**Research Report**

**Service Training of EFL Faculty Members for Professional Development in Saudi Arabia**

# Abstract

*English is a globally recognised language. However, the use of English differs from country to country. Countries like Saudi Arabia have to learn the correct usage of the English by learning it as a unit in their academics. This makes the role of the faculty members very crucial as the students perceive them as their role models and incorporate all the skills of their faculty members in their respective learning. This essentially calls for professional development of the faculty members so that they can contribute effectively for attaining the objective of educated and English speaking community in Saudi Arabia. This paper identifies the attributes that are considered to be essential for the professional development of the faculty members and also relates it to the Students in various institutions, colleges and universities in Saudi Arabia.*

*The paper begins with a brief introduction which presents the rational for conducting this research study. Further, a review of the existing literature has been carried out which forms the basis for the actual research process of this study. The responses of the13 participants who willingly contributed towards this research has been analysed to determine the crucial factors for the professional development of the faculty members. The next part of this study discusses the key points highlighted in the findings and the literature review. The last part of the report puts forward the limitations of this study and a brief conclusion in the end ties the contents of the report together.*

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# Introduction

Today, English is a global language. The same is the case in Middle Eastern countries as well like Saudi Arabia and English is being used as an official and formal language in schools, institutions, universities and also at the corporate level. However, unlike native English speaking countries, the use of the English in countries like Saudi is contingent upon the teachers who teach this as a subject which is EFL (English as a Foreign Language). This paper identifies the level of training and the importance of the professional development of these faculty members in close relation with the learning of the language of English.

## Teaching English in the Saudi Context

Saudi Arabia has undergone tremendous boost as far as its social, economic, professional and political development is concerned. The ministry of Education thus introduced EFL (English as a foreign language) in the early 1925 with a view that increasing amount of dependence was on trade relations which required learning the language of English appropriately to understand the scope of the trade relations comprehensively. With this came the importance of the faculty members who since then have assumed the responsibility of sharing their knowledge to all the students so that the maximum members of the community start to use the language of English. It was thus understood that it was crucial that these faculty members are trained and developed in the most efficient manner so that the objective could be attained (Al-Ahaydib, 1986).

## Research Context

A lot of previous studies have focused in this domain of EFL and professional development and the same has provided rich background information to base the process of this research paper. The objective of this paper is to understand the developments of the faculty members who teach English in various universities, colleges and institutions. The results can significantly contribute in improving the level of learning of the students of Saudi, which would ultimately result in the fulfilment of the objective of everyone speaking the language of English competently (Brown, 2004).

## Significance of the Study

Owing to its great oil reserves, the trade relations of the Saudi Arabia are spread across various countries around the globe. Hence the correct usage of the language of English not only leaves a lasting impression with different parties, it is also essential for a comprehensive understanding of the prevailing opportunities and potentialities in the foreign markets. Hence, it is vital for the students to learn the language of English from their faculty members. Thus, the grooming of the faculty members is an important criterion for the overall development of the country of Saudi Arabia.

# Review of the Literature

This section of the paper deals with identifying previous research that has been carried out in the field of teaching-learning aspects in EFL classrooms. The literature review primarily focuses on previous studies on EFL learning-teaching in Saudi context. An examination of the theoretical basis for the notion of language teaching has been conducted. The role of motivation in First Language and Second Language learning and teaching has also been included. The criteria for selection of authentic text for institutional objectives is also reviewed (Team, 1999).

## Previous studies on EFL learning-teaching in Saudi context

Fakieh Alrabai and Christo Moskovsky in their research on Intrinsic Motivation in Saudi Learners: EFL concluded that Saudis possess ‘dormant’ reserves as far as motivation is concerned. They also remarked that if favourable conditions are provided, then the same can result in enhancing the learning outcomes. In their study, they made use of a structured survey and selected a sample of 55 Saudi learners from universities and public schools. The result of the survey was subject to some fundamental statistical analysis. The study reinforced the significance of value acceleration in EFL education in Saudi colleges for sustainable and substantial acquisition of the English language to meet the objectives of the community and the nation (Widdowson, 1996).

A study related to TEFL was conducted by Prof. Reima Al-Jarf and it focused on the spelling problem of both the learners and the faculty. Through the use of a listening activity, it was revealed that 64% of the respondents made spelling errors which were phonological in nature. The remaining 36% of the respondents made orthographic spelling errors. The recommendation of the study highlighted the usage of phonemic segmentation practice which essentially requires patterns of letter to sound correspondence and visualization of words in terms of non-phonetically spelled words and syllables. (Weirsma, 1995).

The Attitude of Teachers and Students towards using Arabic in EFL Classrooms in Saudi Public Schools, a study by Haifa Al-Nofaile inspected the behaviours of the faculty members when Arabic language is employed as a facilitating tool in English classes. This study gained a very positive response from the young researchers and provided scope for further studies to be conducted in this domain (Bacon, 1990).

## Theoretical Notion of Teaching Language

Researchers, Theorists and Linguists regard pedagogical approach as highly significant in order to develop language teaching-learning practices in any context. They also press on the fact that using live textbooks, promotion of learning of both the faculty and the student through interest by liking to meaning and stressing two communication is of paramount importance. This presents the culture of learning and development in a natural form.



Source: (Mishan, 2005)

The above figure shows Mishan’s emphasis on using three levels for teaching language.

Blaz remarked that the education of a foreign language essentially centres around five objectives which are namely:

* Communities
* Connections
* Cultures
* Communication
* Comparisons

On the other hand Mishan claimed that 3 C’s were important which he identified as challenge, culture and currency. He further elucidated in his research that culture represents culture of the native speakers of the language, currency offers language and topic in the current usage as well as those which are relevant for the learners of the language and lastly challenge in those authentic texts are intrinsic, yet the language can be used for attaining a proficiency level (Ur, 1996).

