

# In the Thai Students' Eyes: Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers' Pedagogical and Linguistic Qualities and Students' Learning Outcomes

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## Abstract

The emergence of non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) in the ELT industry has paved the way for many opportunities, as well as issues and challenges that question the NNESTs' capabilities. The objective of this study was to investigate Thai students' perceptions of NNESTs' pedagogical and linguistic qualities and how they relate to their learning outcomes using a correlational method to analyze the data from the sample population of 422 grades 4-12 Thai students under Educational Area 1 in Nonthaburi, Thailand. A survey questionnaire was made to mollify the data collection with 10 questions about pedagogical qualities and 10 questions about linguistic qualities. Two open-ended questions were included in the questionnaire to support the responses. Data were then analyzed using Pearson  $r$  and ANOVA as the main statistical measurements. The overall grades of the respondents in English were collected together with the survey questionnaire. The study indicates that Thai students have a very high level of perception of their NNESTs' pedagogical and linguistic qualities. However, there is no correlation between students' perception of the NNESTs' pedagogical and linguistic qualities and students' learning outcomes.

**Keywords:** Learning Outcomes, Pedagogical Qualities, Linguistic Qualities, Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers

## 1. Introduction

There is a lot of research advocating Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers' (NNEST) capacity to teach English and be part of the English Language Teaching (ELT) industry (Ma, 2012; Faez, 2018; Yazan, 2018; Alam, 2019; Kasztalska, 2019; Floris & Renandya, 2020; Rahman & Yuzar, 2020). One of the arguments made is that the potencies of Native English-Speaking Teachers (NESTs) and NNESTs complement each other and are ideal in the teaching arena (Tosuncuoglu, 2017). While some stakeholders prefer native speakers, others favor NNESTs. Whereas there is a perception that NESTs teach their own language better and are therefore more suited instructors for English as a Foreign Language (EFL), NNESTs are believed to have more understanding of the issues involved in second language acquisition. As a matter of fact, both NESTs and NNESTs have shortcomings that range from their foreign accents to pedagogical issues and cultural dimensions (Moussu, 2018). There has also been a trend by educational institutions against discriminating hiring practices and toward moving away from the NEST and NNEST dichotomy.

All that said, the debate as to who is better when it comes to teaching EFL to Thai students is still going on Thailand, a country where English is taught by instructors hailing from a variety of countries. Responses are split. As reported by Ulla (2019), while some favor an instructor with a native accent to teach EFL or ESL, there is a positive perception of Filipinos as EFL or ESL teachers in Bangkok. Many see the issue in terms of teacher training and teaching experience rather than simply in terms NESTs or NNESTs (Phothongsunan, 2017; Waelateh, Boonsuk, Amebele, & Wasoh, 2019). In short, NNESTs have the capacity to teach ESL or EFL even though it is their second language. Since the emphasis is on the pedagogical and linguistic qualities of a teacher, not necessarily his/her nationality, fortifying quality teacher education programs and providing them with the essential pedagogical tools have been a priority (Iskandar, 2020).

This study focuses on NNESTs in Thailand. It aims to determine the perception of Thai students regarding their NNESTs' pedagogical and linguistic qualities as correlated with their learning outcomes. More specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is Thai students' perception of NNESTs' pedagogical qualities (teaching strategies and content) and linguistic qualities (fluency and accuracy)?
2. Are there significant differences in the pedagogical and linguistic qualities of NNESTs and students' learning outcomes?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the pedagogical and linguistic qualities of NNESTs and students' learning outcomes?

This study is significant in a number of ways. To begin with, the ELT industry is not just a venue where the teaching-learning exchange process exchange takes place but also one where language learning and the sharing of culture occur, showcasing varied teaching strategies and levels of students' progress. The results of this study can therefore fortify NNESTs' self-confidence and competency as in the midst of the on-going debate about the NEST and NNEST dichotomy in the ELF industry Thai students continue to have a high regard for NNESTs. This study can also be a reference to create varied English refresher courses, school-wide activities, and even long-term professional developments.

