

EvSum485

ROLE & DESIGN OF BASELINE STUDIES IN THE EVALUATION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING: THE CASE OF NEPAL

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The Project

The Secondary Education Project English Language Teaching (SEPELT) provided an expatriate for a two year period (1987-1989) in order to establish a programme of one month's in-service education for 903 teachers, delivered by a team of 26 local teacher trainers trained under the project. The project also funded 11 training awards, and a short follow-up consultancy. The total cost of the project was £313,000.

The Evaluation

The evaluation consisted of a baseline study, the results of which are included in the evaluation report, along with lessons on the use of baseline studies for education projects. The baseline study was undertaken by two consultants from the University of Reading, a linguistic specialist and a statistician. Local consultants were also used. The study took place during 1989-90, and a final report was produced in 1991. An ODA Economist assisted in the drafting of the report, which was completed in 1993.

Overall Conclusion

The project had a small but statistically significant impact on the performance of the students of the trained teachers compared with that of the students of untrained teachers. The improvement in performance was more marked in the first year of the study, but performance continued to improve, at a slower rate, into the second year.

The Main Findings

- Testing of teachers revealed some small but significant differences in oral and grammatical ability, in favour of the trained ("experimental group") teachers compared with untrained ("control group") teachers. These differences were attributable to the impact of the training provided.
- Results from observations of teacher practice were very significantly different between experimental and control groups. Trained teachers' average score was 67% for trained teacher characteristics, compared with a 23% average for those untrained. This confirmed that the trained teachers were implementing what they had been taught.
- When considering subgroups of "high", "medium" and "low" ability students of

the trained and untrained teachers, the only significant gains were achieved by students who were of a high ability at the start of the study.

- Over the period of the study, the average score of the students of the experimental group (in a dictation test) improved by 17 percentage points; that of the students of the control group improved by 7 points.
- For the subgroup of high ability students of the experimental group, the average score in a comprehension test improved by 15 percentage points; for the subgroup of high ability students of the control group, the average score declined slightly.

Lessons

- Educational baseline studies should ideally be appraised at the same time as the project they are assessing. A baseline design should be incorporated in the overall project design from the outset.
- Care must be taken to ensure that the test instruments chosen for educational baseline studies relate to the objectives of the teaching. It is advisable to have a range of tests, as some tests may not provide useful results.
- Teacher observations can help to explain the student test results, provide more confidence in the conclusions of an educational baseline study, and provide valuable information on the implementation of training in the classroom.
- The size of the sample of teachers to be included in an educational baseline study must take account of likely attrition during the study; the longer the period of study, the larger the initial group must be.
- Educational baseline study results will be most meaningful if they are conducted over an extended period of time, and include post-education monitoring.
- Unless an educational baseline study monitors the performance of students against a defined standard of skills required for the labour market and education system, there is no bench mark against which to assess the results of the educational baseline study.
- The immediate objectives of ELT projects should be specified in terms of the changes anticipated in teaching practice and student performance, and where an educational baseline study is conducted, it should gather data relevant to these objectives.
- ELT project appraisals should take note of the skills tested by the formal examination system; training geared to developing the ability to impart skills which are not tested in examinations is unlikely to be useful.