

The UN Sustainable Development Goals and Teacher Development for Effective English Teaching in Bangladesh: A Gap that Needs Bridging

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Abstract

This article takes up the opportunity offered by the United Nations' *Strategic Development Goals* to examine provisions for the selection, recruitment, training and professional development of secondary English teachers in Bangladesh. Qualified and trained teachers are considered as essential to effect the changes in English teaching and learning planned in national education policy. Since the adoption of a communicative approach to language teaching, initiatives have been taken to train teachers to teach English in this approach, and particularly to use multimedia equipment in their teaching; however the adequacy of these provisions is questioned in existing research and in media debates. This article starts with a brief description of the education context, highlighting the global *Strategic Development Goals* and local secondary English teaching. A review of existing recruitment and professional development provisions for secondary English teachers follows. Then project-based training programmes, which are funded and managed by external donors and aid agencies, are critically examined. Finally emerging issues and recommended changes are discussed.

Keywords: sustainable development goals, teacher education, Bangladesh, teacher development, pre-service, project-based.

Introduction

Sustainability is a multi-faceted concept. In contemporary discourses (for instance Adams, 2006; James, Magee, Scerri, & Steger, 2015; Kates, 2010) it encompasses concern about the future of our planet and its natural resources, concern about the preservation of particular habitats and the life forms within them, preservation of the human race, and the preservation of the quality of life as it is currently experienced. The concept of sustainability also addresses the issue of whether initiatives and practices have the capacity for continuation. Overall sustainability is concerned with the future and with what needs to be done to ensure well-being in the future. It has become a broad-based concept

that is adopted by many educational organisations as a guiding principle for development. For instance, a recent university webpage (University of Canterbury, 2018), following the model of the 2005 World Summit on Social Development, announces the launch of its Sustainability Framework by defining sustainability “as development which consists of environmental sustainability, social sustainability, and economic sustainability.” Recent articles in this journal have focused on a multi-faceted range of educational topics relating to sustainability, including gender equity (Badjanova, Pipere, & Ilisko, 2017), urban sustainability (Mammadova, 2017), views of secondary school science teachers (Aldahmash, Alshmrani, & Almufti, 2017), entrepreneurial education (Vaicekauskaitė & Valackienė, 2018) and digital learning (Jirgensons & Kapienieks, 2018). This article adds discussion of teacher development in Bangladesh.

Increasingly discussion of sustainability is accompanied by realisation of global interdependence. The United Nations (2015) *Sustainable Development Goals* are an example of a global endorsement of the need for concerted commitment to preservation of peoples as well as of the planet, and it is noteworthy that the first two goals are the elimination of poverty and hunger. The so-called *developing* nations of the world are signatories who are committed to action on the attainment of the goals at the same time as they are the objects that the goals primarily address. They are called upon to achieve global standards at the same time as it is implicitly acknowledged that they have further to go and need to do so with limited resources. Such a predicament faces Bangladesh in its striving to improve its education system.

The *Sustainable Development Goals* provide an agenda for global educational change that is directed towards achieving the three interrelated dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental (United Nations, 2015). Bangladesh is a signatory to the agenda and it is challenged to achieve global future-focused goals at the same time as it plays *catch-up* with providing teachers and infrastructures to its population of 170 million. The situation has embedded difficulties.

The General Assembly of the United Nations made the following commitment:

We commit to providing inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels – early childhood, primary, secondary, tertiary, technical and vocational training. All people, irrespective of sex, age, race or ethnicity, and persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous peoples, children and youth, especially those in vulnerable situations, should have access to life-long learning opportunities that help them to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to exploit opportunities and to participate fully in society. We will strive to provide children and youth with a nurturing environment for the full realization of their rights and capabilities, helping our countries to reap the demographic dividend, including through safe schools and cohesive communities and families. (United Nations, 2015; Clause 25)

The declaration is an explicitly challenging one with the overarching aim “to free the human race from the tyranny of poverty and want and to heal and secure our planet” (ibid). The fourth of the seventeen goals centres on education with the mandate to “ensure inclusive and quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (United Nations, 2015). The 2018 U.N. report on the progress of Goal 4 states that a lack of trained teachers is one of the key factors that is “jeopardizing prospects for quality education for all (United Nation, 2018).”

This article examines the state of and the challenges facing teacher development within Bangladesh's overall project of educational improvement. It focuses on one particular area of Bangladesh's current education policy and curriculum: the teaching of English to all students from school-entry level, and examines the effectiveness of current processes of teacher development for this purpose. The teaching of English may be seen to be aligned with Targets 4.1, (ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes), 4.4 (substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship) and 4.7 (ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote... a culture of [among others]... global citizenship...). The degree to which the learning of English language is required to achieve these targets and the overall goal of quality education is open to contestation. What is important is that government policy has strategically linked English language to economic development and to the ability to contribute and compete in the global area and so made English compulsory throughout schooling. Since it is compulsory, then quality teachers of English are needed. If it is badly taught, not only will it fail to achieve the goal of contributing to personal, social and national development: it will contribute to a sense of failure and inadequacy. Other researchers have also examined the importance to education for sustainable development of effective teaching of second languages. For example, Mehrparvar and Karimnia (2018) claim that the learning of a second language fosters ability to function in different socio-cultural contexts and to communicate effectively and creatively in such contexts, and Sundh (2016) argues that since English has become the lingua franca in international relations, competence in the language is necessary for young learners.

