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Professional Development of EFL teachers in an Adult Language Program in Armenia

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Abstract

The quality of English teachers' performance in class depends on teachers' education, or on the years of experience, or both. This study tries to discover the influence of education and experience in teachers' decision making. To what extent EFL teachers' beliefs in Armenia, align with their classroom practice. In addition, what teachers' preparation programs offer to EFL teachers in Armenia? Moreover, how the teaching methods of teachers with MA degree, differ from the methods and techniques of teachers without MA program. The main goal of this research is to find out to what extent EFL teachers' experience and education play a role in their teaching practices. It also aims to determine if teachers' beliefs in teaching, and classroom practices, align or contradicts. The study is based on a series of observations and interviews of three EFL teachers in an adult language program in Armenia. The findings of the study suggest that, both education and experience of teachers is optimal in their decision making. In addition, teachers' preparation programs accelerate teachers' professional development, but experiences contribute to teachers' professional growth, too. Moreover, teachers need professional learning communities, to help them sustain their professional development, and improve their classroom practice.

Chapter One: Introduction

Being an ESL/EFL teacher for almost eight years, and working with different age groups of English learners in different settings in and out of Armenia, I always wondered what factors affect EFL teachers' classroom practices. Is it due to teachers' education, their experience, or may be both. Personally, facing challenges in teaching English to second or foreign language learners, and hearing from colleague teachers about their challenges, I always tried to find the answer of, what helps teachers in their classroom action. How EFL/ESL teachers sustain high quality in their teaching practice. It has been believed that, it is essential for teachers to be learners too, and learn from their teaching practice. However, what if some EFL teachers do not monitor their classroom action, in order to learn from their practice.

Teaching has changed greatly in the past decades. There are different methods and techniques that educators and teachers use and try to implement in their classes. Their classroom practices might depend on the objectives and the outcomes of the lesson, on the age of the students they teach, and on the proficiency level of the students. Nevertheless, different EFL teachers might act differently and use different methods and techniques. Even teachers from the same high education programs might differ in their classroom practices. One of the advantages of teaching in the twenty first century though, is that teachers from all over the world can communicate and share their ideas and challenges. With the media and technology growth, and

the globalization of the world, EFL teachers from different parts of the world, can share their ideas and methods. But what about teachers to be the most important factor, in the success of all these methods and techniques. David Blunkett, (1998) asserted that teachers need to develop their teaching practices, while they model the process of life-long learning to their learners. Teachers, who dedicate their time and knowledge to help learners in their inquiry of knowledge and education, can they sustain professional development through everyday profession practice?

The present study tries to investigate the professional development of three EFL teachers of an adult language program at one of the universities in Armenia. It aims to know to what extend these teachers are aware of the connection between their beliefs and their teaching practice in class. The study also tries to investigate the importance of the teachers' education and experience in their decision making and in their teaching practices in the classroom. Moreover, how teachers' education and experience affect their teaching. The study attempts to discover if there is a difference in teaching methods and techniques, between the teachers who attended teachers' preparation programs, and those who did not. In addition, the study will examine the efficiency of the idea of "teaching teachers how to teach". Moreover, this study tries to find whether the teaching is a skill that we can develop or not. The significance of the study is to highlight factors that impact the quality of teachers' classroom practice. The study has a qualitative method of collecting data, and presents case study of three EFL teachers in an adult language program in Armenia. The data collected from three sources; the three sources are in-class observations, interviews and document, which include extra worksheet, teachers used in their classes, in addition to some information about MA program and CELTA training. This study

tried to address these two questions: 1) to what extent do the practices of EFL teachers in Armenia align with their practices about their teaching? 2) In what ways teacher preparation programs help EFL teachers to make better decisions about their teaching practices?

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Schleicher (2012) claimed that today's teachers need to be equipped with high level of knowledge, and to constantly promote this knowledge. Cornett (1992) believed that "*Teaching is a complex task that demands thoughtful professionals*".

However, teachers who graduate from the same teaching preparation programs might act differently. This means that, attending the same teacher preparation programs, does not assure the same classroom practices of EFL teachers. Their action might differ, even though they have the same years of experience. Thus, what affect teachers' classroom practices, if the graduates of the same programs act differently in their teaching practices?

