**Signature pedagogies in continuous professional development: A critical review of current practice**

**Abstract**

Signature pedagogies in the professions are considering teacher-educators with teacher and teaching education context (Shulman, 2005). The primary purpose of this paper is to represent distinguished features of signature pedagogy for teachers’ continuous professional development. Several papers deeply analyzed to achieve clear outcome. Signature pedagogy includes several notions which need to be taken into consideration for developing and training professional teachers in different contexts. One of them is continuous professional debates based on acquired knowledge in a critical framework. The other one is learner's communities who sharing knowledge passionately. And the final one is showing knowledge with wider scope and implementing in the classroom to have feedback. This paper analyzed different observable aspects of signature pedagogy among Iranian teachers and could be replicated in other countries to find out the other features of teachers signature pedagogy. We hope this research serves as a catalyst to invite others for future negotiations in defining other kinds of signature pedagogies operating within educational systems. Signature pedagogy research tries to expose teachers to authentic and contextual materials. Teacher professional development praise signature pedagogy as collaborative and constructive in developing professional. Effectively, this article tried to develop common terms for signature pedagogy in process of professional development context.

**Keywords**: *signature pedagogies; professional development; professional learning; community of practice*

**Introduction**

English language teaching considered as an expanding and developmental field. Across Iran, an increasing number of English language learners in private institutions and public school, had called for skilled-trainers and educators to occupy positions in such institutions. There are some questions which need contemplation such as what makes English language teacher different from teachers of other Fields? What unique feature makes them different? These questions need a deep investigation beyond classroom practice. Teachers who have spent several years majoring in English and amalgamate their language teaching methodology, expertise, pedagogy, linguistic and flourish in their field are unfortunately work among non-expert ones, even majoring in non-related fields. This paper explored distinguished characteristics of teacher preparation courses need to be taken into consideration for teachers’ professional development. Effectively, I intended to dive into the deep part of professional uniqueness and acknowledging the quest to recognize and legitimate teaching English as a profession.

Signature pedagogy is derived from work of Shulman (2005). English teaching education within technological, pedagogical and content knowledge (TPACK) framework try to present how these components play significant role in profession.

Teacher education aimed at empowering and making teachers capable to use knowledge in real context to support the learning process.  According to Falk (2006), signature pedagogies are the best practices to understand teacher education deeply and more precisely to make them wise or flawed.

Values of investigating the Educational of pedagogies of teachers were highlighted in a recent studies (Zeichner 2012; McDonald, Kazemi, and Schneider Kavanagh 2013; Ovens and Fletcher 2014). The term critical auto-ethnographic case study approach  includes narrative diaries, emailing expert pedagogues for guidance/advice,  used by Cameron (2014)  on how and why critical pedagogy approach where being resisted by  student teacher educators. Current studies focus on exploring values in signature pedagogies and complexities that teacher educators are faced as well as the requirements that teachers need to have.

The education pedagogies called for continuous debate among the scholars and practitioners to support high quality training. These debates should have the ability to challenge the habits of practice. As mentioned in abstract, three dimensions in signature pedagogy were identified based on Shulman (2005) dimensions: surface, deep and implicit. Habits of mind (content), habits of hands (skills) and habits of heart (value) explored by Shulman (2005).

In this article we tried to highlight the role of teacher educators as professional capitals- a critical term for highly effective teachers. During the continuous professional development, signature pedagogy should be trained and showed as fundamental criteria to be a future teacher education.

Exploring how pedagogy works within teacher education, continuous professional development programs and in-service ones, call for deep analysis of signature pedagogy to be applied to many continued professional development and teacher education programs.

These programs according to Shulman (2005) educate practitioners to be professional and enjoying their professional capital. Signature pedagogy aims at preparing teacher-educators as a predictor of uncertainty and probable problems that they may face in future career.

**Significance of study: teaching English entangled with technology**

Teacher training courses' elements need to be verified and scrutinized to enhance members’ legitimacy in academic fields and beyond. Its elements should be reconsidered and redesigned in ways that establish legitimacy in teaching English profession (Jenks, 1997).

Accreditation and discipline are fundamental characteristic to Iranian professionals, which supposed to be crucial factors to become expert in teaching English. Some teachers considered a professional by participating in blended or online training, while in other professions such as nursing and law long-established courses required to become professionals.

