Reconceptualization of Teacher Education

Experiences From the Context of a Multicultural Developing Country

Dilshad Ashraf
Jan-e-Alam Khaki
Duishon Alievich Shamatov
Mir Afzal Tajik
Nilofar Vazir
Aga Khan University

Teacher education in developing countries faces great challenges attributable to economic constraints, including shrinking resources, the low status of teachers—exacerbated by declining incentives—and an entirely theoretical approach in teacher training programs. These challenges are further intensified by variations in the trainees' cultural, regional, and religious backgrounds and by the lack of collaboration between different education sectors. In this context, the Aga Khan University Institute for Educational Development (AKU-IED) in Karachi, Pakistan, is attempting to provide contextually appropriate, effective teacher education programs for Pakistan and other developing countries. This article draws on the authors' personal experiences in the teacher education programs at AKU-IED and on studies that examine the impact of these programs on participants. Several studies show that teacher education transforms teachers' beliefs and practices if accomplished through more effective approaches. The article discusses how teacher education programs are conceptualized and implemented in the multicultural context of AKU-IED, where the course participants come from various developing countries and diverse backgrounds.

Keywords: *professional development of teachers; reconceptualization of teaching and learning; positive interdependence; Aga Khan University Institute for Educational Development; reflective practice*

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

—T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*

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The Aga Khan University Institute for Educational Development (AKU-IED) was established in 1993 in Karachi, Pakistan, to counteract the "continued deepening decline in the quality, effectiveness, relevance, and outreach of education systems in Pakistan and elsewhere in the developing world in the face of growing numbers of children and shrinking resources" (Aga Khan University, 1991, p. 6).

AKU-IED is a part of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), a group of private, international, nondenominational agencies working to improve living conditions and opportunities for people in specific regions of the developing world. The AKDN organizations have individual mandates that range from the fields of health and education to architecture, rural development, and the promotion of private sector enterprise. Together they collaborate in working toward a common goal—to build institutions and programs that can respond to the challenges of social, economic, and cultural change on an ongoing basis. Improving the quality of education through human resource development and institutional capacity building, which also contribute to socioeconomic development, is a key premise of AKU-IED's approach to teacher education.

The educational philosophy behind the teacher education initiatives at AKU-IED emphasizes promoting critical reflection, innovative approaches, and action research in a pluralistic, multicultural environment (Khan, 2002). This reflects the general focus of AKU, which is to foster multiculturalism and pluralism in an effort to learn from, and share experience with, other cultures and institutions (Aga Khan, 1983). AKU-IED promotes and practices multiculturalism in its mission of "bringing about reforms in educational systems of developing countries, particularly Pakistan, by increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of schools and other educational institutions" (AKU-IED Mission Statement).

Because its clientele come from multicultural, multisystem (government, community, and private individually owned schools), and multilinguistic backgrounds, AKU-IED encompasses multiculturalism through both policies and practices and through its nondenominational outlook. It draws heavily on knowledge from the West and the East, by fostering a symbiotic relationship with many universities around the world, such as Oxford University and University of Toronto (both from 1993) and Sheffield Hallam University (from 1994), among others.

The specific focus of AKU-IED is to address "irrelevant curricula compounded by ineffective assessment which in turn fostered rote learning and passive student roles" (AKU-IED, 2000, p. i) by improving the performance of teachers and other stakeholders through a planned, systemic approach (Wheeler, 1999). AKU-IED offers in-service programs for teachers and educators: a 2-year Master of Education (M.Ed.) program in teacher education; Certificate in Education (Cert. Ed.); subject-based (English language, mathematics, primary education, science and social studies) 8-week programs; intensive 1-year advanced diploma programs in the same subject areas; and educational management programs for head teachers and other school administrators. All these programs aim to create a community of professional practitioners and a critical mass of teachers, educators, and school leaders expected to work in their schools as catalysts

and professional development teachers (PDTs). They are expected to improve their own performances and work together in whole-school improvement initiatives.

This article mainly focuses on the M.Ed. program at AKU-IED. It reflects our personal experiences as students in the second cohort of M.Ed. program (1996-1998), as well as our experiences in facilitating different teacher education programs at AKU-IED. Together with the insights gained from other qualitative research studies (Elnazar, 1999; Haji Baig, 1998; Shamatov, 1998), we explore the transformational learning experiences of the course participants from the first and second M.Ed. programs (1993-1995 and 1996-1998, respectively).

