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EPI-CLASSROOM AS AN IN-SERVICE TRAINING METHODOLOGY TO IMPROVE
TEACHER PERFORMANCE AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Seminario de Graduación

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Carta de recomendación del tutor

Por medio de la presente hago constar que **Indra Yaneris Ortega Miranda, Nelsi Mabel Pérez Morales y Norma Daliana Velásquez Gutiérrez** estudiantes de la carrera **Licenciatura en Ciencias de la Educación con Mención en Inglés**, han elaborado el trabajo de investigación: **EPI-Classroom as an In-Service Training Methodology to Improve Teacher Performance and Professional Development** el que ha cumplido con los requisitos científicos, técnicos y metodológicos estipulados en la normativa correspondiente a la asignatura **Seminario de Graduación**.

Por lo anterior se autoriza para que realicen la presentación y defensa de su trabajo de investigación, ante el tribunal que se estime conveniente.

Se extiende la presente a los 13 días del mes de febrero del dos mil veinte.

Atentamente,

Israel Ramón Zelaya, Ph.D.

Docente

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ABSTRACT

The present research aimed to analyze the impact of EPI as an in-service training methodology to improve teacher performance and professional development, which leads to students' meaningful learning. The research sites for this qualitative investigation are Santa Cruz National Institute and EPI-Classroom in Estelí. It implemented non-participant observation during the classes at the institute, and it carried out participant observation and semi-structured interview at EPI-Classroom. The main finding reflects that the sessions in which EPI is divided impact the performance of the teacher by guiding the steps educators should take in their classrooms to achieve students learning. This is a positive aspect that helps to overcome some of the educational challenges presented in the classrooms. Since it is unavoidable as teaching professionals to face some difficulties, during the training, they count with support from the pedagogical assessors, EPI's coordinator, and their colleagues. Therefore, this study suggests the language teachers to keep working individually and as a group to improve their teaching and language skills to overcome any difficulty in their classrooms, and considering EPI as a complement for their professional development.

Key Terms: Professional development, teacher performance, in-service training and EPI.

1. CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) presented the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) (2009) -carried out in twenty-five countries- which showed the increasing concern in developing effective in-service training (INSET) to improve the quality of teacher performance. INSET is considered an opportunity for teachers to evaluate the teaching-learning process, also to create solutions to problems identified in class. In Nicaragua's case, improving the standard of Education motivated the Ministry of Education (MINED) to reform the before known Evaluation Programming Workshop and Educational Training (TEPCE¹ in Spanish), and presented the Inter-Learning Pedagogical Encounter (EPI² in Spanish).

EPI is a new term that was introduced by MINED, but its history dates back to more than thirty years ago when TEPCE was presented. TEPCE had the same proposal as EPI related to exchanging strategies and content programming with a methodology of workshop. Nevertheless, most of the teachers always suggested that TEPCE had to improve some elements to meet their expectations of professional development and to contribute to their job performance (Romero, 2017).

Also, local researches about TEPCE identified problems like bad organization of the time -since mainly was focused on content programming; not too much in exchanging of strategies-, need for more expert support during the TEPCE's sessions, and some limitations in the access to varied didactic material. Due to these circumstances, MINED reformed TEPCE trying to solve those problems, and created EPI. This has been working as the substitution of TEPCE since 2017, as far as we know, there is no previous research about this training. Therefore, to illuminate this uncharted area, we developed this study.

With the purpose of understanding EPI's relation to teacher performance; this research was conducted in two places: EPI in Estelí and Santa Cruz National Institute. EPI had the participation of thirty-two in-service English teachers that represented the population, then it

¹ Taller de Evaluación, Programación y Capacitación Educativa.

² Encuentro Pedagógico de Inter-Aprendizaje.

took a sample of seven teachers from different schools; then it identified from that sample two educators who attended to Santa Cruz National Institute, whose classrooms observed were the seventh-grade “B” and eighth-grade “C.”

Santa Cruz National Institute is located in the countryside of Estelí. The village where it is located counts with sixty-five sub-zones. A population of 8309 resided in the area at the time of the observation. This institute serves as primary and high school. It counts with two high school’s English teachers. In the classrooms, the teachers count with the basic material (book, markers, also whiteboard) to develop the English class but they still face limited access to information and communications technology (ICT) (computer, cellphones, internet connection, etc.) to provide a different input³ to their students.

Observing those elements, Santa Cruz village is considered an adequate place to develop this study showing the reality of training in Nicaragua. Because the role of INSET is to prepare teachers to overcome difficulties that they may face in their classrooms, also to guide them through the identification of solutions according to the contexts in their classrooms. Accordingly, the overall goal of this study is to analyze the impact of EPI as an INSET in the professional development and performance in the classroom of the English teachers at Santa Cruz National Institute in Estelí, during the second semester of 2019.

1.1. Background

Researchers concerned about improving the quality of teacher performance have had as object of study INSET programs. This is the case of a study carried out in Malaysia which discusses the effectiveness of INSET for educators. The study found that INSET benefits teacher performance through updating professor’s teaching skills. It also described how useful INSET is to overcome educational challenges. Additionally, the research explained that the role of the administrator, attitudes of the teachers, training needs, and strategies are useful components to include in this type of training (Mohd, 2014).

³ It is the language data which the learner is exposed to (Zhang, 2009)

Seminars, workshops, conferences, also formal education are some of the spaces that Central America has in terms of teacher professional development. Nevertheless, most of the language teachers do not count with resources to receive this extra training. And those who attend these training programs still have to deal with a lack of modern teaching methodologies, in addition to the taught in the workshop, and their reality in the classrooms. Besides, the programming of the content may still contain traditional features limiting the use of some innovative strategies (Red MEIRCA, 2012, p. 6).

Aforementioned, there is no previous information about EPI, but related to TEPCE, it counts with some studies that noticed the presence of some factors affecting its contribution to teacher performance. It is important to describe the background of TEPCE due to its similarity with the methodology of EPI. If such is the case of the study entitled “Organizational and training factors affecting academic teacher training outcomes” which explained that a bad organization of the training affected its productiveness and selection of wrong methodology impacted negatively in the perception of the teacher about this training (Renta, et al., 2016).

Similarly, Romero (2017) presented a study related to teacher training and professional development. The researcher applied some instruments to collect data; for example, interview plus observation. It concluded that there are pedagogical factors like outdated methodology, a lack of innovative resources, and also programs too much traditional which affect the continuous formation of teachers.

The background related to TEPCE is useful for this study. This information contributes to have an understanding of the challenges that English teachers face during the training; how they could overcome them, and the significance of this type of training in the job performance and professional development of the educators.

1.2. Key Words

In-service training (INSET): it is a space designed to cope with the teachers’ needs working within an institution, in this case MINED. Generally, INSET does not lead to a formal qualification since it centers on specific language teaching problems observed in the

classroom, examples of this could be: workshops or short courses about innovative strategies, handling errors or focusing on pronunciation, creative teaching, etc. (Rossner, 2017). Besides, in-service refers to teachers that are already working in the field.

Teacher Professional Development (TPD): Wallace (1991) differentiates professional development from in-service training. He conceptualizes training as managed by *others* (workshops, conferences, seminars, etc.); whereas development is something that can be done only for *oneself* (pp. 3-14). Similarly, Rossner (2017) explains that TPD is a broader terminology, also it may include INSET activities, considering every space that supports the acquisition of teacher competencies⁴ as a part of TPD; that is exactly what INSET does.

