

## Chapter Six

### **Exploring the Impact of Teacher Education Pedagogy on EFL Reading Teacher Identities: A United Arab Emirates Case**

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#### **Issues that Motivated the Research**

##### **Issue one: The power of prior reading experiences**

Developing an identity as a reading teacher is a long process of socialization, involving school experiences, teaching beliefs and reflections about teaching (Borg, 2003; Day, Kington, Stobart & Sammons, 2005; Clarke, 2008). This “apprenticeship of observation” (Lortie, 1975, p. 61) marks teachers’ socialization as students throughout their schooling, as an important influence on their teaching practices (Lortie, 1975). However, these memories formulate a conception of the teaching of reading based on perceptions developed by people when they were students, rather than when they were teachers (Lortie, 1975). This biographical baggage (Collinson, 2004) may provide a deep, though not necessarily accurate, sense of what it means to be a developing teacher of reading. For example, in the present research context, Emirati Bachelor of Education (BEd) students enter college with years of exposure to traditional behaviorist reading instruction, including a focus on reading comprehension, direct translation, and intensive reading skills. The quality of this instruction has a lasting impact on how they define themselves as readers and developing reading teachers (McNally, Harold, & McAskill, 2002; Taha-Thomure, 2003; Richardson, 2004; Clarke, 2005).

Teachers’ beliefs and past experiences as learners may conflict with the images of teaching promoted in teacher education programs (Freeman & Richards, 1996). In fact, it may be unrealistic to expect student teachers to initiate constructivist settings in schools if their prior experiences do not include constructivist-based experiences (Kaufman, 1996). As Eilam’s (2002) study in Israel shows, the teaching behaviors of Arabic student teachers are rooted in cultural beliefs and perceptions. It is, therefore, an important and challenging role for the teacher educator in a UAE context, not only to incorporate student teachers’ prior knowledge into curricula, but provide opportunities for practical experiences and reflection upon those experiences (Freeman & Richards, 1996). Teachers must also harness and shift different forms of knowledge and ensure that changes are reflected in students’ teaching practices. This focus involves helping student teachers move from a philosophy of teaching and learning developed as learners, to a philosophy of teaching consistent with their emergent understandings of the language learning and teaching processes developed in college. Their identities are constructed, reconstructed, and deconstructed through an ongoing process of interpreting past and current educational experiences, where their “identities are neither intrinsically stable nor intrinsically fragmented” (Day et al., 2005, p. 601).

##### **Issue two: Impact of teacher education delivery approaches upon student teacher practices**

Seen primarily as the inculcation of knowledge and skills, the potentially powerful effects of teacher educators’ teaching styles on student teachers’ practices have mostly remained unrecognized to date

(Korthagen, Kessels, Koster, Lagerwerf & Wubbels, 2001; Lunenberg, Korthagen, & Swennen 2007), particularly in an Arabic context (Barber, Mourshed, & Whelan, 2007). At the heart of this issue is what Kennedy (1991) called “the improvement of practice problem” (p. 3). If the aim of teacher education programs is not simply to transmit explanations of teaching but to support teachers-in-training in developing their own understandings and practices, then the issue of how teacher educators in the UAE conceptualize the knowledge and practices that they seek to develop in student teachers is critical.

Many teacher educators believe that student teachers learn in a way similar to that of children – through having opportunities for hands-on experiences in an interactive, supportive environment (Colby & Atkinson, 2004). While practical experience, including activities such as micro-teaching, problem-solving, and internships, has long been a part of most language teacher education programs, these experiences are often too few and not sufficiently focused on the realities of the classroom (Crandall, 1996; Korthagen et al., 2001), including in an Arabic context (Eilam, 2002; Barber et al., 2007). Drawing on the work of Bruner (1986) and Vygotsky (1978), a number of language educators (Crandall, 2000; Cameron & Baker, 2004; Verity, 2005; Lunenberg et al., 2007) recommend that more extensive and intensive practical experiences be integrated throughout teacher education programs, providing student teachers with greater opportunities to link theory to practice and receive support from experienced teacher educators.