**ELT Foundation as a profession**

Importance of exclusion among ‘‘Knowers’’ which refers to professional group and ''non-knowers’’ which refers to layman are highlighted by Breshears (2004). This is a questionable and murky area to many educators who are into teaching English. Firstly, according to Phillipson (1992) native speaker fallacy could be criteria to be an English teacher. Secondly, Breshears (2004) stated there is no deep observation on certificates and standards given to teachers.

Diaz Maggioli (2014) argued learning to teach in the specific context been and careful consideration on becoming certified and Academic teacher. Who is not only transmitter of knowledge but also transformer of knowledge and skills to become “intellectual and scientific mentor”. The notion of qualification and certification has been evolved. Participating in intensive courses which guarantee to change novice teachers to professional ones is rudimentary in teacher education. It is not easy to equip student-teachers with skills, standards and prescribed notions and then allow them to perform freely in specific contexts. Definitely, more practice and consideration should be paid on authentic and developmental opportunities. Although some demos are asked to be done by educators, but that is not sufficient to become a professional teacher.

The primary concern of this paper is on practice teaching English as a profession in Iran context.

**Signature pedagogy overview**

Shulman (2005) defined signature pedagogy as different types of teaching that establish the base for future practitioners who are aiming to educate for new professions.

Three signature pedagogy dimensions identified by Shulman (2005):

1- Surface structure

2- Deep structure

3- Implicit structure

Surface structure includes operational Factors in learning and teaching such as how teaching is organized and how lessons are taught within a discipline. Deep structure involves several assumptions in which educators needed to be mastered at them and become professional and critical thinkers. Implicit structure delves into moral dimensions like attitude, values and beliefs in learning and teaching. Signature pedagogy conceptualization of Shulman (2005) was mostly focus on engineering, law, nursing and medicine profession, but in this paper we try to introduce teaching English as a foreign language as a legitimate profession which deserves more consideration like above-mentioned professions.

**Technological pedagogical and content knowledge (TPACK) overview:**

Mishra and Koehler (2006) mentioned that teaching is a complicated and structured process which demands different kinds of knowledge. Signature pedagogy is the one that characterize these types within a discipline. Here, technological pedagogy and content knowledge are crucial elements that make a teacher distinguished amount non-professional ones; all play important roles in developing best practice and good teaching (Koehler, 2002).

Content knowledge is the teacher’s knowledge of the subject and what is to be taught (Koehler & Mishra, 2006). Historically, content knowledge was the foundation of teacher knowledge and education (Shulman, 1986).

Pedagogical knowledge is the teachers’ knowledge about the process and practice of teaching and learning (Koehler & Mishra, 2006). Recent trends in teacher education have changed its focus from content knowledge to pedagogical knowledge, emphasizing general classroom pedagogy apart from the subject matter being taught (Ball & McDiarmid, 1990). The combination of content and pedagogical knowledge has now permeated the field of education and teachers are trained for both subject matter as well as pedagogy, blending the separate concepts (Shulman, 1986).

Technological knowledge is the knowledge of working with and applying technological tools and resources in order to assist in achieving a goal (Koehler & Mishra, 2006). With the increase of technology in the workplace and life, education and teacher training has blended a third knowledge into the mix: technological knowledge.

Koehler and Mishra (2006) stated that the Foundation of effective teaching is TPACK that demanding technological understanding; comprehending pedagogical teaching; the difficulty of knowledge to learn and ability to solve the problem as well as employing prior knowledge and make use of them in practice. The Amalgamation of these areas could be applied to teaching and learning context.

Trainees are required to the exposed to TPACK elements. For content knowledge they need to understand second language acquisition, grammar and linguistics. What pedagogical knowledge, assessment, lesson planning and methodology or fundamental notions needed to be covered? And finally, for technology knowledge some supportive courses should be provided for them such as, MALL (mobile assisted language learning technology), CALL (computer assisted language learning) and TELL (technology enhanced language learning).

**Signature pedagogies for teacher training**

Primarily, the focus of teacher training courses is on teaching foreign languages. For example, teaching English in non-English context in which and English language is not necessary to learn, in fact it is optional.

Kiel et al. (2016) claimed that signature pedagogy has to be supplemented with specific context or subject. Signature pedagogy provides a spectrum on means and goals of teaching and the subject as well as defining roles, giving values and promoting hopes for the teachers who involved in a community. Shulman (2005) provided different types of teaching for future practitioners as a foundation.

