

HOW CAN IN-SERVICE DEVELOPMENT TAKE A PART IN SAUDI ENGLISH TEACHER DEVELOPMENT?

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ABSTRACT: *This paper presents a solution to how in-service development in Saudi Arabia can enhance the lack of English language proficiency of Saudi Arabian EFL teachers. The paper examines the problem and mentioned that a lack of English language proficiency and development was an issue that needed to be addressed. In the literature review particular theories were reviewed, which helped to explain the issues that the KSA is currently facing with a solution suggested.*

KEYWORDS: Education, English as Foreign Language, Saudi Arabia

INTRODUCTION

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is important in all countries but more importantly in developing countries such as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) (MahiburRahman, 2011). Because of the presence of a combined problem represented in lack of pre-service training and lack of proficiency among Saudi English teacher, the Saudi Arabian English language teachers efficiency is not enough to deliver teaching materials. Even after spending a minimum of 4 years studying to become English language teachers, there is still an obvious lack of proficiency which is also not helped by an almost complete absence of intensive EFL teacher training courses (AL-Hazmi 2003).

One extremely important and crucial component of an English language development which may play an important role in English language teaching field professionally is that in-service development. In-service development allows for the teacher to expand useful learning knowledge and in particular of models where supervision is used. Unfortunately, the communicative context of EFL teaching lead by supervision is not very well represented where little is known about the detailed supervisor-teacher relationship. This supervisor-teacher relationship must be looked into with regards to communication styles that encourage a positive environment where this is true in the Saudi Arabian context (Khan, 2011).

In this paper, I present a solution to show how in-service development in Saudi Arabia can enhance the lack of English language proficiency and how this type of development can improve the way the English language teacher deliver English in Saudi Arabian EFL context. Firstly, the problem represented in a situation of lack of English language proficiency and development will be looked at. Secondly, a literature review looking at certain concepts and related theories will be introduced to help explain this issue with potential solutions suggested. Thirdly, these theories are related to what was found in the literature review and a discussion will bring to the forefront a potential solution. Finally, a conclusion with recommendations will be presented.

The Current Situation of Saudi English Language Teaching

The kingdom of Saudi Arabia has established English language as a school subject early in the life of the Kingdom that King Abdul Aziz established nearly 100 years ago. Charles Ogden's Basic English model was the form of taught English used at the time of the Kingdoms founding and for a few decades afterwards too. After the initial period of the Basic English model a Living English model was adapted for use in the majority of the Arab World for a period of nearly 20 years during the 50s and 60s (Abdellah, 2012).

A further improvement to the English teaching syllabus was made in the 1970s when a Progressive Living English model was adopted for use in the Arab World. This new taught Progressive Living English model was targeted at females and introduced into the female education system where males adopted a Longman English model developed by the Longman publishing group (Abdellah, 2012). Even after all of the positive developments that have taken place, some Saudi English language teachers still face difficulty with delivering teaching materials to their students in the classroom. This is due to a common phenomena in Saudi Arabia where most English language teachers face problems in the degree of mastering the required level of English language and as a result proficiency tends to be poor (Al-Seghayer, 2014).

A large number of graduates from Saudi universities lacks English language proficiency which impacts their teaching skills, as previously suggested. Al-Seghayer referred to a study conducted by the Ministry of Education claimed that the average TOEFL scores of Teachers of English was only 430 where the common average is 677 (TOEFL website). In addition to this, the study showed that the effectiveness of lesson preparation was 60% and classroom management amongst Saudi teachers was 64%, while the evaluation of teaching the English language methods were 54% and 52% respectively. Similarly, Al-Harbi (2006) conducted a study in Al-Qassim city where he found that teachers were in dire need of so-called training through a specially setup service with a particular emphasis on classroom management as current standards were quite embarrassing. Al-Harbi also suggested that specialist development should be provided on how to teach basic skills, more lessons on the common rules of the language as well as an increase in technology courses. (Al-Harbi, 2006 cited in Al-Seghayer 2014).

English language teachers students in Saudi Arabia spend almost four years studying various courses such as English language and English literature. They have a choice to take a further one year extension course on EFL teaching. However the majority of students decide to embark on a career in teaching without such a course. Although colleges in some areas such as Jeddah, Yanbu or Bisha have already started to provide students with EFL teaching courses, this course does not satisfy the needs of the students. Students currently spend only one semester in elementary or intermediate schools learning English and afterwards are expected to teach from 8 to 12 hours per week. As a result of this, most teachers believe that the one semester teaching course does not prepare them for their profession properly (Al-Hazmi, 2003).

