Libyan Political Conflict: Effects on Higher Education Development

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Abstract- Teachers are the conveyers of ideas, practices, and they are the source of knowledge to their learners. Libyan University Teachers (LUTs) are doing that in a challenging context to students whom education process is not stable, at the same time as they (both LUTs& Students) are doing it in a difficult cultural and governmental conditions. LUTs are constrained, as teaching is an activity in which the extent to which the teacher can decide what they are going to do is limited because of the way that things are decided. Libyan English as a foreign language (LEFL) teachers may have extra issues and constraints in that they cannot use a lot of the techniques that teachers of other subjects may use. This is because they have to work in a language that is not native to their learners. Then, if the teacher is not a native speaker either, it will be another constraint. Libyan English as foreign language university teachers (LEFLUTs) may have additional constraints than, for example, an Italian teacher teaching English to Italian students. These constraints may come from their cultural context, such as the impact of Libyan community, teachers' age and gender, the way learners' use to learn (their learning styles), also the current political upheavals (civil war) which influenced the way that LEFLUTs teach and deal with the foreign language. In other words, LEFLUTs are restricted by the wall of culture, political interference, and their subject and how to teach it. Thus, if we seek to offer support, we need to explore in details the influences affecting their teaching approaches in the language classrooms. It may then be possible to suggest a way or an approach of continuing professional development (CPD) to work within these constraints. This paper is an outcome of my research study on the Libvan university context which presented ideas and justifications of implementing Action research as model of CPD for LEFLUTs within the University of Benghazi.

IndexTerms— LEFLUTs background knowledge, current civil war in Libya, influences of the Libyan Culture, OGTs, NGTs, University of Benghazi-Libya, CPD and Action Research as CPD.

Aspects of investigation- This paper explores the background information on Libyan education system, policy, training, and current political conflict (civil war). It investigates how Libyan university teachers are prepared, and how they teach EFL in terms of their views on learning and teaching methods. Also, this research will go through the challenges faced by the LEFLUTs arising from their existing political situation, culture and beliefs of teaching. It will also go through the challenges of the university management within faculty and department at the University of Benghazi. The following research questions cover the main research concerns:

Research Questions:

- A. To what extent the current political conflict (civil war) influenced Higher Education development in Libya?
- B. To what extent Libyan EFL university teachers LEFLUTs effected from such conflict, in terms of knowledge and professional development?

- C. What are the major influences facing University teachers' knowledge (UTK) at the University of Benghazi?
- D. To what extent continuing professional development (CPD) activities could be offered now to promote (UTK)?

Research Tools:

Qualitative research:

- Semi -Structured interviews
- Designed Classroom Scenarios

I. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Libya

Libya is an Arabic country located in North Africa between four Arabic countries: Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria and Sudan. Vandewall (2006) showed that the population of Libya is approximately 6.5 million, the majority of whom live mainly in the north of the country. It is the fourth largest country on the African continent. It has a Mediterranean Sea coast line of about 1,900 kilometres. Libya is a large country with an area of about 1.8 million square kilometres, which is seven times the size of the United Kingdom (pp.5-7). Agnaia (1996) pointed out that Libya is a bi-lingual country, with the languages spoken being Arabic and Berber. People who speak Berber are a minority, living in the cities of Zuwara and Yefren (western mountains of Libya), who speak their language among themselves and pass it on to their children. Arabic, however, is the only official language in Libya and it also the language used in the educational system, which is not the same as the various dialects spoken in different parts of Libya. Thus, when students enter schools, Arabic-speaking children are exposed to a language which is different from their everyday dialect (pp.8-

