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### Follow-up strategies to better INSET within a Palestinian context

on this project to support the profession. Indeed, the main success factor was a team of professionals with the right expertise.

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### 3.8 Follow-up strategies to better INSET within a Palestinian context

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Risks associated with in-service training (INSET) include the possibility of having no effect on teacher behaviour (Hayes 1997) and the chance that that teachers will revert to their old practices under a new name (Beeby 1980). As a follow-up to our training of supervisors of English working for the Ministry of Education in Palestine on a train-the-trainer course, my co-trainer and I were asked to observe the supervisors as they cascaded the training they had received to teachers.

#### The study

A study was carried out to investigate the question 'Does using follow-up strategies as part of an INSET course improve the teaching performance of the participants within a Palestinian context?' In order to answer this, other questions were added. First, what are the attitudes of teachers and trainers towards INSET courses in general? Second, what are the beliefs and attitudes of Palestinian teachers and trainers towards different follow-up strategies related to INSET? Third, what challenges do Palestinian trainers and teachers face when using follow-up strategies in their in-service training? Finally, how does using follow-up strategies affect the teaching performance of the teachers? 'Follow-up' as I used it refers to strategies and procedures initiated by the teacher or the supervisor to reinforce the implementation of, and evaluate the level to which the teachers adopted the newly learned skills or knowledge.

The tools for data collection were structured interviews, observations and questionnaires. Separate questionnaires were given to teachers and supervisors; these contained subjective and objective questions focusing on the attitudes towards and practice of follow-up and INSET in general. The interviews focused on the implementation, challenges and suggestions for improvement. The focus was on diaries, self-evaluation, observer feedback, dialogue and peer coaching as follow-up strategies. The participants in the research were 150 secondary school English teachers and 25 supervisors.

#### Results

The results showed that the Palestinian teachers and supervisors have very positive attitudes towards INSET and follow-up and they believe the training addresses their needs and improves their performance. The great majority of teachers and supervisors use follow-up in their training, mostly voluntarily. Teachers and supervisors believe that the purpose of follow-up is supportive and evaluative; a slightly higher number of teachers believe it is evaluative, while a slightly higher number of supervisors believe it

is formative. Teachers and supervisors stated that lesson observations, self-evaluation and training course handouts were mostly used for follow-up, with self-evaluation being the most effective. There was a discrepancy between teachers and supervisors over peer-coaching; supervisors emphasised its importance and effectiveness, while teachers believed the opposite. The interviews showed that the teachers' heavy load and lack of orientation were the main reasons they rated peer-coaching low. Another discrepancy was on learners' assessment. In contrary to what supervisors stated, teachers believe that it is used as follow-up by supervisors to evaluate them. Both teachers and supervisors believe diaries are not effective.

Regarding challenges related to INSET and follow-up, the results showed that the scheduling, timing and duration of follow-up was the major challenge where the training is concurrent with teaching with no release time or make-up arrangements, with the courses being short and the intervals between parts long. The challenges with follow-up were having minimal progress meetings and lesson observations (maximum twice a year) in addition to the absence of specific tools for follow-up. Another big challenge is that training in follow-up is not part of INSET courses. Challenges with materials are not having materials specific for English-for-Palestine, training activities are neither enough nor transferable to the classroom. With regards to the setting, the training doesn't take place in real classrooms and there is a mismatch between the technology in the training hall and the one in the classroom. The most important is that there is not enough teaching practice during the training sessions.

### Recommendations

The recommendations, based on the findings of the research on the Palestinian context, are applicable to other contexts which have the same challenges. A trainer-supervisor needs to plan for follow-up that is time-efficient, boosts confidence and motivation within a teacher, guarantees better transfer and implementation of newly learned skills or knowledge, and eventually leads to better teaching performance. This can be achieved through preparing follow-up tools, modelling in the teacher's classroom, designing transferable training materials which are specific for the training context, having more participant-centred training, adopting unseen observations and promoting peer-coaching.

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