

Impact of In-service Training on Teacher's Professional Life

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Abstract : This study mainly focused on in-service teacher training and technologies which has great impact on teacher's professional life specially classroom practice, and professional activities out of classroom. The study was conducted in Paba upazilla of Rajshahi district with a teacher of secondary school. She is involved in English in Action (EIA) intervention and attends regular training program of EIA. It was conducted in an ethnographic type of research and used qualitative approach. Data were collected by observing one teacher for a three-day period, throughout the school day. Each day researcher gathered data through whole day observation of teacher's activities and collecting artifacts. After each day observation, the teacher was interviewed by semi structured interview schedule for more clarification for her activities. Collected data were analyzed thematically. Literature reveals that teachers learn little from traditional in-service training workshops but findings of the study showed that after getting EIA training she became more competent. She is trying to implement CLT approach in classroom and also trying to use technology in English teaching-learning though she had huge burden of extra classes and some other academic activities as well.

Keywords: In-service training, Cluster Meeting (CM), technology, secondary teacher, professional life.

Background of the Study

Qualified teachers are essential for quality education (NEP, 2010). Pre-service and in-service training institutes are playing a vital role in preparing efficient teachers, yet unfortunately our present teacher education program is not able to produce such qualified teachers (Ehsan, Akter, Biswas & Ashrafuzzaman, 2011). In English classrooms of Bangladesh, majority of the teachers use traditional lecture method, do not practice four language skills and student participation in classroom learning becomes poor. There are hardly any student activities, although the new English textbooks have offered several group and pair works (Yasmin, 2007 & Yasmin,

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2009). Moreover, large class size, time constraints, and lack of in-service teacher trainings are further key issues which have been discouraging Communicative Language Teaching Approach in the classroom (Yasmin, 2009 & Rahman, Begum & Zinnah, 2009). Literature also reveals that teachers learn little from traditional in-service training (BESR, 2002; NEP, 2010; Ehsan, Biswas & Ashrafuzzaman, 2012 & Husen, et al. 2003).

In the above light, English in Action (EIA) is trying to improve the quality of English language learning in primary and secondary education level in Bangladesh. EIA focuses on technology based classroom teaching. EIA arranges and conducts in-service training (cluster meeting) for the teachers' professional development. Beyond traditional training, the cluster meetings are introducing more scientific and modern teaching methods and are also bringing newer technologies (Shohel & Banks, 2012; Shohel & Banks, 2010; Shohel & Power, 2010; Woodward, 2010). Therefore, it is important for us to investigate in-depth about how effectively these are being used in our classroom practices. This study is an attempt to explore and identify the impact of in-service teacher education and technologies on a teacher's professional life specially her classroom practice.

Rationale of the Study

In-service education programs for teachers are being organized on a continuous basis but very little information is available whether the training experiences have improved classroom practices of teachers. Teachers attending in-service courses often complain that in-service courses are too theoretical, and are too far removed from their daily working experiences. Training activities, therefore, do not result in improving teachers' 'instructional behaviours' (Veenman, Tulder, & Voeten, 1994). However, although in-service training is thus considered, it does not seem to be enough assurance to produce changes. There is not enough research that shows the short and long term effects of in-service training in innovation projects or changes in educational practice (Blackburn & Moisan, 1987; Hernandez, 1996).

However in Bangladeshi context, Shohel and Frank (2010) explored the English in Action (EIA) intervention in Bangladesh and described how the school-based support systems would impact on classroom practice in Underprivileged Children's Educational Programs (UCEP). It presented evidence to demonstrate how in-school training would facilitate teachers' professional development (TPD). This paper explored TPD by analyzing interviews with

UCEP school administrators and teachers who are participating in the pre-pilot EIA intervention. It concluded that school-based support systems combined with technology enhanced open and distance learning (ODL) are contributing significantly to TPD as an in-service training. This study focused on entire school based support system.

