

IN-SERVICE TRAINING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS AT PRIMARY LEVEL IN RURAL SINDH: ANALYSIS OF MONITORING PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

Of the many initiatives that have been undertaken in recent years by the Department of Education & Literacy, Government of Sindh for the qualitative improvement of education, one of the initiatives was to upgrade the knowledge and skills of in-service English language teachers at primary level of education. The Provincial Institute of Teacher Education (PITE) Sindh designed and implemented four weeks program with the assistance of Department of Education & Literacy in almost all (23) districts of the province. The implementation strategy of the program includes: development of the manual for teacher trainers (generally known as master trainers), training of master trainers by lead trainers, training of primary school teachers at District level, finally monitoring and evaluation of the program. The purpose of this paper is to share the experiences of monitoring visits which aimed to critically look at current mode of delivery of training activities. The data were collected through a check list developed by experts. Findings indicate that implementing in-service training at a huge level was a daunting task for organizers. It was very challenging for master trainers to design and implement teaching resources at classroom level. Moreover, their repertoire of teaching strategies was very limited to address primary school teachers (PSTs) leaning needs in teaching English. The study recommends to conduct need assessment survey before the start of such programs. In the light of teachers English subject specific needs, training should be arranged. Teachers' should be facilitated in developing context-specific language material. The PITE administration should provide opportunities for further professional development in the subject of English.

Keywords: In-service Training, English, Primary school teachers, Monitoring

INTRODUCTION

In-service training, continuous professional development (CPD) capacity building and staff development are the terms that have been used in teacher education literature interchangeably. In-service training of teachers have been recognized as the main factor that contributes towards students' learning outcomes. Due to technological development in recent years the in-service training and CPD of teachers have received great attention in education. Bolam and Weindling (2006) advocate that 'well-structured CPD can lead to successful changes in teachers' practice, school improvement and improvements in pupils' achievement' (p.113). One of the benefits of professional development is to improve teaching and learning in the classroom, because of this reason emphasis is placed on teachers' in-service training. Effective professional development requires an awareness of the activities that help teachers to be engaged in different tasks. (V. Darleen Opfer & David Pedder , 2010).

For the professional development of teachers, a number of interventions in the Province of Sindh have been undertaken in recent years. These interventions include training of government serving head teachers in educational leadership and management, training of

12000 Primary school teachers (PSTs). The PST 12000 teachers training program aimed to focus on six subject themes i.e. Science, Mathematics, Social Studies, Islamiat, Language(Urdu/Sindhi) and English. While monitoring the activities of PST 12000 program teachers and head teachers suggested to increase the duration of English subject. When the program was over, a project proposal was developed and sent education department for the training of PST in the subject of English. The Bureau of Curriculum & Extension Wing Sindh conducts training for pre-service teachers while the mandate of in-service teachers training has been given to PITE Sindh. Recently PITE Sindh has completed four weeks training of PSTs in the subject of English. The name of this project was “In-service Training of Primary School Teachers (PSTs) in English Proficiency in Sindh.”

IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

The following framework was used to implement the project activities:

Development of Project Proposal (PC-1) with estimated cost



Approval of project proposal



Expression of Interest to work as lead trainers, master trainers



Selection of lead trainers, master trainers



Development of Manual based on Sindh textbooks Boards class I- V Books



Training of Master Trainers



Conduct of Trainings for PSTs at district level



Monitoring of Training by PITE personnel



Evaluation of Training by Third Party

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of present study was to reflect on:

1. Content(Couse outlines), teaching pedagogies used during the conduct of training.
2. Challenges faced by master trainers in the implementation of program activities.
3. To make suggestions for the improvement of training program.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It has been recognized that teachers' professional education does not end up after getting the initial training. The recent development in learning theories and excessive use of technology in education demands that teachers should update their existing content knowledge and teaching skills. There are different ways to help teachers in upgrading their subject matter knowledge, one of the way is to organize in-service training for them. Peyton 1997, cited in Cheng and Ren 2003) maintain that experienced teachers also need to maintain their language skills.

The importance of English as an international language cannot be overlooked. It is also called as 'global lingua franca'. English is the language of communication, trade, business, education, research and tourism. It is the language that has potential to move us towards globalization. Nunan(2001) argues that in recent years the demand for English Language has received great attention with economic globalization.

Keeping in view the impotence of English language, the Government of Pakistan has made English a compulsory subject from class I to onwards. Previously English was taught from class 6 to wards, which created many language problems for students when they join universities. The National Curriculum of Pakistan (2006) in the subject of English mentions clearly about the importance of English. This curriculum acknowledge the significance of English as the language of communication, higher education and better prospects for students in choosing variety of careers. The national curriculum talks about the development of competencies in English language. These competencies comprised of reading skills, writing skills, speaking skills, thinking skills, formal and lexical aspects of language and aesthetic development of students.

