The Applicability of the New South Wales Quality Teaching Model to the Jordanian Primary School Context

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the applicability of the New South Wales Quality Teaching Model (NSWQT Model) to the Jordanian primary school context. The study was restricted to seven primary school teachers. A qualitative approach of data gathering and analysis was used. One key finding was that quality teaching was described in a similar way in both the Jordanian MOE’s documents and in documents describing the NSWQT model. Furthermore, most elements of the NSWQT model were evident in the practice of teachers identified as being ‘quality teachers’. Despite these findings the study found that there was an inconsistency between the stakeholders’ perceptions of what constituted quality teaching as articulated by MOE’s documents and the NSW model.

Keywords: New South Wales Quality Teaching Model, Quality Teaching, Primary School, Teaching Model Applicability, School Context.

INTRODUCTION

The Jordanian Government has observed the exogenous initiatives and shifts forcing policy makers to focus on providing education systems that can meet the needs and demands of globalization and provide labor markets with a skilled labor force (Alshurfat, 2003; Ministry of Education, 2004, 2006, 2013). The first serious attempt by the Government of Jordan to meet the country’s needs was in 1987 when the late King Hussein launched the National Conference for Education Reform (Ministry of Education, 1988, 2001). The result of the conference was a comprehensive education reform program to be implemented over the following 20 years (Alshurfat, 2003). In 2002; the Jordanian national education vision and mission were developed and endorsed (Ministry of Education, 2006). This was the outcome of a forum on the future of education in Jordan held in Amman during September 2002, with participants from around the world (Ministry of Education, 2002, 2006). According to the MOE, three relevant blueprints were established. First is “the general education plan (2003-9)”. Second is “the Education Reform for Knowledge Economy (ERiKE)” and, third is “the Jordan Education Initiative (JEI)” (Ministry of Education, 2006, p13). The first phase of the Education Reform for the Knowledge Economy Program (ERiKE I) ran from (2003-2009) and closed in June 2009 after five and a half years of implementation (Ministry of Education, 2013). The second phase of the Program (ERiKE II) continues to build on the achievements of the first phase and follow the same implementation arrangements that have proven to be successful in (ERiKE I), and in the same time, focuses on schools as the locus of change as well as on the need to enhance capacity building at the central and field levels which are: establishment of a national school-based development system, monitoring and evaluation and organizational development, development of teaching and learning, development of special focus program development and improvement of physical learning environments (Ministry of Education, 2013). Such a comprehensive but staggered reform movement in the Jordanian education system is desirable since it implies that articulation in general terms precludes development of a comprehensive package. The MOE, however, consistently considered teachers’ roles in rhetorical rather than practical terms. For example, MOE (2006, P.17) stated that “Those who are most affected by decisions are the best placed to make those decisions”. In reality, teachers were neither consulted in regards to educational reform (Alshurfat, 2003) nor did they receive any real guidance on conceptualizing or implementing quality teaching.
So, despite the Government’s move to reform the education system in Jordan, studies conducted to evaluate the results of the reforms have shown that students still demonstrate low skills in relation to critical thinking (Anani and Al-Qaisee, 1994; Oweidat and Hamdi, 1997). Another study showed that teachers still dominated most lesson time and did not give their students an opportunity to express and/or direct themselves nor direct their own learning activities. Most of the questions asked by these teachers were based on the memorization of fixed facts. The study also showed that these teachers did not allow any positive interaction in the classroom and that behavioral problems were dominant in the classroom (Alnahar and Kishik, 1994). Because of research findings such as these, the education system in Jordan has faced significant criticism and has been accused of graduating unskilled people who cannot be competitive and meet the economic, social, cultural, political and national challenges and problems (Oweidat, 1997).

Recently, the Jordanian Minister of Education Dr Mohammed Dhunaibat sounds the alarm about many educational aspects including teachers’ preparation, teaching strategies, teaching planes and curriculum. He addressed issues during a workshop organized by Ad-Dustour Newspaper in 26-10-2013. The workshop invited most of the educational expertise. He said:

*When a student enters the first grade of primary will face difficulties in understanding the curriculum because it is based on a curricula platform before, this has led to us to have, according to local studies, approximately 20% of first, second and third grade students cannot read a single letter or multiply one digit by another... We in the Ministry of Education are fully aware of what are the negative points in the curriculum in general, and we will work to avoid them (Ad-Dustour, 2013, P.2).*

In the recent Ministry of Education’s Annual Narrative Report in terms of quality of learning outcomes indicated that there is decline in students’ scores in Science and Math (Ministry of Education, 2013). Skills results have also revealed that the majority of students’ achievements are still below the desired levels (Ministry of Education, 2013). As it reported, the Ministry is taking the necessary remedial actions to tackle this challenge by initiating a plan to enhance readiness for International Tests that will, in turn, improve the education quality and raise Jordanian students’ achievements (Ministry of Education, 2013). According to the report, results of showed low levels in acquiring sufficient foundational skills in Math and reading for students in the first three grades, which is considered an early alert for the MOE to take the necessary remedial action at earlier stages (Ministry of Education, 2013).

These claims sparked arguments and debates about demands for another round of education reform at the national level and it is under preparation as far as the researchers know. If any education reform is to be successful, the dimensions of quality teaching should be included, taught, trained and implemented to meet the aims of that reform. In the experience of Jordanian education reform, these elements are ambiguous; desired teaching practices neither explained clearly nor adequately. To prevent this reform from failing, a tested and developed model of quality teaching practices based on and solidly grounded in theoretical and empirical platforms, such as the NSWQT Model (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2003a), needs to be provided. This study was conducted to fill the growing gap between the policy and the practices of the education reform movement in Jordan. It aims to assess the Jordanian educational context before domesticking a new model of quality teaching. In other words, it was necessary to observe quality teaching practices in Jordanian classrooms before considering a new model of quality teaching.