As student teachers learn through example, teacher educators seek pedagogical approaches and experiences that will challenge their thinking about teaching and learning, while at the same time connect theory to practice. Also critical for professional development is to involve students in “learning activities that are similar to ones that they will use with their students” (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2000, p. 204). However, teacher educators may not often practice what they preach or function as models for the teaching practices they seek to promote (Anderson, 2005). In order to improve the impact of teacher education to develop new visions of learning in the UAE, teacher educators may need to begin teaching student teachers as those trainees are expected to teach.

### **Context of the Research**

In response to a demand by government authorities to significantly improve educational practices in the UAE, and to simultaneously Emiritize and professionalize the teaching profession (Mograby, 1999; UAE Ministry of Education and Youth, 2000; Clarke & Otaky, 2006), Vision 2030 was developed. This plan was created to reform education in the UAE by encouraging effective teaching methods. Within this recognition of the need for reform in UAE schools and classrooms, one issue of concern to educators and teacher educators is the need to develop a culture of reading for pleasure.

However, the fostering of a reading culture among Arab students as a pleasurable activity is a challenge in both the UAE and the Arab world. This obstacle exists partly because of the belief that Arabs share an oral rather than a written culture (Shannon 2003). Within this situation, those entering the education profession in the UAE often face considerable obstacles in the government’s primary school system, particularly in the teaching of English reading. Despite the enormous wealth of the UAE, many public schools are ill-equipped, lacking basic facilities such as proper libraries. Furthermore, public libraries are not common. For example, the city of Abu Dhabi, with a population of more than 1,000,000 people, currently has only one library. A consequence of this

situation is that many Emirati parents are unable to fully support their children's learning. Moreover, schools are commonly staffed with poorly trained and poorly paid Egyptian, Lebanese, Syrian, and Tunisian teachers, who operate within a traditional behaviorist model of transmission based on rote memorization. Ironically, these same teachers supervise Emirati student teachers who have attended extremely well-funded colleges and universities, and have been exposed to radically different Western ideas of the processes of teaching and learning reading.

Within the context outlined above, this research provides insights into the teaching of reading in UAE primary government schools. This study specifically demonstrates, through innovative examples, how Emirati student teachers aspire to make a difference in increasing the quality of the teaching of reading to young learners.

### **Research Questions Addressed**

The focus of the study was to determine the impact of a revised teacher education methodology course for second-year BEd students on the reading approaches they used during teaching practice placements in foreign language classrooms. The specific research questions arising out of this context and out of the literature review were as follows:

1. What is the perceived and observed influence of a revised (Vygotskian social constructivist) teacher education curriculum upon student teachers' methods of teaching reading during teaching practice in UAE foreign language classrooms?
2. What is the perceived and observed impact of reforming delivery in the college classroom (using the constructivist delivery innovations of performance modeling, systematic micro-teaching and problem-based learning) upon student teachers' methods of teaching reading during teaching practice in UAE foreign language classrooms?
3. How do student teachers interpret the impact of teacher education pedagogy upon their prior beliefs, knowledge, and practices, and how does this impact their beliefs and knowledge about teaching reading in an EFL Emirati context?

## Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

**Table 1. An overview of tools, contexts, and timeframe for phases of data collection**

	<b>Phase one: Intervention</b>	<b>Phase two: Application</b>	<b>Phase three: Interpretation</b>
<b>Description</b>	1. Rewriting and developing the course 2. Implementing curriculum review and delivery approaches (microteaching, problem-based learning, and modeling)	A teaching practice placement during the college intervention of a revised reading methodology course where student teachers teach reading in Emirati government primary schools	1. The perceived influence of college content and delivery by student teachers using a dialogic forum. 2. 6 Teacher educators and 90 student teachers evaluating course content and delivery
<b>Timeframe</b>	20-week Reading Methodology Course in Semester 2, Year 2	2-week teaching practice experience in Semester 2, Year 2	End of 20-week Reading Methodology Course
<b>Context</b>	90 student teachers across 6 women's colleges in the college system, taught by 6 faculty of education	16 student teachers in 16 UAE government school classrooms	90 student teachers engaged in online discussions across 6 women's colleges in the college system  16 focus group student teachers in one college
<b>Research Tools</b>	Documentation: course outlines and course evaluations (pre-intervention)	Non-participant observation Documentation: Teaching Practice Reports	Online discussions Focus group interviews Documentation: course evaluations

Initial documentary evidence from both student teacher and faculty course evaluations revealed a need to change the Year Two reading methodology course to make it more relevant to the context of teaching in an Emirati environment. Semi-structured focus group interviews uncovered student teachers' perceptions of the influence of teacher education delivery innovations and curricular changes on their own reading teaching methods. Student teachers were assigned to a particular focus group according to their ability as reading teachers (based on teaching practice reports). These focus groups included categories of 'confident', 'developing', and 'reluctant' reading teachers, and were then used to facilitate the comparison of perceptions and abilities of developing reading styles. There were four to eight participants in each group, as determined by Krueger and Casey's (2000) guidelines for focus group numbers most likely to produce optimal interpersonal dynamics. The focus group interview context aimed to provide a safe environment for participants where they could "share ideas, beliefs, and attitudes in the company of people from the same socioeconomic, ethnic, and gender backgrounds" (Madriz, 2000, p. 835).

Online discussions were used to evaluate how student teachers interpreted the impact of teacher education experiences upon their prior beliefs, new knowledge, and practices of teaching reading. The written nature of the online mode provided these EFL student teachers with time to develop their thoughts and arguments (Le Cornu & White, 2000). Drawing on the social construction of mind, language, and discourse (Vygotsky, 1978), online discussions also maintained an emphasis on reflection and reasoning about teaching (Johnson, 1999). Finally, non-participant observational analysis was carried out by teacher educators at College X, to observe and monitor the student teachers' styles of teaching reading in action in their EFL primary school classrooms.

The process of analyzing data was complex, because it involved a hybrid approach to qualitative thematic analysis. In that approach, emergent themes related to the effectiveness of curriculum development and of instructional delivery of a revised teacher education reading course became the categories for analysis. The analyses used a deductive a priori approach advocated by Crabtree and Miller (1999) to reach the first level of interpretive understanding. The data-driven inductive approach of Boyatzis (1998) using manual coding was also employed by highlighting key themes and words to reach the second level of interpretive understanding. Flanagan's (1954) Critical Incident Technique (Farrell, 2008), was used to draw out the most memorable aspects of the student teachers' past and present learning experiences that had made a difference in their understanding of themselves as developing teachers (Goodson & Sikes, 2001), and particularly in their style of the teaching of reading during teaching practice. Other data, such as teaching practice reports and course evaluations, were analyzed using the cut-and-paste technique (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990), in which sections relevant to the research questions were identified and categorized into the key themes. Color coding was used where necessary to organize the material into 'chunks' or themes (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). This further coding process identified coherent patterns across the data, providing a degree of cross-referencing between the different types of data collected, as well as between the two data analysis approaches.

### **About the participants**

As the study's epistemological orientation is interpretative, the findings rest mainly on the perceptions of an intact group of sixteen Emirati female student teachers who were undertaking the methodology course on the teaching of reading. Using homogeneous purposive sampling, (\*selective

or subjective sampling, guided by a qualitative research design) (Patton, 1990), the production of meaning, tacit knowledge, and naturalistic generalizations were emphasized in semi-structured dialogic forums amongst an intact group of Emirati women. The anonymous contributions of 76 secondary participants from across the UAE (who also studied the reading methodology course), in both online discussions and course evaluations, confirmed the perceptions of the core group of student teachers in College X. All participants demonstrated an increased self-awareness, reflection on practice, and a problem-solving orientation to the EFL reading classroom. Eight international teacher educators, one of whom was the researcher, were involved in the study and conducted non-participant observations and course evaluations. In this sense, the study incorporates an implicit ethnographic facet, in terms of Hammersley's (2002) depiction of ethnography, which involves the researcher in the everyday life of the key participants as their teacher educator. This partially ethnographic aspect is also mirrored in the study's pedagogical orientation, using socio-cultural approaches.

