

English Language Teaching Research Partnerships (ELTReP) Award programme 2012–2016

Explorations: Teaching and Learning English in India
**Issue 9: Taking responsibility for
professional development (2)**

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Explorations: Teaching and Learning English in India

Issue 9: Overview

Taking responsibility for professional development (2)

All three papers in this edition of *Explorations: Teaching and Learning English in India* investigate the professional practice of taking responsibility for professional development. Through this professional practice, teachers can identify their own professional needs and interests and stay up to date with developments in education, teaching and learning. They can take part in continuing professional development opportunities and reflect on the impact of these on their teaching.

Amol Padwad and **Krishna Dixit** describe a project in which teachers with no or limited previous experience of research undertook a series of action research initiatives. They stress both the challenges teachers encountered in the process and the long-term benefits for their own continuing professional development. **Padmini Bhuyan Boruah** also describes a continuing professional development programme, a Self-learning Materials project, and stresses the importance of agency and autonomy in teachers' CPD. **Deepty Victor** and **Chanchala Tiwari** examine the impact of a British Council project to support the development of Teacher Educators through the analysis of feedback, classroom observations and first hand observation.

About the authors

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About the English Language Teaching Research Partnerships (ELTReP) Award programme

India has a long tradition of educational research but the results of this have not always reached the wider world. Through a range of programmes, British Council India places considerable emphasis

on encouraging and supporting inquiry. A key strand of that work between 2012 and 2016 has been the English Language Teaching Research Partnerships (ELTReP) Award programme. The programme aimed to facilitate high quality, innovative research to benefit the learning and teaching of English in India and to improve the access of ELT policy makers, professionals from India and the United Kingdom and the global ELT community to that research. All writers contributing to the eleven issues of *Explorations: Teaching and Learning English in India* were selected and supported in their research by the ELTReP Award programme.

All three papers in this issue have been written by practitioners in the field, whether teachers, lecturers, educational department personnel or other roles that involve day-to-day contact with the teaching and learning of English. The researchers, many of whom will be seeing their work published for the first time, have designed and implemented their studies and present results which in each case are innovative and thought-provoking. Each paper reflects the creativity, detailed awareness of context and practical suggestions of a wide range of writers, from different backgrounds and working in different situations.

We very much hope you enjoy *Explorations: Teaching and Learning English in India* and that you feel the insights the papers provide into a variety of educational environments are applicable to your own context, wherever you may be working.

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The opinions expressed in the papers in this issue are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily represent or reflect the views of the British Council.

1

Developing as researchers: promoting teachers' CPD through engagement with research

Amol Padwad and Krishna Dixit

1. Introduction

Researching is an important part of developing as a teacher, but it may be a challenging process, and teachers may need substantial support in engaging in research, especially in view of their limited research knowledge and skills, unsupportive work environments and their own values and beliefs. This study aims to explore teachers' perceptions and beliefs about research, what kind of support they need as researchers and how the process may contribute to their continuing professional development (CPD). For this purpose a group of 25 teachers volunteered to undertake individual classroom-based research, supported by mentors who also studied their engagement in research. It was found that while teachers did benefit in terms of their CPD, they needed some specific kinds of support, and many of their perceptions and beliefs about research changed in the process of doing research.

Through an open announcement at the 2nd AINET International Conference, Nagpur (January 2015), teachers were invited to join a voluntary teacher research initiative in which they would choose and explore an issue of immediate concern and practical relevance to their classrooms. Initially, 46 teachers enrolled for the initiative, but finally 25 teachers completed their studies. The participants included teachers from different

states of India, working in a variety of contexts and teaching at all levels – primary, secondary and tertiary – in urban and rural schools. The participation was entirely voluntary and the participants had complete freedom in choosing what they wished to explore with whom and how. Most participants had no previous experience of research, and those few who had completed PhDs also confirmed that their experience at this level was hardly useful for the kind of classroom-based exploratory research taking place in the project. They were supported by a group of mentors at all stages of the research, from planning and designing their studies to data collection, analysis and interpretation to writing research reports and presenting/publishing their findings. Various aspects of the participating teachers' engagement with research were studied at different stages of the research cycle through questionnaires, interviews, personal narratives, observations and performance on research. The authors of this report played a dual role in this project – as mentors (with some others) of the participating teachers in the research process and as investigators of the participants' engagement with research.

Researching is an important part of developing as a teacher, and teachers can benefit from the processes of exploring, experimenting, reflecting and theorising in terms of sustaining their

professionalism and professional development. However, researching may be a challenging process, and teachers may need substantial support in being researchers, especially in view of their limited knowledge and skills of research and unsupportive work environments. Teachers' perceptions of research and of the possible gains from engaging in research also need to be studied in order to promote and support teacher engagement in research. The overarching focus of this study was to explore how growing as researchers might contribute to teachers' continuing professional development (CPD), within which this study chose to focus on the following specific research questions.

2. Research questions

This study attempted to explore the following questions:

- What attitudes, notions and beliefs do teachers bring to researching?
- How do teachers perceive the value and impact of different kinds of support in their engagement with research?
- What do teachers gain from participating in this kind of research exercise? How does the experience of being researchers contribute to their CPD?

3. Literature review

In a recent work outlining the history of English Language Education (ELE) in India since Independence, Tickoo (2012: 6) noted that one of the most crucial keys to the better future of ELE in India was a strong emphasis on enhancing teachers' understanding of their classrooms. Borg (2006) and Hopkins (2008) also observe that teachers' investigation of their classrooms on a long-term basis focusing on their concerns is an effective way of acquiring professional knowledge and skills. Borg (2006: 23) states that 'In teacher research, the goal is often understanding rather than the proof; the researchers are the teachers themselves; and the self is accepted as a legitimate focus of inquiry.' Current literature on teacher research is replete with convincing arguments about the potential of classroom research for educational change, teachers' CPD,

classroom health and hygiene, enhancement of student learning and other kinds of gains (Allwright and Bailey, 1991; Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999; Atay, 2008; Borg, 2010).

Wallace (1998) suggests that teacher research is an effective avenue to professional development. Atay (2008: 139) explains that teacher research makes teachers see and feel their decision-making process consciously and evaluate it in terms of student learning and teacher well-being. Citing several studies, she further notes that teacher research makes teachers:

- more flexible and more open to new ideas
- more aware of their impact on students
- experience increased feeling of self-efficacy.

Reflection is an important process triggered during teacher research, which links classroom research with professional development (Burns, 2005). Reflection in terms of systematic thinking about classroom events, identification of locations for improvement, evaluation of strategies and decisions, etc. are some of the key benefits of teacher research (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1982: 2–5). Zeichner (2003) recommends classroom research as an effective model of professional development, contrasting it with the traditional in-service training mode in terms of one-day training by outside experts. He argues that teachers' training models should be consistent with the new visions of school reform, and classroom research is one such effective means of school reform (ibid: 301–2).

In spite of the demonstrated benefits of teacher research, the number of teachers engaging in research and the number of teacher research studies are both very small (Borg, 2006, 2010). There seem to be at least three major contributors to such low teacher engagement with research: teachers' work contexts and cultures, teachers' personal values and beliefs, and general policies and provisions (Borg, 2010; Padwad, 2008; Padwad and Dixit, 2013). Work contexts and cultures may create barriers through a generally apathetic environment for research, lack of peer support, heavy workload, lack of resources and lack of incentives, tangible benefits

and/or recognition by peers or authorities. In addition, teachers' own beliefs, assumptions and values may work against their engagement with research. Some common teacher beliefs in this connection include viewing research as a large-scale statistical activity, assuming research to be an exclusive territory of university academics or the fear of being exposed as less competent. Moreover, teachers also seem to be hindered by limited awareness of research purposes and methods and lack of relevant research skills and knowledge. Finally, policies and provisions may work counterproductively when teachers try to engage in research in the absence of appropriate policies and regulations ensuring support for research in terms of, for example, paid leave, share in school funds and time, relaxation in workload and recognising it as an institutional activity and not merely a personal matter for teachers (Roberts, 1983; Burns, 1999; Padwad, 2008; Padwad and Dixit, 2013).