The selection of this model was not random as the model shares considerable overlap with the vision of the Jordanian MOE, which, in parallel with ministries in Australia, is to reform education by constructing a sustainable educational system capable of meeting the next millennium’s demands and needs in terms of producing skilled and knowledgeable generations (Ministry of Education, 2002). Furthermore, the model is comprehensive, covering most elements of quality teaching. By reviewing the literature, and conceptualizing and reporting on quality teaching and learning, it was clear to this researcher that the model largely covers the concepts of quality teaching built from a constructivist perspective (Borich, 2000; Brophy and Good, 1986; Newmann and Associates, 1996; Good and Brophy, 2000; Hughes, 1988; Killen, 2003; Lawton, 1988; McLaughlin and Talbert, 1993; Newmann et al., 1996; NSW Department of Education, 2003; Shulman, 1987; Williams, 1988). This is the common and desired approach to teaching and learning in the current global
education reform movement. Nevertheless, it is not satisfactory simply to assume that theories apply across all contexts; it is important to test the applicability of models in different contexts. The purpose of this study is to examine the extent to which the NSWQT Model can be applied in this different context. As far as the researcher could discover, no research of this kind with this type of comprehensive model has been done in Jordan.

**Literature Review**

The NSWQT Model is in its third incarnation, produced from a series of reforms incorporated at different stages. The recent form of this model arose from significant cooperation between the NSW Department of Education and Training and Dr James Ladwig and Professor Jennifer Gore from the University of Newcastle (NSW Department of Education, 2003). The roots of the NSWQT Model were published in 1996 by Fred Newmann and his associates. Their Wisconsin-based research project studied the relationship between what they called “authentic pedagogy” and student performance. That research arose from reform efforts seeking to increase student performance (Newmann et al., 1996, p.280). The research team created three main categories (or dimensions) for defining student performance for what they declared was authentic pedagogy. These were: the construction of knowledge; disciplined inquiry; and value beyond the school. They recognized that different factors could enhance authentic pedagogy and its associated learning (and this process was conceived as ‘quality teaching’). Their underpinning theoretical perspective for this understanding was constructivism, from which they defined criteria for tracking what they called authentic academic achievement (Newmann et al., 1996).

The formative stage providing the basis for what later became the NSWQT Model occurred in Queensland between 1998 and 2000. During this time an extensive observational study of classroom practices was conducted in Queensland schools, the ‘Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (QSRLS)’, co-directed by James Ladwig of the University of Newcastle and Bob Lingard of the University of Queensland. Their study drew heavily on Newmann’s research (Education Queensland, 2001; NSW Department of Education and Training, 2003a; University of Queensland, 2001). Over three years, the Queensland researchers made detailed observations and statistical analyses of 975 classroom lessons in government schools. The study sought to investigate possible correlations between classroom-based management practices and enhanced student social and academic outcomes (Education Queensland, 2001; University of Queensland, 2001). The resultant model consisted of four dimensions encompassing 20 elements of what these researchers also called authentic pedagogy (Education Queensland, 2001). The study found that the following main factors can influence productive pedagogy and subsequently students’ performance: pedagogical practices, assessment practices, teacher attitudes and beliefs, the nature of the professional learning community, the quality of leadership practices, professional development, and system alignment and system support (Education Queensland, 2001).

In 2003, the model was re-contextualized and reshaped by Dr James Ladwig and Professor Jennifer Gore from the University of Newcastle, in consultation with, and on behalf of, the NSW Department of Education and Training (NSW Department of Education, 2003). This became the NSWQT Model and it was designed to help the NSW Department of Education and Training reach the National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century, also known as the Adelaide Declaration (1999) (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2003a). In its final form, the NSWQT Model consisted of three dimensions of teaching and learning comprising eighteen elements. The model pointedly describes quality teaching as pedagogical practice that consists of eighteen observable elements clustered around three main dimensions. These broad dimensions were termed intellectual quality, quality learning environment, and significance. A close analysis of the dimensions and their elements found in the NSWQT Model reveals that they were derived from a variety of theoretical perspectives in education as they described below:

**Intellectual Quality**

The dimension of intellectual quality was built on the model of Bloom’s taxonomy in teaching and learning (Bloom, 1956), while the element of higher order thinking owes much to Newmann’s studies in the social studies teaching and learning context (Newmann, 1991; Newmann and Associates, 1996) and other researchers’ work Anyon (1981); Berlak and Berlak (1981); Bernstein (1971a, 1971b, 1973); Castells (2000); Cazden (1992); Connell (1993); Cope and Kalantzis (1995); Darling-Hammond and Youngs (2002); Freebody, Ludwig, and...
Quality Learning Environment

The dimension of quality learning environment and its elements reflect ideas and concerns of the research by Anderson and Burns (1989); Anderson (1994); Barr and Dreeben (1983); Beane (1993); Bernstein (1971a, 1971b, 1990); Biggs (1991); Bredekamp and Rosegrant (1995); Brophy and Good (1986); Cope and Kalantzis (1995); Darling-Hammond (1997); Darling-Hammond and Youngs (2002); Dewey (1916); Doyle (1992); Ginott (1971); Glasser (1986, 1990); Groundwater-Smith et al. (1998); Hooks (1994); Lemke (1990); Newmann (1989); Newmann and Associates (1996); Oakes et al. (1992); Thomas et al. (1998); Willms (2000). In general, it can be said that their research about quality learning environments showed the need for positive, comfortable, fair-minded, and productive interactions between teachers and students, both in the classroom and in the school-community more generally.