Different research gives different perception of what might affect the teachers' classroom practice. Some research suggests that teachers need to conduct action research to improve their teaching, such as Donald McIntyre & David Hargreaves (2008, 1999). Others like Cornett (1990) claimed that having a personal theory is the key for teachers' classroom action. Thus, teachers' beliefs affect their action. However, Clandinin & Connelly (2000) suggested that when teachers narrate their own teaching experience, this help them make sense of their own practice.

2.1 Action Research

Much research is done to know the path towards the development of teachers' classroom practice. Connelly & Clandinin (1988) highlighted the importance of action research to improve teachers' classroom practice. Donald McIntyre & David Hargreaves (2008, 1999) asserted that teachers should not be treated as "*passive recipients of others' research and knowledge*".

Hence, they highlighted the importance of doing action research to improve teachers' practice.

Moreover, Fueyo & Koorland (1997) highlighted the benefits of action research that leads to the teachers' professional improvement, especially the improvement of pre-service teachers' practice.

Hansen (1997) even argued that teacher researchers might have more meaningful research questions. Because the source of the questions comes from real situations in their classrooms.

However, Cook (1998) and Moller (2001) discussed the load work of the action research, and the mess teachers might fall in, while collecting data. For that reason, Bambino (2002) and Cushman (1998) emphasized the idea of having colleagues and friends to assist the teacher researchers.

2.2 Personal Theory and Teachers' belief

Researchers like Cornett, Elliot, Chant, (1994) and Stern (1995) argued that teachers' personal theory has a great impact on their classroom action. In this context, Schwab also (1969) asserted that there is a connection between teachers' beliefs and action. In addition, Cornett (1990) suggested that it is important for teachers to recognize their personal theory. Since, the result of their knowledge of personal and professional theory, will lead them to the

improvement of their classroom practice. But teachers should also know how to develop their teaching theories into practical knowledge. Moreover, Stenhouse (1975) highlighted the importance of involving teachers in constant enquiry in to their classroom action, in order to sustain professional development.

Studies by Chant, (2002); Clandinin, (1986); Cornett, (1990a); Pape, (1992) suggested that teachers use a personal theory to influence classroom action. In addition, Dewey (1900) placed the teacher in the center, to understand educational practice and develop educational theories. Since, the teachers' belief is the reason of their classroom action as Sanders and McCutcheon (1986).

Furthermore, Danielewicz(1998) and Fickel (2000) asserted that teachers beliefs are shaped according to their environmental and cultural influences.

2.3 Narrative Stories

Many studies highlighted the importance of narrative stories that help teachers improve their action. In this context, Clandinin & Connelly (2000), Lyons & LaBokey (2002) claimed that when teachers narrate their teaching experience, this enables them to make sense of their own practice. This means, that when teachers inquire into their own experience, they question what they know or what they think they know. Hence, these stories enable them, articulate what they know and believe about teaching, and help them make connections between their beliefs and their practices. However, McIntyre (1993) posited that *"reflection is a much more important way of learning for experienced teachers than for beginning teachers"*. Schwab (1969) claimed when teachers reflect on their action, they figure out how their personal belief

impacts their action. McIntyre (1993) believed that, it is optimal for experienced teachers to reflect critically on their teaching in order to improve their own practice.

However, Dewey (1938) suggested that experiences influence teachers' belief, and once the teachers reflect on their beliefs critically, they will have the base for their professional growth.

2.4 Teachers' Preparation Programs and Professional Development

Calderhead and Shorrock (1997) stated that each particular student teachers learning experience vary in these programs. Moreover, Hagger (2002) argued that student teachers learning need to be taken seriously. At this point, Hagger & McIntyre (2006) posited that new teachers not only need to acquire the knowledge and the skills that will enable them enter the profession as competent classroom practitioners, but they also need to use this knowledge. For this reason, Eraut (2000) claimed that learning takes place "when existing knowledge is used in a new context and a new combination".

In this context, David Blunkett, (1998) claimed that "*the fostering of an enquiring mind and the love of learning are essential to our future success*" is perfect example for student teachers in these programs to consider.