All participating student teachers, regardless of background (i.e. desert farming Bedouin or city merchant), dress in a black *abaya* (cloak) and *shayla* (head scarf), with only their faces uncovered. Most of these women are driven to and from college by a male relative or driver in vehicles with tinted windows. Their home lives, "which play a central role in their experiences, [are] very restricted compared with women students from Western countries" (Richardson, 2004, p. 432). For example, the reality for most of these young women is a pre-destined life where marriage is arranged, often during their B.Ed. degree. The student teachers' home lives are often controlled by elders, and most of them are prohibited to socialize with men, shop alone, or travel without chaperones. However, despite society's adherence to a strict Muslim code of behavior for women and contrary to the perceptions of the typical Emirati woman, who is "protected from public display and not involved in the public arena" (Richardson, 2004, p. 433), this study's core group of student teachers are enthusiastic and empowered to contribute to the building of their country's education system. While they are the first generation of Emirati student teachers to attain a degree in education and much needed agents of change, they are nevertheless a product of behaviorist schooling themselves. It is most likely negative memories of previous learning experiences that fuel their desire for educational change.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### **Finding one: Transformational teacher education pedagogy: Promoting a reading culture in primary school classrooms**

Initial documentary evidence from both student and faculty course evaluations revealed a need to change teacher education content and delivery, teaching of reading practices in an Emirati environment, and the promotion of a reading culture in primary schools. In addressing research questions one and two, with a focus on curricular and pedagogic changes, this case study involved the shaping and contextualizing of a teacher education reading methodology course at College X. Keeping in mind what student teachers need to know about reading to teach it effectively in the context of language learning in UAE primary schools – by moving from understanding reading as a multifaceted, complex phenomenon to the practical application of concepts and methodologies –

Emirati student teachers' capacity to teach reading successfully was increased. This movement was seen as a catalyst for addressing negative attitudes towards reading in Emirati schools along with targeting the improvement of reading pedagogy itself.

Within this study, the potential influence of teacher education on developing reading teaching styles was explored. Particularly, explicit performance modeling of reading approaches and implicit modeling of positive attitudes towards reading were addressed. Based on course evaluations, teaching practice reports, and observations, modeled constructivist reading lessons in college were found to be a major influence on shaping what student teachers did in the EFL classroom and the reading culture they promoted. Using NUD\*IST statistical inductive coding, effective elements noted by student teachers in focus group interviews included modeling in the college classroom the following: shared reading; reader's theatre; electronic books; storybags; vodcasts/videos; reading aloud; pre-, while, and post- reading stages; questioning techniques; Total Physical Response (TPR) activities; puppets and props; using intonation, rhythm and pitch while reading; role play; drop everything and read; library week events, including guest authors, reading workshops, panel discussions, and school visits; use of resources: musical instruments; post-it notes; and powerpoint presentations.

Teaching practice reports revealed that student teachers did indeed experiment with these modeled interactive strategies during their teaching practice placements, demonstrating that many student teachers taught as they had been taught to teach. For example, student teachers on teaching practice placements reported that the lively and attractive features of storybags (a cloth bag filled with a book, puppets and related activities) further engaged EFL learners in the storylines and sustained their interest for longer periods of time:

My students were so interested in the storybags of *The Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle, that when the lesson ended, they asked if I could read it again with them. They never did this before.

