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RESEARCH PAPER

Exploring the Professional Development of English Teachers through Appraisal of TESOL Programs in Pakistani Universities

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PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
	The paper explores the professional development of English language teachers through the comparative study of M.A TESOL programs of two high ranked universities of Punjab and Sindh. The researchers using content analysis approach critically evaluated the M.A TESOL Scheme of Studies of two universities. The findings reveal that these universities award the same degree but substantial variation exists in both universities' rationale, objectives, courses, teaching strategies and modes of assessment. However, significant similarities in above mentioned two MA TESOL Programs are also noteworthy, such as, disassociation of contents with Pakistani regional languages context, marginalization of a course about cultural pluralism and omission of the notion of World Englishes (WE) and the debate about English medium of instruction (EMI) in Pakistan. The researchers interviewed 10 faculty members of TESOL Programs of both universities about these omitted issues. It is recommended that the universities having MA TESOL Program should explicitly reflect Higher Education Commission (HEC) guidelines to maintain uniformity of contemporary trends in teaching

Introduction

English flourished globally and shaped into a lingua franca that is being extensively deployed for communication among the speakers of different languages without the involvement of native speakers (Burns, 2005; Seidlhofer, 2004). Being a world language, English is intricately interwoven with the notions of modernization and socio-economic development (Block and Cameron, 2002; Tsui and Tollefson, 2006; Weaver, 2003). The role of English language in technology, transformation and progress strengthens its position in social, political, educational

and economic spheres which mutually complement to describe English as a lingua franca (ELF) and an international language (EIL).

Since independence, Pakistan like most colonial countries has purposely employed English functionally for performing various official and unofficial tasks. The country is persistently using English not only for higher education, international communication, administration, judiciary, legislature, commerce but also for internal communication among educated people (Bamgbose, 2001, 2003; Bruthiaux, 2003). Significantly, Crystal (2011) emphasizes upon the importance of teaching English as an international language (EIL).

Therefore, serious attention must be paid to English language teaching (ELT) as it is a communication barrier for Pakistani people. The insufficient knowledge about English language can certainly affect the progress and confidence of individuals with regards to performing various responsibilities and tasks such as, tourism, research, government, policing, business, or data dissemination. The purpose of the research lies in evaluation of TESOL Programs of two high ranked universities located in Sindh and Punjab to understand the professional development of English teachers in Pakistan in accordance with needs of the country.

Literature Review

Crystal, (2011) describes that there are various names for English such as, 'World English', 'Common English', 'Global English', 'General English' or 'Continental English'. English is an international language and spoken in multiple dialects. Kachru believes (1983, 1985, 1992, 1996) that these terms refer to varieties of English used for communication across the world. According to Burns (2005, p.5), English has various local and international uses and is 'a member of international communicative network'. Thus, Crystal (2003) rightly asserts that acquisition of English as a foreign language (EFL), English as a second language (ESL) or English as an international language (EIL) is definitely obligatory as the knowledge reservoirs are accessible in it. This is a logical rationale for embracing English a compulsory subject worldwide at all education levels. As a result, it also becomes the medium of instruction, curricula and assessment (Tickoo, 2006). Therefore, people demand access to English for getting into broad inequitable relationships and networking in the world (Pennycook, 1994, p.4). Jenkins (2006) believes that the main role of English is to open a window onto the world.

Phillipson (2003) reflects that English is a lingua franca in many countries where every literate person knows English. Jenkins (2006) observes that interaction between NNS-NNS (non-native speakers) in English has become as common a phenomenon as the communication between NS-NS (native speakers). ELF (English as a Lingua Franca) has been recognized as a crucial research issue in World Englishes. The linguists (Charles 2007; Ehrenreich. 2010; Pullin Stark, 2009; Bj¨orkman, 2011; Erling, 2007; Smit, 2003. 2010; Sifakis and Fay, 2011) have

explored diverse implications of ELF for communication within specific domains. Thus, English is a beneficial tool of development, modernity and opportunity. It is passionately adopted by both privileged and deprived community (Pennycook, 2001). Moreover, English is a link language between diverse linguistic, cultural and ethnic groups and not merely the property of native speakers (Seidlhofer, 2004).