Significant

The dimension of significance has deep roots in the way pedagogy for ‘meaningful’ learning has been conceptualized: that pedagogy should connect with what students have learnt from ‘real life’. It also has been connected to the idea that students construct new knowledge on the basis of, and in connection with, their existing knowledge. This then means that such pedagogy needs to take into consideration the social and cultural diversity at teaching and learning sites. This concept originates in constructivist theory, which asks teachers to elicit students’ prior knowledge and experiences to aid the construction of new knowledge on this basis and to connect this knowledge with the students’ lives outside the classroom. The elements of this dimension are found collectively in the literature of Bruner (1960, 1966); Christie (1985); Cope and Kalantzis (1995); Darling-Hammond (1997); Dewey (1956); Egan (1988, 1997); Hymes (1996); Luke (1988); Newmann and Associates (1996); Thomas et al. (1998) and others mentioned previously.

Unfortunately, there have been few theoretical and practical studies of the NSWQTM Model since it was developed. The most recent reach was by Wilson and Powell (2013); their paper reports on a research case study, conducted in a school in Western Sydney, Australia, in which teachers worked with researchers and students to create learning experiences that reflected both intellectual quality and significance - two dimensions of the NSW Quality Teaching Framework (QTF). Findings suggest that these dimensions of the QTF were not implemented in a balanced way and this reflected a lack of support for the professional learning of teachers which the researchers could have helped to address, but did not. The paper argues that teachers should be supported by ongoing professional learning in order to sustain innovation and change (Wilson and Powell, 2013, P. 37). One of the researches that used the model as an illustration was by Gigliotti (2012); the aimed was to address the extent to which students engage in higher-order thinking when completing laptop-based activities developed by their teachers. A qualitative research approach was used during the honors inquiry to investigate the 1:1 laptop program. This research was undertaken in a single Stage Three, Year Six classroom and a total of 26 students, one classroom teacher and a pre-service teacher participated in the study. A Connected Outcomes Group (COGs) unit of work was used to provide a framework for the teaching and learning experiences that occurred in the classroom. The New South Wales Professional Teaching Standards (NSW PTS) and the New South Wales Quality Teaching Model (NSW QTM) were used to provide examples that illustrate the principles of quality teaching and learning that teachers need to address to ensure their students are able to successfully participate in higher-order thinking and develop technological skills and understandings. The study found that higher-order thinking was evident during laptop-based activities when Teachers provided feedback and when the strategy of questioning was used and when students were given the opportunity to take ownership of their work (Gigliotti, 2012, P. 78). Another study was conducted by McConaghy (2002) in New South Wales rural schools for a project called “Productive Partnerships for Teaching Quality” (p.1). The aim of the project was to identify the contextual factors that can influence quality teaching and learning in rural schools in NSW. More precisely, the project sought to explore the extent to which different contexts can influence quality teaching and learning and the relationship between teachers’ academic and professional preparation and students’ outcomes in rural schools (McConaghy, 2002).

In her theoretical framework, McConaghy compared three versions of the quality teaching model and connected those with the framework created for the Productive Partnerships for Teaching Quality project.
This was done to compensate for the perceived limitations and problems of the previous versions of the quality teaching model. Although McConaghy acknowledged the contributions of the Wisconsin project and the Queensland research, she was more concerned with the applicability of the model to NSW rural schools (McConaghy, 2002). This concern is quite reasonable when researching the transfer of a model of quality teaching to a different context. The crucial factor for McConaghy was that the original Wisconsin Authentic Pedagogy Model was created in and was potentially biased towards its urban context (McConaghy, 2002).

She went to say: “We also consider it necessary to rethink school-community dynamics and the place of quality teacher education in models that specify conditions for quality student attainment in rural schools” (p.9). McConaghy’s analysis revealed that the original model did not include the community in the ‘circle’ of teaching and learning and did not consider the social and political contexts of the teaching and learning sites in which the research was conducted. It neglected the background factor of the academic and professional preparation of the teachers in the study (McConaghy, 2002). Ultimately, however, to have a reasonably comprehensive model for assessing teaching and learning practices to act as a platform for research is better than having no paradigm at all. As Ladwig (2005) states, “we should be very upfront and say that you cannot improve pedagogy without having some model of pedagogy as your guide, or your goal” (p.71). Moreover, the usefulness of the model arises in part from the situation that the model in its first Newmannesque manifestation was part of a sophisticated remedial strategy to be used to reinvigorate and reconstruct American national pedagogies to enable students’ to enter a new era prepared with intellectual and social skills developed through an ‘authentic’ process (Ladwig, 2004; Newmann, 1989; Newmann and Associates, 1996; Newmann et al., 1996). From this, the model was further developed, re-contextualized, and its limitations and other issues addressed in the form of the Productive Pedagogy Framework, using data collected by Gore et al. from the model’s application in the Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (Education Queensland, 2001; Gore, 2001; Hays, Lingard, and Mills, 2000; Lingard, 2000; Lingard, Mills, and Hayes, 2000; NSW Department of Education and Training, 2003a; University of Queensland, 2001). Therefore, the model was “domesticated... [and] reinvigorated” (McConaghy, 2006, p.332) in the Queensland context through the longitudinal study. Similarly, in NSW the model was domesticated through the practical and theoretical reviews undertaken by academics from the University of Newcastle and professionals in the NSW Department of Education and Training (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2003a). Researchers drawn from different disciplines studied the model’s practical application. Formosa and Dixon (2004) conducted a study aimed at exploring the degree of congruence between the model and the day-to-day teaching practices utilized with children with moderate intellectual disabilities. Using qualitative methods in data collection and analysis, they examined the activities of one teacher located in a support unit in a primary school on the South Coast of NSW. The data were collected over four months. On the one hand, the study found that there was a little congruence between the dimensions of intellectual quality and significance and their 12 elements and the realities of teaching children with moderate intellectual disabilities. On other hand, it was found the dimension of quality learning environment and its elements had significant congruence with the realities of the day-to-day teaching practices noted.