First, this article traces the contextual and historic background in which English language teaching and teacher recruitment take place in Bangladesh. Then it reports and discusses aspects of a research project (Al Amin, 2017) investigating the overall conditions of English language teaching. Finally, in keeping with the United Nations Strategic Development Goals, it discusses strategic priorities for teacher training and professional development and makes a number of recommendations. Although the article focuses on the preparation and development of teachers who will teach the English language, many of the problems examined apply more generally to teacher education in Bangladesh.

Historic Context

Bangladesh emerged as a nation in 1971, following several hundred years of colonising occupation, first by the British and then by Pakistan (Islam, 2007). These years of colonisation played a significant part in making Bangladesh a 'developing' country. They also promoted the role of the English language and shaped the development of public education and of systems for teacher training.

Throughout the British empire English was the language of power and therefore dominated public service and public education. By the time Britain withdrew, English was well established as a widespread second language. British systems of education were also well established. After the partition of India, despite nationalist protests in the newly formed independent countries, English remained important because of its growing importance in print and electronic media and in international communication and trade

(Crystal, 2004). Within the somewhat artificially forged union of West and East Pakistan English was by default the easiest means of communication (Hamid, 2009). The rich would send their children to English-medium schools and English was the medium of higher education. Despite intermittent efforts to discourage English in favour of the national language, Bangla (Hossain & Tollefson, 2007), the imperatives of international trade and the dominance of English language in academic and economic dealings (Crystal, 2004) have led English to become a compulsory subject from Class I (Hamid & Baldauf, 2008).

Current Context

After a period of struggle to develop a formal education policy, in 2010 the government of Bangladesh legislated an Education Policy designed to provide access to education to all its citizens and a curriculum that called for the development of life and social skills as well as equipping them with skills needs to compete in the global community (Bangladesh Ministry of Education, 2010). Competency in English is emphasised as one of these skills.

The Bangladesh education system is a centralised education system administered by various wings of the government. In the year 2015 there were 9,743,072 students enrolled in primary schools, 9,540,102 students enrolled in secondary schools and 3,678,869 students enrolled at college level (BANBEIS, 2015). The project of supporting the learning of such a large number of students is a daunting task for a developing country and is accentuated by poverty, unemployment, lack of infrastructures and recurring natural calamities such as flooding and land erosion.

Nevertheless, education is seen as primary means to effect national development, and this view is reinforced by the United Nations' emphasis on education as a key strategic development goal. A number of initiatives have been taken including increasing budget for education, increasing infrastructural facilities, undertaking projects to train teachers, offering free education up until class twelve and offering stipends to keep young people at school instead of working as cheap labour. As will be further discussed later, many of these initiatives have been undertaken with the support of international loans and have involved international consultants.

There have been specific initiatives to improve secondary English education, and one the major initiatives has been the adoption of a curriculum based on a communicative approach to language learning. Nevertheless, there is repeated criticism in research findings of the quality of English language teaching in Bangladesh secondary schools and of the lack of communicative competency in school leavers who have not attended specialist English-medium schools (Ali & Walker, 2014; Choudhury, 2010; Hamid & Baldauf, 2008; Maniruzzaman & Hoque, 2010; Rasheed, 2017).

Currently there is no systemic process of pre-service teacher training or of teacher selection, although there are plans for the formation of a national teacher accreditation council that will oversee the quality of teacher education. To a large extent becoming a teacher in the existing context is a default position. There is only one selection process for public service and that is initially on the basis of a national examination. Those whose scores are not high enough to gain Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) jobs are often recommended for employment as government high school teachers (Ahmed, 2017).

None specifically applied to become a teacher, and most would see it as a second rate job. Nevertheless because of the scarcity of jobs in Bangladesh they would begin teaching and many would again compete for the BCS examination, hoping to get a higher score and leave teaching. Teachers in non-government schools are appointed by the head teacher in conjunction with the School Management Committee although there are government guidelines and requirements to finalise such appointments. It is expected that a teacher has a subject degree, but probably not a qualification in education. For the most part teacher training in government and non-government schools takes place after teachers have been appointed to a school, largely through short courses.

Methodology

Research Methodology

The discussion in this article draws on data from a survey of 216 teachers, interviews with teachers, teacher educators, students and parents, and collation of a range of government and other official reports. The survey examined teachers' understandings of curriculum expectations, their actual practice and the factors that influenced their practice. Following analysis of the data from the survey a further qualitative component to the research was developed. This consisted of open-ended interviews, collated through a snowball approach (Bryman, 2015) with students (n-42), teachers (n-35), teacher trainers (n-12), principals (n-4), parents (n-12), and other related professionals (n-15), observation of practice and content analysis of various official documents, statistical records and media accounts.