Many decades, English as foreign language teachers were supposed to be salient in knowing about language, linguistic and counters knowledge (Richards, 2010).

Predominantly, mastering in linguistics, phonetics and phonology, semantics, syntax/pedagogical grammar, second language acquisition/development, assessment, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, multilingualism/multiculturalism, and discourse analysis are not sufficient. Second language teacher development and education conceptualization as distinguished as someone who employs theoretical issues in teaching.

Though, today's second language teacher education is highly explicit inquiry that needed to be investigated deeply and specifically in understanding sophisticated and socio-economic context in which learners are situated in.

Controversial debates have been existed on the relationship between theory and practice. According to Richards (2010) the distinction between disciplinary knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge is blurred. The former refers to restricted and limited body of knowledge that are fundamental and rudimentary to gain membership in profession and the second one refers to basis of knowledge for language teaching such as reflective teaching, curriculum planning and classroom management(Shulman,1986).

Second language teaching education should reconceptualize based on knowledge (Freeman and Johnson,1988) in a way that praise teachers as learners of language teaching rather than the students as learning of language. Teachers’ self-evaluation on their own teaching to gain deeper understanding of the complex nature of teaching is worthwhile. Continuous professional development, teacher learning, cognition and teacher identity are important elements in effective teaching as well as having knowledge about language and language acquisition process.

Advocacy is another important element in teachers' access to Academic Resources and sharing with colleagues of community members. Schon (1983) declared that reflective practice is a popular concept in teacher education program. Reflective practice is a cognitive process accompanied by teacher attitudes as defined by Farrell (2015). It puts emphasis on cognitive, metacognitive and intellectual dimensions, while emotional and moral dimensions are inner life of teachers.

Hear the question could be that how to gather information about reflective teaching? There are several tools to have feedback from mentors, teachers and learners of such as discussion, meeting, interview, questionnaire, focus group, classroom observation, video recording and action research Farrell (2016). It is suggested for teachers to theorize their practice, not practice the theory (Crandall, 2000; Richards, 2004; Wright, 2006). Teaching could not be prefabricated plans or pre-existing beliefs, teacher learning is contextual and situational (Johnson, 2006).

Teachers as Transformers are highly praised rather than teachers as transmitters of knowledge. Self-development tools, productive reflection and developing own practice can lead to change. Crandall; and Christison (2016) made a distinction between teacher training and teacher education. Teacher training is preparation of teachers for discrete skills for a specific situation but teacher education is more wide and comprehensive in which effective teaching, critical thinking and fundamental Concepts or practiced. Values are core in reflective teaching. Experiences are not sufficient to develop expertise according to Tsui (2009). Teacher collaboration and engagement in accomplishing the tasks are seen as important elements. Reflective teaching needs instructional support because it is energy and time consuming.

Teaching practicum has got important position in English teaching, involving both Direct and indirect experiences (Mckay, 2000). Experience can be achieved by watching recorded videos and observation of other teachers’ experiences. Direct experiences are achievable through being an assistant or collaborator in others teaching being a teacher in actual classes and tutoring.

While teaching, it is beneficial to assign a mentor who observes you and give a follow up feedback for you.

As The Witness in today’s teacher training courses (TTC), teaching practicum is often represented at the end of the program as Baecher (2012) noted the same process. The process of teaching is required to be thoughtful and carefully scaffold. Even the supervisors and mentors don't suspend adequate time on evaluating the Future teachers. Moreover, other aspects of professional teaching deserve to incorporate in programs; the Aspects which are beyond classroom practice (Wagner and Lopex, 2015). The aim of the course should be at developing autonomous teachers who know how to teach.

As mentioned earlier, there has been a shift in transmission of knowledge from teacher to student. There were highly theoretical courses in which learners just learn the knowledge without engaging. This movement goes ahead to more practical courses in the experiential learning views; constructivist and sociocultural element are more salience for critical thinker teachers and theorizers (Richards, 2010). Also teachers are having the role of mediator and facilitator for students knowing.

A New Era, the system of education doesn't need technician practitioners who implement activities and tasks in classroom. Teachers have got multilevel identities. Becoming a second language teacher demands sense of plausibility not just simply acting in classroom (Kanno and Stuart, 2011).

The majority of second language teachers in the world, are non-native speakers of English, thus they were English language learners too. They have got distinctive identities which differentiates them from native speakers’ teachers. This is a challenging point which is the center of struggle and conflict as well as discrimination for non-native teachers that native teachers are superior (Tsui, 2011).