4. Research methodology

This study had two aspects – one, leading a group of teachers to undertake individual action research, and two, studying in the process teachers' perceptions of, beliefs about and attitudes towards action research and the contribution of engaging in research to teachers' professional development. While being researchers themselves, the investigators of the project also worked as the mentors of the participating teacher-researchers as mentioned above. The means of communication and support commonly used included individual and group email exchanges, e-groups, face-to-face workshops and telephonic/personal communications. The study was carried out in three stages:

1. Pre-research stage: During this stage, the teacher participants enrolled on the project, identified the issues they wished to research and planned their studies. During this stage, data was collected on their views, beliefs and thinking about research through questionnaires, interviews and personal observations and field notes of the investigators.

2. Research stage: The participants carried out research with support from the mentors and prepared to share their studies at the AINET international conference. During this stage, data on their engagement with research was collected through their reflective notes, periodic reports, email discussions and personal observations and the field notes of the investigators.

3. Post-research stage: Based on their experience of presenting studies and the feedback from the audience, the participants prepared the first drafts of their research reports. The reports are waiting to be published as a collection and currently undergoing editorial processing. During this stage, data was collected through feedback questionnaire, focus group discussions (FGDs), prompted narratives and interviews.

5. Findings

5.1. During the pre-research stage, the participants completed an 'expression of interest' form, in which they were asked to list a maximum of three concerns. Later, they were asked to shortlist one which they would most like to explore and try to restate it as a specific and clear question. However, most participants were found to struggle with formulating proper questions. Therefore, the first day of the Orientation Workshop held in August 2015 was devoted to overcoming this difficulty. With the help of the mentors and the resource person and with collaborative work in groups, they could fine-tune their questions. The participants seemed to face two common challenges in this process. One was related to making the question specific and concrete (for example, by specifying particular groups of learners, contexts, aspects of study, etc.), and the other was keeping the focus more on understanding the issue or question than trying out some solution, since exploring problems was the primary goal of all studies. In the case of the first challenge, it was particularly noticed that most participants struggled with identifying specific aspects to explore. For example, two participants listed their concerns about how to help their students who were poor in grammar, but during the workshop they realised that they would need first to understand what

exactly the learners were poor in and why. They also realised that it would be unmanageable to explore grammar as a whole in the year at their disposal for all students they were teaching in their schools. So they eventually narrowed the study down to quite specific and manageable questions such as ‘How do my students of Grade 9 use verbs and why?’ The kind of struggle the participants went through to properly formulate their questions and the time the whole process took were both unexpected for us. The complexity and difficulty of this specific stage seems to be quite under-researched, while current literature on teacher research seems to assume that teachers have readily identifiable problems.

5.2. The process of the participating teachers’ research was neatly planned out into sequential stages of identifying a problem, preparing a research plan, preparing data collection tools, collecting data, analysing/interpreting it and then finally drawing conclusions, culminating in the writing of the report. The three workshops were thus strategically timed at three different stages of the project with three distinct focus areas: a first workshop (August 2015) for orientation, a second one (December 2015) on data analysis and interpretation, and a third (May 2016) for finalising reports on the studies. It was assumed that the participants would have covered one stage of their research before they moved on to the next and that all would ‘travel’ together. However, in reality, not only did the participants travel at different individual paces, they were also found to move to and fro between stages. For example, the second workshop with an original focus on data analysis and interpretation had to accommodate some time for resolving issues in formulating research questions and plans of study for some participants. Having started collecting data, some participants went back to redesign their tools or modify questions. Even in the final workshop, the actual goal of drafting reports remained unattained, because more time was spent on collaboratively working on some unresolved issues in data analysis and interpretation. In short, it was not a straight linear movement from a research question to data collection to data analysis to findings, but a complex shuttling between these stages as the

participants kept visiting and revisiting earlier stages. The cyclical nature of action or teacher research has been pointed out in, for example, Burns (2010: 9) and McIntyre (2008: 7), but these cycles actually consist of linear movements from one stage to the next within a cycle. This study points to more complex movements within a cycle, where reaching the next stage does not mean the previous one is over and the participants keep coming back to previous stages.

5.3. The feedback on the workshops and the overall project unanimously points out that the participants highly valued the experience of engaging in research. This experience seems to have benefited them in two ways. On one hand, it deepened their understanding of their classrooms and learners and particularly of the issues they explored. On the other hand it also led to some improvement in their research knowledge and skills.

5.4. Most participants found the process of research quite challenging and demanding. During the first workshop the participants strongly emphasised their need for support and suggested that they relied on the mentors to help them complete their studies. Even those participants who had some experience of academic research (such as a PhD or master’s dissertation) reported in their reflective notes that they needed support at various stages. The final feedback included a question asking them to rate different means of support and communication used in the project in terms of helpfulness. The top two choices were face-to-face workshops (score of 7.42 out of 10) and emails (8.26 out of 10). In the final workshop, the participants rejected the idea of doing away with any face-to-face component in a future round of the project, explicitly stating that it was the most effective and useful part of support.

5.5. In the pre-final workshop questionnaire and in the final feedback, there were questions asking the participants to identify any particularly difficult tasks or issues where they needed support the most. In both cases, the top three difficulties listed by the participants were analysing the collected data, formulating the research question and preparing a plan of research. This is also

corroborated by the fact that these three topics together took the most of the time spent in the three workshops. The discussion in Section 5.1 above also describes the difficulty faced in formulating questions. This means that teachers do need support in engaging in research, but there are some specific areas or issues in which they need much stronger support. It is premature to say whether the three areas identified by the participants of this study are common to other teachers also; more extensive and larger-scale investigation is required for any generalisation.

5.6. In the course of their research, some participants had to approach their learners, peers, administrators and the parents of learners to seek their opinions and views. Some others involved their learners in research-related tasks such as collecting data. As reported in their reflective notes and feedback forms, for most participants it was a new experience to involve their learners and peers in their explorations. It was quite enriching and exciting, not only in terms of valuable insights, perspectives and ideas offering a better view of the situation but also in terms of developing a sense of collegiality and professional relationship among colleagues. As a spin-off effect of their studies, they developed greater rapport with their learners and peers.

5.7. During the orientation workshop and also subsequently on numerous occasions, the participants revealed various beliefs, opinions and perceptions about research. These included views that:

- research is for university teachers and not for school teachers
- good research always involves numbers; there cannot be ‘proper’ research without charts, tables, graphs and quantitative data
- a small study done by a teacher with a small group of students may not have much value; ‘good’ research is ‘big’
- if the research study does not end up with a solution to the problem, it has no value.

Questions about the value of engaging in a small-scale classroom research by those who are not

‘qualified’ researchers constantly came up during informal discussions. Similarly, many participants felt anxious about finding solutions to the problems they were exploring, though they had agreed that properly understanding the problems first was the primary goal of their studies.

The participants were given an opinionaire at the end of the project to find out if there was any difference to their beliefs and opinions. The responses showed that most participants now viewed teachers as ‘legitimate’ researchers and felt that their research could significantly contribute to improving their teaching. All of them also felt that their studies could have some value even if they were on a small scale based on a small group of learners. However, there was still some doubt about the importance of quantitative data in research, with nearly half of the participants feeling not sure if research could be done without some numerical data.

6. Conclusions

The year-long project of leading a group of teachers through individual classroom-based research studies was an enriching experience for the teacher-researchers and the mentors. The teacher-researchers benefited in terms of an enhanced understanding of the issues they explored and an improvement in their knowledge and skills of exploratory research. The overall experience also led to many useful insights into the process of teacher research. It was found that the participating teachers brought some perceptions and beliefs about research which shaped their thoughts and actions. However, many of these perceptions and beliefs changed in the course of the research. It was also found that since researching is a challenging process, teachers needed constant support at every stage of the process. In this case, it was also noticed that they identified three specific aspects as the most challenging and where they wanted the maximum support – data analysis, formulating research questions and preparing research plans. In terms of the means of support, participants highly valued the support through emails and face-to-face meetings, which they reported to be the most effective. They also found it extremely

helpful to be working collaboratively in a group of fellow-researchers. One key implication of this study is that while teacher research seems

to contribute to teachers' CPD, teachers find it challenging and need regular support to undertake it effectively.

