A review of potential teacher development opportunities

Profession, Teacher

Introduction

This evaluative essay focuses on reviewingteacherprofessional development strategies in using assessment for learning (AfL) to improve English as an additional language (EAL) for primary pupils in England.

Teaching is a difficult job. Improvement and constant development are therefore necessary to ease the burden of hardworking teachers. As a result, teacher professional development is a mandatory requirement in many jurisdictions (Wiliam, 2011). Shimahara (1998) stated that teacher professional development is a typical concern in industrialized countries because it is the key to improving teaching. However, William (2011) mentioned that teachers feel inundated as they are continuously ' bombarded' with innovative strategies to increase their working efficiency.

Keeping teacher professional development in mind, the focus here also relates to the teaching and learning of English as an additional language. Globalisation plays a major role in stressing equal opportunities and social equity for all learners. Due to the long tradition of migration trends across the globe, the international concerns also encompass of contextualisesocial justicefor multi-lingual learners (Cajkler and Hall, 2009). To highlight this matter, a statistic from the Department forEducationin 2011 shows an increased in the number of ethnic minority pupils in English state funded primary schools (DfE, 2011).

This reflects the circumstance of England primary schools where pupils whose first language is other than English has increased in number. The

urgency of this matter is supported by Ofsted (2012) by stating that English has a momentous position in the school curriculum. Thus, teachers' 2 strategies to tackle this situation become the centre of attention. Where the English language has served as a lingua franca for ethnic minority pupils in England, literacy skills play an important role in theiracademicand everyday routines as well.

By putting forward the two important aspects of this essay; teacher professional development and EAL in primary schools, it is only necessary to mention the relevance of combining both of these aspects in a topic for discussion. With all duerespectto other core subjects in the curriculum, the reality of teaching as a difficult job and a statement made by National Association for Language Development in Curriculum (NALDIC, 2009: 1) on EAL that it is a ' very complex phenomenon', seem to have formidable implications for teacher professional development.

Educational reforms such as curriculum reform, does not guarantee necessary changes in classroom practices. It is well known that how a subject is taught wins over what is taught, hence ' pedagogy trumps curriculum' (Wiliam, 2011: 13). Therefore, when curriculum frameworks only work as far as guiding teachers in dealing with EAL, thus assessment for learning (AfL) is then best integrated in pedagogy to further develop the practice of serving teachers and raise pupils' achievements.

English as an Additional Language Classrooms in England

According to a brief description by NALDIC (2011), there are over a million bilingual pupils participating in teaching and learning contexts in United

Kingdom. According to statistics from Department for Education and Skills (DfES, 2006a: 8), there has been an increased of ethnic minority pupils in primary schools from 18. 3% in 2004 to 19. 3% in 2005 and then reaching 20. 6% in 2006. Each of these pupils enters school communities with minority language that is not English as theirmother tonguelanguage.

It is stated by Hughes (2002) that teachers need to consider pupils' diverseCultureto establish learning environments that are meaningful. It is important that teachers attend to their learning needs in order to achieve teachinggoals. The diversity in culture that may cause challenges in pupils' learning according to Hughes (2002) includes the kind of spoken language use by them outside of school context such as at home. English as an Additional Language (EAL) according to Davison (2007) refers to ethnic minority pupils who are perceived as to needing support with their English development.

These pupils possess language other than English (LOTE) as their mother tongue language. The terminology of English as a Second Language (ESL) is also commonly used by many researchers and teachers to identify these LOTE pupils. However, there has been a rise of issues about the usage of ESL as a term in pedagogy hence, the term EAL is said to be a more appropriate term to be used as it suits the context where the English language abilities of bilingual or multi-lingual pupils are multi-leveled (Davison, 2007).

These issues revolve around the fact that LOTE pupils should not all be assumed to take English language as their second language. These pupils can be 4 fluent in speaking and writing in their mother tongue language but

not in English language, or it can be vice versa (NALDIC, 2009). On the other hand, these pupils can be more fluent and able to socialise with their schoolmates in English language informally, but not be able to engage in academic writing and meet the requirement of the national standards.

Cummins' (1979) distinction between Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive and Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) as cited in DfES training toolkit programme (DfES, 2006b) shows that communicative or conversational skills (BICS) of pupils usually develop first in verbal exchanges context before they develop their cognitive (thinking and learning skills) and academic languages (CALP). In general, it takes two to three years for upils to be fluent in English as an additional language and an average of five to seven and even ten years for bilingual pupils to be competent in cognitive and academic domains. Essentially, EAL teachers need to know that only by pupils achieving development in both of their cognitive and academic language can they contribute to their academic success (DfES, 2006b). In an actual fact, how successful is the teaching and learning of English language subject in England primary schools?