In TTC, student teachers are exposed to limited kinds of technology, simply asked to identify different types. Student teachers technological awareness must be enhanced by the understanding of technology implementation and realizing technology innovations.

In domains of TTC, trial, error and troubleshooting might be highlighted alongside classroom management and interaction.

Integrating technology into English academic plans are not enough, teachers need training based on the curriculum planning (Reinders, 2009). Different kinds of facilities in technology should be introduced to teachers, exposing to the usages of real and authentic materials are highly beneficial.

Al-Seghayer (2017) introduced that incorporating technology to English academic learning classroom is a double edged sword in which teacher obliged to not only teaching English but also technology. The teacher with high level of competence, are confident enough to perform the tasks in classroom.

In Iran context, as Richards and Farrell (2005) mentioned to make experience and confidential student teacher, three contexts need to be provided: ground, online synchronous and online asynchronous. Moreover, three Ps (presentation, practice and production) could we relevant equivalents for these contexts. By incorporating them in classrooms, we would have more sophisticated teachers who have got signature pedagogy. Teacher educators can train student teachers with technological materials and the demo its effectiveness, students-teachers can perform what they practiced by designing an independent lesson which includes technology. Practicing three Ps will provide teachers with ongoing exploration.

Akyol and Garrison (2008), claimed that signature pedagogy is fundamental in education, learner’s don't learn in isolation; cognitive presence, teaching presence and social practice needed.

Teacher learning is a long-life that happens is social context (Johnson and Golombek, 2003), life-long education is inspiring for learners, despite the mistakes may happen in classroom and continual learning is highly constructive.

**Continuous professional debates based on acquired knowledge**

The findings of this study are observing in Iran professional learning for teachers for signature pedagogies. More research is needed to replicate this study in other countries.

Based on observations and interviews, teachers not only need critical debates about their profession, but also in need for negotiating teaching pedagogies with other colleagues and professionals. To be quality teacher is only possible by continuous professional debates without zealotry opinion. Developing and sharing happen in community not isolation. The ability to differentiate between critical Debate and recitation is one threshold of power practice (Conway and Munthe, 2015).

Pictures need to have freedom in the speech and it pays to reflect deeply It is believed that Gathering teachers in a meeting rooms can be sufficient for sharing ideas and continuous critical debates. However, teachers need to have freedom in their speech and a space to reflect deeply on owns teaching and others. Contextual experiences, particularly those related to public policy are providing safe environments (Deglau et. al.2006). These challenging environments are highly beneficial and reflective for developing professional powers.

In this paper, continuous professional debates identified as one of the crucial elements of signature pedagogy among Iranian teachers which need to develop more precisely.

Wells (1999) referred to dialogic inquiry as teachers’ everyday practice of pedagogy and content. Here, dialogue inquiry means the quality of knowledge exchanged among teachers and experts' deep conversation which is rooted in challenging verdict as well as feeling safe and not having fear of negative evaluation on teachers' side are maintaining the continuous debates.

Problem setting is sometimes more important than problem solving in teaching and teacher education. In this regard, problem setting is the linkage between control, power and what counts as legitimate knowledge in political and cultural profession (Tinning, 1991).

Lawson (1084) supported that pedagogical strategies should be facilitative in regard to problem setting rather than problem solving.

Parker et al. (2010) reported representation of teachers work to each other- formally or informally- is a well strategy to share their learning publicly. Sharing and making the process of teaching meaningful give teachers a sense of accomplishment. It builds capacity for professional teachers and leaders to complete each other in accomplishing different tasks.

Patton, Parker and Pratt (2013) found practice efforts and sharing informal or formal experiences are distinguishing for teachers’ profession. Many advantages allocate to teachers who participate and engage in communities beyond the classroom. It gives them sense of confidence and acceptance (Deglau and O’Sullivan 2006; Parker et al. 2010; Atencio, Jess, and Dewar 2011; Hunuk, Ince, and Tannehill, 2012)

There are different groups which highlight teachers learning such as Communities of practice, teachers’ inquiry communities, professional learning environment and culture of collaboration (Duncombe and Armour 2005). Establishing cultural collaboration is a distinguished feature which refers to signature pedagogy. Actually, teacher alliance from education system brings too many disadvantages for both educational system and teacher profession.