In most cases the interviews took place over several sessions and were audio-recorded. However significant information sometimes emerged while talking to participants informally on the way to the school or in their home or while over a cup of tea at a nearby tea-stall. In that case there was follow-up over the phone and notes were taken manually. In all cases participants were asked to give their informed consent according to the requirements of our university's ethics committee.

Research Participants

All the 216 participants of the survey were English teachers within the secondary schools when they took part in the survey. Participants were selected from both non-government and government high school. A majority of participants were attending 28 days in-service training on communicative language teaching in their various neighbouring teacher training colleges.

In the qualitative component, the 42 students included secondary students, undergraduate university students, graduates and several school 'drop-outs'. The 35 teachers were predominantly secondary school English teachers, but also included several head teachers and several Madrasha¹ teachers, and several teachers of other subjects who taught English in private tuition. The 12 teacher trainers were all from government Teachers Training Colleges. The 12 parents were all actively engaged in providing English tuition for their children. Other participants were from a range of professions that required competency in the English language.

All names were used as pseudonyms.

Research Results

The survey revealed a significant gap between the participating teachers' understanding of the expectations of the curriculum and their actual practice. For example, there was a predominantly negative response to the suggestion that an effective English teacher "is someone who teaches only what will be important for the final exam", but at the same time most of the respondents felt pressure from principals, students and parents to teach in ways that would matched the examination format. Respondents also identified a number of barriers to effective English teaching, including lack of trained teachers and lack of understanding of the principals of communicative language teaching, failure to use the mandated textbook, overreliance on commercial guide books and teachers' practice of pressuring students to come for private tuition, teachers' low salary, high student numbers, lack of facilities, fear of English, family poverty, absenteeism, and lack of English environment in and outside school.

The qualitative component yielded a rich array of narratives of personal experiences of graduates, parents, students, teachers, and teacher educators respectively, as well as a compilation of accounts from media and official records about the need for competency in English, the impact of examinations, the training of teachers, the differences between rural and urban contexts and the power of global influences. Collectively these led to a "mapping" of the field of English teaching that is reported in Al Amin (2017).

In the pages that follow there are details of the findings which concern opportunities for pre-service and in-service teacher training, selection, recruitment and empowerment of teachers.

Pathways to Become a Secondary English Teacher in Bangladesh

The minimum qualification required to become a secondary school teacher in Bangladesh is to pass a three-year Bachelor degree. Those who have some English in their degree are eligible to teach English at the secondary level, as well those who have majored in English.

For a B.A. (pass) course students may study a mixture of prose, poetry, and grammar. Students' reading, writing and grammatical knowledge are assessed through a final examination, but there is no provision for assessing students' oral or listening skills. Majority of the public and private universities in Bangladesh offer a four years B.A. (Hons) programme in English and one year M.A. in English. Studying English in a reputed public university in Bangladesh is very competitive and places are in high demand, and graduates can, and do, apply for many other jobs as well as for teaching.

Institutes of Education and Research of several government universities, such as Dhaka University, Chittagong University, Rajshahi University, offer a four-year Bachelor in Education degree, and the government Teachers Training Colleges (TTCs) have recently started a four year Bachelor in Education degree under the National University. These courses focus in education in general and teaching and learning but again graduates of these courses can, and do, apply for many other jobs. Many of these institutions, especially the TTCs, also offer a one year Bachelor in Education (B.Ed), mainly for in-service teachers.

As stated above, teachers for government secondary schools are recruited through the government administered central examination. For non-government high schools

there is no recruitment examination at the national level. However, now there is a requirement for prospective teachers to pass the Non-Government Teachers' Registration and Certification Authority's (NTRCA) examination (Non-Government Teachers' Registration and Certification Authority, 2017) prior to recruitment by the school. It is only after joining a school that a teacher needs to complete a one year B.Ed programme from one of the teacher training colleges. For many teachers opportunity to meet this requirement does not occur for considerable time, and some miss out altogether. A significant number of teachers start teaching English without having any professional training. Sometimes teachers of other subjects teach English due to the shortage of English teachers in secondary schools.

In-service Training and its (in)Adequacy

Given that the majority of secondary school teachers in Bangladesh start their teaching career without any teaching qualification or training, in-service training and development assumes great importance.

BANBEIS data showed that 68.8% of secondary teachers were trained in some kind of training including B.Ed, Dip. Ed or M.Ed (BANBEIS, 2015). However, the BANBEIS (2015) data also revealed that 52% of secondary English teachers had only one course of English in their undergraduate level degree, 23% of teachers who were teaching English did not study English at all at undergraduate level and 4% of teachers only had a higher secondary qualification. These statistics show that a high percentage of English teachers started their teaching career without a sound background in either education or their subject field.

In-service training for the secondary teachers in Bangladesh can be divided into two main categories: training programmes that are ongoing and financed by the Bangladesh government (mainly provided by the TTCs and the National Academy for Education Management), and partnership-funded project-based short training courses. The duration of these courses ranges from several days to one month. Project-based training courses are mainly financed by developed countries or by financial institutions like the World Bank or the Asian Development Bank (ADB) as a combination of grant and loan.