According to inspections done by Ofsted from April 2008 until March 2011 in over 133 primary schools, the report highlights the finding that primary schools have less improvements in English attainments in comparison to secondary schools (Ofsted, 2012). The problems listed are encompassed of having fewer pupils achieving national expectations in reading, and quality in teaching writing is varied such that less efforts were given in spelling and handwriting. Slower improvements in primary schools are then linked to the

fact that there is a lack of specialists present in the teaching and learning context.

Although, due to 5 inspections done by Ofsted consist of individuals, there might be biased element involve in the evaluation. Nonetheless, Therefore, I do believe there should be more researches focusing on the competences of teachers through teacher training programmes and continuing professional development. Relevance of Formative Assessment in EAL " Sensitive formative assessment of pupils' classroom performance demands a high level of teacher awareness of pupil needs...teachers need to take account... the even more complex and less ' visible' aspects of language use. (NALDIC, 2003: 1) I can relate to the above quoted statement by NALDIC (2003) where teachers are required to carefully plan formative assessment for pupils' learning by considering the complexity of language education especially EAL. According to Wiliam (2011), there has been a lack of researches done for teacher professional development. Learning styles, educational neuroscience and content area knowledge are the common areas included in teacher professional development. Thus, why focus on formative assessment in this context?

Getting into the basic details of understanding assessment, Green and Johnson (2010: 14) define assessment as more than just tests and quizzes for the purpose of grading. Furthermore, assessment is viewed as a mix of methods to implement before, during and after lessons by taking advantage and making good use of pupils' former or current knowledge to enhance

learning. From the definition itself, they feasibly elaborated three main purposes of assessment 6 based on occurrence of the instructions.

Diagnosticassessment happens before teaching, formative assessment (assessment for learning) happen during teaching and summative assessment (assessment of learning) happens after teaching (Green and Johnson, 2010). Thus, the terms diagnostic, formative and summative can be seen as defining the functions or purposes of the wide range of assessments. Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam (2003: 31) mentioned that there are four ways of assessing pupils; questioning or classroom dialogue, feedback or feed-forward, self and peer-assessment, and formative use of summative tests.

The relevance of focusing on formative assessment is due to its compatibility alongside many other aspects that contribute to pupils' achievements (such as age, abilities and multileveled language). NALDIC (2003) agrees on the insufficiency of only using National Curriculum English and thus resulted in Assessment for learning (AfL) which is synonymous to formative assessment, to be used on a daily instructional basis (NALDIC, 2009). According to Stiggins (2005) as cited in Wiliam (2011), Assessment for learning exists throughout the process of pupils' learning.

AfL provides pupils with information of their learning progress through feedback as evidence and at the same time, assist pupils on how to improve and meet achievement standards. NALDIC Formative descriptors consist of assessment framework to assist teachers on day-to-day methods or provide stages for diagnosing pupils' progress, and also to help teachers plan and

integrate AfL into EAL teaching approaches (NALDIC, 2009). Issues in Assessing English as an Additional Language 7 We have only looked at the complexity of language in terms of its terminology.

Davison (2007) mentioned that knowing what to be taught and learnt in classrooms must precede the action of assessing EAL pupils' development. Other than that, teachers must also take notes on pupils' knowledge prior to lessons to provide them with better learning opportunities. Shepard (2000) talked about two different problems in relation to teacher practices and pupils' prior knowledge to learning. She stated that quite a number of teachers only documented results from pre-test and post-test assessment tasks however failed to subsume pupils' pre-test results for enhancing pupils' learning.

In another case, a sizeable amount of teachers involved in reading and language subject had the tendency of using activities that acknowledge pupils' background knowledge but failed to comprehensively integrate them with assessment. In practice, EAL pupils would have more predicaments in learning English as their additional language in comparison to native speakers of English pupils learning English. Hence, teachers are required to be more sensitive towards the cultural background and prior knowledge of these EAL pupils to help fulfill their learning needs.

Language as a second language contains facets such as grammatical, socio-cultural and strategic abilities taken from models that can be referred for assessing. However, Widdowson (2001) as cited by Davison and Leung (2009) stated that the complexity of language is mainly due to the absence

of comprehensive views and researches on the relations of these components, thus resulting in theoretical issues arising such as on the ' validity' and ' reliability' on assessing criteria of language.