1.1. Current upheavals in Libya (Summary from 2011 to 2016)

Along with the 2011 youth movements in the Middle East, known as "the Arab Spring", and after the deposition of the Tunisian and Egyptian Presidents, a frustration that had been building in Libya started to emerge. Wilson (2011:2-5) explained that Libya, like many countries in the region, has a huge youth population and few economic opportunities. "Coupled with the Gaddafi's regime nepotism and oppression", small protests occurred in Benghazi, the second biggest city in Libya in the east of the country, after a human rights activist was detained. When police tried to restrain these demonstrations, they only grew larger, attracting more people on to the streets. Elabbar (2013) explained that, the situation changed massively when the protests were put down violently by the police between the 16th and 18th of February

2011; a battle "erupted" in Benghazi in which the primary Libyan Army base was overtaken. Wilson (2011), the most important event after this was the defection of Libyan Army units to the protestors, after being ordered to fire on the protestors. From this early success, the protests grew in intensity and in violence. Gaddafi, unable to trust his Army, hired a "brigade's worth (6000 men) of sub-Saharan African mercenaries". On top of that, he ordered ground attack jet fighters and helicopter gunships to massacre the protestors in Benghazi. Though many were killed, the city was overtaken on 20th February and the pro- Gaddafi loyalists were driven out.

Elabbar (2011), showed that the UN has begun negotiations to implement sanctions. The Arab league has suspended Libya and begun talks with the African Union about imposing a nofly zone over Libya. By the

20th of August 2011, a dramatic development started to happen in Libya, as the revolutionaries (represented by the National Transitional Council) from many Libyan cities such as Benghazi, Musratah, the Western Mountain as well as revolutionaries from Tripoli itself, marched to the Gaddafi main compound (presidential palace) in Tripoli. This marching toppled the Libyan dictatorship period which continued for 42 years. Finally, it is important to point out that the battles between the Libyan revolutionaries, NATO and Gaddafi's remaining forces continued (after august 2011) in some cities loyal to him until approximately end of 2011.From 2012 to 2016, Libya is still facing political and security circumstances led the country to real civil war between different manpower.

II. BRIEF HISTORY OF LIBYAN EDUCATION

Yousif *et al* (2012), in 1951, a UNESCO Commission came to Libya to report and to make suggestions about education. They stated that there were "only 29 primary schools in the capital city of Libya (Tripoli) and only one in the other major city (Zawiya). There was one teacher training centre for women in Tripoli (Toruneav, 1952). The primary school system in Tripoli was based on the Egyptian syllabus, and the upper primary school system followed the Italian school curriculum." Education was given no priority at all under these periods of occupation. During the period of Kingdom, all Libyans were guaranteed the right to education at school at all levels, but education was not compulsory. In September

1969 there was a military coup led by the former leader Colonel Mummer Qaddafi, (defeated in 2011), which "altered things quite dramatically". This "revolution" (as Qaddafi kept

naming it) led to many positive steps in Libya and education started to grow at an enormous rate (presented in Table 1), alongside huge economic, political, and social changes in the country" (pp.77-79). Khalifa (2008) pointed out that the since the Constitution of 1969 (*which was changed in 2 March 1977*), "Libyans are guaranteed the right to education. Primary and high schools were established all over the country, and old Quranic schools that had been closed during the struggle of independence were reactivated and new ones established, lending a heavy religious perspective to Libyan education".

The educational program suffered from a limited curriculum, a lack of qualified teachers and a marked tendency to learn by rote rather than by reasoning. Libya's population of approximately 6.5 million now includes 1.7 million students (p.79). Yousif *et al* (2014,) also pointed out that just during the period 1973 to 1985, "the size of the school and universities population doubled, females in the student population increasing by 130 percent, compared with 80 percent for males" (p.82).

Furthermore, Chapin (1987) showed that the first Libyan university was established in Benghazi (East Libya) in 1955 and there are "presently nine universities" and seven higher learning institutes, including training and vocational schools (p.19). Teferra (2004) explained that in 2003 there were over 140,000 students enrolled in Libyan universities (p.25). El-Hawat, (2006) pointed out that in 2002 there were nearly

5,000 students at the Master's level, 49 at the Doctoral level and 580 enrolled in medical schools (p.213).