Since the adoption of the CLT approach the Bangladesh government has initiated many externally funded projects to improve the learning and teaching of English, including the Teaching Quality Improvement (TQI) project which aimed to train 28,000 English teacher (English in Action, 2009), the English Language Teaching Improvement Project (ELTIP) (Farooqui, 2010), and the English in Action (EIA) project which is a jointly funded project by the Department of Foreign Investment of the UK (DFID) and the Bangladesh government. The National Curriculum and Textbook Boards (NCTB), and the National Academy of Educational Management (NAEM) also arrange a range of training courses.

In addition, training courses for English teachers are offered by some universities, such as Dhaka University and Chittagong University, and BRAC, as well as all teacher training colleges.

Contrasting Practice in Developed Counties

In most developed countries a person needs to graduate from an accredited teacher training provider and then is required to be registered as a teacher before starting their teaching career. In New Zealand, for example, graduation from an approved initial teacher education provider is required in order to become a primary, secondary or early childhood teacher. Provisional teacher registration follows and only after a period of teaching and fulfilling other required criteria can a teacher receive full registration. Teachers need to regularly renew their registration (Education Council, New Zealand).

Sahlberg (2010) relates Finland's position as a leading OECD country in educational achievement to its excellent teacher education system. Teaching there is a highly sought profession. Only the best and the brightest students get a chance to become a teacher. Teacher education programmes are designed so that a teacher can acquire sound theoretical and professional knowledge even before starting a teaching career. All school teachers in Finland are offered systematic professional development.

Some developing countries also put strong emphasis on teacher education. Malaysia, for example, mandated that all teachers in the secondary level need to have a bachelor's degree in education. Candidates for the pre-service teacher training programme undergo a rigorous selection process and only those who met the entry criteria and have strong desire to become a teacher are selected for the pre-service teacher education programme (Mokshein, Ahmad, & Vongalis-Macrow, 2009).

Wei, Darling-Hammond & Adamson (2010) stated that short term, workshop-based teacher training courses are unlikely to bring about changes in teachers' professional development and in students' outcomes, and they argued that it required long term and sustained investment of time and money into teachers' education to see positive outcomes in terms of teachers' professional development. Broad and Evan (2006) expressed a similar view, stating that effective professional development programmes are those that are sustained, on-going and in-depth, whereas short term, *one-shot* programmes are ineffective to bring about changes in teachers' practices.

Project Based Teachers' Training in Bangladesh

Since the adoption of the CLT approach several projects have been undertaken that targeted English teachers' training.

The English Language Teaching Improvement Project (ELTIP) started in 1997, funded jointly by the British government and the Bangladesh government. The British Council and National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) jointly managed the programme. The aim was to train teachers in communicative language teaching, enabling them to use the NCTB textbooks, *English for Today*, and enhancing their language skills and professional development (Farooqui, 2008). In the first phase 5,000 teachers were trained, four regional resource centres were established. 27 master trainers were trained in the United Kingdom at that time. When the funding for the project ended in 2002, the Bangladesh government decided to continue with the project and a second phase of the project run from 2002–2005, with a total of 17,328 teachers trained. A third phase of the project ran from 2005 to 2009. In the ELTIP project a total of 35,000 teachers were trained. Despite these numbers the succession of projects encountered considerable criticism by various researchers (Ali & Walker, 2014; Hamid, 2010;

Hamid & Baldauf, 2008; Sarker, 2004; Seargeant & Earling, 2011) who questioned the efficacy of the training and judged that ELTIP failed to make its intended impact on students' ability to use English communicatively.

The Teaching Quality Improvement project (TQI) is jointly funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). One goal of the project is to provide training to teachers of various subjects. A second phase of the project spans from 2012 to 2018. Under this project teacher training courses were arranged in various centres including teacher training colleges. For the English teachers four-week continuing professional development courses were arranged, focusing mainly on communicative language teaching. Teachers were trained in principles of communicative language teaching and how to use the prescribed textbooks, *English for Today*, in the classroom.

According to its mission statement, the aim of English in Action (EIA) was to enable "25 million Bangladeshi adults and school children to improve their English language skills that will help them access better economic and social opportunities" (EIA, 2010). This project is funded jointly by the DFID of the British government and the Bangladesh government. A nine-year project was implemented with the help of various partners such as BMB Mott MacDonald, BBC Media Action, the Open University, UK and two national NGOs. EIA developed materials following the content of the NCTB textbooks. These include interactive audio lessons to use in class, posters and video clips. There are teachers' guides and audio and video resources for teachers' professional development.

Many English teachers have received training in using ICT in their teaching under the various projects. The initial target for supporting schools with technological equipment is that there would be at least one multimedia classroom in every school, in the second phase there would three to five multimedia classrooms in every school, and in the third phase computer and language labs would be established in every school (Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 2012).

With the help of the Asian Development Bank the government is implementing a policy called *Digital Bangladesh* which is monitored from the Prime Minister's Office through a programme called *Access to Information A2I*. The government of Bangladesh is gradually providing equipment like computer projectors and internet modems to schools, arranging training for the teachers in the teacher training colleges, and developing a digital textbook which any one can download free. One of the key aims is to train teachers so that they become proficient in using technology in the class and improve their pedagogical knowledge of teaching using technology. There are initiatives to develop master trainers for ICT. Under the TQI project ICT is one of the key areas where teachers are given training to use multimedia in their classroom.

