

IMPLEMENTING ENGLISH COURSES IN B. ED/ADE: THE ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGERS AND TEACHER EDUCATORS

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ABSTRACT

The quality of teacher education is directly related to the standards of education in a country. Highly qualified and skilled teachers can implement the curriculum effectively and achieve the desired goals set by it. As described by Schramm (2012), “Highly skilled teachers are one of the single most important influences on student success” (p.13). The Education reforms that began in Pakistan during 2000 triggered two major revisions: (a) reforms in National curriculum for Class I-XII in 2006 and (b) reforms in the curriculum of Teachers' Education during 2010-12. Subsequently, one year B. Ed (Bachelors in Education) and certificates courses were replaced by a new four year B. Ed (Hons) and ADE (Associate Degree in Education) program along with new English courses Based on Model developed by Teachers College Columbia (USA). These courses are an attempt to prepare skilled teachers who can meet up the required standards and realize reforms. There is a need to collect data regarding program implementation in order to improve the quality and speed of reforms. The purpose of this study is to explore the role of Educational Managers and Teacher-Educators for effective delivery of these courses. The study is limited to Public sector institutes in Sindh. The population was comprised of three groups of stakeholders in the government sector who were responsible for the implementation of the courses. The sample of the study includes Educational Managers and Teacher Educators, who were selected through the Simple Random Sampling technique. In-depth interviews were conducted and the study explored the integral role played by Educational Managers and Teacher Educators in order to train Student-Teachers who are skilled as per the requirements of NPST and the reformed Standard-Based National Curriculum 2006. Results showed that the delivery of these courses is hindered due to lack of trained Master Trainers and Teacher Educators in English, untrained and non-cooperative In-service Teachers, and gaps in administrative and monitoring systems. The findings are beneficial for apex bodies, policymakers and Teacher Educators, etc.

KEYWORDS: Curriculum reforms, Teacher Education, Practicum, Teaching of English, B.Ed (Hons), Teacher Educators, Educational-Managers

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Education is the basic need of any society. Curriculum and Teachers both are pillars of the Education System. To improve the quality of education, different governments have constantly tried and tested various course designs. Old textbooks are replaced with new ones and much attention has been directed towards the role of teachers as well. As a matter of fact, Teacher is the most influential factor in the process of teaching and learning. As discussed by Ranjan and Rehman, “the teacher is directly responsible for the learning achievement of the student” (p.3). In fact, if the resource material is not suitable enough, a skilled teacher will be able to adapt and exploit the text to fulfill the learning needs of the students. It means the teacher is an important tool to execute the curriculum. This realization resulted in the awareness that the domain of teachers’ training also needs reforms to achieve the required standards. The resultant measures have caused a paradigm shift from Teachers Training to Teachers Education. Since ‘training’ refers to the acquisition of skills required to perform a task in an applied situation and ‘education’ implies the development of a reflective, protean practitioner with appropriate professional knowledge and skills, thus

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it has been acknowledged that Teacher Education plays a major role in the successful implementation of a curriculum.

The reformed curriculum basically supports a Student-centered approach by giving freedom to the teacher for selecting any methodology that fulfills the needs of the students and types of contents. This fact dictates the need for a teacher who is competent and trained enough to successfully deliver Standard-based curriculum in classrooms.

The National Education Policy (2009) proposed, “reform is required in all areas: pre-service training and standardization of qualifications” (p.42). Hence reforms were made in the curriculum of Teachers’ Education in 2010-12. The certificate and diploma courses for teachers’ training have been replaced by two years’ Associate Degree in Education (ADE) and four years’ degree in Bachelors in Education (B. Ed). All of these reforms have been made to improve the quality of education. Chouhan (1984) mentions, “the quality of teachers that determines the overall effectiveness of a system of education depends upon their education that is popularly known as teacher education...the teachers’ education is the main cassette in all the educational development” (Akram, 2010, p.13-14).