(Focus Group Interviews, 2007, p. 1)

The following quote demonstrates student teachers' perceived influence of modeling positive beliefs and attitudes towards reading and motivating EFL students to read for pleasure, as modeled by their teacher educator:

We've taken all the approaches... that can or cannot be implemented in Emirati classrooms .... Now we know which is good and what is not good for young EFL learners.... Also our view of reading teaching is different from our teachers. I mean they thought only about comprehension, pronunciation, and grammar. We want students to develop a love of reading and not be afraid to make mistakes. This is what we learnt in college.

(Focus Group interviews, Group 1, 2007, p. 1)

Student teachers further expressed a desire to become agents of change, by setting themselves apart from their former teachers, moving to more child-centered approaches, instilling a love of reading among EFL children, and creating a positive reading culture. An example of these changes is found in the comment below:

From our past experiences, some reading techniques in EFL classrooms were not really promoting the love of reading, so now as future teachers we really want to promote the love of reading so that students will have the desire to read for pleasure in a reading friendly environment ... we know what we have to do to improve this situation (Focus Group Interviews, Group 1, 2007 p. 6).

The evidence from student teacher responses indicates that effective teacher education pedagogy, particularly performance modeling of reading approaches and behaviors, can indeed influence styles of teaching reading. This evidence also shows that student teachers can be better prepared with the skills and strategies necessary to teach reading in UAE classrooms.

**Finding two: Contrasting the traditional behaviorist reading paradigm with the college constructivist reading paradigm**

The data in Table 2 are drawn from online discussions that summarize the discursive construction of subthemes that emerged. In addressing research question 3, these subthemes were used to evaluate how student teachers interpret the impact of teacher education experiences upon their prior beliefs, new knowledge, and reading practices during teaching practice. The online asynchronous forums gave EFL student teachers time to develop their thoughts, arguments (Jonassen, 1996), and statements of belief that were personalized and extended. The analysis used a combination of deductive thematic analysis along with NUD\*IST inductive coding to organize and confirm emerging themes direct from the data. The broad categories of ‘a traditional reading paradigm’ and ‘a college reading paradigm’ form the opposing themes below of ‘becoming EFL reading teachers’ from the perspective of 90 student teachers across six UAE colleges over a six-month period.

**Table 2. The discursive construction of ‘traditional classroom delivery’ versus ‘college delivery of reading methodology’**

<b>Traditional Reading Paradigm</b>	<b>College Reading Paradigm</b>
Teacher-centered	Student-centered
Behaviorist approaches e.g., Round Robin Reading and the alphabetic approach	Using constructivist and behaviorist, approaches, e.g. shared reading, reading aloud, reader’s theater, phonics)
Accuracy	Fluency - Reading with intonation, meaning
Direct learning - comprehension exercises	Indirect learning of language through stories
Passive Teaching – drilling of reading textbook	Active Teaching – role play, props and instruments; improvising; reading for pleasure; authentic texts
Whole class choral reading	Differentiated reading and scaffolding
Bare walls	Print- and literacy-rich environment
Listen, repeat, and memorize	Challenged and scaffolded, develop criticality, reflection and questioning skills
Grammar, comprehension exercises	Three stages in a reading lesson: pre, while, post
One book – emphasis on course book	A variety of genres, course book as a guide
Low motivation and self-esteem	High motivation and self-esteem
Reading happens in school	Reading happens at school and at home



Teacher correction	Peer- and self-correction; Constructive feedback
Teach for exams – summative assessments	Teach to learn – formative assessments
Arabic teachers unqualified	Qualified Emirati teachers with a B.Ed.
Government teaching = traditional teaching	College teaching = constructivist teaching