Criticisms in Published Research of Funded Projects

There are numerous criticisms of various aspects of the various externally funded projects, identifying waste of resources and lack of suitably qualified trainers. A strong criticism is that every project appears to want to start from scratch. EIA was started with similar goals to that of the previous ELTIP project and both projects were primarily funded by the same donor. However, instead of building on from the previous project, EIA started from the scratch, beginning with several baseline surveys. Hamid (2010) criticised the lack of co-ordination between these projects:

Moreover, each of the projects developed its own training infrastructure and resources which remain underused or unused at the end of the project. Thus, the cycle repeats itself as projects come and go in one of the poorest countries of the world (p. 304).

Further criticism is about the quality of trainers. In some instances the project, such as ELTIP phase I, starts with building training rooms in various locations and recruiting trainers for the duration of the projects. Once the project is over, the trainers become jobless. Sometimes teachers were employed to work as guest trainers in addition to their main job. Hunter (2009) commented that experienced teachers are not likely to leave their permanent fulltime jobs to work in short projects. He reported that fresh graduates are more likely to become trainers. He questioned the commitment of experienced teachers who became guest trainers in addition to their permanent jobs. Some projects do not have their own resources, so they are implementing thorough various training providers like teacher training colleges. As a result it is often noted that the regular programmes of those colleges are compromised.

Not only the means of training but also the content of the training has been questioned. Alam (2018) claims that the country is still struggling to see any apparent benefit from introduction of communicative language teaching and question the English attainment of students after the completion of higher secondary school. A Professor of Dhaka University further questioned the appropriateness of CLT in Bangladesh, citing the overwhelming number of students failing to get a pass mark in the undergraduate admission test (Habib & Chakraborty, 2014).

In Bangladesh there are commonly circulated reports of teachers who have been teaching English for a long time and had no chance to attend any training. On the other hand there are teachers who have attended the same training in different locations. Field observations in the current research identified instances of lack of monitoring and lack of coordination in implementing project-based training. For example, some participants were met at one of the teachers' training colleges where they were attending a three weeks continuous professional development course on communicative language teaching under the TQI project and the following month three of the same participants were encountered at another government funded training programme on communicative language teaching.

Loan and Aid Based English Teaching Development Projects – Who Benefits?

Loan and aid agencies can be identified as key stakeholders in English language teaching in Bangladesh. The majority of the ELT initiatives in Bangladesh are fully or partially funded either as a loan or as aid by various organisations and countries (Hamid, 2010; Earling, Hamid, & Seargeant, 2013).

In these projects consultants are employed from first world countries and particularly from the country involved in financing the initiative. In the two major English teaching project ELTIP and EIA the consultants were mainly from the United Kingdom. Bangladesh experts have also been involved but to a limited capacity, and the key decisions are made by the foreign consultant. There is an underlying presumption that Bangladesh lacks the expertise as well as funding to carry out the project. A question that arises: can

the use of short term foreign experts develop local Bangladeshi expertise unless there are clear plans for capacity development of local teams?

It may be argued that the foreign consultants add to their project portfolios and their research outputs and the capacity of Bangladeshi institutions remains underdeveloped. Thus when the term of a loan is finished Bangladesh has to look for another loan or further aid to continue the initiative. As an example, when the ELTIP finished, the EIA started with the same concept and both of them were primarily funded by the British government. When TQI-I finished Bangladesh had to seek another loan for the TQI-II project with a new international consultancy team. The pay differential between local and international consultants is a source of concern and criticism. A teacher trainer, interviewed in this study, commented:

The loan providers often categorise consultants as national consultant and international consultant for various development projects in Bangladesh. If a consultant is employed from outside the country, then he or she gets a large amount of money and other facilities regardless of their expertise. On the other hand a national consultant does not get much money, even if he or she has much experience and expertise.

There are doubtless market force reasons for the difference in payments. However, the complaint indicates that the expertise of the foreign consultants is not always visible to the local teacher trainers and that the loan money seems to be pouring back to developed countries.

A participant who works closely with educational development projects in Bangladesh, commented that often loans were granted with a condition that training needed to be hosted in the intuitions of the country providing the loan, again raising the question of whose interests were best served by the loan.

There is international research that suggests that aid for improving education in developing countries often acts against country's development. Heyneman (2006) argued that educational aid for developing countries, instead of strengthening their local institutions limited their capacity. Shamim (2011) found that project-based English language training schemes are not often sustainable. She cited the example of a donor funded English language teaching project in Pakistan and stated that although the success of the development project was reported, it was not sustained for long. The project built a centre at a university and once the project was over the centre became ineffective. She attributed two reasons for that ineffectiveness. First the project was undertaken outside the ministry's regular financial procedures and once the project funding was over there was no means to continue. The second reason was that since it was an external project it did not have adequate infrastructure.