Siddiqui (2007, p.161) observes that major limitations of Pakistani classrooms are crowded classrooms, inadequate resources, untrained teachers, uncreative textbooks and external assessment. It is perceived that disassociation of English teachers and curricula from creativity, critical thinking and authenticity have gravely impacted students' communicative potential in universities (Irfan, 2018). Many ELT specialists and linguists such as, Kamhi-Stein and Mahboob (2005), Murray (2005) and Shamim and Qureshi (2009) have written in their research studies that most of NN (non-native) English teachers on account of proficiency need in English, use local languages to camouflage their deficiencies in English under the plea of explaining concepts to learners. Similarly, British Council Coleman report (2010, p.17) reveals that most of the teachers teach English through the medium of Urdu or a regional language because either their English is poor or they are diffident about their competence.

A popular misconception that sweeps across Pakistani institutes is that a person with fluent spoken English can teach English proficiently (Bashiruddin and Qayyum, 2014). However, British Council PEELI Report (2013) has produced opposite results that shows that more than 50% English teachers (60% private schools and 56% public schools) teaching in public and private schools scored lowest possible bands in Aptis Test. English teachers are still teaching using Grammar Translation Method (GTM) to keep focus on grammatical items and translation rather than working towards oral competency of the pupils. It is noteworthy that 94% English teachers cannot teach through English medium instruction (EMI). Therefore, instinctively they revert to bilingual teaching strategies (Irfan, 2018).

Mahboob and Talaat (2008) believe that teacher educators in Pakistan are recruited without academic or professional credentials in education; this process of recruitment has far reaching implications. Thus, lack of pedagogical training and application of educational theories, models and practices negatively influences their potential to train teachers. Anyone with a qualification in English literature with little or no school teaching experience can become a teacher trainer in Pakistan. Moreover, there is no logical evidence that individuals with higher language proficiency are capable teacher trainers.

As a consequence of such TESOL scenario, many students experience challenges and struggle regarding English throughout their lives. Siddiqui (2007, p.168) writes that those students who have studied at elite schools, colleges and universities have better communication skills as compared to those who come from non-elite institutes. Simple solution to cope with the language problems is to

have strong reliance on their memorization ability to pass the examination without improving proficiency in English language skills.

Material and Methods

The researchers using content analysis approach critically evaluated MA TESOL scheme of studies of two high ranked universities of Punjab and Sindh. The universities have been assigned acronyms that are SU and RU respectively for confidential and ethical reasons. The researchers also designed 10 interview questions to collect the qualitative data. The researchers recorded the interviews via whatsapp. The recorded material was meticulously transcribed.

10 faculty members representing TESOL Departments of SU (n=5) and RU (n=5) participated in interviews. Those faculty members were invited to be interviewed who agreed to participate voluntarily in the study. Six faculty members were Lecturers (n=3 from SU and n=3 from RU) and four of them were Assistant professors (n=2 from SU and n= 2 from RU). 6 Lecturers had M. Phil TESOL qualification while four Assistant Professors had acquired PhD TESOL qualification.

The researchers have compared the rationale, eligibility criteria, course objectives, contents, modes of assessment and recommended reading lists of two Masters in TESOL Programs to explore the professional development of English language teachers. In the next stage of data analysis, the researchers analyzed the transcriptions of interviews with regards to missing gaps that were discovered after content analysis of the two universities' curricula.

Results and Discussion

The findings of the study are described into two stages. Stage 1 provides the evidence of content analysis of MA TESOL curricula of two universities. Stage 2 consists of interview data collected from two universities of Punjab and Sindh.

Stage 1: Data from SU and RU Scheme of Studies

Rationale of the Program

SU's rationale is stated as "responding to the global spread of English as international lingua franca and as language of science and research, government has decided to introduce English right from class 1" (p.2). RU aims at supporting "practitioners of English to improve their classroom teaching"(p.4)

Eligibility Criteria

The eligible criteria of RU is "16 years education in relevant curriculum (e.g. Master in English Literature, linguistics, mass communication etc. or any relevant field" and passing the admission test (English and Logical Reasoning) and

interview" (p.1). SU recruits students on the basis of 14 years' education that is BA/BSc (p.3).

Course Objectives

The main objectives of RU are (p.4):

- Understanding of the theories in SLA and critically engage with the issues of application

- Holistic approach to language teaching through integrating both language and literature in their classroom

- Discourses on the role (s) of technology in language teaching and learning

- Demonstrate a critical insights into issues in TESOL such as EIL (English as an international language) and multiculturalism deploy their understanding to inform their teaching practice in contextually relevant ways.

- Testing for learning and testing for content knowledge

- Critique and undertake classroom based inquiry

- Analyse, critique and mentor teaching practices and professional engagement of English teachers in their respective contexts

  Chiefly SU's objectives are (p.2):

- Enhancing the students' level of competence in the use of English language

- Providing teaching, training and research in English language for Master's and PhD degrees.

