

## **Professional Development Schools (PDSS) as a Teacher Training Reform in Two Arab Teacher Training Colleges in Israel**

**Ahmad Amer and Saleem Abu Jaber**

Al-Qasemi Academy

### **Abstract:**

This research article is a review of the educational reform "professional development schools" (PDSs) and its implementation in two Teacher Training colleges in Israel where Arab students qualify to become teachers. The research instrument is primarily document analysis of evaluation reports published by the two colleges as well as other publications worldwide. Both researchers are experienced pedagogical advisers within PDS reform and the traditional practicum as well. The review starts with describing how the PDS started and spread in the US, then it describes its implementation in Israel in general and in two teacher training colleges where Arab students learn, in particular. This article describes the PDS reform in two Israeli-Arab teacher training institutes: The Academic Institute for Arab Teacher Training in Beit Berl College and The Teacher Education Department in Kaye College for Elementary Schools in the Bedouin Sector. This article presents planning stages and the beginnings of the PDSs in the two Arab teacher training institutes, the implementation process and evaluation of goals achievement. Recommendations on how to improve this teacher education reform implementation in both schools and teacher training colleges are an integral part of this review article.

Keywords: Professional Development Schools (PDSs), Teacher Training, Israeli-Arab, Teacher Training Colleges.

### **Introduction:**

Professional Development Schools (PDSs) are becoming a significant trend in teacher education reform, a trend where teacher training colleges/universities and schools have partnership. According to the National Council for

Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) in the US, there are five defining characteristics of PDSs:

- **Learning Community** - Addresses the unique environment created in a PDS partnership that supports both professional and children's learning.
- **Accountability and Quality Assurance** - Addresses the responsibility of a PDS partnership to uphold professional standards for teaching and learning.
- **Collaboration** - Addresses the development and implementation of a unique college/school community which shares responsibility across institutional boundaries.
- **Equity and Diversity** - Addresses the responsibility of the PDS partnership to prepare professionals to meet the needs of diverse learners.
- **Structures, Resources and Roles** - Addresses the infrastructure that a PDS partnerships uses and/or creates to support its work.

In the early nineties of the 20th century, education leaders and researchers around the world saw the need to significantly change the traditional teacher training programs. The notion of partnership between teacher training institutes and schools in the U.S. followed a series of ongoing studies conducted by John Goodlad and others from the seventies onwards. Goodlad and his colleagues conducted extensive studies in elementary and high schools in the United States (Goodlad, 1984), and also conducted a comprehensive study which examined the teacher-training programs (1,300 programs) in many teacher training institutions (Goodlad, 1994). The main conclusion of these studies was that the need for change of the schools as well as the teacher training programs. PDSs are often compared to teaching hospitals, (hybrid institutions). As practicing professions, both teaching and medicine require a sound academic program and intense clinical preparation. The teaching hospital was designed to provide such clinical preparation for medical students and interns; PDSs serve

the same function for prospective teachers and in-service faculty. Both settings provide support for professional learning in a real-world setting in which practice takes place.

The dissatisfaction with the traditional model (Ariav, 2001; Beck, 2001; Silberstein, 1995, 1998) gave rise to creating partnerships with schools to establish teacher training programs in which students learn from the academic institution what is necessary to know about learning and instruction in terms of theory and underlying assumptions. In parallel, partnerships with schools give students the opportunity to practice their theoretical knowledge in an authentic environment that provides them actual experience in schools. The rationale behind the partnerships is to enable the interaction between the academic culture in colleges and universities and the practical applied culture in school (Silberstein, Ben Peretz & Grinfeld, 2006).

The Professional Development School (PDS) model was first proposed in Holmes report (Holmes Group, 1986). The Holmes report authors argued that improvement of practical experience processes depends on school change and re-structuring of practices in the field.

The PDS model attempts to enhance the student ability to combine the two types of knowledge: practical knowledge and theoretical knowledge within a learning community composed of academic institution lecturers and pedagogical advisors and school teachers.

