



## EMPOWERING BENINESE EFL TEACHERS FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH EFFECTIVE SUPERVISORY WORKS: CASE STUDIES OF OUÉMÉ AND PLATEAU REGIONS, BENIN<sup>i</sup>

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### Abstract:

Inspectors are required to design activities that focus on quality insofar as teaching is concerned. The purpose of this work consists in raising the highest pedagogical institution's awareness of its prominent role and the immediate actions to take in order to positively impact the education system as a whole with specific regard to EFL teachers' classroom performances in the secondary schools in Ouémé and Plateau district in Benin. The paper also aims to have their teaching practice improved and thereafter allow them to reach professional development for the benefit of their students. The study has then identified specific activities to be carried out and implemented by the target teachers in a classroom situation. To find out the type of activities that can be carried out to reach the study's purpose, instruments that made it easy to collect data have been displayed, analysed and discussed. The analysis and discussion of the results have brought about the justification of the three hypotheses formulated in the study. All this was done on the basis of a properly described procedure that resulted in the findings of the study which revealed that the poor academic achievement of numerous students of the target region is due to their teachers' pedagogical weakness. It has been suggested that inspectors should then train, coach and accompany those teachers through purposely selected activities.

**Keywords:** inspectors, education system, professional development, classroom situation, Benin

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<sup>i</sup> RENFORCEMENT DES CAPACITES DES PROFESSEURS D'ANGLAIS DU BENIN POUR LE DEVELOPPEMENT PROFESSIONNEL PAR LES ACTIVITES DE L'INSPECTION PEDAGOGIQUE : ETUDE DU CAS DES DEPARTEMENTS DE L'OUEME ET DU PLATEAU, BENIN

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## 1. Introduction

The massification policy and the subsidy of the school fees in Benin have entailed an increase in the students' number in our secondary schools, which inevitably enlarges the field of training, compelling the government to call up in the teaching profession many categories of people most of whom have no initial training. Then a few years after their recruitment, they were sent to the Teacher Training College (ENS) to have their initial training. Despite their initial training, they have not been able to positively impact the students' academic achievements. The BEPC and BAC final reports of the last five academic years are illustrations of the poor performances of most of those teachers. That is the reason why pedagogical inspector services have to hold onto their duty so as to help them do well in the implementation of their professional commitment. In other words, supervisory work, if regularly and steadily organised, should bring about self-efficacy and lead teachers to develop on the professional ground. The fact that most of them are seldom doing well has yielded the above research questions and hypotheses.

- 1) Why do many teachers fail to reach professional development, many years after they have been trained at ENS (Teacher Training College)?
- 2) How can supervisors or inspectors help the EFL teachers in Ouémé-Plateau region better their teaching practice for professional development?

The answers to the above research questions would require the formulation of the following hypotheses:

- If there are many teachers of English who have problems meeting professional requirements, it may be due to a lack of sufficient initial training background.
- To reach professional development, many EFL teachers in Ouémé and Plateau departments need to be empowered through permanent and effective supervisory activities.

At this juncture, some theoretical principles are required to allow inspectors or supervisors to reach this goal.

### 1.1. Theoretical Foundations

This section highlights the document background of the research work. The theoretical framework, the institutional context and other related studies. This article focuses on five different but interconnected theories. The first two *Scientific Management Theory* advocated by Taylor and *American Rational Choice Theory* developed by Smith constitute its background. The third one called *School Voucher System* requires financial or material aid the government must grant parents to support their children's education. The *School Voucher System* being too much selective, it is useful to refer to the fourth, *Vygotskian socio-cultural theory* that views learning as a social process, which obliges the child to work with his peers. Vygotsky's theory has it that everything is learned through interaction with others and then, integrated into the individual's mental structure. This implies the *Experiential Learning Theory* also referred to as *Learning by doing*. Dewey's theory imposes that learners observe, imitate or practice what they are taught since *practice makes perfect*.

These mentioned theories induce teaching improvement and by implication the education quality.

There is no country in the world where education quality is not a prior concern. European, Asian, American, as well as African countries, give the education system paramount importance. In this respect, legal measures have been taken through *Constitutions, Education acts, Orientation laws, etc.* to orientate education policymakers and regulate actions and decisions. These legal documents serve as the groundstone of every piece of writing and research work regarding accountability in any education system. Evident-based examples include South Korea, the USA, Belgium, England (the UK), France, Benin, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, and Tanzania, just to mention a few.