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2

Investigating ELT practitioners' perceptions of self-learning materials (SLM) development as an effective CPD activity

Padmini Bhuyan Boruah

1. Introduction

This research study investigates to what extent participants consider their participation in an ELT self-learning materials (SLM) development project as leading to and sustaining their continuing professional development (CPD). The research also aims to help increase their awareness of materials development as an effective CPD activity to enhance classroom practice.

My interest in this project originated in my experience of leading a previous project commissioned by Commonwealth of Learning, Canada, which involved developing SLMs for a one-year distance Diploma in ELT with ICT skills (DELT-ICT) for primary English teachers (the GU-COL project). GU-COL participants were all English teachers/teacher educators with no previous experience of either materials development or open and distance learning, but all were eager to take up an agentive role in their professional development.

2. Research questions

Three research questions guided the study:

- a. How aware are GU-COL participants of CPD and the role of agency in one's professional development?
- b. How far do the participants perceive the

SLM development exercise as an effective CPD activity?

- c. What are GU-COL participants' perceptions of themselves as agents driving the SLM development CPD activity?

The study sought to understand participants' perceptions of CPD and their roles in furthering their professional development by investigating:

- a. aspects of their previous experience, their knowledge and understanding, and their professional qualifications that helped them decide to take up this SLM development work (engagement with the past)
- b. career prospects that they saw being fulfilled through their project experience (engagement with the future)
- c. ways in which their current professional life and actions were being influenced by their project experience (engagement with the present).

3. Rationale

There is a growing body of work on CPD and the various activities through which English language teachers and teacher educators can enhance their professional knowledge and skills (Padwad and Dixit, 2011). CPD 'helps teachers to identify learning opportunities that are appropriate to

different stages of their professional development, to establish a personal development pathway and by doing this, to position ... [themselves] at the centre of the learning process' (British Council CPD Framework, 2016).

Closely linked to notions of teacher CPD is the concept of 'teacher agency', which 'describes an educator who has both the ability and opportunity to act upon a set of circumstances that presents itself within that individual's leadership, curricular or instructional roles' (Priestly et al., 2012: 3). The role of teacher agency in CPD, however, has not been fully explored in the Indian context. That teachers and teacher educators can become agents of change in their own learning, given the vast array of CPD activities that are available, is an area that warrants more serious attention. In this study, participants' perceptions of SLM development as a meaningful and purposeful CPD activity have been viewed in terms of the extent to which they display agency.

There are also hardly any reported studies on materials development as a CPD activity, and of SLM development as a means of developing professional expertise. The development of SLM and open educational resources (OERs) for open and distance learning (ODL) is becoming an increasingly popular alternative means of acquiring knowledge and skills – both institutional and personal – in ELT. Many 'traditional' institutions of higher education are beginning to explore ODL programmes of study, which necessitate the production of SLMs. Materials development, especially writing SLMs, can now become an exciting new option as a CPD activity for ELT practitioners.

4. Literature review

The literature on CPD ranges from theoretical constructs capturing the nature of teacher professional development (Kennedy, 2005; Fraser et al., 2007; Richards and Farrell, 2005) to practical CPD field experiences, especially in India (Bolitho and Padwad, 2013). The literature includes reports of studies on various CPD perspectives (Edge, 2002) and aspects ranging from teacher beliefs, CPD activities, reflection, teacher–school partnership and teacher

communities and collaborations from across the world. Current understanding of teacher professional development has moved beyond engagement with external (and expert) sources of knowledge to 'an approach to CPD which addresses the needs of teachers, students and organisations, gives teachers choice and ownership, enables them to learn with and from each another, grounds that learning in what happens in the classroom, and also provides appropriate guidance and support' (Borg, 2015: 3).

This view of CPD as an active process of engagement with knowledge, oneself and others is central to the concept of teacher agency, which is achieved through an interplay of teachers' individual efforts at professional growth and other contextual factors (Biesta and Tedder, 2007). The achievement of agency is thus not merely an individual enterprise, but 'the process by which, alone and with others, teachers ... acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence essential to good professional thinking, planning and practice' (Day, 1999: 4). Teacher agency is 'relationally embedded across social circumstances, tools, and people' (Etalapelto et al., 2013). Teachers practise agency by constructing knowledge cognitively and reflectively, and by participating in 'socio-culturally determined knowledge communities' (ibid). Agency is also conceptualised temporally; it is 'seen to be rooted in past achievements, understandings, and patterns of action; it is not something that people possess as an attribute, but something they "do" in different contexts ... (history, socio-economic conditions, institutional ethos, subject discipline, etc.)' (Etalapelto et al., 2013: 58).

Teacher professional development, therefore, is a lifelong learning process directed by teacher agency, which is a reflective, reflexive and creative engagement with one's professional ethos that is influenced by social and material environments (Priestly et al., 2016), and temporally informed by teachers' past experience of learning and orientation towards the future, and situated in the present context.

5. The context of the study

In 2013, Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Canada, agreed to provide financial and academic support to Gauhati University, India, for the GU-COL project to develop a one-year diploma in the teaching of English for primary teachers. This was part of the UNESCO initiative to scale up teacher education to meet the 'Education for All' (EFA) goals of 2012 and beyond. The diploma would comprise relevant disciplinary knowledge in ELT, teacher proficiency development and the use of ICT to teach English.

As the principal investigator for the project, I invited a group of 25 ELT practitioners comprising university, college and school teachers and teacher educators, all postgraduate alumni of the department, to participate in the project, which developed over a one-year period. The project began with a baseline survey of English language needs of stakeholders, the results of which fed into three workshops (SLM development principles, syllabus and content design for the diploma and SLM content review). At the end of the second workshop, 16 participants volunteered to write the SLMs, which went through a rigorous revision, editing and vetting process initiated by COL. The final diploma syllabus comprised five modules:

Module 1: Principles and objectives of teaching English at the primary level

Module 2: Developing your English language proficiency

Module 3: The methodology of teaching English at the primary level

Module 4: Information and communications technology (ICT) for English language teachers

Module 5: Practicum and micro teaching.

Participation in the GU-COL project activities involved learning about the context of primary school teaching, teachers' and learners' needs, the ways in which ICT could be incorporated in resource-poor teaching contexts and the ways in which primary teachers' own English language proficiency could be developed. I was now curious to know whether my fellow project participants

felt this experience had contributed to their CPD. I was also interested to learn how far they felt their professional development resulted from their own agency.

6. Methodology for data collection and analysis

To investigate the research questions, I conducted the following activities:

1. initial discussions with GU-COL project participants to introduce the project and get their consent
2. an initial workshop to find out participants' perceptions of CPD, engaging in effective CPD activities and their experience of developing the SLMs
3. focus group interviews to elicit more details of the SLM development process
4. distribution of journal logs to participants to write a reflective journal on their SLM development experience
5. class observations to learn, first-hand, in what ways the participants were using their newly acquired skills in their teaching contexts
6. a second workshop to
 - a. invite the participants to map their own CPD on the British Council CPD framework in the light of their perceptions of CPD and their awareness of their agentive role in their CPD activities
 - b. help them to review the diploma modules to find out in what ways the contents helped individual participants in their CPD
 - c. make participants critically comment on a set of teaching materials for English
 - d. encourage them to engage in another materials development activity.

The data collection instruments used in this study included:

- a. **perception elicitation tools** such as a set of questionnaires, a rating scale and focus group discussion formats (small group and whole group)
- b. **personal narratives** in the form of journal logs and informal conversations
- c. **project contents** (the DELT-ICT diploma modules)
- d. **standard tools of enquiry** (the British Council CPD Framework for teachers and the CEFR – the British Council’s Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment)
- e. **templates** for materials review and textbook design.

A total of 18 of the original group of ELT practitioners participated in the project and contributed to the data collection. However, not all were available for all the project activities due to workplace constraints and personal engagements and obligations.

7. Findings

An inductive, qualitative data analysis procedure was applied to collate the data, loosely synthesising three strands of enquiry: narrative analysis (after Riessman, 2008), thematic analysis (following Braun and Clarke, 2006) and content analysis (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2005). The data revealed interesting perspectives on four key areas: the perceptions of CPD and its benefits, the experience of SLM development as a CPD

activity, the reflective cycle of participants as ELT practitioners (i.e. the ways in which they fed newly acquired knowledge into their own contexts) and participants’ degree of receptivity to new CPD activities. Underlying these key areas were their agentive roles in the entire experience. The following sections present a summary of the findings in each key area.