The new degrees in Education are based on the Model of Teacher Education proposed by Teachers’ College Columbia USA. This model proposes the concept of Practicum that includes three participants:

1. Student-Teacher,
2. Cooperating Teacher,
3. College/College/University Supervisor.

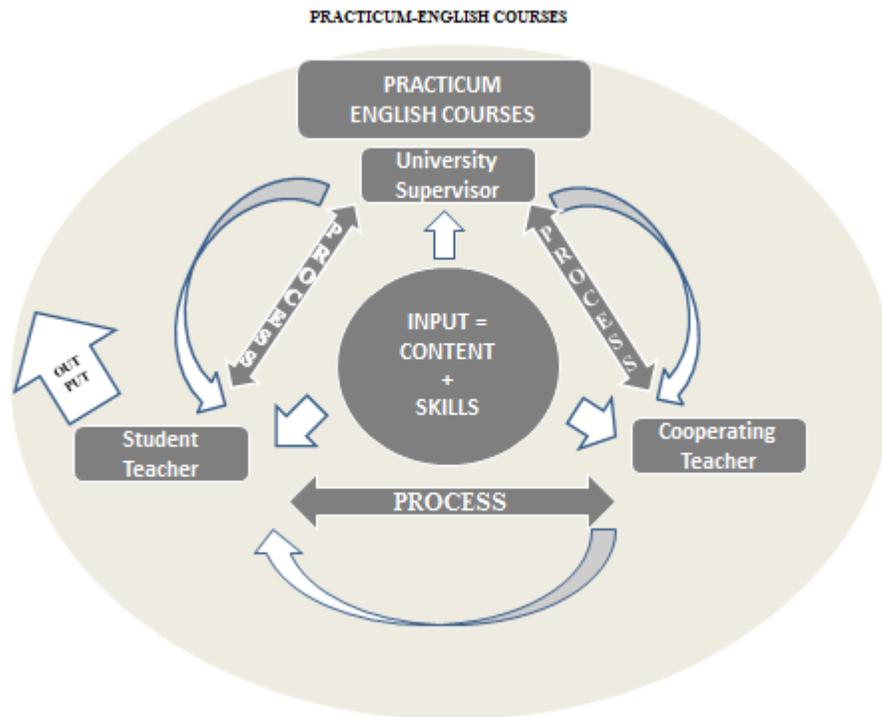


Figure 1. Practicum English courses

In this model, Student-Teachers are taught to be independent learners. They are regularly monitored and mentored by the cooperating teacher as well as the Teacher Educator. In this way, Student-Teachers receive consistent feedback, both from the cooperating Teacher as well as from the College/University Supervisor. The Teacher Educator is also responsible for the alignment of all the planning, assignments, activities and classroom practices of the Student-Teacher with current theories and practices.

The process of Practicum helps Teacher-Students in becoming effective, independent and self-directed learners. ESL teachers are required to be competent in teaching methodologies, content knowledge, and knowledge regarding language, assessment, and theories whereas, EFL teachers have to acquire proper skills and knowledge on how to teach in a real context, the school setting. Learning to participate in social and cultural practices with regard to education is assumed to be crucial for developing a professional identity as a teacher (Rahimi, 2008, p.7).

The realization of the English curriculum is dependent on various factors. Trained and skilled English Language Teachers, who are well equipped with research-based teaching methodologies, is the central determinant amongst these factors. “The academic and professional standards of teachers constitute a critical component of essential learning conditions for achieving the educational goals of a nation” (Kusuma & Srivani, 2013, p.2). Therefore, newly designed English courses, Functional English I, Functional English (II) which focuses on Communication Skills and Teaching of English (ToE) were introduced at ADE/B. Ed (Hons). These courses are designed with reference to SBC 2006, NPST 2009 and NEP 2009, to not only develop content and pedagogical knowledge in the Student-Teacher but also provide skill development through Practicum so that the prospective teacher could implement the English curriculum 2006 in elementary classes.

THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

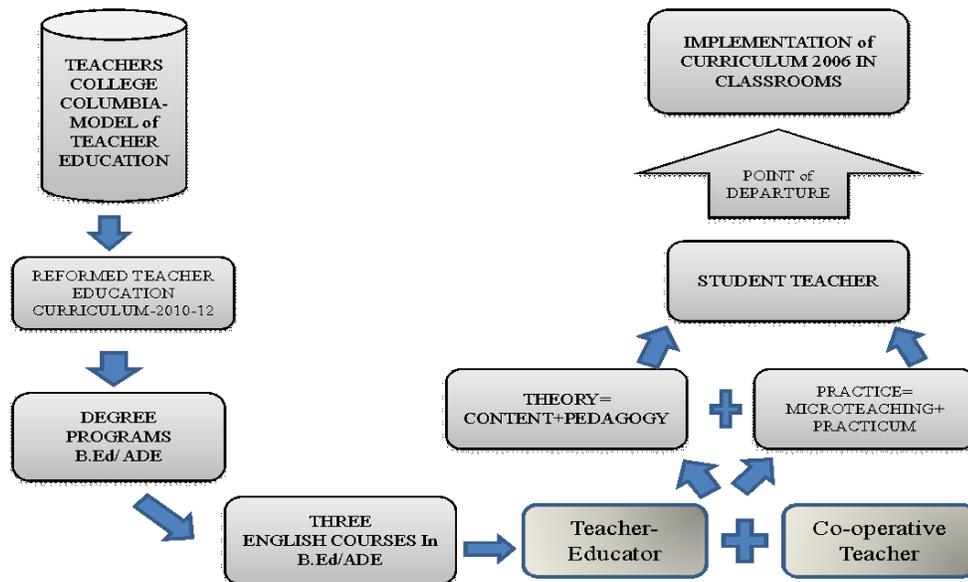


Figure 2. The conceptual framework

Gan (2013) refers to Farrell (2003) in saying that in ELT, there is a scarcity of data concerning the field experiences of Non-Native Student-Teachers of ESL, especially with regards to the Practicum (p.92). In order to obtain better results, the reforms made in the courses need to be monitored so that the feedback would help the apex bodies in tailoring and revising the courses according to the needs of the local and cultural context. “There is a dearth of examination of teachers' practices related to the effective use of the

textbook for developing teaching and learning practices” (Mohammad, & Kumari, 2007, p.3). The principal benefit of inquiring about the effectiveness of an activity, course or program is the generation of valuable data that can be further used to improve the effectiveness of the course. In the current local context of Pakistan, the success of the reforms made is largely dependent on the data and research conducted in the field that could provide feedback. Munshi and Bhatti (2009) also talk about the need and importance of the inquiries which should be made regarding the effectiveness of the teachers' education programs in order to address the issue of the deteriorating standards of education at different levels in Pakistan. One of the main reasons in failing to address the issues in a timely manner, as well as sustaining or upgrading the education system in Pakistan, is the absence of research on a course and program evaluation. Khan and Saeed (2009) claim that “there is no adequate research is available to evaluate the B.Ed (Hons) programme” (p.86). The urgent need of data is felt at various levels, “in order to reform teacher education sector in Pakistan, there is a dire need to evaluate the effectiveness of existing teacher training programmes” (Dilshad & Muhammad, 2010, p. 88). The value of teaching English as realized at government level, and as exhibited in NPST 2009 and NEP 2009, provokes the need of evaluation of the role of Educational managers and Teacher Educators in execution of English courses taught at B.Ed especially when the In-service teachers are not trained through the current program and lack the ability to assist Student-Teachers in the prescribed way.