The quest for education quality has brought a lot of nations to the establishment of inspection services endowed with the responsibility of control over schools for their conformity with the government education policy. This has inspired some scholars who investigated the role of inspectors/supervisors to whom the government delegate the 'power' of school accountability through the ministry of education. Consequently, many studies have been carried out in certain countries. In this section, a limited number of those studies have been consulted and examined in terms of the problem(s) raised, objective(s) aimed at, methodology used, findings, results attained and possibly recommendations and suggestions.

The first one is Wade's (1986) whose study aimed to know if there is any isomorphism principle between inspectors' functions and teachers' activities. The second scholar, Klerks Marielle C.J.L. (2012) investigated the impact of inspection activities on the improvement of educational quality. Both studies reveal a negative answer to the issue raised. The third one involves Kiruma Ssegobe Nicholas (2013) which got the same result. Although the Ugandan government established institutions to manage school inspections, inspection practices did not give satisfaction. Furthermore, Kabati John (2017) investigated the issues related to the inspection of primary schools for quality practices in Tanzania in order to identify the role of school inspectors in controlling the quality of primary education and the challenges that hinder effective school inspection. The findings reveal that Inspectors should use friendly language when communicating with teachers instead of command and harsh language. All this brings the problem to the open sky. The next section focuses on the methodology of the study.

## **2. Methodology of the Study**

The third part of this work is devoted to the way of its achievement. In other words, it is here that we have described how the investigation has been conducted and carried out. Even though it is the shortest part, it is made up of five sub-headings: the research population, sampling, instruments, data collection procedures and method of data collection analysis.

## 2.1. Population

The question of teacher empowerment through supervisory or inspection visits involves all the school stakeholders in the public as well as in the private sectors. Teachers (and students by implication), teachers' advisers, school administrators, students' parents and even inspectors themselves are impacted by the inspection activities. Then the research population encompasses all of them but for the accuracy of the results only a few teachers in the classroom situation, TAs, Inspectors and University lecturers have been sampled. This can be justified by the fact that the students' academic results are dependent on their teachers' performances through accurate supervisory works.

The investigation has been conducted in two districts: Ouémé and Plateau (in the southern part of Benin).

## 2.2. Sampling

The investigation was meant to be conducted in each commune of the target districts. There are nine communes in Ouémé and five in Plateau. In Ouémé, the research questionnaires have been handed over to teachers from six communes whereas, in Plateau, they have been distributed to teachers in communes. The number of schools selected was dependent on the size of the commune (see the table below).

In Ouémé, the average number of the teachers of English in the thirteen (13) selected schools is about two hundred and sixty (260) that is to say 20 teachers per school. We then chose to question 25% of them. The corresponding number gives 65 (sixty-five) and that is the reason why five (5) teachers were given the questionnaire in each of the thirteen (13) schools.

In Plateau region, owing to specific reasons, four schools were selected in three communes. The total number of EFL teachers in the selected schools is about eighty (80). Thus, the same rate, (25 per cent) results in twenty (20) which corresponds to the investigated teachers. Therefore, each school received five (5) questionnaires as in Ouémé. The table below is a summary of the points developed in this subpart.

First, in Ouémé, there were 65 (sixty-five) targeted EFL teachers but 49 (forty-nine) gave back their answers. Second, in Plateau, we collected 19 (nineteen) questionnaires out of twenty. The case of the teaching advisors was different. Those General secondary schools in Ouémé and Plateau areas are only eight (8) in number while there is only one (1) TA in the Plateau region. All of them received the questionnaires but (5) five gave them back.

The limited number of the TAs in the study area has prompted us to get in contact with the English inspectors living in Porto-Novu. All of them received the investigation document and turned it back; 4 (four) out of 4 (four) say 100%.

The other category of people considered has to do with the University lecturers. In fact, 80% of them gave their point of view through their answers to the questionnaires which mainly served as the instruments of data collection.

Apart from the questionnaires, structured interview schedules and classroom observation have also been useful tools in the realization of this research work.

### **2.3. Instrumentation**

Two documents have been used as instruments to carry the investigation out in the target regions. These are questionnaires (addressed to EFL teachers, TAs, Inspectors and University lecturers specialised either in didactics or applied linguistics and interviews realised with local authorities of the ministry of education at the secondary school level and other personalities. Classroom observations carried out in three schools with personal experiences (mainly based on pedagogical and inspection visits) were occasions on which we collected data and useful information.

The questionnaire was addressed to EFL teachers, TAs, Inspectors and University lecturers specialised either in didactics or applied linguistics to collect some factual information and data.

### **2.4. Supervisory Approach**

Classroom observation appears to be one of the means used by supervisors and TAs to handle and appreciate how learning is being conducted in a given classroom situation. Observations in classroom contexts guided me in collecting data for this study.

Although classroom observation situations are hardly measurable and quantifiable, they remain occasions whereby reliable data can be collected if well managed.

