



Pedagogic relevance of teacher development: the case study of JCC

Intakhab Alam Khan

King Abdulaziz University Community College, Jeddah-KSA.

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ABSTRACT

Teacher development has become a key concept in the field of education. Both pre-service and in-service teacher training are extremely crucial in the entire process of the development of a teacher as a professional. In-service training received due attention from the experts and educators in order to strengthen the base of pre-service training or lay a new foundation for those who have no formal training, and to follow up training needs as continuous teacher development. Education has been changing globally in order to meet the urgent demand of the society, economics, and science-technology. There has been a focus all over the world to develop the teachers of the institutions to meet the needs of the students, and institutional effectiveness leading to the national development. King Abdulaziz university (KAU) is one of those pioneering institutions in Saudi Arabia that has been taking the initiatives to equip its staff to raise them to the international standards (if required). Jeddah community college (JCC), being the part of KAU also realised the need of teacher development activities. Many training, pedagogic, and developmental activities took place in the past especially from 2007 till date. The present paper aims at exploring those training activities that were carried out at JCC in order to equip and update the skills of the target teachers. In this connection, many seminars, workshops, training sessions were organised by the JCC, and the teachers attended those programmes within the college, university, and even went abroad for a 2 week-intensive trainer's training organised at Greenwich Community College, London, UK. The training course was sponsored by the university. It was expected that after such teacher development activities, the teacher preparedness will be enhanced, and the outcomes will be more beneficial for the students. As a matter of results, the present teaching at JCC is modern, novel, innovative, e-learning/online learning based and computer assisted which itself is one of the motivating factors, interesting for the learners, and needed for the ultimate human resource development.

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Introduction

The issue of 'Education as a profession' may lead to many academic discussions. Education is genuinely considered as means of a human resource development. In addition, it is the right kind of investment which gives 100% returns. Since education is a big enterprise, and it has to follow certain norms, it falls under the category of an industry as well. In order to assure quality products, the employees need to be well trained so that they can work with commitment and dedication, and yield results. There can be many contexts of education: philosophical, social, psychological, political and pedagogic. Education is also known as an interdisciplinary subject, and considered an applied side of philosophy, psychology and sociology. Thus, these three courses are basically taught in all the departments of educational institutions as these disciplines constitute the conceptual framework of education as a discipline. Education is the theoretical side which training is based on the theories of education, thus, it is the practical aspect.

Education has been changing according to the need of the socio-economic needs of the nation. As Education must go in accordance with the change in the society, the teachers must also change. Thus, they need sophisticated sort of training to go along changes in society, culture in general and education system in particular. Therefore, it is always recommended to learn and get training in the form of simulation or learning

theories/ styles/ pyramids, and other dimensions of education so that effective strategies can be evolved in order to cope with any expected situation in the actual classroom setting. Since education deals with the human development there is always a chance of waste. In order to minimise the chance of waste, and do the work in a more effective way so that the objectives can be achieved, the need of pre- service training is felt. Those who are not trained before their employment, they need in-service or online professional development.

There are many studies that reveal the ineffective results of educational practices in Saudi Arabia. It is felt that most of the professionals are not well trained in their areas of specialties. Thus, it is inevitable to ignore the relevance of teacher training in a place like Saudi Arabia where the achievement of education is not up to the marks and the quality is usually at stake.

Teacher Development and its Relevance:

Teacher development is a broad term that encompasses a range of people, interests and approaches. Those who engage in professional development of the teachers share a common purpose of enhancing their ability to do their duties effectively. Education is getting global these days and competitive day by day.

Both the parents and the nation want a creative mind in children. So the teacher's role becomes greater. The teacher

needs an effective teacher-training so as to be able to assimilate the educational values and ideas of one's own culture and of modern needs. The nation needs the services of millions of teachers who have trained minds and not stuffed brains so that the ultimate development of human resource can be targeted. The actual training requires the following aspects to be fulfilled: teacher's attitude, philosophical change, technology oriented attitude, skill oriented teaching /learning, human resource development etc.