In environmental education, Loughland (2006) conducted a PhD study to investigate “the relationship between students’ understanding of the environment and the pedagogy of environmental education” (p.11). The study used the model “as a theoretical framework of analysis in order to examine the data from the perspective of student performance in relation to current understandings of what constitutes good pedagogy practice” (p.v). Hence, the model used in this study as an instrument to measure classroom practices and indicate the model’s reliability, validity and effectiveness for this type of research. Johnson and Cupitt (2004) conducted a mathematics study funded by the premier program in NSW that assists schools which have a high percentage of students from a low socio-economic-status background. This program is called the “NSW Priority Schools Funding Program (PSFP)” (p.2). The study involved teachers in four primary schools. The researchers found that the NSWQT Model connected well with their collaborative research approach. Furthermore, the model and its elements created a common language for working with mathematical processes. They incorporated many elements from the model to support PFSP mathematics teachers.
In socio-cultural research, the model has been recommended as an effective framework for best practice for boys’ education in terms of its recognition of the need to understand social diversity and differences and their impact in real life (Keddie, 2005). In Keddie’s (2005) framework, she suggests that using the model’s conceptualization of productive pedagogy can be beneficial for building the relationship between teachers and students, to empower students’ understanding of gender and masculinity, and to open their horizons to diversity and varying gender roles. She argues that teachers should implement the model’s elements as productive themes to teach boys the deep meaning and significance of gender and masculinity within a context of social justice, rather than deal with these themes in a traditional way. Keddie feels that such clear understandings eventually will be reflected productively in social and academic outcomes.

Researchers from the University of Newcastle and their colleagues at the New South Wales Department of Education and Training recently began a four-year longitudinal study of the links between teachers’ professional development, pedagogy and student achievement. This project is called “SIPA: Systematic Implications of Pedagogy and Achievement in NSW Public Schools” (Ladwig and Gore, 2005, p.26). The research aims to analyze the efficacy of the NSWQT Model. The grades participating in the project are upper primary, from Years 3 to 6; a transitional cohort, from Years 5 to 8, and a lower secondary cohort, from Years 7 to 10. Data are collected through classroom observation, measures of learning, and assessment tasks for students. The sample consists of 3000 students and 36 000 samples of students’ work. Furthermore, 1000 teachers from 40 schools will be interviewed (Ladwig and Gore, 2005).

This study is, probably, the largest and most comprehensive study conducted since the latest version of the model was developed. Therefore, the model has been and continues to be elaborated by scholars and practitioners from different disciplines in an ongoing research partnership process that includes other education-system stakeholders. It has been examined at both school and classroom sites where the model has been taken seriously by participants. However, the model has not been tested outside the borders of Australia or America in terms of testing its applicability in a school and social culture that can be seen in some ways to be quite different from the cultures of these developed industrialized societies. This is the main aim of the current study. Since the main aim of this study is to examine the applicability of the NSWQT Model, it is necessarily to acknowledge the cultural sensitivity associated with any education reform particularly in the case of Jordan. The reason for that is to establish a kind of recognition of the cultural differences before any attempt of comparing, applying or implementing different models of quality teaching cross culturally.

Statement of the Problem and the Research Questions

The problem was to examine, describe and analyze the applicability of the NSWQT Model to the Jordanian primary school context. In order to achieve this overarching aim and the objectives outlined above, the study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How is quality teaching described officially in Jordan?
2. How is quality teaching described officially in the NSWQT Model?
3. What are the current quality teaching practices in Jordanian primary schools as judged by the NSWQT Model?
4. What are the perspectives of selected Jordanian primary schools’ stakeholders of quality teaching?
5. What factors influence quality teaching as perceived by the school stakeholders?

Research Design

The study sought to describe the extent of the applicability of the NSWQT Model in the Jordanian primary school context. Quality teaching occurs within a context and many factors can influence that context. This context has been organized into three main hubs: 1) the policy of education; 2) the school context; and 3) the classroom practices. To investigate the applicability of a different model of quality teaching in a different context, it is essential to consider the nature of that context. Therefore, a qualitative research method was used for this study. Understanding insightful information about human behavior usually comes from a natural setting with the researcher the key person in the area of research (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Minichiello, Sullivan, Greenwood, and Axford, 2004). The main question was: to what extent can the NSWQT Model be applied to the Jordanian primary school context? To understand the problem of the research, the main question was divided into four further questions. First, how is quality teaching described in Jordan? Second, how is
quality teaching described in the NSWQT Model? Third, what are the current quality teaching practices in Jordanian primary schools? Finally, what are the perspectives of Jordanian primary school stakeholders of quality teaching and the factors that influence it?

Participants
Because of the nature of the study, specific participants with known characteristics needed to be selected (May, 2001). The participants included seven quality teachers in primary schools and six principals of the selected teachers. The subjects observed were mathematics and Arabic language. These subjects were selected specifically because literacy and numeracy are the main subjects at this stage and also in the foundation stages. Both subjects are good examples for teachers to demonstrate their teaching abilities by applying elements of quality teaching. The researcher used four criteria to identify the quality teachers which were: Supervisors’ Recommendations, Principals’ Confirmations, Colleagues’ Confirmations and Parents’ Confirmations.