### **2.5. Data Collection Procedures**

Questionnaires were first set up and the targeted population was identified. Then we went to the selected areas and handed the documents over to the teachers of the selected secondary schools. They were given time to fill in the questionnaires; the quicker ones would hand them back just after one or two days. The others were allotted three or four days at most but some gave them back after a week. The same procedure was followed in the realization of the interviews. Two hours or so were sufficient for each of the interviews realized.

All these procedures have helped me in collecting data that will be useful in the findings of this work. Here is the method of data analysis.

### **2.6. Methods of Data Analysis**

The analysis of the results of the investigations and interviews held in the target schools is one of the most important parts of this research work. Classroom observations, personal experiences, comparative approaches, and quantitative and qualitative methods were explicitly or implicitly used to examine and discuss the findings of the study.

#### **2.6.1. Comparative Approaches**

Questionnaires, structured interview schedules and classroom observations enabled me to collect data from different areas and different categories of people. This led me in comparing answers and proposals from various respondents. As a matter of fact, we have

tried to synthesise the different points of view. All this brings about an analytical approach.

### **2.6.2. Quantitative and Qualitative Methods**

The research instruments used to make the investigation were addressed to target people whose statistical figures are displayed in chapter four. As the number of answers or appreciation collected on this and that aspect of a given question is not always the same, quantitative measurement is then required to shed light on the numerical data.

Whereas the quantitative method refers to measurement or numbers and figures, the qualitative approach has to do with meaning, definitions, descriptions, exploration, concepts, etc. In this study, the qualitative method has helped me discuss and interpret data according to what the respondents have said or suggested. The same approach will be helpful in the analysis of the different classroom observations that have been mentioned in this study.

Now that the data analysis methods have been described, we tackle the next chapter about *Presentation and Discussions of the Results*.

## **3. Presentation and Discussions of the Results**

### **3.1. Presentation of the Results**

The results of this study encompass the responses of the EFL teachers, TAs, inspectors and university lecturers through the different questionnaires they were given. There were four questionnaires: questionnaire 1 to EFL teachers, questionnaire 2a to TAs, questionnaire 2b to Inspectors and questionnaire 2c to university lecturers.

#### **3.1.1. The EFL Teachers**

The EFL teachers have been given *Questionnaire 1*. Fifty-five (55) EFL teachers were given the questionnaire in Ouémé District and we were able to collect forty-nine (49) say 89.09%. In Plateau department, there were nineteen (19) respondents out of twenty (20) which is 95%. In addition, while four (4) TAs out of seven (7) gave back their questionnaire all the five investigated inspectors reacted positively. Finally, 80% of the university lecturers, through their answers to the questionnaire, contributed to the collection of data. The different results collected here and there will be displayed on the basis of their academic and professional qualifications, official status, teaching experiences, the necessity of planning lessons and up-dating teaching files, the reason(s) for coming into the teaching profession, supervisory works (in-service trainings, coaching, inspection visits, assessment, remediation), the interviewees' point of view.

##### **3.1.1.1. Academic and Professional Qualifications of the Teachers**

The table below shows the academic qualifications of the teachers. Only the highest academic degree the respondent teachers are teaching with is taken into account in the table below.

**Table 1: Academic Qualification of the Respondents**

Academic Qualification	Regions					
	Ouémé		Plateau		Total of both regions	
	F	Percentage (%)	F	Percentage (%)	F	Percentage (%)
BAC	01	02.04	00	00.00	01	01.47
DUEL	00	00.00	00	00.00	00	00.00
Licence	21	42.85	11	57.89	32	<b>47.05</b>
Maîtrise	23	46.93	07	36.84	30	<b>44.11</b>
DEA	04	08.16	01	05.26	05	07.35
Doctorate	00	00.00	00	00.00	00	00.00
Other	00	00.00	00	00.00	00	00.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>99.98</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>99.99</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>99.98</b>

The table reveals that the majority of the EFL teachers in both regions are holders of the Licence (bachelor) and Maîtrise degrees (91.16%). Only a few (01.47%) are teaching with the Baccalaureate qualification.

On the basis of their academic qualification, we can conclude that many EFL teachers in Ouémé and Plateau regions have the required background to get adequate professional training.

The required professional qualifications to teach in secondary school are either BAPES or CAPES (Secondary school teaching qualification). The table and the graph below present the results of the investigation in the target regions.