Master of Education in Teacher Education

The objective of AKU-IED's M.Ed. program is to prepare a cadre of effective teachers and teacher educators, educational leaders, and researchers. On graduation from AKU-IED, the course participants (CPs) become PDTs and change agents. The M.Ed. curriculum evolves from cohort to cohort, with a focus on areas such as the reconceptualization of teaching and learning, teacher education, mathematics, language teaching, primary education, science, social studies, curriculum, research, and educational change. The program also has field-based components involving both teaching and research. The language of instruction is English, because most of the CPs speak some English and the literature is predominantly in English. The curriculum modules are interrelated and interdependent, thereby leading to a holistic understanding of the areas of professional education. The curriculum itself departs in many significant ways from the traditional teacher education curriculum in Pakistan and elsewhere in many developing countries.

CONCEPTUAL UNDERPINNINGS OF THE M.ED. PROGRAM

The conceptual framework within which the M.Ed. program was conceived and implemented emphasized the need for "reprofessionalization of teachers" (Bacchus, 2001, p. 1) through reconceptualization of teacher education programs offered in the developing countries, particularly in Pakistan (AKU-IED Task Force, 1991). The program is underpinned by the constructivist philosophy and depends on critical pedagogic knowledge construction, departing from the notion of knowledge as a frozen body of "truths." Conceptually, the program incorporates a number of perspectives drawn from analysis of both local needs and contemporary models for teacher development and school improvement in the developed nations. It does not specifically follow any one particular ideology of teacher education; rather, it draws from a number of perspectives and approaches that have proved effective in different parts of the world. Because each of the IED programs rests on the premise that there is no one "best" model of teacher edu-

cation, the M.Ed. CPs can discuss, analyze, and draw from a variety of perspectives and practices of teacher development and school improvement.

After each cohort of M.Ed. CPs complete their program, the program facilitators engage in an extensive evaluation process to further enrich the program's curricula and make them relevant to its diversified clientele. Thus, the conceptual framework for the M.Ed. program evolves and is shaped on the basis of the CPs' learning experiences and its evaluators' review. Nevertheless, certain principles within which the M.Ed. program is conducted remain the same.

For example, the program is heavily field-based (Pauly, 1991). It aims to develop PDTs as change agents who are equipped with wider knowledge and advanced skills for working with a variety of clients in their respective schools. To allow M.Ed. CPs to work in real classroom situations and school contexts, AKU-IED selects a number of schools under a plan called "cooperating schools." These schools open their doors for the CPs to engage in team teaching and action research. Thus, these schools become the "laboratories" in which the CPs experiment with and study the effectiveness of different theories about teaching and learning. They carry out a form of "collective self-reflective inquiry" (action research) in different social situations and school contexts to improve their own practices (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988).

Another principle embedded in the M.Ed. program is "reflective practice" (Schön, 1983). The CPs are encouraged to reflect on and critically examine their preexisting conceptual frameworks of teaching and learning. Through group discussions and exchange of their reflective journal entries, they deepen their understanding of how different theories of teaching and learning, school improvement, and teacher development can be translated into practice. Furthermore, after completion of the M.Ed., CPs as professional development teachers are required to return to IED and work for 6 months in planning, implementation, and evaluation of the Certificate in Education Programs to fully appreciate, apply, and use their learning.

BACKGROUND AND PROFILE OF COURSE PARTICIPANTS

The CPs of the M.Ed. program come from different regions of Pakistan as well as from other developing countries, such as Bangladesh, India, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, and Zanzibar. The CPs are thus drawn from diverse backgrounds, with different educational systems (government, private, and nongovernment organizations) and various religious, linguistic, ethnic, and cultural representations. The CPs' different languages include Urdu, Balochi, Bengali, Burushaski, English, Khowar, Kyrgyz, Pashtu, Persian, Punjabi, Shina, Sindhi, Swahili, Tajik, and Wakhi. Thus, each CP cohort constitutes a truly multicultural, multiethnic, and multifaith group, learning together in a friendly environment. Such harmonious cooperation is unusual, if not unique, in the context of Pakistan.

