International Journal of
Asian Social Sciences

Global Paradigm Shift in Pedagogy and English Language Teachers' Professional Development in Pakistan

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Abstract

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Education system like other areas of modern society has undergone a phenomenal paradigm shift from learning to e learning and teacher to e teacher. The shift embodies substantial departure from objectivist teacher centered instructional methodology to collaborative, interactive, customized, metacognitive and constructivist pedagogical approaches. The paradigm also signifies increased use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in teaching/ learning practices and higher education (Nawaz 2011). Importantly ICTs are now considered essential to knowledge construction and as facilitators of learner centered pedagogy. They have also become integral to teacher-learner partnership in learning, virtual learning creative/critical thinking, higher order skills and customized planning for learning styles. The EFL teachers in Pakistan in this context needs to be made cognizant of this paradigm shift and developed accordingly. They need to be trained in emerging techniques so that they can better innovate in their personalities, teaching methods and their teaching objectives and producing citizens who possesses global adoptability and can communicate across the planet. The study particularly highlights importance of diverse learning styles and use of ICTS in language teaching and learning for meaningful realization of this paradigm shift in our context. The conclusion is drawn that these characteristics need to be incorporated into content areas of education and teachers training templates for sustainable and meaningful changes in the education and training out comes.

Introduction

Education system like other areas of modern society has undergone a phenomenal paradigm shift from learning to e learning and teacher to e teacher. The shift embodies substantial departure from objectivist teacher centered instructional methodology to collaborative, interactive, customized, interdisciplinary, non-linear, self directed, customized, metacognitive and constructivist pedagogical approaches where learning is not the acquisition of knowledge, rather it is the process of knowledge construction and pedagogy is used to support the construction of knowledge (Kundi and Nawaz, 2010). The paradigm shift embodies agenda that recognizes the importance of sustained collaboration, teachers' roles as knowledge producers, their need to manage change, and a mutuality of moral purpose (Day, 2004). It also embodies developing broader and global perspective of the learners with increased awareness of inter-culturality and responsibilities for global peace, harmony and socio-economic development. The paradigm also signifies increased use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in teaching/ learning practices and higher education (Afaq et. all

2009, Nawaz 2011). Importantly they are not looked upon as instrumental aid to knowledge transmission. They are considered essential to knowledge construction. They facilitate learner centered pedagogy and have become integral to teacher-learner partnership in learning, virtual learning creative/critical thinking, higher order skills and customized planning for learning styles etc. The advanced countries in the world have adapted to this new paradigm in organizational and educational affairs at all levels (Valcke 2004 as qtd in Afaq et al.). US Education department Vision 2020: Transforming Education and Training through Advanced Technologies (usinfo.org/enus/education/edu_overview.html) aims to transform education and training "in ways previously unimaginable" and represents the ultimate shift to this paradigm.

Imperatives for EFL Teachers Professional Development

For language teachers in the developing countries like Pakistan, the paradigm shift is full of challenges as well as innumerable possibilities for personal and pedagogical growth. The challenges pertain to lack of

political will in developing standardized education system in the country, adequate financial resources, institutional support and most importantly a traditional teacher centric mind-set that resists change and innovation in teaching practices/attitudes. The EFL teachers here needs to be made cognizant of this paradigm shift and developed accordingly. The study particularly highlights the importance of diverse learning styles and use of ICTs in language teaching for meaningful realization of this paradigm shift in our context. It is argued that for desired learning outcomes EFL teachers should innovate in instructional practices and provide activities that are compatible with the ways through which learners like to learn the language. The conclusion is drawn that these characteristics need to be incorporated into content areas of education and teachers training templates for sustainable and meaningful changes in the education and training out comes.

Focus on Learners: Learning Styles and Strategies

Focus on learners embodies a whole set of new values and practices in class rooms. Cognitive constructivist learning theory clearly explains the paradigm shift to learner centered pedagogy. Piaget and Vygotsky were the forerunners of cognitive constructivist learning theories. Piaget's theory of cognitive development emphasize that "humans can not be 'given' information which they immediately construct and use. They must 'construct 'their own knowledge. They build their knowledge thorough experiences" (Valais, 2010). Vygotsky's social development theory on the other hand elaborates that "social interaction precedes development and plays a fundamental part in cognitive development" (Valais, 2010). For ELL Vygotsky's model emphasizes that learners need to plays an active role in learning. Focus is therefore shifted from teacher-cantered class room culture of transmitting knowledge to a more collaborative student cantered learning culture of discovery and inquiry through cooperative learning (Valais 2010). Dewey and Bruner's constructivists' notions of spiral path of inquiry and scaffolding also developed the knowledge construction model further. Dewey's spiral path of inquiry highlights that learning begins with curiosity of the learner in a spiral path. "Each step in this inquiry based learning naturally leads to the next: inspiring new questions, investigations and opportunities for authentic 'teachable moments'" (Valais, 2010). Bruner's scaffolding describes a "process that enables a child or novice learner to solve a problem, carry out a task or achieve a goal which would be beyond the unassisted efforts" (Bruner as cited in Valais, 2010). Marlow and Page (2005 as cited in Valais 2010) support the constructivist approach to L2 learning on

the grounds that this approach signifies constructing knowledge and not receiving it; thinking and analyzing, not accumulating and memorizing ; understanding and applying, not repeating it and being active not passive (Valais, 2010).