2.1. Structure of Libyan Education

The structure of Libyan education is divided into two main structures: the school system and the university system. El-Hawat (2006) reports that elementary school in Libya consists of six years, followed by three years of junior high and three years of high school. The secondary school system is divided into two main specialties, Arts and Sciences, comprising six areas of specialization. Libyan school officials view education as "the path to human and technological development and progress" and they are implementing changes to the system to keep pace with the modernization and globalization that is part of modern Libyan society. The creation of two types of secondary school is one example of this, as this new system was started in 2004, and another is the creation of universities based on students' specializations (pp.207-208). The following table shows the current stages of education in Libya by stage, years, ages and period.

Table 1: Stages of	f Education i	n Libya
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Stage	Years	Ages	Period
Primary	1-6	6-12	6 years
Middle	7-9	12-15	3 years

High schools	10-13	15-18	3 years
			(used to be 4)
University	13-17	18-22	4 years

(Adapted from Rajab, 2007)

III. UNIVERSITIES

El-Hawat (2003) reported that, according to the Committee of Higher Education (Ministry of Education) instructions, since 1990 all the universities in Libya require a score of 65% or better in the national schools' examination. Some faculties, such as medicine and engineering, require scores exceeding 75% for admission. Students who have an average below 65% are admitted to higher training and vocational institutes. Students from specialized high school are strongly encouraged to continue their field of specialism at the tertiary level (for example medicine, engineering, and economics). "Consistent with other countries, degrees are awarded at bachelors, masters and doctorate levels. Libyan universities contain three major disciplines".

These disciplines are Arts, Science, Technology and Medicine. Graduation from a Faculty of Arts takes four years, Science takes five years and Medicine takes between five and seven years.

"Thus, the university sector has been transformed from a single, state-run multipurpose university into a decentralized group of generalist and specialised universities. Also, there appears to be an imbalance between the number of students enrolled in the humanities and arts, and those in sciences and technology" (El-Hawat 2003:pp.395-397).

However, Gadour (2010) argued that the Libyan students moving from school to university face several learning and educational struggles and changes; for example, teaching and learning management at university is completely different to the school system, which can be seen in the large numbers of students, learning systems and teaching methodologies (p.170).

3.1.Difference between School and University Systems

Gadour (2010:p173-175) pointed out that differences between school and university system can be clearly seen in the following points:

A. curriculum management and design: curricula for all schools are arranged by the Ministry of education; while at universities the syllabus for each course is arranged by individual teachers on each university class. B. teacher training programmes: to some extent, school teachers (who must have a university degree) are provided with training policy which is usually arranged in the summer time. However, university teachers are left without a training policy or arrangements. This may be a result of cultural and political factors. C. student numbers: students moving from schools to universities spend a long time learning to cope with the large classes (90 to 130 students in each university class) instead of the smaller number of students at schools (35 to 45 in each school class). **D**. teaching methods: school teachers are restricted to using teachers' books which show all the steps and methodologies of teaching and inspectors who observe the teachers' activities, but university teachers are left to their own understanding and make their OWN decisions regarding teaching.

In other words, in the school system students are used to following a nationwide system of learning. For instance, students who specialize in social science (such as EFL) have to learn from particular, arranged and linked-up curricula during their high school period, with the aim of preparing students to complete this specialization at university. However, when they come to universities, they find what they learn there is not linked to what they have learned at school. This transition between teaching and learning styles occurs when school managers, teachers and students are restricted by a national administration, while at universities, teachers and students are based on individuals' managements. Also, at the universities, most teachers are given materials or syllabuses by their faculties and departments managers, which are usually chosen according to personal preference rather than due to a linked-up system or philosophy. Moreover, at national universities (such as University of Benghazi) the management of faculties, positions, teaching and teachers is arranged from the top down, which is another challenge facing the transition of management and administration between schools and universities. The following points illustrate the forms of administration and management used at the university level in Libya.