Ariav and Smith (2006) define the partnership as an opportunity for simultaneous professional development of student teachers, teachers training institute staff as well as school personnel. The ultimate goal of this professional development is improving pupils' learning in its broadest sense: academic, social, cultural and emotional achievement (Ariav and Smith 2006). PDS

model sees teaching as a practical reflective profession that combines theory and practice (Silberstein, 1998).

Different partnership-based models exist in several countries such as the US, England, Scotland, Australia, Norway, Sweden and Austria.

According to The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), PDS reform has four primary goals:

- Maximizing **school learners** performance and achievement
- Preparation of **new teachers** and other school-based educators
- Professional development of beginning and experienced **teachers** and other school-based educators
- Applied **inquiry** designed to improve practice

In the beginning of the 21st century, several teacher-training institutions in Israel joined the PDS reform and created quite a few successful initiatives. The MOFET institute (a center for the research and development of programs in teacher education and teaching in the colleges in Israel) established a forum in which college representatives were involved in mutual learning about potential partnerships between teacher training colleges and schools. This partnership reform also appeared as a recommendation in Dovrat Committee report (National Task Force to promote education in Israel 145, 131-130, 2005).

Extensive research literature indicates the importance and positive impact of the practicum on teacher education. Studies indicate that practical work is considered one of the most important components in the process of qualifying new teachers. The practical work has a positive impact on how students access special education learners and on their ability to work with children with learning disabilities. Moreover, structured practical experience in a group setting reduces stress among students during the experience. (Snoek & Smith, 1996; Hodge, Davis, Woodward & Sherrill, 2002). Wang and Odell (2002)

argue that problems that college students face can be considerably reduced in the PDS Model.

### **PDS in two Arab Teacher Training Institutes:**

There are three teacher training colleges in the Arab sector in Israel. Al-Qasemi Academic College of Education; Sakhnin Academic College for Teacher Education and The Academic Arab College Of Education. In addition to these three colleges, there are few institutes that qualify Arab teachers within teacher training colleges in the Jewish sector: The David Yellin Academic College of Education has an institute called 'Education for teachers of children with special needs in the Arab sector'; Beit Berl College has an institute called 'The Academic Institute for Arab Teacher Training'; Kaye College has 'The Teacher Education Department in Kaye College for Elementary Schools in the Bedouin Sector.

In some of these colleges/institutes PDS replaced the 'traditional' practicum where the pedagogical advisor had students in 3-5 schools. This dispersion of students prevented the advisor from giving instant feedback to his trainees. Al-Qasemi college, for instance, has recently started implementing PDS in Haifa District this Academic year (2011-2012).

While there is a severe shortage of teachers in the Jewish sector in Israel, there is a saturation as far as the numbers of pre-service teachers in the Arab sector. In the US, the PDS reform was necessary partly to tackle the problem of the shortage of teachers or teachers dropout as well as to make the induction process as 'smooth' as possible for new teachers. This is the case too in the Israeli Jewish sector. PDS reform in the Arab colleges/institutes has not developed as a result of teachers shortage or dropout! As far as international standardized tests, Israel is not doing very well in general, and the Arab sector is doing very poorly. The PDS reform in the two teacher training colleges has

been adopted to prepare better qualified teachers to help improve the learners' achievements in schools.

### **The Academic Institute for Arab Teacher Training in Beit Berl College**

The Academic Institute for Arab Teacher Training in Beit Berl college started implementing PDS model in the 2005-2006 academic year. Beit Berl College is a multidisciplinary academic institution that is active in education, society, art, and culture. Jews and Arabs work and study at Beit Berl (<http://www.beitberl.ac.il/english/Pages/default1.aspx>). The college describes its PDS program as follows: "The partnerships with schools in the Arab sector create a platform for student teachers to obtain comprehensive practical experience and introduce innovative instruction in the partner schools. In this context, the students strengthen their teaching skills and learn to cope with their beliefs about learning, diversity, and other crucial educational issues." ([http://www.beitberl.ac.il/ENGLISH/SCHOOLS/ARAB TEACHER/Pages/Special Programs.aspx](http://www.beitberl.ac.il/ENGLISH/SCHOOLS/ARAB_TEACHER/Pages/Special Programs.aspx)).

