

## A REVIEW OF RESEARCH INTO THE EFFECTS OF TEACHING PEDAGOGY: CONTROVERSIES IN THE AREA

*Dr. Emre Debreli*  
*European University of Lefke*  
*English Language Teaching Department*  
*edebrelı@eul.edu.tr*

*Abstract: This paper examines recent and current research into teacher training/pedagogy in higher education, and provides an overview of the existing studies into the concept's effectiveness. This examination is based on 'teacher beliefs' studies conducted in the literature in relation to teacher training/pedagogy programmes, and thus only draws conclusions according to those studies. The present paper highlights important factors of certain training/pedagogy programmes around the world, such as their duration, content and philosophy, as well as their context-bound nature, and discusses why such factors have resulted in research in this area remaining inconclusive. Links are also made to the field of EFL, where research on the effectiveness of teacher training/pedagogy is lacking and immature. Areas and aspects which require more research are also addressed, and suggestions are made for future research.*

*Keywords: teacher training, pedagogy, teacher beliefs, teacher training programmes, EFL*

### PEDAGOJİ ÖĞRETİMİNDE ARAŞTIRMA SONUÇLARININ GÖZDEN GEÇİRİLMESİ

*Özet: Bu çalışma yüksek öğretimde öğretmen eğitimi/pedagojisi alanındaki yakın geçmişte ve günümüzde yapılan araştırmaları incelemekte ve öğretmen eğitimi/pedagojisi etkileri ile alakalı olan yapılmış çalışmalara genel bir bakış yapmaktadır. Bu inceleme literatürde adı geçen 'öğretmen inançları' çalışmaları baz alınarak yapılmış ve bu çalışmalar doğrultusunda yorumlanmıştır. Bu çalışma dünyada var olan öğretmen eğitimi/pedagojisi programları ile alakalı olan süre, içerik ve filozofi, ve programa özgü faktörleri öne çıkarmakta ve bu faktörülerin öğretmen eğitimi/pedagojisi alanındaki araştırmaları nasıl sonuçsuz kıldığını tartışmaktadır. Buna ilaveten, mevcut çalışma, İngilizceyi Yabancı Dil olarak Öğretme alanındaki öğretmen eğitimi/pedagojisi'nin etkileri ile ilgili olan az sayıdaki ve henüz şekillenmemiş olan çalışmalara atıflar yapmaktadır. Daha fazla araştırma*

*gereken alanlar ve konular saptanmış ve belirtilmiş, ileride yapılacak olan araştırmalar için tavsiyeler yapılmıştır.*

*Anahtar Kelimeler: Öğretmen eğitimi ve yetiştirilmesi, pedagoji, öğretmen inançları, öğretmen yetiştirme/pedagoji programları*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Despite thirty years of extensive research carried out in the field of teacher education and pedagogy, there is still no clear conclusion regarding the effectiveness of pedagogy programmes provided by various institutions for teachers' practical knowledge development, particularly in the field of language teaching. Although there are studies indicating the positive effects of pedagogy programmes, some key researchers in this field do not seem to be satisfied with these findings (Brouwer and Korthagen, 2005; Grossman, 2008; Korthagen, 2010). Factors in the literature, such as the duration of these programmes (e.g. some programmes last for one month, whereas others can last for up to two years), and their content and the philosophy (some adopting constructivist principles of teaching and learning, while others only claim that they adopt such principles), seem to value and undervalue the findings obtained from different studies, which is perhaps one of the reasons for such uncertainty surrounding the effects of pedagogy on teacher learning. Another factor- perhaps the most influential in the clash of ideas relating to research into the effects of pedagogy programmes- is the context-bound nature of existing studies into this phenomenon. In other words, the findings obtained from contexts where English is used as a native language and where it is used as a foreign language seem to show differences. For example, foreign language pedagogy candidates are said to have more affective concerns than native language pedagogy candidates (Calderhead and Shorrocks, 1997), which thus affects their perceptions of language teaching. Consequently, such differences in perceptions affect the findings of the studies conducted in these contexts, thus making it difficult to compare one finding with another. Differences between the participant groups dealt with across the world and differences between the types of the studies conducted are also factors that prompt dissatisfaction among researchers.

The main aim of this paper is to highlight recent dilemmas and implications in the area of teacher training and pedagogy, mainly through focusing on the field of English language teaching (both in native and foreign contexts). The present paper looks at different studies conducted with pre-service teachers (teachers who are undertaking a training or pedagogy programme) in different teacher training or pedagogy programmes, and examines these according to the aforementioned criteria: namely the duration of the pedagogy programmes, their content and philosophy, and, finally, their context-bound nature.