The student teachers' newly acquired knowledge of theories and approaches enabled them to critically reflect on their past and present experiences in light of the perceived benefits and application to an EFL classroom. As evidenced in Table 2, one of the most characteristic discursive strategies employed by the Emirati B.Ed. students is the construction of a series of strong binary oppositions that revolve around the contrast between (1) the progressive teacher, who uses student-centered, interactive reading methods; and (2) the traditional teacher, who uses teacher-centered, behaviorist reading methods. As highlighted in an earlier study in the same research context (Clarke, 2005), the traditional teachers include both the majority of Arabic teachers that student teachers experienced in their previous schooling, along with the majority of the supervising Arabic school teachers they have worked with during their teaching practice placements in government schools. Therefore, teaching approaches are defined in terms of the interactive reading approaches the student teachers have encountered during college lectures, tutorials, and teaching practice placements in private English schools. Underpinned by a Vygotskian constructivist theory (Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002) and informed by their newly acquired professional knowledge and beliefs, the trainees themselves make a clear distinction between themselves and their past teachers, by declaring a firm intention to (1) develop a love of reading, (2) create a print-rich and literacy-rich environment, (3) teach using a variety of reading approaches, (4) challenge and scaffold students' learning by catering to differentiated abilities, and (5) promote fluency using a variety of genres. This non-traditional approach to teaching and learning, inspired by constructivist principles and modeled in the teacher education classroom, is perceived by Emirati student teachers to be more conducive to learning to read in the UAE than are traditional teacher-centered approaches to teaching reading. As progressive practitioners, their online discussion postings and focus group interviews express a desire to make a difference in developing students' reading skills and voice the type of classroom environment they want to create.

### **Finding three: Becoming agents of change through reconstructing conceptions of practice**

There is an expectation that Emirati student teachers will contribute to the development of education in their country (Gallagher, 2007). As pioneers, they are faced with the challenge of improving the quality of the teaching of reading and student learning outcomes. Follow-up focus group interviews reveal that becoming a versatile foreign language reading teacher who promotes pedagogic change may be more challenging than expected.

In addressing research question three (how student teachers interpret the impact of teacher education pedagogy upon their prior beliefs, knowledge, and practices), conflicting beliefs and practices raised tensions for the reluctant (weaker) reading teachers. These student teachers aspire to become agents of change and teach reading in an interactive, constructivist way. Yet when confronted with the realities of the EFL classroom, they fall back into old patterns of behaviorist learning experiences. Their style of teaching is influenced partly by survival behavior developed during the student teacher's own apprenticeship of observation, and partly by stored images of current school

mentoring teachers' behaviorist reading approaches. On this topic, one student teacher shared the following thoughts:

I think I will use the reading strategies promoted in college in UAE classrooms because this is the right way to teach reading. I will forget about the traditional way because I didn't learn that much from it.

(Focus Group Interviews, Group 3: 2007, p.9)

Yet teaching practice reports, such as the examples given below, reveal that in practice, this group of six student teachers predominately teach reading as they themselves had been taught, rather than as they had been taught to teach, despite an interactive lesson plan being presented:

Her reading style is mainly teacher-centred and she provides limited opportunities for students to be active in her classroom. On her next placement, Student X should try to relax more so that she can enjoy being with the students. She needs to have more confidence in her ability to teach and with increased confidence I'm sure her rapport with the students can only improve. Student X's potential as a teacher of English is of a satisfactory level.

(College X, TPCMR, Developing Student teacher, 2007b)

Student Y's classroom management skills are good and she has an effective teaching persona and can command students' attention. However, she needs to focus on engaging students actively in learning activities through effective whole class, group and pair work. She needs to understand that students cannot learn by just listening and that students need to be active with relevant and meaningful language learning activities.... She fills a lot of class time with teacher talk and does not engage students in language use above word level answers.

(College X, TPCMR, Reluctant Student teacher, 2007b)

Student Z's style of teaching is traditional. She uses lots of repetition and focuses on accuracy of language. She has good classroom control. However, she needs to work on eliciting more answers from students by giving them time to answer, encouraging them to interact in a variety of groupings and developing her own questioning techniques.