It has been acknowledged that teachers' position is critical in implementing curriculum in the classroom. Therefore, teachers training not only enhances content knowledge, communication skills, level of confidence but also help them to change the way usually they teach. The teaching of English language in Pakistani government schools is suffering due to many reasons. There is dearth of English language teachers, there is lack of material for teaching English in schools and teachers have very rare opportunities to attend In-service or CPD programs in English language.

The present English language in-service training programs was designed to help teachers to teach English language skills(Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing) in a better way. In the first phase the training was organized for a group of master trainers(MTs) for two weeks. These MTs were trained by leading teacher educators. The MTs taught PSTs in the second phase. This phase was conducted in 23 districts of the Sindh province. For proper implementation of training program activities, a number of monitoring officers were appointed. These officers made monitoring visits and submitted their reports at PITE. This paper is all about 'how MTs were teaching to PST? What challenges MTs were facing in implementing manual activities?

METHODOLOGY

The research was designed in qualitative paradigm. Following procedures were adopted for data collection:

Document Analysis

The material regarding existing in-service teachers training programs in the subject of English were collected from Bureau of Curriculum and PITE Sindh. This material included

National 2006 English Language Curriculum, Textbooks of Class I to 5 and English language Manual.

Monitoring Visits

During the conduct of the training program in 23 districts of the Sindh, the emphasis was given upon monitoring of the program. The purpose of monitoring was to ensure the implementation of training program activities in classroom. The monitoring activity greatly helped in proper and smooth conduct of training activities. The check list was used to evaluate different aspects of training program. These aspects include

- i. regularity and punctuality of trainers and trainees
- ii. content delivered
- iii. use of teaching methods, teaching resources
- iv. and communication and presentation skills of PSTs

In last portion of the monitoring check list, the monitoring officers were asked to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the training program academic activities. It is worthwhile to mention here that the quality of logistics and refreshments were not the focus of monitoring visits.

Monitoring Visits: Summary of Findings

The following observations were recorded during monitoring visits:

1. Master Trainers replicated the activities of the manual. The monitoring team did not see the use of teaching material other than the prescribed activities of the manual.
2. It was necessary to use English as a medium of instruction in class yet code switching was observed in the classroom. Trainers were using Sindh and Urdu as a medium of instruction. Both MTs and teachers were not fully conversant in English.
3. Little emphasis was given to speaking and writing skills of teachers
4. MTs were facing difficulties to engage all trainees in group work. Only few teachers were prominent in speaking.
5. It was felt that district education management team unable to provide any support to teachers in implementing program activities in the classroom.
6. Teachers were provided rare opportunities for talking in the classroom
7. Concepts were taught as a separate entity rather than integrated. The grammar was taught separately.
8. Textbooks and manual were the only available resources in the classroom.
9. While taking teachers, it was found that no assessment of teachers' professional needs were done before the start of the program.

DISCUSSION

The role of trainer (MTs) is considered very crucial in implementing the program activities. The educational profile of MTs indicate their low level of qualification in English language. It is to mention here that there is dearth of English language trainers in Sindh rural context. The trainers not only have good understanding of English language but also have skills to teach teachers. Zhan(2002) elucidates that English language trainers should understand the linguistic system of English grammar, discourse and phonology. The findings suggested that teachers professional needs were not assessed which created hurdles for MTs in conducting sessions. Auerbach (1994) has highlighted the importance of need assessment while teaching

adult learners of English. The need assessment helping in examining the context of learners. As it was found that grammar was taught separately which was the approach being used in schools in Pakistan since very beginning? There is need to teach concepts integrated. Mira (2004) mentions that the grammar should be taught integrated and evaluated with the four skills. It should not be taught separately. The findings of monitoring visit reveal that use of teaching material was very limited in the classroom, which was demotivating factor in learning English, our experience suggested. It is incumbent upon MTs to use variety of material in the classroom. Developing the repertoire of MTs in different methods of Teaching English is very important. MTs or trainers knowledge always useful in improving trainees' knowledge. Kanwar (2000) advocates that teachers must be aware of new teaching methods and strategies in English teaching. This can be useful in passing ones knowledge to others.

During monitoring it was revealed that MTs and teachers got few opportunities to visit other systems. Such kind of exposure help to broaden views about teaching in general and English language teaching particularly. Chen and Ren (2003) describe that “ we will have to go into the actual classroom to understand EFL teaching and learning context.”

SUGGESTIONS

1. Before the conduct of any training program for in-service teachers in English Language, it is suggested to conduct professional need analysis of teachers in all English proficiency skills.
2. The training groups should be formed according to teachers' professional needs.
3. Only those MTs who have proper qualification and experience in teaching of English should be appointed as lead trainers and master trainers.
4. Use of Information, Communication, technology (ICTs) tools can be useful in improving teachers speaking and listening skills.
5. During the training, visits should be arranged for MTs and PSTs to observe English teaching classes in nearby reputable schools. This opportunity will help them to reflect on their classroom practices.
6. Ample budget be reserved for purchase of teaching material in schools
7. PITE administration can allow their faculty to start English speaking course on local FM radio, the local teachers of English can get benefit from it.

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