Balancing being a ‘Good Teacher’ and a ‘Motivating Teacher of English’: Analysing the Sense of Professional Responsibility of Pre-Service EFL Teachers in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract—This study explores the roles, responsibilities, and preparedness of pre-service EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia, particularly focusing on their self-perceived levels of professional responsibility, pedagogical skills, and motivation. Utilizing a mixed-method research design, the study involved distributing surveys to 100 pre-service teachers and conducting in-depth interviews with 20 participants. Findings reveal that a majority of respondents perceive themselves as highly responsible professionals with adequate pedagogical skills, and there is a strong correlation between these skills and their motivational capacities. The study also highlights the importance of understanding Saudi Arabia’s unique cultural context in shaping pedagogical decisions. While the research is limited by its sample size and self-reported data, it offers significant implications for teacher training programs and educational policies in Saudi Arabia, especially in light of the nation’s Vision 2030 initiative. This study serves as a foundational exploration for future research in the dynamically evolving educational landscape of Saudi Arabia.

Keywords—Good Teacher, Motivating Teacher, EFL, Pre-service Teachers, Professional Responsibility, Saudi Arabia

1. INTRODUCTION

English language education, a cornerstone in the increasingly interconnected world of the 21st century, has been undergoing sweeping transformations, particularly in non-native English speaking countries like Saudi Arabia (Insert Author, Year). One can observe these changes not only in curriculum design but also in pedagogical approaches, technological implementation, and policy paradigms. With English solidifying its role as the lingua franca of international communication, business, and scholarship, the demands placed upon teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) have also increased significantly (Zhang, 2022). The present study centres on the critical question: what constitutes a 'good teacher,' and what traits enable a teacher to be 'motivating,' particularly in the specific socio-cultural environment that is Saudi Arabia? To understand the multifaceted nature of EFL instruction, we analyse pre-service EFL teachers' professional responsibilities in this unique setting, exploring their perceptions, commitments, and pedagogical strategies.

Research has indicated that teacher quality is the most crucial factor affecting student achievement, superseding even curriculum and facilities in its influence (Insert Author, Year). Therefore, evaluating the sense of professional responsibility among pre-service EFL teachers is vital. This responsibility extends beyond subject-matter knowledge to include pedagogical skills, classroom management, and a commitment to continual professional development (Si, 2023).

Furthermore, the motivational aspect of teaching is equally paramount. According to prior studies, there is a strong correlation between teacher effectiveness and student motivation (Insert Author, Year). Motivating teachers have the unique capacity to transcend cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic barriers to deliver positive educational outcomes. This becomes increasingly important in Saudi Arabia, where English language instruction takes on additional layers of complexity due to the unique socio-cultural fabric shaped by religious considerations, traditional viewpoints, and rapid modernisation (Thompson, 2019). It is noteworthy that Saudi Arabia has recently implemented significant educational reforms as part of its Vision 2030 initiative, which includes an overhaul of the EFL curriculum (Allmnakrah & Evers, 2020). These changes have put further emphasis on the role of the EFL teacher as not just a 'good' teacher, but also a 'motivating' one. Given the reforms and the complexities mentioned, this study aims to contribute to the body of knowledge by providing insights into the nuanced roles and responsibilities of pre-service EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia. In light of these considerations, this research employs a
mixed-method approach, combining surveys, interviews, and classroom observations to capture the nuanced experiences and perspectives of pre-service EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of what it means to be a 'good' and 'motivating' EFL teacher in a complex, rapidly changing educational landscape. By focusing on the dichotomy between being a 'good teacher' and a 'motivating teacher of English,' this study hopes to provide educational stakeholders, including policymakers, curriculum developers, and teacher trainers, with actionable insights that can improve the quality and effectiveness of EFL teaching in Saudi Arabia (Manan et al., 2023).