## **2. Review of Related Literature**

### ***- Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (NNESTs)***

The World 'Englishes,' proposed by Krachu in the mid-1980s, has created a localized variety of English used in many countries, which are part of either one of the following English circles; the inner circle, the outer circle, and the expanding circle. The inner circle consists of countries where English is used as the lingua franca. The outer circle includes countries with historical colonial relations with countries in the inner circle, where English is commonly used in social life and government sectors. The expanding circle comprises countries that use English as a foreign language. This creates opportunities for English teachers from the outer circle, known as NNESTs, to teach English in various parts of the world as they fill the demand for English-speaking teachers. There are countries, however, where speaking English is a status symbol and students prefer to learn from NESTs (Toscuncuoglu, 2017). NNESTs, however, bring cultural pluralism to the classroom and convey other important fundamental characteristics of a language (Alam, 2019). According to Medgyes (2001), while NNESTs have linguistic limitations and an inferiority complex, they have the advantage of speaking two or more languages and being part of several cultures. This culturally-responsive teaching reduces the focus on stereotypes of accent or dress, or ways of communicating. They are also good models and clear evidence that learning English is

achievable. Moreover, NNESTs speak in a manner (interlanguage) that is understandable to students.

### ***- NNEST's Pedagogical and Linguistic Qualities***

English teachers are expected to teach effectively. Frenzel, Taxer, Schwab, and Kuhbandner (2019) and Oder and Eisenschmidt (2018) identified two key aspects of effective teaching. The first one is intrinsic and involves teacher's motivation, enthusiasm, and interpersonal skills. The second one is extrinsic and involves teacher's skills like proficiency in instructional materials and strategies. Another factor is continuous professional development, which is meant to address teacher's pedagogical and linguistic gaps and deliver more effective lessons. Thus, teachers' pedagogical and linguistic qualities are one of the factors apt to amplify students' learning outcome. In a study entitled *Self-Perceived Non-Nativeness in Prospective English Teachers' Self-Images*, Gonzalez (2016) determined that NNESTs use their native language (L1) more in teaching, pay more attention to psychological and emotional factors, are more book- and test-oriented in their teaching, and have more knowledge about their students. These findings are in keeping with Waelateh et al.'s (2019) study on NNESTs' pragmatism teaching English. Moreover, as Kasztalska (2019) argued, NNESTs have a broader understanding of internationalization and World Englishes, not to mention translanguaging. However, while students often acknowledge that NNESTs are knowledgeable and hardworking, they also point out that intercultural communication anxiety may at times impede their effectiveness in teaching (Abayadeera, Mihret, & Hewa Dulige, 2018). According to Lee, Schutz, van Vlack, and Martinze Agudo (2017), NNESTs have insecurities stemming from a lack of communication abilities. Ellili-Cherif and Hadba (2017) nevertheless concluded that NNESTs are on par with other teachers as long as they use reliable and quality teaching materials, implement modified teaching strategies to fit any given context, and employ differentiated linguistic lessons to strengthen their pedagogy; hence the need for professional development. English refresher courses and opportunities to advance their skills are very important to enhance their pedagogical and linguistic skills but also their personal and interpersonal skills.

### ***- Students' Learning Outcome***

Several factors may affect students' learning outcomes. Among those identified by Munawaroh (2017) in her study on teaching methods and the learning environment influencing students' learning achievements, two will be used in this study: teachers' teaching strategies and teachers' linguistic skills. Other factors discussed in Munawaroh's (2017) study that greatly affect students learning outcomes include: students' level of motivation, intelligence, readiness, and learning abilities. According to Sosik, Chun, and Koul (2017), motivation plays a vital role in the learning process and often is a function of the learning situation and social support. As they argue, with the right combination of parental and school supervision, students will achieve positive learning outcomes. Research also indicates that student engagement in discussions and activities inside a language class is critical for learning (e.g. Gerritsen-van Leeuwenkamp, Joosten-ten Brinke, & Kester, 2019). The more interactive the class, the deeper learning is. Making the class interactive and fun boosts the teaching-learning process (Bai, Larimer, & Riner, 2016). When combined with real-world situations, it could develop cross-cultural promotion, whet the appetite of students for more knowledge, and widen their horizon and understanding of the world. Mante-Estacio, Nino Valdez, and Pulido (2018) determined that giving students real-world problems to solve and interact with promotes learner-centeredness and culturally-sensitive instruction. Therefore, the learning process can affect learning outcomes (Burapadecha & Thiankhanithikun, 2016).