The findings will help in exploring the gaps and establishing the credibility of these courses in preparing Student-Teachers to implement the curriculum (2006) in elementary schools. Moreover, the findings will provide feedback to improve these courses, address the issues related to methodology and delivery, and further accelerate the process of evaluation within the Curriculum of Teachers Education 2012.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The modifications in the fundamental approach to curriculum in 2006, resulted in the emergence of a gap. Skilled and trained teachers were required for the implementation of the new curriculum. This fostered reforms in Teacher Education in 2010-12. Four years B.Ed (Hons) and a two years ADE were introduced replacing old degrees and certificate courses. The reformed degrees proposed new English courses which designed under the influence of National Education Policy 2009 and National Standards for Professional Teachers 2009. Presently, efforts are being made to implement the reforms. As these are recent reforms and no research-based data is available therefore, there is a need to collect data to assist in further decisions. This study aims at exploring the role of Educational Managers and Teacher Educator in preparing Student-Teachers to implement reform Curriculum 2006 in classrooms.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Q. What is the role of Teacher Educators and Educational Managers in the implementation of English courses in B.Ed (Hons)/ADE?

JUSTIFICATION

The findings of this study will help Government Bodies, Policy Makers, Teacher Educators and Student-Teachers to make an improvement in the process of implementation.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is limited to the government institutes for Teachers' Education which offers B.Ed (Hons)/ADE degree programs with reformed English courses.

SCOPE

The study is applicable to other elementary level courses and to the institutes which offer four years bachelors' program in Education and a two years Associate Degree in Education, in Sindh.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The process of effective language teaching comprises of three major components: appropriate content, need-driven methodology, and a trained and skilled teacher. This implies that linguistic content and teaching methodology, as proposed by the curriculum, are realized through a professionally educated language teacher. All curriculum designs demand a set of qualities in teachers. "Educational literature, theory, and reform trends have long promoted putting teachers in a central role in curricular design" (Handler, 2010, p.1). Therefore, a curriculum can be effective in realizing the desired standards of education only if the teachers' education coheres with it.

Literature review strongly suggests that Teacher Education in Pakistan, before reforms, had failed to produce desired results. "There is a consensus amongst all stakeholders that the quality of teachers in the public sector is unsatisfactory" (National Education Policy, 2009, p.42).

Under these circumstances, the Millennium Education Goals (2000) enforced reforms in the basic structure of teachers' education. High standards can only be emulated by investing, revising and evaluating the quality of the pre-service and In-service education of teachers. Dilshad (2010) refers to many authors, "quality of school education largely depends, among other factors, on quality of teachers prepared in teacher education institutions" (p. 1).

In the present scenario, trained teachers are required to teach the curriculum in 2006. "There is a strict connection between teaching program and curriculum as they are within each other" (Topkaya & KÜÇÜK, 2010, p.53).

Khan (2014) states, "teacher education is associated to the development of teacher expertise, command and capability that would enable and empower the teacher to meet the requirements of the profession and face the challenges therein" (p. 330).

Since the last decade, there had been a shift from exploring effective ways to train teachers towards understanding the procedures of teaching reflexively. Student-Teachers can learn to teach through experience and reflection. The Model of Teacher Education developed by Teachers' College Columbia, USA includes the concept of a Practicum. It is designed on the foundations of social constructivism.

THE CONSTRUCT OF THE PRACTICUM

There are three poles in the Practicum model: The Student-Teacher, a College/University Supervisor who provides the theoretical support and aligns all the activities, and the Co-operative Teacher who helps in the realization of all the planning. These three work in a particular context in order to make a community of Practice. The concept of a community of practice proposed by Situated Learning Theory, which basically talks about a group of people who collaborate with each other in order to perform an activity. During this process, their roles and skills affect each other and they gain experience. This notion has roots in ZPD in which scaffolding is used in a planned way so that the novice improves upon his knowledge and skills during his interaction with an expert. Clancey (1995) and Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1989) developed a model to apply situated learning theory within the classroom. They believed that in situated learning, learning is not considered as an abstract thing but a social, contextualized process. They put forward the notion of cognitive apprenticeship, “cognitive apprenticeship supports learning in a domain by enabling students to acquire, develop and use cognitive tools in authentic domain activity” (p.39). Social interaction, reflection, and collaboration in a community help in the construction of knowledge.