Similarly, EIA large-scale quantitative study 2a (2011) indicates significant changes in classroom practices and the amount of English language compared with that observed in the Baseline 3 study conducted in 2009. This study focused on the use of English by teachers and students, the extent of teacher and student talk time, the nature of the teachers' talk, as well as the nature of the activities that students took part in. One lesson from each of the 350 primary teachers were observed. At that time teachers were observed to be primarily reading from the textbook, rarely involving students in activities, and in two-thirds of the lessons, speaking in English less than in Bangla. In only a small proportion of lessons did the students speak in English during a lesson or have opportunities to participate actively in discussion or to answer questions.

From the above discussion, though the in-service training has some weaknesses, EIA cluster meeting is helping the teachers in English teachers' professional development. For that reason, the researcher wanted to explore intensively a teacher's change in classroom practice as a result of attending EIA cluster meeting.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are to,

1. explore the activities held in Cluster Meeting
2. analyze the impact of Cluster Meeting on English Teacher's teaching proficiency
3. identify the challenges of using technology in teacher's teaching practice

Methodology

The study was conducted in an ethnographic style of research and used qualitative approach (Creswell, 2008). Researcher has selected one secondary school teacher from Paba upazilla of Rajshahi district for the teacher's life study purposively. Researcher had a good rapport with the school and from the school teacher Brishty Zaman (pseudo name) was observed as a teacher's life study. The secondary data were collected through document survey while the primary data

were collected observing the teacher for a three-day period, throughout the school day. Each day, researcher gathered data through whole day observation of the teacher's activities and collecting artifacts. After each day observation the teacher was interviewed by semi-structured interview schedule for more clarification on her activities. Collected data were presented and analyzed thematically under different themes and sub-themes emerged from the data.

Analysis and Findings of the Study

Teacher's Career and Aspiration

After completing Bachelor of Arts, she has completed Bachelor of Education also. She is 34 years old. She is teaching in secondary level for 9 years and during these 9 years, she is teaching English and other subjects in this school. She attended some training during her teaching career for her professional development. According to the teacher, *"I get support from TQI training (Days-14, 2008), ELTIP (2003), and EIA cluster meeting for my professional development."* She is teaching English 1st Paper, English 2nd Paper, Bangla 2nd Paper and Social Science in the school but she wants to take only English classes in future because of her getting intensive training specially in English. She stated that,

"I want to be an ideal English teacher. For this reason I am practising English. I want to improve my English skills and teaching quality. In future, I want to teach only English lessons in the school. I get encouragement from the EIA cluster meeting. I am also encouraged to teach my kids. My skills in English have been improved as a result of participating in the EIA project."

Teacher told that after getting EIA training she feels more comfortable to speak in English in the class and students enjoy her class more than previous. She wants to be a good English teacher. For this reason she needs more training.

Teacher's Professional Life and Workload in the School

She takes 6 classes in each day of the week and thus she takes 36 classes in a week. The average number of students is 55. The school has to perform different kind of activities, at the same time there is no break in the routine, so in between classes the teacher has to take one or two minutes extra time to go to the next class. The teacher moves room to room for taking classes because taking students from one room to another room is difficult and time consuming. After the

tiffin, the teacher has one lesson gap, during the time she does some professional activities and takes preparation for the next day. In the teacher interview, she told,

“I do not have any free time or leisure between classes. It seems boring to me and I do not get time for preparation. I learned a lot of classroom techniques from EIA cluster meeting but I cannot apply due to lack of preparation. If there is a break after every class it would be better. I will get relax time and I will be able to think more.”

Sometimes teachers have to play other roles in the school out of classroom teaching-learning activities. Teachers attend SMC meeting, Teacher’s meeting, also meet with the parents and visitors in the school.

Other activity/role	What they did together	Place
SMC member; Day-1 (10:25-10:40am)	Attended the SMC meeting and spent some time there. The topic of the meeting was result of test examination of class ten.	Head teacher’s room
Two Govt. visitors (Health supervisor); Day-2 (12:28-12:36pm)	The teacher took class in the KG school run by the school authority. Visitors provided worm tablet to the teachers for distributing among the school students.	Teachers’ room

The teacher does not attend SMC meeting regularly. Today she was present in the SMC meeting. The topic of SMC meeting is discussion about test examination of SSC examinee. Apart from this, two visitors came to the school and provided worm tablet to the teacher for distributing among the school students.