- Developing in students the power of analysis so that they can critically assess the problems of our community, country and continent and to attempt to provide solutions.

- Producing a cadre of professionals who will defend and promote the values of humanities.

Comparison of Courses

TESOL Programs reveal similarities and differences. The following similarities have been noted:

- ELT in semester 1 and linguistics courses are offered in next semester.

- Linguistic similarities are missing. Mother tongue/ national language interference is not discussed (p.6).

- The contents are not contextualized in Pakistani context (p. 32).

- Rationale needs a section about language policy including medium of instruction controversy

- Cultural pluralism in Pakistani context

- TESOL Programs are incomplete without the concept of World Englishes

- There is no statement in both universities' scheme of studies that HEC guidelines have been followed.

The following significant points have been evidently noted in SU courses which are dissimilar from RU scheme of studies:

- The titles of the programmes

- The concept of "genre" is conspicuously missing in "Teaching of Creative Writing" (p. 52).

- The contents of the topic "Linguistics in Pakistan" are included. The topic is not clearly defined (p.9).

- What has the course "Philosophy of Education" to do with Linguistics and English Language Teaching?

- No subtopics for Teaching of Language Skills (page 13) and Assessment of Grammar and Vocabulary (p.21).

- The course entitled "Education in Pakistan" should be "Language in Education in Pakistan" (p.15).

- Focus is on functional use of English (p.12)

- Theory lacks practice, for instance, the practical application of methods of teaching excluded in "Methods of Teaching" (p.26).

Procedure of Design of Courses

It is observed that SU courses follow basic curriculum design principles which are objectives, contents and reading list. However, it is not discussed how contents were organized. On the other hand, besides basic principles of curriculum design, RU also includes weekly schedule and modes of assessment. It is

noteworthy that as compared to RU, SU courses' reading lists throughout the document are outdated.

Modes of Assessment

SU evaluates students' performance with the help of assignments, presentation, e-portfolio, peer feedback, student seminars and mini-research projects. RU has not included assessment procedure in scheme of studies. Unexpectedly, RU has excluded the modes of assessment for courses.

Stage 2: Analysis of Interview Data

Information about Regional Languages

SU 1 perceives, "*I think it is important to bring awareness in student teachers about the linguistic landscape of Pakistan to help them nurturing their pedagogical approaches*". RU 2 also believes, "*the course about must be included as a part of TESOL Program because without knowing about local languages of the country it will be hard to understand and apply English language teaching approaches within the classroom context*". The respondents view that the prospective teachers should have adequate knowledge about sociolinguistic landscape of Pakistan for considering the linguistic needs of students. It is meaningful to know that L1 (regional language or national language) interference causes errors and hinders L2 (second language) performance.

Incorporation of Cultural Pluralism

SU4 asserts, "*cultural pluralism course must be incorporated in TESOL program because Pakistani education system is essentially multicultural*". RU3 also agrees, "*in today's world when we are moving towards interculturalism and linguistic plurality it would be helpful if cultural pluralism is also included*". It is surmised that information about cultural pluralism should be made part of TESOL Programs as it is certainly an effective teaching strategy for responding to individual, cultural and ethnic differences of learners. Pakistan is a multicultural, multiethnic and multilingual community (Irfan, 2018), hence teachers must be aware of linguistic and cultural diversity in their classrooms.

World Englishes (WE)

SU2 views, "*there should be a course on World Englishes that provides other varieties of Englishes*". A participant from RU reports, "*this course is part of Applied Linguistics but not TESOL Programs. It is necessary to include this course to enable teacher students to learn about other acceptable varieties besides British and American Englishes* (RU6). The participants perceive that World Englishes (WE) course should also be integrated with TESOL Program. In this way, future English teachers would be able to make a distinction between different varieties including

Standard Englishes. The knowledge and understanding of WE is essential for English teachers to tackle learners' language problems that particularly arise out of WE such as, pronunciation and spellings.

English Medium of Instruction (EMI)

The perceptions of the participants are, "*we should consider effects of English teaching as medium of instruction*" (SU7). "*Teaching using EMI must be an essential component of TESOL Programs*" (RU8). English is a medium of instruction, curricula and assessment at higher education. Therefore, this course must be compulsorily included in TESOL Programs.