For an example, in assessing writing, there may be a question on the validity of perhaps teachers putting more emphasise on grammar proficiency in comparison to creative writing. 8 Thus, theoretically, with the nature of language being multifaceted and the different abilities of LOTE speaking pupils in mind, one has to wonder how teachers deal with and monitor their development and progress. Of course there are NALDIC Formative descriptors which provide framework and guidance to teachers; however, there is the persistent question of whether or not this is enough.

An experiment was done by Davison in 1998 (Davison, 2007) involving ten Hong Kong immigrant students in Australian secondary schools. The result of the research indicates that teachers of these immigrant students had the tendency of creating a ' community of dialogic exchanges' (Davison, 2007: 542). Referring to formative assessment, classroom dialogue is one of the areas used to assess students to enhance learning, nonetheless, it is the way that teachers use this method that really determines the outcomes to be positive or negative for their learning.

Here, the teachers seemed to acknowledge the background of the EAL students but omitted their learning needs. The teachers developed negative judgments towards these students such as perceiving them as depending too much on their mother-tongue language and having nomotivationto learn and speak in English. Thus, this poor discernment by teachers as assessors

should be a major professional concern. Furthermore, in reflection to Davison's research, I would like to include some issues raised by Cumming (2009) in the Forum section of TESOL Quarterly.

Briefly, Cumming put forward problems that relate teachers and assessment. Firstly, the problem is on teachers' lack of knowledge on assessment, and also questioning their professional abilities since there are still a lack of studies done to help answer how language teachers build up their competences 9 throughout theircareer. Secondly, teachers having a hard time in choosing assessment approaches that would work better in helping pupils meet the curriculum standards. Lastly, there are issues involved to how teachers relate assessment with pupils' development and learning needs.

As a result, the judgment skills, knowledge and abilities of teachers as assessors, are some of the many factors that should be considered in improving within teacher professional development. Teacher Professional Development: Novice to Expert? The demands put on teachers' shoulders can be quite a jargon to others who are not involved directly in the related profession. There is even a saying that I was once told and here it is; the works of a teacher to others as they see it is only a tip of an iceberg.

Throughout my teaching experiences, I slowly grasped the meaning of it as the reality of the profession manifested itself through the extra hours of marking, lesson planning and researching. During my earlier periods in the teaching diploma programmes, I believed teachers with years of school experience ought to master the techniques of teaching. It was my

assumption that veteran teachers should outperform novice teachers. Nonetheless, with the passing of time, I have learned to believe that experience would only give positive impacts on pupils' outcomes when the serving teachers bring with them developments in their practices.

Of course the time factor contributes to teacher professional development, such as to give ample opportunities to teachers to experience and develop their skills. However, for judging on how good a teacher is, it does not entirely matter on the length of time the teacher has taught, but what the teacher does within this time that is really a concern. 10 Such as, how teachers develop teaching approaches on bringing in greaterlearning experiencefor pupils in EAL classrooms or setting.

Referring to my old belief, a trite assumption that I'd probably make would be that teachers should just be left in schools for a period of time to eventually learn to teach better. Surprisingly, this assumption is proven to have a little bit of truth. Wiliam (2011) has put forward research done by Leigh (2010) on 90, 000 Australian elementary school students. The research shows a small gap of differences on the impacts of students' progress as a result from the teaching between veteran and novice teachers (see Appendix A).

Hence, a couple of years advance by veteran teachers in the career put them at a slightly better teaching result, yet Leigh stated the majority agree that the case is not always the same. The attention of even on the tiniest bit of truth on the assumption that veteran teachers teach better than novices, is better turned to how they teach and develop their practices. That is, by

improving their inner developments; wisdom, knowledge, experience and polishing their critical judgment skills (Dadds, 2001).

On the other hand, it is vital to realise that the whole process of developing teacher practices does not evolve entirely on teachers simply catching up with the latest educational trends (Wiliam, 2011). Metaphorically, it is not as easy as reading ingredients off a recipe book and lacking of involvement in the process of cooking itself. Putnam and Borko (1997) as cited in Shepard (2000) agreed that constant experimentation and reflection on pedagogical models in real classrooms context by teachers precede beneficial changes to their teaching practices, beliefs and attitudes. 1 Teacher Professional Development Strategies in EAL Looking from an international view, Shimahara (1998) stated that teacher professional development in every countries differ from one another in terms of its strategies. In Japan, the strategies of professional development encourage peer-development, meanwhile in America; the strategies are focused on following paradigms for self-development. Higgins and Leat (2001) talked about effective teacher development by linking its models in a mapping diagram (see Appendix B).