Wei et al., (2009) asserted that "*effective professional development*" can take place by giving teachers new knowledge and techniques, to improve their practice. This knowledge might come from teacher preparation programs. Whereas, Colleen McLaughlin (2013) stated that, the current policy in the UK is focusing that teachers' professional development occur at schools. Research done by Wei, et al., (2009); Penuel et al., (2007) claimed that effective professional development improve teacher knowledge, "*providing job-embedded opportunities for teachers*

to collaborate around issues". Here is an indication of providing professional learning communities to teachers. Professional learning communities is the step towards professional development as Vescio et al., (2008) mentioned professional Learning Communities provide teachers with the skills and knowledge to sustain professional development. It also offers a community to the teachers that value each individual teacher's experience.

Finally, reading all this research and being inspired by all these thoughts. I could not find research that focus on particular actions of EFL teachers. The focus of the study directed to discover the influence of EFL teachers' education and experience in their decision making, and how these three teachers' beliefs about teaching, align with their teaching practices. The study will also try to discover what teacher preparation programs offer to EFL teachers?

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Study Design

This study used the qualitative method of collecting data, and entailed multiple-case study of three EFL teachers. I chose the case study design in order to convey the practice of the teachers as it is, without imposing my own point views. The source of the data comes from multiple sources to increase the trustworthiness of the findings. The sources of the data are three EFL teachers' classroom in-class observations, interviews and documents about MA TEFL program and CELTA training, and to extra worksheet from the teachers.

The study attempts to answer these specific questions:

- To what extent do the practices of EFL teachers in Armenia align with their beliefs about their teaching?
- In what ways teacher preparation programs help EFL teachers to make better decisions about their teaching practice?

3.2 Context and Participants

The study was done in a university setting context, where three EFL teachers teach adults and teenager learners in an adult program in Armenia.

The participants of this study are three EFL teachers of a language center in an adult language program in Armenia, where they teach in a university environment. The participants were chosen using convenience sampling. They have been chosen intentionally, according to their teaching schedule, and thus it does not overlap with the researcher's classes. The three teachers teach teen and adult learners with different first language backgrounds, Armenian, Persian, Russian and Arabic. The three participants are Kelly, Mike and Maggie. They are given pseudonyms for the sake of the confidentiality and privacy. Kelly majored in English philology

and specialized in translation. She didn't have any teaching experience before applying to get her MA in teaching English as a foreign language. Her first teaching experience was her practicum, where she taught a few classes in the first year at a language program, where they teach young learners. She graduated two years ago from the TEFL program in Armenia. Now she is teaching General English in a language institute in a university in Armenia.

Maggie has five years of teaching experience. She taught at Yerevan State Linguistic University for two years as a lecturer, before applying for MA degree in teaching English as a foreign language. She graduated last year and now she is teaching General English in an adult language program in a university setting in Armenia. She taught teenagers at Yerevan State University, and English for specific purposes to adults learners in one of the language centers in Yerevan.

Mike is originally Armenian but he was born in the United Kingdom and lived for most of his life there. He moved to Armenia a few years ago, where he started to teach English. He has not taught English in his life before coming to Armenia. His major was Humanities. He did not attend any teacher preparation programs and he does not have a Masters Degree in teaching. He just got an online four weeks intensive course certificate from CELTA training program. He has been teaching at this language program for seven years now as a General English teacher.

3.3 Data Collection

The observations were conducted in the three teachers' classrooms, where they teach different proficiency levels of learners of English as a foreign language. During the class observations, I took notes of whatever occurred in each teacher's class. The teachers use Technology. The

classrooms are equipped with a laptop computer and a projector, speakers, a screen and a blackboard. The classes run three times a week for three hours per session.

3.3.1 Observations

The observations lasted nearly three months; I observed ten to twelve times each of the teacher's classes, and each observation lasted three hours. I was nonparticipant observer; who did not participate or show any reactions. I took notes of everything happened in each class. Because my primary goal is to collect data and see how these three teachers practice teaching, without imposing my view points. I stopped observing the classes when new themes stopped coming up.

3.3.2 Interviews:

For the interviews, I used a voice recorder and the interviews were conducted in the same university setting, where the participants of the study teach. The class observations helped me determine the interview questions. During the interviews, I tried to stay objective and neutral, and attempt not to express my opinions. I just asked the questions and asked for more clarifications and explanations whenever there was an ambiguity, in order to reduce the subjectivity of the study. After the interviews were recorded I transcribed the audiotape. The interviews with the three teachers are conducted, as an attempt to find out the teachers' education level, their teaching development process, and their teaching philosophy, in order to see how their beliefs align with their practice. The interviews lasted thirty to forty minutes each and held at the same university where the three teachers teach. From the interview questions, I tried to reveal what is each teacher's perspective towards the use of the mother tongue in EFL

classes, their perception of the teacher role, and their attitude towards various types of error correction, their lesson planning and the contribution of TEFL program to their teaching practice. (For interview questions see Appendix).