IV. TOP-DOWN APPROACH FOR UNIVERSITIES MANAGEMENT

Latiwish (2003) divided the Libyan top-down management into two main elements: top-down political instructions and top down educational instructions:

4.1.Top-down Political Instructions

Political instructions come from the government, and sometimes even from the former leader, Qaddafi's office. They use to choose heads and deans of universities and faculties, as the Committee of Higher Education (Ministry of Education) and the universities have no authority to even suggest candidates for these positions. The Committee of Higher Education has the responsibility for organising the political instructions, such as those to employ or to cancel teachers' contracts, and normal education managements. This system has been in place for more than 40 years and it became a part of the traditional Libyan employment system (Latiwish: pp.22-23). Also, Yousif *et al* (2014) showed that after Qaddafi era; this tradition top down instructions is still exists with different shapes (PP.88).

4.2.Top-down Educational Instructions:

Latiwish (2003) a highlighted that the Ministry of Education provides a list of general policies for universities, such as the start and end dates of academic years, faculty entrance scores, and authorizing university heads and deans to the other academic managements (p.25). El-Hawat (2003)

showed that this method of management has increased the gap between departments, faculties and the university. Some faculty deans try to apply their own perspectives and beliefs of managing their faculties, such as choosing department heads for personal or social reasons. Also, some heads of departments require their teachers to follow their perspectives of choosing materials and methods of teaching and even managing exams (p.382).

4.3. Education Policy: Schools and Universities:

The Libyan Education Authorities (1995, p.109) showed that the Libyan government provides policy statements detailing the aims of the school; for example, the "curriculum must cover all the activities in a school designed to promote the moral, cultural, intellectual and physical development of students, and must prepare them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life and society". However, El-Hawat (2006, p.215) highlighted that in the university education system; the education authority simply authorizes their national university managers to apply whatever policy they personally feel is most suitable; this point has caused differences between universities and even faculties.

The following is a statement prepared for schools by the Libyan Education Authority (1995, pp.110-111) and translated into English:

- ➤ Build knowledge and skills which enable children to understand a wide range of concepts and apply this understanding in appropriate ways.
- Ensure that appropriate provision is made for all children to achieve their full potential.
- Develop positive attitudes to learning in an environment which will preserve self-esteem and confidence.
- Develop as wide a variety as possible of all curriculum skills and knowledge necessary for everyday life.
- Develop a positive attitude to physical activity through participation in activities which promote confidence and self-esteem.
- ➤ Work in partnership with parents and the community to enable children to gain the maximum benefits from their environment.

Vandewall (2015) argued that, "while educational development is still a priority for the new government officials, the educational programmes in Libya suffer from limited and changeable curricula, a lack of qualified teachers (especially Libyan teachers), and a strong tendency to learn by rote rather than by reasoning, a characteristic of Arab education in general. Nonetheless, education is already free at all levels, and students receive a substantial stipend. In other words, the existing change in curriculum and poor development activities and current war influenced the teachers' way of teaching and even their knowledge of dealing with such changeable materials (pp.40-41).

V. THE STUDY FINDINGS

In the light of main research issues concerning difficulties faced by LUTs, and influences from the current civil war, Beliefs/Culture and Concepts of Learning, the results of this study, which exposed several important points to discuss and

explain. Also this study pointed out that the responses, ideas, knowledge and experiences of 14 LEFLUTs at the University of Benghazi.

A. To what extent the current political conflict (civil war) influenced Higher Education Development in Libya?

The data analysis and findings, major issues regarding the participants' knowledge, current political situations facing Libya from 2011 to 2016, and difficulties they face have been elicited. These difficulties could be summarized and discussed as follows: (1) knowledge and skill development within the university (2) top down approach from management or administration within the university, faculty and department (3) poor facilities and resources, such as the internet, books, PowerPoint, etc. (4) the large number of students within the department (5) current civil war which destroyed the university of Benghazi and influenced the academic atmosphere, motivation and collaboration among teachers.

