

English language teaching and beyond

Karuna Mastkar shares how the skills she gained from a British Council project in India have helped her excel in and outside the classroom.

In 2009, English teacher Karuna struggled to speak the language. Meanwhile, many of her secondary school students kept failing the subject despite their hard work. This left Karuna discouraged and unconfident.

Karuna applied to be a master trainer on the British Council's Developing English Teaching in Madhya Pradesh (EMPower) project. Within three years of applying her new skills, all her students were passing English. 'Plenty of exposure to English and microteaching sessions improved my English and trained me in student-centred techniques,' Karuna says.

After the training, Karuna changed her approach to teaching English. 'I can now engage 100 students using grouping and pairing. For example, I assign genres of writing among groups, e.g., essays, letters, applications. Each group researches their genre and presents via a chart to other groups.'


Karuna also changed how she gave feedback: 'I started using smileys in their notebooks. This made my students very happy and engaged.'

As a master trainer, Karuna passed on her new

skills to trainee teachers. It wasn't easy for Karuna to win over resistant trainees, but she was determined. 'I prepared well. This made me more confident and ensured a smooth delivery. I consistently linked training activities with classroom teaching. I made my sessions fun and learning packed. We all spoke in English. When the trainees realised this training was different and useful, things fell into place.'

In 2015, Karuna submitted a language game to a British Council competition and won the opportunity to attend a conference hosted by a local teacher association. This introduced Karuna to the wider field of English language teaching (ELT), giving her insight into curriculum design, mixed-ability classes and formative assessment. She now encourages her own students to participate in district and state competitions as a school leader.

Today, Karuna is responsible for curating and sharing resources with teachers through a state-owned app. Once an underconfident teacher, she has been named one of the top ten ELT specialists by the state of Madhya Pradesh.



'I am happy to know that I am able to inspire other teachers and make a difference.'

Karuna Mastkar, teacher, Government Higher Secondary School, Pagnispaga, Indore, India