3.3.3 Documents:

Additional data is collected from the materials each teacher used in their classes, to explore the source of their teaching practice. The materials include extra worksheets, teachers used to support the learning process, and information from MA TEFL program and CELTA training.

Maggie and Kelly are graduated from MA program. MA TEFL program provides MA degree in teaching English as a foreign language. The student teachers gain the pedagogical and practical knowledge about teaching, with the support and guidance of professional instructors. Whereas Mike has an online CELTA training certificate; CELTA is a certificate in teaching English to speakers of other languages. It is a training course that helps teachers sharpen their teaching practice, and to know more about the effective teaching. Teachers of this training program observe experienced teachers and see their classroom practices. The training usually lasts four weeks during which teachers teach real ESL teachers for six hours.

3.4 Data Analysis:

During the data analysis I transcribed the interviews, and then I coded both the observation notes and the interview transcripts in order to identify themes. After that, I analyzed the themes from both data sets, and attempted to uncover alignment and contradictions between teachers' beliefs and practices. I also tried to discover whether these three teachers' practices differ, depending on their education and experience. After observing so many classes, I had

huge amount of data. But because it was impossible to include everything in this study, I tried to find the most common points that these three teachers shared in their classroom practices. Hence, I got five main categories which are the findings of this study.

Chapter Four: Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the study. Five major themes emerged from the collected data. These themes are the perception of the three EFL teachers in an adult language program in Armenia towards the mother tongue use, methods and attitudes towards error correction and lesson planning, teachers' view point about their role in the classroom and the contribution of the TEFL program to their teaching. Through the interview questions and the class observations, I tried to discover, whether the beliefs of these three teachers align with their classroom practices or not. The first category shows the three teachers' belief, about the use of the students' mother tongues in EFL classrooms, and then presents how these three teachers practiced that in their teaching.

4.1 Teachers' Practices and Beliefs: The use of the first language

The use of the students' mother tongue in teaching a second or foreign language is one of the most debatable topics in applied linguistics. Thus, it was interesting to explore these three EFL teachers' beliefs and practices, related to the theme of L1 use, in a language program in Armenia.

Kelly believes that with beginners' level of foreign language learners, the teacher should use the mother tongue of the learners, to give instructions, to explain some grammar rules and to

provide the meaning of some vocabulary words. As she claimed, it is impossible for an EFL teacher to use only the target language. She thinks using the first language of the learners is inevitable, and in her classroom practice she used the first language of the learners. Kelly said:

With level one, it is impossible, because if she is level one and they know ... they know almost nothing, and when you want to explain something.. with objects, it's a table I describe it, I show it. But when you have some abstract notions, you describe it and you give synonyms in English. Look! How do you want them to understand what you talk about, if they don't understand that one word, and explain that one word, in ten or twenty other English words. So sometimes it's like necessary, you can't just skip it. So sometimes if there's a need you should use L1.

Kelly's and Mike's beliefs align with their teaching practices, because they believe that the teacher might use the first language of the students in teaching English classes. Mike believes that L1 use is optimal for quick vocabulary definition, and that is what he practices in his classes. I noticed during the class observations; Mike sometimes used Armenian to provide the meaning of some vocabulary words. While Maggie believes that the teacher should not use the first language of the learners at any proficiency level, because as she said, it is an English class and the communication should be only in English. However, the interesting thing that I noted in her practice is that, there was L1 use in Maggie's classroom practice, but she was not aware of that. Ultimately, there is some contradiction between her practices and beliefs, related to the first language use in EFL classes. Moreover, Mike's and Kelly's beliefs and practices related to the first language use align.