Heynman's claim and Shamim's observations are to some extent reflected in the donor or loan based educational development projects in Bangladesh. Donor or loan based educational projects sometimes build their own training teams and sometimes turn to various teacher training colleges. In interviews several teacher trainers highlighted how project-based training projects hamper teacher training colleges' regular programmes. As some of these projects conducted as part of the Bangladesh government's projects, teacher training colleges as government institutions are obliged to run the training sessions. They also provide opportunity for teacher trainers to earn extra money on top

of their regular salary. Thus, trainers in many cases are eager to teach in those courses. One experienced teacher trainer commented:

Many of the teachers in the teachers' training colleges somehow just manage their regular teaching for B.ED, M.Ed or honours course and sometimes ask other colleagues to cover if needed. Then they involve themselves in short training courses as from these trainings they get extra money – depending on the number of classes they take. Some teachers think that their regular salary is their right and they will get it anyway at the end of the month and they work hard for the short courses for extra money.

She added:

When June (the last month of the financial year) approaches various organisations come to the teacher training colleges and request them to run their trainings as they want to spend their allocated budget. Teacher training colleges often run TQI, SEQAEP, LSB, Disaster Management's courses simultaneously.

Due to the shortage of teacher trainers sometimes it is seen that one teacher trainer is the master trainer of several courses. However, these projects want teacher training colleges to run their courses as ability to spend the allocated money is considered as the mark of a successful project and inability to spend money is considered as ineffective project management.

Teacher training colleges were established to provide degrees and professional development courses for teachers. It may be argued that these institutions should be the providers of pre-service and in-service teachers' education as well and that they can rightfully be partners to international projects. However, the current situation does not have enough infrastructural monitoring processes to assure quality.

Participants' Perceived Benefits of Short Training Courses

Despite various criticisms, many participants reported a positive effect of short course training. They spoke appreciatively of the opportunity to learn and try out new teaching strategies and of the benefits of developing collaborative relationships with colleagues.

For example, one participant stated:

I have learned about communicative language teaching in the training. For example, before attending the training I had no idea what was group work, pair work, mind mapping, pre-reading and post-reading activities and what is the importance of different materials in teaching. Since I attended the training I feel the urgency of learning.

Another teacher talked about the benefit of simulation classes:

The most beneficial thing is the simulation classes where we get the chance to demonstrate in front of other teachers what we have learned and how to do different kinds of interactive activities; how to engage students in the lesson and how to use the textbook "English for Today".

A headmaster and English teacher described his experience after attending two trainings, one in communicative language training and another one related to ICT:

I made changes in my teaching after attending in the training. Now I like to make my class friendly. After the trainings I feel that it is very essential for teachers to use interactive activities in the class.

Another teacher also described his training positively:

It's the first time I have got a chance to attend in any training and it opens a lot of avenues for me. It offers something different from what I knew about teaching.

The above comments indicate that participants were introduced to some new concepts and teaching strategies in the training. There are teachers in the secondary schools in Bangladesh who teach English but have very little knowledge about the communicative approach to language teaching and who are not familiar with other classroom activities than giving lectures (Choudhury, 2010). For them these courses seem to provide an introduction to communicative language teaching which they may explore further.

Perceived Problems Associated with Short Training Courses

Problems in the short training courses were also identified. One of the observed problems was that some course attendees lacked sufficient English language competency to participate in the course. Selina was one of the participating teachers of a short training program arranged in a teachers' training college. Selina was attentive but very quiet in the training session. In that session there were teachers who had graduated from various public universities of Bangladesh and were teaching at prestigious schools in the city. Selina was a teacher of a village school, and she explained that she was attending because someone from her school had to attend the government provided training. She was not an English teacher but she taught some English at her school. Throughout the training session she sat and listened without asking any question and without participation in the discussion. The trainer sometimes asked her opinion, but as the training was conducted in English it seemed she did not understand what the trainer was asking. She would remain silent and the trainer seemed to realise that he could not spend too much time with her. He was unwilling to use participants' first language as one of the key messages of the training programme was to encourage participants to use English only in class. Selina was not willing to demonstrate a simulation class. As attendance is the only requirement, there is no pass or fail in courses such as these. Therefore the question arises about how much benefit teachers like Selina get from attending this kind of training course. It seems that there is need for very different courses for teachers who have not yet developed strong English language competency.

Training courses are largely centralised in city sites. Teachers who come far from the city and need to find accommodation struggle to attend. There is sometimes opportunity to stay in a college hostel, but there are few such facilities. One female participant described how hard it was for her to find accommodation to attend one month training in the city away from her village where she worked:

It is very difficult to find temporary accommodation in the city in Bangladesh and especially for woman it is almost impossible to find a suitable accommodation. Besides for someone like me who is not familiar with the city it is very difficult to live in the crowded city life.

Another teacher, who asked for strict anonymity, reported his conversation with colleagues at his course and highlighted a lack of interest in changing practice:

My colleague commented: 'I have no interest in the training. I have to come as it was mandatory and the school authority and administration asked me to go for the training. I am attending and getting training allowances. After teaching so many years now I have nothing to learn. I cannot change anything in my teaching'.

