

3. Teacher Education in Algeria

In Algeria, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research offers two types of EFL teacher education/training programmes; programmes of ENS (Ecole Normale Supérieure), and those offered by Departments of English at university. ENS (English) is a teachers' training college independent from university, which is located in different regions of the country and offers two types of teacher education/training: Bac+4 years for a Middle School teacher and Bac+5 years for a Secondary School teacher. ENS uses an entry exam admission (written test and interview) for highly graded students in Baccalaureate exam. Meanwhile, students who are admitted to study English in one of the university departments follow an LMD system (License, Master, Doctorate) in which education in language and culture, literature and pedagogy is offered. The difference between the two forms of teacher education is that ENS education ends with a training period in one of the assigned secondary or middle schools, while at university such training is not offered. Moreover, in ENS, courses in school legislations are included in their syllabus that is missing in university programmes. All in all, teacher education in ENS is more specialized in training teachers for the profession than university where proficiency in language is more stressed.

To conclude, teacher education is not only about preparing teachers to handle a class subject and test learners' achievement in it, but also to train them how to cope with the immense pressures, dilemmas and challenges they may face in school whether with learners, colleagues, administrators and other school staff members. In other words, "teacher education should not (purposely or otherwise) portray teaching as simple or mechanistic" (Loughran 2008, p. 169) in the sense that teacher education goes beyond the boundaries of the class to involve various aspects of teaching and learning including the social, economic and cultural aspects. Moreover, putting what is learned in theory into practice requires teachers to have other roles than mere delivering information to a group of learners following a textbook. A teacher, then, is supposed to be a knowledge constructor and developer, an evaluator of the teaching and learning, and a source of inspiration and a lifelong coach for learners.

4. EFL Teacher from Induction to Professional Development

It is widely accepted that teaching any subject area is a complex and challenging task that requires teachers to have multi-roles as instructors, organizers, facilitators, discipline and knowledge providers, decision makers, among others (Allebone & Davies, 2000; Crowe and Berry, 2007; Brooks, 2007); however, teaching EFL is not only about applying what the principles of pedagogy dictate to teachers to do in class with learners. It becomes a profession

of multisided dimensions which requires a deep consideration of social, personal and cultural realities of learners and their attitudes towards the language being taught and its culture. Though English has become the world language of education, economy, politics and many other areas, learners around the world learn it differently and in different approaches according to their socio-cultural milieu and the needs of the job market in their homelands. Therefore, teachers, novice in particular, have to bear in mind this scenario even if they have gone through a period of teacher education. This later acquaints them with what the teaching profession needs to be properly practiced in terms of lesson planning, classroom management, teaching skills and language constructions besides dealing with learners with special needs. Becoming a teacher extends its requirements to include other qualities such as:

[...] flexibility, innovation, responding to and instigating change; the roles of leadership and implications for self-development; the explicit and implicit curriculum; the frustrations associated with programs, processes and people; the importance of cooperation, collaboration and teamwork and the influences of critical incidents/events. (Brandenburg 2008, p. 4)

All the above qualities and roles of the teacher are often not taught in colleges or universities while teachers are still learners; they are instead learnt from the experience of practicing teaching and dealing with all the partners involved in this profession. When it comes to EFL teaching, other roles emerge to the ground while teaching. This mainly concerns motivating learners to practice English inside and outside class especially in countries where no speakers of English exist as in Algeria. Teachers also complain about the unsuitable textbooks to the learners' culture, lack of authentic resources, difficult teaching conditions and unrealistic examinations (Willis, 1981).

Although these problems and many others are usually considered in the induction phase and in the pre-service education through training sessions for novice teachers and even for in-service teachers, "the task of preparing teachers for the profession is a complex and challenging one (Calderhead & Shorrock 2005, p. 8). This task begins with the preparation of student teachers at colleges and universities through courses in pedagogy, learners' psychology and school legislation. In the case of novice EFL teachers in a non-English speaking countries, the task becomes even more challenging and daunting (Schmidt, 2008) especially if it includes preparing student teachers to master the language and its linguistic features as syntax, phonology and semantics, which are seen by many student teachers as more important than the teaching and learning approaches and the other related pedagogical matters. Moreover, such issues such as student teachers' own evaluation and attitudes of

satisfaction of their received education and training often determine the success or the failure of teachers in their job (Calderhead & Shorrock 2005).