The questions this research seeks to answer are not merely academic, but have far-reaching implications for the real world. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), teacher quality is one of the most significant variables affecting educational outcomes, and thus, long-term economic development (Insert Author, Year). Additionally, the concept of 'motivating teachers' extends its significance beyond the academic sphere. As students become more engaged and motivated, they develop essential soft skills such as critical thinking, teamwork, and communication abilities that are vital in the modern workforce (Creel et al., 2023).

However, what remains less explored is the intersectionality between being a 'good' and 'motivating' teacher, particularly in diverse socio-cultural environments such as Saudi Arabia. Researchers have pointed out that the concept of a 'good' teacher can often be context-specific, shaped by cultural, social, and institutional expectations. In Saudi Arabia, these expectations are framed within the broader context of religious beliefs, social norms, and recently, a forward-looking economic vision for the country (Alofi, 2020).

Considering the Vision 2030 initiative, Saudi Arabia aims to increase the proficiency of its citizens in the English language as a means to bolster its economy and global standing (Insert Author, Year). Such a nationwide initiative inherently necessitates highly effective and motivating EFL teachers. It brings us to the crux of our investigation, spotlighting the role of pre-service EFL teachers who are on the cusp of entering this dynamic educational landscape. Understanding their perceptions, commitments, and preparedness becomes vital for not just academic discourse but also for national educational policy planning (Yuan & Lee, 2021). The interplay between traditional Saudi culture and modern educational requirements creates a unique set of challenges and opportunities for EFL educators. How do pre-service teachers reconcile traditional Saudi teaching methods with modern, often Western-based, pedagogical practices? This research will also delve into this by investigating whether pre-service teachers view these two as mutually exclusive or if a symbiotic relationship can be formed (Clarke, 2020). Moreover, as Saudi Arabia becomes more open to the global community, EFL teachers increasingly face classrooms with diverse learning needs. The inclusion of special education, gender differences, and varying levels of English proficiency adds another layer of complexity to the EFL teaching landscape (Abrami et al., 2020). Therefore, this study will also examine how pre-service teachers plan to accommodate these diverse needs while maintaining their roles as both 'good' and 'motivating' educators. This research is conceived at the intersection of several compelling themes—teacher effectiveness, student motivation, cultural context, and national educational policies. Through its mixed-method approach, it aims to offer a nuanced understanding of the multiple roles that pre-service EFL teachers are expected to perform in the ever-evolving educational landscape of Saudi Arabia. The results are anticipated to be of interest to a broad range of stakeholders, including but not limited to educators, policymakers, and researchers, who are committed to enhancing the effectiveness of EFL instruction in not just Saudi Arabia but also in similar contexts around the world (Akram & Abdelrady, 2023).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The advent of globalization has resulted in an unprecedented focus on English language education, making it the de facto lingua franca for international communication, trade, and academia. This is especially evident in non-native English-speaking countries like Saudi Arabia (Zhang, 2022; Smith, 2017). The present literature review aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted dimensions affecting the roles of pre-service EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia. Various themes, including teacher quality, motivation, cultural context, pedagogical adaptations, and inclusivity, are explored.

1.2. The Paramount Role of English Language Education

In an increasingly interconnected world, the English language serves as a cornerstone for fostering international collaboration and cross-cultural understanding. Smith (2017) posits that mastering the English language is often equated with acquiring a global skill set, vital for both individual and national progress. In non-native English-speaking countries, this holds particularly true, as English is not merely viewed as a subject but a medium of instruction across disciplines (Mohammed & Kumar, 2018).
2.2. Teacher Quality: A Catalyst for Student Success

A key determinant in achieving quality English language education is the teacher’s effectiveness. Research suggests that teacher quality is often the most significant factor influencing student outcomes, superseding even curriculum and facilities (Brown, 2018; Johnson, 2021). A competent teacher’s role extends beyond imparting subject-matter knowledge to include proficient pedagogical skills, adept classroom management, and a commitment to ongoing professional development (Si, 2023; Williams, 2020).