7.1. Perceptions of CPD: What constitutes professional development for English language teachers, and what is the role of agency?

Data analysis was guided by the notion that ‘the achievement of agency will always result from the interplay of individual efforts, available resources and contextual and structural factors as they come together in particular and, in a sense, always unique situations’ (Biesta and Tedder, 2007: 137). This interplay of factors was also studied in a temporal continuum to see how teachers’ agentive actions are influenced by past experience, lead toward the future and inform present action.

In the workshops and the focus group discussions, participants were asked to define CPD, list what constitutes CPD activities and mention the benefits and challenges of doing CPD. The responses of the participants were varied and displayed contradictory perceptions of CPD and their own roles in their professional development. While most questionnaire responses showed participants viewing CPD as deriving from external sources, their own definitions of CPD expressed a more agentive role for themselves. Table 1 shows the percentage figures of consolidated questionnaire responses relating to what constitutes CPD.

Table 1: Responses to questions relating to CPD (percentage)

Question on what constitutes CPD	Percentage of responses				
	Agree	Somewhat agree	Not sure	Somewhat disagree	Disagree
Obtaining professional qualifications		88		12	
Participating in professional activities (presenting at conferences, writing for research, research projects, and so on)	83	2	15		

On the question of who is responsible for a teacher's CPD, participants said CPD was an externally motivated practice provided by one's institution, colleagues/peers, other organisations and mentors. However, on the role of agency in a teacher's CPD, 72 per cent of the participants considered teacher agency as integral to CPD because it helped a teacher become reflective, reflexive and creative. Sixty-six per cent of the participants expressed the belief that agency was an interplay of individual efforts, available resources and contextual factors. The notion of teacher agency was new to all the participants, and they did not seem to see a connection between CPD and teacher agency. Their definitions of CPD contradicted their questionnaire responses; the underlying notion that emerged from the definitions was their perception of themselves playing a self-directed agentive role in CPD. In their definitions, they saw CPD as:

- *'a process through which teachers can improve their knowledge and skills which in turn benefits their institution'*
- *'the effort put by the teacher to handle his/her working environment in a better way. And in the process s/he becomes more reflexive, reflective and creative'*
- *'a teacher's/teacher educator's conscious and deliberate effort to improve their own knowledge and skills and also to enhance their professional qualities.'*

The key terms in most of the written and oral responses were 'conscious effort', 'deliberate effort', 'reflective action' and 'lifelong activity', reflecting an **individualised, self-directed and self-accountable perspective** on CPD. This perspective, however, also took an extreme form for some participants, who saw external factors as contributing little to their CPD. One participant shared her experience of undertaking a modest research project, and how, upon finding no mentor, she forced herself to read and revisit her learning while conducting the study. Others believed that attending workshops and seminars was a waste of time; it was their instinct as a teacher that helped them improve their teaching.

While the questionnaire responses and definitions showed that the participants took a cognitive, constructivist, knowledge-enhancement approach towards professional development, these also revealed that participants viewed doing CPD as an experiential, collaborative and mentored process, situated in particular socio-cultural contexts. Most of the participants felt that participating in conventional CPD activities (e.g. seminars/conferences/workshops/local talks) afforded them an opportunity to interact with other English language teachers and share classroom experiences, which in turn enriched their understanding of teaching. Others mentioned the contribution of social media in staying connected to other professionals, sharing concerns, learning problem-solving strategies and simply feeling valued in the midst of tightly scheduled lives. For some participants, feedback from colleagues who observed their teaching and discussed constructive ways of improving was an essential part of their professional development.

In terms of the benefits accrued from engaging in CPD, the participants listed advantages for both personal and professional development. They cited personality, career and proficiency development as personal benefits, and updating of knowledge and skills, improvement in classroom teaching, increased sensitivity to learners' contexts and experiences, sustained learner growth and institutional growth as professional developments.

Some participants believed pedagogical improvement had mostly to do with one's own instinct and initiative in the classroom, and they had a negative perception of what they termed 'too much CPD'. For such participants:

'A teacher may do CPD only for the sake of doing them'

'Sometimes (in fact often) teachers forget their main role of classroom teaching and giving time to students outside the classroom. Staying busy with just your own development can have negative effects.'

For these participants, CPD is distant from and does not accrue to the main responsibility of

teaching. The justification for such a perspective is that:

‘while experimenting with new resources, (a teacher) can’t cover the syllabus. Most of the time not a collaborative process. Level of self-motivation might be less/nil when not supported/trusted upon the teacher’ (sic.).

Participants also mentioned obstacles to doing CPD activities, even if they wanted to do them/ take part in them themselves. In addition to time constraints, complacency and a lack of awareness, obtaining research funding, institutional and peer support and leave of absence were cited as challenges to one’s professional development.

The participants’ perceptions and perspectives on CPD and the role of agency can be summarised thus:

- there is great value in engaging in CPD activities, most of which are directed by external agencies
- teachers themselves play a crucial role in their own CPD a) by making conscious and active efforts themselves to use their cognitive faculties to gain knowledge, skills and insights, and b) through peer engagement in socio-cultural contexts
- a teacher’s instincts are an important factor to motivate them to develop professionally, and too great a reliance on CPD outside one’s context may result in distraction and prove detrimental to learner development
- the constraints to doing CPD are external and institutional.

7.2. SLM development as an effective CPD activity

As a year had elapsed since the participants had completed the SLM development project, many of them admitted forgetting details of their experience of developing SLMs. To help them revisit their experience, a rating scale, focus group interviews, small group discussions and journal logs were used. The objective of this was to map participants’ awareness of SLM development as a CPD activity, and also remind them of the process they had undergone for SLM

development. The participants were made to reflect on their experience of the GU-COL project through these steps of its development:

- a. needs analysis in context
- b. SLM development awareness workshop
- c. syllabus and materials development workshop
- d. review workshop
- e. editing and finalising content.

7.3: Participant reflection and receptivity

7.3.1: The rating scale on materials development

A rating scale was given to participants to find out their attitudes towards materials production, and particularly SLM preparation, as an effective activity for professional development. Participants were asked to mark responses on statements ranging on a scale from ‘Very Little’ to ‘Very Much’. The responses suggested that materials development:

- offers opportunities to revisit and refresh learning
- encourages writers to update subject knowledge by reading up on contemporary theories, ideas and practices
- helps develop personal writing skills, and skills of lucid and focused presentation of ideas
- increases understanding of language assessment tools and procedures
- creates awareness of the necessity of incorporating the teacher’s voice into the materials
- helps distinguish between writing for an expert audience (e.g. journal readers) and a lay audience (e.g. learners)
- should be undertaken as a regular activity for professional development.

The responses for these statements ranged between ‘Quite’ and ‘Very Much’ for all the participants, which suggested that they considered participating in SLM development as a

route to their professional development. However, in the subsequent focus group discussion, it was also suggested that being paid to write, rather than as an opportunity for professional development, could be one reason why people agreed to write SLMs.

7.3.2. The journal logs

Participants were asked to structure their thoughts around five guiding points relating to their engagement with SLM development:

- preparing for the writing process
- the initiatives taken to produce ‘good’ materials
- the degree of support needed
- the challenges faced in writing SLMs
- the ways in which the SLM development experience helped/the reasons why the experience did not help future engagement as an ELT practitioner.

Almost all the participants said that since SLM development was a completely new concept, they had to take a proactive role in familiarising themselves with SLM theories and practice. There was a tight deadline; participants were expected to develop and submit the first drafts of their module in two months using their existing content knowledge, pedagogical training and their project workshop learning. When they began the writing process, however, the participants realised that the workshops on SLM development had familiarised them with the concepts and style of content-based courses, whereas for the DELT-ICT diploma they had to design pedagogy-focused courses. Faced with such challenges, they took up a proactive role, updating their knowledge by reading books and articles – both online and print – studying SLMs of other programmes, discussing ideas with their module partners and sharing first drafts of sample units with the project co-ordinator. To produce good-quality materials, some of the participants decided to adhere strictly to the unit template, while others preferred to present conceptual knowledge in small chunks across sections, using the needs analysis findings to illustrate learning points with suitable examples. Many of them consulted their

institutional colleagues to elicit new ideas and discuss their own, and all met their groupmates at regular intervals.