The English courses in B.Ed (Hons)/ADE are designed to help Student-Teachers in applying new concepts and polishing their skills during the Practicum in order to meet the requirements of the reformed curriculum and explore the practicality of the proposed teaching activities and methodologies. Wasim (2012) refers to Barry and King (2002) that, “teaching practice [practicum] provides the opportunity to apply the principles of teaching and learning that have been studied during course work” (p.35). Presently, Standard-based curriculum and the concept of practicum are prevailing in the world because a Practicum helps in the construction of experience which is culturally sensitive. Ulvik and Smith (2011) state that, “the aim of the practicum varies, depending on the view of teacher education which can be seen as cultural practices that serve local needs” (p.517). In this process, every member of the group constructs his experience. The College/University Supervisor, the Co-operative Teacher, and the Student-Teacher all enrich their personal experiences through interaction. All of them benefit as they construct their own realities and share them with the other members of their group, resulting in a cohesive understanding of the context that can be triangulated. “Teacher explores his or her own ‘sense-making’ in the world, new constructions are produced that can be used to comprehend the sense-making of others” (Cannella & Reiff, 1994, p.28).

Rahimi (2008) says that a partnership between the language teacher, University/school and Teacher Educator is an important element of any teacher education program that provides sound knowledge and enhances competency in EFL teachers. She further elaborates that a satisfactory teacher development program uses research, personal development activities and experiences as the basis for input. The output is assessed through reflective practices and log writing (p.4).

The greater aim of education is to help individuals and practicing communities as well as to be functional and productive in the rapidly changing world of complex realities. This is a process that passes through the stages of planning, implementation, and evaluation.

The continuity of the process entirely depends upon getting constructive feedback about the effectiveness of planned and implemented educational actions. The success of any educational change, specifically as massive as a curriculum change, however, largely depends on how teachers perceive it and what they do to implement it. (Topkaya & Küçük, 2010, p. 1)

Any attempt to gauge the effectiveness of a program, assessment of the effectiveness of the course and especially something as grand as curriculum evaluation should include the feedback provided by the stakeholders who have been a part of this process and have experienced it in a real context. Assessing the effectiveness of any course is a beneficial activity that ends in generating valuable data that could be used for the improvement of any irregularities. “Evaluation is basically a matching process, which concerns matching learners’ needs to available solutions” (Nemati, 2009, p.2). Tunç (2010) refers to Ornstein and Hunkins (1998) that, “evaluation is a process that we carry out to obtain data to determine whether to make changes, modifications, eliminations and/or accept something in the curriculum” (p.2). The reformed degree programs and the English courses at B.Ed and ADE are an attempt to address the deteriorating standards of English language teaching and learning in Pakistan. Evaluation is the process that helps in stabilizing a system. Collecting data regarding the effectiveness of these courses would provide support in sustaining and upgrading the courses. Literature suggests that, in most parts of the world, educationists, research scholars, academic institutions and government bodies put together their efforts to provide feedback in order to improve the teaching-learning process. In these circumstances, exploring the effectiveness of these courses becomes an important academic activity.

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

This is a basic study that uses a qualitative approach that is Phenomenological. The study aims to collect facts about the phenomenon through the participants’ perceptions and experiences.

RESEARCH TOOLS/INSTRUMENTS

The instrument used in the research was in-depth interview which was comprised of three sets of interview questions. The tool was passed through expert and face validation. The tool used to collect data from Educational Managers and Teacher Educators contained ten questions besides having spontaneous pokes and questions. For the sake of consistency and triangulation, both the sets of the interview were comprised of similar questions. The tool is attached in the appendices.

PROCEDURE

In this study, in-depth interviews were conducted with Educational Managers and Teacher Educators in the public sector. All interviews were audio- recorded with the prior permission of the participants.