EPI: Inter-Learning Pedagogical Encounter (EPI) is a space of reflection, and recreation of experiences experimented by teachers during their job performance in the classroom. EPI is structured with a workshop methodology, involves disciplinary and methodological elements related to the contents reflected in the programming (strategies, techniques, material, tools, etc.), and it is teacher-centered (MINED, 2018). During the last Friday of each month, teachers attend this training, and they have to rotate; one month, they work on exchanging strategies, and the next one is centered on content programming. EPI enters in the category of INSET because it is a workshop promoted by an institution (MINED), and the participants are in-service teachers. EPI is organized in stages: National-EPI, Departmental-EPI, Municipal-EPI, EPI-Classroom, and Post-EPI. It also counts with moments: content scheduling, didactic action in the classroom, pedagogical reflection, and updating and inter-learning.

Teacher Performance: This is the accomplishment of a task, and it is the result of the effort and resources used by the teacher during the development of the lesson. There are numerous activities which teachers carry out that determine how effective and productive their jobs might be. Such activities include the drawing of scheme of work, lesson plan, delivery of lesson, evaluation of students, reporting of students' progress, etc. (Maclean, 2018).

⁴ It covers issues of developing teacher identity, evaluating students and facilitating learning (Pantic, 2011, p. 12).

1.3. Research Problem

The world changes every day, and so is the way students learn a foreign language. This new generation is more in contact with resources that have changed the way it used to acquire a language. For this, English teachers must have opportunities to learn modern practices according to these new learning requirements. An effective in-service training provides those opportunities to develop their professional competencies.

Nevertheless, during the search of these competencies, the educators deal with challenges that may affect the training process. Most of the time, the educators have to defeat the contrast between two realities: the training and classroom. This happens when the content shared in the training is not related to their real classroom context. When the training does not meet the teacher' expectations, the teacher could consider it as a requirement, and not as a beneficial component in their professional development.

In Nicaragua, classroom reality that teachers face includes: large amount of students, different learning styles, student misbehavior, a lack of support by the parents, a lack of access to didactic material, teacher demotivation, etc. Therefore, EPI as an INSET should prepare teachers with the competence to overcome any issue presented in the teaching-learning process. And hence, helping teachers to implement updated methodology, effective lesson plan, and more tools in the teaching process. Consequently, well performance from the teacher will facilitate student teaching (Richards & Farrell, 2005).

In this regard, Darling-Hammond (2017) mentions some elements training should have to impact teacher performance. These are: content centered on teaching strategies related to the curriculum but adaptable to different contexts. Active learning in which teachers design their teaching strategies (pp. 1-4). Additionally, collaborative work between colleagues creates positive changes in the teaching process since teachers exchange and support their ideas. Knowledge of teaching models is also useful for teachers to identify the best pedagogical practices. Besides, feedback and reflection must be present in INSET.

But that is just a review of some of the elements that effective training ought to have, these features will be based on the teacher and students' needs. However, the goal will

always be the same, to improve the quality of the teacher performance to allow student outcomes. Therefore, EPI as an in-service training and part of teacher professional development should present some of these elements to be an effective training.

Considering the significance of INSET in teacher performance, and the background that EPI has, this research analyzes the impact of EPI in the professional development and job performance in the classroom of the English teachers at Santa Cruz National Institute in Estelí, during the second semester of 2019.

1.4. Research Questions

To conduct this study, we consider the following research questions relevant to our inquiry:

- What educational challenges do the English teachers face during their performance in the classroom?
- To what extent are EPI related to the performance of the English teacher in the classroom?
- How could teachers take advantage of EPI in their professional development?

1.5. Purpose of the Study

It is interesting to observe the student interaction with this changing world. Their desire to understand the context keeps growing, and it is undeniable that most of them are fast learners. The advances in terms of technology and communication have increased the requirements that this new generation presents, and it challenges teachers to understand how their students learn and what they need to obtain a significant knowledge about the language.

Nonetheless, to provide an answer to these new requirements, teachers need to review the methodology that they have been applying during the last couple of decades and to figure out if that methodology needs to be changed or updated. That process of renovation requires the support of training that could guide educators through that journey, but it is not enough to count with some help once or twice per year. Teachers need a well-structured training that improves the quality of teacher performance and at the same time student learning.

When students are learning a language, they need a teacher who provides them upload tools to achieve goals according to the curricula of each country. The same happens with teachers, they need a training that shares the latest approaches in teaching a foreign language, methodology, ICT⁵ to teach, and so on. Additionally, it is necessary a place to develop that training, like a language laboratory with the resources and didactic material that teachers need to practice the performance of their classes.

1.6. Organization of the Paper

This research is outlined into six chapters. Following the introductory chapter, section two is structured and organized by learning theories and approaches supporting the two roles that teachers have in their professional development, as learners and educators. It also describes the significance of reflection and collaboration in INSET, and suggests the communicative approach and its techniques as content included during EPI's sessions. Besides, it identifies representative features during effective INSET. Chapter three includes the methodology that guided the design and implementation and three instruments to gather evidence: semi-structured interview, participant, and non-participant observations. It describes the place, population, and sample studied. And it presents the ethics and human subjects issues respected during the whole research. Chapter four is an analysis and discussion of the findings. It answers with the supporting theory and field evidence to each research question presented in section one. Finally, in Chapters five gives the final understanding related to the research problem, and it recommends actions to solve some of the difficulties and limitations observed.

⁵ Information and Communication Technologies: technologies that provide access to information through telecommunications. Including Internet, wireless networks, cell phones, and so on (Christensson, 2010).

2. CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The present chapter is structured selectively by the literature consulted for the purpose of our research. The theory presented will help to give answers to the research questions set at the beginning of this study. First, it presents the Social Constructivism learning theory and its sub-theory Active Learning, and its implementation in teacher training. Second, it describes two main features that INSET should have based on reflective and collaborative approaches. Third, it identifies the communicative approach as one of the most used in the language classrooms and training. Fourth, it defines some other elements beneficial to be included in the workshops. Finally, it explains the relation between teacher performance and in-service training.

2.1. Teaching-learning theory: Social Constructivism and Active learning

The social constructivism theory is associated with the work of Lev Vygotsky, and explains that knowledge is constructed through social interaction. Vygotsky makes emphasis on the effect of society -this could be teacher communities- in the way the learner interprets and uses the experiences acquired during the social interaction. Besides, the process requires to share, discuss and reflect meanings and understandings about a specific topic or problem (Jordan & Carlile, 2008, p. 59).

Although social constructivism is centered on human learning, it explains that teacher's role- as coordinator and facilitator- must be to adapt the classroom environment to the student's needs and stimulate the learner's autonomy to construct their knowledge socially. Thus, social constructivist teachers should consider their students as social learners. Teachers should also be prepared in identification, classification, analysis, and problem-solving learning strategies. In fact, Vygotsky's theory influences the content presented in courses for teacher training, where educators learn socially, and where collaboration and active participation from the teachers must be always presented.

It is worth noting that from the social constructivism theory a variety of sub-theories, methods and approaches has been developed. That is the case of the Active Learning theory related to teacher training, which claims that educators must be active participants in their

learning process to build knowledge and developing their teaching skills. To achieve this, they must interact with the rest of colleagues or classmates in their physical environment. These opportunities can be facilitated by a facilitator due to training is teacher-centered (Westwood, 2008, p. 4).

The active learning theory also pays attention to teacher's attitudes, and motivation to collaborate and participate in the INSET activities. Besides, it notices the willingness of the educators that attend to the training to include in their lesson plans, the knowledge and strategies learned.