As a common factor, all the CPs have prior experiences of both schooling and teaching in systems of education that promote rote learning and reinforce the gap between the teacher and the learner stemming from institutionalized hierarchies.

Table 1: M.Ed. Graduates of Aga Khan University Institute for Educational Development

M.Ed. Program	Participants	Male	Female	Pakistani Graduates	International Graduates
1995	21	8	13	17	4
1998	35	16	19	28	7
1999	30	14	16	21	9
2000	29	15	14	20	9
2002	27	15	12	17	10
2003	34	16	18	24	10
2004	34	24	10	22	12
2005	35	16	19	23	12
Total	245	124	121	172	73

From AKU-IED's inception in 1993 to 2004, seven cohorts of CPs, totaling 210, have completed their M.Ed. degrees (see Table 1 for details). Another 35 CPs are currently studying at AKU-IED.

RECONCEPTUALIZATION AT AKU-IED

The curriculum and pedagogy at AKU-IED have been sensitive to two contextual realities: the nature of education provided in the systems from which the CPs come and the most recent advances in teacher education. Combining these, the M.Ed. curriculum was conceptualized in terms of seven major parameters (Bacchus, 2001):

- Identifying the elements of the conceptual framework in terms of the teaching and learning process
- Unfreezing the CPs' views of the teaching and learning process
- Improving the CPs' pedagogical skills
- Preparing the CPs for the role of in-service teacher educators
- Preparing the CPs to be educational change agents in their respective milieus
- Equipping CPs for reentry into their schools
- Providing follow-up and support services to professional development teachers.

The majority of M.Ed. CPs reported that, prior to joining AKU-IED, they had inherited a traditional approach to teaching and learning. Both as teachers and as students, they had learned practices that included the transmission mode of content delivery, chanting of information, and a teacher-centered classroom environment in which the teacher is a source of knowledge and the learner is a passive recipient of that knowledge. As teachers, they worked in isolation and often had to compete for limited resources and opportunities. They stuck to curricu-

lum and textbooks that were generally taken for granted as authorities and had students rote-learn the material in order to pass examinations. For example, the participants of Shamatov's (1998) study reported that they had had very discouraging educational experiences themselves; as students, they had had to memorize concepts, at the expense of comprehending them, in order to get "good" grades. They had had authoritarian teachers who often insulted them. One CP shared his experiences of encountering a teacher whom he perceived as being threatening.

> The teacher would first make all of us stand up and then she would ask us questions while we were standing, so that we could not open our books and notebooks and look for the answer. While we were standing, no one was allowed to touch a book or a notebook at all. But one day I unconsciously touched my book, as usually happens with children. But the teacher saw me and she slapped me hard on my face. Consequently, I developed a sort of fear of that teacher. (Shamatov, 1998, p. 26)

As teachers, the CPs continued to carry on what their teachers had perpetrated, learning by "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975) because of the lack of knowledge of any alternative. They also assumed the role of teachers as being the complete source of knowledge. They were constrained by the dominant culture of the education system within which they were working. One of the CPs explained how he started with an image of fair and honest ways of teaching but was forced to follow his colleagues' example because of the contextual realities of his school.

> When I newly joined my service [teaching], many students failed because they could not give me the required answers, 60 out of 75 failed. After the examination, I went home for a week and then came back. But I could not believe my eyes. All the students who failed were sitting in the class again. . . . I came to know that the headmaster got bribes, clothes, and watches from those students, and then he re-did the paper results and declared all the students had passed. I was shocked as I was well prepared to do things honestly, but after that incident I changed. I said to myself I would do whatever others were doing. I worked dishonestly because I was *majboor* [Urdu for *obliged* or *forced*] to adapt to the system. (Shamatov, 1998, p. 37)

His story exemplifies how the systemic context of education perpetuates certain attitudes that create an environment inimical to good professional practice.

As prospective teachers, most CPs had had disappointing experiences in the teacher education programs they had attended before they joined the M.Ed. program at AKU-IED. They had been lectured about ill-defined theories and imported ideas; often they did not understand how to translate those theories and ideas into their classroom practices. Consequently, these teacher education programs made no impact on their ways of teaching; they returned to their "traditional" methods of teaching after attending the programs. They reflected that they had been turned into technicians who were less and less planners of their own destiny and more and more deliverers of others' prescriptions (Tajik, 2001).