VALIDITY & RELIABILITY

All interviews were conducted in private and in case of any interruption, the researcher stopped recording and waited to resume the previous state. Later on, member-validation was done.

SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

The sample of the study was comprised of two sets of the stakeholders related to the government institutions only, including the Educational Managers and Teacher Educators who were involved in the development, piloting, reviewing and implementing the courses. A sample was extracted through Simple Random Sampling Technique. The sample includes;

- Teachers Educators that teach English courses in ADE/ B.Ed (Hons) at Govt. institutions in Sindh.
- Educational Managers who work in Apex bodies in Government of Sindh.

PROCESS OF DATA ANALYSIS

The accumulative data provided foundations for textual analysis. The interview with Educational Managers and Teacher Educators were initially analyzed separately and later, altogether. Thus the final data analysis was done in three tiers. In this way, the Thematic Analysis of the data was completed.

FINDINGS

1. Educational Managers successfully implemented the program in institutions.
2. Educational Managers played a major role in the process of implementation of English courses by providing support through Master Trainers and training sessions for Teacher Educators and In-service.
3. The efforts of Educational Managers are adversely affected by the political intrusion.
4. There are gaps in the coordination among Educational Managers regarding keeping alignment in following schedules.
5. The negative behavior of the Co-operative Teachers limits the role of teacher educators, the conducive learning environment and demotivates Student-Teachers.
6. Lack of trained English Language Teacher Educators is the main hurdle in improving the effectiveness of these courses.
7. Most of the Teacher Educators, teaching English courses, lack required qualification in the English Language. They are able to perform their jobs with the guidance provided by Master Trainers.
8. Teacher Educators play the most important role in making arrangements for Student-Teachers at public sector schools, counseling In-service teachers and helping Students-Teachers in Practicum.
9. The speaking skills of Teacher Educators are generally underdeveloped.
10. Some of the Teacher Educators fail to complete the syllabus in time.

DISCUSSION

Role of Educational Managers

According to Educational managers, the most influential stakeholder in the Practicum is Teacher Educators and the Master trainers who train Teacher Educators. The lack of trained Teacher Educators is the greatest hurdle in the proper delivery of the courses and inappropriate posting of trained Teacher Educators as per region; the participants of the study were graduates of science, economics, and education but none had a degree in English; even so, they are forced to teach English courses. As mentioned by an Educational Manager, there is a lack of trained faculty and moreover, due to political interference, these teachers are not posted according to the needs of the region. As a result, there are some places in Sindh where not a single trained Teacher Educator is available in colleges of education to conduct these three courses. Therefore, these courses are conducted by Teacher Educators who hold a degree which is not relevant to the course.

A factor that is basically damaging the positive impact of these courses is the unsatisfactory performance of Teacher Educators. One major drawback, as mentioned earlier, is the lack of trained faculty for English. A Teacher Educator explained, "I face so many difficulties.. Its... I think not due to the course...due to my personal weakness because I'm not a Masters in English, I'm science masters." Oral proficiency is fundamentally environment dependent and a Teacher carries the most responsibility in creating the environment of the class.

PROVIDING SUPPORT TO IN-SERVICE TEACHERS

In-service teachers work as co-operative teachers in the trio that forms the practicum. They are bound to monitor the Student-Teachers' performance and help them in improving their teaching practices. In Pakistan, as the curriculum of Teacher Education includes updated content and the concept of practicum has been recently reformed, therefore, In-service ELTs are unaware of the latest trends in language teaching. Though training has been provided to them, it is insufficient. As the Educational Managers and Teacher Educators mentioned, some training has been provided to them. Master trainers are sent to places to train the faculty. But there is a need to speed up the process. Dhawan. S (2014) refers to Kazmi, Pervez, and Mumtaz (2011), "the in-service teacher training enables the teachers to be more systematic and logical in their teaching style" (p.98). An Educational Manager said, "There are some issues with Co-operative Teachers." He further said that at times, the Co-operative Teachers are very discouraging and refused to accept Student-Teachers' proposed activities as a method of teaching.