2.2. Reflective and Collaborative approaches

Scholars have structured approaches related to professional development in which reflection and collaboration are fundamental to construct knowledge since in both elements the teacher is exposed to viewpoints from people with varied backgrounds. An example of which is the work of Professor Michael Wallace (1991) who explains that professional competence of language teachers can be achieved by reflecting on their practice in the classroom, and this provides skills to identify adequate steps to improve the lesson plan and student's assessment (pp. 5-9).

Although the reflective approach is designed for both pre-service and in-service teachers, all the participants of the TPD must have some previous knowledge related to teaching a foreign language since it emphasizes in the idea that every learner has a previous knowledge before starting the training, and this knowledge will contribute to the construction of new knowledge and skills.

During the reflection, the teachers could discuss the challenges that they face in the classroom, the possible reactions that experienced-teacher could have in those situations, how they could manage those problems without expert support, etc. This whole process is a cycle that involves previous knowledge (first stage), professional experience, practice, and reflection (second stage). Finally, when both stages are accomplished, it is considered the teacher has developed its professional competence, then the cycle goes on and on (Wallace, 1991, p. 15).

Similarly, related to teacher professional development approaches like reflective teaching and lesson study, explain the significance of using reflection before and after the lesson. Lesson study is an approach to instructional improvement, in which teachers worked collaboratively to consider the short and long-term goal to improve student education and to contrast the current reality in class and the purpose settled (Lewis & Hurd, 2011, p. 1).

Lesson study also includes a group of teachers identifying an issue in the learning process, selecting research lesson, planning the lesson; then, one of the team members conducts the lesson with the students, the rest of members observe the lesson, and when the lesson is culminated, the whole team reflects on the positive and negative aspects observed during the lesson. It is worth noting, that this feedback does not point only the teacher job performance, but observes the lesson and students reaction during the implemented plan.

The reflective teaching approach works as a complement to the lesson study, both emphasize in reflection, but in the first one, the teacher practices self-evaluation (Tice, 2004), and in the second one, the educator is observed by other teachers and that is how he or she obtains some feedback. Basically, reflective teaching involves the development of critical thinking from the teacher about his or her own performance in the classroom. In some way, after receiving the feedback from the lesson study, the teacher should internalize that information and practice self-evaluation, so it could say that both approaches complement each other.

Another aspect to point out is that the lesson study and the reflective approach by Wallace are underpinned by the collaborative approach. From the perspective of English teachers, this collaborative process focuses on improving teacher performance-including linguistics and teaching skills to develop the professional competence- through deep, group reflection and researching cause and solutions of the learning problems presented in the classroom (Wood & Rawlings, 2017, p. 91).

2.3. Language Learning Approach: Communicative Approach

Usually, in-service training programs follow a specific theme. In the case of language teachers, it could be: how to teach grammar communicatively, developing creativity in the

classroom, motivating students to speak, creating innovative strategies to develop a specific linguistics skill, using ICT to teach a foreign language, etc. So, it is common to observe that these INSET programs are supported by approaches centered on communication, meaning that the content shared with the teachers should be focused on developing the communicative competence in the students.

In the case of communicative competence, Professor Jack Richards in his book *Communicative Language Teaching Today*, explains that this kind of competence is the ability to recognize the rules of language that make the production and understanding of the language, and the use in a real context of the target language (Richards J. C., 2006, p. 3).

For illustrative purposes, we can refer to the communicative language teaching (CLT) as a language learning approach in which the learner is able to communicate in various real-life situations, for example, making suggestions, invitations, complaining or expressing the time, the weather, etc. Importantly, the teacher should be prepared to develop a class and create an environment in which students express all those ideas as they would do in a real conversation.

2.3.1. Communicative Language Teaching Activities

Richards (2006) citing Brumfit (1984) describes that the CLT may include activities centered on fluency and accuracy, this because the development of the communicative competence requires those features. Activities like role plays, dialogues, interviews, information gap, opinion sharing and scavenger hunt, require group work. In fact, the CLT is related to the theories and approaches mentioned before in which collaboration, and hence social interaction will determine the success of the task.

Some of these activities could be centered more on fluency than accuracy or vice versa. For example, information gap activities consist of exchanging ideas with classmates to gather specific information. For this, the students should identify the adequate use of grammar structures (accuracy) to write it. Still, in the case of opinion sharing, students must have to center themselves on fluency. It would be meaningful to have a balance between both types of activities.

For that reason, the educator must have adequate training about how to implement the CLT in the classroom to achieve an effective performance from the teacher and students because if the teacher identifies in what moment and how to include a CLT activity in the lesson plan, this will facilitate the teaching-learning process of the English language.

It is important to mention that CLT is one of the many approaches developed in the in-service teacher training, especially working with language teachers but there are some others approaches and techniques that could be included in the training as a way to present different teaching practices. A methodology that is effective in a school may not be effective in another one; as in a group of students the teacher may find different learning styles, the same happens in the training where already in the classroom each teacher experiments a different reality.

2.3.2. The most effective language approach

In language teaching and language acquisition, it cannot talk about the most effective teaching method because researches have shown that this is a subjective issue in which it can find more than one way to learn a foreign or second language effectively. This subjectivity will depend on my willingness as an educator to include specific activities of a particular method. Apart from that, nowadays, it has observed an increasing desire to add strategies and resources in the lesson plan belonging to different approaches; this is because during the pre and in-service training, teachers usually are exposed to different teaching methodologies.

Basically, it is up to each teacher if it wants to follow step by step a teaching method. As Peter Westwood (2008) states “the appropriateness and efficacy of a particular teaching method can be considered in relation to the type of learning it is supposed to bring about, and in relation to characteristics of the learners”. Accordingly, the teacher has the responsibility to change a classroom procedure if it does not fill students’ requirements and needs; this to guide students through the construction of their own knowledge, in case that the teacher follows a constructivism theory.

That is why, the CLT is suggested an approach to be included in the training as a way to develop students and teachers’ communicative competence, but clarifying on the significance of implementing a wider variety of teaching methodologies.

2.4. Effective In-Service training for English Teachers

“Being competent and well-performing teacher is one of the most important resources in any educational institution (...) The teacher is the one in charge of helping students learn and benefit or suffer from the quality of his teaching” (Boudersa, 2016). The same scholar also claims that a productive teacher training must help to teach how to use strategies, in the specific case of English educators, it is important to train them in the development of their communicative competence through the use of modern methods, didactic material, ICT’s, and so on. Besides, the workshop has to provide information about how the process of acquisition of a foreign language happens so teachers can choose the perfect strategy that matches with the context, the type of learners, the resources, etc.

2.4.1. *Content focused*

Darling-Hammond explains that “the Professional development that focuses on teaching strategies associated with specific curriculum content supports teacher learning within their classroom contexts” (2017, p. 2). In this regard, the institution and coordinators that lead the training must take into consideration the classroom’s reality where teachers perform their lessons to plan the workshop. For example, if the students face difficulty in the use of the Present Perfect tense, and the teachers observe this problem as a significant limitation, during the training, this problematic situation should be discussed to model teaching strategies that solve the problem.

In such a case, the content shared in the training must be centered on teachers developing their communicative competence; in order to provide a good input to the students. To develop this competence, the process is similar to working with students. For example, one of the most common approaches implemented in the language classrooms is the communicative approach; so the activities in the training could be centered on this type of approach. Then depending on the willingness of the teachers, they could include these activities in their own lesson plans, to develop their students’ competencies.