At AKU-IED, beginning from the first module of the program, which was titled "Reconceptualisation of Teaching and Learning," the CPs were engaged in "a fascinating experience of revisiting existing beliefs and practices" (Ashraf, 2000, p. 15). The shift from the traditional to a more transformational mode of teaching was characterized by what has been called as "unfreezing" (Lewin & Grabbe, 1945) and "refreezing" (Lewin, 1952, cited in Wheeler, 1999, p. 8). The CPs reflected on their existing teaching practices and the beliefs that guided their actions. As they were exposed to alternative but more productive ways of teaching, they began to question some of their preexisting beliefs and practices. To provide a context for reconceptualization, the program introduced the CPs to knowledge of broader societal changes, such as the democratization of the political order and the globalization of the world economy, as well as more specific teaching and learning concepts, thus linking curriculum to society and its needs.

The CPs then went into the field to practice their newly learned knowledge, attitudes, skills, and values, to see for themselves the practical difference that these created in the classroom (Tajik, 2003). The extensive teaching practice, with peer/faculty observation, in the cooperating schools was, for many CPs, a new experience of reflective practice and a practical demonstration of the construction of a teacher knowledge base.

To achieve the course objectives, the CPs worked with each other cooperatively and in a collegial environment. The program emphasized social skills, promoting tolerance and sensitivity to diverse and often opposing ideas and ideologies. The CPs were also encouraged to develop collegial relationships with each other, with the aim that, on graduating from AKU-IED, they would become change agents, improving their schools by building strong collegial learning communities. Despite the efforts to promote collegiality, the CPs' various cultural, religious, gender, and racial backgrounds posed tremendous challenges to almost everyone involved in the program. These challenges were gradually addressed through negotiation, reflection, and the encouragement of positive interdependence among the CPs. Cultural diversity came to be viewed as a strength, not as a problem to be dealt with.

This paradigmatic change in both the theory and practice of teacher education was, to say the least, not easy. Particularly in the beginning, the process of transformation was "painful" and for many apparently "impossible." But as the course progressed, the CPs could see the advantages of the new ways of looking at their old practice, and they began to appreciate the alternative ways of thinking and teaching. The CPs reported that they understood "reconceptualization" as an ongoing development process through which one could critically examine notions in order to reconstruct them. One could thus broaden one's own vision or perspective, rethink and challenge one's own mind-sets, question taken-for-granted knowledge, and thus turn one's thinking upside down. One CP added that reconceptualization did not mean a change for the sake of change; rather, it was a deliberate attempt to improve one's practices as well as to transform the whole worldview that upholds those practices.

Research (Elnazar, 1999; Haji Baig, 1998; Wheeler et al., 2001) indicates that the CPs do reconceptualize their practice as a result of AKU-IED education. The former associate director of AKU-IED also observed, "We have some encouraging evidence that the CPs do reconceptualise" (Shamatov, 1998, p. 45). The CPs also reported major transformations in their understanding of educational issues. One CP observed:

> I am no longer the child that had been manipulated by the whole system. Being a learner here has helped me to question and change my views. I am now an independent learner and do not depend on someone else to tell me the truth all the time. Hopefully, I can take these notions with me to my school and treat my students with respect. (Shamatov, 1998, p. 60)

Another CP commented that the change not only related to the teaching-learning processes but also involved the transformation of broader cultural and value orientations:

> You see, I came from a place where people do not value ideas, but they value status; they value who you are. For example, there is a saying in my language, "Let the king's son speak, even if his mouth is crooked". But now I have changed entirely. These were two extremes; I was on the one side and then I was taken around to another side. (Shamatov, 1998)

A third participant further commented on the issues of faith, tolerance, and accepting others as they are. Living and studying together with representatives of different faiths, races, and cultures led him to question and challenge his own assumptions; he experienced an important transformation:

> I would not say that I was a very religious person before coming to IED, but I became kind of secular here. I started to think that everybody has a right to live, irrespective of their religion. I stopped discriminating against people based on whether they were followers of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, or whether they were Christians or worshiped idols. Everybody has their own faith and that should be respected. (Shamatov, 1998, p. 60)