The Research Context:

Since the goal of most modern professional development efforts is improved performance by the organization, staff, and ultimately students (Sparks, 1994), information on crucial measures of student learning increasingly is being considered (Guskey & Sparks, 1991). But, perhaps more importantly, professional developers are also looking more seriously at the research on professional development in education. They are examining what is known about the various forms of professional development, not only for teachers but for all those involved in the educational process. They also are considering what is known about various organizational characteristics and structures, especially those that facilitate ongoing professional growth.

The research base on professional development in education is quite extensive as a lot of researches have been carried out in the area (Epstein, Lockard, & Dauber, 1988; Griffin, 1983; Guskey, 1986; Joyce & Showers, 1988; Lieberman & Miller, 1979; Orlich, 1989; Wood & Thompson, 1980, 1993). However, critics still pass comments on the practical relevance of the subject and related studies.

Other researchers suggest that professional development efforts designed to facilitate change must be practitioner specific and focus principally on day-to-day activities at the classroom level (McLaughlin, 1990; Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977; Wise, 1991). Others indicate that an emphasis on individuals is detrimental to progress and more systemic or organizational approaches are necessary (Tye & Tye, 1984; Waugh & Punch, 1987). Some experts emphasise reforms in professional development must be initiated and carried out by individual teachers and school-based personnel (Joyce, McNair, Diaz, & McKibbin, 1976; Lambert, 1988; Lawrence, 1974; Massarella, 1980). Others emphasize the most successful programs are those guided by a clear vision that sees beyond the walls of individual classrooms and schools, since teachers and school-based individuals generally lack the capacity to conceive and implement worthwhile improvements on their own (Barth, 1991; Clune, 1991; Mann, 1986; Wade, 1984).

Some reviewers argue the most effective professional development efforts approach change in a gradual and incremental fashion, not expecting too much at one time (Doyle & Ponder, 1977; Fullan, 1985; Mann, 1978; Sparks, 1983). Others insist the broader the scope of a professional development program, the more effort required of teachers, and the greater the overall change in teaching style attempted, the more likely the program is to elicit the enthusiasm of teachers and to be implemented well (Berman & McLaughlin, 1978; McLaughlin & Marsh, 1978).

Though many things are common in most institutions yet the case of JCC is different. The college is the first of this type that got accredited by an American organization COE. In addition, it has established a partnership with UK's community colleges: Greenwich and City College, Brighton and Hove. The

college has been developing from each aspect of educational/institutional effectiveness. However, development is a continuous process. Therefore, continuous professional development in general and e-resource development in particular is the ultimate need of each institution of modern time.

The Need of Attitudinal Change

A change in the educational system can happen only when a certain attitudinal change takes place in the teachers concerned. This I stress wherever I go and speak at gatherings of our teachers and administrators. There is a great need for a change in our attitudes. Our people need to think over and discuss the great subject of motivations behind all work-efficiency. 'When can I, or when do I, work best?' This is the attitudinal change that we have to achieve in a big way. No work is big or small; our attitude makes it so, and we change accordingly. Many research findings support the hypothesis that attitude of a teacher leads to good teaching achievements.

The fact that most teachers most of the time behave as information providers (Brown, 1982). The basic model of teaching in this case is: a) spontaneous ; (b) belief that all students are identical and ready to follow same type of instruction; (c) acceptance of models the teachers were taught; and (d) lack of readiness about students' forms of learning and thought (Hallbwachs, 1975). Reay (1975) says that one of the reasons for this attitude could be due to the little time allowed for preparation within the teacher's working day. Another explanation could be the teacher's *personal style* in the interpretation of curricula, content and pedagogy (Sacristan, 1989, Gallard and Gallagher, 1994). Studies carried out in Brazil (Garrido et al. (1991) indicate that teachers show little interest and lack of compromise towards innovation in school.