B. To what extent Libyan EFL university teachers LEFLUTs effected from such conflict, in terms of knowledge and professional development?

Through the data analysis and findings, number of important points regarding the difficulties faced by the participants because of the current civil war, views, beliefs/culture and concepts of learning must be clarified. These difficulties were revealed through the process of data collection and analysis. As the participants old and new generation teachers (OGTs& NGTs) pointed out there is an influence from their existing culture/beliefs, on views of professionalism and concepts of learning shown through their responses to the scenarios and interviews. In other words, during the data collection and analysis, it has been found that the participants are influenced by their cultural beliefs of teaching and learning, as some of them displayed the traditional Libyan culture of teaching and responding to the scenarios. Also, the current political conflict which influenced the education atmosphere as the main university campuses are destroyed in the civil war, as all faculties are moved to be located within public schools building which is another big challenge.

C. To what extent continuing professional development (CPD) activities could be offered now to promote (UTK)?

The aim of CPD is to develop teachers' knowledge during their careers as it provides them with a way to develop knowledge. Freeman (2004) stated that teachers' knowledge development is the central activity of teacher education and 'any improvements in the professional preparation of teachers... need to be learned', i.e. it is significant to organise appropriate improvement programmes (p. 89). The Institute of Professional Development (2006) explained CPD as a combination of approaches, ideas, concepts and techniques that help teachers to manage their own learning and development (p. 6). Rodrigues (2004) stated that CPD is described as 'any process or activities that provide added value to the capability of the professional through the increase in knowledge, skills, and personal qualities necessary for the appropriate execution of professional and technical duties, often termed competence' (p. 11). Kennedy (2005) highlighted that action research as a model of CPD has been recognized as being successful in providing teachers with opportunities to ask critical and important questions of their practice (p. 250). Also, Clare et al. (2000) stated that the action research approach could improve

teachers' knowledge improvement through several elements: (1) teachers engage in critical reflection on specific features of their curriculum and pedagogy, they get to know their students well, interact with them, observe them and gather "data" (2) they engage critically with the research literature related to their research (3) they collaborate with their peers and they modify their curriculum and pedagogy in ways that allow their students to meet a wide range of their educational needs (p. 117).

Furthermore, Van Driel *et al.*(2001) concluded their PCK study by stating that 'PCK is an appropriate framework for the design of teacher education programs and development. As discussed in 4.1.4, already, PCK has been used to describe and develop such programs at all levels' (p. 984).

VI. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Per what we have learned from the research theoretical background, framework, research challenges, research findings, and discussion, Action research as a model of CPD may be a helpful approach for the development of the LEFLUTs at the University of Benghazi. This is because of following points:

A. Most LEFLUTs (OGTs &NGTs) are looking to develop their teaching abilities and learn more about teachers' knowledge such as pedagogical knowledge, content knowledge, curriculum knowledge and knowledge of learners even during the current upheavals in Libya. Some of them try to challenge the lack of official development programmes through their self-activities, such as one of my participants said "I do take curses outside Libya, and other (NGT) teachers who showed a real interest in increasing their knowledge and challenge the civil war circumstances.

Therefore, this point about teachers seeking development can be used as a supportive point to suggest and encourage those teachers to apply the action research model of the CPD programme for their knowledge development. For example, those interested teachers could set together and discuss their classroom problems, implicitly guided at the beginning, and then try it, observe it, and by then they will reflect to what they have found themselves; this process could encourage them to work out and progress their mistakes.

B. The approaches of action research are flexible enough to be applied by those teachers (the LEFLUTs), as they facilitate teachers to investigate problems either individually or in pair or group work. LEFLUTs at the University of Benghazi are facing cultural and situational difficulties which may limit any wide range of development programmes. In addition, action research as a flexible instrument of CPD could be a very useful start for professional development programmes in the Libyan university situation.