Making the transition from a student teacher to a practicing teacher is the stage in which many decisions and choices are to be made and the level of responsibility increases. Novice teachers begin their early days in school with stress, anxiety and dilemma. They are now in the field to meet their learners with their different backgrounds, behaviours and learning strategies; it is the moment of practicing the theory and having a stand towards the teaching approaches and making their own reflections upon them. Farrell (2008) sees that the first years of teaching is not only about familiarizing with the context and the structure of the class, but also about interacting accordingly with the different partners in that context.

Becoming a teacher begins with an induction period during which the novice teacher gets to know the environment of the school and its population. It is the period of following the rules and sticking to the ties of instructions on the one hand and it is the period of wondering and getting lost in the midst of school regulations, learners' problems and the load of lessons' schedule on the other hand. Although they are guided with a common textbook nationwide, many novice teachers feel constrained and engaged by the instructions of the syllabus and the school policy in which minimum space of creativity and freedom is left. Moreover, their identity as teachers needs to be shaped since the beginning and developed later on by the constant interaction, cooperation and contacts with fellow colleagues, inspectors and mentors (Furness, 2008). Through these personal and professional relations, novice teachers build their authority and charisma by which they can be identified with all along their career. Furthermore, having such support from colleagues and other partners in their induction period empowers them to do the best of their efforts for the best of their learners. Bubb (2007, p. 1) believes that "it really is crazy to throw new teachers into full responsibility for children's learning! Still, everyone in education needs to help them do the best that they can, and induction is there to do just that".

Moreover, going through the induction period successfully puts the teacher in the first steps of a long journey of professional development which carries all the ups and downs of the profession; satisfaction, pride, gratitude on the one hand and stress, disappointment, and frustration on the other. This journey carries different parts; "some parts will be smooth and fast flowing, others stressful and full of traffic jams" (Bubb 2003, p. 117). In addition, physical and mental ill-being is a common problem among novice teachers; therefore, teachers during the induction period need to know how to maintain their health, manage their

time, persist and never give up and cope with different personality traits of learners and colleagues.

To conclude, the purpose of teaching goes beyond applying classroom practices and school regulations; it has other “moral and social purposes” (Westcott and Harris 2007, p. 31) which focus on building learners’ personalities to be valued, effective and contributing individuals in the society. So, becoming a teacher is not only about preparing lessons and assessing learners, but also about building one’s identity and career and helping learners to be good members in society.

5. The Study: Population and Methodology

The current study is a descriptive-based survey which addresses 136 EFL Master’s graduates at Biskra University; 120 are females and 16 are males. It aims to find out their major challenges that hinder them from being fully prepared to start teaching. The study participants have gone through 05 years of studying English at university via two phases; three years in Licence and two years in Master’s and they ended it with a graduation project (Master’s dissertation). Throughout these years, students have received various courses that range from language mastery to content and pedagogy-based courses. Unfortunately, no training sessions in schools have been assigned to them. In their Master’s studies, the focus was more on pedagogy and language acquisition and learning which is intended to prepare them for the induction phase. The project of graduation is submitted to the department as a partial fulfilment for the requirements of obtaining a degree in the English language.

The present survey was administered by the end of the first semester of the academic year (2015-2016) in which students were asked to fill in the given questionnaire and give sincere replies to the questions. Most questions address students’ readiness to the profession and the issues related to the teacher education they have received. The main part of the questionnaire is devoted to probe their expected challenges that might be encountered once becoming teachers.

6. Data Analysis and Discussion

The collected data is recorded manually in tables and represented statistically in percentages as follows. The analysis of data includes three major parts; the first part focuses on readiness for the teaching profession, the second part is an evaluation of the teacher education programme, while the third part deals with the expected challenges that student teachers of English have about teaching.

6.1. Part One: Readiness for the Teaching Profession

Q1. Are you satisfied with the quantity (the time allocation) of the received education?

This question aims to know if participants are pleased with the time allotted to the education they have received.

Table 1: *Students' Satisfaction with the Quantity of the Received Education*

Response (R)	Yes	No
Participants (P)	65	71
Percentage (%)	47.79%	52.20%

Students often complain about the load of the programmes in their studies as it exhausts them and leaves no room for further activities. Master's students of English at Biskra University have 11 hours of lectures per week in each semester which is deemed to be insufficient for better achievements. Therefore, the table shows that 71 students (52.20%) express their dissatisfaction with the quantity of instruction they have received during their academic journey. Yet, 65 students (47.79%) are satisfied. Whether satisfied or not, students are often interested in the quality rather than the quantity of education. Therefore, the next question probes the issue of quality of education.