**Table 2: Professional Qualifications of the Respondents**

Professional Qualification	Regions					
	Ouémé		Plateau		Total of both regions	
	F	Percentage (%)	F	Percentage (%)	F	Percentage (%)
BAPES	16	32.65	10	52.63	26	<b>38.23</b>
CAPES	11	22.44	02	10.52	13	<b>19.11</b>
Being trained	10	20.40	02	10.52	12	17.64
Untrained	12	24.48	05	26.31	17	25.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>99.97</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>99.98</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>99.98</b>

In Table 2, the number of trained teachers, 57.34% (38.23% +19.11%) outweighs the number of those who are being trained (17.64%) and who have not been trained (25%). Thus, it is shown through the table that in Ouémé and Plateau more than fifty per cent of the EFL teachers are professionally qualified to teach English.

Now that their academic and professional situation is clarified, let us have a look at their official status.

### 3.1.1.2. Administrative Status of the Teachers

The administrative status of the investigated teachers is compiled in the following table:

**Table 3: Administrative Status**

Administrative Status	Regions					
	Ouémé		Plateau		Total	
	F	Percentage (%)	F	Percentage (%)	F	Percentage (%)
APE	03	06.12	01	05.26	04	05.88
ACE	07	14.28	03	15.78	10	14.70
ACLR	13	26.53	08	42.10	21	30.88
Vacataires (Part time)	26	53.06	07	36.84	33	48.52
<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>100%</b>

The number of part-time teachers (48.52 %), as shown in table 3 is almost half the total number of the investigated teachers (33 out of 68) which is nearly fifty per cent. There is only a 5.88% APE compared to those under contracts (45.58%). In other words, the number of non-permanent teachers in our secondary schools is a far cry from the number of those officially recruited by the government.

Another fact investigated is their motivation in coming into the teaching profession.

### 3.1.1.3. The Reason(s) for Their Coming into the Profession

Apart from unemployment reasons, embracing a career is often dependent on intrinsic motivation. This has led me to ask the EFL teachers the reason(s) that prompted them into the teaching profession. Table 6 displays the answers we have collected.

**Table 6: Reason(s) that motivate teaching**

		Ouémé	Plateau	Total	Percentage
Reasons	Unemployment	12	10	22	32.35
	Calling	37	09	46	67.64
	<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>99.99</b>

It has been noticed that 46 teachers out of the total number (68), declared that they came into the teaching profession because they received a calling for it. The rest said that they were compelled to do it because of unemployment reasons. It is a fact that in Plateau region 10 teachers out of 19, say 52.63 % surprisingly confessed that they had no vocation for the profession. As a matter of fact, those teachers, to be accurate, need to be mentored by supervisors or inspectors.

### 3.1.1.4. The Supervisory Visit Habits

The visits being evoked here involve supervisory works such as in-service trainings, coaching, inspection visits, assessments and remediation activities. During a pastoral visit or a planned visit, the inspector may decide to select and implement one of these activities with the visited teacher(s). While some EFL teachers said they were paid inspection visits once in a while, others replied they have never been visited. The table below shows the figures.



**Table 7:** Supervisory visit habits and their impacts

		Regions			Percentage
		Ouémé	Plateau.	Total	
<b>Inspection visits habits</b>	Yes	36	14	50	73.52
	No	13	05	18	26.47
	<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>99.99</b>

More often than not, teachers who receive pedagogically or/and inspection visits have their teaching habits impacted. The table and graph that follow show how much the respondents have been influenced by the supervisors' different visits.

**Table 8:** Impact of the visit

<b>Impact of the visits</b>	Positive	31	13	44	88.00
	Negative	05	01	06	12.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

When asked if they have ever been visited by an inspector, fifty (50) respondents in both districts answered *Yes* and forty-four (44) replied their teaching practices had been positively impacted by the inspector's visit. But a considerable number, eighteen (18) declared they had neither seen an inspector nor a teacher advisor (TA) in their classroom. That's the reason why we tried to question inspectors and TAs.

### 3.1.2. The Teaching Advisers (TA)

Like the EFL teachers, a questionnaire has been submitted to the TAs in order to collect some information.

After we had collected the questionnaire and proceeded to their analysis, we noticed some pedagogical problems confronting the TAs in the implementation of their tasks. The frequency of the visits, as all of them mentioned, is *once in a while*. As it appears, although almost all of the respondents think pedagogical visits can help the EFL teachers attain professional development, some of them believe the way the visits are organized should be revisited and improved. Initial and in-service trainings, regular visits, coaching, pedagogical accompaniment and periodical assessments of the visits are some of the supervisory works they suggested for the EFL professional development. Their suggestions recall those of the inspectors.

### 3.1.3. The Inspectors

The instrument we gave the inspectors for data collection, is a document made up of two parts. The first has to do with their academic as well as professional qualifications. The second part of the questionnaire mentions the supervisory works that are to say *inspection visits, in-service trainings, coaching and assessment*.