Several participants, however, reported that they found the transformation an extremely difficult experience and that they felt cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) while acquiring knowledge that often contradicted their previous understanding and practices of teaching and learning. The former associate director warned about the complexities of the transformations:

> They were holding something very strongly for a long time; for example, they used to work individually and competed for rewards with others, and now they come here and they are told that they should work with others, share their ideas and knowledge with others. At first they become "mentally ill at ease", and it is very difficult for them. You take away something from them which had been part

> of their whole belief structure for many years. It is really disconcerting. (Shamatov, 1998, pp. 44-45)

His statement reflects the predicaments of the CPs and reflects how they had to struggle hard to change their notions and accept the new ones. According to Bacchus (2001, p. 11), the change was facilitated by a number of factors:

- The instructors' continued efforts to unfreeze the CPs' traditional views of teaching and learning.
- The CPs' gradual acquisition of a new professional vocabulary that introduced them to such concepts as the transmission mode of teaching, multiple intelligence, children constructing and interpreting their own knowledge, reflective practice, and action research. This new language gave them the resources with which to communicate with their colleagues and start a new way of looking at teaching and learning.

Thus, the research studies conducted at AKU-IED and our own experiences as CPs and as faculty members indicate that the new venture is providing significant positive changes in the CPs' beliefs and practices.

FACTORS ENABLING RECONCEPTUALIZATION

The data from the studies and our retrospective analysis suggest that the environment of AKU-IED, modeling by faculty members, and course instruction all contributed significantly to the transformation of the CPs' pedagogical beliefs and practices. We briefly discuss three factors.

Institutional environment. The CPs unanimously commented that the environment at AKU-IED was crucial to their personal and professional development and also to the reconstruction of their vision. Several of them described the environment as "unique" in that it was friendly and supportive.

"People here respect each other and their ideas. This supportive environment helped us to act accordingly," was a common response. Although they came from different countries and regions, the CPs reported that they got along together well because of the friendly environment of the institute, the unending support of faculty members and administrative staff, and the fact that they lived together in a hostel.

The AKU-IED's institutional context thus created an enabling and culturally conducive environment to help CPs to bring forward diverse views without fear of being judged by others. They could explore alternative theories, beliefs, skills, values, and attitudes. The Institute fostered a comfortable learning and teaching environment in which CPs could express their views and dilemmas about change and stability. Some representative comments follow:

> People [at AKU-IED] respect each other. They value ideas, and are open to suggestions; everyone here is equal. In the context where I come from, I could not

> stand, let alone sit in front of the director. If the director was coming, I was supposed to stand up, even if I was working. I have to leave all my work and stand up out of respect for his high position, . . . "the director is coming.". . . But here you call the director by his first name! (Shamatov, 1998, p. 60)

> We all have facilities for learning and everyone is friendly. Librarians, cooks, and drivers . . . you can enjoy interacting with people of different colours, cultures, and faiths. (CP's personal communication)

> We learned to appreciate other cultures by celebrating their festivals and holidays. For example, I did not know anything about others' culture and their religion, but now I realize there are so many similarities in our religions. (CP's personal communication)

Thus, the environment of AKU-IED reinforced the CPs' process of transformation. They began examining alternatives to hierarchical relationships, thus demonstrating a true character of learning communities.

Modeling of faculty members. Besides support, the faculty of AKU-IED provided an important learning experience for the CPs by promoting nonhierarchical relations. The first director of the AKU-IED, Dr. Kazim Bacchus, stated that one way for the faculty members to set an example of collegiality with the CPs was through fostering less rigidly hierarchical relationships with them. This, however, proved not always easy, because the CPs came from communities where "power distance" and "gender gap" characterized the dominant social patterns and attitudes (Hofstede, 1980, 1991). Many CPs found it difficult to adjust when asked to call faculty members by their first names and sit with them over lunch to discuss educational issues informally. As one of the CPs stated, "You sit with them [faculty members] and eat in the cafeteria. They joke with you and ask you to call them by their names. That was difficult, but it gave me confidence and I knew I was being respected."

The faculty members also set examples of collegiality by team-teaching and peer coaching in different modules. They planned modules, conducted courses, and evaluated together, thus encouraging the CPs to work and teach together. Teamwork was especially difficult for the CPs, because they mostly came from contexts where teachers worked in isolation and individualism prevailed (Hargreaves, 1995).