4.2 Teachers' practices and Beliefs: The Role of the Teacher

Maggie and Kelly have been taught, in their TEFL education that, the teacher role in communicative classes should be the least. Teachers should give space to the learners to be

active learners. The optimal way to have student centered classes is to provide a safe environment, where the students interact in real life contexts. Mike is also aware of the communicative methods of teaching, and the importance of reducing the teacher's role. He always implements student centered classes during the second half of each class. There is always group work such as role play, debate or discussion, where the students use the target language in real life environments. The three teachers had moments where their classes were teacher centered, and other moments where they give the students the opportunity to interact, and practice English by using the target language. Kelly argued that for beginner level of learners, it is hard for the teacher to have student-centered classes throughout the whole class time. The classes could be teacher-centered sometimes, and that what she practices in her classes. The interaction in her classes was mostly between the teacher and the learners. Mike always had teacher-centered classes in the first half of his classes, but he compensated that by having group work discussions, role play, and debates, in the second half of each class. He believes that the role of the teacher is the most important role, and if he has twelve passive students it is because of him, and his teaching methods. Remarkably, he feels responsible to promote the students' learning. On the other hand, Maggie believes that classes might be sometimes teacher centered, and that does not harm the learning of the students, and she practices that. But she emphasizes group work and pair work, and encourages the students to use the target language. These three teachers feel themselves responsible to transform information and knowledge to the students. They see themselves as guides who lead the students in their learning process, and that they are the ones who promote the students learning. Here is what Maggie said about the teacher role in contrast to the students' role:

Uh the teacher should be a kind of a guide for the students ... you should help them, provide support if needed.. Of course, it also depends on the students, they need to collaborate...During the first couple of classes, the teacher should be the one who can set as an example, make students work actively. Of course students talk time ... should prevail during classes definitely ...but sometimes it becomes a kind of teacher centered class...

4.3 Teachers' practices and Beliefs: Error Correction

The three teachers used a variety of error correction: recast, repetition, reformulation, etc. The third category of the finding is about the type of error correction these three teachers practice in their classrooms. Three of them used a variety of error correction such as recast; when the teacher provides the correct form or reformulates the student's error. Metalinguistic clues; when the teacher poses a question related to the formation of the student's utterance, but the teacher does not provide the correct form. Elicitation; when the teacher elicits the correct form from the student by asking questions. Repetition; when the teacher repeats the student's error with intonation.

Wood (1989) and De Bot (1996) claimed that *"Error correction should not be explicitly corrected, if the focus is on communication in a language teaching classes"*.

Kelly and Mike used the immediate explicit corrective feedback in their classroom practice. They were correcting the students' mistakes immediately, and providing the correct form. They have the knowledge of other types of corrective feedback, but they do not practice them. Kelly believes that Armenian students *"are used to the Soviet Union education system....they don't get offended"* if she gives immediate correction feedback.

While Mike believes that his role as a facilitator should be more dominant during the group work. Hence, he does not pay too much attention to take notes of the students' mistakes. Maggie believes that she uses only the delayed explicit corrective feedback by having a notebook to take notes. As soon as the students complete the exercise, she writes down the mistakes on the board for the students correct their mistakes and discuss them with her. I noticed Maggie practiced that in her classes, but in addition to that she sometimes used the immediate corrective feedback. The three teachers beliefs related to the error correction align with their classroom practices.

It is important to mention that Mike doesn't know the terminologies used in the corrective feedback, but he has the pedagogical knowledge of other types rather than the ones he used.

4.4 Teachers' Practices and Beliefs: Lesson Planning

Lesson planning could help teachers connect each lesson's objectives with the classroom instructions, to make good instructional decisions. It might also help them in their time management and decision making. The three participants of this study have their own theories and practices related to lesson planning. Mike and Kelly believe that lesson planning is essential to have successful classes, as Mike mentioned:

Ok, well.. Lesson planning for me has changed. When I first started teaching, uh I would do a huge amount of lesson planning, normally more than the lesson. So, if the lesson was three hours, I would have spent four or five hours planning a lesson, trying to make it interesting. But over the years, and repeating the courses, my lesson planning has changed too. I'm now looking for diversification...So I look for alternative ways of doing the same thing for two reasons: One is.. I'm always looking to improve the interaction during the lessons. So that is my lesson planning is actually, what would interest me, and if I think, that I would like to do this task, then I think the students would ...That's how I try to develop my lesson plans.

Whereas Maggie thinks, that after teaching the same course over and over there is no point of having a lesson plan. Hence, I noted during the class observations that the class pace of both Mike and Kelly was more appropriate, which means the pace was not too slow nor too fast. While Maggie's classes were sometimes too fast, where the students didn't get enough time to practice, and in other times, the pace was too slow. Therefore, lesson planning might help teachers to have better time management.