### **a. Inspection Visits**

According to the inspectors consulted, EFL teachers should regularly be paid pedagogical visits before having their teaching performances impacted. They went so far in saying that the more a teacher received inspection or pedagogical visit in an academic year, the more performant his or her teaching will be and the better s/he will impact the learners' academic results. Inspection visits are part and parcel of in-service trainings.

### **b. In-service Trainings**

Inspectors have noticed that most EFL teachers, despite the miscellaneous training sessions they underwent, were not all able to improve their teaching practices. The reasons, according to them are the following:

- most of them have poor academic backgrounds and are not vocational teachers;
- they were not involved in any pre-service or initial training before their recruitment;
- they used to miss the training sessions organised periodically because they are mostly part-time teachers and inspection visits have no impact on their administrative status.

All these reasons evoked by the supervisors we got in contact with, aroused other concerns to which they reacted.

### **c. Coaching**

Inspectors declared that although the DIPIQ has a specific programme for teacher coaching, there is no formal context for its implementation. Thus, they raised the problem of lack of material and financial means and seized the opportunity to confess that the impact of the supervisory works will not be felt until the government provides the sector with enough human, financial and material resources. Nevertheless, they believed that young teachers can be coached under the following circumstances:

- when in a beginner position with no initial training;
- during the weekly pedagogical workshops;
- when s/he does not know what to do in a given context;
- if s/he has no initial training;

They also talked about how to assess a teacher under coaching.

### **d. Assessment**

Here, inspectors addressed a series of questions. To know whether the supervisory works should always be assessed, they all answered positive and explained how *Assessment* can be carried out. In their opinion, we can assess teachers by grouping them in a workshop where they will have to answer some questions on their pedagogical behaviour. Teachers in a classroom situation can also be evaluated through their students' annual academic results. Moreover, they believed that assessment should be a personal matter. *Auto-evaluation* is the best form of all types of evaluation and it should take place every day in the classroom context, said some of them. Another idealistic time when assessment can

be applied is during inspection visits or classroom observations. They concluded by pointing out that regular or frequent assessment of supervisory works is one of the most efficient ways to lead the EFL teachers to empowerment and to the improvement of their learners' academic level in order to allow them to have access to university studies.

#### **3.1.4. The University Lecturers**

The questionnaires have been addressed to linguists and specialists of didactics but we have not been able to collect all of them for some of the respondents were too busy and could not hand the document back in the required time; others travelled and did not hand in the paper over. Only a few answered the questions. The first question was to account for the low academic level of some EFL teachers. Here are the answers:

- Owing to their uncontrollable number and their academic background, many students are not predisposed to learning the English language.
- There is a lack of appropriate libraries for students to borrow books and most of them fail to do research work.
- Some teachers do not always play their part to put the students on the right track.
- The evaluation system sometimes lacks transparency.

After they had answered the first question, they focused attention on the second one. The question is about their opinion on the collaboration between inspectors and university teachers as far as the EFL teachers' professional training is concerned. First, they all agree that both actors should work hand in hand to strengthen the trainees' academic and pedagogical backgrounds. To back up their position, they developed the following arguments:

- Creating such a context will rightly make BAPES or CAPES student teachers imitate some 'models' among the lecturers.
- If lecturers and inspectors work in collaboration, BAPES and CAPES certificate teachers will have their practice improved and quickly reach professional development.
- While university teachers care for theory, syntax, intelligibility and fluency, inspectors will see to pedagogy and methodological approaches.
- Language teaching is a process. It requires academic as well as methodological background. No one can reach professional development irrespective of trainings based on academic and methodological background. All this cannot be accurately and efficiently carried out without the collaborative commitment of university lecturers and inspectors.

The above data collected after investigations will now be discussed with special regard to the research questions and hypotheses.

#### **3.2. Discussions of the Results and Findings of the Work**

Looking into the different results and especially the replies from inspectors and university teachers, it goes without saying that Benin education system is stormed by miscellaneous categories of EFL teachers with low academic background and

professional qualifications. Although 47.05% and 44.11% are respectively holders of Licence and Maîtrise, their accuracy and fluency in the English language are highly perfectible. As a matter of fact, empowering them becomes an imperative task. In this sense, we will discuss the collected data under two dimensions including the dimension of academic-based realities and the political dependent context.

### 3.2.1.1 The Academic-based Realities

After the primary and secondary steps, students who have passed their A-Level (*Baccalauréat* exam) are admitted into the university. Most of them will register in the English department since there is no strict selection criterion. Almost all the laureate students coming from secondary schools with different backgrounds (in science as well as in literature) have free access to English language studies. De facto, the number of students registered is important. While some of them are endowed with high potentiality, the majority number is composed of low-skill learners. That is what the lecturers have tried to explain above.