Q2. Are you satisfied with the quality (the value) of the received education?

As quality of education matters most for student teachers, this question investigates their level of satisfaction.

Table 2: *Students' Satisfaction with the Quality of the Received Education*

R	Yes	No
P	39	97
%	28.67%	71.32%

As some of them are not satisfied with the quantity of education they have received, students likewise are not pleased with the quality of education. Only 39 students (28.67%) who expressed their satisfaction which means that over half of the participants (71.32%) are disappointed by the level of education they received. Lectures in Master studies are meant to be delivered in forms of tutorials and workshops for better practice; however, the lack of the experienced teaching staff and the shortage of the teaching equipments turned out the instruction into mere theoretical lectures in amphitheatres. This situation created a boring and

ineffective learning atmosphere that affected negatively students' appreciation of the received instruction.

Q3. What is your plan after graduation?

After graduation, some student teachers have other future plans other than teaching, which is the main focus of this question.

Table 3: *Students' Future Plan after Graduation*

R	Pursuing academic studies	Teaching in middle/secondary school	Joining specialty-related business	Other	All
P	41	75	15	01	03
%	30.14%	55.05%	11.02%	0.73%	2.20%

After graduation, students vary in their future projects; some of them pursue their academic career while others prefer the job market. The table shows diversity in students' plans after graduation, yet the majority (55.05%) opted for teaching. 41 participants (30.14%) plan to continue their postgraduate studies (doctorate degree), 15 participants (11.02%) see that joining a business in the job market is the proper project for graduate students. Only one student (0.73%) did not choose any of the suggested options; s/he said that 'taking care of the family is the best life project'. 03 participants were undecided so that they ticked all the options, which indicates that they have no clear plan after graduation.

Q4. If you are interested to become a future teacher, are you prepared for the profession?

The participants who opted for teaching as a future plan are now asked to show their readiness for the profession.

Table 4: *Students' Readiness for Teaching*

R	Yes	No
P	72	64
%	52.94%	47.05%

Master's students of English are generally prepared to be teachers of English; however, not all participants feel that they are ready to commence teaching after graduation. The table shows that 52.94% of students express their readiness for the job, while 47.05% express the opposite. This disparity in opinion reflects students' differences in their expectations for the teaching profession. When asked for the reasons of being not prepared for teaching, participants gave the following reasons as shown in table 5.

- a. Linguistic incompetence
- b. No formal preparation for teaching
- c. Anxiety to deal with teenagers at school
- d. The teaching profession in very demanding
- e. Personality traits do not support teaching
- f. Teaching is not financially promising
- g. (other reasons)
- h. No Answer
- i. More than one reason

Table 5: Reasons for Not Being Prepared for Teaching

R	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
P	5	12	11	3	3	4	6	4	16
%	7.81%	18.75%	17.18%	4.68%	4.68%	6.25%	9.37%	6.25	25%

The table shows that the 64 students out of 136 who said that they are not ready for teaching did not agree on one reason. 12 students (18.75%) stated that they are not formally prepared at university to teach i.e. there had been no practical teaching sessions in schools or workshops/seminaries to acquaint them with the principles of teaching. 11 students (17.18%) considered behaviour management, especially dealing with teenagers as the main reason. Linguistic incompetence (lack of language mastery) is the third reason that was reported by 5 students (7.81%), which makes them unready for teaching. 6 students (9.37%) gave other reasons; among the given reasons the lack of interest in the profession, the inability to bear the huge responsibility that teaching puts on teachers, and the absence of a long term objective for the career. The remaining participants' responses are shown in the table above. The most noticeable percentage is 25% which represents students who opted for more than one reason. Unpreparedness for teaching is often resulted from the 'inappropriate' nature of education that students have undergone, which creates negative attitudes towards teaching. As other similar professions, teaching demands an early preparation and incessant effort to achieve an already determined goal. A successful teacher is, therefore, the one with a clear vision and philosophy of teaching who identifies clearly his/her short and long-term objectives and makes precise expectations to overcome the potential challenges of the profession.