Moreover, students’ self-confidence in learning English and their self-perception are related to their authentic learning outcomes (Grey & Jackson, 2020). Thus, teachers should undergo trainings to deliver effective learning outcomes and improve students’ learning processes. Opartkiattikul, Argthur-Kelly, and Dempsey (2016) argued that the opportunity to learn and practice skills during professional development is essential in supporting teachers in their efforts to improve student outcomes. NNESTs must continue their professional development, especially in respect of teaching strategies and linguistics, to remain qualified English teachers (Kasztalska, 2019) and meet Thai students very high stance on NNEST pedagogical and linguistic qualities.

### 3. Research Methodology

#### - Respondents

This study focused on the perceptions of Thai students enrolled in an English program at some of the Nonthaburi Educational Area 1 schools in Thailand that have 5 or more NNESTs. The schools involved include 2 schools for grades 4-6 and 2 schools for grades 7-12. Slovin’s formula was used to identify 422 samples with 0.5 as marginal error. It is the researchers belief that students at these grade levels (Grade 4-12) can already scrutinize, compare, and define the qualities of their NNESTs. The reason they chose schools in Nonthaburi Area 1 is because of the ratified, organized, and connected government schools within Educational Service Area 1, which means the curricular programs and activities in each school are synchronized. Nonthaburi is directly northwest of Bangkok alongside the Chao Phraya River, which is part of the Greater Bangkok Metropolitan Area.

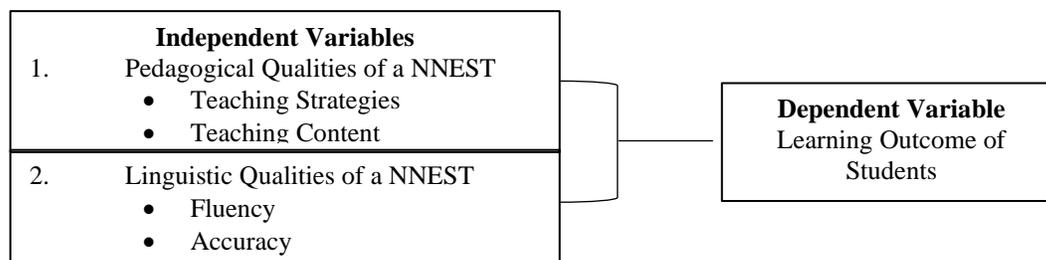
**Table 1:** Number of Respondents per School

School	Students	%
Anurajaprasit School	151	35.8
Pracha-Uppathum School	42	9.9
Benjaminarachanusorn School	113	26.8
Anuban Nonthaburi School	116	27.5
Total	422	100

**Figure 1:** Study Paradigm (Created by the Authors for this Study)

#### - Data Gathering Procedure and Instrument

This descriptive research used a survey method for collecting data, namely a Likert scale questionnaire with open-ended questions. The researchers created their own questionnaire, based on the independent variables and the dependent variable, to effectively gather data on their perceptions and their individual grade in English subject, as illustrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Research Framework (Created by the Authors for this Study)

The survey questionnaire consists of 3 parts, (i) respondent's demographics, (ii) Likert-scale questions on pedagogical and linguistic qualities of a NNESTs, and (iii) open-ended questions, and includes 10 questions on pedagogical qualities and another 10 questions on the linguistic qualities of NNESTs. Each question has a scale for the respondents to choose from (5 for strongly agree; 4 for agree; 3 for neutral; 2 for disagree; and 1 for strongly disagree). The last part of the questionnaire includes two open-ended questions that the students needed to answer concisely. These two questions focus on the characteristics of NNESTs, their pedagogical and linguistic qualities in particular. The purpose of these questions was to support their responses to the Likert-scale questions. The questionnaire was translated in Thai language to generate valid results. The survey questionnaire was then pilot tested in a school that is not included in the study. A reliability analysis was carried out on the perceived task values scale comprising 10 items in the linguistic qualities and 10 items in the pedagogical qualities of the NNESTs. Cronbach's alpha showed the questionnaire reached acceptable reliability at  $\alpha = 0.78$  and  $\alpha = 0.82$ , respectively.

The researchers sent a consent letter to the school directors to ask permission to conduct the survey and distribute the survey questionnaires. The researchers also made sure that the respondents were instructed by NNESTs. They also sent letter of consent to the parents of the students. For confidentiality purposes, the questionnaire did not require students to write their names and schools. The respondents were given ample time to answer the questionnaire. The data was collected, coded, and recorded using SPSS for calculation, statistical results, and analysis.