The countries following the practicum model may have trained in-service teachers. In Pakistan, the case is different. Here, in-service teachers' knowledge about content and pedagogy is relatively outdated as compared to the Student-Teacher. Under these circumstances, Educational Managers arrange training programs and Teacher Educators play a more vigilant role through coordination and counseling of In-service teachers.

ROLE OF TEACHER EDUCATOR

The Teacher Educator plays a central role in the realization of a practicum. In teacher training programs, the Teacher Educator has multiple roles and responsibilities. They not only educate Student-Teachers but

also work as a mentor, facilitator, and guide. Furthermore, they also have to coordinate between university and school. As a consequence, a Teacher Educator should possess all the admirable qualities of a model teacher. In the Pakistani context, the performance of the Teacher Educator needs improvement. In some institutions, Teacher Educators are much indulged in training and improving their knowledge as well as their language skills. Student-Teachers at the same institutions shared that they never faced any problem during practicum, as all arrangements had already been made by their teachers. Bashir, Malik, Fatima, and Bashir (2014) said, “Supervisors visit the internees in their own classrooms. The task of the supervisor, as an observer, is to help the Student-Teacher to make sense of his or her experience within the framework of the total curriculum” (p.90). On the contrary, at some institutions teachers do not follow the course outline and there was little coordination between their supervisors and the school administrators which shows that the process of implementation of reforms has gaps and needs the immediate attention of authorities.

INTER-RELATION OF TEACHER EDUCATOR AND STUDENT-TEACHER COMPETENCIES AND SKILLS

The data exposes a lack of proficiency in the language skills of both Teacher Educators and Student-Teachers. Some of Teacher Educators have poor speaking proficiency. The data exhibits their command over conversational English as the quotes are kept strictly in the original language used by the Teacher Educators. A situation Analysis conducted by UNESCO in 2006 describes:

The various levels of Teacher Educators themselves are caught in the same cycle of poor teacher quality and delivery. They administer their classes in the traditional teaching style of lecture giving, dictation, and notes. Trainers fail to cultivate any creative thinking, inquiry, and problem solving among their trainees. Most of them are not aware of how to improve their own knowledge and skills or to bring themselves up to date with modern advances in teacher training (p.48).

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that Educational managers and Teacher Educators played an integral role in the implementation of the English courses in B.Ed (Hons)/ADE. Educational Managers tried to speed up the process of implementation of reforms through providing administrative and academic support in the form of arrangements for training of Teacher Educators with the help of Master Trainers. The role of Educational Managers is negatively affected by the political intrusion. Teacher Educators are the main tool in the system to realize the reforms. They not only teach and train Student-Teachers but also guide In-service teachers. They coordinate with the administration of public schools to provide Student-Teachers with better opportunities to develop the skills and gain experience through Practicum.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Government should limit the political influence through setting policies.
2. Educational managers should improve coordination among themselves through regular meetings.
3. More Teacher Educators should be trained to teach these courses.
4. Teacher Educators must be bound by universities and colleges to complete the courses.
5. There should be a support body in order to facilitate Teacher-Educators in teaching.

6. The In-service teachers should be trained so they can cooperate with Teacher Educators in making Practicum more fruitful activity.
7. More Master Trainers must be trained and sent frequently across Sindh to train more Teacher Educators so that they can perform their role in an effective way.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

There seems to be a need for situation analysis to investigate the process of implementation further. In order to collect rich data with the rationale of improving the process of implementation, it may be beneficial to combine the findings of this study with survey questionnaires in relation to Educational managers, Teacher Educators and Student-Teachers as well as the In-service teachers and classroom observations on a large scale which is assumed to validate the findings of this present study. In short, it would help in getting deeper information about the problems and thus, would assist in making appropriate decisions in improving the courses and the process of implementation.

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