Widdowson was of the opinion that one needs to comprehensively understand how the native speakers of the language of English utilise their skills and put the same into communicative use especially when it comes to class room learning. Hence, it is learned from the above that proficiency based, more material focused, and enhanced humanistic approaches are required to be used by both learners and the faculty members while adopting learning methods of EFL.

## EFL Learning Motivation

This section focuses on pointing out the reasons as to why students (which applies to the teachers as well) prefer to learn foreign languages and hence the reason for the faculty members to practice their teaching. It is inevitable to notice that all the learning activities is a direct result of the motivational forces and the same plays a crucial role in the learning of a foreign language which is English in Saudi in this paper. It has been seen that both extrinsic and intrinsic motivational forces lack in Saudi EFL classes. Thus, a motivational drive is often required to attain the objective of successfully making every learned person of the community be well versed in English.

It is extremely difficult from the perspective of the teachers to successfully teach the language of English to a class which is poorly motivated which is true in the case context of Saudi. Teachers and faculty members essentially shape the curriculum innovation which in order affects the motivational levels of the students. Hence, grooming of the teachers and their comprehensive training is so very vital for attaining the objective of making every student in Saudi well versed as far as the usage of the language of English is concerned.

This part of the review of the literature identifies the attributes which are considered to be necessary as far as the training and development of the faculty members is concerned so that they are seen as a role model by the students which would essentially result in effective learning.

***Use of Technology***: Contemporary times have been marked by a revolution in the technology sector. It is high time that the same needs to be reflected in the education industry as well. It is more than common to see students use Smartphone, tablets, laptops and other state of the art gadgets to enhance their learning experience. Hence, it is time that the same is utilised in the classrooms as well. Faculty members must understand the benefits of interactive learning which is possible through the use of technology. The same is applicable in the case of EFL as well where the students can see the videos and other forms of important material when it comes to learning the language of English (Mishan, 2005).

***Seminars***: It is crucial for a country like Saudi to hold regular seminars which invites foreign faculty so that both the faculty members and the students get exposure to guest lecturers which can turn out to be a great learning experience for them. Also, the student exchange program is yet another way of deepening the learning levels both for the faculty members and the students. This way there would be ample opportunity for the students and the faculty members to visit foreign countries where they would be essentially required to communicate in English during the period of their stay and hence a boost to their confidence.

***Constant Communication and use of Strategic Methods***: The faculty members need to consistently discuss their approaches for motivating the students and also for developing their own skill set. This is important because the most of the faculty members in Saudi schools and colleges are not native English speakers and are often required to sharpen their skills so that they result in providing adequate necessary knowledge to the Students. The senior management of the universities also needs to play an active part in formulating a strategic perspective so that the efforts of the faculty members yield maximum returns (Lee, 1995).

***Selection Criteria for the Faculty Members***: It is also a crucial element that the selection of the faculty members takes place in an organised manner and the best of the talents are hired for the role of faculty member. This is important as it is necessary for the students to view the faculty members as their role models and any deviation from the same can adversely affect the motivational levels of the students. Hence, the selection must be based on a specified eligibility criterion and only those candidates that successfully complete the requirements of being a faculty member should be offered a chance to teach the language of English to students.

***Proper Induction and Consistent Development***: One of the essential measures of adequate training of the faculty members includes a proper training via a comprehensive induction program. The induction helps the faculty members understand the importance of the EFL for both the faculty members and the university level student in Saudi. Further, this is not a onetime affair and has to be practised at constant intervals so that faculty members feel charged and go with the flow which results in a constant development as far as their key responsibility areas are concerned (Ellis, 1997).

## Summary

This section identifies the theoretical perspective of the research that has been carried out in the past in the domain of learning and development of Faculty members in EFL. Different experts of the industry have marked different conclusion with their respective studies. How learning is carried out in the classroom and what factors affect it has also been included. Further, the motivation behind learning the language of English has been elucidated. The last part of the Literature Review consists of specific points and training procedures which are essential for constant development of the faculty members (Herron, 1991).

# Methodology

Both primary and secondary research methods are applied in the given study. The use of secondary resources is more prevalent in the literature review where the use of academic journals, magazines, newspapers, public libraries has been made to find out literature in relation to the given research problem (Moskovsky, 2009).

A simple primary research methodology has been applied for the purpose of this study. Two questionnaires (Please Refer to Appendix A and Appendix B for the detailed questionnaire used) were used and distributed amongst the faculty members as a part of a small scale study. The respondents were randomly selected. The main source of gathering information was YIC website using which the questionnaire was e-mailed to the randomly selected faculty members and all the respondents and the participants were EFL teachers in Saudi. A total of only 13 respondents participated and were considered for the purpose of findings and analysis in this study. This leaves ample scope for more research in this given domain as a small number of respondents are certainly not enough to provide full proof evidence pertaining to the credibility of the research.

The responses of the participants have been analysed in the next section which leads to the findings of the report (Creswell, 2003).

# Findings

For the sake of simplicity of this study, Internet and Technology has been assumed to be playing a vital role as far as the grooming, professional development and training of the faculty members is concerned. Hence, the questionnaire includes specific questions related to Internet usage. It was seen that out of the 13 respondents, 10 respondents made use of Internet in their free time and also used the same to learn new and interesting things about the language of English which they can potentially use to share in the class room with the students. Also, the analysis of the major questions only, has been presented in this Findings part of this study (Crystal, 2003).

*Computer Usage: Faculty Members, N=13*

When asked about the significance of computer usage and technology in both professional development and enhancing the learning level of the students, 7 out of the 13 respondents approved that Internet and computers does play a crucial role in the contemporary times (Rogers, 1988).

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