They attempted on linking models such as those that seek on transitional stages of novice to expert teachers, teachers' professional reflection, pedagogical knowledge, subject knowledge, socialisation and personal explanatory. This goes back to relate on the previous research on 90, 000 elementary students in Australia on the differences of performance between novice and veteran teachers (Wiliam 2011). It would not be enough to

prepare individual teachers with only a specific skill in teaching development such as on pedagogical approaches alone.

This is because teacher professional development is multi-faceted and the components are interrelated. Although there are imperfections on trying to map out the complex relationships of models within teacher development due to many different meanings of the concepts in literature, however, they agreed on stressing the importance of teachers in having explicit work purposes (Higgins and Leat, 2001). Due to the major focus on mainstreamed classrooms in English schools, Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) therefore aims in providing all pre-service teachers 12 ith the experiences of EAL integration across all curriculum subjects (Cajkler and Hall, 2009). In my home country, the curriculum has a vast of English Language medium subjects listed for the majority local and non-native English speaking pupils. Thus, in the previous years, preservice and post-service teachers in Brunei had the opportunity to choose upon entering the teaching training programmes such as to specialise in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL).

However, it is acknowledged by Cajkler and Hall (2009) that despite the urgency to meet the demand of increasing EAL pupils in England, the inclusion of EAL specialisation in pre-service teachers training programmes is out of the question due to the already ' very crowded programme' (Cajkler and Hall, 2009: 154). In the initial training, the confidence level of newly qualified teachers (NQTs) was low especially in the fields of assessing English and teaching of literacy.

The study also noted that the training provided pre-service teachers with less involvement with the national guidelines for assessment of EAL pupils; Language in Common. As a result, 45% from one hundred and fifteen respondents prioritised teaching skills for EAL as the most essential further training category for continuing professional development (Cajkler and Hall, 2009). Thus, assessment and language developments are suggested to be centralised in the teacher training programmes.

Therefore, in 2006, the introduction of training toolkit for EAL Excellence and enjoyment: teaching and learning for bilingual pupils in the primary years (DfES, 2006b) to schools aims to raise understanding on EAL pedagogy and provide guidance on teaching approaches for bilingual learners. Then, White et al (2006) in their evaluation of the pilot programme of the DfES toolkit (DfES, 2006b) mentioned that there has been a positive improvement in teachers' confidence and better comprehensive view of EAL pedagogy by teachers. 3 If I insisted on my previous assumption on letting novice teachers evolve to experts, Higgins and Leat (2001) pointed out that there are again stages involve in the transition to increase expertise. These transitional stages are not shown in the mapping diagram (see Appendix B). Nonetheless, it triggers such questions as to what extend do we measure achievements of teachers to confirm their expertise in teaching, hence, what makes one a teaching expert?

Does defining one's expertise help others to improve, such as through demonstrations of teaching to pre-service and post-service teachers? Changes can only occur and produce results when teachers are willing to

first, change from within. Perhaps I can look at it from this point of view where education reformers provide new teaching models to schools, but instead, all these innovative strategies are making teachers feel inundated by them and as a result, changes intended never take place in classrooms (Wiliam, 2011).

Let's also reflect on the situation of the ten Hong Kong students where teachers assess them through classroom dialogue activity but misinterpreted in using that assessment to make judgments that did not contribute in helping them to learn better. As a result, Dadds (2001: 51) emphasise teachers to cultivate their inner ' voice' and judgment or the ' expert' within them before accepting and using instructions from the ' expert' outside. Teachers are learners themselves. They need to learn on how to look at their rooted values on the profession first before thinking on improving and catering the learning needs of pupils.

Suggestions to Overcome Issues in EAL 14 Other than participating actively in the schools or the nation's teacher professional development programmes, there are also many other individualistic ways for serving teachers to successfully implement AfL in EAL pedagogical approaches. In the context of teacher professional development, it really depends on teachers to improve their knowledge and professional abilities; to trust their instincts, experience and wisdom in order to help pupils attain better in their learning.