2.4.2. *Collaboration and Communication*

Most of the workshops follow an inter-learning methodology. The teacher should be an active participant during the exchange of strategies and knowledge with his/her colleagues. The main principle of this methodology is to foster collaboration since “*teachers do not learn isolated, but develop by working together*” (Cambridge Assessment International Education, 2017). Working together, they can contribute to change the tradition of some methodologies, like is the case of some Centro American methodologies (Red MEIRCA, 2012). The problem comes when teachers do not work actively on the training process and avoid supporting the work of their colleagues, affecting the performance of some activities that need of their contribution and experiences to be developed.

2.4.3. *Expert Support*

During the workshops, it is necessary to incorporate the help of experts who can share modern strategies with the teachers, or some knowledge on how to use ICT to teach English, etc. “Coaching and expert support involve the sharing of expertise about content and practice focused directly on teachers’ individual needs” (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017), but if the coach is not well-prepared, the workshop could finish in a waste of time in activities not related to the training. Nicaragua is taking small steps in the process of incorporating expert support for each subject during the teacher formation, but there is still a gap in comparison with other educational systems (Red MEIRCA, 2012).

2.4.4. *Feedback and Reflection*

Hattie and Timperley (2007) explain that feedback⁶ can be a positive or negative factor in training, but depends on the type that is being applied in the workshop. It is a consequence of the performance, while teachers are making use of the feedback, they can express their ideas about what strategies they thought were helpful or maybe what part they thought was not related with the goals set on the workshop.

⁶ A class activity in which various individuals or groups report back to the class on what they have researched or discussing (Wallace, 1991, p. 45)

2.4.5. *Pedagogical Elements*

Teacher formation can be affected by the application of outdated methodology, requirement of innovative resources and program too much traditional (Romero, 2017). Besides, the motivation that teachers show during the training affects its effectiveness, matched with the lack of personal ambitions of the educators can be determined factors during EPI.

2.5. Evaluation of Teacher Performance

To analyze the impact of an in-service-training program in the teacher performance, it is necessary to observe the whole environment in the classroom and the actions taken by the educator. Evaluation of job performance includes looking for aspects like lesson planning, student-teacher interaction, group control, understandable instructions, students' performance of the activities, records maintained by the teacher, etc. It is important to notice that this is a procedure followed in most of the educational systems, and it is developed in order to provide some feedback to the teacher about strengths and weaknesses in the performance of his or her job. Although this is called Evaluation of the teacher performance, it is important to observe the students learning due to the goal of the teacher will encourage students to learn.

Charlotte Danielson created a well-known model that evaluates the performance of the teachers, this could be applied by colleagues during a lesson study or by pedagogical assessors, and it will vary according to the norms and rules of each system. Danielson indicates that the teacher has to domain four features to be considered productive in the classroom (Danielson, 2014).

The domains are: planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction and professional responsibilities. Nevertheless, this is just a model that works as a guide to evaluate teachers, some other elements could be included. For this, in-service training must include in its content some of these elements in order to contribute to the improvement of the teacher performance.

3. CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

3.1. Overview

This study pretends to analyze the impact of EPI-Classroom on the professional development and performance in the classroom of the English teachers at Santa Cruz National Institute in Estelí, during the second semester of 2019. Giving answer to this objective will be determined by identifying the challenges teachers face in the classroom, determining the relation between EPI and the teacher performance, as well as, recommending how to take advantage of EPI in the professional development.

3.2. Population and Study Sample

Creswell & Poth (2018) explain that “the sample size follows the guidelines to study a few individuals or sites, but to collect extensive detail about the individuals or sites studied”. The study sites are Santa Cruz National Institute and EPI-Classroom in Esteli. The population for this research are thirty-two English teachers (seventeen from public, nine from private, six from semi-private) that attend to EPI-Classroom in Estelí, and it took a sample of seven teachers from public, private and semi-private schools to have an overview of different backgrounds. Out of these we chose two teachers belonging to Santa Cruz National Institute to carry out the non-participant observation of their classes.

The sample was selected by convenience, and the qualities set to choose it were: that the English Teachers has to belong to the same school, and they should have the willingness to express their ideas to contribute to the gathering of data.

This research will allow us to understand the problem from different perspectives using a small sample and to create a pilot test to refine the questions that will be applied during the interview (Cresswell, 2014).

3.3. Collection of Data

Angrosino (2007 as cited in Creswell & Poth (2018) explains that observing “is the act of noting a phenomenon in the field setting through the five senses of the observer, often with a note-taking instrument, and recording it for scientific purposes” (p. 166). In this regard, the participant observation will allow us to observe and experiment the elements manifested

during EPI- Aula meetings, and interact with the population during the training (Hernandez Sampieri, 2014, p. 417). At the same time, it will allow us to have an ample understanding of the context and the phenomenon under study.

Similarly, it applied a non-participant observation in the classroom due to our purpose was to observe the performance of the teacher and it did not want to affect that process. During the elaboration of this observation guide, as the main goal was related to teacher performance, it was based on the model of Charlotte Danielson (2014) who explains the possible features that well teacher performance should include.

The participant observation of EPI was centered on identifying strategies, didactic material, tools, topics, and language teaching approaches. And the observation of the teacher performance included lesson planning, classroom environment, instructions to the class, and fulfillment of the professional duties. These two instruments were designed to complement each other results, in order to give answer to research question number two.

Furthermore, Brinkmann & Kvale (2015) states that “the qualitative interview seeks knowledge as expressed in normal language (...) and it aims at nuanced accounts of different aspects of the interviewee’s lifeworld”. The type of interview selected is semi-structured which is based on a guide of questions but the interviewer has the freedom to introduce additional questions to obtain more information (Hernandez Sampieri, 2014, p. 403). The application of this instrument will facilitate us the comprehension of the perception that teachers have about this problem.

The interview was applied to seven teachers, two of them belonging to the same institute and which classes were observed. It is important to mention this because the answers may vary from the teachers whose classes were not observed and the teachers whose performance in the classroom was observed.

3.4. Data Analysis and Strategies

John Creswell (2014) in his book *Educational Research: quantitative & qualitative design and mixed method approaches* states the following:

Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data. The final written report has a flexible structure (p.4).

This methodology will allow us to observe and understand the context where EPI is developed and the perception of teachers about the factors that are affecting the correct development of this training. The data recollected will be analyzed according to the research objectives and based on the applied instruments.

3.5. Ethics and Human Subjects Issues

This work follows the ethical issues presented in qualitative research; it gains local access permissions, disclose the purpose of the research, respect the study site and minimize disruptions, avoid deceiving participants and siding with participant and disclosing only positive results, respect the privacy of participants, do not plagiarize, do not duplicate publications (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 56). We consider respecting these ethical issues because it will allow us to follow and write this paper free of negative situations to culminate with success in this research.

4. CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In the following chapter, we describe the analysis of data followed by a discussion of the research findings. The findings related to the research questions that guided the study. To answer these inquiries, it applied and compared the data obtained from a semi-structured interview, a participant observation, a non-participant observation.

Research Question 1: What educational challenges do the English teachers face during their performance in the classroom?

The social constructivism theory by Lev Vygotsky challenges teachers adapting the class environment to the student's need and stimulate the learner's autonomy to construct their knowledge socially (Jordan & Carlile, 2008). Therefore, the social constructivism English teacher should be prepared with skills in identification, classification, analysis, and problem-solving to create this type of environment. The challenge increases for the English educators in Central America whose classrooms have limited access to interactive didactic material (ICT), some educators with poor language skills, traditional content programming provided by the institutions, excessive student amount, etc. Consequently, it becomes difficult to avoid classes centered on teachers and encourage students to participate actively in the construction of their knowledge (Red MEIRCA, 2012, p. 6).