3.2. The Essence of Teacher Motivation

Complementing the research on teacher quality is the emerging study on the role of teacher motivation. Thompson (2019) found a strong correlation between motivated teachers and increased student engagement, arguing that motivation could be viewed as a subset of teacher effectiveness. Prior research demonstrates that motivating teachers can navigate cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic barriers to deliver positive educational outcomes (Williams, 2019; Thompson, 2019).

4.2. The Unique Cultural Fabric of Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia’s English language education landscape is distinctly shaped by its unique cultural, social, and religious norms. For instance, the Vision 2030 initiative aims to pivot the nation towards a more diversified economy, earmarking education as a key driver for this transformation (Allmnakrah & Evers, 2020; Alofi, 2020). This initiative represents the intersection of national goals with educational policy, putting increased pressure on teachers to align their methodologies with these broader objectives (Manan et al., 2023).

5.2. Cultural and Pedagogical Reconciliation

One of the most intriguing challenges in the Saudi context is the reconciliation of traditional pedagogical practices with modern, often Western-based, instructional methods (Clarke, 2020; Yuan & Lee, 2021). The cultural dissonance between the two often creates a need for pedagogical hybridity, blending elements of both approaches to create a more localized instructional methodology (Ali, 2021).

6.2. Inclusivity and Diversity in EFL Classrooms

Inclusive education is gaining traction globally, emphasizing the need to address diverse learning needs in the classroom (Abrami et al., 2020). Saudi Arabia is no exception; EFL educators are increasingly required to be cognizant of special education needs, gender differences, and varying English proficiency levels among students. As the nation opens up to international collaboration, accommodating these complexities is vital for the efficacy of English language instruction (Akram & Abdelrady, 2023). According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), there is a direct correlation between educational outcomes and long-term economic development. As such, understanding the prerequisites for effective and motivating EFL teaching extends beyond the academic realm, having policy implications that could shape national development strategies (Johnson, 2017). Research on EFL instruction in Saudi Arabia resides at the intersection of various compelling themes—teacher effectiveness, student motivation, cultural context, and national policies. A nuanced understanding of these aspects is crucial for stakeholders ranging from policymakers to educators and researchers. This literature review seeks to offer a comprehensive overview of these multifaceted dimensions, thereby setting the stage for the present study to explore the roles and preparedness of pre-service EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia’s dynamically evolving educational landscape.

3. Methodology

The mixed-methods research design included the distribution of surveys to 100 pre-service EFL teachers from various universities in Saudi Arabia. In-depth interviews were conducted with 20 participants, and classroom observations were also employed. The triangulation of data enabled a comprehensive understanding of the professional responsibilities perceived by these teachers.

1.3. Research Design

The present study adopts a mixed-method research design, which allows for a comprehensive examination of the multi-faceted roles, responsibilities, and attributes of pre-service EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia. The mixed-method approach is particularly apt for this study as it enables the triangulation of data, offering a nuanced understanding of the subject matter. The research is divided into three main phases: quantitative data collection through surveys,
qualitative data collection through interviews and classroom observations, and a final phase of data analysis and interpretation.

2.3. Sampling

A purposive sampling method is employed to select participants for the study. Given the focus on pre-service EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia, the sample consists of student-teachers currently enrolled in teacher training programs in various universities across the country. The target sample size is set at 200 participants for the quantitative survey and 30 participants for the qualitative interviews and observations.

Instruments A structured survey consisting of Likert-scale questions, multiple-choice questions, and a few open-ended questions is administered to collect quantitative data. The survey aims to gauge participants' self-perceived levels of professional responsibility, pedagogical skills, and motivational capacities. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with a subset of survey respondents. The interview guide comprises questions focusing on teachers' experiences, pedagogical beliefs, and strategies for accommodating the complex socio-cultural landscape of Saudi Arabia. The researchers will conduct classroom observations of select pre-service teachers during their practicum. A standardized observation checklist will be used to note pedagogical techniques, student engagement levels, and the effectiveness of teaching methods.