Documents
To understand the description of the quality teaching concept according to the Jordanian MOE and the NSWQT Model’s perspectives, the researcher had to refer to and analyze official documents to answer some of the research questions. Official and published documents from the Jordanian MOE were collected and examined. These documents relate to the criteria of quality teaching evaluation, which highlights the concepts of quality teaching in different contexts. For the NSWQT Model, the researcher collected all the important documents about this model in addition to the model itself, which are available from the NSW Department of Education and Training. The documents allowed the researcher to compare and contrast the criteria of quality teaching in Jordan with the NSWQT Model. The description of quality teaching from the MOE perspective was compared with what is occurring in the classrooms.

Observation
Teaching is an interactive process between the teacher and students and it is essential to observe the sights and the sounds of this interaction and it allows the researcher to study the teaching-learning process as it occurs in its natural place, which is the classroom (Anderson and Burns, 1989; Patton, 2002). Video-recording was use as the researcher was able to capture actions and reactions. While the camera was filming, the researcher observed the teaching and learning process and completed a coding sheet specified for this purpose. The coding sheet was the coding sheet of the NSWQT model of quality teaching. This sheet consisted of three dimensions and eighteen elements. Fourteen lessons were observed and recorded on seven videotapes, two lessons for each teacher. The subjects were mathematics and the Arabic language. Each lesson lasted 40 minutes. The total time for observations was 560 minutes. To ensure that the given scores for each teacher were valid and credible, a sample of videotaped lessons was given to an independent rater. This person was fluent in both English and Arabic, had knowledge of the NSWQT Model and had experience in primary school teaching. For each item and the related question, a rating of 1-5 was given to each lesson; 5 being most evident, 1 being not evident.

Interviews
The interview is a common technique in the qualitative method (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998; Merriam, 1988; Patton, 2002). The interviews enabled the school stakeholders to express themselves and comment about the context in which they work. The interviews allowed the researcher to compare and contrast the education policy and the actual teaching practices (rhetoric and practices). Each participant was interviewed once and each interview lasted 30 to 40 minutes. The participants interviewed were the six principals and seven teachers. The interviewees were informed that the interviews would be recorded on audio-or videotapes. The researcher was able to concentrate on the questions asked and the answers at the transcript stage and the interview could be repeated for translation and accuracy (Minichiello et al., 1995).

Field Notes
The researcher used these techniques simultaneously with other techniques: notes were kept with the researcher all the time and on all visits to schools. The written notes involved giving information that shows the schools’, classrooms’, students’ and the teachers’ locations. Keeping field notes gave the researcher a clear vision and assisted him in interpreting data collected by other techniques. These notes derived from the researcher’s observations before, during and after each visit to each school.
Data Analysis

Because of the nature of this study and the unique nature of this study, the researcher analyzed the data in the same manner as they were collected. Once data collection had been completed, the data were processed so they would be clear and available for analysis. All observation sheets, field notes and the documents were translated from Arabic to English. After the researcher had transcribed the tapes into text, he grouped and classified the data under the file titles (observations, field notes, interviews and documents). The researcher started analyzing the data based on the following techniques.

Patterns, Themes and Categories

In this investigation, the researcher had to explore the description of quality teaching according to the perspectives of the Jordanian MOE, the NSWQT Model, and the school stakeholders. The researcher treated the documents and the transcripts of the interviews as a whole body of text. The documents were analyzed in this way because there were few documents and so the researcher had to read and analyze these documents thoroughly. The researcher, therefore, treated these documents as texts together with the texts from the interviews and analyzed them by developing a category system through the ways of deductive and inductive. The first aspect to the analysis was the search for the dimensions of quality teaching, which were determined in the research framework. The dimensions of quality teaching were derived from the points of view of the teachers, principals, the MOE documents, and the NSWQT Model documents. These dimensions revolved around three hubs: the teachers’ actions, the students’ actions, and the interactions between students and the teachers. The researcher was also looking for factors that could influence quality teaching. These factors also revolved around three main hubs: the influence of the education policy, the influence of the school, and the influence of teaching practices. The researcher then considered the newly merged patterns, themes, and categories.

Observed Elements

Elements of quality teaching were extracted from the observations and from the field notes and videotapes. The videotapes and field notes were coded to explore the elements of quality teaching and to compare them with the elements identified in the conceptual framework on the one hand and with the NSWQT Model on the other. For the classroom observations, the researcher first carefully watched the videotapes and transcribed them into text. The texts for each lesson were carefully reread. Each unit of data, which can be a sentence or paragraph, was marked. The purpose was to come up with major codes and to look for specific concepts of quality teaching which were determined in the research framework and the NSWQT Model. The major codes were divided into sub-codes allowing the data to be arranged into elements representing the practicing dimensions of the quality teaching process. In this manner, the researcher worked back and forth between the data and coding construction until the conceptual saturation had been reached.