Students visit the school once a week (on Wednesdays); there are two practicum weeks during the year where students teach the whole week Sunday-Thursday; there are one 'staff hour' where the pedagogical adviser, mentors and students meet on a weekly basis to discuss and share feedback on issues related to the practicum.

*The Academic Institute for Arab Teacher Training in Beit Berl College and PDS four goals:*

*i) Maximizing **school learners** performance and achievement*

The institute has not conducted any summative or formative assessment regarding this goal.

*ii) Preparation of **new teachers** and other school-based educators*

In comparing the PDS with the traditional practicum, the following three categories with the correspondent variables were measured:

**Personality variables** (1. Self-esteem; 2. Teaching self-efficacy; 3. Emotional reference as a future teacher; 4. Emotional reference as a pupil in the past)

**Environmental variables** (1. School climate; 2. Attitudes towards the teaching profession; 3. Attitudes Toward College; 4. Knowledge about the teaching profession; 5. Perception of staff hour effectiveness; 6. Perception of Practical work week effectiveness)

**Instrumental variables** (1. Knowledge transfer from college to school; 2. Expressive teaching skills; 3. Instrumental teaching skills; 4. Reflective Thinking).

The findings demonstrated more similarities than differences between PDS reform and traditional practicum. However, PDS students outperformed in four variables: Self-esteem; Teaching self-efficacy; Attitudes towards the teaching profession and Reflective Thinking. Regarding the variable 'Expressive Teaching Skills', there was no difference. This variable consisted of four items: Encourage learning among students; Solving discipline problems; Address students with special needs & Providing emotional encouragement to students. 'Perception of staff hour effectiveness' variable was perceived differently among second and third year students. Third year students perceived the staff hour as less effective.

*iii*) Professional development of beginning and experienced **teachers** and other school-based educators

The main changes related to the role of the mentor teachers initiated by the PDS aims at fostering a more balanced relationship between mentor and student teachers (Abdal-Haqq 1998; Castle, Fox, & Souder, 2006). Both mentors and students are members of a learning community where mutual

learning prevails. Still, despite the reported declared benefits of PDS for mentors, they still perceive their role as transmitter of knowledge to the students; the formation of a learning community is not mature yet.

iv) Applied **inquiry** designed to improve practice

The Evaluation Department at Beit Berl College accompanied the implementation process of PDS. Four reports have been published: PDS evaluation in The Academic Institute for Arab Teacher Training (2007); students' perceptions of PDS (2009); Mentors' perceptions of PDS; and pedagogical advisers' perceptions of PDS. No research has been conducted on school learners' performance and achievement!

The report on pedagogical advisers showed that the pedagogical advisers perceived the positive potential that the PDS program has in empowering the colleges students, mentors and school learners as well. The instant feedback that the college students get, the weekly staff hour, approaching the school as an organization, bridging the gap between theory and practice and developing reflective thinking among the trainees are the components that the pedagogical advisers find very constructive in promoting learning for all parties involved. Still, many of PDS underlying assumptions were not manifested such as the need to encourage students and support them emotionally, dealing with classroom management and discipline problems, developing a learning community, and addressing the social and personal development of the trainees.



## **The Teacher Education Department in Kaye College for Elementary Schools in the Bedouin Sector**

Kaye Academic College of Education is the academic institution for teacher education and professional development of educators in the south, serving both the Jewish and Bedouin populations of the Negev.

(<http://www.kaye.ac.il/115403/About-Kaye-College>). Kaye College sees PDS partnerships with the Bedouin sector as an opportunity to bridge the gap between theory (what students learn in the college) and practice (the practical work in schools). Schools serve as an environment where students and mentors act in authentic situations where pedagogical and practical considerations are intertwined. The Evaluation Department at Kaye College accompanies academic and community focused projects. Within the framework of projects focused on community and learning, the department has accompanied Partner Development Schools (PDS) in Bedouin Elementary Schools starting in 2010-2011 academic year (The Teacher Education Department in Kaye College for Elementary Schools in the Bedouin Sector).

