

# Evaluating Higher Diploma in English Language Teaching for the Primary Stage from the teachers' perspectives

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## Abstract

This study aims to evaluate the Higher Diploma in English for the Primary Stage from the diploma students' perspectives. A questionnaire was designed consisting of 25 items distributed in two areas: cognitive/academic preparation and professional/skill preparation. The following statistical analyses were used: means, standard deviations, t-test, and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The study results showed that the level of evaluation of the two domains in the program was low. The study also showed no statistically significant differences between the means of educational diploma students when evaluating the Higher Diploma in English for the Primary Stage due to their academic specialization (Arabic language, social sciences, and Islamic studies). In conclusion, the researcher suggested a developmental mechanism derived from the study results to improve the higher Diploma in English for the Primary Stage.

## Keywords:

*evaluation, English language, teacher preparation, diploma.*

## 1. Introduction

The teacher is the cornerstone of the educational process and the backbone of every social and educational reform. Quality of education is closely related to the quality of the curricula and the teachers who implement them since the human element is the leading party in the equation of societal and civilized development in general. Therefore, preparing and training the teacher is not far from the comprehensive development process.

Teacher preparation has received significant efforts in the search for excellence and quality. The most important sources of these efforts are conferences, seminars, and what researchers wrote about teacher education and preparation. Several recommendations emerged, the most prominent of which included the Eighth Conference of Education Ministers, which was held under the slogan "The Arab Teacher between Effective Training and Professional Empowerment", which recommended the need to evaluate teachers' preparation programs constantly. Also, the seventh conference in Muscat, which was entitled "Post-Basic

Education: Developing and Diversifying Its Paths," recommended the necessity of paying attention to the teacher and the level of his performance, both in terms of sets or programs to improve the conditions of teachers, and the necessity of evaluating the performance of teacher preparation to contribute to its development, and to provide it with specialized cadres.

Salem indicated the need for continuous evaluation of faculties of education and teacher preparation programs to ensure that they are based on a knowledge base derived from educational and scientific research [1]. At the same time, Madkour indicated that researchers should motivate scientific research and conduct more studies of minds through informing educational experiences, developing scientific research in the field of teacher preparation, and increasing funding, the essential basis for raising the level of the teaching profession [2].

Teacher preparation institutions believe in the importance of preparing the teacher academically and professionally. Therefore, programs have been developed to provide him with the knowledge and skills to perform his work as required [3].

The Optimal Investment Program for Educational Human Resources (OIPEHR) is based on the Saudi Ministry of Education's efforts towards achieving the optimal investment of educational human resources in all stages of public education. It targets teachers of three disciplines: Islamic studies, Arabic language, and social studies in the primary, intermediate and secondary levels, to allow them to teach in other disciplines amongst which is English language. The program's overall objective is to rehabilitate and empower Islamic education, Arabic language, and social studies teachers.

Preparing teachers to teach in other disciplines aims to invest in human resources optimally, develop teachers in all stages of public education, provide them with the opportunity to teach in other disciplines, and contribute to achieving the Kingdom's 2030 vision. Moreover, it provides teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge that qualify them to teach in their new disciplines while

maintaining their excellence in their previous disciplines. It also raises the quality of education and its outputs by empowering teachers with the knowledge and professionalism in new disciplines that serve all stages of education.

The OIPEHR covers all educational directorates in the kingdom. Nomination for the program is based upon fair competition among applicants. The program does not require any financial commitments, as the program is implemented in the evening and within the educational district. The English language diploma program consists of two levels:

Level 1 includes the following courses:

- English Grammatical Structures
- Reading and Writing
- Listening and Speaking

While level 2 includes:

- Advanced Language Skills
- English Teaching Methods
- Language Assessment Approaches & Methods
- English Language Teaching Methodology for Primary Lower Levels
- English Language Teaching Methodology for Primary Upper Levels
- Teaching Practice

Given the importance of preparing the English language teacher and the burdens placed on him, evaluating this preparation in English language teaching has become an inevitable necessity dictated by the renewed conditions of life represented in the globalization of education. Furthermore, given the criticism directed at teacher preparation programs in general and the English language-teacher preparation program in particular, and because of the researcher's expertise as a professor of English language curricula and methods of teaching at Umm Al-Qura University, this study sheds light on the higher Diploma in English for the Primary Stage in academic and professional fields. Peacock suggests a procedure for the evaluation of EFL teacher-training programs based on principles of program evaluation and foreign-language-teacher (FLT) education. It focuses on program strengths and weaknesses and how far the program meets the needs of students [5].

Therefore, the research study answers the following questions:

1. What is the degree of achieving academic and professional preparation in the Higher Diploma in English for the Primary Stage from educational diploma students' perspectives?

2. What are the obstacles to the English Language Teaching Diploma Program from the perspectives of the teachers enrolled in it?

### Methodology

The researcher followed the descriptive approach represented by the questionnaire, as it is the appropriate approach to the nature and objectives of the research.

### Sample

The study sample included 95 male, and female teachers enrolled in the Diploma in Teaching English. The sample included all Saudi universities that offered this diploma, and the specializations of the sample members included Islamic studies, Arabic language, and social studies.