It is imperative as stated above to have clear and strong understanding of learners' learning styles to allow constructivist model at work in and outside class rooms. Oxford, (2001) asserts that styles and strategies help EFL teachers to determine a particular learner's ability and willingness to work within the frame work of various instructional methodologies and that "the more that teachers know about their students' style preferences, the more effectively they can orient their L2 instructions as well as the strategy instruction that can be interwoven into language instruction, matched to those style preferences" (365). Therefore teachers' first responsibility lies in developing theoretical foundations of learning styles and strategies for planning the lessons effectively. Learning styles are basically the general approaches . . . that students use in acquiring a new language or in learning any other subject" (Oxford, 2001: 359). Kinsalla (1995 as qtd in Valais, 2010) define learning style as "an individual's natural habitual and proffered ways of absorbing processing and retaining new in formations and skills". Research into learning styles address two major areas: all students have their own preferred learning style(s) and learning strengths and weakness and a mismatch between teaching and learning styles causes learning failure, frustration, and demotivation (Valais, 2010). Various models describe the different learning styles that could be grouped around Kolb Learning style model, Honey and Mumford's learning style model and Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory (Valais, 2010). The Multiple Intelligence (MI) model has increasingly become popular as it offers a rich source of ideas applicable in class rooms and provides teachers with a lot of ways to be innovative in planning and teaching English language to learners of all ages and "offers EFL/ESL teachers a way to examine their best teaching techniques and strategies in the light of human differences" (Christison, 1996). Gardner in his MI theory suggests that that human intelligence has multiple facets that could be classified as intelligences. They are: Linguistic, Logical-mathematical, Spatial, Bodily-kinesthetic, Musical Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, and Naturalist. Each dimension has its specific features that differentiate it from the other intelligence (Christison, 1996) and ESL/EFL teachers need to identify the activities and categorize them for addressing various intelligences appropriately. She also presents an MI application model with appropriate activities for EFL/ESL lesson

planning that goes beyond class room practices to routine living situations.

Oxford (2001) highlights four dimensions of learning styles that "are likely to be among those most strongly associated with L2 learning. They are: Sensory preferences, personality types, desired degree of generality and biological differences. Each dimension specifies a particular learning style that differentiates the learners' capacity to learn L2 in essentially learner centric class room environment. Sensory preferences learn more effectively through hearing, seeing, touch and movement and body involvement. Oxford (2001) explains that the sensory preferences refer top the physical and perceptual learning channels with which the learners is most comfortable (360). The personality types consist of four strands: "extroverted versus introverted, intuitive-random versus seeing-sequential, thinking versus feeling; and closure oriented/judging versus open/perceiving" (360). Extroverted learners show more interest in concrete experience, contact with outside, and relationship with others; while introverts are more interested in individual, independent situations. Sensing-sequential learners learn best from reports of observable facts and happenings with predominant reliance on their five senses. Intuitive perception learners on the other hand learn more effectively from meaningful experiences and relationships with others. The same differences pertain to thinking and feeling; judging and perceiving types. Thinking learners unlike feeling learners learn best from impersonal circumstances and logical consequences. Feeling learners prefer tailored circumstances and social values.

Judging learners learn by reflection, analysis, and processes that involve closure. Perceiving learners quite differently learn through negotiation, feeling, and inductive processed that postpone closure. Desired degree of generality contrasts the learners who "focus on the main idea or big picture with the learners who concentrate on details (361). Biological differences like times of day when learners feel good to work, food needs and preferences, the nature of environment, temperature etc also affect learning L2 in different learners (Oxford. 2001: 361). Personality styles also denote ambiguity intolerance and brain hemisphere dominance. Ambiguity Intolerance suggests the students' comfort level with uncertainty (addresses both types of students who needs one answer and who enjoy "thinking out of the box" (Valais, 2010). Brain hemisphere dominance denotes more visual, analytical, and reflective and self reliant if left brain hemisphere dominates and more auditory,

global, impulsive and interactive if right brain hemisphere dominates The EFL teachers must take into consideration the differentiating factor for effective lesson planning and even curriculum design. An effective class room environment will reflect a blend of learning styles, design curriculum, create lesson plans, and develop tasks and assessment that address these varied styles. They must, however, as Oxford (2001) contends go beyond the learning style preferences for arranging a wide range of class room activities that not only cater to the diverse learning styles but also help the students go beyond them (362). In order to be successful teachers must show willingness to apply assessment tools to learn about learners' learning style preferences. Oxford (2001) suggests the use of written survey in which learners answer questions to reveal their particular style preferences (362).