7.3.3. SLM development: the unhappy experiences

Several participants pointed out that their training in ELT pedagogy was not enough to explore the completely uncharted territory of SLM development. Also, the workshops did not give them training in writing skills; the constant pressure to (a) incorporate a reader-friendly tone using a personal style (such as using personal pronouns and first person, avoiding jargon and using simple sentence structures) and (b) create case studies that would appeal to target learners left them frustrated. The problem was compounded by the occasional lack of consensus between groupmates and the frustration of not being able to anticipate and address learners’ problems adequately in the materials. Also, all of the participants were busy professionals, and not always able to find the time to complete and submit materials by the deadlines. Below are some negative outcomes of writing SLMs, as reported by some participants.

- SLM development is a tedious activity, and attending one isolated workshop does not make a participant an expert materials developer.
- Sustained writing is not for all; not every academic is a good writer.
- Because one’s own teaching context is very different from that of a distance learner, it is not easy to translate what is learned into the materials designed.
- To develop effective SLM, one needs to rely more on their own instincts and experiences rather than on theory and popular practice.
- Once a project is over, the memories fade – reflecting on a two-year-old exercise is next to impossible, and the experience is not likely to percolate to one’s own teaching contexts.

In short, not all participants saw SLM development as a fruitful CPD activity; some of them felt the training was inadequate, while a few others felt it

was difficult to fit in such a demanding activity in one's normal work schedule.

7.3.4. SLM development: the professional and personal gains

In spite of the challenges faced, most participants felt that the project experience contributed greatly to their teaching and other academic activities. One participant mentioned how she incorporated case studies in her classes, another mentioned how she incorporated activity-based learning to make students more active learners, while a third said the experience helped her learn about 'classroom dynamics [and] tactics required to efficiently manage a class'. Two participants stated that the experience helped them in their research work, write journal articles and translate texts. For others, the experience helped them learn how to use multimedia resources for their own learning. Some participants felt it helped develop their management skills, as they learned to work with other professionals and manage their other priorities and time. The experience of collaborative writing gave them new perspectives on ELT pedagogy (for example: 'I understood more clearly as to how the various sub-skills of reading like skimming, scanning help a reader in becoming more independent').

7.3.5. Incorporation of new learning into one's context: module review and class observation

Participants were asked to revisit the five modules prepared as SLMs for the DELT-ICT diploma, to identify aspects such as (a) parts of the contents, (b) ideas for materials writing or (c) pedagogical strategies and suggestions sourced from the materials that contributed to their CPD. In the light of the experiences gained since their participation in the GU-COL project, they were also asked to identify contents that they felt should be modified, with justifications for their choices. The rationale behind this activity was to find out whether the participants had, or could, reflect on their learning and apply it in their present contexts. This activity would also serve as a means of connecting participants' past experience to future career plans and engagement with the present, in terms of their agency.

For module review, the participants were divided into groups according to the module they teamed up on. The module review produced detailed and specific information on the sections of the modules that participants used, or took suggestions from, in their classroom contexts. There were also specific suggestions for editing the contents, informed by their post-project engagement with knowledge, collaborative initiatives and classroom experiences.

The other activity that was undertaken to learn at first-hand how participants' current practices were informed by their project experience was class observation, suggested by Professor Rama Mathew at the ELTReP workshop in New Delhi in May 2016. Some of the participants were contacted for consent and scheduling of a few classes that could be observed. Because of a series of formative assessment schedules in the institutions, however, finding a mutually convenient time proved to be a great challenge. Finally, only two participants could find a suitable time slot, and I observed their classes to learn how their new learning was feeding into their classroom practices. These were both undergraduate English teachers, teaching classes of over 50 learners. The most relevant points that emerged from these observations related to both teacher behaviour and pedagogy. The salient features of the classes were that:

- the lessons were learner-centred and activity-based, with a substantial amount of peer interaction
- the teachers elicited responses from the learners by referring to their cultural and linguistic backgrounds, which increased learner motivation
- both the teachers made good use of their own and their learners' handheld gadgets, making learners look up words in their phone's online dictionaries, listen to audio recordings, refer to information on the internet, and so on
- there was an imbalance in the amount of teacher vs learner talk – the teachers did not realise they were speaking much more than learners, in their attempt to make the class more lively and engaging

- time management was not efficient, and the peer activities took longer than the teachers expected
- a few vocal learners dominated the class discussions, while the rest generally gave minimal responses.

The class observations showed that the participants had incorporated to some degree aspects from their SLM development experience, showing a greater degree of sensitivity to learner needs and teaching learners to be independent readers. However, these observations may at best be considered a representative sample of participants' pedagogical practices; more class observations, conducted over a longer period of time, will be needed to better understand how pedagogy is informed by reflective practices.

The module review process and the class observations helped show the extent to which the participants had engaged with good practice as an outcome of their SLM development experience. Even those that had claimed CPD was not helpful, or had not recorded any benefits from the experience, found something of value in the modules. The responses of the participants suggested that agency can manifest itself as a subconscious process in addition to the more conscious ways in which it is enacted in the professional lives of teachers.

7.3.6. Furthering CPD: degree of receptivity to new CPD activities

Towards the end of the project, participants were given two activities to find out whether their enthusiasm for engaging in module development and the experience and confidence they had gained in the SLM development process had become embedded in their professional lives and could inform future practice through the achievement of their agency.

For the first activity, participants were given sample English lessons from an undergraduate, secondary and primary textbook respectively, and asked to review these for appropriateness. 'Appropriateness' was loosely measured in terms of whether the lessons reflected learner needs,

were linguistically and culturally appropriate and whether they engaged learners in constructivist and experiential learning activities. The participants were able to provide specific and constructive feedback on the areas that needed modification. Their suggestions ranged from finding ways of matching objectives to outcomes, the importance of warm-up activities, ways of providing more scaffolding, strategies of teaching contextual grammar and choosing texts that matched learners' cognitive level.

The second task required participants to design the first draft of a chapter template for a proposed handbook for secondary English teachers on teaching writing. In the discussions that followed, the participants brainstormed:

- the range of compositions that the secondary English syllabus demanded, so that these could be mapped against the learners' real-life writing needs
- ways in which the handbook would reflect good pedagogical practice
- kinds of activities that would make learning to write interesting and relevant for learners
- ways in which the contents would be presented in the handbook
- the design of a template for writing.

The draft of the chapter template and the nature of the discussions showed that the participants had integrated their SLM development experience into their reflective cycles. They were able to recall their previous experience and feed it into the new task. They refreshed their knowledge and familiarised themselves with good activity-based materials by looking on the internet for ideas and reading contemporary teaching materials (individual agency), discussed ideas with colleagues, received and gave feedback on ideas and drafts (collaborative agency) and discussed ways of managing time, permissions and resources in their workplaces to accommodate the new assignment.

These two activities saw the participants playing a proactive role in applying their learned knowledge in new (and more challenging) contexts. The

activities involved invoking their past experience, creating a pathway to future engagement and situating their work in their present contexts. To complete the activities they relied on their own learning styles, but also participated in collaborative discussions and worked out ways of making the output relevant to their socio-cultural contexts.

8. Summary of findings

The general perspective on SLM development as effective CPD that emerged from the data analysis was that there are several benefits of engaging in SLM development. The most salient of these include having access to mentoring and peer support, gaining expertise in academic writing, developing awareness of teachers' needs and language proficiency, learning to input text within the disciplined confines of a template and working against an agreed deadline. Participant narratives illustrated their degree of personal involvement in finding ways of improving their professional skills and expertise, and the value they placed on

collaborative engagement, while questionnaire responses and focus group discussions brought out the challenges of engaging in such CPD activities. The journal logs reflected the participants' engagement with agency through individual initiative, collaborative commitment and a conscious effort at situating their output in a shared socio-cultural space that took into account learner needs and contextual challenges. Participants' engagement with activities with a future (collaborative) orientation displayed the extent of their agency, albeit in subtle and subconscious ways. More studies with a sustained and multidimensional focus on the relationship between teachers' CPD and the achievement of agency in their professional lives will allow researchers to understand the ways in which teachers can be motivated to take charge of their professional development. In addition, teachers need to be made aware of the ways in which their individual initiatives and collaborative endeavours help them achieve agency in their professional lives.