### Instrument

The researcher relied on the electronic questionnaire, which consisted of closed and open items, to identify the teachers' program evaluation. The open items also allowed the respondents the freedom to express their views on the program's obstacles. The researcher built the study tool (the questionnaire) after reviewing the literature and previous studies and reviewing tools and questionnaires related to the topic, in light of which the objectives of the study tool were determined. The questionnaire statements were formulated in their initial form. After presenting the tool to the specialized reviewers to measure its validity and the amendment required. The questionnaire included two sections:

The first section: preliminary information regarding the teaching profession and the number of training courses.

The second section: included the dimensions of evaluating the Higher Diploma in English for the Primary Stage from the perspectives of the educational diploma students. The questionnaire consisted of 25 items distributed over two areas: academic preparation (12) items and professional preparation (13) items.

## 2. Results and discussion

Data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences, and the next part deals with the presentation of the study sample members' responses to the study's questions and their statistical treatment to reach the results, analysis, and interpretation.

Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were calculated for each of the questionnaire terms. The results of the study, when answering its two questions, showed that the degree of achievement of academic and professional competencies in the program is

“weak” from the point of view of 90% of the study sample. The sample members agreed that the program suffered many obstacles that affected its scientific and skill value for teachers. The length of time came as one of the obstacles. The sample members considered it insufficient (only ten weeks) to prepare them, especially since their specializations are far from the English language specialization. In addition, the study did not take place for ten whole weeks in either semester!

The sample members also saw that the lack of regularity of study on time was the biggest obstacle by 90%, given that many universities could not start teaching for the second semester on time, which reduced the study period for the second semester to only four weeks!

Academic references were also one of the most important obstacles from the student's point of view. Where 85% of the study sample believed that the scientific references allocated to the educational courses were above their linguistic and scientific abilities and did not fit with the nature and objectives of the learner. Also, 60% of the study sample thought that the diploma's timing was inappropriate! They had to work in the morning and then prepare for the diploma in the evening without reducing their teaching loads in schools. In conclusion, the study sample members, with rates varying between 10-20%, mentioned some other obstacles, including the efficiency of faculty members, classrooms, and administrative and academic procedures.

According to the sample's responses, the program does not keep pace with the scientific preparation of the teacher in the modern scientific developments, noting that most of the programs that have become new are almost comprehensive cognitively, skillfully, emotionally, and creatively. *“Teachers have to deal with creative students, and therefore it is necessary to modernize educational preparation programs that can meet the modern challenges in education.”*

As for evaluating the program in general from the point of view of those enrolled in it, 85% of the sample agreed that the program is "weak" in achieving its goals and the goals for which they joined. This result may be attributed to the misunderstanding and lack of clarity on the nature of the program among those enrolled in it. Some of them mentioned that they joined the program with a desire to learn English! This is, of course, contrary to the objectives of the program and may have shocked those who had these objectives. It is important to consider their contributions in refining and improving teacher preparation programs.

Finally, the issue of teacher preparation and professional development is an essential and crucial issue imposed by the developments of modern life and the explosion of knowledge and its transformations to improve the teaching profession and the quality of teachers [4]. The incident and its adaptation support the status of this venerable profession and enable the teacher to carry out his true mission in society, in line with the rapid changes and demands that emerged from the community that it should keep pace with the rapid technical and scientific development. Hence, we must identify the teachers' needs to continue their studies, especially their educational qualification, and Saudi Arabia needs competent teachers capable of bringing about human development and a renaissance in society [5], [6], [7].

### 3. Recommendation

In light of the results, the researcher proposes the following mechanism to be implemented through the following steps:

- Providing balanced experiences between cognitive, academic - professional and skill areas - psychological and personal. Without forgetting one side from the other.
- Building a comprehensive and up-to-date knowledge base in the field of scientific and educational specialization, while adopting an approach based on the unity of knowledge.
- Employing the content of the scientific and educational specialization together to solve problems and present ideas in a creative and innovative way
- The need for a kind of integration between quantity, type and practice in the aspects of knowledge and academic preparation.
- The necessity of linking aspects of knowledge and academic preparation with local variables and taking into account the culture and philosophy of society.
- Restructuring the organization and distribution of courses, and paying attention to it at the level of content (accuracy, validity, balance, and consistency).
- A need for intensive courses dealing with language skills, verbal supplies, and forms of communication and recitation, in a diagnostic and therapeutic framework.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study aimed to evaluate the Higher Diploma Program in Teaching English for the Primary Stage, which falls within the optimal investment program for educational cadres. The study surveyed the opinions of teachers who joined the first batch of this program. The results showed the teachers' dissatisfaction with what was provided during the two semesters, attributing this to many obstacles, including the study period and references...etc. The researcher believes that investing in educational cadres is a beautiful economic idea, but it is not educationally the same. This decision may affect teaching performance, specifically in the English language, where the preparation of the language teacher for the primary stage must be equal, or even more significant, than the preparation of his peers for the other stages. Therefore, this decision to assign the teaching of English at the primary level to teachers from other disciplines needs to be re-examined.



**Hashem Alsamadani** received his MA and Ph.D. degrees from Ohio Univ. in 2008 and 2009. After working as an assistant teacher (since 2001) and an associate professor (since 2014) in the Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction at Umm Al-Qura Univ., he has been a professor at Umm Al-Qura Univ. since 2018. His research interest includes reading instruction in EFL, CALL, and second LL techniques and strategies.

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