Effectiveness of USAID Sponsored Teacher Professional Development Programme: Perspectives of Pakistani Graduating English Teachers

1Wasim Qazi, 2Khalid Rawat and 3Mateen Ahmed

1Professor, Iqra University Abid Town, Block-2 Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Karachi, Pakistan.
2Assistant Professor, Iqra University Abid Town, Block-2 Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Karachi, Pakistan.
3Abid Town, Block-2 Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Karachi, Pakistan.

Abstract: The research study was designed to critically evaluate the perceptions of Teacher Educators (TEs) about the Pakistani Teacher Educational Professional Development Program (PTEPDP), teaching practices, pedagogical skills, the problems and issues in the implementation of new skills in the Pakistani classroom culture. Qualitative approach was used and the data were collected from interviews with TEs in training colleges and from the review of relevant documents. TEs were interviewed in-depth in order to understand the perceptions of program. During the study it was found that the PTEPDP contributed to the professional development of TEs especially in teaching of English. There was a remarkable change in the behaviour and attitudes of TEs after attending the training of PTEPDP. They used modern techniques, strategies and activity based methods but nonetheless came across difficulties in the implementation of the program which included: lack of physical facilities, lack of interest of teacher trainees, classroom arrangements, and non availability of internet access. It was observed that colleges had scarce resources such as over head projector, multi-media, televisions and computers etc. In some cases the resources were there but they were not utilized due to unavailability of human resources.

Key words:

INTRODUCTION

Academy for Educational Development (AED) Pakistan implemented the Pakistani Teacher Education Professional Development Program (PTEPDP) focusing on Sindh and Balochistan provinces. The overall objective of PTEPDP is to prepare skilful and high performing teachers in the areas of English as a Second Language (ESL), and to foster professional linkage between educational institutions in the United States and Pakistan so as to contribute to strengthening of Pakistani institutions. These professional development programs are customized to reflect needs identified as critical to Pakistani educators.

Outcomes of the program are expected in the form of new skills, knowledge and attitudes sustained within the participating institutions in order to for improve their organizational performance. This will be done through the adoption of relevant policies, strategies, programs, and operational practices that address educational and social development challenges. The participants after returning to work are expected to share their new skills, knowledge and perceptions with their colleagues, and create linkages with other groups to mutually enhance capabilities, reinforce leadership potential and promote positive trends within the country. It is hoped that these activities will improve professionalism in the field of teaching in Pakistan.

Program Objectives:
According to the Orientation Manual of AED (2005) the main objectives of PTEPDP were:
- To enhance the professional skills of selected Pakistani educators in the teaching of Mathematics, Science, and English as a second language for managing change;
- To promote academic and cultural exchange between Pakistan and US teacher educational institutions to contribute to increased capacity of those institutions and engender good will between the peoples of Pakistan and the United States.

The present study is only focused on perceptions of AED alumni in the field of English as a Second Language. According to the Orientation Manual the objectives of the ESL training program were to provide ESL teachers with tools to better address the needs of the English language learners in their classes through:
- Presenting specific ways to improve ESL teacher’s pedagogical skills through the use of constructivist techniques, cooperative learning, and generalization by students and teachers.
- Enhancing teacher trainers’ abilities to find, adapt, and make effective use of available resources in print and online.
- Providing instruction in learning strategies and encouraging learner autonomy, where appropriate.

Corresponding Author: Wasim Qazi, Professor, Iqra University Abid Town, Block-2 Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Karachi, Pakistan.
Tel: +92214800670-4; Fax: +92214987806; E-mail: whqazi@gmail.com

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• Sharing successful practices of ESL teacher trainers and creating a community of learners, linking participants; Oregon State University (OSU) will engage teaching team and other ESL teacher trainers.

• Establishing on going online resources for classroom teacher trainers.

Training Plan:
The theme of this project is “best practice” as it provides extended opportunities for learning. Extended learning is clearly related to actual changes in teaching practice. Teachers are encouraged to reflect on their own practice and share their ideas with others in the study group. They will be empowered by doing their own projects and by building connections with others doing similar work. More specifically, the trainer will have core instruction in methodology supplemented by materials and lesson plan that ought to give the Pakistani teachers opportunities to practice what they are being taught (think theory and applications). The English Language support will be just that, a way for the Pakistanis to practice using English develop their confidence in using the language, and teach the parts of the language that they do not yet control.

The Expected outcomes of ESL training include:
1. Implementation of skills and strategies to improve English language learners’ proficiency.
2. Improved use of resources for the classroom.
3. Experience for teacher trainers in preparing action plans.
4. Experience for teacher trainers in giving poster session presentations to their peers.
5. Establishment of ongoing professional links among the participating teachers and the OSU engaged teaching team, and other ESL teacher trainers.

Teacher Educators’ Role In Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Of Trainees:
Ideally, high-quality TE is approachable, offers encouragement, has the ability to listen, gives constructive feedback and challenges thinking. It is also important that both the TEs and the trainee teachers have a good understanding of the programme. The trainee teachers bring with them a bulk of preliminary knowledge, both about their subject, and about the teaching of that subject. This is acquired from their own school and other personal experiences.