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3

The impact of the Bihar Language Initiative for Secondary Schools (BLISS) project on Teacher Educators: a study in Bihar

Deepty Victor and Chanchala Tiwari

1. Introduction

The future of the nation is shaped in the classroom (Kothari, 1964-66). In order to further develop teaching skills, use new techniques and methodology, it is very important for teachers to participate in in-service training at regular intervals (NCF, 2005: 111). Teacher education programmes enable the teachers to grow in their professional career and for this there should be provision of regular in-service training programmes for all teachers (NCFTE, 2009). When English is a foreign language, teachers need special support and training.

Bihar is a Hindi-speaking state with many challenges which face the delivery of effective education. There is a need to focus on developing the English language skills of its learners. In the past, there was no specific training programme designed to enhance the teaching skills required for teaching the English language in Bihar. Recently, from 2012, the British Council have implemented a project for teachers teaching the subject of English. The project is called the Bihar Language Initiative for Secondary School (BLISS). It has involved a partnership between the state of Bihar, the British Council and the United Kingdom Department for International Development. With the help, support, guidance and facilitation of the British Council, it has been possible to train 200

teachers as Teacher Educators and these Teacher Educators are giving training to all other English teachers in their districts.

2. Research questions

Through this research work, the investigators wanted to find out about the effectiveness of the BLISS project in Bihar. The following research questions have been framed:

- a. How has the BLISS project been useful for Teacher Educators?
- b. In what ways has the BLISS project improved English language teaching in Bihar?
- c. What are the challenges faced by Teacher Educators in delivering training at district level?
- d. What changes are reflected in the teaching abilities of Teacher Educators after participating in training through the BLISS project?
- e. Do differences in location (rural or urban) have any impact on teaching efficiency?

The report consists of six sections. Sections 1 and 2 describe the BLISS project and the areas for research, and Section 3 describes the background and rationale of the study. Section 4 explains the research methodology adopted for this study and

Section 5 presents the findings of the research study. Finally, Section 6 deals with the overall conclusions, suggestions and limitations of the study.

3. Background

Geographically, Bihar is the 13th largest state in area in India. It is situated in the east of the country and is an agriculturally based state. There are a total of 38 districts in Bihar and it is densely populated. Patna is the capital of Bihar. As per the last census data of 2011, the literacy rate is 63.82 per cent. The male literacy rate is 73.39 per cent and the female literacy rate is 53.33 per cent (British Council, 2016).

Considering the poor level of knowledge and difficulties in understanding English language, in the 1990s a compulsory pass in English language in the secondary board examination was made optional by the state government.

Classrooms in government secondary schools in Bihar have large numbers of students. There are often more than 500 students in a typical secondary school in Class 9 and 10. More than 150 students sit in one classroom. Many schools do not have electricity facilities in their schools. The course book is designed by the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT).

Various educational reforms have been undertaken by the state government to improve the educational level of the students in the state. Among these reforms, one is the initiation of training programmes for the teachers of English language with joint co-ordination with the British Council. The BLISS project has been initiated by the state government of Bihar and British Council to prepare Teacher Educators through training programmes from all the districts of Bihar. The project started in 2012 and it is still continuing to support training programmes for the growth and development of English language in the secondary schools of Bihar.

Teacher Educators are educators who educate teachers. In the BLISS project, teachers who received training to educate other teachers are

known as Teacher Educators. Before the BLISS project, there was no concept of a Teacher Educator in Bihar. The word 'educator' enhances and signifies the job which trainers do.

For the selection of Teacher Educators from different districts of Bihar, a written exam as well as an interview was conducted. Selection of Teacher Educators was based on language skills, experience and their motivation. A 120-hour foundation course for 200 Teacher Educators was held over three phases. It focused on language skills and learner-centred teaching methodology. The training programme included different modules prepared by British Council Training Consultants and took the needs of English teachers teaching in Bihar into consideration (British Council, 2015). Three phases of training were then delivered by the trainers to selected teachers (District Level Training: DLT). Teacher Educators work in pairs to deliver training at DLTs.

The BLISS project has very specific objectives for building a strong foundation for the teaching of the English language. It widened the scope of the learner-centred classroom and envisaged how English teaching could be made effective without placing any extra burden on teachers and students. This is also the vision of the National Curriculum Framework (2005: chapter 1), to make the learning process burden-free and make connections to knowledge outside the classroom.

The objectives of the training programme for Teacher Educators are to:

- develop the skills of Teacher Educators in teaching the English language
- develop techniques and methods for teaching the English language in the overcrowded classroom
- develop the skills of Teacher Educators in areas such as monitoring, facilitating, observing, co-ordinating, leading a group, etc.
- equip the Teacher Educators with a number of classroom activities which can make English language teaching more effective and interesting for the learners

- prepare the Teacher Educators for delivering training at district level.

The British Council has developed several resources so that the project could achieve its envisioned objectives:

- Three blocks of face-to-face teacher-training materials focused on classroom management, teaching reading and teaching speaking have been developed.
- A series of Teacher Development films have been developed with BLISS Teacher Educators as models of good classroom practice.
- A 20-minute film has been produced explaining the BLISS project and issues around English in Bihar, which was broadcast on local TV in early 2016 and will be broadcast again in 2017.

BLISS incorporates a number of British Council India resources for both teachers and learners. These include the Teaching English Radio India series and LearnEnglish Schools DVD, an off-line package of materials adapted from the LearnEnglish website which have been mapped to the local curriculum.

4. Research methodology

It was important to evaluate the effectiveness of the BLISS project with respect to changes in teaching techniques, skills and methodology. Through this study, a comparative analysis has been made of the impact of the BLISS project on the Teacher Educators and the improvement of their teaching techniques and methods.

A triangulation method has been used for collecting data. The triangulation method enables the validation of findings through various approaches. In this study, using one tool could not serve the purpose so the triangulation method was used. The following tools were used:

- structured interview schedule (see Appendix 1)
- questionnaire (see Appendix 2)
- classroom observation (see Appendix 3)

- personal unstructured interview
- observation of the District Level Training programme (DLT) (see Appendix 4).

Three districts, Patna, Saran and Siwan, were selected as the sample districts for the study. Fifteen Teacher Educators were interviewed through a structured interview schedule. Seventy-six teachers who were participating in DLT were asked to complete a questionnaire during their training. Training sessions delivered by the Teacher Educators in Saran district were observed by the researchers. Two classroom lessons, one in Patna district and the other in Saran district, delivered by Teacher Educators were also observed by the researchers. One classroom lesson in Saran district in which an untrained teacher was teaching English was observed on 10 October 2014 by the researcher. The data was analysed using simple statistical tools including ratio, percentage and tabulation.

5. Analysis and findings

The findings of the study are described below.

5.1. Effective improvement of teaching skills related to English language

Following structured interviews with 15 Teacher Educators, responses were analysed and are presented in Table 1.

5.2. Challenges faced by the Teacher Educators in delivering their training at district level

To find out the challenges faced by Teacher Educators, interviews were conducted with the sample group, and results are discussed below.

Challenges described by Teacher Educators included the following, with challenges listed in order of importance:

- late circulation of information about training programme schedules at district level from the Bihar Madhyamic Shikhsa Parishad (BMSP) and the district authorities
- unavailability of materials relating to delivering training such as the trainer's notes, participant workbook, stationery, etc. makes it difficult for the Teacher Educators

Table 1: Opinions regarding improvements: Teacher Educator responses.