Additionally, as extracted and understood from the literature, the process of action research could be helpful for the Libyan university teachers because of the following reasons:

- ➤ It is quick to increase teachers' sense of critical questions, reflection, and reduces stress in terms of their existing Libyan culture/belief of being qualified for teaching.
- ➤ The action research model of CPD could help and promote them (LEFLUTs) in terms of further

- reading and integrations with the field of EFL teaching, and it will also help them fill the gap between theory and practice.
- The process of action research can be adapted to facilitate all levels of teachers, as this study has demonstrated that there are different levels of teachers.
- Action research can facilitate teachers with the bottom up approach, motivation and collaboration.
- Action research as a model of CPD could be helpful to promote teachers' PCK through suggesting different research activities which support different areas of teachers' knowledge.
- t does not need any policy or routine as it can be managed simply, and busy teachers can apply its activities within their teaching hours (see chapter three for more information about CPD, PCK and action research).
- Action research as CPD could be applied over a short or long period and with small or large groups of students.

Finally, and according to my own view, I can say that encouraging LUTs to action research activities could be good start towards adapting CPD ideas among Libyan policy makers; as well as the start of bottom up approach. Particularly, there are some good indications behind the scenes that could be used to support this view, such as the overall impressions towards development among most LEFLUTs, the globalization of knowledge and contacts, such as internet and private language schools which require well trained teachers. These points and many other related aspects such as the 2011 to 2016 upheavals in Libya could establish a great start on the way to increase CPD ideas in the Libyan EFL context.