They went so far in recognizing that there is not an official language immersion programme that obliges learners to sojourn in an English-speaking country. Despite all that, some of them succeed anyhow in getting the final certificate (the master's degree) on the basis of which they are allotted some teaching hours in secondary schools and that is where the shoe pinches.

Referring to the data, not only students can be held responsible for the situation. For instance, there is not an appropriate library for the English department students. In addition, there are many students who cannot afford to buy books or useful documents for their studies. Another reason has to do with the teachers. They said some of them do not always play their part to put the students on the right way. Either those teachers fail to teach the essential knowledge required within a cycle or they are too lenient with their learners. This is to say that they may not be rigorous enough in appreciating their students' academic and intellectual work. The system is an andragogy-based process where each teacher is given certain autonomy in teaching and evaluating his/her students. The more accurate the teaching, the more efficient the evaluation and the more trustworthy the results will be. But surprisingly, some of the respondents indicated that the evaluation is not always transparent. It is unbelievable that some teachers indulge themselves in granting a category of students the academic qualification they don't deserve.

Another fact worth mentioning was raised by Cross D, (2003: 41) who indicated that *there is an increasing tendency to put untrained teachers into classrooms in countries with rapidly growing populations* like ours where the unemployment rate has reached its peak.

In fact, most university leavers, looking for jobs, holding or without holding academic degree(s) rush into our schools with the intention to make money for survival reasons. They consider teaching as a money-making venture since they have no background in the profession. This study has unfortunately revealed that 25% of the so-called teachers are not trained. All this shows the weakness of their academic level. Hence

the answer to the first research question: *If many EFL teachers have not been able to reach professional development many years after their professional qualifications, it is because of their poor academic background.* By implication, hypothesis number one is then justified as follows: *If there are many teachers of English who have problems meeting professional requirements, it is because of the fact that they lack sufficient initial training background.* The lack of initial training may be dependent on the political context.

### **3.2.1.2 The Political Dependent Context**

In Benin, the government has based its political decision on the Constitution and the Orientation law according to which education is a priority and that it should be an access door to culture, science, knowledge and know-how. Decrees have then been taken for the implementation of those laws that bring about the massification of schools because of the free access to primary school policy issued by the government in 2006. The immediate consequence of the policy is a drastic increase in the number of teachers. That was the reason why the political authorities were obliged to recruit a vast number of teachers by converting non-professionals and novice part-time teachers into permanent ones. The “Reversés” (to refer to the converted non-professional teachers) and the Pré-insérés with little or no teaching experiences obtained their passport to land in the field of the teaching profession. But the situation has created more problems than it has solved. Most students have been sacrificed on the altar of the mediocrity of the poor teaching practice of those teachers. A great number of them have no initial training. What is worse is that some of them don’t have the required academic qualification. In addition, the bad living conditions almost all the teachers were facing in the secondary sector caused the creation of many trade unions that obliged teachers to go on strike very often abandoning their classes. For more than a decade, there has always been a strike each academic year. In the academic year 2014-2015, for example, the strike lasted for four months (from October to January). The same situation occurs in (2017-2018). As a consequence, the first term was totally affected and the inspection activities could not be held within the required or indicated time. The pedagogical activities are then disorganized or blocked.

Although they recognised that pedagogical visits can entail professional development, all the TAs shared the viewpoint according to the way the supervisory activities are organised until now cannot impact the EFL teachers’ classroom practice. Moreover, when asked if they have been able to pay all the teachers under their jurisdiction a pedagogical visit within an academic year, all the TAs answered negative. So did the inspectors when invited to say whether it is possible for them to inspect and coach all the teachers under their control. In other words, inspectors cannot be able to supervise all the entrusted teachers within the same academic year. One of the respondents declared that it is not possible unless the government recruit an important number of inspectors. Furthermore, inspectors have so far been complaining about the way they are often treated by the government who has invested so much money in their training but is unable to offer better working conditions. They lack material resources and financial accompaniment. They view the situation as a case of discrimination. As a

matter of fact, they are not motivated to elaborate on all the required supervisory activities to empower the “weak” teachers.