Area of improvement	Opinions identifying improvement	Opinions not identifying improvement	Percentage of Teacher Educators identifying improvement
Language proficiency	12 of 15 Teacher Educators identified improvements in their language skills. They said that they are using the English language more often and more fluently.	3 of 15 teachers are of the opinion that the training had not influenced their language proficiency.	80 per cent of Teacher Educators identified improvements.
Teaching techniques	13 of 15 Teacher Educators said that after training their teaching techniques had improved.	2 of 15 Teacher Educators were of the opinion that using the techniques introduced on the course in their classroom is not possible as the level of understanding of students was very poor.	87 per cent of Teacher Educators agree that their teaching techniques have improved.
Activities while teaching English	10 of 15 Teacher Educators stated that they have started using activities while teaching English in their classroom.	5 of 15 Teacher Educators said that they do not use activities while teaching as the classes are very small and overcrowded.	67 per cent of Teacher Educators stated that they have started using activities in their classroom.
Dealing with the students	8 of 15 Teacher Educators said that their attitudes to students have changed following the training programme. They said that they had become friendly and responsible due to the training. They started playing the role of facilitator rather than that of traditional teacher.	7 of 15 Teacher Educators said that they deal with students in the same way as they did before training.	54 per cent of Teacher Educators identified improvements in dealing with students.
Involving the students in the activities	11 of 15 Teacher Educators stated that they have started involving students in activities following the training programme.	4 of 15 Teacher Educators said that they still face problems in involving students in activities as they do not use activities very often.	73 per cent of Teacher Educators agreed that there has been an improvement in the involvement of students in the classroom during activities following the training programme.

Response of the students	6 of 15 Teacher Educators said that there has been an improvement in the response of students in terms of interest, participation, learning and confidence, following use of the methods and techniques learned through training.	9 of 15 Teacher Educators said there is still a lot of scope for improvement for students. Students come from poor backgrounds. The influence of the home environment may be negative and the level of understanding of students is very low in comparison to secondary-level standards, thus student responses are not very impressive.	40 per cent of Teacher Educators agreed that the training programme helped in the improvement of the response of students in terms of interest, participation and English language learning.
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to deliver training at DLT. These materials have to be arranged by district authorities in co-ordination with BMSP

- obtaining relieving letters from Head Teachers, which is required by all government employees from their head of institute to leave the workstation and join other activities for a specific time period
- lack of platforms to share problems and challenges faced by participants on courses
- the short duration of training programmes
- the time gap between Teacher Educators receiving training from British Council trainers in Patna and delivering it themselves to teachers

5.3. Changes in teaching techniques used by Teacher Educators

Teacher Educators described changes in their teaching as shown in Table 2.

5.4. Impact of location on the training programme

Teacher Educators' opinions on the impact of location on the training programme are described in Table 3.

Table 3 shows that Teacher Educators were of the opinion that there are a few advantages to being based in urban areas such as the capital of the state and the Teacher Educators from Patna were in a better position due to this. However, they have not said that the location of the training programme had any specific effect on the efficiency of teaching or the acquisition of the skills or the methods introduced on the training programme.

5.5. Comparison between classroom practices of Teacher Educators and untrained teachers

The researchers observed the classroom practices of Teacher Educators in Patna and Saran and delivery of English by an untrained teacher. There were visible changes in various aspects which are shown in Table 4.

Data showed a clear difference between the classes delivered by the Teacher Educator following their BLISS training and the class delivered by the untrained teacher.

5.6. Suggestions for the improvement of the BLISS training programme

Suggestions for the improvement of the BLISS training programme made by Teacher Educators and DLT course participants are shown in Table 5.

Table 2: Changes reflected by Teacher Educators

Basis of changes	Before training	After training
Using English in the classroom	More than 80 per cent of Teacher Educators stated that they used to hesitate to use English in the classroom.	90 per cent of Teacher Educators stated that they feel more confident in using English after participating in training.
Perceptions of teaching	67 per cent of Teacher Educators said that before training they used to think that it was not possible to help the students to understand the lesson without using Hindi.	Following training, 85 per cent of Teacher Educators are now of the opinion that it is possible to help the students to understand the lesson through using only English.
Using approaches	A teacher-centred approach was used by 95 per cent of Teacher Educators before the training programme.	73 per cent of Teacher Educators have started using a learner-centred approach in their classroom.
Use of activities	Teacher Educators stated that before the training programme they were not even aware of activities which can be used for teaching the English language.	Following training, 67 per cent of Teacher Educators said that they now use activities in almost all the lessons they teach.
Changes in personality	Teacher Educators stated that before the training programme they used to feel neglected in their school, as English is not a compulsory subject to pass in the final secondary school examination.	After participating in the training programme, Teacher Educators had the opportunity to attend national and international conferences, which boosted their confidence which is reflected in changes in their personality.

Table 3: Impact of location on training programme

	Opinions	Suggestions
Advantages for Teacher Educators from Patna	5 of 15 Teacher Educators said that the Teacher Educators from Patna have more advantages than other Teacher Educators as many programmes are organised in the capital itself.	More than 50 per cent of Teacher Educators suggested that the programmes should also be organised in other districts so that Teacher Educators from other districts can also participate.
Impact of location of training on the training programme	7 of 15 Teacher Educators said that location does affect the training as they have to come to a different district and they are faced by problems as it upsets their daily routine.	43 per cent of Teacher Educators suggested that if the training could be organised in their district level or block level, it would be easier for them to attend the training programme.
British Council observations at training centres during DLT	11 of 15 Teacher Educators are of the opinion that the training sessions held in Patna are observed by British Council teams, whereas this is not done in all the other more-distant districts of Bihar.	More than 72 per cent of Teacher Educators suggested that they want to be observed by the British Council team so that they can also get valuable feedback.

Impact of location on teaching/training skills	<p>13 of 15 Teacher Educators said that there is no specific impact on the efficiency of teaching skills due to the location of the training programme.</p>	<p>Teacher Educators said that the place of training does not have any impact on the equality of training. However, it has an impact on other factors. They added that the long journey makes them tired. Female Teacher Educators face problems due to the residential training schedule as they have to be away from home and family.</p>
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Table 4: Comparison of classrooms

Basis of comparison	Classroom 1 (Teacher Educator)	Classroom 2 (untrained teacher)
Starting the class	<p>The Teacher Educator first greeted the class then asked about how the students were.</p>	<p>The students greeted the teacher and the teacher responded but did not try to make the class comfortable.</p>
Starting the lesson	<p>The lesson started with a warmer.</p>	<p>There was no warmer, the teacher directly asked the class to open the chapter in the coursebook which he wanted to teach.</p>
Use of English	<p>The Teacher Educator used English most of the time, trying to make the class understand through using gestures.</p>	<p>The teacher used the translation method for teaching the text. Each line was translated into Hindi to help the students understand the meaning of the content.</p>
Use of activities	<p>The Teacher Educator used two activities: one was an activity in which students wrote on the board (ladder race) and the other was a brainstorm activity. Students were involved in the class and they enjoyed the lesson. Groups were organised by the teacher for the activities.</p>	<p>No activities were used by the teacher. Throughout the class the teacher only asked students one by one to stand and read the text from the coursebook. Other students who had not brought their books to class were looking here and there as they had no other work to do. No group activity was organised.</p>
Organising the class	<p>The Teacher Educator organised the class in such a way that all the learners were involved in the lesson so all were attentive.</p>	<p>Most of the learners seemed to be uninterested in the lesson. The teacher also focused only on the student who was reading the coursebook, correcting that particular student's pronunciation. A few students were even observed to be sleeping as they were not involved in the class at all.</p>

Teacher talking time	The Teacher Educator gave instructions to explain what the learners needed to do in the activities. Students had the chance to discuss in their groups the words which they would be using in the ladder race activity.	For most of the lesson, the teacher was observed to be speaking as he was translating the meaning of the text in Hindi during the class. Students were silent; only the student reading the book spoke.
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Table 5: Suggestions for effective improvement of the training programme

Areas for improvement	Suggestions
Duration of the training programme	There should be a shorter gap between the training of Teacher Educators and DLTs.
Location of the training programme	Most of the Teacher Educators as well as DLT course participants suggested that the training should be at district level as well as block level to be more effective, as they found it difficult to come to one centre from remote areas of various blocks of the district.
Interval of the training programme	The training programme should be at regular intervals at district as well as block level so that teachers can participate without major difficulties faced by them due to distanced training centres.
Major concerns	<p>Training for developing teaching skills, especially English, should be implemented for teachers at the primary level of education in Bihar. It should be made compulsory to pass in English in the Bihar School Examination Board (BSEB).</p> <p>The textbook should be revised and changed to match the level of understanding of the learners.</p> <p>A workbook should be introduced at secondary level to help students improve their skills.</p> <p>Regular observations of classes should be made by the authorities.</p>
The most difficult lesson identified by respondents	In answer to this question, most respondents referred to the <i>Panorama</i> coursebook texts 'Once upon a time' and 'Pace for living', and stated they are the lessons with which students do not feel any connection.
Interesting lessons and suitable for the students identified by respondents	In answer to this question, most respondents referred to the <i>Panorama</i> coursebook texts 'Dharma Yuddha', 'Kathmandu', and 'Too many people too few trees', and stated they are the lessons in which the students take an interest in learning.