Language learning strategies Language learning strategies on the other hand as Scarcella and Oxford (1992. qtd in Oxford, 2001) define are specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques . . . used by students to enhance their own learning . Oxford (2001) argues:

> Individual learning styles and strategies can work together with or conflict with a given instructional methodology. If there is harmony between (a) the student (in terms of style and strategy preferences) and (b) the instructional methodology and materials, then the student is likely to perform well, feel confident, and experience low anxiety. If the clashes between (a) and (b) , the student often perform poorly, lacks confidence, and experience significant anxiety Some timers such clashes lead to serious breakdowns in teacher-student interaction. These conflicts may lead to the dispirited student's outright rejection of the teaching methodology, the teacher, or the subject matter (359).

Learning strategies has been categorized as meta cognitive (planning, monitoring evaluating); cognitive (using resources, note-taking, making inferences) and socio-effective (cooperating, clarifying and self-talk). The teachers' role in this context is to teach the learners not only the language, but also the learning strategies they need and "consciously build strategy training into the lessons to help students develop their own strategies" (Opp-Bechman and Klinghammer, 2006: 8). It will of

course need a detailed person to person evaluation regarding students' background, their problems and strategies they are currently using (Opp- Bechman and Klinghammer, 2006). Many research studies (Oxford 1995, Oxford and Ehrman, 1995) establish that increased use of language learning strategies result in increased level of language proficiency. The research also substantiates that the more "teachers know about their students learning strategy preferences, the more effectively they can attune instructions and to the specific needs of the students (Oxford, 2001b: 171). Styles and strategies also help in determining "a particular learner's ability and willingness to work within the frame work of various instructional methodologies" (Oxford, 2001: 365). However, EFL teachers must not be specific with any particular instructional methodology. "L2 teachers would do better to employ a broad instructional approach . . . to meet the needs of all students in the class"(Oxford (2001: 365). The L2 teachers are encouraged to conduct assessment of learners learning styles and their strategy use. Observation, interviewing consultations etc can be helpful tools in accumulating the information in the above areas. It will help most EFL teachers to become aware of the ways learners prefer to learn the language. It will help them in discovering their students' preferred way of learning the language to teach in a way that is appealing to most students, if not all, and do what works best for them. More than that the understanding of the diverse learning styles and strategies will enable the EFL teachers in our context in particular to use language to develop learners personality in terms of improved critical thinking for enhanced productivity in personal and professional life. Teachers of L2 also need to focus on the factors that could influence L2 learning strategies. Valais (2010) highlight these factors as motivation, gender, cultural background, attitudes and beliefs, types of task, age and tolerance of ambiguity. The teachers of English Language must take into consideration these possible influencing factors for meaningful outcomes of the strategy use.

Focus on Technology
New paradigm in pedagogy also calls for increased use of ICTs in language teaching. As stated above, ICTs are not looked upon instrumental/material support for language instruction. They are now deemed as facilitators of learner-centered pedagogies. (Neo 2007; Rakes, Fields & Cox 2006; Sandholtz, Ringstaff). Most significantly the paradigm shift to the use of technology in language learning calls for adaptation of teachers' and learners' roles in teaching and learning as it embodies a major shift from teacher-centered to constructivist modes of classroom

instruction (e.g., Neo 2007; Rakes et al.2006), and causes teachers to confront their established beliefs about instruction. Current trends in research reveals that teachers' use of technology in the language class is bound to increase the learning process with increased level of student's attention to learning inspire deep processing of concepts and improved class performance through content learning. Brinton argues that multimedia tools serve as an important motivator in the language teaching process because "media materials can lend authenticity to the classroom situation, reinforcing for students the direct relation between the language classroom and the outside world" (2001: 461). In the field of Language learning the paradigm shift in all respect discussed above is apparent and calls for substantial innovations in class room practices and teachers behavior/attitudes to teaching. For instance Henri (1992), Ingram and Hathorn (2009) and Johnson & Johnson (2004) have worked on co relation between learning principally collaborative learning through the use of technologies like computer conferencing, online communication, computer conferencing and content analysis and online collaborative learning. Warschauer (2001) argues that research on relation between World Wide Web and foreign language learning focuses on three main areas of interaction, reading and writing; and affect. The practical dimension of this mode of using computers and online communication support learner centered paradigm as it allows learners to "engage in increasingly complex task throughout the course, in collaboration with partner in the same class or in other locations and with appropriate scaffolding from the teachers and other sources" (208). The projects designed could be in the form of interviews and surveys; on line research; comparative investigation of a social, cultural and investigative matters; simulations and online publications. These types of projects provide motivation to frame learning throughout the semester. Shetzer and Warschauer (2000) categorize three main dimensions of ICTs in learning English language:

