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Effectiveness of Teacher Training Programs for the Secondary School English Teachers at Aligarh Muslim University: A Critical Analysis

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Abstract:

English language teaching is a process that requires great efforts on the part of the teachers and students. It requires teachers to be equipped with sufficient knowledge of various teaching methods and skills, which should be adapted according to the age, sex, background and attainment level of students. A teacher is the person who initiates all curriculum related activities, motivates students to participate and also helps them to use the newly acquired knowledge and skills in practical situations. The teaching of English at the Secondary level in India has always been a challenge for curriculum developers, subject experts and teachers.

So, for making the Secondary education system efficient, availability of effective English teachers is the prerequisite and therefore on the top priority of every educational institution, there is a provision for teachers' training and capacity building program. The purpose of these training programs is to equip them with latest content knowledge, modern methodologies, use of advanced technology and significant aspects of academic and administrative nature. The aim of the study is to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher training program (pre-service and in-service) attended by the English language teachers of the secondary level in AMU.

Keywords: Aligarh Muslim University, ELT, teacher training, pre-service, in-service, effectiveness, secondary education system.

1. Introduction

Today, we live in a globalized world in which English, as an international language, plays a vital role. Over the course of time, teaching English, as a foreign language, has gained considerable significance and has exerted itself as an educational field that it is worth researching within the general educational system.

Since the human life has been changed radically by the development of the technologies and the improvement of the knowledge, the need for qualified teachers

is felt even more than before. Thus, to keep up with these changes, teachers need to be trained continuously to become more efficient in their professions.

For the last two decades, there have been a lot of debates on the teachers' preparation and development. According to Lanier and Little (1986), teacher education as a field of study has not found its right place in the academy. In teacher education field, teacher educators play highly important roles; however, most of the time, they are not taken into account in the research conducted on their work. However, this situation has changed since the 1990s as university researchers, lawmakers, and policy analysts have paid increasing attention to what teacher educators do. From then on, teacher education has been recognized as an object of academic research.

According to Saban (2002), teachers can develop their qualifications and achieve professional identity through both pre-service and in-service training programs. It is obvious that the quality of education is influenced by the quality of teachers and their teaching. Teachers first gain an "entry-level proficiency" in teacher education institutions in pre-service training programs, and "command" is obtained after a wide understanding of teaching and acquiring skills based on practical experience in in-service training programs. Each teacher needs to pass in-service education and training (commonly abbreviated as INSET) courses for the initial professional training. In-service training courses are the major elements in solving the difficulties facing teachers' development (Day, 1999; Craft, 2000; Sugrue, 2001; Hammadou, 2004; Lee, 2007).

In order to furnish the prospective teachers with necessary teaching expertise and the development of professional tools and techniques, the teacher training programs must be carefully and conscientiously planned, organized and evaluated. Furthermore, for the enhancement of quality of education and career development, teacher training programs of professional teachers are essential whether pre-service or in-service (Rasul, 1992).

"In-service training" is a term used to describe a set of activities and requirements generally falling under the heading of 'professional development'. An in-service training program is a program intended to improve the performance of all personnel already holding assigned positions in a school setting or to implement a specified innovation or program (Sapp, 1996). It is a key factor in influencing the professional development of teachers and, thus, contributes to the improvement of their knowledge if teachers are actively involved in the process (Saiti and Saitis, 2006). Marsden (1991) discusses seven reasons for evaluating training programs: to authenticate the need of assessment tools and methods; to confirm or revise solution

options; to confirm or revise training strategies; to determine trainee/trainer reactions; to assess trainee acquisition of knowledge and attitudes; to assess trainee performance; and to determine if organizational goals are met. Hence, no matter which model is used for training teachers, it is essential that the effectiveness of the programs or courses be evaluated and assessed. Evaluation is conducted to judge the effectiveness of the programs in order to examine whether it is meeting its purposes, whether it is meeting the participants' need, and to make required changes and adjustments for the coming year.

2. Review of Literature

The insufficiency of teacher training has been touched upon by a number of scholars (Freeman and Johnson, 1998; McMorrow, 2007; Chiang, 2008; Clarke, 2009).

According to Chiang (2008), Theories of classroom management, lesson planning, and pre-packed teacher training cannot adequately prepare novice teachers. The teacher development programs should be designed to meet the needs of the teachers by providing them with opportunities in order to develop reflective teaching practices.

According to Freeman and Johnson (1998), one of the shortcomings of teacher education is that it ignores what teachers actually know and how what they know could influence what they do. Teacher education is, thus, more concerned with what teachers are required to know and the way they could be trained.

In a similar vein, McMorrow (2007) posits that a pre-packed and universal prescription does not take into account the contextual diversity and is inadequate in both content and process.