Here the role of Teacher educator is to connect and transfer these different forms of knowledge, and also to make sure that some changes are reflected in the trainees’ practice.

When AED graduates come back from USA after four months / three months training, they shared their action plans with Director Bureau of Curriculum Extension Wing, Jamshoro, Sindh, Director General Provincial Institute of Teacher Education (PITE), Education District Officers (EDOs), Assistant District Officer(ADOs), the principals of Government Elementary College of Education (GECE) & Government College of Education (GEC) in their respective districts about different themes like the use of, constructivist techniques, cooperative learning in ESL classroom, ICT in ESL classroom, low cost materials in ESL classroom, available resources in print and online materials in ESL classroom which they prepared and presented as a follow up program in USA. They highly appreciated and admired TEs action plans and provided the opportunities to AED graduates to share their experience in different professional programs for Junior School Teachers (JSTs) and Primary School Teachers (PSTs) professional growth conducted by Bureau of Curriculum and Extension (BC&E) Wing, Jamshoro, Sindh and PITE, but no cooperation was provided by EDOs and ADOs due to the non availability of funds. AED supported through allocation of funds in order to implement the action plans on selective basis but no funds were set aside for follow-up activities.

Teacher Educator as a professional mentor plays a significant role to raise the ongoing professional development of his/her staff and trainees by providing opportunities for a variety of types of formal and informal in-service activities. He/she knows the disposition and capabilities of his/her faculty members. For this purpose, Teacher Educator develops such strategies and arranging in-service activities for trainees to upgrade skills.

Principals of GECE and GEC fully supported the AED graduates to implement their action plans at practicing schools attached with GECEs which they visited from time to time to see the outcomes of their programs.

Methodology:
Approach:
The qualitative approach has been used to conduct this research. The qualitative approach helps to understand the social phenomena, people’s words, their actions and examines the patterns of meaning which emerge from the analysis of data and these are often presented in the participants’ own words. In-depth interviews were conducted in order to understand the perceptions of the sample group of principals.

Population and Sampling:
The study was conducted throughout Sindh where teacher educators’ were working in Government Elementary Colleges and Colleges of Education after receiving PTEPDP training. The population of the study
consisted of teacher educators both male and female from Sindh who had PTEPDP for subject of English during the year 2003-2005 in the USA under AED program funded by USAID. In Sindh about 14 TEs including the researcher, travelled to USA for training purposes, out of which one was transferred and posted to North West Frontier Province and one other could not be contacted. Therefore, my sample of teacher educators was 8:3 (Male: Female). The 11 participants in the study 8 male, 3 female teacher educators in which six males and two females belonged to Government Elementary College of Education (M/W), while two male and one female educator belonged to GCE.

**Procedure:**

Researcher visited GECE and GCE and conducted interviews of TEs regarding their perceptions about PTEPDP program. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with the TEs at their work places in order to attain a better understanding of the phenomenon.

**Documents Analysis**

The number of sources of data such as teacher’s lesson plan, time schedule, diaries, class handouts, texts, PowerPoint presentations, articles, student’s class work, assignments, worksheet, books and other instructional documents provide the relevant evidence of teacher’s creativity and understanding of phenomenon at a particular time or its development over a period of time. The course outline, time schedule and the existing materials regarding PTEPDP were also collected. Some notebooks, concept maps and creative work and lesson plans of the teacher educators were observed during the classroom visits.

**Data Analysis:**

The study analyzed data by inductive method to see the facts, patterns, themes and meaning which emerged from the data. The research study conducted in GECE and GCE throughout Sindh elicited the perception of teachers who attended the PTEPDP in the USA and implemented their learning for last two years in their colleges.

**Findings:**

**Demographic Characteristics:**

The total samples of principals were 11, in which 8 were males and three were females.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Teacher Educators</th>
<th>Master Arts/ Science</th>
<th>M. Ed.</th>
<th>M. Phil.</th>
<th>Ph. D.</th>
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<td>11</td>
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It is clear from table 1 that none of the TEs had MPhil or PhD degrees. Most of the TEs had 10-20 years teaching experience except one who had 1-10 years experience. Majority of TEs had attended 6-10 training courses except one during the last five years.

Regarding professional development courses that teacher educators attended, it was found that most of the TEs had attended professional courses in:
- English proficiency training
- Intensive English language program
- ESL teachers’ trainers

**AED Alumni Views about Teaching Methods:**

TEs felt great difference in the teaching of English in Pakistan and the teaching of English in the USA. TEs stated that “There was experiential learning in the USA i.e. taught theory in practical way, while in Pakistan experiential learning is totally absent mostly theoretical education’. The TEs further added that “Teachers in USA use cooperative structure of learning, activity based method supported by modern technology like multimedia, video and video camera. In Pakistan they use individualistic structure of learning with traditional method of teaching which makes students write notes without explanation”. (Excerpt was taken from interview, April 2, 2008).

The TEs observed that in the USA the instructors used cooperative strategies and teaching techniques such as pair work, group work, jigsaw, three steps interview, conversation and dialogues, think-pair and Share, group presentation, peer coaching and micro-teaching. The TEs learnt direct method, activity based method, communicative method, total physical response and communicative language teaching.