Technology and Teaching

In the literature, educational technology is considered as a developmental tool (Means, 1994). The addition of technology into a classroom or school does not inherently nor naturally reform teaching or learning (Dede (2001); Wiske (2001). If and how teachers adopt technology determines if change in teaching or learning occurs. An outcome of change seems less likely than the many claims in the literature might make it appear, for "teacher cognitions have taken years to take shape and are, consequently, not easily changed" (Verloop, Driel, & Meijer, (2001) p. 454).

E-Learning and Teacher Development: Theoretical Perspectives

Teacher development is never accomplished unless the technological aspect is not fulfilled. It is possible to use various pedagogical approaches for e- Learning which include: social-constructivist – this pedagogy is particularly well afforded by the use of discussion forums, blogs, wiki and on-line collaborative activities. It is a collaborative approach that opens educational content creation to a wider group including the students themselves.

The One Laptop Per Child Foundation described the use of a constructivist approach. E-moderating: Cognitive perspective focuses on the processes involved in learning as well as how the brain works.(Bloom and Krathwohl,1956). The field of CSCL is fruitful, with many prototypes and application systems having been developed. From the perspective of a distributed computing environment, four different architectures of CSCL were proposed which include: centralized architecture, replicated architecture, distributed architecture and hybrid architecture (Suthers, 2001).

The Case of Jeddah Community College:

Jeddah community college is one of the pioneer colleges of Saudi Arabia which got accredited by COE, USA. Recently, it accomplished the implementation of Electronic Management Education System (EMES)- the preferred Electronic system of the King Abdul Aziz University Jeddah. The college successfully arranged training sessions for the concerned staff of the Jeddah community college. Later, the courses (approximately 120 as a whole) were put online to facilitate the enrolled students as well as the future distance learning students. The college has been ready for such sophisticated changed the time accreditation process started some 2 years ago. To mention about the infrastructural facilities, the following are the main achievements:

- computer based classroom teaching,
- internet facility in each classroom, offices etc
- modern language labs,
- expansion of computer labs,
- computers installation for the students,
- provision of an e-learning supervisor to look after the development etc.

Regarding the online material related to JCC curriculum in general and English in particular, the entire material was uploaded on the EMES website. The focus was on the learning/assessment activities such as CYU (Check Your Understanding), Crossword puzzle, power points etc. The assignments are put online through university website with a deadline. A separate 'forum' has been created to discuss issues. In addition, online chatting facility has also been created to catch the attention of the e-learners of the Jeddah community college, and restore their motivation level which is really a crucial issue. It is expected that such web based material, mass media and high tech programs of education are going to exert some major impact on the attitude and motivation of the formal as well as non-formal students (learning through distance mode).

The most important features of the e-learning are:

- 1-easy and load free,
- 2- interesting,
- 3- open access: any time-anywhere,
- 4- varied information,
- 5- self- learning mode,
- 6-self motivating,

The idea of incorporating e-learning in the classrooms in general basically derived from the following hypotheses:

- 1- E-learning is very important in the learning in general,
- 2- The available e- resource is compatible and up to date,
- 3- The EMES as a tool is very useful,
- 4- There is a need to evolve learning strategies in general,
- 5- Teachers of JCC are well prepared to implement e-learning,
- 6- Self- learning package is expected to yield much better results.

It is expected that he present modest attempt and its result is going to be utilized not only in the community college Jeddah or other community colleges in a country like Saudi, but also by those technical colleges that are more or less like community colleges where other subjects in general. Thus, modern and sophisticated mode of imparting education in general is always a crucial issue. There has always been a debate over the issues like traditional teaching/learning and innovative strategies. In this connection, e- learning will prove to be a landmark technique to facilitate the learners in a strategic manner and achieve the

targets of teaching in general and language teaching/learning in particular.

Continuous professional development (CPD) for teachers

CPD can be defined as the systematic maintenance and broadening of the knowledge, skills and personal qualities needed in working life. Put more simply, it means making the most of you as a professional teacher.