#### *- Treatment of the Data*

The quantitative data collected was computed using Pearson r correlation to define the relationship between the students' perceptions of NNESTs' pedagogical and linguistic qualities, and their learning outcomes. ANOVA was employed to treat the relationship between pedagogical and linguistic qualities according to the respondents' learning outcomes in the English subject. The mean of the grades was computed using the following description: 1.00 – 1.5 for excellent; 1.51 – 2.5 for very satisfactory; 2.51 – 3.5 for satisfactory; 3.51 – 4.5 for good; 4.51 – 5.5 for fair; 5.51 – 6.5 for poor; and 6.51 – 7.0 for needs improvement. In computing the mean of the levels of perception of the students, the descriptions of the mean brackets used were: 1.00 – 1.20 is low; 1.21 – 2.30 is fair; 2.31-3.40 is high; 3.41 - 4.50 is very high; and 4.51 – 5.0 is outstanding.

#### **4. Research Findings and Discussion**

This section addresses each of the research questions articulated in the introduction to this study and discusses the findings in light of relevant previous studies.

##### ***RQ1: Thai Students' Perceptions of NNESTs' Pedagogical and Linguistic Qualities***

Table 2 shows the grand mean of pedagogical qualities, which as we saw earlier consists of teaching strategy and content teaching. The result indicates that students have a "very high" perception of their NNESTs' pedagogical qualities.

**Table 2:** Thai Students' Perceptions of NNESTs' Pedagogical Qualities

Pedagogical Qualities	Mean	SD	Level of Satisfaction
1. Teacher designs lessons that allow students to participate in empowering activities.	4.07	.56	very high
2. Teacher promotes a safe-environment conducive to learning.	4.30	1.00	very high
3. Teacher cultivates cross cultural understandings and the value of diversity.	3.85	1.20	very high
4. Teacher uses advanced technology to improve my learning.	4.09	.97	very high
5. Teacher engages the students in discussion.	3.79	1.08	very high
<i>Overall (Teaching Strategies)</i>	<i>4.02</i>	<i>1.04</i>	<i>very high</i>
6. Teacher clearly states the objectives of his/her lessons.	4.01	.66	very high
7. Teacher presents concepts from related fields.	4.23	.82	very high
8. Teacher incorporates students' real-life situations in instruction.	4.01	1.02	very high
9. Teacher incorporates values in the lessons.	4.11	.90	very high
10. Teacher demonstrates an in-depth knowledge of content.	4.30	.79	very high
<i>Overall (Content Teaching)</i>	<i>4.01</i>	<i>.92</i>	<i>very high</i>
<b>Grand Mean (Teaching Strategy &amp; Content Teaching)</b>	<b>4.13</b>	<b>.57</b>	<b>very high</b>

Table 3 shows a similar result. The grand mean is 4.00 which is also “very high.” Again, this indicates that students have a “very high” level of perception of their NNESTs' linguistic qualities.

**Table 3:** Thai Students' Perception of NNESTs' Linguistic Qualities

Linguistic Qualities	Mean	SD	Level of Satisfaction
1. Teacher links language to the context	4.20	1.023	very high
2. Teacher pronounces words clearly	3.80	1.17	very high
3. Teacher uses grammar correctly	4.12	.92	very high
1. Teacher produces language that may not be predictable	3.76	1.01	very high
2. Teacher responds to the students' questions properly	3.90	1.10	very high
<i>Overall (Fluency)</i>	<i>3.96</i>	<i>.65</i>	<i>very high</i>
3. Teacher uses language suitable for my level	4.18	.90	very high
4. I can understand the teacher's instructions	3.85	1.15	very high
5. Teacher practices the language as used in the real world	4.10	.93	very high
6. Teacher corrects me every time I commit language mistakes	4.27	.83	very high
7. Teacher has control of the choice of language	3.82	.97	very high
<i>Overall (Accuracy)</i>	<i>4.04</i>	<i>.68</i>	<i>very high</i>
<b>Grand Mean (Fluency &amp; Accuracy)</b>	<b>4.00</b>	<b>.60</b>	<b>very high</b>

### **RQ2:** Significant Differences in the Pedagogical and Linguistic qualities of NNESTs and Learning Outcomes

Table 4 exhibits the differences between pedagogical and linguistic qualities and the respondents' learning outcomes. The results were analyzed using f-test ANOVA. The p-value of the overall pedagogical qualities was 0.791 while for linguistic qualities it was 0.790. Their p-values thus do not indicate a significant difference at 0.05 level of significance and there is no

significant correlation between NNESTs’ pedagogical and linguistic qualities and students’ learning outcomes.