6.2. Part Two: Evaluation of the Teacher Education Programme

Q5. Among the courses you have been studying, which ones you think they prepared you most for teaching? (Name the top three).

This question intends to reveal the most relevant courses for student teachers that would be an asset to them in their work. The participants are asked to give the top three helpful courses.

Table 6: *Top Three Courses That Prepared Students for Teaching*

Responses	Didactics	Psycho-pedagogy	Applied linguistics
Participants	55	46	35
%	40.44%	33.82%	25.73%

EFL syllabus for Master's students at Biskra University consists of several courses of relevance to their subject area, needs and goals; however, not all courses are appreciated as being foundations to the teaching profession. Many courses are related to language proficiency as Grammar, Phonetics, Writing and Speaking, etc; meanwhile, some courses are content-based subjects as Linguistics, Literature and Methodology. The three courses that students mentioned as preparatory courses for teaching are: Didactics, Psycho-pedagogy and Applied linguistics. These subjects deal principally with teaching and learning methods besides classroom management and learners' evaluation. Unfortunately, the three courses are introduced into students' syllabus in the last three years of studies which prevents students from taking full advantage of them. Normally, such related courses to teaching must be introduced early in the syllabus so that students will be acquainted with them and have a clearer image of what teaching requires and how it proceeds in the real world.

Q6. Do you think that your diploma (Master's of English) would be a sufficient qualification to practice teaching?

For many students, obtaining the diploma for teaching is the aim; however, others consider it as just the first requisite step to enter the world of teaching. This question probes the sufficiency of the diploma to practice teaching.

Table 7: *Sufficiency of the Diploma as a Qualification to Practice Teaching*

R	Yes	No	No Answer
P	55	80	01
%	40.44%	58.82%	0.73%

After having their License or Master’s degree, students begin their journey of finding a job that matches their diploma. In many cases, a diploma is not sufficient to hunt a job. Therefore, 80 participants (58.82%) consider the diploma as insufficient to practice teaching, while 55 participants (40.44%) consider it as an adequate qualification to teach. As a matter of fact, a student graduate with only a diploma as qualification to teach is not apt to practice teaching especially if no workshops or pre-service training is introduced to them. The reality in the field shows that many teachers fail in their early years of teaching due to the lack of prior practice. A certificate (diploma) remains a mere document with no valid asset to beginning teachers if no training is offered to them, especially during the induction phase.

Q7. What other qualifications you think might be necessary for the teaching profession?

This question is the second part for Q6. It is asked to know if there are other requisites for teaching other than having a diploma.

Table 8: Other Necessary Qualifications for Teaching besides Diploma

R	Training experience	Personality traits	Knowing the culture of the English-speaking people	Others	No Answer	All of them
P	78	12	26	02	01	16
%	57.35%	8.82%	19.11%	1.47%	0.73%	11.76%

Since over half of participants declared that obtaining a diploma is insufficient to practice teaching, the table above shows other qualifications needed for teaching. 78 participants (57.35%) considered training as an indispensable requirement for teaching, 26 participants (19.11%) said that knowing about the English culture is important to be a successful teacher, while 12 participants (8.82%) chose personality traits as a necessary requirement for teaching. Interestingly, 16 participants (11.76%) see that all the mentioned requirements are important for a student teacher to begin the profession, which indicates that they understand how complex and demanding teaching is. Thus, it is important for teacher educators to make it clear and insist on student teachers to widen their vision about this profession and make short and long-term objectives that go beyond obtaining a teaching certificate. They need also to reinforce their knowledge on both teaching theories and practices as they prepare student teachers psychologically and pedagogically to become teachers. The ultimate goal is to be well equipped, confident and knowledgeable about being a part in the world of schooling.

6.3. Part three: Major concerns and challenges

Q8. What would you like to be included in the teacher training program (induction phase)?

(Rank them from 1 to 8).

As induction phase is necessary to start the teaching profession, this question seeks to know the most needed areas in teacher training programmes.

