

Chapter 66: Classroom Learning Centers

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I am Sahar Alqarni. I was born in 1981, I am from Saudi Arabia. My family is small and consists of my husband and two children. I graduated from University of King Abdulaziz and got a bachelor's degree in English literature. I started working in the Ministry of Education since 2006 as an English language teacher for the primary grade in Mecca. I attended several workshops in Makkah area which helped in the development and advancement of education. During my career I have always been keen to develop myself by reading and researching in most sites that related to teaching English to non-native speakers. In addition, I am interested in traveling to English-speaking countries every year to practice language skills and not to forget them through talking or talking positively with people in the markets or various activities that allow us to speak and learn the culture of others.

In 2018 I got a training opportunity to the United States to get a leadership and education program at the University of Central Florida. During this course I learned a lot through the academic, language and development courses and workshops that took place at the University of Central Florida in the first half of the program, which lasted 6 months. One of my main goals was to develop my English language skills, to achieve the level required to meet the English language requirements of English teachers, to harmonize and live with the educational life of American schools, to gain experience from observing in the classroom, to provide a project that helps to develop education when I return to my country. Also, I got a good educational experience in the United States and learn more about their educational systems. Moreover, I paid attention to conferences that dealt with leadership, change and development.

In the first six months of the program, the primary objective was to attend an intensive English course at the ELI Institute. Where the Intensive Language Program is interested in studying methods of listening, reading, writing, grammar and speaking. By attending intensive language classes, I improved my English language and academic skills, and I Focused on listening and speaking skills by mixing and meeting native speakers. Also, I learned how to use format APA style. I saw improvement through the writing classes by applying information from the instructor. Otherwise, attending leadership classes lead me to know how we can solve some problems in educational ways. Furthermore, I discovered that behind every great school and every distinctive teacher is a set of beliefs and related factors (-the philosophy of education-) that uniquely affects how students learn. The philosophy of modern education answers most questions about the primary purpose of education, the role of the teacher, what to teach, and what are the best ways and practices. From here I found that I tend to utilize two distinctive philosophies, that it is progressivism and social reconstructionism philosophies. Every day I had to get about six hours of study in the English Language institute. In addition, all language classes and language labs were provided with the tools and applications of modern learning technology such as electronic presentation, language

programs and the use of some mobile applications and computer applications such as PowerPoint, Kahoot, YouTube, and watch TED talk.

During my study at the English Language Institute, I received many different lessons on communication, writing and reading skills. In addition, many presentations on educational philosophy, education strategies and other subjects were presented in most language classes. At the ELI Institute, I attended the Educational Leadership classes for 3 hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays. I also attended two conferences on educational strategies in Orlando and educational scientific research in New York. In addition, I attended two workshops at the University of Central Florida on the topics of classroom strategies and management. I have benefited greatly from the educational leadership classes, which opened the way for me to learn about the latest methods or strategies in the science of leadership that serve the educational environment, I was supervised by the best academics in this field provided to us before the immersion stage to take advantage of and apply inside the schools.

The Riverdale Elementary School was chosen for my immersion phase and was the last stage of training. I found everything I wanted to learn in the world of education. Daily I was in the classroom. I closely followed the work of the teacher through his educational strategies or through his good classroom management. I benefited greatly from the variety of educational strategies in presenting the lesson to suit all students. All strategies offered a space for questioning, conclusion and problem solving, which motivated students to love sharing and brainstorming and developed their intellectual abilities.

One of the most important strategies that I have observed was the use of learning centers which aims to distribute students into small groups. Then, the teacher asks the groups to go to those centers that have different activities. These centers involve writing center, reading center, audio center, and optics center. The time rotation of all groups takes place twice in one class. Also, I benefited greatly from the way the teacher treated his students and the language of communication between them, which allowed everyone to respond quickly and follow the school system. In addition, the educational environment in terms of the classroom is very stimulating in terms of group arrangement. Also, the classroom was provided with all the requirements of school, such as: computers, printer, display devices and smart board. Hence, when I go home, I would like to show my Capstone Project about classroom centers to the other teachers in my school. My project aims to engage the students in the centers and keep them entertained and informed much more effectively than a traditional classroom in the Elementary schools.