The CPs also learned from the faculty members that teachers should be lifelong learners and need to constantly work on their own personal and professional development. The CPs were surprised to see faculty members reading books in the library and working to improve themselves. The faculty also came across in their teaching as facilitators, reinforcing the essential role of a teacher as a facilitator rather than a fountain of knowledge and transmitter of facts. The work habits of the faculty members, who kept late hours at the campus, also amused many CPs. Previously they had only seen conventional professors who appeared only for the regimented hours of lectures. The CPs reported that they found the

faculty's qualities instructive; the CPs emulated whichever of these qualities they found worthwhile in their journey of transformation.

Course instructions. The instructional process at AKU-IED has two parts: the curriculum and its pedagogy. The modular approach in the program exposed CPs to a broader body of knowledge from both the developing and developed worlds. They became familiar with alternative examinations of teaching and learning in different parts of the world. In terms of pedagogy, CPs found that the courses at AKU-IED were delivered differently from what most of them had experienced previously. The courses strongly emphasized group work, cooperative learning, and whole class and group discussions and presentations.

For example, the English Module instruction developed by the instructors had a component that required the CPs to "share their ideas in group/whole class, ask and answer questions, equally share responsibilities during group activities, plan lessons and teach in teams, help each other by explaining and clarifying" (English Module Instructions, M.Ed., 1996-1998). The objectives and expectations of the course indicated the following to the participants:

> No one can educate you. You must talk, you must read, you must imagine, you must build, you must listen. Merely being present as someone else tries to pour something into you does not mean you are learning. You must be actively engaged. (Class notes, October, 1996)

Initially, there were tensions about class participation, because many CPs came from backgrounds where English was not their first or even second language, and they faced challenges in expressing their views. A participant from a remote area of Pakistan summed up another challenge related to class participation:

> Where I came from, the less you talk, and the more you listen to a teacher, the more you are viewed as a good student. Asking questions can be interpreted as impudence, and a teacher appreciates it if you just sit and listen, showing your respect. (Haji Baig, 1998, p. 72)

The courses emphasized collegiality and positive interdependence in order to bring qualitative changes among the CPs. Group activities improved the CPs' learning and helped them realize that a teacher was not the sole source of knowledge and that they could benefit from each other's knowledge. CPs could practice social skills, including disagreeing in a friendly manner, listening to others' views, expressing their own ideas, or extending others' ideas. A course participant said, "Here they value your ideas, but not your status or title. I also learned that everyone has ideas, knowledge, life experience and even children have very good knowledge."

The content of the courses included literature on theories of educational change, teacher knowledge and teacher learning, critical theory and pedagogy, experience and reflection, and cooperative learning. This provided the foundational

framework for the course participants. The CPs did not merely learn to apply theories developed elsewhere; instead, they critically engaged in discussions on how to contextualize their learning, what ideas might and might not apply, and how they could make their learning contextually sensitive and relevant. More important, they blended theory and practice, because the CPs could frequently visit cooperating schools to try out the concepts they had learned at the institute. They also learned team teaching, peer coaching and cooperative learning (Haji Baig, 1998).

Another important realization for the CPs was that there was never a limit for self-development. "Here no one belittles you if you don't know something," one CP said. At the same time, they came to know that studying 2 intensive years at AKU-IED made them life-long learners but not "expert teachers." One participant said that he no longer thought of himself as an expert teacher. He considered himself as a guide or a facilitator, because he helped other teachers just as much as he learned from them (Elnazar, 1999). However, this realization did not come easily. At the beginning of the program, many CPs were frustrated during class discussions or assessment because "whatever I said, and then whatever he said, or she said, was appreciated." The faculty members wanted to encourage the CPs to reflect on the fact that there was no "one truth" or "one right answer." "Yes, it was frustrating, because we were expecting our teachers to say to us who was right and who was wrong, but instead they wrote whatever was said on the board," said one CP (Haji Baig, 1998). Finally, the CPs realized that they could explore the worth of their responses on their own and could similarly encourage their own students to seek knowledge from multiple sources. The indicators of transformations of CPs at AKU-IED are very promising; for many it has been a "transformative phase of their teaching career" (Ashraf, 2001, p. 7). Nevertheless, reentry into their organizations, after completing the M.Ed. with a different outlook toward teaching and learning, challenged the graduates. They faced various constraints in their schools, including lack of resources, inadequate support from stakeholders, colleagues not ready for changes, or resistance from more conservative forces. They realized that AKU-IED had been different from their home environments and that they would now have to struggle on their own in large classes with limited resources (Elnazar, 1999).