(College X, TPCMR, Reluctant Student teacher, 2007b)

Here, the teacher-centred behaviourist paradigm, in which individuals are passive learners and not challenged beyond the word level, is reminiscent of years of exposure to traditional reading instruction by former Arabic teachers and current government school mentor teachers. When faced with pressures during teaching practice placements, the student teachers unconsciously based their teaching more on their previous experiences, making it difficult to alter the effects of the apprenticeship of observation of pre-college experiences. They reverted to what Oldfather, Bonds, and Bray (1994) characterize as the default mode in education, with which they are familiar. This collapse into the comfort zones of behaviorist methodologies contradicts the constructivist pedagogy promoted in the college classroom. Therefore, the focus group responses and Teaching Practice placement reports demonstrate that this group of student teachers has failed to shift from a transmission, product-orientated perspective to a constructivist, process-oriented one. This finding

extends Eilam's (2002) study in Israel by showing the power of the apprenticeship of observation, especially for reluctant student teachers.

However, the confident and the developing student teachers, who wholeheartedly embraced constructivist teaching of reading methods introduced in college, took more risks with their teaching. Such teachers have developed eclectic teaching of reading styles that combine both their learning and teaching experiences, including behaviorist and constructivist methods of teaching reading, as evidenced from excerpts of teaching practice reports below:

Overall, Student J's style of reading teaching is eclectic and motivating. She tried out a number of reading approaches, including reading aloud, sustained silent reading and guided reading. The students are active in her classes, yet she also uses effective repetition and comprehension checking strategies for reinforcement of new concepts. She has very good potential as a teacher of English to foreign language learners.  
(College X, TPCMR, Developing Student teacher, 2007b)

Student K demonstrated she was able to manage reading groups effectively. She was very at ease with the students and very positive in her dealings with them, so was able to develop an excellent rapport with them in a short time. In her observed lessons, student K was able to motivate her students through a variety of interactive kinaesthetic activities (e.g., props for each character to be raised throughout the story) and so they remained engaged and on task until the end of the story. She had a good balance between checking understanding and maintaining the flow of the story.  
(College X, TPCMR, Developing Student teacher, 2007b)

As seen in the above examples, these student teachers have learnt to assimilate and accommodate (Piaget, 1971) both past and present teaching influences. Implementing an extensive reading program during teaching practice, setting up a temporary reading corner or mobile library, creating a literacy-rich and print-rich environment, and involving parents in literacy events were among the initiatives promoted by this group of student teachers. As evidenced in online discussions, their desire to become agents of change, as informed by their professional practices in the college classroom, already sets themselves apart from their past and present government school cooperating teachers. A typical online discussion example includes the following:

I aspire to become a student teacher who encourages students to love reading, engage and involve them in reading sessions. Also, I will use different approaches like Reading Aloud, Shared Reading and Reader's Theatre to motivate students and encourage them to participate in discussions. I won't forget some of the old methods like using repetition and choral reading. In addition, I will become a teacher who applies the three stages of reading – pre, while and post- reading that will help students to comprehend the storyline. I want to make a difference.  
(ODP, No. 21, 2007)

This testimony of desiring to change suggests not only a personal embrace of the variety of reading methods promoted in the college classroom but a synthesis of past and present beliefs and practices.

The confident reading teachers have created a new understanding and reconstructed their conceptions of practice (Johnson, 1999) in the reading classroom.

The student teachers' new view of the teaching of reading, however, has created a more complex view of learning to read in a foreign language than the previous view of reading a story and asking comprehension questions. The traditional reading process that focused on control and management was an easier option, with which Emirati children are already familiar. College X's course has therefore created a tension that challenges the role of the reading teacher from that of transmitter or implementer of the curriculum (Suliman, 2000) to facilitator of learning to read in a foreign language. Holliday (1994), Nunan (1989), Pennycook (1994), and Phillipson (1992) cautioned against the transplanted of communicative language teaching methodologies from one context to another, and typically from Western to non-Western contexts (Gallagher, 2007). However, these concerns contradict the perspectives of the Emirati student teachers in this study who aim to become agents of change within a traditional system of national education. In fact, many of the student teachers actively seek out and welcome outside influences.