It is important to note here that, like a considerable number of studies, the above examination will be made according to 'teacher beliefs' studies.

'Teacher beliefs' is a well-known area of teacher education in the sense that tracking teachers' beliefs allows researchers to determine whether teachers' perceptions of teaching and learning change as a result of external factors – in this case, a teacher training or pedagogy programme (Mattheoudakis, 2007). It is widely accepted that teachers' beliefs play an influential role in their perceptions of teaching and learning, as well as how they view learning and teaching, how they teach and how they act in classrooms (Borg, 2006; Calderhead, 1996; Freeman, 1996; Nespor, 1987). Furthermore, Lortie (1975) claims that by the time teachers come to teacher training or pedagogy programmes, they already have well-established beliefs regarding teaching and learning which have already shaped their teaching. On the other hand, Lortie (1975) also claims that some of these beliefs are immature and inappropriate; as such, it is the duty of the teacher training or pedagogy programme to alter such beliefs, and equip teachers with the recent developments in the field. That is to say, the effectiveness of teacher training or pedagogy programmes is evaluated, to some extent, according to the changing beliefs of teachers throughout their training. In this paper, studies concerning teachers' belief studies are taken as a major reference when evaluating the effects of teacher training or pedagogy. Without doubt, many other references can also be taken into account (e.g. programme structure, teaching materials used in the programme, assessments in the programme, and many others) when evaluating the effectiveness of such programmes. A more detailed future study would shed more light on these issues.

## **2. DURATION OF TEACHER TRAINING/PEDAGOGY PROGRAMMES**

According to one of the leading researchers in the field of teacher education, Simon Borg (2006), the length of teacher training/pedagogy programmes plays a large role in teachers' belief development. Borg points to the many different teacher training programmes, such as the Certificate of English in Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA), which usually lasts for one-month; the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), which may take up to one year; undergraduate programmes, where students usually receive their pedagogy during the final year and which usually lasts two terms; and other master programmes, where the pedagogy part lasts for two to four months (depending on the institution). From this perspective, Borg (2006) and many others (e.g. Bramald, Hardman, and Leat, 1995; Cabaroglu, 1999) raise the question: is it applicable to view different pedagogy programmes as the same entity or to expect similar findings regarding their effects on teachers' belief development? A logical answer to this would be no, yet existing findings tell us the opposite is the case. Studies conducted into CELTA programmes by Hobbs (2007) and Michaela Borg (2001), for example, note that intensive CELTA training had positive effects on teachers' belief development, and helped to alter the outdated beliefs brought to the programme. On the other hand, studies

conducted in longer teacher training/pedagogy programmes show that only a little amount of change was observed in pre-service teachers' belief development (Brown and McGannon, 1998; Mattheoudakis, 2007; Nettle, 1998; Peacock, 2001; Tabachnick and Zeichner, 2003). For example, Peacock (2001) studied the beliefs of 146 English language pre-service teachers' beliefs concerning learning and teaching. A questionnaire comprised of various questions about teaching methodologies, how languages are learnt and how languages ought to be taught was given to the students before they started their pedagogy programme. In his first analysis, Peacock (2001) found that most of the beliefs that pre-service teachers held were unrealistic and inappropriate from the point of view of recent language teaching and learning. The same questionnaire was given to the same students the following year to assess whether their beliefs had changed, and to understand the extent to which the pedagogy programme had affected their beliefs. The results showed that the teachers gave almost exactly the same answers to the questionnaire at the end of the year as they did at the beginning of the year. The same was also evident in the studies of Altan (2006), Brown and McGannon (1998) and Tercanlioglu (2005). Such controversy in the field raised many new questions. The concern was no longer related to the duration of the teacher training or pedagogy programmes, but to what actually happened in these programmes. Bramald et al. (1995), being one of the first to bring this phenomenon into light, proposed that it is the content and philosophy of the training/pedagogy programme that prompted change in teachers' beliefs, rather than the duration of the programme. Alongside this conception, research in the area seemed to change its direction to better understand what teacher trainees are provided with in these programmes, while ignoring the discussion about how long a training/pedagogy programme should be.