Activities of EIA Cluster Meeting

The objectives of cluster meeting are to learn from past experiences, develop new skills to use audio, poster and flash cards and develop classroom language. Following items are to be included in the discussion to achieve the objectives:

- Warm up
- Review and reflection
- Extension activities (Demonstration Class/Micro-teaching)
- Preparing for future/next CM
- Cluster meeting evaluation

CMs are conducted considering the interest, demands and problems of the teachers. It should be ensured that session should not be monotonous. Different techniques and methods are adopted to avoid it. For having the variation in CM different types of games and micro-teaching are arranged. EIA cluster meeting emphasizes on participation and interaction.

The teacher stated that,

“It was very good. We observed the techniques of presenting lessons, how to take class well and using audio and posters in cluster meeting. Especially, I learnt many techniques from the cluster meeting”

EIA provides audio and visual instructional materials like iPod (with audio & video lesson), speaker etc. EIA also gives training to teachers about the use of such kind of materials in classroom. The EIA materials have a strong focus on using digital content through ICT tools, which cover two major areas:

- Teachers’ professional development materials
- Classroom materials

In order to change the practices in the classroom, it is important that EIA materials are used in an integrated way.

New Learning in Cluster Meeting

Respondent teacher informed that she had learnt a number of new things in the cluster meeting. These include easy way of teaching English, giving instructions in English, teaching prepositions easily, using Logitech , using teaching aids such as audio or iPod in class, writing paragraph by mind mapping and using posters.

The respondent teacher said,

“I learnt many new things from the cluster meeting such as using posters, teaching prepositions, using audio and gesture, writing paragraph by mind mapping. I learnt these from cluster meeting of EIA.”

Current English Classroom Practices

The teacher tried to perform according to the training she took. She tried to make her class participatory and interactive that is called CLT approach. Students were involved in different activities like group work and pair work. The teacher assessed the students in the

classroom and gave them feedback by herself or peers. In the following part, the teacher's English classroom practice have been described-

Starting the Lessons

The teacher exchanged greetings with the students. Then the teacher asked some questions about yesterday's lessons, asked some questions about today's lessons and asked to open their textbook. After entering the class,

Teacher- good morning students

Students- Good morning teacher

Teacher - How are you?

Students- I am fine and how are you?

Teacher- I am fine, thank you. Everyone is fine?

Students- Yes

Teacher- Ok, thank you. Ok, Students

After greetings, the teacher showed a poster (made by herself) with one student's help. She asked random questions to the students. And the students answered to the questions.

Teacher- Look at the picture. What do you see? What is the picture?

Students- Lutfor's day.

Teacher- What are the girls doing?

Students- The girls are painting.

Teacher- What are the boys doing?

Students- Read the books.

According to the teacher, "I asked question from the previous lesson to check students understanding about the class. If they can understand then I am successful".

Sequence of the Lessons

After completing question answer session, the teacher taught synonyms by writing new words on the board from the textbook. Then she played the audio, students were listening and watching the book. After that the teacher asked questions and asked them to write the answer of those questions in a group. After that one student from the group presented the task. Again the teacher asked some questions

to the students and then the teacher informed the students about tomorrow's lesson.

The teacher wrote some questions on the blackboard.

1. How many people are there in the story?
2. What are their names?
3. Who was surprised?

Then the teacher gave them instructions. The teacher asked the students to listen carefully and answer the questions in a group. The teacher asked them to make one bench a group and discuss in groups and asked one student of the group to write the answers. The students started discussing and writing on the notebook. The teacher checked the notebook in group and then asked one question for every group. All groups were answering the question. The teacher thanked the students and said that the next day, they would read 'Salam'.

Closing the Lesson

Again the teacher asked some questions to the students and then she informed the students about tomorrow's lesson. At the end of the English class the teacher played a song.