Professional Development of English Teachers

The participants report, "*I don't think much deliberation is put in while selecting courses; therefore I have serious doubts about potential of our TESOL degree programs*"(SU8). "*TESOL Programs are basically meant for training teachers and providing them opportunities for professional development. In Pakistan, these are not taught according to the needs and wants of multilingual learners*" (RU 10).

Accessibility of Higher Education Commission (HEC) guidelines

The respondents perceive, "*I am not sure if there are guidelines by the HEC about TESOL Programs*" (SU4). "*I haven't seen any specific TESOL courses on HEC website yet*" (RU8). It is interpreted from interviewees that HEC has not published any guidelines about BS and Masters TESOL Programs.

Discussion of Findings

It is noted that neither SU nor RU has included any topic on teaching using English medium of instruction (EMI). The topic "Language politics and Pakistani classroom" merely highlights politics in language policy. Bearing in mind that English is taught as a compulsory subject till grade 14 because most of the knowledge reservoirs useful to students are in English, the evidence is constructive to understand the relationship between ELT in Pakistan and students' language learning difficulties in universities. Hence, the effects of medium of instruction are far reaching.

It is worth mentioning that both TESOL programs exclude World Englishes course. It is extensively known that English is a lingua franca and global language. It has connected the whole world. It is not merely an international language but used for informal and formal functions in Pakistan. There is not one English but a plethora of WE. There are more non-native speakers than native speakers. World Englishes (WE) is one of the sources of language problems for students, such as spellings and pronunciation. In Pakistan, TESOL Programs have not thought about contemporary developments in WEs. It is crucial to recognise that English speakers

carry along specific markers or signs that are certainly helpful to identify the speakers or users.

The participants express their views that Pakistani English (PakE) can be included as a distinct variety of South Asian English. This non-native variety emerged because people received non-native input in schools and higher education. Irfan (2018) believes that acceptance of Pakistani English (PakE) in universities can reduce students' diffidence and allow them to use English without restraint as their own language. English language has made Pakistan a multilingual community. Many non-native varieties are perceived to be legitimate as they have gradually evolved their own norms and standards. The unique features of PakE are singled out from standard Englishes of inner circle such as, American English (AmE) and British Standard English (BrSE).

The participants expressed the value of providing information about mother tongues in the teaching context. The inclusion of this course might explain English teachers how mother tongues intervene to create language errors. On the other hand, local examples from regional languages can be more meaningful to students. It has been suggested that Urdu embodies the unity and Islamic culture of Muslims while English denotes transnational and progressive beliefs of the community. The expansion of these two languages consolidated cultural and linguistic hegemony in the society. The state acknowledged Urdu as an emblem of identity and equivalence for five major ethnic groups as a way to resolve linguistic and ethno-cultural dissimilarities.

It is reflected that adding a course about Pakistan's regional languages arises they represent linguistic, ethnic and diversity of people. Multilingualism has procreated unique linguistic identities. The history demonstrates that Pakistanis are sentimental about their mother tongues. It is perceived that a course about regional languages will be useful for ELT specialists to pinpoint those language difficulties that are outcome of pupils' mother tongue interference.

At the same time, they demand English as it is an international language and a lingua franca. It has been a crucial stratagem for shifting conservative outlooks, orthodox values and customs with regards to the country's social, cultural, political and economic progress, modernization and transformation. Globally, the comprehensive use of English and technology has shaped the postmodern and postcolonial world into a large village. Thus English in Pakistan greatly benefits correspondence, entertainment, foreign investment, and education.

The questions naturally arise: what makes MA TESOL a professional degree? How should that professional degree be used? The universities highlight contemporary trends in TESOL but how these should be incorporated in a Pakistani classroom. It is discussed above that Pakistani English teachers are not well equipped with updated ELT methodology. They used outdated strategies that have reliance on memorization and do not develop learners' communication skills

in English. TESOL Programs should prepare ELT specialists who can adapt curricula to learners needs that are development of rational, academic, social and creative skills. The programme should adopt means to train teachers to help students about their language problems and also provide enough language practice to teachers so that they can teach their students competently.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In short, TESOL Programs should include courses about EMI, regional languages, cultural pluralism and World Englishes to enhance the professional development of English teachers. It is recommended that Higher Education Commission (HEC) should design and publish guidelines about TESOL Programs to produce the uniform quality of the programs. In addition, the meaningful use of language and literacy in close unison with cultural pluralism acts as an effective teaching approach that emphasizes to create diverse environments in which learners develop understanding of oral and written language as part of real life tasks, and where linguistic and cultural legacy of the students is evidently considered.

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