Results

Descriptions of Quality Teaching

In answer to the first and second sub-questions mentioned at the beginning of study which are – How is quality teaching described officially in Jordan? How is quality teaching described in the NSWQT Model? The results are presented below:

The Jordanian Ministry of Education Description

The MOE describes quality teaching as those practices needed to build a ‘knowledge society’ and that quality education is a cornerstone of a ‘Knowledge Economy’. The concept of quality teaching is part of the MOE’s future vision for education. The MOE acknowledges that quality teaching is a complex process which works in different directions. The MOE suggests that the student’s role in the teaching and learning process has to be moved from the traditional transmission-reception role (teacher-centered) to a new constructivist role (student-centered). The student’s role has to shift away from being a passive receiver of information expected to memorize information from textbooks and retain it until recalled and regurgitated at exam time (Ministry of Education, 2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2004; 2006). According to the MOE, the student must move to being a creative and active participant who debates and discusses, presents ideas freely and boldly, criticizes openly and suggests options, understands and uses technology, knows the value of foreign languages, makes difficult decisions, and stays committed to the path of ever-increasing knowledge and growth through understanding (Ministry of Education, 2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2006). The MOE makes its most fulsome statements about
quality teaching, according to the MOE, quality teaching is a process implemented by a teacher who understands the individual needs of students and does not stereotype students; who understands that disagreements with others can be a source of information for enriching learning; who is a good facilitator because they are able to think critically about and reflect on their students’ learning; and who is able to learn from others, reflect and thereby engage in life-long learning (Ministry of Education, 2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2004). Elsewhere, the MOE has made slightly more sensible comments about quality teaching and these at times were echoed by the school stakeholders in this study: that quality teaching as a process involves four dimensions—planning; creating a learning environment; the implementation of teaching and learning; and assessment.

The NSWQT Model Description

The NSWQT Model considered quality teaching as a process centered on pedagogical practice. The model’s depersonalized, technical and functional conception of pedagogy explains why it describes pedagogy as the “art and science” of teaching (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2003a, p.4), rather than pedagogy relying crucially on the personal characteristics of the teacher and the learner. The NSWQT Model’s developers break down their conception of pedagogy into teaching activity and the quality of instructional tasks. Significantly, in this understanding of pedagogy, knowledge is not seen as something static to be learned but, rather, a process involving construction, production and critique. Crucially, the developers of the NSWQT Model stress the inseparability of content, process (from both a teaching and learning point of view), and result: “the term pedagogy recognizes that how one teaches is inseparable from what one teaches, from what and how one assesses and from how one learns” (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2003a, p.4). In a much more fine-grained way than any Jordanian MOE document, the NSWQT Model describes quality teaching as a teaching and learning process involving three dimensions each broken down into subsets of six elements: i) intellectual quality, which consists of the six elements of deep knowledge, deep understanding, problematic knowledge, higher-order thinking, metalanguage, and substantive communication; ii) quality learning environment, which consists of explicit quality criteria, engagement, high expectations, social support, students’ self-regulation, and student direction; and iii) significance, which consists of background knowledge, cultural knowledge, knowledge integration, inclusivity, connectedness, and narrative (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2003a).

Current Quality Teaching and Learning Practices

In answer to the third sub-question – What are the current quality teaching practices in primary schools in Jordan in terms of the NSWQT Model? Four clear results became apparent from observing the teaching practices of seven primary classroom teachers in Jordan. First, it became clear that the three dimensions and the 18 elements of the NSWQT Model were applicable for describing both the teaching and the learning practices there. Second, the dimension ‘quality learning environment’ (and some of its elements) was more compatible with the teaching and learning practices observed than the other two dimensions. From a closer examination of the teaching practices of the participants, it can be said that in general, the dimensions of ‘intellectual quality’ and ‘quality learning environment’ and some of their elements were more compatible with the existing teaching and learning practices than the dimension of ‘significance’. Deliberate and conscious change would need to be undertaken for ‘significance’ to become as important a part of the Jordanian teaching-learning process as the NSWQT Model (and possibly the MOE) would envisage. It is suggested below that the possibility of implementing such a change could be limited by quite reasonable cultural concerns. Third, from the observations, all dimensions were most clearly applied in Arabic language lessons more so than in mathematics lessons. Fourth, from a close examination of the applicability of the elements across the three dimensions, it can be concluded that the elements of student direction, cultural knowledge, problematic knowledge, and narrative were either applied at a low level or not at all during the 14 lessons observed. Again, it is suggested below that there are cultural factors that may limit the applicability of these elements in the Jordanian context.

School Stakeholders’ Perspectives of Quality Teaching

In answer to the fourth sub-questions -What are the perspectives of selected Jordanian primary schools’ stakeholders of quality teaching? The interviews with the
Jordanian primary school stakeholders showed that they perceived the following as significant elements for producing quality teaching or for producing the characteristics of a quality teacher. The elements were: clearly determining instructional objectives; varying instructional methods; facilitating the acquisition and the implementation of knowledge; using teaching aids; having a physically and socially acceptable classroom environment; being conscientious, honest, and cooperating with colleagues and parents; having clear expectations of personal enjoyment, of professional growth and of the type of personal characteristics needed for teaching; having substantial content knowledge and knowledge of students and their abilities; and using ongoing assessment for teaching and learning.

Influential Factors

In answer to the fifth sub-question -what are the factors that influence quality teaching from these perspectives? The factors assessed by the stakeholders as influencing quality teaching were: infrastructure, resources and funding, mentoring and evaluation, relationships with colleagues and community, curriculum content, professional training and support, school context, students’ social and economic background, and instructional overload.

Discussion

Despite both the NSWQT Model and the Jordanian MOE’s framework attempting to introduce what they believed are asserted to be “best practice” into schools in the form of quality teaching and learning there is some incongruity between them. The major incongruites between the two frameworks arise from the histories from which they were derived and from the contexts within which they are expected to operate. Although both frameworks of quality teaching have a common theoretical understanding of the teaching and learning process and how this process functions, the school stakeholders have different perceptions. The two frameworks based on the constructivist approach to the teaching-learning process, focus on student-centred rather than teacher-centered learning. The main area of incongruence was between the requirements, on the one hand, of the MOE and the NSWQT Model and, on the other, of the perceptions of the school stakeholders of quality teaching and learning. One explanation for this incongruence might be the lack of retraining programmes for stakeholders on the MOE’s policy changes. Another explanation may be that the education reform was formulated without consultation with those school stakeholders who were meant to implement the reforms (i.e., it was top-down rather than bottom-up) (Al-Daami and Wallace, 2007; Alshurfat, 2003; Fullan, 1993; Hargreaves and Evans, 1997).