Students visit the school twice a week (on Mondays & Wednesdays); there are two practicum weeks during the year where students teach the whole week Sunday-Thursday; there are one 'staff hour' where the pedagogical adviser, mentors and students meet; the college holds a 'plenary session' in the beginning of the year where all school staff meet with the students and college representatives to coordinate expectations and to learn about PDS reform; second year and third year students have their practicum together. They go to the same classes in schools and work side by side.

*The Teacher Education Department in Kaye College for Elementary Schools in the Bedouin Sector and PDS four goals:*

*i) Maximizing **school learners** performance and achievement*

The institute has not conducted any summative or formative assessment regarding this goal.

*ii) Preparation of **new teachers** and other school-based educators*

The students expressed their general satisfaction from PDS program. They indicated that having second year and third year students working together was very useful where both parties benefited from this arrangement. Nevertheless, they complained about the high amount of money they spent on preparing the paraphernalia (visual aids, realia, etc.) especially because they visit the school twice a week and have two practicum weeks during the academic year. In the plenary session that is held in the beginning of the academic year, the college students get to know the school as sophisticated organization. The students are exposed to the school tapestry and to the various roles played by the school personnel, such as the school principal, the pedagogical coordinator, disciplinary directors, special education director(s), social activities coordinator, etc. PDS students in The Teacher Education Department in Kaye College were actively involved in school social and cultural activities. Nutrition, Environmental Education, Storytelling Corner (that received a donation of 400 stories from the Arabic Language Academy in Haifa) are three initiatives that the college students had within their practical work last year.

*iii) Professional development of beginning and experienced teachers and other school-based educators.*

In addition to receiving the college students in their school, the mentors have the possibility to go to Kaye college for professional development on PDS reform. Lecturers from the college visit schools to enrich the staff knowledge on instructional and pedagogical issues such as motivation, reading skills and diverse learners. The mentors reported that their contribution as well as the

college students' contribution to the school learners increase significantly in PDS framework compared with traditional practicum. Some veteran teachers acknowledged that they learnt new techniques from the college students and voiced their recognition to the students contributions. However, the mentors voiced their complaint about the heavy load they deal with to keep supporting the college students. In the plenary session that is held in the beginning of the school year, the mentors and other teachers learn about PDS reform vision and goals and they learn about their anticipated roles.

iv) Applied **inquiry** designed to improve practice

The Evaluation Department at Kaye College accompanied the implementation process of PDS. Two reports were published (Abu Jaber, 2011, Evaluation Department Report, 2011).

### **Recommendations:**

As far as the mentors are concerned, there are some challenges that needs to be addressed. The "New Horizon" reform - a national Israeli educational reform - requires elementary and junior high school teachers to work more hours every week, to teach individual students (tutoring), and to spend more time on assessment and documentation. One of PDS primary components is the 'staff hour' where college students, the pedagogical advisor and the mentors meet on a weekly basis to discuss practicum-related issues. Furthermore, the financial reward that the mentors receive in return for taking part in PDS is very symbolic and mentors expressed that they exert a lot of effort while the monetary reward is minimal. These findings in the two institutes are in line with previous ones (Lazopski, Reichberg & Zeiger, 2006; Ariav, Hiosh & Freitig, 2006).

The professional development of all those involved in PDS - students, pedagogical advisors & mentor teachers - is a main goal of such partnerships. Evidence on the impact of PDS on these three parties is limited, especially in providing systematic and longitudinal qualitative and quantitative data. The experience of the two Arab teacher training institutes demonstrates that there are some PDS-related aspects that require further improvement or development. There are gaps between actual and perceived professional growth of these three parties within the context of the partnerships. These findings indicate that there is a need to address the parties professional development directly and in a planned manner. This approach seems necessary so that the partner schools improve and keep their commitment to the partnership with the teacher training colleges.

\*) Beit Berl third year students found the staff hour less effective than second year students. This can be attributed to the repetition of similar discussion in the successive years. There is a need to write a detailed syllabus elaborating the issues to be discussed in each year: lesson planning, classroom management, disciple problems, diverse learners, struggling readers, children with special needs, curriculum, tutoring, national standardized tests, interviewing administrative and pedagogical school personnel, accommodations given to learners with learning disabilities, teaching and learning styles, multiple intelligences, technology and integration into learning and teaching are some of the issues that can constitute the syllabus of second and third year practicum.