Also, it is essential for teachers to be explicit on the learning intentions before assessing pupils for learning. For lesson preparations, teachers in

England are opened to a wide range of resources for EAL and assessment tasks such as from EAL publications, DfES toolkit (2006b) and NALDIC official website which provide great research platforms for teachers and tutors. Teachers can use information on pupils' background and prior knowledge to adapt suitable assessment tasks in classrooms.

According to Shepard (2000), teachers may even evaluate their own practices through classroom assessments by becoming liberal and open into discussing matters related to improving instructions with pupils. Another way of helping teachers to develop their assessment practices is by using video or audio recorder while assessing pupils as media to allow teachers to reflect and improve their approaches, as well as, to enable teachers to better understand the learning needs of their pupils.

For peer-development, EAL teachers may make informal meetings with their EAL teaching colleagues to discuss and make amendments on certain assessments criteria (Davison, 2007; Davison and Leung, 2009). In addition to the issue of assessment ' validity and reliability', the matter can be partially put at ease if the assessing of pupils is done by teachers who know them very well. In addition, 15 teachers should be given great autonomy to plan and help the learning of their own pupils (Davison and Leung, 2009).

However, if the case of ' validity and reliability' is over-emphasised, therefore, I believethat the status of teachers as assessors may be perceived as weak and the whole focus of AfL would be none other than a replacement of standardised traditional ways of assessing. As cited by Shepard (2000), Assessment Reform Group (1999) which consists of researchers from

England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, put forward their discourse to the government policies on three important aspects. Firstly, to amend inspectorate policies to help guarantee teachers as qualified assessors for pupils' learning.

Secondly, increase the funding on professional development opportunities for teachers. Finally, relieve teachers from the apprehensive pressure of standard examinations when planning instructions for pupils' learning. Conclusion The impetus of this essay derived from the fact whereby is supported by NALDIC (2009) that English as an Additional Language (EAL) development is a rather difficult situation that gives impact to teachers' professional experience. There has been a great emphasise on EAL in England due to its long tradition of migration and mainstream classrooms in primary schools.

In relation to the urgency, teacher professional development in England becomes the foreground in dealing with the increasing number of language other than the English (LOTE) speaking pupils in state funded schools (DfE, 2011). On the other hand, the integration of AfL in the teaching of EAL is seen to be the best way to assist teachers in increasing pupils' literacy competences. NALDIC Formative descriptors, established in 2009, serve as assessment framework that provides teachers with 16 approaches to diagnose the progress of pupils in EAL and provide them with feedback evidence to improve learning (NALDIC, 2003).

Language education is very complex. The nature of language involves stages of competencies and encompasses of many interrelated components

(Davison and Leung, 2009). Thus, trying to figure out the abilities of bilingual or multilingual pupils in English language and which aspect or components of the language to use to judge their competences, is quite the phenomenon. Therefore, there are issues involving teachers' critical judgments and wisdom whilst assessing EAL pupils that highlights the necessity of teacher professional development.

According to Higgings and Leat (2001) by referring to Teacher Training Agency (1997), primary teacher training in United Kingdom provided a course where pre-service teachers are to obtain all the needs of professional learning by attending ample of lectures on subject knowledge, teaching approaches and a number of demonstrations on teaching. However, from a study done by Cajkler and Hall (2009), the result shows that there is inconsistency in the focus of EAL in the teacher training programme provided by TDA in England.

Time is an essential element in development but it is also relevant to look at teachers as individuals with different abilities. From my experience, some teachers could be talented and creative than the others, and some teachers could be more motivated. Therefore, arguing on which aspect contributes more in improving teacher practices is impossible due to the fact that it is beyond my capability for discussion and the limitation of this essay. In a nutshell, I agree that that teacher professional development is complex.

Education reformers should not merely focus on one area of teaching practices but also to acknowledge other teaching related factors. 17 Nonetheless, Wiliam (2011) paraphrased Doug Lenov (2010) and stated that

teachers have no maximum limitation of success and should think that striving for continuous development throughout their career is necessary. After all, teachers are not just essentially required to help develop EAL pupils into becoming capable learners in their classrooms but, they also help them to become capable members of the schools and cultural societies (Davison, 2007).

Therefore, teachers' skeptical attitude towards innovative strategies that would help improve their teaching has to be countered with other strategies that would prepare them with the changes they need from within. Iteratively, professional development for teachers needs to be guided with intentions that are relevant and supportive to their continuous professional development in order to face the continuous challenges of the evolving society nowadays.

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shows the rate of teacher productivity in relation to their years of working experience (Leigh, 2010) cited in Wiliam (2011: 28)