4.5 Teachers' practice and Beliefs: Teachers' preparation programs and Decision Making

Maggie and Kelly mentioned that their classroom practice depends on the education they got from the MA program, and that the program contributed a lot to their teaching practice. Especially for Maggie, she mentioned that her teaching practice before the program is completely different from her teaching practice now. Maggie said that:

Well TEFL program contributed a lot....because linguistic University it was just theoretical. We learned theory. It was grammar based as I have already mentioned. The materials were old, not new, and it didn't give much room for the teacher to develop as a personality. But here at AUA I got to know the new methods of teaching, the interactive methods of teaching and..We stress practical, practice a lot here. We had practicum, independent teaching, uh writing lesson plans, uh organizing designing syllable, and syllabi. So all these things helped a lot, and in two years I can definitely say that I gained more than five years at the linguistic University I'm sure.

She goes on to say about her teaching:

It improved a lot. There is a significant difference between me as a teacher in the past and me as a teacher in the present, I think.

Whereas Mike is more autonomous learner, he mentioned during the interview that he usually goes on line and watches lots of YouTube videos, such as wiki webinars. Hence, most of his teaching development is just through studying via internet, or through self analysis. Thus, he reflects on his own practice after each class he teaches, and analyzes his action. From the observations, I noticed that Maggie and Kelly teach Grammar inductively, and they use more variety of activities in each class (e.g. pair work/group work/individual), and they also have activities that integrate the four skills of the students in the learning process. Whereas Mike, most of the time has one kind of group work, where the students use the target language in a real life environment. His classes lack pair work, individual work and listening activities.

Chapter Five: Discussion

The inquiry of this study to identify whether EFL teachers' practices align with their beliefs, has widened my scope in this field, and enriched my experience as an ESL/EFL teacher. The present study proved that teachers' belief affects their classroom practices, and that teachers' personal theory can be manifested in their classroom practices. The study also discovered that, education of EFL teachers has impact on their classroom practices. However, this does not mean that the experience does not play a vital role in the teachers' classroom practice. Much research emphasized this. As a result, teacher preparation programs might speed up teachers' professional development. But teachers' experience contributes to their professional growth too. For example, Maggie and Kelly as graduate students from MA TEFL, their classes included more variety of activities than Mike's classes. But this does not mean that Mike does not have great activity choices that motivated the learners and encouraged them to be involved in the learning process.

However, teacher preparation programs enhance the teachers to become confident about the pedagogical knowledge of the teaching methods and techniques, like in the case of Kelly and Maggie. But Mike also proved that teacher professional development can be self-driven. I believe Maggie and Kelly are good examples of why the higher education in teaching is vital for the EFL teachers. It might help them develop professionally, and to improve their skills and knowledge, which will affect their teaching consequently. There is no doubt that different individuals react differently to any life experiences, but teacher preparation programs can add

and enhance teachers' experiences and practices. If the teacher is ready to develop his/her teaching skills and improve his/her classroom practice.

As Wei et al., (2009) claimed that in order to have effective professional development, we should focus on providing teachers with new knowledge and techniques to improve their teaching, and ultimately improve the learning of their students. Hence, experienced and novice teachers might get benefits from teacher preparation programs like TEFL/TESOL.

As a result, this study discovered that teacher preparation programs, like TEFL programs, provide extraordinary opportunities for both experienced and novice teachers. For example, Maggie, who had teaching experience before applying for MA program, her teaching has improved significantly as she asserted. Whereas Kelly, who didn't have any teaching experiences before applying for MA program, her knowledge of teaching widened and enriched. Moreover, teacher education accelerates teachers' professional development.

Furthermore, whether a teacher has a higher education in teaching or not, it is the teachers' responsibility to seek professional development and improve their teaching practice. It might be true that teachers' preparation programs speed up professional development. It might also help novice teachers, to learn how to teach in a short time. Since these programs provide the teachers, the opportunity to practice teaching while they study to get MA degree. However, it is the teacher's responsibility to seek their own professional development. Mike is an example of autonomous learner, who seeks his own professional development, by searching on line and trying to stay up-dated with the effective methods of teaching, and by attending training programs.