Significance of engaging in a group is highlighted by Parker, Patton, and Tannehill (2012). They argued effective Communities of learners keep members abilities balance between internal and external facilitators to solve the problems. Facilitators affirmed the power between members help learners to raise their awareness on their strengths and weaknesses; it is Teachers who care about each other development and improvement.

Teachers required to design own venues and draw them on tables and maps to contemplate on them and share with other members of community. Collaboration and cooperation among members are fruitful because each member interprets their own meaning and can ask for more clarification if there are any mismatches. By identifying the limitations in teaching profession, teacher educators may have a role, defined a signature pedagogy and professional identity in the field.

**Conclusion**

Student-teachers to gain experience need to develop quality teaching. Technology can be a useful links to language learning and teaching.21st century student-teachers must be critical thinkers and contemplate on an innovative ways and not simply rely on prior knowledge (Jacobson and Lock, 2014).Professional teachers must develop signature pedagogy to form their profession and become powerful in training student-teachers and learners

Professional trainers and supervisors should be facilitators and supporters in observational and mentoring process. They may provide additional information and material to let the teachers think freely by increasing their sense of plausibility.

Encouraging critical thinking among educators to question and explore the potential problem is observed in this study. Teachers require techniques to evaluate and analyze the situation effectively. These techniques can be non-prescribed; they can be developed by Teachers themselves, not dictating the instructions for teachers. Criticizing should be in a soft manner and in a non-intruding way .Simply providing a framework and help teachers to identify and develop their own signature pedagogy. Planning monthly or weekly gatherings for teachers to dialogue critical aspects of teaching and problems they are confronting in their routine teachings. Most professionals claimed that they face challenges which need group discussion, but lack of time and unenthusiastic colleagues are obstacles.

Some educators expressed that despite participating in meetings, gatherings and sharing opinion sessions, teachers just simply share the problems without any Solutions. Teachers enjoy sharing their voices and experiences without any opportunity for maximizing the teacher and learning quality. Having teachers construct knowledge through

Social interaction within a collaborative and supportive community of teachers was critical as was the recognition that interactions had to move beyond mere conversation to action (Patton, Parker, and Neutzling 2012).

Having signature pedagogy, teachers can share their knowledge and experience beyond classroom level and become professionals. Sharing and acknowledging each other performances are good which lead to teacher professional development and enhancing opportunities to experience risk taking moments by encouraging teachers to be autonomous (Calder, 2006).

Surface structure of signature pedagogy considers obviously sharing of values and experiences but deep structure consists of creating personal teaching and learning strategies. This leads to teachers’ self- autonomy, which enable them to create their personally meaningful interpretation and developing leadership capacity to support other teachers effectively.

Professional development quality is about implementing series of conditions to reflect on teachers’ knowledge, skills and identifying their desires and motivations to enhance their teaching methodologies.

The purpose of professional development program is to raise strategic thinkers to fully understand the subject and beyond. Signature pedagogy is characteristics of teaching and learning (Shulman, 2005) and a hallmark in professional education (Calder, 2006); additionally, it helps teachers to gain insight into the professional values and cultures (Golde, 2007).

As Shulman (2005) mentioned, they are pervasive and highly important. Implicitly, they provide definition for how is the knowledge analyzed and what counts as knowledge. Signature pedagogies utility improves teacher abilities and teacher education.

Teachers’ professional capital support students learning and teaching environments as the goal of teacher education is to help lifelong teacher learned as the goal of teacher education is to develop lifelong teacher-learners (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012).

Two distinctive features of signature pedagogies are introduced by Calder (2006). First, uncovering professionals and experts think and act in a profession. Second, unveiling the facts about routines in assessment and a scaffolding the routines in instructions.

Some characteristics of signature pedagogies were listed in this paper such as importance of Engagement, having a community of practice, and etc., adoption and adaption of these professional and skillful pedagogies are vital in developing signature pedagogy. The common notions of signature pedagogy should be implemented in teacher education programs.

This paper analyzed different observable aspects of signature pedagogy among Iranian teachers. This study could be replicated in other countries to find out the other features of teachers signature pedagogy. I hope this research serves as a catalyst to invite others for future negotiations in defining other kinds of signature pedagogies operating within educational systems. Signature pedagogy research tries to expose teachers to authentic and contextual materials. Teacher professional development praise signature pedagogy as collaborative and constructive in developing professional.

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