M.Ed. Graduates' Impact on Their Clients

AKU-IED's graduates are expected to be imaginative, creative, and capable of addressing educational issues through inquiry-based practices. The M.Ed. program prepares them to take on multiple roles in order to have a wider impact on educational policies and practices in their respective education systems. In fact, many CPs have assumed leadership positions in their home institutions after graduating from AKU-IED.

A recent survey by Siddiqui and Macleod (2003) revealed that 40% of the M.Ed. graduates are school-based educators (11% teachers, 11% head teachers, 3% heads of department, 9% teacher educators, and 6% teachers plus teacher educators), 39% are non-school-based educators (33% teacher educators and 6% university teachers), 15% are education officers or managers, 2% are pursuing higher studies, and 3% are working outside the education field. The survey also shows a gradual shift in the graduates' roles, from classroom teacher to teacher educator to education manager. Such a shift in turn indicates that the M.Ed. graduates are gradually taking on leadership roles in their schools and education systems in order to make greater impacts on their clients.

Understanding the M.Ed. graduates' impacts on their clients requires recognizing impact as "an incremental, developmental, multi-dimensional process embedded in the teacher's [client's] perceptions of the need for and the results of change, and linked to the teacher's confidence and professionalism as a teacher" (Anderson, 2003, p. 11). In simple terms, implementing a change is itself an ongoing process; one cannot pinpoint or generalize the impact of the change at any one of its stages. Rather, the impact of change evolves as the change develops.

In order to capture the impact of the graduates' ongoing change initiatives, one needs to closely study their work. The International Conference on Impact held in August 2003 in Karachi not only marked the 10th Anniversary Celebration of AKU-IED but also provided the M.Ed. graduates an opportunity to share their change experiences and the impact they have made on their clients. The proceedings of the conference, published in book form (Halai & Rarieya, 2004), capture the magnitude of the graduates' change initiatives and the impact they have been making in their schools and education systems. Notably, the M.Ed. graduates have taken bold initiatives and made a difference by improving teachers' classroom practices, providing and developing change-oriented leadership in schools, building partnerships between schools and local communities, and empowering female teachers.

Most graduates have concentrated on improving the quality of teaching and learning in their schools. For example, two M.Ed. graduates started a three-phase journey toward school improvement (Ali & Muhammad, 2003). In the first phase, they conducted a needs analysis of two private schools in Karachi and developed action plans to address the identified needs of each school. They engaged teachers in coplanning, coteaching, and postlesson conferences. They themselves played the role of "facilitator" (Craig, 2001) and "critical friend" (Richert, Stoddard, & Kass, 2001) in helping the teachers plan, implement, and reflect on their daily practices. In the second phase, the graduates developed subject coordinators among teachers and helped each subject coordinator and subject teacher develop innovative curricular materials. The third phase was devoted to disseminating learning experiences among the school heads, education managers, and parents. As a result, each school developed a more collegial culture and positive interdependence among teachers, school head, and parents. Similarly, five graduates representing five developing countries (Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Tanzania,

and Uganda) introduced action research in their schools (Dean et al., 2003). They taught and engaged teachers in systematic action research. They studied the impact that action research had on the teachers' own professional development and the students' learning. In addition to learning about how teachers learn and apply action research in their practices, the five graduates found evidence of improvements in teachers' instructional repertoires, teachers' roles as teachers and researchers, and teachers' dispositions. The improvement in teachers' instruction in turn had a positive impact on students' learning outcomes.

Some M.Ed. graduates have designed and implemented innovative programs with school heads. While serving as head teacher, one M.Ed. graduate transformed his high school's structures and culture in order to improve the quality of teaching, learning, and school management (Ali, 2003). In another case, three M.Ed. graduates worked with a group of school heads over a period of 4 years, during which they conducted workshops and seminars, carried out joint planning, and did joint decision making. The three graduates then provided follow-up support to the heads in implementing the plans and decisions in their respective schools. As a result, some positive changes occurred in the heads' beliefs and practices of school management. The head teachers transformed their roles from administrators to pedagogical leaders. As one of them admitted, "This program provided an opportunity to us to developing our school leadership and management skills to become effective educational and community leaders" (Farooqi, Nasim, & Nayyar, 2003, pp. 131-132).