To conclude this English teaching issue in Saudi Arabia, it could be said that English teachers suffer from a lack of English language proficiency. There is also an absence of intensive EFL teacher training courses resulting in poorer quality of teaching in the classroom. This is because Saudi universities do not impose students to take English language preparation

courses. This has affected their level of proficiency of the English language. Moreover, the designed English teacher development programs, if found, suffer from short-term periods training, in which they are no more than one semester for a period of 8 to 12 hours per week. On the basis of this, it is clear to say that the English teacher suffers from a lack of competence in language skills, as well as suffering from a lack of training in the ways of training to be an English teacher.

The History of Teacher Development

What is important in the development of English language teachers is how they learn to teach and the way supervision theory is applied. The focus of this paper will be the importance of one such supervision theory which will aid Saudi Arabian teachers' progression. Teacher development has taken wide attention in the field of teaching English language, where patterns can take different forms such as supervision by the supervisor and the workshop in addition to pair work. This element in the process of teaching has a number of forms. One of these forms is the supervision with all its aspects such as supervision concept, the supervisor himself, the workshop in addition to collaborative issues between the supervisor and the supervisee in which all of these actions aim to develop the teacher during his/her career. Many writers have discussed language development issues such as Burden (1979) and Chamberlin (2000). A review of what has been written with respect to teaching development in the previous studies may pave the way to a better understanding for what in-service teacher development means for Saudi teachers and how it might be achieved.

Firstly, it might be helpful to start referring to how development is differed from training. In teacher development, the individual teacher is the focus with processes such as teacher reflection, and examination central to the concept with a view of change leading to greater professionalism. It is considered to be a constantly developing process. In comparison, teacher training focuses on structuring specific teaching skills such as how to plan a lesson and is considered a finite skill. In teacher development, the skills set and understanding of the teacher is continually expanding and is in a relationship with the students learning. In contrast, the finite nature of teacher training means that the skills set of the teacher can be acquired and mastered at once. (Donald, 1982).

The teacher training process deals with the immediate requirements of the teacher whereas teacher development deals with the long-term skills set goals of the teacher. Although teacher training is important in the life of a professional teacher, it only addresses short term present issues whereas the importance of teacher development is far more important as it is this that will shape the professional teacher in the long term (Donald, 1982)

Generally speaking, the issue of proficiency cannot be solved immediately and needs a long and sustained effort to be addressed. As a result, a focus on teacher development is the best way to combat the lack of English language proficiency in the KSA which is why it is the suggested to be introduced to the Saudi context in this paper.

There are many studied regarding teacher development have been conducted, starting with Fuller's Theory of Teacher Development. Fuller has divided teacher development into three periods; pre-teaching period in which he/she did not find the specific concerns among students where they do not have full concept of what they will doing the future, early teaching period is the following period that has been allocated for an in-service teacher where at this

stage the novice teacher's attention will be about the amount of possible help that he might get from supervisors and experienced teachers in the school environment. The in-service phase concentrates on the teacher in the classroom and I see this stage as a crucial element in the teaching development process as it sheds light on the special ability of the teacher. Attention will be classroom management, evaluation, and the material that is used. This stage can be summarized as a stage of teacher self-evaluation through his willingness to be evaluated. The last period is related to the student. Teachers can see their progress through the development of the students. Teachers can assess their teaching from their students' level of understanding and contribution in the classroom (Fuller, 1969).

Similarly, Burden (1979) has pointed out that the teacher passes through three stages of development. These stages are named the survival stage, adjustment stage and mature stage. In the first year of teaching the teacher does not have sufficient experience in the preparation of lessons, motivating students and teaching methods. In the second stage the teacher has gained more experience and consequently feels more confident in dealing with students and the teaching materials. Burden (1979) highlights that during this stage, the teacher trusts his ability to move to a more advanced stage through his focus on his students and his future plans. After five years of experience he may have solid base of knowledge, earned with the confidence in teaching. Here the experienced teacher believes that they have reached sufficient efficiency in the knowledge that enables them to present their own teaching instructions and how teaching materials are to be used for their students.

There is a lot of teacher development features. An extremely important factor in the professional in-service development of non-experienced teachers is a model of supervision. Supervision is a fundamental part of pre-service and in-service professional development experiences for teachers of ESL. The need to create a meaningful learning experience for teachers has directed attention to theories and models of supervision that encourage reflection through methods such as peer mentoring, coaching, and portfolio development (Camberlin, 2000).

The supervisor's role in the in-service development of a newly qualified teacher aims to improve not only the quality of EFL teaching but also to develop the relatively poor standard of English the teacher has. The supervision has many aspects and can be implemented using different methods such as peer mentoring, portfolio development and regular on-site visits from the supervisor providing crucial feedback to the teacher (Chamberlin, 2000). Based on the fact that the educational process consists of several components, with supervision being one of them, many concepts and theories have been mentioned on this factor as it plays an important role in the education process. Siddiek (2012) has pointed out that educational supervision aims for a better education on the basis of the goal of the educational process which is to move towards effective education.