In this regard, during the semi-structured interview, the professors identified obstacles present in their classrooms and that they still are working to overcome. For instance, they mentioned some problems related to student's indiscipline, lack of interest in learning English, different cognitive styles, disparate language levels, and absence of self-study strategies. According to the teachers, these elements may affect the development of their classes, and for those without experience in solving-problems might be a difficult challenge to overcome; affecting the teacher performance, and hence the implementation of modern teaching strategies.

Related to classroom's resources, teachers identified that sometimes they do not have the resources to update or create new didactic material so they have to look for solutions whether to present something different to develop new contents. Also, if they wanted to present a different input to the students, educators presented limited access to MP3 players, computers, and in some schools the principals banned the use of cellphones.

In addition, associated with their performance, they explained that to create a conducive learning space, they always have to challenge themselves to avoid using the same teaching methods, and improve their teaching skills and communicative competencies. This is considered a positive aspect due to the fact that a good educator should always avoid the comfortable zone and look for changes that will guide to better teaching practices.

Concerning this, throughout the participant observation of EPI, specifically during the Content Programming Session, the teachers had a space to reflect on the challenges or weaknesses presented in their classrooms as well as in the training. Apart from the limitations mentioned before, they identified: teacher demotivation due to a few of the teachers were not interested in collaborating during the activities directed by their colleagues, and hence to include them in their lessons. This is a difficulty because EPI allows teachers to practice the strategies and material that later they will apply in their classrooms.

Those limitations discussed during the Content Programming Session were evidenced in the course of the non-participant observation in the classroom. It observed that some students did not have the willingness to communicate their ideas in the target language, and a few of them showed demotivation at the moment of resolving the tasks. Some strategies shared in EPI required the use of a specific didactic material and the teachers did not count with that material. Teachers also had to deal with time management, and not always they culminated the topic included in the lesson due to meetings with the principals. However, they always found solutions to these situations; for example, they motivated students to participate, they created alternative material similar to the one they needed to use, etc.

Through the participant and non-participant observations, it was found that some of the activities shared at EPI were not related to the ones observed in the classes. For this, during the semi-structured interview, we asked the teachers the reason for this situation. It obtained two different answers to our inquiry. The teachers whose classes were observed, explained that they were told to follow the activities in the English Book provided by MINED. That order limited the free implementation of new strategies. In contrast, the rest of the teachers interviewed during EPI expressed that it was up to them to use creativity during the lesson planning and incorporate both aspects, the book and new strategies.

After analyzing the previous situation and the two explanations from the teachers, it cannot be said that the lack of teachers' creativity is the only factor affecting the implementation of innovative strategies in the classroom. The fact that their principals tell them that they must follow the activities presented in the book, it is also a relevant factor that contributes in the non-application of different methodologies; due to educators must respect the instructions of their principals guided by MINED. In addition to these two factors, as Darling-Hammond (2017) claims teachers' attitudes will determine the effectiveness of the training; their willingness to implement a different practice will also contribute to this matter.

All the teachers mentioned that before implementing a strategy or resource, they had to consider students learning style, the resources in the classroom, the time, their level of knowledge of the English language, their discipline, the amount of students, etc. Whether they wanted to follow the activities presented in the book or the ones shown in EPI, they always opted to modify the activities to create a space in which students felt comfortable to learn. So the challenge was in matching the activities observed in EPI and the ones shown in the book.

From the information gathered, it can conclude that although RED MEIRCA's project was developed more than seven years ago, it observes that teachers continue presenting the same challenges. Prevailing: traditional didactic material due to classroom without access to ICT, student's passive role, and poor communicative competencies between the students. Individually, those elements could be considered to have simple solutions but all together may affect the teacher performance in the classroom, and student education. And that makes us reflect on the significance of having well-prepared teachers with knowledge and skills to overcome every educational challenge in their workplace.

In this regard, although the challenges were notorious and understandable, it is also important to mention that the English teachers are qualified and prepare to do their job and to deal with those situations. The high school English teachers whose classes were observed always looked for solutions to the problems presented and they have the willingness to learn from their colleagues during the exchanging of strategies at EPI. This means that the previous formation and continuous training that they have received as well as their experience in the field have been of great help during the performance of their job.

Research Question 2: To what extent are EPI related to the performance of the English teachers in the classroom?

Giving answer to this inquiry required to compare the evidence obtained in EPI and the two classrooms observed. It was meaningful to determine if the teachers implemented in the classroom with the students, the content shared during EPI, since it is considered that INSET activities are related to teacher performance in the classroom.

Many approaches claim the significance of collaboration and reflection included in INSET activities and their relation to teacher performance. For this, Jordan & Carlile (2008) states that in social constructivism, social interaction is relevant and it is there where knowledge is built (p. 59). Usually, workshops as EPI include teachers learning by interacting with their colleagues (inter-learning). Supporting this idea, the collaborative approach explains that group work is fundamental to solve the tasks presented in the training (Wood & Rawlings, 2017). That construction of knowledge through collaborative work allows teachers to increase their teaching skills by learning from other teaching practices. Skills that productively will be applied in the classroom. It also provides them different perspectives about how to solve a learning or teaching problem.

Another important element during INSET is reflection. To underpin this idea, it counts with the reflective approach by Michael Wallace, the reflective teaching and the lesson study approaches. Basically, they have in common the development in stages of the training, in which teachers observe -usually as a group- a specific issue in the classroom, they create a plan to solve the problem identified, then they implement the lesson with the students, and it is observed the effectiveness of the plan to solve the problem identified (Wallace, 1991; Lewis & Hurd, 2011; Tice, 2004). During feedback and reflection, teachers point out good and positives aspects of their performance, and look solutions for those problems presented (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

Both reflection and collaboration were observed in EPI. Collaboration was presented during the exchanging of strategies and their implementation (updating and inter-learning). Reflection occurred during the spaces for feedback (pedagogical reflection) in which teachers

reflected on their practices in the classroom and how to improve them, and during the feedback that they gave to the strategies shared in EPI.

Another relevant part of EPI is the exchanging of strategies. Although most of the time, the teachers at Santa Cruz National Institute used the English book as a guide, there were some moments in which they included similar strategies presented in EPI. For example, it observed activities like information gap, short interview, sharing opinions by brainstorm, elicit information from flashcards, and others. All these activities are included in the communicative language teaching approach (Richards J. C., 2006). So it can be said that both EPI and teachers are working on the development of students' communicative competencies according to the students' levels of knowledge.

Although the activities observed in EPI were based on communication, during the reflection time, the teachers proposed some other strategies that they had already applied in their own classroom to solve problems like shyness to speak English, a lack of group work, indiscipline, demotivation to participate, etc. In accordance with the challenges presented during the teacher performance in the classroom, sharing these solutions helped the teachers to overcome these educational problems.

In general, all the interviewed English teachers expressed that these exchanging of strategies is something beneficial for them since they have the chance to practice and improve those new resources before applying them in the classroom. They also considered that this practice allows them to learn from the experiences that some other teachers have experienced and during the reflection time, they discuss what problems their colleagues presented in the classroom and how they overcame them. So EPI is considered as a space to prove and put in practice new strategies and resources before presenting them in the classroom, and as they receive feedback from the rest of the teachers, that helps them to improve their teaching skills.