**Table 4:** ANOVA Results

Learning Outcome	Overall Pedagogical Qualities			Overall Linguistic Qualities		
	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N
Excellent	4.0697	.57419	323	4.0204	.60798	323
Very Satisfactory	4.1076	.47339	66	3.9636	.61260	66
Satisfactory	3.9737	.60315	19	3.9053	.87491	19
Good	4.0714	.30563	7	3.9714	.68738	7
Fair	3.9200	.25884	5	3.7800	.36232	5
Poor	4.5000	.70711	2	3.6500	.21213	2
Overall	4.0716	.88718	422	4.0000	.60414	422
F-value	.481			.482		
Sig	.791			.790		
Interpretation	Not significant			Not significant		
Decision	Accept Ho			Accept Ho		

**RQ3:** Significant Relationship between the Pedagogical and Linguistic qualities of NNESTs and Learning Outcomes

Table 5 shows the relationship between NNESTs’ pedagogical and linguistic qualities and students’ learning outcomes. The p-value of students’ learning outcomes and linguistic qualities is at 0.992. Conversely, students’ learning outcomes and pedagogical qualities has a 0.146 p-value. Both variables as compared with students’ learning outcomes can thus be interpreted as not significant. There is no significant relationship between NNESTs’ pedagogical and linguistic qualities and students’ learning outcomes. This means that the students’ level of perception of NNESTs’ linguistic and pedagogical qualities does not influence their learning outcomes. The table also shows the r values of the two variables. Students' learning outcomes have no significant relationship with the linguistic qualities of their NNESTs. Also, students' learning outcomes have a very weak relationship with their NNESTs’ pedagogical qualities. So there is no significant relationship between the pedagogical and linguistic qualities of NNESTs and the learning outcomes of their students.

**Table 5:** Relationship between NNESTs’ Pedagogical and Linguistic Qualities and Students’ Learning Outcomes

Variables Compared	r	Strength of Correlation	Sig	Interpretation Decision
Students’ Learning Outcomes and Linguistic Qualities	.000	No relationship	.992	Not Significant Accept Ho
Students’ Learning Outcomes and Pedagogical Qualities	.071	Very weak	.146	Not Significant Accept Ho

Thai students’ high level of perception of their NNESTs’ pedagogical and linguistic qualities aligns with Abayadeera et al.’s (2018) study, which found that students believed their NNESTs were knowledgeable and hardworking instructors. This belief encourages NNESTs to continue to or even further excel in their profession and keep delivering quality education. Another study from Okuda (2019) on student perceptions of NNESTs working at a writing center in Japan corroborates

Thai students' perceptions of their NNESTs. The Japanese students surveyed viewed their instructors as credible, suitable, and qualified to teach. Teaching is perceived as a noble job and teachers treated with utmost respect and courtesy, which may be a factor in the perception of NNESTs. However, even if students have a "very high" perception of their NNESTs' pedagogical and linguistic qualities, the results show that there is no significant relationship between the NNESTs pedagogical and linguistic qualities and students' learning outcomes. This result is inconsistent with Gerritsen-van Leeuwenkamp et al.'s (2019) study which established that students' learning outcomes were positively related to the deep learning approach. The teaching strategies greatly affected how students went through the deep learning approach. Grey & Jackson (2020) found that students' self-confidence in learning English and their self-perception were also related to their authentic learning outcomes. Generally, teachers showing positive emotions as part of the teaching-learning process as well as the capacity of students to be independent learners have a positive impact on students (Heckel & Ringeisen, 2019). Non-school factors also influence student achievements, but they are largely outside school's control. According to Munawaroh (2017), teaching methods and the learning environment influence students' learning achievements. Other factors discussed in this study that greatly affect students' learning outcome were the level of motivation, the intelligence of students, and their readiness and learning abilities. It is vital that all these teachers' skills should be sharpened and developed. As Opartkiattikul et al. (2016) argued, the opportunity to learn and practice teaching skills as part of one's professional development is essential in fortifying student's learning outcomes.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Thai students perceived their NNESTs' pedagogical and linguistic qualities as "very high." They believe in their capabilities. However, they have different perceptions when it comes to the know-how of teaching English. There is a significant difference between genders and the level of perception of NNESTs' *linguistic* qualities. However, there is no significant difference with regard to NNESTs' *pedagogical* qualities. This goes to show that teaching practices, strategies, and even how teachers handle the class are seen similarly by all students, males and females alike. This study also determined that NNESTs pedagogical and linguistic qualities are not the sole factor affecting students' learning outcome.