Intellectual Quality

In the dimension of intellectual quality, the NSWQT Model highlights two elements considered to be crucial for orientating the rest of the quality teaching and learning process: deep knowledge and deep understanding. The Jordanian framework and the school stakeholders describe these elements, and other elements in this dimension such as problematic knowledge and metalanguage, implicitly and do not position them as essential elements in the teaching-learning process. The reason might be that the MOE and the school stakeholders are aware of these elements tacitly but not explicitly. These elements were evident in the teaching practices of the school stakeholders but they were not discussed. The Jordanian school stakeholders did not explicitly refer to the elements of deep knowledge, problematic knowledge, higher-order thinking, metalanguage, and substantive communication. Nonetheless, these elements were congruent with their teaching practices. This dimension and most of its elements were incongruent with what they said about quality teaching but they were congruent with what they did in the classroom. The school stakeholders may not have been aware of these as important elements in the quality teaching and learning process. Alternatively, the school stakeholders, conceptually, may still believe in the transmission approach to teaching and believe that their practices are congruent with that approach when their observed practices are often clearly congruent with elements that are associated with a constructivist approach to teaching and learning. However, this finding is contradicting some literature (Eisenhart et al., 1988; Green, 1971; Harvey et al., 1968; Hollingsworth, 1989) that argue that teachers’ belief plays an important role in implementing elements of quality teaching.

In their practice, the element of problematic knowledge was not observed to the degree the frameworks would prefer. This incongruence may be explained by the Jordanian context where the stakeholders consider knowledge from what appears to be
an authoritative source to be the ‘truth’ that cannot be questioned, as in the transmission (teacher-centered) approach. This then replicates itself in turn where the teacher sees themselves as the only source of knowledge and this knowledge is presented as fact and, as a fixed body of truth, is not open to questioning. Although the school’ stakeholders’ belief of quality teaching and learning was consistent with the MOE’s old checklist of quality teaching criteria, it contradicted some literature (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Glasser, 1986; Killen, 1998, 2003, 2005; Newmann et al., 2001; Newmann et al., 1996; Newmann and Associates, 1996) that argued that teaching and learning is a construction process. The teacher in this process is a facilitator and the student is responsible for constructing his/her own knowledge. Interestingly, while teachers were much more congruent with the models’ prescriptions in their classroom practice than in their verbalizations, there were also some inconsistencies between different subject areas when teacher practices were observed. These findings are consistent with the some of the literature; for instance Gore, Griffiths, and Ladwig (2001) argued that some elements of these dimensions are difficult to apply to some subject areas. That argument was before the latest trial (2003) of the model.

Quality Learning Environment

At the theoretical level, the NSWQT Model’s dimension of the Quality Learning Environment and most of its elements are congruent with the MOE’s framework. The statements and actions of the school stakeholders, however, were most incongruent in the elements of student self-regulation and direction. The Jordanian school stakeholders tend to focus on classroom management as the main base-line criteria for teacher quality. There are some issues raised in the interviews with the school stakeholders that are not mentioned in either the NSWQT Model of quality teaching or the MOE’s framework but which still seem related to the dimension of the quality learning environment. Characteristics such as conscientiousness, honesty, passion, patience and loyalty are considered to be vital personal characteristics for teachers wishing to implement quality teaching practices. These characteristics are seen as guiding the teacher and the teaching process. At the observed classroom level, the element of student-direction was incongruent with the models’ requirements. Students in Jordanian schools generally come from extended families and from a generally “collectivist culture”; this may explain this incongruence (Rudy, Grusec, and Wolfe, 1999, p.299). This contrasts with western culture, from which the model derives and in which student self-direction is valued. In western culture, as an “individualistic culture”, children are taught to be autonomous and self-directed and children, ideally, are treated in an “authoritative” not “authoritarian” manner (Rudy et al., 1999, p.299).

The crucial point, however, is that the MOE has included this element of student self-direction in its vision for quality education. It is seen as one of the attributes needed for building a knowledge economy. However, the gap between the MOE’s requirements and Jordanian culture may ultimately hinder attempts to implement this element and foment teacher and student resistance and resentment. As it is stated in some Jordanian educational context-based research (Al-Daami and Wallance, 2007) that: “In the case of Jordan the issue is not simply about imposing the kind of technicall-rational program of modernization typically founded on western, secular values” (p. 357). These findings contradict some literature (Glasser, 1986; Groundwater-Smith et al., 1998; Killen, 2005; Meichenbaum and Biemiller, 1998; Zimmerman, 1989) that argues that giving students opportunities to regulate their behaviors provides them with a sense of responsibility for their behaviors, rather than letting all responsibility rest with the teacher. The teacher’s role is to have students feel satisfaction for regulating their behavior when performing their learning tasks.