In the case of EPI, this is divided into two sessions –one per month- content programming and inter-learning. During the classroom and EPI observations, it found that a fundamental tool in the programming is the use of the English book facilitated by the MINED. Basically, this book determines whether a strategy could be included in the lesson planning or not. For example, if a strategy shared in EPI looks attractive for the teachers but if it does

not respond to the requirements shown in the book and the programming, that strategy could not be included in the lesson plan. That argument does not mean that the strategy will be excluded at all, it indicates that it is up to the teacher to modify it to later implement it with the students.

During the observation of EPI, it observed content focused on communicative activities, group control strategies, and organization of content; most of the teachers participated actively in the strategies, collaborate with their colleagues; at the end of each session the teachers gave feedback to the development of the activities, and reflected and gave tips on how they overcame the problems presented in their classrooms; the facilitators of the workshop presented diverse didactic material. All those elements are related to the theories and approaches presented previously.

In EPI, it observed two agents that were considered as expert support, the EPI's coordinator and the facilitators of the inter-learning. The coordinator will be the same during the whole year (February to November) and will participate during the post-EPI and Municipal EPI, during those stages, this person receives instructions about how EPI-Classroom should be developed, and he will organize the EPI sessions and the facilitator of each inter-learning session. The facilitators are chosen from the teacher who attends to EPI-classroom, all the teachers will have the chance to facilitate the inter-learning at least once during the year. The facilitator will exchange new strategies or resources during this session.

Even though the teachers identified the coordinators and facilitators as expert support included in EPI, they also described what another type of expert support they would like to be included in the workshop. For example, a native speaker of the language with knowledge in pronunciation, modern teaching practices, ample knowledge and domain of modern teaching methodologies used around the world. In this regard, they appreciated one time when the first-grade English teachers exchanged some of their teaching strategies with them, they considered this as something attractive. They also mentioned the time they attended a workshop in Rivas where they learned about teaching English using technology. And all these contributes to their performance and professional development.

Observing these opinions, it can determine that the support teachers receive from the coordinator and facilitators is useful, but they also need more exchanges with teachers and experts with different backgrounds and knowledge that the one they already have.

During the observation of the performance of the lesson, it observed that the teachers followed the lesson plan and were prepared with the material to teach the class. The instructions were simple according to the English level of each group of students, and the teachers showed to have knowledge of the topic they were teaching. In this regard, all the teachers interviewed considered as positive the session for content programming that EPI has due to they see this as a guide to elaborate the lesson plan including achievement indicators, units and contents, teaching strategies, possible didactic material, evaluation instruments, and time to start and finish a unit during a specific period.

Research Question 3: How could teachers take advantage of EPI in their professional development?

The lesson study approach could work as a complement for EPI. The implementation of this approach and its activities is beneficial for the teacher performance, and hence the professional development. Lesson study involves those activities in which the teacher works on their teaching competencies. Through lesson study, the educator shows knowledge and teaching skills, and at the same time, he is observed by his colleagues to get some feedback about positive and negative aspects of his performance (Lewis & Hurd, 2011).

Adding reflecting teaching to the feedback obtained, teachers could take actions to improve the teaching-learning process, and hence become better professionals. But this acquisition of professional competences will only be possible if the teacher shows willingness to change methods and strategies that are not being functional in their classes.

Reflecting teaching and lesson study are teacher-led processes. However, the responsibility of providing the resources and time is up to the administrator of the training process, this could both MINED and school (Lewis & Hurd, 2011). For this reason, MINED should provide money, more expert support, a guide for lesson study, explain teachers the significance of attending to a variety of INSET activities to contribute to their professional

development, etc. Thus, if teachers count with the resources in their classrooms and in the training space, they could take more advantage of the whole process.

In the interview, the English educators expressed that they already took advantage of EPI. For instance, the participants use it as a place where they could practice their speaking skills, and hence developing their communicative competence. Furthermore, the teachers explained that as English was not their native language, they still needed to learn new things in the language. So, educators considered the EPI as a space to put into practice and learn their language skills.

They also reflected on how beneficial it was for them to be surrounded by different teaching experiences from their colleagues, as well as from their explanations of the challenges that they have faced in the classroom and how they overcame them. One element, that teachers mentioned that to improve the effect of EPI in their professional development would be significant to include expert support during the training, this will provide them more domain on different topics, modern teaching methodologies, and improve their language skills. In this regard, teachers explained that expert in English teaching, and a native speaker of the language will provide them a different input during the training.

Besides, as during EPI the teachers receive and give feedback from their colleagues, it could be meaningful to include feedback in their own classrooms, asking students to reflect about their performance during the tasks, and as a group how to overcome the negative aspects. Receiving feedback from the students, it is something beneficial for the teacher allowing him to improve his teaching skills.

The fact that EPI includes reflection and collaboration is an advantage for the teachers, these two elements have proved to be beneficial features included in INSET (Wallace, 1991; Wood & Rawlings, 2017). During reflection (individually) and feedback (as a team), the teachers analyze the effectiveness of the strategies implemented. Besides, when the strategies are first presented to the teachers and then to the students, they could identify how to improve the effect of these activities once that they want to include it in a lesson plan. This could work as a practice for the teachers before implementing a new strategy with the students.

That aspect does not mean that applying a strategy with teachers will have the same result than doing it with students. For this, the lesson study method, it is suggested to be implemented by the English teachers in each schools, complementing EPI. In lesson study, the teachers follow almost the same procedure that EPI but rather than presenting the strategies to the teachers, one of the lesson study's member teaches a class with students, and the rest of the team observe the whole process. At the end of the class, the teacher receives feedback from his or her colleagues. But lesson study does not include only receiving feedback, the observers learn a different teaching methodology and are involved in the creation of a lesson plan, maybe with a structure different from the one that they are used to.

5. CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

This research taught us that training has an important role in the professional development of language teachers. And no matter how many years of experience the professors have, they will always have to work on updating their knowledge and skills to become qualified teaching practitioners. During this search for improvement, the educator may count on support from colleagues or experts. This help will provide more knowledge, improvement of skills, and new experiences to prepare teachers for possible challenges in their classrooms.

Even though, as researchers and teachers, we consider the main finding shows real situations happening at EPI, it is also important to mention that the implementation of non-participant observation in more than one school would have modified the findings of the research. However, the lack of time and resources to develop this work limited this research to the results obtained in one school. For this, it recommends gathering data from at least three different schools, to contrast the different realities that teachers face, and to identify if the impact of EPI varies from one school to another.

This research also makes emphasis the importance of the content shared during the teacher training, this content could include innovative strategies, resources according to teaching contexts, updated material, development of language skills, etc. Besides, the training should have reflection and collaboration; elements that allow exchanging of experiences and teaching practices in which educators interact with different perspectives about how good teaching should be.

In the case of EPI, it found reflection, feedback, collaborative work, teaching strategies centered on developing communicative competencies, content programming, critical thinking, and attractive didactic material. The implementation of communication strategies allowed teachers to practice their speaking and listening skills; it incorporated activities like oral information gap, short interviews, board games, opinion sharing, etc., elements included in the classroom and EPI's sessions. Communication is relevant for their job performance because as language teachers they have to master communicative competence to provide good input in the classroom.

However, it found a few factors that may affect negatively the impact of EPI in teacher performance. For instance, the continuous use of the same didactic material since teachers were told to use the English book as much as they could to elaborate on the lesson plan. This limited the implementation of some of the strategies shared in EPI. Besides, the willingness of the teachers in implementing interactive strategies, the lack of didactic material in the classroom, student misbehavior, the support of the principals, are elements that limited the training process. If the educational system contiguous working on giving solutions to these limitations, the impact of EPI could be more positive in teacher performance and professional development.