\*) Third year students in the two institutes are required to work on their 'graduation project'. An integral part of this project is designing an instructional unit. An instructional unit is essentially a complete, coherent sequence of lessons designed to cover a single topic or theme. A well-designed unit has a set of learning goals or objectives; a cohesive plan for day-by-day instruction, including some sort of introduction and conclusion for the unit as a whole; and

built-in methods of assessment. The unit should incorporate a variety of learning activities, emphasize students' active participation, develop students' literacy, use appropriate materials and technology, and integrate several aspects of the content. In the traditional practicum, students used to present their graduation project in the college in front of their pedagogical adviser and their classmates. Since students were scattered in 3-5 schools, it was not feasible to present the project in the schools. Since the PDS program is based on partnership, it's highly recommended that students present their project in the school. Mentors, the pedagogical adviser, college students, school learners, school personnel, inspectors, municipality representatives and other guests can all take part in the presentation session. Such presence can foster the notion of a learning community that is one of PDS goals.

- Workshops to Instill the PDS values among PGs and Mentors
- Organizational Change: Students need to be exposed to school as a system.
- More emphasis on expressive teaching skills
- More emphasis on reflective thinking among Ss, Ps and Ms
- To continue with the current model
- Evaluating School learners' achievement
- 'rewarding' PGs
- Budget allocation: learning centers in the schools (intensive practicum weeks), educational initiatives, games, cultivating a learning environment
- ...

- In the 'New Horizon' reform, all school teachers are annually required to learn 60 hours as part of their professional development. The Ministry of Education should recognize the mentors' participation in the weekly staff hour throughout the year as their fulfillment of at least 30 hours out of the 60 hours requirement. The pedagogical advisor should build the annual syllabus for the staff hour.

- The college should lead the process of adapting PDS program to the 21st century in terms of computer-based technology especially the integration of Learning Management Systems (LMS) such as Moodle. The repertoire of lesson plans that the college students prepare, the interactive quizzes that Moodle makes possible to create, the multimedia (sounds, texts, pictures and videos) integration should all be accessible by the mentors, all pedagogical advisors in the college teaching the same discipline, school learners and the college students of years to come. This process can be an integral part of establishing a learning community.

- Due to the pressure the mentors face in 'New Horizon' reform, it's very advisable that pedagogical advisers prepare a list of relevant articles that are originally written for practitioners to help mentors and students develop professionally. While in school, mentors and students need practical ideas and techniques rather than theoretical or philosophical assumptions. Mentors and students can choose to read what they find interesting and empowering and then they can share what they learn from these articles when they meet in the staff hour.

## Conclusion

There is some evidence from descriptive and qualitative studies, as well as anecdotal evidence, that teacher education in PDS settings is more systematic, empowering, and effective than in traditional programs (Castle, Fox & Souder, 2006; Levine 2002; Ariav & Smith, 2006). This is also the case in both The Academic Institute for Arab Teacher Training in Beit Berl College and The Teacher Education Department in Kaye College for Elementary Schools in the Bedouin Sector. However, as far as the first primary goal of the PDS reform is concerned (maximizing school learners performance and achievement), there is less evidence that pupil learning is significantly or consistently enhanced in PDS settings. The relative newness of PDSs in both colleges allows for more time to attain the ultimate goal of maximizing performance and achievement among school learners. To ultimately obtain this goal, Arab teachers training institutes evaluation departments should incessantly embed systematic documentation and assessment into PDS program design, and devise reliable measures of outcomes from such innovative, nontraditional practical work framework.