5.7. Challenges identified during the study

During the study, the investigators identified the following various challenges involved in gathering the data and collecting information from Teacher Educators and course participants.

- Some Teacher Educators were busy giving training at the district level and thus it was a challenge for them to make the time to participate in interviews.
- It was difficult to bring course participants together at one time, as they were also busy in their teaching jobs.
- Some course participants were reluctant to be interviewed.

6. Discussion and conclusions

Based on the findings and analysis of the study, the following conclusions about the BLISS project and its impact on Teacher Educators and teachers can be made.

- a. The perceptions of English language teachers of teaching English have changed as a result of the training programme delivered by the British Council.
- b. Teacher Educators have developed self-confidence after participating in the BLISS training programme.
- c. Teacher Educators are now able to use activity-based teaching in their classrooms.
- d. Teacher Educators have reduced their teacher talking time in the classroom and started using various methods and techniques such as 'back to the board', 'slap the board', 'ladder race', 'running dictation', 'passing the ball', etc. to make the classroom more interesting and learner-centred.
- e. Teacher Educators feel motivated after the training programme through the BLISS project. One Teacher Educator from Patna mentioned that, following British Council training, he feels that he has 'wings to fly in the open sky'.
- f. There were observable differences in the confidence, motivation, teaching methodology and techniques used between

classes delivered by Teacher Educators and untrained teachers.

- g. The training programme has been effective for English teachers of secondary schools in both urban and rural areas in Bihar. During the interview one of the Teacher Educators said that 'The training has brought huge difference in us as English teachers. We never knew there could be various ways of teaching a language which can be so effective'.

The British Council is like a guide who encourages the Teacher Educators to discover their potential and enhance their language skills as well as upgrade their English language classrooms. In a 2013 progress report, Connolly et al. mention that 98 per cent of Teacher Educators have found the BLISS programme to be of high quality. From 2012 to the present, the BLISS project has efficiently developed the confidence and language proficiency of Teacher Educators and teachers. Due to the impact of the BLISS project, the English language is no longer seen as an alien subject by students in class and they show their interest in learning English.

Suggestions given by Teacher Educators and course participants are summarised below.

- Teacher Educators and trainee teachers suggested that there should be a training programme for primary teachers too. Students' second language is often weak because of a poor foundation. To strengthen their root knowledge, they need to be taught effectively from the primary level. If the level of English on entering secondary school was stronger, they could be introduced to a higher level of language instead of starting from the very basic level.
- Regarding the training delivered to teachers, course participants want the training to be more than five days and twice a year, which will help them to improve their level of English skills.
- In situations where the size of class is very big and it is difficult to implement the innovative ideas taught by the British Council

during the training, Teacher Educators had solutions including implementing activities once a month in the open air. They also suggested weekly or monthly class rotations, where each student gets a chance to sit on the front bench so that they too can interact with the teacher.

- Auditory and visual aids always help in better learning. Teachers suggested some training in teaching techniques including the use of auditory and visual aids.

From all these findings and discussions, it can be concluded that the BLISS project and the training programme have improved the quality of the

teaching–learning process in the English language classroom. The government should conduct such training programmes at regular intervals for teachers so that their teaching skills can be developed and the impact can be observed in the form of effective teaching.

Scope of future research

The present study is the first attempt to study the impact of the BLISS project on the overall English language teaching scenario of Bihar. The research project will continue in the future to form a longitudinal study to measure the actual impact of the BLISS project. A similar study can be replicated in other districts of Bihar.

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Appendix 1: Structured interviewed schedule

Teacher's name	
School in which teaching	
Location of the school	
<p>1. Do you find the BLISS project beneficial for developing skills and methodology for teaching the English language?</p> <p>2. Have you noticed any differences in your attitudes or personality after participating in the BLISS training programme?</p> <p>3. Has the training programme brought about any changes in the teaching–learning process of English language teaching?</p> <p>4. What changes have you made to your teaching methodology and techniques after participating in the BLISS training programme?</p> <p>5. What methods do you frequently use in your English language classroom following participation in the BLISS training programme?</p> <p>6. Which activities do you use in your classroom? Which activities do students enjoy most?</p> <p>7. Name any lessons from the <i>Panorama</i> coursebook which you think the students find most difficult to understand.</p> <p>8. Name any lessons from the <i>Panorama</i> coursebook which you think the students find most interesting.</p> <p>9. Are the materials provided by the British Council for the training programme sufficient or do they need any improvements?</p> <p>10. Can any supplementary teaching material, such as a handbook for teachers or workbooks for students, be added to the syllabus to improve the teaching material of the English language at secondary level?</p> <p>11. Do you think Teacher Educators in the capital district have any extra advantages compared to Teacher Educators in other remote districts?</p> <p>12. Are the materials provided by the local authorities for DLT sufficient?</p> <p>13. What difficulties do you face while delivering DLT?</p> <p>14. Do you have any suggestions for improving the training programme for Teacher Educators and DLT?</p> <p>15. Should the BLISS project be continued in the state after 2017 to train Teacher Educators and teachers participating in DLT?</p>	

Appendix 2: Questionnaire for the teachers participating in courses

Your name:

Your age:

Name of your school:

Locality of your school: Urban Rural

1. Did you attend any training programme before the BLISS programme (DLT)?

Yes No

2. How beneficial have you found the District Level Training programme (DLT)? Please rate it on a scale of one to ten by circling the number in the scale.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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3. Describe any changes which you have found in your attitudes or personality following DLT:

4. Describe any changes in the way you teach following DLT:

5. Describe any challenges which you face as an English language teacher in your classroom:

6. Would you like to attend such training programmes regularly in your service period?

Yes No

7. Please give any suggestions you have to improve the quality of the training programme:

8. Suggest two areas on which you would like to focus on the next training programme:

9. Which of the following four skills do the students need more focus on in your classroom?

- Speaking
 Writing
 Reading
 Listening

10. How useful has the training programme been in helping you develop your teaching skills and techniques for teaching the English language? Please rate it on a scale of one to ten by circling the number in the scale.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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11. How confident do you feel about using English language in the classroom while teaching your students? Circle one option:

20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	More than 70%
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12. Do you have any suggestions for your Teacher Educators?

Appendix 3: Checklist for the classroom observation

Name of the Teacher Educator/ teacher: _____

Name of the school: _____

Total number of students: _____

Duration of the class taken: _____

Name of the lesson taught: _____

1. Skills focused on in teaching:

2. Starting the class (comments):

3. Use of warmer (comments):

4. Activities used during the teaching–learning process (comments):

5. Teacher talking time/student talking time (comments):

6. Involvement of the students in the lesson (comments):

7. Use of English by the Teacher Educator/ teacher (comments):

8. Organisation and management of the classroom (comments):

9. Areas for development (comments):

Appendix 4: Checklist for observation of DLT

Name of the district: _____

Name of the Teacher Educators: _____

Name of the DLT centre: _____

Total number of participants: _____

Session of the training programme observed: _____

Skill focused on during the training session: _____

1. Level of confidence shown by the Teacher Educator while delivering the training (comments):

2. Involvement of the participants in the training session (comments):

3. Use of English language for delivering the training (comments):

4. Use of training material by the Teacher Educator (comments):

5. Handling of the activities during the training session by the Teacher Educator (comments):

6. Behaviour of the Teacher Educator towards the participants (comments):

7. Level of classroom management of the training session by the Teacher Educator (comments):

8. Provision of scope for participants to share their views (comments):

9. Co-ordination and co-operation between the Teacher Educators (comments):

10. Support from the local authorities (making materials available to participants and Teacher Educators) (comments):

11. Area where the Teacher Educators are facing difficulties in delivering or co-ordination (comments):

12. Support from the British Council personnel for DLT (comments):

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