The book provided by MINED which most of the teachers use in the classroom becomes a good tool that guides teachers in the elaboration of the lesson plan. However, it is necessary to allow teachers to include different material, and not always depend on the same tool. It recommends organizing spaces for lesson study, in which teachers can collaborate and reflect on their teaching practices. This is a little bit different from EPI because it gives more follow up to the activities presented in the classroom, and requires observation of a class and not a simulation of it. Motivation is a key element in teacher education, it recommends to organize more spaces for reflection and motivation where teachers express their worries and doubts, and where an expert provides them tips to deal with stress and demotivation.

In general, the impact of EPI is that it modifies and guides the actions and decisions that teachers take in their classrooms. For this, it considers relevant to continue working on improving this space as a way to provide modern methodologies and updated resources to the teachers. Continuous professional development for educators helps them during the achievement of their professional competencies, and hence they present an effective job performance facilitating the construction of knowledge from the students.

The essence of this study was to show, the reality of training in Nicaragua, to provide the educative community an idea about what are the real needs for teachers in terms of training, and expecting that MINED will continue reforming the system to construct a productive and effective training, where teachers may acquire the professional development to enhance the quality of their performances inside and outside the classroom and to get significant learning in their students.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Teacher's Interview

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua

UNAN-Managua

Facultad Regional Multidisciplinaria

FAREM-Estelí

Objectives:

- To identify the educational challenges that English teachers face during their performance in the classroom and professional development.
- To determine the relationship between EPI and the performance of the English teacher in the classroom.

Dear teacher, as researchers and students of the fifth year of English at FAREM-Estelí, we ask your consent to develop the current interview. All the information gathered from you will provide us essential data to define the aspects that involve the problem and to look for recommendations. This inquiry will analyze your perception and experiences related to the impact of EPI in your professional development.

Please, answer the next questions. And thanks for your time and support.

Institution's name: _____ Interviewee's name: _____

Date of the interview: _____ Name of interviewer: _____

1. Could you mention forms of professional development in which you have participated (e.g. workshop, conference, seminar, lesson study, etc.)?
2. Describe an experience in which you used new teaching skills, ideas, knowledge, or a strategy to solve a problem related to your English Class acquired during your professional development?

3. What teaching challenges have you faced during the performance of your English lesson? How did you overcome them?
4. The MINED presented EPI as a workshop to exchange strategies and knowledge among teachers, do you think this really happens? If so, in what way?
5. What do you think teachers can learn working in groups?
6. One of the elements of teacher performance is planning instruction and designing learning experiences for all students, do you think EPI facilitates you to develop this element? If so, in what way?
7. In what other ways EPI has impacted your performance as language teacher?
8. What elements from EPI should be improved for you to consider it beneficial according to your professional development expectations?
9. What beneficial could students experiment when the teacher has received an effective professional development?
10. What are your plans for your professional development in the next years?

**Note: Additional follow-up questions will be asked, as appropriate, with each participant.*

Appendix 2: EPI Participant Observation Guide

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua

UNAN-Managua

Facultad Regional Multidisciplinaria

FAREM-Estelí

Name of the institution: _____ Date of the observation: _____ Time: _____

Name of observant: _____ Number of participants: _____

Objectives:

- To determine the relationship between EPI and the performance of the English teacher in the classroom.

Write a check in the correct cell according to the right answer: Always (A), Sometimes (S), and Never (N)

N°	Statements	A	S	N	Observation
1	At the beginning of the session, the teachers are well informed of the objectives of the session.				
2	The workshop is applicable to the teacher performance				
3	The strategies shared during the workshop give the teachers sufficient practice and feedback.				
4	The difficulty level of the activities is appropriate.				
5	The instructor is knowledgeable on the topic.				
6	The instructor (s) is a good communicator				
7	The instructor (s) is well prepared.				
8	The teacher's doubts are answered by: a) The instructor b) The colleagues				
9	The planning and implementation of each workshop session is: a) Individual b) In pairs c) In groups				
10	The training is developed in: a) Spanish b) English c) English and Spanish				

11	The linguistics skills applied in the training are: a) Speaking b) Reading c) Writing d) Listening				
12	Teaching strategies shared during the workshop.				
13	The teachers show during the activities developed in the training: a) Motivation and interest b) Collaboration b) Active participation				
14	The resources used during EPI are: a) Visual Aids b) A computer c) A tape record d) Body Gestures				
15	The material was presented in an organized manner				
16	The programming of the content is: a) Individual b) In pairs c) In groups				
17	Teacher involvement was encouraged				
18	The length of the session was appropriate for the amount of material covered.				
19	The number of people in the class was appropriate.				
20	Discussion about issues in the English class followed by possible solutions.				
21	The programming of content is detailed, and easy for teachers to follow it.				
22	Communicates concepts related to the teaching process.				
23	EPI is centered on: a) The teachers b) The trainer c) Sharing strategies d) The programming according to the curricula				
24	Promotes High professional expectations for the teachers.				
25	At the end of the session, teachers give feedback about the development of the workshop.				

Appendix 3: Classroom Non-Participant Observation

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua

UNAN-Managua

Facultad Regional Multidisciplinaria

FAREM-Estelí

Name of the institution: _____ Date of the observation: _____ Time: _____

Name of observant: _____ Number of participants: _____

- To determine the relationship between EPI and the performance of the English teacher in the classroom.

Write a check in the correct cell according to the right answer: Always (A), Sometimes (S), and Never (N)

N°	Statements	A	S	N	Observation
	Planning and Preparation				
1	Implements lessons which include instruction according to achievement levels, and reflects the curricular objectives.				
2	Uses available materials and resources (flashcards, cards, videos, realia, etc.)				
3	The teacher presents a variety of teaching strategies. Mention which strategies.				
4	Chooses activities appropriate to student abilities				
5	Chooses activities, materials, and resources appropriate for students with special needs				
6	Focuses student attention				
7	The lesson contains elements related to the students context.				
8	The strategies that the teacher present are related to the ones exchanged during EPI.				
9	The strategies taken from EPI present modifications.				

10	The teacher presents class control.				
11	The teacher has time management.				
12	The teacher circulates during the class to check all students.				
	Classroom Environment				
13	The teacher motivates students to develop their language skills.				
14	Interaction between teacher and students				
15	The teacher involves students in all the activities, without discrimination, and accepts their opinions and ideas.				
16	The students show no fear to speak during the strategies, and participate actively.				
17	Students understand and follow the instructions given by the teacher.				
	Instructions to the Class				
18	The teacher speaks clearly.				
19	The teacher uses classroom language.				
20	The teacher gives simple and understandable instructions to the students				
	Fulfillment of Professional Duties				
21	The teacher demonstrates knowledge of the subject matter.				
22	Uses effective examples and illustrations				
23	Teaches accurate and up-to-date information				
24	Answers students doubts.				

Appendix 4: Evidence

Observation of EPI: Exchanging Strategies Session



During the Exchanging Strategies Session, one team of teachers from German Meiner school worked as facilitator of the training, and guided the rest of the educators during the activities.

In this picture, it can observe the facilitator using flashcards and asking to the teachers for descriptions. This strategy allowed educators to use the language by giving their ideas of what they observed in the picture. The facilitator recommended to use this material with all the grades.

