

Do We Prepare EFL Teachers for Practice? Comparing Professional Competences of Pre-Service and In-Service Teachers

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Abstract

Teacher education aims to prepare future teachers for classroom practice, yet some professional competences may be difficult to develop without sustained experience in schools. Previous research with final-year EFL pre-service teachers showed relatively high self-perceived competence in planning, methodology, collaboration and intercultural competence, but considerably lower confidence in research, innovation and leadership. Interviews with novice teachers also suggested that some demands of the profession become apparent only after entering practice. This study compares the self-perceived professional competences of pre-service and in-service EFL teachers and examines whether teaching experience is associated with different competence profiles. The study uses a professional teacher competence questionnaire covering 12 domains, supplemented by a thirteenth domain focusing on AI use in education. The same instrument is administered to both groups, allowing direct comparison across career stages. Particular attention is paid to areas in which the perceptions of practising teachers differ from those of teachers approaching the end of their initial preparation. The comparison seeks to identify areas in which initial EFL teacher education corresponds well with the demands of practice, as well as competences that may need greater attention during university preparation. The study may also show which aspects of professional competence are shaped more strongly through experience in real school contexts.

Keywords: EFL Teacher Education; In-Service Teachers; Pre-Service Teachers; Self-Perceived Professional Competences; AI In Education