- Communication with groups and individuals and involving the command over pragmatics of various forms of synchronous and asynchronous communication, both in one to one and many to many electronic discussion forums.
- Construction, involving ability to work individually and in collaboration, including command over hypermedia authoring and

- Research, encompassing range of reading, navigation and interpretation, skills, including how to research the internet effectively, how to evaluate information and how to cortically consider multimedia information (211-212).

Technology also offers an endless means of teachers' life long interaction with peers in the field of language teaching. One major drawback in the existing teachers' training programs/courses lies in the area of any consistent, global, interactive and established pattern among the EFL teachers at any stage. The graduates and in-service teachers have little opportunity to engage in any meaningful professional development activities that keep them abreast of innovation in learning and teaching in the field. Internet could be effectively used for covering the gap and transforming learning into a life-long learning for the graduates and the teachers alike. It will provide language faculty to establish a consistent and regular discussion pattern. Blogs could be one effective way of using internet for life-long learning purposes. A decade earlier it was difficult to think of establishing such net based system in Pakistan as the availability of internet facility was not common and only higher education institutes in major cities could provide free and fast access to it. Now a kind of revolution has taken place as it has become possible to have access to fast internet connectivity at approximately US $ 15 per month at homes and all private schools are now equipped with computer facilities. More than that Pakistan telecommunication authority (PTCL) has opened up connectivity at low rates to students and now 80% of the urban students have access to networking at their homes. In this context the teachers need to be exposed to the effective use of internet resources and facilities fro building effective learning strategies. A blog as Boas writes "is a web with regular diary or journal entries that incorporate different postings by authors and responses to these posts by an audience" (2011: 26). They are easy to set up and are simple to use. They could be very effective in addressing writing/reading skills for the learners and provide EFL teachers rich opportunity to share knowledge and experience across the globe with colleagues and educationists.

For the developing countries like Pakistan this shift to e-learning and increased use of technology is replete with prospects like increased access to research and knowledge, opportunities to upgrade present education system, accessing global market based economy, increased capabilities to keep the education system updated, and affordable access to education/training resources, and education for all. There are, however, several interlinked threats and opportunities interfused in this paradigm. In my home country there are more threats than opportunities. It requires new skills, progressive attitudes and competency among the educators, administrators, teachers, planners and organization manager. Harrell (2000) thought that teachers who were not familiar with the tools might turn their lessons from a success to a failure as they failed to use the tools to support the lessons. "In fact, a teacher without experience in this approach is sometimes overwhelmed with both the possibilities and the potential barriers" (Harrell, 2000: 134). In addition, Brinton (2001) claimed that the preparation of teacher-made media materials demands an investment of time and energy beyond that of normal lesson planning. As a result, quite a large number of language teachers express their inability or unwillingness to use multimedia in their classrooms. The major threat to the new paradigm is typical mindset that resists change, collaboration, mutual exchange and global perspective. This mindset can only be overcome through concentrated efforts on educating the youth as future leaders with creative and critical thinking faculties and greater global adoptability. It needs to establish and strengthen cognitive and social constructivist learning paradigm with increased use of ICTs for collaborative, interdisciplinary, critical thinking pedagogy.

Conclusion

Content of education (curriculum) has substantial influence on the outcome of education. It affects social, economic, political and intellectual change in the society. However it requires a research oriented content development that addresses cognitive, affective and psycho motor domains of the learning modes; that is learning centered, allows students to use reflective, met cognitive thinking process, develops critical and creative thinking, inspires shared experiences and learning. It must meet contextual needs, but also develop global perspective and responsibility. It must also indicate the paradigmatic shift in favor of technology based and facilitated curriculum. If Pakistan has to play an effective role in global partnership for peace and prosperity, it must redefine its curriculum parameters and objectives and make it more in accordance with global requirements. It must also redefine content of education to set itself free from intense intolerance, parochialism, religious intolerance, bigotry and extremism. It is essential for us however to have trained and experienced educators to work as curriculum planner with international exposure to

develop attitudes, skills, & knowledge and generate leadership skill as well as community service. Such information can also help material designers and syllabus planners to devise a language learning syllabus that is in line not with their own perceptions and experiences, but also with what is most likely to meet with the students' approval.

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