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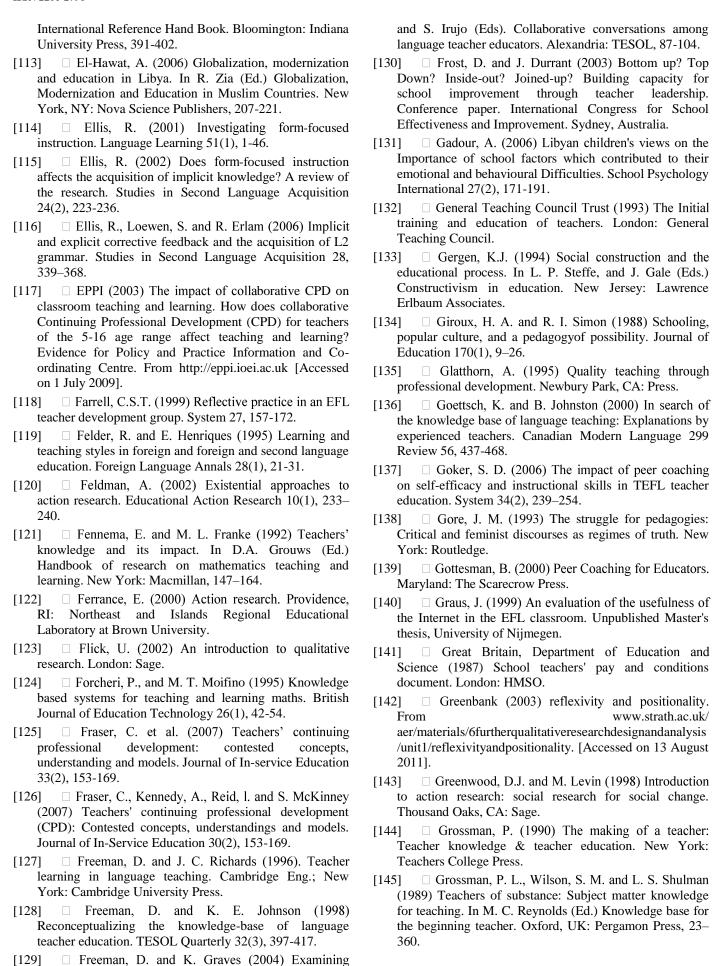
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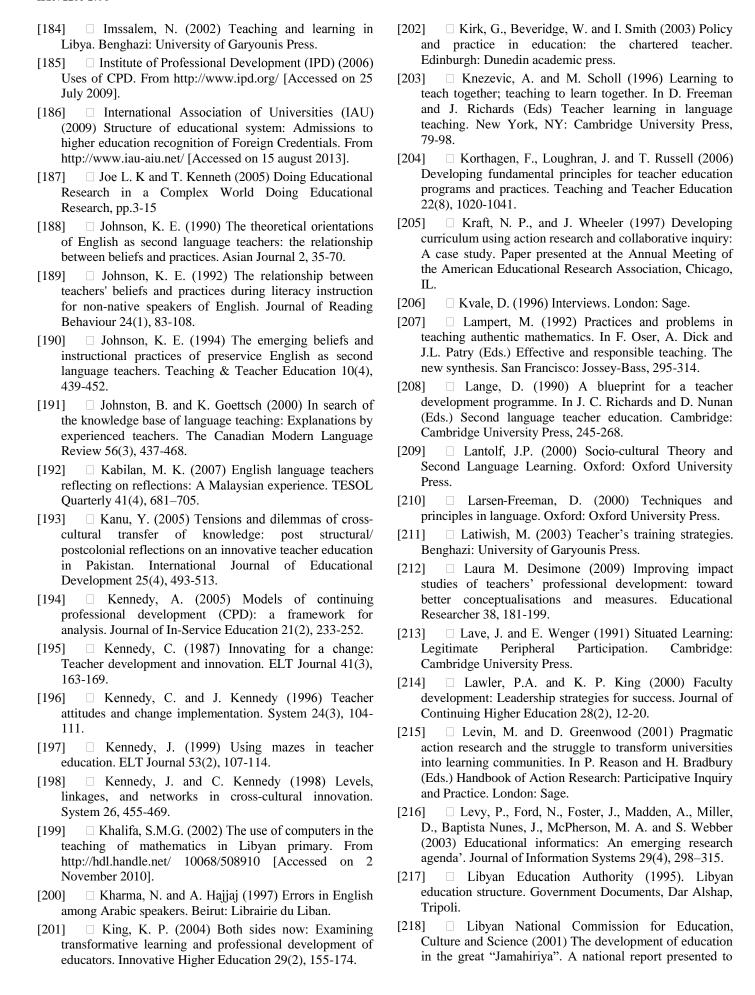
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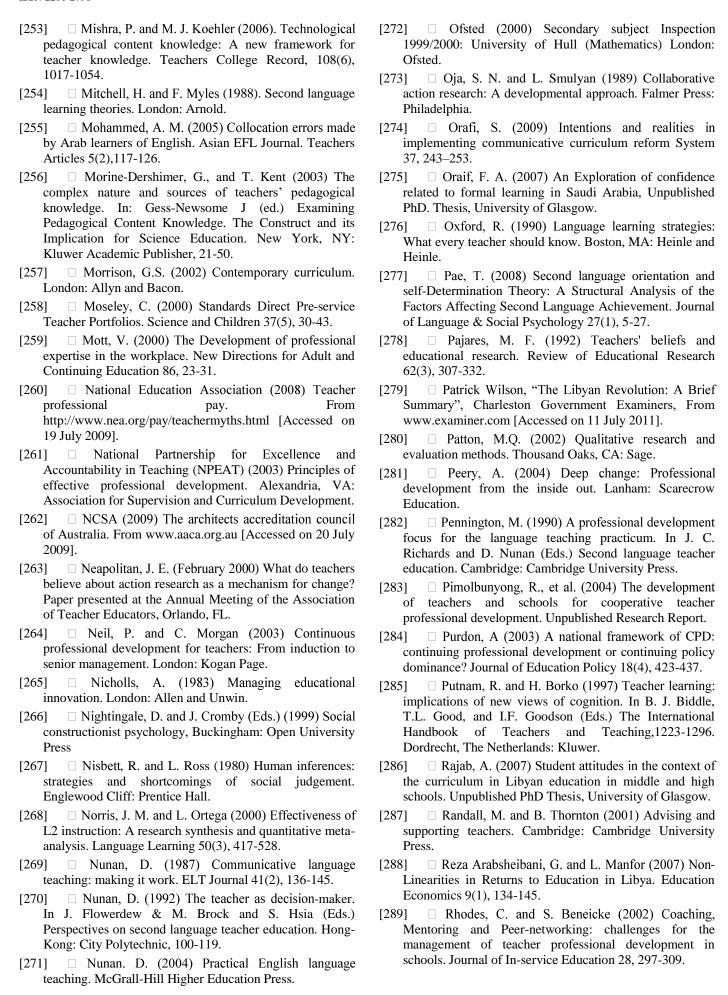