When I came to America, I had several skills that contributed to my scholarship. First, I taught the English language for 11 years and attended workshops for active learning. Second, communication skills, I have a good experience about teaching kids since I have attended workshops about how to deal with students. In addition, I have taught different subjects like Arts and sport classes in the elementary grades. All the previous skills led me to think about what I would do and set out goals for myself.

Goals set:

When I reached to America, I set goals to achieve throughout the BLCSI program to develop myself in English skills and teaching experience. For this reason, I aimed to improve my English language and academic skills, focus on listening and speaking skills, and develop APA Formatting. In addition, during the immersion schools, I set specific goals to achieve

them like, first, effectively identify and report in a written form language teaching strategies observed in their classroom interaction on a weekly basis. Second, relate the identified language teaching

strategies to existing theories in language acquisition in a written report. Also, successfully identify and report language assessment strategies

observed in their classroom interaction in a written form. Beside use two or more of the observed language teaching strategies in a written production (e.g. lesson plan) or an oral production (e.g. presentation). Provide a clear and logical rationale of the preference for a language teaching strategy in a written report. Also, demonstrate an understanding of the affective dimension in the classroom and its relationship to learning in an oral or written production. Finally, successfully demonstrate an understanding of the social and cultural dimension of the English language use by using sociolinguistic references in an oral or written production.

These goals guided me to identify the way which I needed to use methods to achieve them. All these come through knowing the techniques that the teachers used to control the students in the classroom by using the rules of discipline and sound levels. Furthermore, using the close reading strategies and Kagan strategy constantly in the classroom. Moreover, recognizing varied strategies for language assessments through the classroom interaction and using two kinds of assessments (Formative and Summative) assessments. Additionally, apply the weekly (conferences and observations) assessments and written tests in my school. Also, preparing and presenting the lesson in the leadership classes in front of my classmates and using language teaching strategies we learnt like Kagan. Beside, understanding the logical rationale for a language teaching strategy with the teachers in the school through encouraging the students in reading and writing. By the time, realizing how the attractive environment (by using good decorations) affected the students and make them interact and enjoy learning. Finally, diversity of the social and cultural dimension in the classroom make the learning of the English language in need to use different methods and references.

There are several steps to work through for achieving the goals that I set up for myself.

Attending real classes and observing the classroom interaction, then recording what I noted in a written form. After that watching the real experience in the classroom through recording the steps and process that teacher use effectively. Besides searching in different websites for new researches that care about using the tools and techniques of modern education like (watch TED talk) + (app: kahoot). Lastly, do make some research in the leadership about the philosophy that teachers use to teach his classes and make various case studies to recognize the best ways to deal with varied students, so we can reach to student's recognition with several ways.

On the other hand, I set goals for my project to implement upon returning home: I would like here to say some of them. First, recognize the process for classroom management and how can we teach the English language students in effective ways. Second, improve the English language skills through " classroom centers". Beside demonstrate the effective planning and preparation skills in presenting the capstone. Moreover, ensure the fact that students who did not understand the lesson from the first time can receive more individualized lesson. Also, demonstrate effective use of technology to support teaching and learning. Lastly,

effectively provide peers with constructive feedback on the capstone presentation. The goals guided me to identify the way which I need and the implement that I should use to achieve them.

Capstone project:

During my visit to the classrooms, I was interested in how the teacher use the educational strategies. Actually, I have profited greatly from the variety of educational strategies that presented the lesson to suit all students. One of the most important strategies that I have followed is the centers