### **3. CONTENT AND PHILOSOPHY OF TEACHER TRAINING/PEDAGOGY PROGRAMMES**

In 2005, Mok Yan Fung presented an influential paper on what teacher training/pedagogy programmes' philosophies ought to be. According to Fung (2005) – as well as Ball and Cohen (1999) and Bines and Welton (1995) – teacher training/pedagogy programmes should include inquiry into pre-service teachers' beliefs concerning different issues in their learning. “Inquiry” here means to think in broader contexts; it means generating multiple conjectures about an issue in teaching and learning. This can perhaps be interpreted as pre-service teachers evaluating their beliefs and preferences in light of both theoretical and practical aspects. However, researchers like Farrell (2008), Ong'ondo and Borg (2011) and Feiman-Nemser (2001) emphasize the practical content of teacher training/pedagogy programmes as a major contributor to teachers' belief change. They further mention that it is only when teachers find opportunities to put their beliefs into practice – and thus experience whether they work or not – that belief change occurs. They claim that the practical

component of teacher training/pedagogy programmes is one of the strongest elements in triggering belief change. Perhaps a reference can be made here to what is discussed in the previous section, where it was highlighted that a one-month CELTA programme prompted more change in the beliefs of teachers than a one-year programme such as that dealt with in Peacock's (2001) study. Although there was an apparent difference in the length of the programmes discussed, teachers in CELTA were exposed to practice more extensively (i.e. up to 7–8 hours in a week), whereas teachers in Peacock's study were taught for only 6 hours throughout the one-year period; this may explain the reasons for differences in belief change in both studies. The same was also observed in many other studies, such as those by Altan (2006), Debreli (2012), Mattheoudakis (2007). In Debreli's (2012) study conducted in Northern Cyprus, for example, teachers were only exposed to classrooms in which to practice their teaching for four hours throughout the year, and experienced very little change in their beliefs. According to Feiman-Nemser (2001), such little exposure to practice is likely to result in teachers being less informed and less able to form integrative understanding of their role as teachers, and thus a belief change is less likely to occur. As also suggested by Bullough and Knowles (1992), these findings may indicate the need to critically scrutinize experience, and that pre-service teachers should be provided with ample opportunities to systematically make connections between their beliefs and practice. Along the same lines as Fung (2005), it can be said that the beliefs teachers hold are abstracted and generalized forms of situations with appropriate articulation; however, these alone are not able to help teachers to make sense of the complex teaching process, so ample opportunities to practice and test those beliefs is a prerequisite.

Another important concern of the researchers with regard to teacher training/pedagogy programme philosophy is whether such programmes educate their participants according to recent trends in the field, and whether they follow constructivist teaching principles. What is meant by constructivist teaching principles is allowing teachers to build their own understandings upon what they already know (Richardson, 1997), and encouraging them to adopt non-didactic approaches when they enter a classroom. In a search of the literature, only a few studies seemed to fit this criterion, e.g. the studies of Michaela Borg (2001) and Hobbs (2007) show that CELTA is one programme that persists with such a philosophy. On the other hand, we have minimal insights into other programmes owing to a lack of studies, missing information about the programmes studied, and a lack of evidence on whether the programmes actually employ what they claim to in the programme. Although many programmes claim that they provide what CELTA offers, limited information on this issue makes it difficult to provide empirical comparisons. Recent findings in this field show that trainee teachers are not actually encouraged to think and act according to constructivist philosophy, but they are often seen to teach in a way that pleases their course teachers (i.e. when they

are being assessed), which is often called a “feigned practice” (Cabaroğlu, 1999; Ong’ondo and Borg, 2011).

In addition to being exposed to classrooms, Wallace (1991) points out to the need for pedagogy programmes to prompt trainee teachers for systematic reflection and self-evaluation. According to him, reflection and self-evaluation provides personal development, and allows teachers to be self-critical. Although there is evidence that reflection and self-evaluation contributes to trainee teachers’ personal development (Almarza, 1996; Johnson, 1996; Wong, 2010), the proportion of the pedagogy programmes encouraging such aspects leaves us with some question. It can be said that research into all of these aspects is still premature, requiring more in-depth studies from multiple contexts in order to let us make healthier empirical comparisons.