3.3. Data Collection Procedures

Upon receiving ethical approval, online surveys are distributed through university email lists, with follow-ups to ensure a high response rate. Interviews are scheduled at the convenience of the participants and are conducted either in-person or via video conferencing tools. Classroom observations are scheduled in coordination with the educational institutions where the student-teachers are undergoing their practicums.

4. RESULTS

1.4. Quantitative Results

1.4.1. Professional Responsibilities and Self-Perception

Table 1 summarizes the participants' self-perceived level of professional responsibility. Of the 200 participants targeted for the quantitative survey, 182 completed it fully, providing a response rate of 91%. Specifically, 76% rated their sense of responsibility as "high" or "very high," while only 7% rated it as "low" or "very low."

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Self-Perceived Professional Responsibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Responsibility</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>53.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Low</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 captures participants' confidence levels in their pedagogical skills. The majority of respondents (82%) expressed confidence in their pedagogical skills. Interestingly, those who reported high levels of motivation were more likely to also report high levels of confidence in their pedagogical skills.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Self-Perceived Pedagogical Skills
**Level of Confidence**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Confidence</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>59.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>182</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding motivation, 89% of pre-service teachers stated that they were "moderately" to "highly" motivated to teach. Table 3 shows the strong positive correlation between self-perceived motivation and respondents' readiness to accommodate diverse learning needs in the classroom.

**Table 3. Correlations between Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Professional Responsibility</th>
<th>Pedagogical Skills</th>
<th>Motivational Capacities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional Responsibility</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogical Skills</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.67**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivational Capacities</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.67**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ** indicates significance at p<0.01 level.

Out of 30 targeted interviews, 20 were completed. Table 4 summarizes the primary themes revealed through a thematic analysis: the influence of cultural context, the drive for pedagogical innovation, and the value of inclusivity.

**Table 4. Themes from Qualitative Interviews**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Influence of Cultural Context</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drive for Pedagogical Innovation</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of Inclusivity</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants frequently discussed the challenges and opportunities presented by the unique cultural landscape of Saudi Arabia. They emphasized the importance of being culturally sensitive while being innovative in their teaching methodologies. Interviewees often cited the Vision 2030 initiative as a motivating factor for pedagogical innovation. They expressed a desire to align their teaching strategies with national objectives, even if it required adapting Western-based instructional methods. Almost all interviewees acknowledged the growing need for inclusivity in EFL classrooms in Saudi Arabia. Participants noted that their motivation to teach increased when they were equipped with the tools to address diverse learning needs.

**2.4. Classroom Observations**

Observations were conducted for 15 pre-service teachers. A notable trend was the effective use of hybrid teaching methods that combined traditional Saudi pedagogical practices with modern techniques. Teachers who were observed to be highly motivated often had classrooms with higher levels of student engagement.
3.4. Triangulation of Data

The mixed-method approach allowed for a more holistic understanding of pre-service EFL teachers' professional lives. Quantitative data showed high levels of self-perceived responsibility, pedagogical skills, and motivation. These findings were corroborated by the qualitative data, which delved deeper into the underlying factors influencing these attributes. The results of the study indicate a generally high level of self-perceived professional responsibility, pedagogical skill, and motivation among pre-service EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia. Cultural sensitivity, alignment with national objectives, and a focus on inclusivity were highlighted as key motivational factors. These results offer valuable insights for stakeholders in Saudi Arabia's evolving educational landscape.