Based on this concept, educational supervision is seen as a set of efforts between the teacher and the supervisor towards integrated professional education. On the basis of this I see that the educational supervision is a joint co-operation between the two parties with specific goals the teacher seeks to achieve in light of harmonic interaction between him/her and the supervisor. The supervisory process goes beyond just to address the psychological relationships between the supervisor and the teacher as it also deals with the cooperation with the education system in the whole school (Siddiek, 2012). With regards to the educational supervisor's responsibilities, Siddiek in his investigation found that there are responsibilities

of the supervisor in terms of helping the school administration in providing the right atmosphere for the teacher, noting weaknesses in the teacher and giving advice on how to strengthen his/her weaknesses through regular meetings, workshops and helping the teachers to access library resources.

There are many ways by which in-service teacher scan develop their English language abilities in terms of efficiency or teaching methods. One of which is known as supervision by specialist supervisors. Murphy and Torrf (2012) claimed that English language teachers are in need of continuous professional development, especially new teachers. They can obtain this through regular visits by English language supervisors and the feedback they are given. English language supervisors are supposed to be dependent on sufficient knowledge to achieve the greatest benefit for the teacher. This claim has been strengthened by (Olsen, 2010). Olsen (2010) stated that the most successful teacher is the one who is most familiar with language teaching materials. Although the author mentioned above has referred to the general picture of supervision overview, Sheerer's supervision explanation emphasizes on the idea of "the use of collaborative strategies between supervisor and teacher" which is nearer to what I would like to implement. This approach encourages the exchange of ideas between the supervisor and the teacher and then the teacher will be provided with feedback which may be helpful in his teaching (Sheerer, 1997).

Zohairy (2012) conducted a study on Saudi English language development. He explained that there are only two universities in Saudi Arabia which offer training programs to EFL teachers and continuing professional development. In addition, the professional development programs are not widely accepted by the participants at these two universities (Zohairy, 2012 cited in Al-Seghayer, 2014). Al-Seghayer added that the current situation of English language teacher programs were insufficient with many language instructors unhappy with the services provided. The results indicated that these programs need more courses and linguistics, EFL syllabus design, and cultural awareness.

How Can Saudi English Teacher Benefit From in-Service English development?

Having looked to the principles of teacher development and referring to one of the most important aspects of the development of the teacher, supervision is vital. Studies, such as Zohairy (2012) mentioned above, show that there was a lack of educational institutes providing specialist training for teachers which is part of the problem I have outlined. From the previous studies, and according to the concepts of teacher development and the supervision concepts, These are some of the key points the following part will try to address the in-service English teacher development along with suggestions for a solution for the main problem which is the lack of Saudi English language proficiency and the linked lack of teaching preparation.

Based on the general principles of what has been reviewed for some of the educational related theories, and according to my belief of the importance of the possible active role that should be played by English language supervisors, I will review in this part the potential solutions to the Saudi context. Some argue that the most useful educational developments should be gradually processed and must not be simultaneous whereas others argue that the most successful programs are those under the direct supervision of workers concerning the development of the weaknesses in the educational process (Khan, 2011).

Accordingly, and based on the main issue relating to in-service English teacher development, I see that this vision can be achieved in a country like Saudi Arabia. In order to overcome the linguistic and training weaknesses we need a cumulative process. Because the first step is very important, I suggest that the supervisor is a native speaker. By the supervisor being a native speaker we can make sure that novice Saudi teachers can overcome the issue of lack of proficiency and at the same time they can develop the teachers teaching ability. This is confirmed by Khan (2011) when she claims that there are long- term educational co-operations in the field of English language teaching between Saudi Arabia and some overseas educational institutions in terms of sending some English-native speaking supervisors to visit some of the schools there. As an English language teacher in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, it can be suggested that Saudi teachers see native English teaching supervisors as perfect role models in obtaining a near native like English language teaching capability. As a result, Saudi English language teachers have a strong desire to learn from their native English teaching supervisors as they will be able to acquire native quality English language skills.

Teaching is a complementary profession, in other words it is possible to build on the previous stages. Teaching EFL is preceded by another stage called the pre-service (the training obtained before working experience). I see that it would be beneficial for novice EFL teachers if there are cooperative programs to enhance their beliefs of teaching in place with the administrators of English appointed by the provincial departments of education. These programs are then held regularly in pre-teaching periods which is what has been preferred by (Incecy, 2011) when he encourages the attendance of such courses because he believes that the process of teaching is seen on the basis of a single phase from the beginning of the first semester at the university to the last day of the teaching profession.