#### **4. CONTEXT-BOUND NATURE OF TEACHER-TRAINING/PEDAGOGY PROGRAMMES**

As mentioned earlier, the context-bound nature of studies conducted thus far is one factor that inhibits researchers from conclusively stating the effects of teacher training/pedagogy. Context-bound studies are studies that are conducted in different contexts, with different participant groups, and in different programmes throughout the world. However, due to such contextual differences, such digressions among the existing studies make it difficult to compare or generalize their findings, thus leaving us with inconclusive research. The extensive literature search, for example, showed that a great body of research on pre-service language teacher training/pedagogy was carried out in Western countries with more developed educational systems, and with pre-service teachers who were native speakers of the English language. This is well illustrated in Simon Borg’s (2006) review of studies on pre-service teachers around the world, which suggests that only 15% of studies were conducted in Eastern and Middle Eastern countries with non-native EFL pre-service teachers. This issue is important and deserves more attention, as it has been noted that EFL non-native pre-service teachers who teach in monolingual classrooms are assumed to have different kinds of beliefs and affective concerns, and these may affect their training from native language teachers (Calderhead and Shorrocks, 1997). Due to the possible differences between non-native and native contexts of English, it is likely that the findings from native contexts may not apply to non-native contexts. As Simon Borg (2006) suggests, the existing body of research is not fully representative of broader language teaching settings, and he draws attention to such contextual gaps as one of the limitations of research in this area.

Although a number of studies do exist which were carried out with non-native teachers, or in programmes which involve both native and non-native teachers (such as CELTA or PGCE), the differences between the aims of these studies, their duration, the methodology adopted and the differences between

the participant groups limits the application of such findings to broader contexts. In this sense, it would not be healthy, for example, to compare findings from a programme which provides intensive practice opportunities for its participants, and which has a clear philosophy of what to give the participants (e.g. CELTA), to the findings from a programme where the participants only have few hours to practice their teaching skills and which does not have a clear philosophy of teaching. Studies adopting different methodologies when dealing with teacher beliefs or when exploring the effects of pedagogy on teacher learning would also be risky to compare, as there is a huge debate in the literature on whether to adopt qualitative or quantitative approaches when exploring this phenomenon. It is clear that findings from different contexts cannot be feasibly compared due to many contextual differences. Although stronger assumptions and conclusions can be made about the effectiveness of specific training/pedagogy programmes in specific contexts (e.g. CELTA), almost 80% of the programmes worldwide maintain their obscurity. Most notably, the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has a far smaller percentage of studies into the effectiveness of its training/pedagogy programmes, and these perhaps cannot be applied to native contexts. It is also interesting to note that there are only a few studies conducted into EFL contexts, despite more than half of the world using English as a foreign language, and given that there are more EFL teachers and training/pedagogy programmes than native speakers or teachers of English, or training/pedagogy programmes focused on English as a first language.

## **5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

This paper has brought together the existing problems of research into the effects of pedagogy on teacher learning, and provided an overview of why the research into this phenomenon remains inconclusive in its current form. The aim was to provide a set of themes to show which aspects of research in this area remain problematic, and to illustrate the gaps that need further research. It has been shown that pedagogy itself is a wide construct, and that there are many other sub-constructs to consider when dealing with this phenomenon. By only taking into account three themes (the programmes' duration, content and philosophy, and context-bound nature), the present paper addressed what is already known and which areas require more research. It has been highlighted how there is no satisfactory evidence indicating that longer training programmes provide more change in teachers' beliefs and are thus more effective. Conversely, studies which dealt with shorter programmes demonstrated a greater impact. Although this might be the result of these programmes' clear vision, content and philosophy, we do not actually know much about the vision, content and philosophy of the other programmes due to a lack of research. It has also been emphasized that the programmes' content or philosophy plays a more important role in influencing beliefs. What comes into play here is what Bramald et al. (1995) propose regarding making clear

whether the programme is viewed as a constant or as a variable. The existing findings address the fact that each training programme should be viewed as a separate entity, as their components are likely to provide different levels of changes to beliefs. Here, it might be suggested that the studies who reported positive outcomes on belief change, as well as the studies which reported negative outcomes, should be reviewed again in terms of how they dealt with the training programmes' differences. Such comparisons are believed to provide more realistic aspects of the programmes' influence. Another suggestion can be made here for future studies that deal with more detailed investigations of this kind; these require in-depth analysis of the programme content and philosophy, and it is also crucially important to observe whether these are applied within the programme. Without doubt, studies in the field of EFL – of which only a few is known – should be another prerequisite. Such studies are believed to elucidate many questions researchers have by allowing more comparisons from different contexts, and with more realistic figures relating to the programmes' contents.

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*Dr. Emre Debreli received his MA in Teaching English as a Foreign Language at the University of Essex and his PhD in Education at the University of Reading. He is currently a lecturer at the European University of Lefke, Faculty of Education, English Language Teaching Department. His area of expertise includes teacher education and teacher training.*

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