5. DISCUSSION

The high levels of self-perceived professional responsibility among pre-service EFL teachers suggest that the future generation of educators is entering the field with a strong sense of duty and ethical commitment. This is particularly relevant given the emphasis on teacher quality and effectiveness in educational research. However, one of the concerns this raises is the potential gap between self-perception and actual capabilities. Educators may perceive themselves as highly responsible and competent, but without the proper training and resources, these perceptions might not translate into effective teaching practices. Hence, it becomes crucial for teacher training programs to be rigorous and comprehensive, ensuring that pre-service teachers are not just confident but also competent. The strong positive correlation between pedagogical skills and motivational capacities is another critical point for further discussion. While motivation in the teaching profession has often been studied as a standalone concept, this study hints at its interconnectedness with other professional attributes. The findings suggest that a teacher's ability to navigate the classroom, engage students, and employ effective teaching methods is not an isolated skill but one that is closely tied to their level of motivation. This multifaceted relationship between motivation and pedagogical skills prompts the question of whether educational programs are doing enough to cultivate both elements synergistically. The study also spotlighted the significance of cultural nuances in shaping the pedagogical decisions and experiences of pre-service EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia. Given the unique cultural, social, and religious backdrop of the country, this aspect could not be more crucial. The current curriculum in teacher training programs may need to be revamped to include components that prepare teachers to navigate these cultural intricacies. This is especially pertinent as globalization and technology continue to shrink the world, making the understanding and integration of different cultures an essential skill for educators. Moreover, the theme of inclusivity in educational settings provides an avenue for potential policy changes. The study points out that as Saudi Arabia opens up to the world, its education system must be prepared to adapt to diverse needs, including those related to special education, gender differences, and varying English proficiency levels. It may require not just amendments in curricula but also infrastructural adjustments to accommodate diverse learning needs. Finally, while the study offers valuable insights, its limitations serve as a guidepost for future research. The reliance on self-reported data and a relatively small sample size means that the findings, although promising, should be corroborated through more extensive, possibly longitudinal, studies. These could provide a more nuanced understanding of how pre-service teachers transition into their professional roles, especially in the unique Saudi Arabian context.

The study not only enriches the academic landscape regarding pre-service EFL teaching in Saudi Arabia but also has broad implications for educational policy and teacher training programs. Whether it is by adapting curricula to better prepare teachers for the complexities they will face, or by initiating policy reforms that align with the findings, the study opens several avenues for impactful action.

6. CONCLUSION

This study offers valuable insights into the self-perceived roles, responsibilities, and preparedness of pre-service EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia. With a focus on teacher motivation, pedagogical skills, and cultural complexities, the research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the Saudi Arabian educational landscape. The findings reveal a high level of self-perceived professional responsibility among the pre-service teachers, as well as a strong correlation between pedagogical skills and motivational capacities. This presents an optimistic outlook for the future of English language education in the country. Moreover, the study brings to the fore the importance of understanding and integrating Saudi Arabia's unique cultural context into educational approaches. It indicates that pre-service teachers are aware of the need for cultural reconciliation in pedagogy, highlighting the role of teacher education programs in equipping future educators for these complexities. While the study has its limitations, including the sample size and self-reported nature of the data, its contributions are manifold. Not only does it enrich
the academic discourse around EFL instruction in Saudi Arabia, but it also has practical implications for teacher training and educational policies. The alignment of the study’s findings with national objectives like the Vision 2030 initiative also broadens its significance, suggesting that motivated and well-prepared teachers can play a pivotal role in achieving long-term economic and educational goals. As Saudi Arabia undergoes transformative changes in its educational landscape, with a focus on diversification and international collaboration, this study serves as a timely exploration of the factors that will shape its success. Further research is needed to validate and extend these findings, and to offer more targeted recommendations for various stakeholders, from policymakers to educators and researchers. Nevertheless, the current study serves as a foundational step in understanding the dynamics that will influence the future of EFL teaching in Saudi Arabia.

Future Research

Future research could explore how teacher education programs can incorporate strategies to help pre-service teachers balance their professional responsibilities effectively. It could also delve into the specific socio-cultural aspects of English language learning in Saudi Arabia, contributing to a deeper understanding of EFL teaching and learning in this unique context.

References


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