### - Recommendations

New technologies are changing language teaching and creating a growing need for NNESTs to have professional training on the latest trends in language teaching. As this study shows, students expect teachers to keep enhancing learning activities, strategies, and any other learning factors contributing to improving students' learning outcomes. Administrators and school officials should therefore provide avenues for teachers to grow professionally. The focus should not only be on pedagogical and linguistic trainings, but also on classroom management, relationship-building and classroom design so as to create a bigger impact on students' learning outcomes. To this end, an intervention action plan was designed for the professional development of the NNESTs in each school. Its goal is to promote better student learning outcomes. The action plan is inspired in part by the conceptual framework of the 2018 Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS). The survey is a large-scale international survey of the teaching workforce, the conditions of teaching, and the learning environments in participating countries. The 2018 framework builds on the 2008 and 2013 surveys which emphasized training on effective teaching strategies for students and schools. It tackles in-depth themes and primacies on professional individualities and pedagogical practices.

TALIS was developed in collaboration with the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA, Amsterdam, The Netherlands), IEA Data Processing and Research Center (IEA DPC, Hamburg, Germany), Statistics Canada (Ottawa, Canada), and the OECD. It is not just a support for teachers in their professional development but it is also meant for policy makers and school leaders to ensure that opportunities are available.

The rationale of the program is that NNESTs, either Thai or non-Thai, should be given opportunities to hone their skills and continue their professional development, which should focus on current pedagogical trends and language training. Its purpose is to update teachers in Thailand who use English language as the medium of instruction on 21<sup>st</sup> century pedagogical trends, techniques, and skills. There are certain objectives to be followed to achieve maximum effectiveness of the program. These are meant to update teachers on current trends, practice and recent advances in the teaching arena; to renew the teachers’ skills, attitudes and approaches with regard to the development of new teaching techniques and objectives, new contexts, new scholastic research, and create effective and appropriate assessments and evaluations for students; to empower teachers to give part of curriculum development, and other facets of teaching practices; to foster schools in applying new strategies about curriculum and other aspects of teaching practice; and to provide an avenue for exchange of teaching strategies and knowledge in language teaching among teachers and others.

Table 6 shows the matrix of activities and procedures of the intervention program. There are 4 activities, each of them with corresponding performance indicators, time frames, and strategies.

**Table 6:** Intervention Program Matrix of Activities and Procedures

Activities	Strategies	Performance Indicator	Timeframe	Persons Responsible
Student-teacher assembly	Solicit ideas of what the students expect from the teachers and the school	Taking student attendance and students’ feedback (expectations from the teachers)	First week of every semester (2 times per academic year)	The academic head
	Provide a picture of the classroom and the pedagogy integration	Giving orientation to students on what is in store for them inside the classroom to boost their academic performance		Homeroom Advisers Students
Teacher training and in-service professional development	Language teaching workshop	Initiating and managing learning processes	a. Within the 1st week of May and October	School Administration Academic Head
	Pedagogical training, including classroom management	Responding effectively to the learning needs of individual learners	b. Within the last week of October and 3rd week of March	All NNESTs
	Conducting a SWOT analysis	Integrating formative and summative assessment		
	Teachers’ workshop on being an effective	Creating effective and appropriate assessments and evaluations		

	teacher on both outside and inside the classroom	Providing solutions to the present problem and possible problems in the classroom and in school		
		Identifying the strengths and weaknesses, as well as the threats and opportunities of the teachers, the school, and the school administrators		
Professional Development	Provide opportunities for the teachers to proceed to educational programs or post-graduate programs	Increasing teachers' qualification		Government Officials
		Mounting teachers' professional and pedagogical practices		School Administration
				NNESTs
Cooperative Teaching	Team teaching	Assessing one's weakness and strengths	a. monthly (rotational member of the group every month)	NNESTs
	Peer-evaluation	Learning from each other's pedagogical techniques		Academic Head
	Group assessment	Promoting teacher-teacher relationship		

Source: Created by the Authors for this Study

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