### **Implications for Policy, Practice, and Future Research**

This study has highlighted the importance of linking reading theory and practice, engaging in curriculum review processes, implementing constructivist-based teacher education, and prioritizing the development of socio-culturally appropriate materials and pedagogy. While these key areas may help guide the development of Arab teacher education reading programs, Smith (2000) raises an interesting point regarding "the folklore about student teachers 'changing' the schools" (p. 12). While the student teachers view themselves as agents of change within a traditional system of primary school education, whether or not they will actually affect change in the teaching of reading in Emirati primary schools will need further research. An initial follow-up study on the impact of College's X's BEd program in schools conducted by Clarke, Hamston, and Love (2007) found that graduate teachers were experiencing difficulties in combining the roles of a new teacher and an agent of change. This challenge was compounded when colleagues at their schools did not endorse the kinds of constructivist pedagogic approaches advocated by the BEd program. Despite this obstacle, in many school situations they found graduate teachers were having a positive influence on their school communities. They were initiating change in the form of professional development reading workshops for colleagues on topics such as the role of storytelling, integrating English with other subjects, and establishing processes for sharing curriculum materials.

However, there currently are changes sweeping the country in terms of educational reform and policy development, with international groups of educational consultants being employed to implement a new centralized curriculum throughout government school classrooms. Initial research could be conducted into the practical difficulties and growing needs of graduate teachers in implementing this prescribed curriculum. The results of such studies may assist student teachers' transition from college to the classroom and may promote collaboration among the graduate teachers, existing school teachers, educational consultants, and ministry officials. This research would also entail the deconstruction of the framework that student teachers have formed around the binary opposition of traditional versus progressive and behaviorist versus 'constructivist' approaches to the teaching of reading, as evidenced in this study. In addition, the potential struggle to maintain their current beliefs as they take up roles within an environment predicated upon a differing set of

educational beliefs would warrant further research. The influence of both the schools' mentor teachers and the nature of the school environment itself on student teachers' developing belief systems and reading styles could be assessed. Also, as stated in the research literature, the provision of systematic support for new teachers can increase the effectiveness of teacher performance in schools (Boreen, Johnson, Niday, & Potts, 2000; Wong & Breaux, 2003) and therefore an extension of this research could involve the establishment of links between the undergraduate college classroom and school classrooms in which graduates teach. Through the provision of access to a wealth of reading resources in the college library, professional development reading workshops, online interactive reading courses, collaborative special events in schools (e.g., book week), beginning teachers may have an increased chance of becoming change agents when they are supported by communities of teacher learners (Corrie, 2000).

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has explored the impact of teacher education pedagogy on EFL reading teacher identities in a UAE context, representing one aspect of a wider study focusing on the beliefs, previous learning experiences, and developing reading teacher identities of Emirati student teachers. It offers a way of thinking about the formation of the teaching of reading styles in an Emirati context, as a dynamic process of identity development involving both past and present influences. Therefore, whether student teachers' conceptions of practice exist a priori, or whether they are created through transformational teacher education experiences, this study suggests that both processes interact simultaneously. Constructing a paradigm from a single case study is paradoxical, yet when integrated with other similar studies from the region, it could contribute towards providing a greater understanding of pedagogical identity formation in the UAE, a location that is currently underrepresented in the research literature.

Few countries in the world have experienced the rapid economic and educational development seen in the UAE over the past thirty years. Yet it remains to be seen how that development will help foster an improved education system, education methodology practices, and literacy levels that will sustain future generations. Exploring ways in which Emirati student teachers and graduates learn to teach reading is a long-term endeavor. Teacher education programs are the first step in a professional journey that requires the nourishing conditions to support the promotion of a reading culture in the UAE through teacher development. It is, nonetheless, a journey that will never end because, no matter how effective we are as teacher educators, we can always improve.

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