The second hypothesis is fully justified here in this sense that *inspectors in general and those of Ouémé-Plateau region, in particular, are not able to empower the teachers under their control through permanent and effective supervisory works simply because of the drastic lack of the minimal working conditions they are facing*. In such conditions, how can they be able to coach and accompany the teacher under their jurisdiction? This is one of the reasons why in Ouémé-Plateau region, the teaching practice of a considerable number of teachers is poor (cf hypothesis number 2). In other words, most of EFL teachers will never reach professional development since those who are supposed to lend them a helping hand are not numerically and materially able to do the job. To make it clearer, although inspectors are only a few in number, they are not awarded the minimum working conditions and attributes for the empowerment of the entrusted teachers. Unless the government decide to make secondary education a priority, the EFL teachers in Ouémé and Plateau region will pedagogically be powerless for years. In spite of all these bad conditions of theirs, what are the supervisory works inspectors should normally set up to empower the EFL teachers? The answer to this important question will be dealt with in the following part.

### 3.2.2 Findings of the Work

The presentation and discussion have led to the following findings.

- Poor academic background causes many EFL teachers’ low professional achievements despite the number of years in the profession. By implication, hypothesis number one is then justified as follows: If there are many teachers of English who have problems meeting professional requirements, it is because of the fact that they lack sufficient initial training background.
- The government has to recruit a sufficient number of supervisors or inspectors and equip them with appropriate didactic, infrastructural and material means. All this must be coupled with better working conditions.
- To reach professional development, many EFL teachers in Ouémé and Plateau departments need to be empowered through permanent and effective supervisory activities such as inspection visits, coaching, accompaniment, tutoring, sharing experience etc. EFL teachers’ professional development cannot be carried out without a collaborative partnership with university lecturers.

The above findings have inspired some suggestions and recommendations.

## 4. Suggestions and Recommendations

In fact, inspectors, through purpose-built activities, are the first that must pave the EFL teachers’ way to professional development. To help me know the type of activities that can be carried out to reach the study’s purpose, we set up instruments that allowed me to collect data that have been displayed, analysed and discussed in chapter four. The analysis and discussion of the results have brought about the justification of hypotheses

1 and 2 with the answers to the research questions. All this was done on the basis of a procedure described in the third part of this article. Here are the findings.

The field investigation has revealed that despite the miscellaneous training sessions they underwent, most EFL teachers were not able to improve their teaching practices because:

- most of them (48.52 %) are part-time teachers and are used to missing the purposed-built training sessions running to private schools;
- 91.17% are beginner teachers and were not involved in any pre-service or initial training before their recruitment; their teaching experience is comprised between zero and fifteen years; they also have a low academic background
- they ignore how to plan lessons and prepare their classes in order to catch students' attention for efficient learning;
- 24.48% in Ouémé and 52.63 % of the EFL teachers in Plateau did not receive any calling for the teaching profession. They started teaching because of unemployment reasons.

Although surprising, these findings were predictable and it is what gave birth to this study. It is now an actual fact that in the target region if English language is taught by such people, it will hardly impact the entrusted learners. De facto, they need to be empowered.

#### **4.1. Suggestions**

The suggestions will go to Inspectors and to the EFL teachers.

##### **4.1.1. Inspectors**

###### **A. Developing Professional Competency N°1: The Management of Training**

- Select a group of teachers mainly newcomers those without sufficient professional experience and identify their teaching problems and by implication the need for training (at the beginning of the academic year). This can be realised through diagnostic classroom visits.
- Analyse the needs of training and convert them into objectives to be reached.
- Conceive and write a programme of training with specific regard to the appropriate materials.
- Define the strategies that will favour its implementation.
- Implement the training programme possibly with the assistance of the TAs of the basin.
- Organise follow-up activities to see how well the target teachers are doing.
- Evaluate the different activities being implemented.
- Prepare remediation activities.
- Coach those who may still be having problems in order to lend them a helping hand until they get the matter the right way.
- Initiate informal inspection visits to examine the progression and give advice for improvement.

## **B. Designing and Implementing an Annual Inspection Programme in Favour of the Teachers**

The pool inspector aiming at empowering the teachers under his pedagogical basin should plan his annual activities respecting the sub-division of the academic year. Here are my suggestions for an accurate supervisory activity for teachers' empowerment during a nine-month academic year.