Many of the M.Ed. graduates have designed and implemented programs not only for teacher professional development and school leadership development but also for bridging the gaps between schools and local communities. Such community-based school improvement programs have resulted in greater collaboration and mutual understanding among teachers, parents, and community representatives. Consequently, community members have made significant contributions to school improvement by participating in the day-to-day administration of the school, generating funds and other resources, and providing voluntary services in the maintenance of the school (Mithani, Memon, Shah, & Farooqi, 2003; Shafa, 2003). The M.Ed. graduates have also helped create such networks among various stakeholders in order to make school improvement and community development mutually supportive courses of action (Tajik, 2004).

Another significant change has occurred in breaking through the patriarchal structures and cultures in schools in developing countries. In Pakistan, a group of M.Ed. graduates have engaged in strengthening the capacity of community-based schools through empowering local women in the rural areas of Sindh and Balochistan. Under this program, 262 rural women have been trained to act as change agents in raising women's voices and active participation in schools and community development projects (Mithani et al., 2003; Naz, 2003). Preliminary findings show that mothers' participation in schools has increased, resulting in a rapid increase in girls' enrollment in village schools.

Summary

Through an innovative M.Ed. program (and other, shorter programs), AKU-IED has successfully provided a context for teachers and teacher educators from many developing nations to improve their professional practices through critical examination of their original beliefs and practices. The environment of AKU-IED, modeling by faculty, and a new instructional approach have further assisted CPs not only in examining their personal beliefs and practices but also in questioning the hierarchical education systems from which they come. Each CP of each successive cohort of the M.Ed. program graduates with a transformed outlook toward teaching, learning, and the management of educational institutions. In turn, they contribute to the accomplishment of AKU-IED's mission of bringing about reforms in the educational systems of developing countries by increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of schools and other educational institutions. As torchbearers of educational change in their respective contexts, these graduates often confront enormous challenges that test both their learning and their determination. As one of them reflected on her experiences, "I have realized how difficult it actually is even to bring about a small impact leading to change in self and the organization especially working in a real context" (Vazir, 1998, p. 97). However, in many cases they have succeeded in initiating significant positive changes.

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Dr. Dilshad Ashraf works at the Institute for Educational Development of the Aga Khan University with a focus on gender and education, school improvement, curriculum studies, and teacher development. Her doctoral thesis at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto examined teacher development in northern Pakistan. E-mail: dilshad.ashraf@aku.edu

Dr. Jan-e-Alam Khaki is a faculty member at the Aga Khan University Institute for Educational Development (AKU-IED) at Karachi, Pakistan. He did his doctoral studies at the University of Toronto's Ontario Institute of Studies in Education (UT/OISE). He is currently engaged in teaching different programs at AKU-IED. E-mail: janealam.khaki@aku.edu

Mr. Duishon Alievich Shamatov has worked in Faculties of World Languages and International Relations, Osh State University, Kyrgyzstan. Presently, he is a faculty

member at the Aga Khan University Institute for Educational Development in Karachi, Pakistan. Currently, Mr. Shamatov is pursuing doctoral studies at the University of Toronto. His research and teaching interests include mentoring, assessment practices, teachers' work and lives, teacher development, and school improvement curriculum and textbook analysis. E-mail: duishon.shamatov@aku.edu

Dr. Mir Afzal Tajik is a faculty member at the Aga Khan University Institute for Educational Development in Karachi, Pakistan. He has recently completed his doctoral studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. He is engaged in teaching and research in the areas of school improvement, educational leadership, and teacher development. E-mail: mirafzal.tajik@aku.edu

Dr. Nilofar Vazir works at AKU-IED as a teacher, educator, and researcher. She has vast experience in Montessori, early childhood, and primary education. She holds M.Ed. and Ph.D. degrees from Pakistan, the United Kingdom, and Canada. Her areas of interest include early childhood and primary education; curriculum: teaching and learning, project development, moral education, and mentoring. E-mail: nilofar.vazir@aku.edu