Table 9: *Subject Areas to be Included in Teacher Training Programmes*

Response	Rank	Participants	Percentage
Lesson plan	1	30	22.05%
Classroom management	2	23	16.91%
Language skills	2	23	16.91%
Language construction (grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation)	4	21	15.44%
Learners' psychology	5	20	14.70%
ICT in education	6	18	13.23
Teacher development	7	17	12.50

No student teacher doubts the importance of teacher training in his/her professional development; however, they differ in their priorities and interests. As the table shows, lesson planning is placed in the first rank by 30 participants (22.05%), classroom management and teaching language skills are ranked in the second and third rank by 23 participants (16,91%), and the fourth rank is for teaching language construction (vocabulary and grammar) that is the priority of 21 participant (15.44%). Dealing with learners' psychology, using technology in class and seeking professional development are ranked as the bottom three priorities of the participants as shown in the table above. Though they are the main ingredients of teacher education, these subject areas are not equally appreciated by student teachers. Preparing lessons and coping with discipline problems in class seem to be the major concerns of participants because they represent the core of classroom behaviours and the practical aspect of teaching of which many student teachers graduate from university with insufficient knowledge and practice of such critical areas in the teaching profession. Though these subject areas are in the heart of teacher education, they are in most cases demonstrated in a theoretical ground, which creates a gap between what student teachers have received in their teacher education programmes and what the realities of teaching impose on them.

Q9. As a future teacher, what challenges you think they might encounter your career?

This question seeks to answer the main problem of this paper i.e. the challenges that student teachers expect to face in teaching especially in their first year (s).

- a. Large classes
- b. Discipline problems
- c. Course book materials
- d. Administrative procedures
- e. Learners' differences
- f. Fair assessment
- g. Self-assessment
- h. Updated pedagogy and technology

Table 10: *Student Teachers' Expected Challenges in Their First Years of Teaching*

R	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h
P	79	65	34	31	48	26	16	21
%	58.08%	47.79%	25%	22.79%	35.29%	19.11%	11.76%	15.44%

For novice teachers, surviving the first year (s) in school is about “having full control of the class and the content of their instruction” (Farrell 2008, p. 2). This idealistic view of teaching often worries beginning teachers as they put higher expectations of themselves being on the spot. Thus, participants, as the table shows, ranked the areas of every day classroom practices in the top three major challenges including dealing with large classes, coping with discipline problems and considering learners' differences. It seems that dealing with overcrowded classes and having full control of learners' behaviours and their diverse identities are the biggest concerns of student teachers as they have gone through the same experience with their teachers while they had been learners in their different phases of learning.

7. Discussion of Results

From participants' responses, it is clear that becoming an EFL teacher in a non-English speaking country as Algeria is not an easy task. Graduation and being certified are just the first small steps in the long journey of teaching. Most participants accepted this idea and believed that having a university degree in TEFL is insufficient and needs to be supported

with ongoing periods of training during their pre-service phase and sustainable support from colleagues and school staff especially during their induction period. Also, it becomes evident that the instructional load that student teachers have received during their university studies remains a mere theory as long as no initial contact with learners in schools is offered to them as a way to prepare them for the profession. Moreover, the focus on pedagogy and psychology of learners in the last two years of education is well appreciated by student teachers though it lacks practical sessions and workshops in which practice is more stressed than theory. Consequently, many participants showed hesitancy and uncertainty to follow teaching as a profession simply they are not ready for the profession; a profession of paradoxes: stress and dilemma on the one hand and enthusiasm and excitement on the other one. The other participants who showed their readiness to become teachers forecasted many challenges mainly those of discipline and classroom management in addition to lesson planning, teaching language skills besides language constructions (grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation).

To begin with, teacher education literature proved that dealing with behaviour management in class is what challenges most beginning teachers (Brooks, 2007) especially if no prior training in classroom management is offered during teacher education programmes. In this study, most participants claimed that teaching overcrowded classes with diverse backgrounds and learning styles is the most daunting and stressful part of teaching. This situation makes teaching no longer joyful and fruitful as covering the program and rushing to finish its content becomes the prior concern of the teacher, which in turn affects negatively learners' outcomes and destroys quality teaching. Such big number of learners needs special attention and double efforts in terms of discipline, organizing, teaching and assessing. Student teachers are often taught how to deal with small and medium-sized classes, organize group work activities and follow a textbook in lesson planning; however, they find themselves confronted with a crowded class in which all what they have learned is no longer useful. Thus, they have to work twice harder to maintain discipline and guarantee a smooth running of instruction using innovative and creative strategies to cope with this reality. The literature suggests that the key to handle the issue of classroom and behaviour management in large classes is to foster teachers' professional development in order to "expand their knowledge base, reflect on their practise, and adapt or change their practise or prepare for new responsibilities" (Murray and Christison 2010, p. 195). Most novice teachers rely on theory to practise classroom tasks; however, theory does not suit different world-wide teaching contexts and realities as the existing literature on teaching and learning covers particular cases and limited samples of learners. Therefore, teachers are deemed to rely on the existing research to

make their own decisions and reflections on their own practices to suit their classroom context and thus make sense of their teaching.