During this game called Jeopardy, with collaborative work, teachers were asked to mention series of items from different categories. The group with more points win. Here, it observed collaboration due to the rest of the members of each group supported the person who represented their group on the board.

In this dynamic, teachers practiced speaking. And the facilitators presented cards to represent the points, and categories of work.

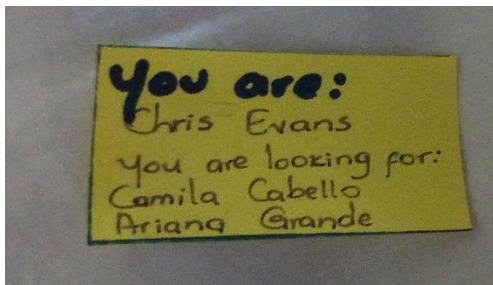




In this activity teachers practiced tongue twister, as a way to work on their fluency. As well as in the previous strategy, they had to form groups to practice.

They had to move faster in order to form a group according to the teacher's instructions. The group that did not follow the instructions had to pronounce the tongue twister quickly.

This activity was based on small interviews. Each teacher represented a celebrity, and had to look for another celebrity. For this, they had to make short interviews to find the right person.





This dynamic consisted on information gapping. Teachers had to ask questions in order to solve the tasks. The papers were divided in student A and students B, and they had to complete the numbers by asking.

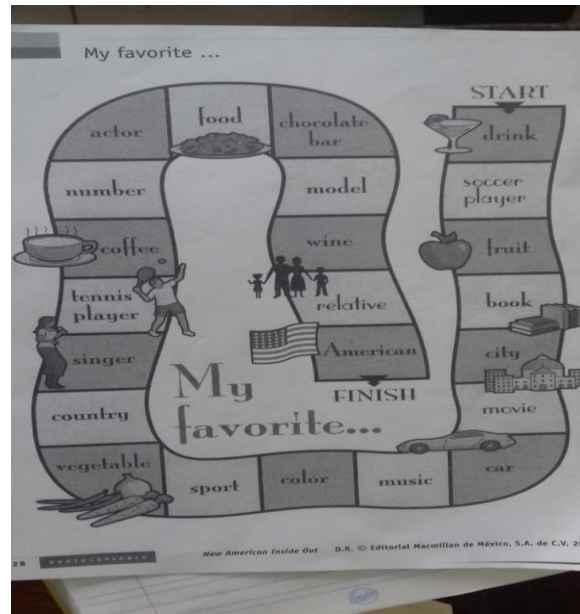
Student A
Find the missing dates.

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	3rd	9th		18th	30th	
2		4th			2nd	
3	15th		11th		24th	
4	1st		22nd			19th

Take it in turns to ask and answer, e.g. What's the date in square C1? It's the...
When you have finished, compare your squares.



This is a board game in which teachers had to solve each items presented in the board orally.



EPI Observation: Content Programming Session



Programming of Content included feedback in which teachers discuss about the difficulties that they presented in their classrooms. And they also through brainstorm explained solutions to the problems observed.



Content programming also includes elaborating a plan of the units, contents, strategies, achievement indicators, resources, and competencies to include in individual lesson plans.

Non-participant observation of the Classroom



This activity was similar to the information gap presented in EPI with the variation that students could use both English and Spanish in order to communicate their ideas and fill the gaps in the task.

Most of the activities were guided by the English book provided by MINED, which included students working on their notebooks.



Appendix 5: Data Triangulation

Research Questions	Theoretical Support	Semi-structured Interview	Participant and Non-Participant Observation
What educational challenges do the English teachers face during their performance in the classroom?	The social constructivism theory challenges teachers adapting the class environment to the student's need and stimulate the learner's autonomy to construct their knowledge socially (Jordan & Carlile, 2008). The challenge increases for the English educators in Central America whose classrooms have limited access to interactive didactic material (ICT), educators with poor language skills, traditional content programming provided by the institutions, excessive student amount, etc. Consequently, it becomes difficult to avoid classes centered on teachers and encourage students to participate actively in the construction of their knowledge (Red MEIRCA, 2012, p. 6).	As constructivism theory presents, teacher should be facilitators of the learning process. In this regard, they explained that to create a conducive learning space, they always have to challenge themselves to avoid using the same teaching methods, and improve their teaching skills and communicative competencies. But it turns difficult to create a class student-centered when they have to deal with student misbehavior, a lack of parent support, a lack of access to innovative didactic material, etc.	To confirm the explained by the teachers, it observed in the classrooms that students' indiscipline affected the implementation of some strategies; teachers counted with the basic material: book, whiteboard and the rest was up to him. In the case of the book, most of the time, teachers were using the book and a few times they used some strategies presented in EPI. Also, during EPI, they had time to reflect on their development in the classrooms, and teachers expressed the same problems observed in the classrooms.

Research Questions	Theoretical Support	Semi-structured Interview	Participant and Non-Participant Observation
<p>To what extent are EPI related to the performance of the English teacher in the classroom?</p>	<p>Many approaches claim the significance of collaboration and reflection included in INSET activities and their relation to teacher performance. Knowledge is constructed through collaborative work that allows teachers to increase their teaching skills by learning from other teaching practices. Skills that productively will be applied in the classroom. It also provides them different perspectives about how to solve a learning or teaching problem.</p> <p>Besides, Hattie and Timperley (2007) explain that feedback and reflection contribute to the identification of positive or negative factor during the training and in the classroom, and look for solutions to the problems discussed by them.</p>	<p>English teachers interviewed expressed that collaboration and sharing of strategies is something beneficial for them since they have the chance to practice and improve those new resources before applying them in the classroom. They also considered that this practice allows them to learn from the experiences that some other teachers have experimented and during the reflection time, they discuss what problems their colleagues presented in the classroom and how they overcame them.</p>	<p>Both reflection and collaboration were observed in EPI. The collaboration was presented during the exchanging of strategies and their implementation. Reflection occurred during the spaces for feedback in which teachers reflected on their practices in the classroom and how to improve them, and during the feedback that they gave to the strategies shared in EPI.</p>

Research Questions	Theoretical Support	Semi-structured Interview	Participant and Non-Participant Observation
How could teachers take advantage of EPI in their professional development?	<p>The lesson study approach could work as a complement of EPI. It is beneficial for the teacher performance, and hence the professional development. Lesson study involves those activities in which teachers work on their teaching competencies. Through lesson study, the educator shows knowledge and teaching skills, and at the same time, he is observed by his colleagues to get some feedback about positive and negative aspects of his performance (Lewis & Hurd, 2011).</p>	<p>The English educators expressed that they already took advantage of EPI; using it as space where they practice their speaking skills, and hence develop their communicative competence. About this aspect, the teachers explained that as English is not their native language, they still had to learn new things about it, so the educators considered EPI as a space to put in practice and learn new aspects related to language skills.</p> <p>One element, that teachers mentioned was to include more expert support during the training will provide them more domain on different topics, modern teaching methodologies, and improve their language skills. In this regard, teachers explained that expert in English teaching and a native speaker of the language will provide them a different input during the training.</p>	<p>It observed that teachers take advantage of the programming of contents by including it in their lesson plan. This worked as a guide for them. Some of the strategies shared in EPI were also presented in their classrooms. As teachers receive and give feedback from their colleagues, it could be meaningful to include feedback in their classrooms, asking students to reflect on their performance during the tasks, and as a group how to overcome the negative aspects. Receiving feedback from the students, it is something beneficial for the teacher allowing him to improve his teaching skills.</p>