In addition, this study shed light that teachers should promote reflection to connect beliefs and practices. As Buchmann (1984) claimed the professional knowledge is simply knowledge for action. The three teachers state that after each class they teach, they reflect on their own learning. They also try to avoid the things that did not work well, and when something works well, they adopt it and implement it in other classes too. Thus, to step towards the professional development, teachers need to reflect on their own teaching. Applying new things might be a step towards teachers' growth. Jasper (2003) defined the reflective teaching as a process of lifelong learning that results developed professionals.

Another critical finding from this study could be that teachers need communities, where they can develop professionally. As Mitchell & Sackney, (2000); Stoll et al., (2006) claimed teachers need to work collaboratively with their peers. Furthermore, the three EFL teachers of this study wanted to be observed by other teachers, as they wanted to observe their colleague teachers on regular bases. They also wanted to receive a constructive feedback. Here is what Mike indicates, when I asked him about the path towards the professional development. He said:

I would really like people... It doesn't matter... they don't have to be experienced teachers. It doesn't matter who they are...just sit in and give constructive ... but it's not really criticismconstructive feedback yea ... I don't want someone to sit... all my lesson and in the end of it say: wow! Brilliant! You know ... that doesn't help me. I would much rather somebody said, well.. you know.. Have you tried doing this? Or maybe, you did talk too long. Or maybe you did this. Or you know.. You're moving too much. Or or maybe you're speaking too loud or too quiet, and there are lots of things like that, which we didn't get... which can be really useful.

We should provide the teachers with opportunities to help them obtain their professional development. Another important element towards the teachers' professional development as

the teachers noted is to receive an evaluation on their classroom practice from their students and from their supervisor. Thus, programs might consider having the idea of having Professional Learning Communities “*where groups of teachers share and critically interrogate their practices in an ongoing, reflective, collaborative, inclusive, and learning-oriented and growth promoting way to mutually enhance teacher and student learning* (Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace and Thomas, 2006)”.

Conclusion

Diving into these three EFL teachers' classes, through their class observations and interviews, the study helped me explore the knowledge and practice of each teacher. The observations and the interviews allowed me realize what help the teachers in their classroom practice. It helped me discover the alignments and the contradictions in their beliefs and practices. The findings cannot be generalized though. We might need longitudinal study, which includes teachers from different language programs in Armenia. Including more teachers in a study, might give us a better understanding of the factors that affect EFL teacher's practices. However, the practices of these three teachers showed that, both the experience and the education of teachers are optimal to obtain professional development. However, this is not enough. There are steps teachers need to take and factors that play a role in the teachers' professional improvement. Such as, teachers' reflection on their own teaching critically and working in professional learning communities. The study also emphasized that teachers' beliefs might be the base of their classroom practices. The beliefs and the classroom practices of these three teachers align most of the time, but this does not mean that they did not have some contradictions sometimes. It might be due to the lack of the constructive feedback in their profession community. Unfortunately, these three teachers do not receive any feedback on their teaching practices, and they also do not get the students' evaluations ; after each course these three teachers teach, the adult language program ask the learners to evaluate the teacher and the course, which is usually done in the end of each course. As the three teachers admitted they never receive a report on their evaluation. Even though, EFL teachers should work on their own

professional development. In addition, they need to be equipped with a skill of making a connection between their practice and belief, in order to improve their teaching.

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Appendix

The teachers have been asked the following questions:

Teachers' education:

What was your major at college?

When did you graduate from AUA?

When did you start teaching?

Why do you teach? What do you like about teaching?

Can you tell me about your teaching philosophy?

Classroom Methods and Planning:

Which teaching methods do you prefer? Which one do you use?

What can you tell me about your lesson planning?

What is your feeling about using the first language of the students in the classroom?

Classroom Interaction/ Teacher's and students' role:

How would you define the students' role in the classroom? What about the teacher's role?

What are your thoughts about teacher talk time vs. students' talk time in class?

How do you try to engage the learners in each lesson?

Assessment:

How do you assess the students' learning? What approaches or measures do you use?

Error Correction:

What are your approaches to error correction? What do you think students prefer in terms of error correction?

Professional Development

How do you try to develop professionally? (Workshop, conferences, courses)

How do you reflect on your own teaching?

What did the TEFL program offered to you as an EFL teacher or added to your teaching?

To what extent has your teaching improved? How?

What are the things that you want to change or improve in your teaching?