Besides classroom and behaviour management, lesson planning and material preparation for different types of learners are also challenging parts for student teachers. Though lesson planning is the most stressed on area in teacher education as it forms the heart of teaching, beginning teachers still consider it as an exigent part of their profession. Most beginning teachers struggle with finding relevant sources and creative activities for their lessons that suit different types of learners. In addition, they have to forecast learners' questions and reactions to certain points in the lesson and respond properly. Though the textbook describes the lesson sequence and suggest a lesson plan with corresponding activities, tracking the sequence of the lesson as it is described in the teacher's plan usually ends up with troubles of having unexpected situations in which an immediate modification or adaptation in the lesson is required. Furthermore, a smooth transition from a phase to another in a lesson needs tactics and experience which most beginning teachers lack. More importantly, following the syllabus while preparing lessons makes teachers feel constrained with the requirements and objectives of the syllabus in which little space is left for creativity and innovation.

With the subsequent reformations in the Algerian educational system in the last decade, the current tendency in teaching focuses on learner-centred approaches as opposed to teacher-centred approach in which more emphasis is given to learners' engagement and participation in classroom activities. This tendency makes radical changes in the teachers' roles from "sage in the stage to guide in the side". This philosophy in teaching necessitates more efforts from teachers to keep in pace with the ideals of the learner-centred approach as new techniques and strategies in dealing with learners in class have to be developed and adapted to suit the different learning styles and preferences. For a novice teacher, dealing with learners is no longer a matter of transmitting information or teaching the rules and the grammar of the language; it becomes a matter of coaching learning and researching novelty to bring contagious enthusiasm to the classroom to ensure the achievement of objectives as they are set in the syllabus. The challenging side in this context is that many student teachers still receive a traditional education which is based on knowledge transmission in their teacher education programmes. Though the new reforms in the higher education require teacher educators to ensure quality education that goes in parallel with the new pedagogy that stresses teaching competencies instead of teaching knowledge, the traces of applying it are lacklustre.

Socially speaking, the teaching profession in Algeria lately has not been financially rewarding which affects the status of the teacher in the society, especially teachers of English who have been always struggling for a better social position. This social and economic situation of teachers has affected the way learners regard teachers. The voices from the field reported that learners especially in secondary schools are no longer interested in learning foreign languages and their reverence to teachers decreases; therefore, dealing with behavioural issues in class becomes a daily routine and a heavy burden on teachers. Thus, coping with the classroom and behaviour management is not purely pedagogical as social and cultural dimensions of education have other influencing roles to play.

8. Conclusion

These conclusions are exclusively drawn from the Algerian context; therefore, changing the research context may lead to different conclusions. Moreover, the number of participants is considerably unrepresentative of the whole population of EFL graduates at Biskra University. First, the paradoxical feeling of student teachers of English towards teaching makes many graduates reluctant and unready to join this 'noble' profession. The feeling of excitement to realise the dream now becomes a feeling of anxiety to enter the class and meet the learners; learners who are in need of a source of motivation and empowerment in a country where English is slowly occupying the spot. Second, the reasons of being unready to teach English go beyond the pedagogical constraints as there are other factors than the lack of training in teaching and the substandard quality of the received education during the teacher education programme. Student teachers then are required to reconsider their roles in class and search for proper strategies that meet the objectives of learner-centred pedagogy that has been recently adapted by the Algerian educational system. Third, the issue of classroom management that was reported by the participants to be their major challenge in teaching seems to have two sides; pedagogical and social. Fourth, the lack of training in planning lessons and working with the textbook along with the decreasing reverence for teachers have led student teachers to rank behavioural management and discipline in class as their top concerns of becoming teachers. To conclude, being knowledgeable in the subject area has become a mere prerequisite skill to teach, while being creative manager of learning has become the required skill to meet the new standards of the teaching profession.

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