However, very few studies have been carried out into in-service programs. In effect, the current teacher training courses in India suffer from various shortcomings which make them potentially inadequate when it comes to equipping teachers with sufficient knowledge and expertise that is necessary for their career. Therefore, this study will be an attempt to explore teachers' perceptions of training programs in India, to see whether they are actually meeting the needs of the teachers and students.

3. Objectives:

1. To evaluate the existing practices used by the English teachers at the Secondary level.
2. To examine the competency level of English teachers at the Secondary level.

3. To find out the effectiveness of teacher training program attended by English language teachers.
4. To provide effective measures for the improvement of teaching English as a Second language.

4.Challenges of Teacher Training in India

In India, there are various challenges in the field of teachers' training. Most important of all is the shortage of a sufficient number of trainings for different areas like, curriculum development, teaching methodology, students' evaluation, classroom management, planning, and administration. Immediate in this aspect is the quality of the Teacher Training programs. The better a teacher is trained, the better he or she can educate tomorrow's generation of India. Additionally, teacher training puts the positive impact on teachers and students' subject knowledge. In this way, the information shared by the teachers to facilitate children improve their knowledge but help to stay in school, and decrease low scores and dropout rate. In India in general and the provinces of U.P in particular, numerous English language and other training programs were launched at national, provincial and district level, but unfortunately these attempts proved to be only partially successful and not to the satisfaction of stakeholders.

5.Methodology

Purpose and Design of the Study

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of English language training programs (pre-service and in-service) on the secondary school English teachers. The research was designed in qualitative paradigms, specifically making use of content analysis to gain insights into the perceptions of practicing language teachers. The population of the research study was comprised of the 20 teachers teaching English subject at the Secondary level in AMU, who had received the training through teacher training programs. This study was an evaluative study based on semi-structured interviews and observations. The researcher personally visited the institutions and observed the classes.

6.Findings

On the basis of the research study to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher training programs in English, the following findings were drawn:

- Majority of teacher training programs were not successful in professional skill development for the trained teachers.

- Majority of the teachers were having only pre-service training that is not sufficient for lifelong teaching.
- Learned skills were mostly not applied in the classroom and the same traditional practice was continued in the schools by the trained teachers also.
- There was no effective follow-up strategy to measure the performance of these trained teachers in the classrooms.
- It was observed that the English language played a very important role in understanding all the subjects and helped the students learn every subject effectively.
- There was no use of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methods.
- The focus was not on all the four skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing) of language, only reading and writing were given prominence.
- It was observed that teacher training programs were advantageous only for the teachers who personally wanted to get academic benefits from such programs otherwise many teachers came for the sake of remuneration.
- Training programs were launched to make teachers more skillful and objectives were set for the programs, the objectives were achieved to some extent in the programs but there was no implementation of those programs and there was no follow-up system to check whether the learned skills were being applied or not. Consequently, such programs failed in a practical way.
- Most of these teachers have little or no experience of in-service training, refresher courses.
- Those who have attended in-service program were confident and motivated. But they suggest, in-service programs should be subject specific.
- The findings also suggest that though the training is quite good but it needs to be developed more.

7. Conclusion, Recommendations, and Suggestions

This study was conducted to analyze the effectiveness of the teacher training programs conducted as per government's educational policies to provide quality education to the students through effective instructional methodologies, tools, and techniques, at secondary and higher secondary level. Teacher training is a part and parcel of a curriculum. It seems to be impossible to reach the goal of a curriculum without teacher training programs. These training programs aimed at building confidence, knowledge, self-grooming, and skills to teachers. Besides this, English subject was particularly focused on providing both the teachers and students more opportunities to understand content of English as well as four skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing). It was intended that the teachers become capable

of solving day to day problems of their students. Further training should be designed and arranged for the trainers to develop their language efficiency and knowledge regarding the contents of the training.

Indeed, measurement of effectiveness is considered a complex phenomenon. Findings of the study show that despite these training by a number of reputed organizations and allocating a major portion of the budget by the governments no major achievements are seen in the teaching-learning processes in educational institutions. Further, there was no effective follow-up strategy to measure the performance of these trained teachers in the classrooms.

The finding of this study also revealed that teachers used traditional methods for teaching English, and they had no adequate knowledge of current methodologies of teaching English . Furthermore, refresher programs should be conducted for updating the knowledge of these teachers on regular basis. These programs should be based on the needs and demands of the teachers and learners. In short, the appropriateness of these in-service training programs in the process of learning and teaching concerning the implementation of the new program content, and most importantly the evaluation and the critique of the program need to be explicitly addressed.

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