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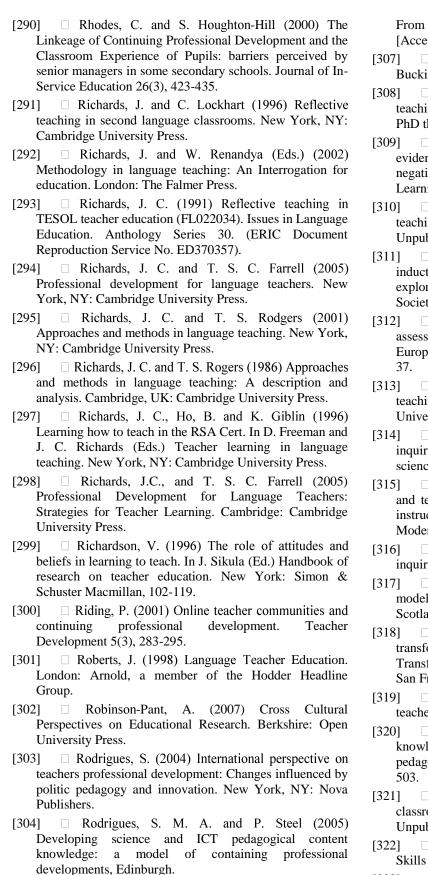
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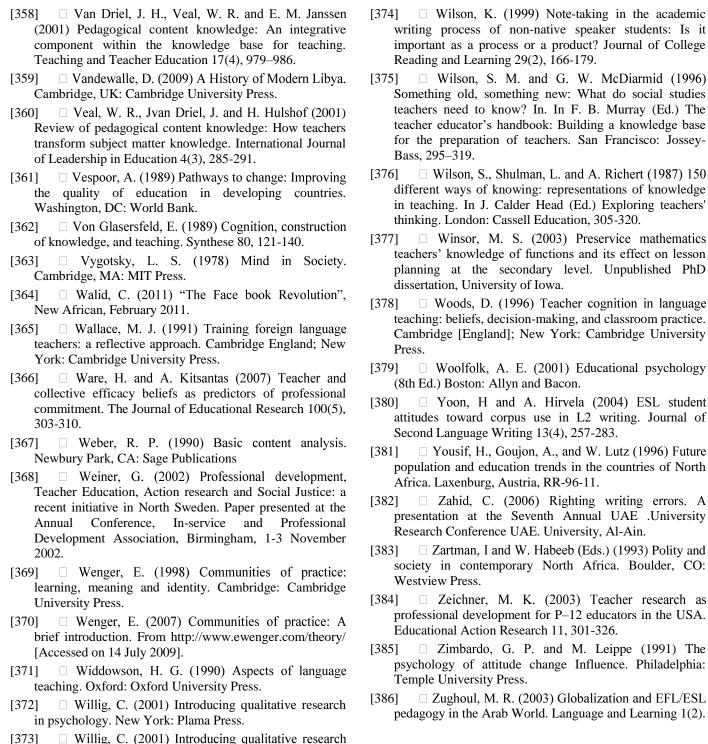
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