Significance

The NSWQT Model’s dimension of significance and some of its elements are congruent with the MOE’s framework, but not with the responses of the school stakeholders. The Jordanian framework and the school stakeholders are both imprecise about asking teachers to acknowledge the existence and impact of cultural knowledge or social background on learning and to integrate this into their teaching. However, there are implicit guidelines provided to teachers by the MOE about dealing with students from different cultures and social backgrounds. Since the MOE is a legislative body of educational reform then it is necessarily to provide school stakeholders with blueprint for quality teaching and learning if they (MOE) want their vision to be implemented. School stakeholders cannot guess what is
in the MEO back mind. The relationships between both parties are supposed to be built on trust and transparency as it has been addressed in some literature (Dewey, 1916; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1994). There is a common perception in Jordanian society that there is no significant diversity in the Jordanian community in terms of religions, customs and ethnicities. The society is Arabic in nationality and language, Islamic in religion, and has common customs and ethnicities. Nevertheless, there can be socio-economic and political differences within Jordanian society and this is acknowledged by the MOE. In contrast, the NSWQT Model explicitly details the requirement for teachers to acknowledge diverse cultural knowledge and social backgrounds. The model gives teachers some ideas of the ways they could meet the demands and needs of Australia’s multicultural society and deal with social diversity in their classrooms. The NSWQT Model strongly suggests using narrative as a teaching strategy for dealing with cultural complexities, which is also supported by the literature (Christie, 1985; Egan, 1988, 1997; Hymes, 1996; Luke, 1988), while the Jordanian framework does not. The school stakeholders did not mention the importance of cultural knowledge and narrative in the teaching and learning process. In the classroom practices, the NSWQT Model’s element of cultural knowledge was incongruent with the observed teaching and learning practices. The Jordanian community is relatively homogeneous in terms of religion, ethnicity, race and language. The classrooms observed for this research did not have different cultural groups that allowed the teachers’ knowledge of different cultures to be examined. The MOE is aware of the importance of the element of cultural knowledge, but it remains implicit in official documents. The school stakeholders did not mention cultural knowledge and the element was not a feature of any of the 14 observed lessons. Political and social demographic changes in the region (Al-Daami and Wallance, 2007) may make cultural knowledge more of an issue for Jordanian teachers in the future. Previous research (Johnson and Cupitt, 2004; Keddie, 2005; Loughland, 2006) contradicts the findings of this research in so far as these studies argue that background (cultural) knowledge and narrative are key elements in making the teaching and learning process significant for students. The findings of the present study also seem to contradict earlier literature as to the real centrality of cultural facility for quality teaching (Biggs, 1991; Borich, 1999, 2000; Christie, 1985; Connell, 1993; Delgado-Gaitan, 1996; Egan, 1988, 1997; Glasser, 1986; Groundwater-Smith et al., 1998; Hymes, 1996; Killen, 1998; Luke, 1988; Meichenbaum and Biemiller, 1998; Nakata, 1995; Zimmerman, 1989).

Despite all the congruencies and incongruences between the model and with what has been said and been done by the MOE and the school stakeholders, the NSWQT Model, in general, has some limitations in its applicability to the Jordanian context. The model does not give attention to the social context of the educational. These findings are consistent with McConaghy (2002), who exposed the model’s limitations in recognizing the importance of the community surrounding the school in specific places and the special social conditions and cultural contexts of these places. The NSWQT Model does not give alternatives to use in different approaches to assessment. It propagates for an authentic assessment or “performance-based assessment” to show students’ knowledge in situations similar to real life (Killen, 2005, p.128). The model has limitations in its flexibility of using different strategies for assessment to meet the variety of student abilities. For example, a student who has good communication skills can debate, discuss and argue verbally and can benefit from such assessment (Killen, 2005) but the student who is disabled in these skills would be disadvantaged by this type of assessment. The incongruence between the NSWQT Model and the MOE’s framework is the MOE suggesting different assessment strategies, whereas the NSWQT Model claims one assessment strategy. Another limitation of the model’s applicability is that it is considered to be a generic model. The model may give a general framework for pedagogy but does not give sufficient details for each curriculum area. These findings are consistent with McConaghy (2002); the model did not recognize the subject matter as the core of the pedagogic arena. However, these findings contradict the results of other studies (Johnson and Cupitt, 2004; Keddie, 2005; Loughland, 2006) who argued that the model can be relevant to different curriculum areas.

Conclusion

The NSWQT Model is consistent with the MOE’s future vision and the Framework for Assessment and Curriculum. The MOE aims to develop an education system able to meet national and international labor
market needs by preparing teachers and students with the attributes required by a knowledge economy that recognizes and meets global requirements and challenges. However, for the model to be completely applicable and subsequently functional, contextual factors need to be considered and prioritized.

REFERENCES


The Applicability of …


 مدى ملاءمة نموذج نيو ساوث ويلز لجودة التعليم لبيئة التعليم الابتدائي الأردني

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ملخص

هدف الدراسة الحالي إلى التحقق من مدى ملاءمة نموذج نيو ساوث ويلز لجودة التعليم لبيئة التعليم الابتدائي الأردني، كون طريقة البحث المستخدمة هي طريقة البحث النوعي، اقتصرت عينة الدراسة على سبع معلمين، لجمع بيانات البحث، استخدم الباحتان المقابلة والملاحظة وتحليل الوثائق، اشارت نتائج الدراسة إلى أن التعليم النوعي وصف بصورة مشابهة في النموذج المشار إليه وكذلك في وثائق وزارة التربية والتعليم الأردنية، كذلك اشارت النتائج إلى أن معظم عناصر التعليم النوعي المشار إليها في النموذج كانت ظاهرة وواضحة داخل الغرف الصفية التي تمت ملاحظتها. بالرغم من هذا التشابه هناك فرق ما بين وزارة التربية والتعليم ونموذج نيو ساوث ويلز من جهة وبين المعلمين من جهة أخرى من حيث طريقة تفسير مفهوم معنى التعليم النوعي أو جودة التعليم.

الكلمات الدالة: نموذج نيو ساوث ويلز لجودة التعليم، جودة التعليم، المدرسة الابتدائية، ملاءمة نموذج تعليم، البيئة المدرسية.