From the observation, she was using the Logitech. Students were silent and watching. She played the audio. "Marry wore her red dress". Teacher explained in Bangla after playing first time. In second time, all students sang with the teacher.

Seating Arrangement

Students' seat line was U-Shaped in the class because in that way she was getting all students in the front of the class, and she can communicate with all the students. She was doing it for 6 days. She wished to do it in other classes. She learned the technique from cluster meeting.

Using Materials in the Classroom

The teacher used posters, real life materials such as students' bags, shoes, doors, pens, textbooks and audio in the classroom. Observing classrooms, it was found that the teacher used two types of materials in the classroom: audio and visual. These audio materials included songs, dialogues and activities and visual aids included posters, flashcards and figurines.

Nature of Interaction

Most of the time the teacher spoke in English in the class and gave the instruction correctly. She asked questions and students answered those. In the question-answer session, it seemed to be teacher centred. But, in group work students were participating actively.

Teacher-Student Relationship

The teacher-students relationship was collaborative with students and she encouraged students to speak in English. The teacher-students relationship was very friendly. The teacher helped the students in group or single.

Change in Classroom Practice after being Trained by EIA

Findings of the study showed that after getting EIA training, she became more competent. She told that,

“After attending the cluster meeting, I can now successfully implement the new ideas such as using iPod as students like songs. They become happy when they see pictures. I let them play many word games. That makes students learn words easily. A game can be played in many ways; I learnt that from CM.”

Most important things about classroom practice after being trained are:

Teacher’s Classroom Practice after being Trained	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exchanging greetings• Using audio in the classroom (songs, rhyme, dialogue and story)• Showing pictures from EIA posters• Asking questions by showing flash cards• Doing group works, pair works and role plays• Expansion- Applying class instructions in personal life• Speaking and listening practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Playing games• Using W/H questions• Writing paragraphs by mind mapping• Students participation on board• Giving instructions in English fluently• Giving feedback like <i>“Thank you, good, very good, okay, well, excellent, your idea is right”</i>• Motivating students

The teacher's View about Cluster Meeting and Technologies

The teacher had positive views about cluster meeting and Technologies. According to the teacher,

“Regarding cluster meeting (CM), everybody gives demonstration lessons on class 6, 7 and 8. First CM did not go well; it just ended with only giving materials. I have been clear about four skills including listening, speaking, reading, writing from second CM. In this way I have learned choral dialogue in the third CM. Now I feel very easy to take class six and learner also get me with ease. I have improved a lot by participating in the EIA. For instance, I try to speak English in the class and give lessons in new strategies. I applied these practice also in a KG school where I take classes.”

Teacher is motivated in teaching because of the new teaching materials especially audio. Teacher thinks that the audio materials are effective to conduct the English class. The teacher stated that,

“Audio material is the best instrument to learn and teach in the class and it helps students by decreasing their fear and shyness against learning English.”

Students' Response about Changing Classroom Practice

Students' responded very well about changing the classroom practice. Now the students are more interactive in the class. They are participated in the class. According to the teacher,

“The students are also demonstrating much more inspiration because they are also talking English in the class now. They now do their class work in groups and thus the works finishes in the class. As a result learner's fear in speaking English is coming down.”

Teacher also told that, Many students reported their guardians that their madam was teaching them in the class very easily and thus that they find pleasure in learning the lessons.

The teacher's Motivation about Teaching Learning

Now the teacher is thinking and her motivation has been changed about teaching and learning English after taking EIA cluster meeting. She told that,

“Changes are taking places. For example, pre, while listening, stage by stage, were not taught before but now are being taught. I have had changes and I want to speak English especially to teach my son. For this purpose, I have bought spoken English books.”