In my experience there is confusion in the concept of supervision in Saudi Arabian context. There is an overlap between the school supervisor (the first party) the general supervisor (the second party) and the third party which is the direct teacher supervisor. The distribution of work of these three parties makes the novice teacher suffer as the teacher becomes confused of the hierarchy. I suggest that it might be beneficial for the novice EFL teacher to be isolated from all other different works and only concentrate on the way that he/she can develop their English language proficiency via discussion sessions with the supervisor. In this regard, I agree with (Al-Seghayer, 2014) in his general idea when he claimed that the importance of certain academic programs needs modification as they are not structured well. This is because courses in English teaching methodology, designing language syllabi, language program evaluation, language planning and policy, and most importantly for us, EFL teaching and learning are not well represented at university level. But I disagree with Al-Seghayer in terms of time matter in which I believe that it should be delayed until the in-service period due to the presence of the specialist supervisor, in which it would be possible to benefit from his/her observations and feedback. What enhances this point of view is that the graduate students have limited English language proficiency and English language teacher training which is the main subject of this study.

The reason this paper concentrates on supervision is because of the importance of supervisor-teacher feedback. The feedback is extremely valuable in teaching EFL as is explained by Reigeluth (1999). Reigeluth (1999) states that supervisor-teacher feedback is an instruction method which encourages cognitive learning going on to explain that informative feedback is crucial within an instructional design theory. Reigeluth further added that feedback is

important due to a systematic instructional design. Systematic instructional design means to improve the process of evaluation and in this case via a feedback method. Feedback has long been associated as the most important part of guiding a student. Secondary Presentation Forms are pieces of information added to Primary Presentation forms in order to develop the learning process. Feedback, as stated by Reigeluth (1999) has the capability of occurring during practice.

Because this is long-term and a systematic instruction, it could be suggested that feedback can compensate for the lack of teacher training methods as most teachers are not exposed to English teaching programs as is explained in the thesis problem. It is clear that English language teacher development is a necessary demand for English language teachers however in-service training programs do not reach the required degree of efficiency in Saudi Arabian education departments. As a result, training for Saudi EFL teachers becomes an urgent need, and cannot wait anymore, especially if we take into account that as mentioned before in-service training is minimal in Saudi Arabia and does not reach the desired level by educational standards.

It is suggested that in order to address the clear lack of in-service English language teacher training in Saudi Arabia, the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education (MoE) should accelerate and spread wider the initiatives it has recently made. The Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education has formed links with the British Council and U.S. Embassy with a view of introducing Saudi English language teachers to modern teaching techniques through in-service training programs. This initiative aims to train many Saudi Arabian English language teachers and supervisors in a host of different educational methods within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education has sent hundreds of EFL supervisors abroad to the United Kingdom to attend train-the-trainer courses. These train-the-trainer courses' goals are to instruct attendees in the most up to date TEFL developments. A further suggestion would be to introduce a type of English foreign language teaching booster course aimed at uniting and improving previous knowledge. For example, a 1 year TEFL/TESOL diploma or 2 year Advanced TEFL/TESOL diploma could be introduced as a mandatory course to be taken by newly qualified English language teachers in Saudi Arabia. Another mandatory program that could be introduced by the Ministry of Education would be to formally accredit in-service training with a MA certificate in TEFL/TESOL course. Other areas of the English language teacher training program that could be explored are applied the knowledge of the English language and applied linguistics.

CONCLUSIONS

One of the most important parts of an English language teaching professional's development is in-service training where in-service training allows for the teacher to develop useful learning experiences. This is because in teaching EFL (in this case in the KSA) the major issue comes from the lack of English language proficiency which impacts the Saudi Arabian English language teachers efficiency in delivering teaching materials. As mentioned in the stating the problem section, academic institutes in the KSA do not impose student-teachers to participate in English language preparation courses which affects their level of proficiency which is a major contributor to the poor quality of taught English language in Saudi Arabian schools. Within the literature review section, the concept of teacher development, training

and supervision was mentioned with suggestions for a solution for the issue of the lack of Saudi Arabian teacher English language proficiency with a clear development necessary. The current state of English language teacher development in Saudi Arabia is unfortunately not very good and there is a clear need in-service training programs as the necessary level of efficiency in Saudi Arabian education departments is currently inadequate. It was suggested that one solution for the lack of in-service training was to speed up and spread the initiatives that the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education have recently made. Even though teacher-training links between the British Council and U.S. Embassy are a step in the right direction, there needs to be more done in speeding up and spreading this initiative to all over Saudi Arabia. A further suggestion was to introduce additional teacher-training diplomas.

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