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مشروع مدارس منظومة الشراكة للتطوير المهني في  
كليتين لتأهيل المعلمين العرب في إسرائيل

أحمد عامر وسليم أبو جابر

تلخيص:

هذه المادة البحثية، هي عبارة عن مراجعة للمشروع التربوي "مدارس منظومة الشراكة للتطوير المهني (PDSS)" وتطبيقه في معهدين من معاهد تأهيل المعلمين في إسرائيل، حيث يتلقى الطلاب العرب التأهيل المهني للتدريس في المدارس العربية. إن أداة البحث في المقام الأول في هذا البحث، هي تحليل وثائق تقارير التقييم الصادرة عن المعاهد وكذلك الأبحاث العلمية الأخرى التي صدرت بهذا الخصوص في جميع أنحاء العالم. الباحثان لهذا المشروع يتمتعان بتجربة وخبرة كمرشدين تربويين في عملية الإرشاد التقليدية السابقة وكذلك في عملية الإرشاد المبنية على مشروع "مدارس منظومة الشراكة للتطوير المهني (PDSS)". تبدأ هذه المراجعة بوصف كيفية بداية وانتشار هذا المشروع في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية، ومن ثم تنتقل إلى وصف نقل المشروع وتطبيقه في المعاهد والمدارس في إسرائيل بشكل عام، وخاصة في معهدين من معاهد تأهيل المعلمين العرب على وجه الخصوص. حيث يتناول هذا المقال بتوسع مشروع "مدارس منظومة الشراكة للتطوير المهني (PDSS)" في معهدين لتأهيل المعلمين العرب في إسرائيل وهما: المعهد الأكاديمي لإعداد المعلمين العرب في كلية بيت-بيرل، والقسم الابتدائي لتأهيل المعلمين العرب في كلية "كي" في بئر السبع.

يعرض هذا المقال مراحل التخطيط والخطوات الأولى لانطلاق هذا المشروع، كما يعرض عملية التطبيق وتقييم تحقيق الأهداف. وأخيراً يقدم المقال توصيات بشأن كيفية تحسين تطبيق هذا المشروع مستقبلاً في كل من المدارس العربية ومعاهد تأهيل المعلمين.

كلمات البحث: مدارس التطوير المهنية (PDSS)، تأهيل المعلمين، العرب في إسرائيل ومعاهد تأهيل المعلمين.

## בתי ספר לפיתוח מקצועי (PDSS) כרפורמה בהכשרת מורים

### בשתי מכללות להכשרת מורים ערבים בישראל

אחמד עאמר וסלים אבו ג'אבר

#### תקציר:

מאמר זה הוא סקירה של הרפורמה החינוכית בהכשרת מורים "בתי ספר לפיתוח מקצועי (PDSS)", ויישומה בשתי מכללות להכשרת מורים בישראל, בהן סטודנטים ערבים מקבלים הכשרה מקצועית להוראה. כלי המחקר הוא בעיקר ניתוח מסמכים של דוחות הערכה שפורסמו על ידי שתי מכללות, וגם ספרות מקצועית שפורסמה ברחבי העולם בנושא זה. שני החוקרים הם מדריכים פדגוגיים מנוסים בהדרכה הפדגוגית לפי דגם ההכשרה המסורתי וגם לפי דגם ה-PDS. הסקירה מתחילה בתיאור האופן שבו התחיל דגם ה-PDS ואיך התפשט ברחבי ארה"ב. לאחר מכן תיאור העתקת הדגם ויישומו בישראל בכלל, ובשתי מכללות להכשרת מורים שבהן סטודנטים ערבים מתכשרים להוראה, בפרט. מאמר זה מתאר את דגם ה-PDS בשתי מכללות להכשרת מורים ערבים בישראל: המכון האקדמי להכשרת מורים ערבים במכללת בית ברל והתכנית להכשרת המורים לבית הספר היסודי במגזר הערבי במכללת קיי בבאר שבע. המאמר מציג שלבי התכנון ותחילת יישומו של דגם ה-PDSs בשתי מכללות להכשרת מורים ערבים, תהליך היישום וההערכה של השגת מטרות הדגם והמלצות כיצד לשפר את יישום הדגם הזה בבתי ספר ובמכללות להכשרת מורים, הן חלק בלתי נפרד ממאמר סקירה זה.

**מילות מפתח:** בתי ספר לפיתוח מקצועי (PDSS), הכשרת מורים, ערבים בישראל, מכללות להכשרת מורים.