Challenges Faced by the Teacher

The respondent teacher faced some challenges in introducing EIA techniques in the classroom while using audio. Along with benefits of using technology, the teacher also addressed some challenges as well:

- Logitech does not cover with the high number of students
Teacher stated that, *“I faced problem with Block Rocker and then I got Logitech. But students were high in number and Logitech didn’t cover.”*
- Classroom management problem:
The teacher reported that *“Sound of audios created problems in classroom management as the students of other classes gathered and created noise while playing audios.”*
- Lack of time for preparation (she took 36 classes in a week):
The teacher told, *“I did not have any break between classes...If there was a gap after every class it would be better. I would have got relaxed time and I would have been able to think more.”*
- Lack of supervision and monitoring:
The teacher reported that classroom observation by the teacher facilitators were not sufficient.

Suggestions for Further Improvement

The teacher also put forward some suggestions,

- After every five to six months of service a three days cluster meeting should be made compulsory for English teachers to attend so that they could share their challenges of implementing EIA methods and techniques and materials in the classroom and for consolidating their knowledge and performance.
- IT support should be increased.
- Supervision and monitoring must be accentuated on the previous pilot phase schools and current intervention schools of English in Action.

Life out of School

In the morning she took the English class on Ashar Alo KG School. Then she took classes in PADMA Girls' High School. Her husband came to school to take her home in a motorbike. After returning home she worked for her family and taught the kids. To mention about practising English at home, she only practised English with her son. She did not do the things earlier but she got these changes later after taking part in the EIA. Now she wishes to learn how to speak English in better way. Her family supports a lot and she gets honor in her society.

Discussion

The objectives of cluster meeting are to learn from past experiences, develop new skills to use audio, poster and flash cards and develop classroom language. Major activities of cluster meetings are warm up, Review and Reflection, Extension activities (Demonstration Class/Micro-teaching), Preparing for next CM and cluster meeting evaluation (Ashrafuzzaman, 2014 and Shohel & Frank, 2010).

This teacher became more competent after getting EIA training. After being trained, most important things that have now taken place in the classroom practices are exchanging greetings, using audio, poster and flash card in the classroom, doing group work, pair work and role play and giving instructions in English fluently. This finding is similar to the finding from Hena & Uddin (2014), Babu, Ashrafuzzaman & Khanum (2013), Ehsan, Ashrafuzzaman & Das (2012), Rahman, Babu & Sharear (2012), Rahman, Babu & Ashrafuzzaman (2011) studies. Students responded very well about changing classroom practice. Now students are more interactive in the class. They are participating in the class and using English most of the time. Ashrafuzzaman (2014) and Ashrafuzzaman, Babu & Begum (2010) also report that they apply many useful and participatory techniques to make the students learn better. The teachers and students are using more English and their shyness is removed also. Teachers have positive views about cluster meeting and technologies. Now teacher's thinking and motivation have been changed about teaching and learning English after taking EIA cluster meeting.

The school has to perform different kinds of activities, at the same time there is no gap in the routine, so in between classes teacher has to take one or two minute extra time to go to the next class. So she

does not get enough time to take preparation (Ashrafuzzaman, 2014). Respondent teacher faced some challenges also in introducing EIA techniques in the class room like, speaker or iPod problem, classroom management problem and lack of supervision and monitoring. Similarly Ehsan, Ashrafuzzaman & Das (2012) and, Ashrafuzzaman, Babu & Begum (2010) report that as the teachers are new in using the technologies, sometimes they are found to be facing difficulty.

Conclusion

In Bangladesh, the job of a school teacher is stressful. Through the study, an opportunity was created for observing closely a teacher's professional life which involves various roles played by the teacher. The general findings revealed that a teacher had to do a lot of works with teaching-learning activities in the classroom and extra activities that influenced classroom practices. But with a lot of challenges teacher was trying to deliver best output and this is the hope for changing the situation. EIA intervention is trying to change the classroom picture through its various innovative activities and materials. Teachers are trying to implement the methods and materials effectively. Students' participation is increasing day by day. They are very much interested to listen to the audio and also interested to work in groups and interested for pair works. Teachers are also interested to involve the students in teaching learning process. Materials and activities are very effective for bringing a change in the classroom practice. EIA cluster meeting is very effective for teacher's professional development. This teacher had an ambition for being a teacher from her school life. After participating in EIA cluster meeting, she has an ambition for being an ideal English teacher.

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