Jitendranath Roy, an experienced English teacher and an examiner of the S.S.C examination, also expressed his dissatisfaction with the existing training courses in some institutions:

There are some institutions and some private universities that offer teacher training like the B.Ed and the quality of these training courses is very poor. In my school I have seen a teacher who has completed B.Ed from such an institution and it seems to me that he has learned nothing. He was hardly attending any classes – maybe once in a week or even less – and after a while he got a degree. In my opinion the government should not recognise that kind of qualification.

Moreover, participants highlighted that *load shedding*, cut-off of the electricity supply, is very common throughout Bangladesh and in the village areas the problem is especially severe. When there is a power cut during the class the use of ICT becomes impractical as there is no backup to continue the class.

Lack of security for ICT equipment and absence of technology support are other concerns in many schools. Teachers are consequently afraid of using ICT equipment in their teaching; they fear that if something goes wrong they may be responsible for the repair.

Participants also stated that the duration of classes is not suitable for use of multi-media. In many schools the equipment is set up in one room. Time is wasted from the 45 minute class in moving either students or equipment and then packing up again. Participants also complained that although the government had created a pyramid system whereby one teacher was trained in ICT from each school and they were expected to arrange training in the school for the other teachers, many teachers did not want to disseminate what they had learnt in the training.

Emerging Issues

This project gave detailed illustration of claims made in the literature that English teachers come into school with inadequate skills in using English and in teaching it (Chowdhury & Le Ha, 2008; Hamid, 2010; Hasan, 2013; Islam, 2015). Pre-service training does not occur and in-service training is inadequate. Key features of the shortcomings are summarised in the figure below.

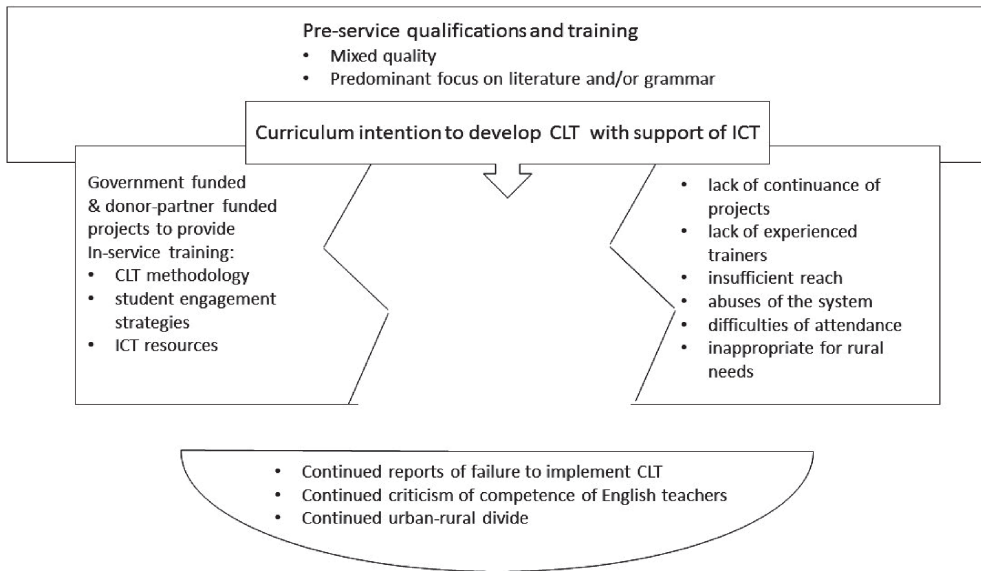


Figure 1. Intentions and limitations of training courses

Teachers enter the profession after the completion of generic qualifications that are not designed to train teachers. The credibility of teacher recruitment through a public service examination is questionable. Processes of selection need to be developed that allow a assessment of character motivation and professional aptitude.

As detailed above, short courses for improving English teachers' effectiveness have been developed, with course design coming from a succession of international institutions and funding provided by international funding agencies as well as the government of Bangladesh. These courses predominantly focus on pedagogical approaches that would enable teachers to develop a more student-centred classroom environment and to use the government textbook, *English for Today*, in ways that are compatible with a communicative approach to language teaching. A further aim of many courses is to introduce teachers to the possibilities of using ICT resources to support their teaching of English.

Participants in this study identified a number of shortcomings in the existing systems of short course professional training. Two overarching problems were the absence of sustainability in the funded projects and the lack of experienced and language proficient trainers. They also pointed out that, despite stated funding and policy aims, the projects have not yet had the capacity to involve a majority of English teachers. Participants reported their perception that there were abuses of the system in that many part-time trainers were insufficiently committed to the project and that some trainees came only because they were forced by their management committees or because they wanted to take the monetary gain of the training allowance. They further pointed out that because courses were centrally located, rural teachers, especially women, experienced difficulty in finding accommodation and leaving their families.

There were many concerns about the appropriateness of the training courses for the needs of rural teachers and their schools. Many rural teachers do not have enough English language competence to participate in, or even understand, the courses. Further, those who do understand are not provided with strategies to change the culture of their

communities and schools, and do not have the resources to utilise the ICT training they have been given. Even city teachers reported that they found it hard to change their practice in view of the dominance of the examination system and the consequent reliance on guide books.