Strategy, which aims to distribute students into small groups. Then, ask the groups to go to those centers that have different activities. It is typically a specific area within the classroom that provides students with exciting and interesting experiences to practice, reteach, and enhance their learning. These types of centers are filled with manipulative, art materials, books, and other instructional tools. Students visit the centers to complete an assignment or learn through different activities. In well-designed learning centers, students participate in activities that help them see curriculum subjects in real time hands on ways. Working both independently and in small groups. In addition, students are provided with time and space to complete a project or learn about a subject. Furthermore, the learning center is governed by rules that students well aware of and requires students to be responsible and accountable for their own learning. The power of learning centers lies in the fact that students who did not get it the first time or need more practice presented in different activities, the student can receive a more individualized lesson than a whole -class lesson could ever provide. Also, centers provide time for you as a teacher to spend time with students individually or in small groups, helping students learn curriculum materials in their own way and style. This seminar discusses a new approach to designing internet-based learning centers that can be integrated with the centers you already have in your classroom. There is no right or wrong way to organize learning centers, and you may want to modify your center use throughout the year. The number of centers you have at one time may depend on the size of the classroom. Also, the centers can be categorized according to the teacher's desire. If the teacher wants to make the centers assorted like writing center (to improve student's handwriting by using incursive papers), reading center (to improve reading skill by reading stories and comics), word by word (to improve vocabulary by using games), I pad center (to improve listening skill by listening to some chants or stories or English program). On the other hand, the centers can be focused on one skill like reading. Then the teacher makes the centers related to this skill. For instance, reading fluency, reading comprehension (read and respond), vocabulary center and library center. Classroom centers is an engaging method that keep the students entertained and informed much more effectively than a traditional classroom.

Thus, I think when I apply this strategy, there will be many results. Some of them, improve the student's skills through using technology (I pad + kahoot). Also, students share in the centers effectively by working on the assignments and moving to another center. In addition, identify the student's needs when they work in small groups by teacher's observation. Moreover, engage the students in the subject through different activities, for instance: manipulative, cut out, stories. Also, provide the teachers with constant information on the performance of their students through observation, and connect learners with appropriate lesson every day. The students will be responsible and accountable for their own learning. Finally, learning centers

allow students to be themselves, they become more comfortable with their surroundings and more natural.

Future

Upon my return to Saudi Arabia. I am going to take several steps to implement the project.

First, when the school adopting the classroom centers as a mean of improving student's learning, scheduling student time is an important consideration for Elementary schools. Second, I am going to apply the classroom centers in my classroom at my school. Then, I can present the idea for my friends by making workshops in the training center on August 2019 for the English and non-English teachers. I am going to explain for them what's the importance of making classroom centers and how can we prepare the classes for this project. It takes advance plan and creativity

to design exciting and effective learning centers. In fact, It is open to school of all financial backgrounds. Designing your own centers is extremely easy and requires no advanced technological knowledge.

In addition, I am going to explain the keys to make effective learning centers in the workshop: First, the teachers must create comprehensive procedures, communicate them to students, and allow adequate time to practice them until they become routine. Second, Centers allow students to work in different configurations including independently, in group they choose based on interest, and in mixed ability or leveled groups.

Third, Centers tasks in any content area should be interesting, challenging, and provide a student a chance to practice skills in authentic ways (meaning that activities help students connect their learning to the real world or develop life habits of mind). Finally, whether by observing students as they are working, collecting student work to review, engaging students in reflections on their learning, teachers must monitor student progress.it is important to know when students need support and when they need to be challenged further. Also, I clarify for the teachers the tips that will help to set up dynamic areas for independent learning: first, Tie centers into your curriculum: the content or skills can change to match what you are studying in a particular subject area. Second, make sure your learning centers have clear objectives, simple directions, and samples of the type of work or activity students will be creating there. Third, create a storage system of boxes: file folders, or large envelopes. Also, label all of the materials in each storage container. Beside Including a variety of activities to engage different types of learners. By doing these steps the process of publishing and applying the project in my school will be completed. (Linda Shalaway (2018).

In sum up, I have joined as a trainee in the program building leadership change through school immersion that aims to prepare the teacher to analyze the situations we experience in the school immersion and make decisions based on best practices. So, after finishing from studying the English language and the school immersion, I determined which is suitable to transfer it to my country. In fact, I was exciting about the classroom centers which intent to make the students work and enjoy during their learning. I prepared goals and organized workshops for my project to implement upon returning home. I think it will be a useful and interesting experiment to transfer it to my country.

Reference

- [1] Linda Shalaway (2018).The New Teacher's Guide to Setting Up Learning Centers.
<https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/new-teachers-guide-setting-learning-centers/>