- Referring to the curriculum with regard to the readers and pedagogical guides, define and plan the number of *Learning Situations* a given teacher in a classroom situation is supposed to cover in the first, second and third terms.
- Associate the TAs. Share ideas with them and let them suggest amendments if possible; this will allow true collaboration. Submit the planning to the teachers and head teachers in the appropriate term. Do not let them have all the annual plans in the first term.
- Have all the teachers and the school administration adhere to the planning and get the teachers to take commitment so as to follow it. Headteachers and the vice principal in close proximity must also be involved for routine control.
- TAs will pay regular visits to those teachers to help them come over the eventual difficulty they may be facing in implementing the programme.
- Have the low-performant teachers follow the good teachers in their classroom for improvement. Encourage peer teaching. This is an efficient condition for teachers to learn from each other. Periodical exchange must also be initiated for teachers to talk about their experiences in their respective classrooms.
- Evaluate teachers through unexpected inspection visits at the propice time to take a decision.
- Organise a full-scale inspection visit once a term to appreciate how well the school administration has played its part in accompanying the teachers for improvement. Coin some of the problems facing the teachers into topics or themes to be discussed at weekly pedagogical workshops or term seminars each teacher should participate in.
- Write a final report to the highest authorities (minister via the DIPIQ) for motivational rewards to give good teachers. This will surely motivate the other teachers to do well.

### **4.1.2. Teachers**

Teachers in classroom context have to:

- teach the people they are entrusted with and take part in their education by training them for life;
- make them acquire knowledge and know-how and help them develop their critical spirit, build their autonomy and elaborate a personal development programme;
- prepare students for citizenship by helping them understand the meaning and the importance of our customs and traditions.



All this put in a nutshell means that teachers are expected to know what to do in a given context. Simply put, a teacher should be eclectic. A theory that consists in adapting not adopting. Parrot teachers are not what our system needs. But those who are able to make do with the existing material in a given context and have the learners work efficiently.

## **4.2. Recommendations**

### **4.2.1. The Government**

The impact of supervisory activities on EFL teachers' performances cannot be felt if the Government does not create appropriate conditions.

The first condition would be the involvement of the Inspection (as an institution) in the process of decision making. In my opinion, depolitisation of the education system should be a priority. The Government should let the dog see the rabbit by implementing *the right man in the right place policy*.

We need to rethink leadership as far as education is concerned. Inspection leadership must be valued. That is the reason why Ahle, (2006), in his CAIESG Mémoire, demonstrated that leadership at the secondary school level should be rethought. We need better quality educational outcomes. He argued that this cannot be attained without innovation related to leadership action, people and purpose. In other words, no innovation is possible when the status quo is kept.

The university too, as an institution has a role to play in the achievement of the recommendations.

### **4.2.2. The University**

If wisdom is empirical and *intuitu personae*, knowledge and know-how are acquired under the light of a guide. No ascension is possible without a guide according to Snyders (1974). The teacher is the one supposed to shed light on the learners' darkness. He is the provider of the light. The source from which knowledge should flow into the learners. As such s/he should have his/her academic background intensified and strengthened. The only place where his knowledge is supposed to be densified is the university. University is then a focal point in the construction of a person's academic background. No one can teach in a secondary school if they haven't passed through a university channel. For all these reasons, we have made the following recommendations:

The university academic authorities are invited to:

- define criteria whereon students are admitted especially in the English section. This will reduce the high number of students and regulate free access to English language studies.
- develop a learner-centered equipment policy; build an appropriate library for the English department;
- erect a language laboratory for students to listen to native speakers and authentic English and compel students to speak English to one another wherever they are on the campus;

- initiate an annual language immersion programme for third and fourth-year students to sojourn in an English-speaking country such as Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya etc. for at least two months each academic year.
- back beginner teachers up with pedagogical and didactic theories and practices and innovate an inspection-based control system. A controlling board composed of intermediate and full professors to evaluate and judge the professionalism of each stakeholder of the system annually or after a semester.
- ensure a valid and transparent evaluation system. The above list of recommendations is inspired by the respondents' answers to the questionnaire. It is true that the list is not exhaustive but what is sure is that if those few recommendations were taken into account, we think the English department would do a lot in the improvement of the students' academic level.

## 5. Conclusion

Based on what has been said above, it is important to briefly restate what has been covered in this research work. As such, the empowerment of EFL teachers in Benin for professional development through effective supervisory works in Ouémé and Plateau Regions is the main focus of this document. To deal successfully with the issue and answer all the hypotheses and research questions, the article has been divided into four (4) parts. The first one, the introductory part, has raised the issue of EFL teachers' powerlessness in the target zone and set the research questions and hypotheses. The second part displayed the methodology through the research population, the sampling, the research instruments, the data collection procedures and the method of analysis. All this has led me to the third part based on the presentation and the discussion of the results which turn up to the answers to the research questions and the justification of the research hypotheses. The findings, also included in the third part, paving the way for the last part entitled suggestions and recommendations. Whereas the suggestions went to the Inspectors and EFL teachers, the recommendation encompasses the Government and the university Lecturers. This work has the privilege to raise a problem no researcher has yet dealt with in our context. We hope it will have the expected impact on the EFL teachers' population in Benin and by implication in other countries.

### Conflict of Interest Statement

We declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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