Despite successive training projects, popular opinion and published research (Alam, 2018; Ali & Walker, 2014; Rahman & Pandian, 2018; Rahman, Pandian, & Kaur, 2018) suggest that a CLT approach has not been implemented to any significant extent in Bangladesh and that too many teachers of English lack basic language and pedagogical competencies. The participants' comments also point to an enduring urban-rural divide. It is questionable whether short-term project-based teacher training can bring the desired changes. This confirms findings from earlier Bangladesh research (Hamid, 2010). Sound pre-service programmes are needed to ensure teachers are equipped with sound knowledge before they are appointed to schools.

The survey results, further detailed in Al Amin (2017), also indicate that, while many of the participating teachers largely understood and appreciated what they learned with their courses, they did not implement their understandings into their practice.

While many of the participants interviewed perceived some benefits in the short training programmes, it is highly questionable whether there is enough time and opportunity in these courses for teachers who are not at all familiar with the communicative language teaching to learn different types of communicative classroom activities and use them successfully in their classes. Examinations play a decisive role in determining teaching and learning in Bangladesh and teachers focus on the high stake examinations which reward rote learning (Al Amin & Greenwood, 2018). So there is need for training that addresses how teachers can help students develop their communicative skills and at the same time prepare for the examination.

It might be asked whether better results could be obtained if there are opportunities for teachers in the field to collaborate with other teachers. For example, teachers and students from the rural schools could go to the prestigious city schools to see how the teachers in those schools teach. Similarly teachers of the city schools could come to the rural schools and teach there for a short period of time so that rural teachers can learn from them. One of the aims of the British Council's *Connecting Classrooms* project, in which some schools in Bangladesh are taking part, is to create collaboration between teachers and students from different countries and, following a similar model, collaboration between urban and rural schools might bring positive results in teachers' professional development. Research from other developing countries has explored pathways for effective training of teachers who did not receive pre-service training. For example, Alkhawaldah (2018) in a Jordanian study argues that school-based training allows teachers to collaborative learn from each other. A Bangladesh study (Alam, 2016) had similar findings.

Even more fundamentally, rather than relying on project-based and foreign consultant led short term training courses, Bangladesh needs to strengthen its own teacher training capacity through local institutions. Once funding has finished, projects end. They are not sustainable. Bangladesh needs to develop its own quality assured initial teacher training and its own system of continuing professional development. Long term policy, implementation, planning, and development of expert trainers are essential elements if Bangladesh is to see any real progression in education generally, and in English teaching in particular.

There are other challenges in education: teacher-student ratios, teaching loads, salary levels, resources and infrastructures. However, it is essential to ensure that teachers are enabled to become motivated to develop themselves professionally. At present there is no provision for monitoring and mentoring teachers' professional development, and high stake examination results are the only yardstick by which teachers, students and schools are judged.

Conclusion

Sustainable Development Goal 4 calls for its signatory nations to *ensure* inclusive and equitable *quality* education. Policy decisions and curriculum can affirm commitment to the goal and lay the foundations for education change, but in themselves they cannot provide the teaching. Teachers are the ones who have the potential power to translate policy and curriculum into opportunities for learning. In Bangladesh, in the case of English language teaching, there is clearly articulated policy and a free textbook supported curriculum. However, it is the shortage of quality teachers that has been repeatedly critiqued. The development of quality teachers requires a sound system of teacher preparation and continuing teacher development. This article has identified that training currently takes place through a mix and match of courses of varying length, provided at widely varying career stages, by a wide range of national and visiting consultant providers, with many alleged abuses and failing in delivery. It has also identified that while some participants feel stimulated by participating in short course training, many find it too difficult to translate their new insights into practice. In addition there are many teachers, especially in rural schools, who have had no access to training. The present model of teacher training is arguably un conducive to a system of sustainable teacher development. If the targets nominated in Sustainable Development Goal 4 are to be assessed by any means beyond the statistical reporting of enrolments, then quality systems of preservice education and continuing professional development of teachers is urgently needed. This article has focused on the training of English teachers. However, although there are specific problems relating to the teaching of English, the problems of teacher selection, lack of pre-service training, and teaching that focuses on rote-based examination preparation apply across the curriculum. Quality systems of teacher development are needed for all.

Nevertheless, it is important to remain mindful that, as a developing country, Bangladesh is in a historically-constructed disadvantaged position. While it needs partnerships to develop its education system, it does not need partnerships that do not develop sustainable initiatives and increase its own capacity for sustainable development. The SDG4 agenda provides a useful benchmark for the goals Bangladesh aspires to: it does not provide a blueprint of how to achieve them. This article argues that the government and educational agencies of Bangladesh need to be more critically evaluative of sponsored projects for teacher development and to develop its own rigorous and sustainable systems.

Declaration

This article is based on the first author's PhD research. The first author wrote the first draft and the second author provided critical feedback, comments and suggestions for further improvement.

Note:

(1) Islamic school

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