

An Audit of a Range of English Language Teacher Training and Adult Provision



One of the series of baseline studies undertaken for English in Action in 2008-2009

Introduction: Background and setting

- English in Action (EiA) aims to develop language learning and teaching over a 9-year period. It is funded by the UK Government's Department for International Development (DfID).
- The goal of EiA is to "contribute to the economic growth of Bangladesh by providing English language as a tool for better access to the world economy". The purpose of the project is to "increase significantly the number of people able to communicate in English, to levels that enable them to participate fully in economic and social activities and opportunities".
- The EIA project aims to achieve its goal and purpose by introducing innovative pedagogical practices in English language teaching and learning in Bangladesh through teacher training.
- This baseline study was undertaken in August 2008 to examine the existing provision of training for English language teachers in Bangladesh and for adult learners.
- The results will be used as a basis for developing new training materials and programmes for the EIA project.

How and where this study was carried out?

Several methods were used in carrying out this study. A workshop was held in Dhaka in August 2008 attended by representatives from various Bangladeshi NGOs and GOs involved in educational development activities. In addition, interviews were held with two Bangladeshi universities, the British Council, some English medium schools, and private English education providers.

Interviews were held with representatives from the British Council, public and private universities in Bangladesh, English coaching centres, garment industries, banks, hospitality industries, the Grameen telecommunication company and some Bangladeshi NGOs involved in educational development programmes.

Key Findings

“Training for English language teaching is not well developed”

- There are approximately 86,000 Primary schools in Bangladesh and the challenges are considerable because English is just one of the subjects that every Primary teacher is expected to teach.
- To date there has been no separate initiative for English language teacher training from the Government. However UNICEF funds the English subject-based training that is delivered through PEPD II.
- In the Secondary sector, there are a number of small initiatives exemplified by the Complementary Sector Reform Project (CSRP), which finished in mid-2008. The major Government initiative, the Teacher Quality Improvement (TQI) project, in operation since 2006, is targeting 28,000 teachers of English in all Secondary schools in Bangladesh. The BRAC Secondary EL teacher training programme, PACE, is working with 6,626 teachers of English. ELTIP was initiated in 1997 and continued to provide English language teacher training until mid-2008 when it's funding became restricted.

“Best practices in primary and secondary teacher training varied between organisations”

- Some organizations seemed to be further ahead in meeting 'best practice' standards for pedagogical practice, on-going support and monitoring and evaluation systems, than others. For example, BRAC and Plan Bangladesh in the Primary sector and TQI and CSRP in the Secondary sector appear to provide the most comprehensive training.
- Most organizations in the schooling sector were aware of contemporary preferred practices in relation to training i.e. student-centred, participatory, focused on building spoken communication competencies rather than just on reading and writing. Similarly, most appeared to be providing some kind of ongoing support and engaging in some level of monitoring and evaluation.
- In the Tertiary sector, the Bangladesh Open University provides both Primary (1,000-1,200 students) and Secondary (5,000 students) English language teacher training using self learning materials along with audio and video.

Key Findings

“The training provision in the teacher training colleges (TTCs) suffer from considerable weaknesses”

- There are 14 Government Teachers’ Training Colleges (TTCs) and 119 Private TTCs that are affiliated by the National University to teach the nationally approved MOE B.Ed. degree. However, because there is no moderation or evaluation of the content and mode of delivery of this degree across the private TTCs, the standard is very variable. Many private TTCs fall far short of providing the learning opportunities and development of competencies expected of graduates of the B.Ed.

“There are a plethora of universities, institutes and coaching centres providing teacher training outside the formal school setting, but communicative language teaching is largely absent”

- The 5 million students from 1,700 Colleges that fall within the jurisdiction of the National University are required to enroll for, and pass, a compulsory EL course focused on reading writing and grammar and delivered by lecture style mostly. Communicative English is not usually taught in these courses. Some of these organizations such as BIAM orient their training to communication English for particular vocations. British Council provides training for ministry staff, telecommunications, banks, IELTS, CELTA, business courses and so on.

“Private coaching centres are a growing business in Bangladesh, providing communicative language training”

- Coaching centers are an ever-growing industry in Bangladesh, advertised widely on billboards, newspapers and the Internet. Some focus specifically on IELTS but many are very flexible and will provide training for any purpose. Most of the providers described their methodology as very interactive, making use of a range of IT such as video, audio, MP3 players and in some cases, language labs. Their tutors appear to be highly qualified academically in EL.

“Corporate entities have their own provisions of vocation specific training programmes”

- In the Garment Industry much training is provided under the auspices of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA). One such institution is Bangladesh Institute of Fashion and Technology (BIFT). The major hospitality training provider is the GoB National Hospitality and Tourism Training Institute (NHTTI). People from widely diverse backgrounds and English language expertise, are trained here in all aspects of working in the hospitality industry.

Key Conclusions

A consistent concern expressed by most organizations was the poor level of communicative English among teachers and trainers. Their education and training has not emphasized spoken English, so they are very poor role models for the young people they teach. Even those who are well qualified academically are often poor at communicating in English.