CPD can help a professional in the following ways:

- maintain and enhance your competence in your job
- stay competitive in the employment market
- demonstrate your commitment to future employers
- avoid stagnation and manage change
- by bringing a new and exciting intellectual challenge

CPD is about planned learning and reflection in your career. It's not simply an "add-on" to your job or something limited to a particular stage in your working life. It could include mentoring, attending conferences and seminars or planned reading. In fact, any activity which boosts your skills and employability – so long as it's done in a systematic way. Because the world that teachers are preparing young people to enter is changing so rapidly, and because the teaching skills required are evolving likewise, no initial course of teacher education can be sufficient to prepare a teacher for a career of 30 or 40 years. Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is the process by which teachers (like other professionals) reflect upon their competences, maintain them up to date, and develop them further.

Quality Education

The teacher is the most important element in any educational programme. It is the teacher who is mainly responsible for implementation of the educational process at any stage. No amount of investment in education can improve quality of education unless there are well qualified teachers to impart quality education. In order to target quality education, the teacher should have quality training and expertise. It is expected that most trained and professional teachers should have the following traits in order to be effective and efficient.

Teacher Development: qualification, training and practice

Teaching is an art as well as a science. Without the proper development of teaching skills a teacher can't teach his classes. The teacher has to justify his position by showing different traits as under:

Qualification and experience is the basic trait of a teacher, be English teacher or any other subject. Therefore, he should have: a sound knowledge of the subject, knowledge of Educational Theory, creativity, professionally trained. A need analysis assesses the lack of teacher's personality and various roles. A systematic exercise of need assessment on a regular basis is always necessary to know that teachers attend the training they actually need. Training and professional development has to become more differentiated to be able to address identified needs.

The teacher developmental programmes implemented year after year should follow a pattern and a direction so that they reinforce each other. It should be a follow up program in nature and resume the course from the point one has stopped before in order to bridge the gap.

It is always essential in this fast changing society to equip oneself so that he can go along the modernisation. Thus, in order to be update, modern and sophisticated, one should attend in-service training or professional development programs. It is always appreciated if the teachers of English are research

oriented, but ironically speaking, most teachers in India and Saudi are disinterested in any such program. They think that this is an academic embarrassment to take part in any training program. They innocently forget that every teacher is not a born teacher. Instead some are made good teachers.

Teacher Development Activities at JCC

Many developmental programs have been conducted at JCC from time to time which include workshops, seminars, and training sessions. But, the main developmental activities started with the process of accreditation of JCC with COE, USA. Later, JCC was trained in university's electronic management education system (EMES) in which they created, developed and uploaded the courses online which are ready for use especially for distance education program.

The main developmental activities started with 'The train the trainer programme' in the UK. It was conducted for 2 weeks to develop the JCC staff in different educational areas both at Jeddah and the UK.

The following areas were dealt with during the workshops/brainstorming sessions, and later the train the trainer program at Greenwich Community College, London, UK:

- Teaching/learning: the concept,
- roles of a teacher,
- local learning needs,
- curriculum,
- learning theories,
- Bloom's taxonomy,
- scheme of work and lesson plan,
- learning on line,
- learning styles,
- SMART objectives,
- motivation,
- language development,
- quality framework,
- lesson observation,
- assessment,
- support and supervision,
- business unit,
- continuous self-improvement etc.

As mentioned above, the JCC staff was also trained however locally, in the University's EMES system. Based on the E-learning needs and the recommendations of the training at London, UK, class observation (as friendly peer review) was initiated. A written prescribed form was used to write comments. In addition, a few crucial training sessions were also conducted for the development of the JCC staff.

Conclusions

Teacher development is as important as teaching. It is believed that if the teacher doesn't equip himself as per the modern need, he may not be able to justify his job. Teacher development in the 21st century is never a complete process unless he is able to use e-learning.

It is because of the fact that e-learning in general and blended learning in particular is required in all circumstances to benefit the target learners to the level that is expected from the concerned teacher.

The community College, Jeddah, considering the need of the teacher development arranged and provided all the required resources: physical, e-resource and human resource (including Human Resource Development) to raise the level of the institution in order to realize the conceived educational objectives.

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