**Views about New Teaching Techniques Learned by Teacher Educators in USA.**
Table 1: New teaching techniques learned by teacher educators in USA.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Name of New Teaching Techniques learnt by Teacher Educators in USA</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Group work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pair work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Jigsaw</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Think-Pair &amp; Share</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Three Steps Interview</td>
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</table>

**Views about Implementation of Action Plan:**

One Teacher Educator said that he “applied the Action Plan in PC school attached with GECE College in his own expenses. He further reported that he taught the PC school teachers English Book 1, Book 2, Book 3, Book 4, Book 5, because they were very poor in English and they could not be able to teach these books to the students. They prepared charts and other audio-visual aids and displayed in their classes”. (Excerpt was taken from interview, April 9, 2008).

One Teacher Educator regarding implementation of action plan informed that he “taught the poem of ‘The Parrot’ with rhyme and rhythm with correct pronunciation and intonation and used A.V aids of mask of parrot” (Excerpt taken from interview, April 12, 2008).

TEs appreciated the role of college administration and informed that they provided every sort of opportunities and physical facilities of modern technology whenever needed by arranging training programs and workshops in order to enhance professional development of their teaching staff.

**Views about Difficulties and Issues:**

The TEs informed that they faced following difficulties during implementation of strategies and techniques learnt in the USA.

- Language problem
- Poor skill competency of trainees
- Lack of physical facilities
- Resistance from colleagues and administrators
- Lack of resources of modern technology
- Shortage of attendance of trainees
- Classroom arrangement
- Lack of interest from administration side
- Non-availability of Laptop.

One of the TEs highlighted the fact that “The principal did never visit my class-room although I did creative work and prepared an English Corner and formed English Speaking Forum in the class-room. (Excerpt taken from interview, April 13, 2008)

**Discussion:**

The PTEPDP in ESL organized and conducted by AED in different universities in the USA and sponsored by USAID in order to enhance the pedagogical skills with techniques to better address the needs of the English language learners in their classes. The courses of this program were specially designed for in-service Pakistani teachers and TEs. Theses courses focused on improving English language skills while at the same time providing exposure to innovate classroom strategies and techniques in ESL. The facilitators used modern technologies like watching video, LD projectors, multi-media, video camera, cultural presentation and discussion to facilitate the PTEPDP graduates during class.

In Sindh, the training colleges had scarce resources such as multimedia, OHP, TV, Tape recorder, and computers. In some cases, the resources were there but it was very difficult for college management to utilize them. The PTEPDP had great impact on the practices of TEs. They used new teaching techniques and strategies like group work, pair work, think-pair and share and jigsaw in the classroom, but they faced difficulties which included lack of physical facilities, small space and seating arrangement of classroom. The trainees took active part in classroom discussion, activities and presentations.

In most of the GECE, the subject of English was taught by TEs who did not hold the Master’s degree in English Literature or Language. TEs while teaching English used code-switching in their mother tongue. This revealed their poor speaking skills in English. There were no English faculty and no such forum through which they could enhance their speaking skills. In professional colleges, especially, in Education and Elementary colleges the TEs faced lack of physical facilities, short attendance of trainees, therefore, they could not implement their action plan which was a part of training of PTEPDP. They did try to implement their action plan in PC schools (attached with GECE), trainings and workshops. It is observed that most of the Principals had communication problem because most of them received promotion on seniority basis and they had no
exposure to English language environment. The principal informed that they visited the classrooms of PTEPDP graduates on regular basis but in actual fact that they did not follow proper schedule of classroom visits.

The PTEPDP was a good initiative for the professional development of TEs. On the whole PTEPDP was a successful program for enhancing the quality of in-service TEs of Sindh.

**Recommendations:**

Keeping in view the findings of this study, it is recommended that:

- Follow up program is necessary for continuous professional growth on a sustainable basis. The sponsoring agency should allocate specific funds for this purpose.
- English language laboratories should be established in each GECE and GCE. This will greatly help in the qualitative improvement of English in the province.
- PITE and BC&E Wing, Jamshoro, Sindh should provide training to TEs in conducting action research. This will help them to learn from their own experiences.
- Training in teaching of English courses should be arranged for TEs to enhance their professional skills.
- There should be a close working relationship between offices of the EDO Education and Colleges of Education for implementing of training in teaching of English to those who are working in the school system in the province of Sindh.

**Conclusion:**

The PTEPDP was a unique professional development program in the sense that programs like these were previously restricted to the administrative personnel at the top and teachers were without such an opportunity. It was, for the first time, such a program was arranged for Pakistani teacher educators from professional colleges. The purpose of this program was to give a firsthand experience and exposure to enable them to understand the educational environment in the education institutions in USA. The idea was also to promote healthy relations between the teachers of the USA and Pakistan. During the training of PTEPDP, the TEs learnt the American concept that the education is a lifelong process, where theory is imparted with a practical orientation nearer to everyday life. The AED took a unique initiative for the promotion of teaching of English by providing training to TEs. English language is a vital source of information and interaction and our TEs benefited by the experience immensely and in many ways.

**REFERENCES**


