

Reforming English Language Education in Bangladesh through Sustained Change in Pedagogical Practices



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English in Action

- A large-scale English language development programme funded by UKAid, started at the request of the Government of Bangladesh
- Target audience – 25 million learners
 - Primary school teachers and students
 - Secondary school teachers and students
 - Adult learners
- Implementation period - 2009 to 2017
- Three phases - pilot, up-scaling and institutionalisation

At a Glance

Aim: Contribute to the economic development of Bangladesh by providing English language as a tool for better access to the world economy

Implementing partner: BMB Mott MacDonald

National partners:

Friends in Village Development in Bangladesh (FIVDB)

Underprivileged Children's Educational Programs (UCEP)

International partners:

The Open University, UK

BBC Media Action

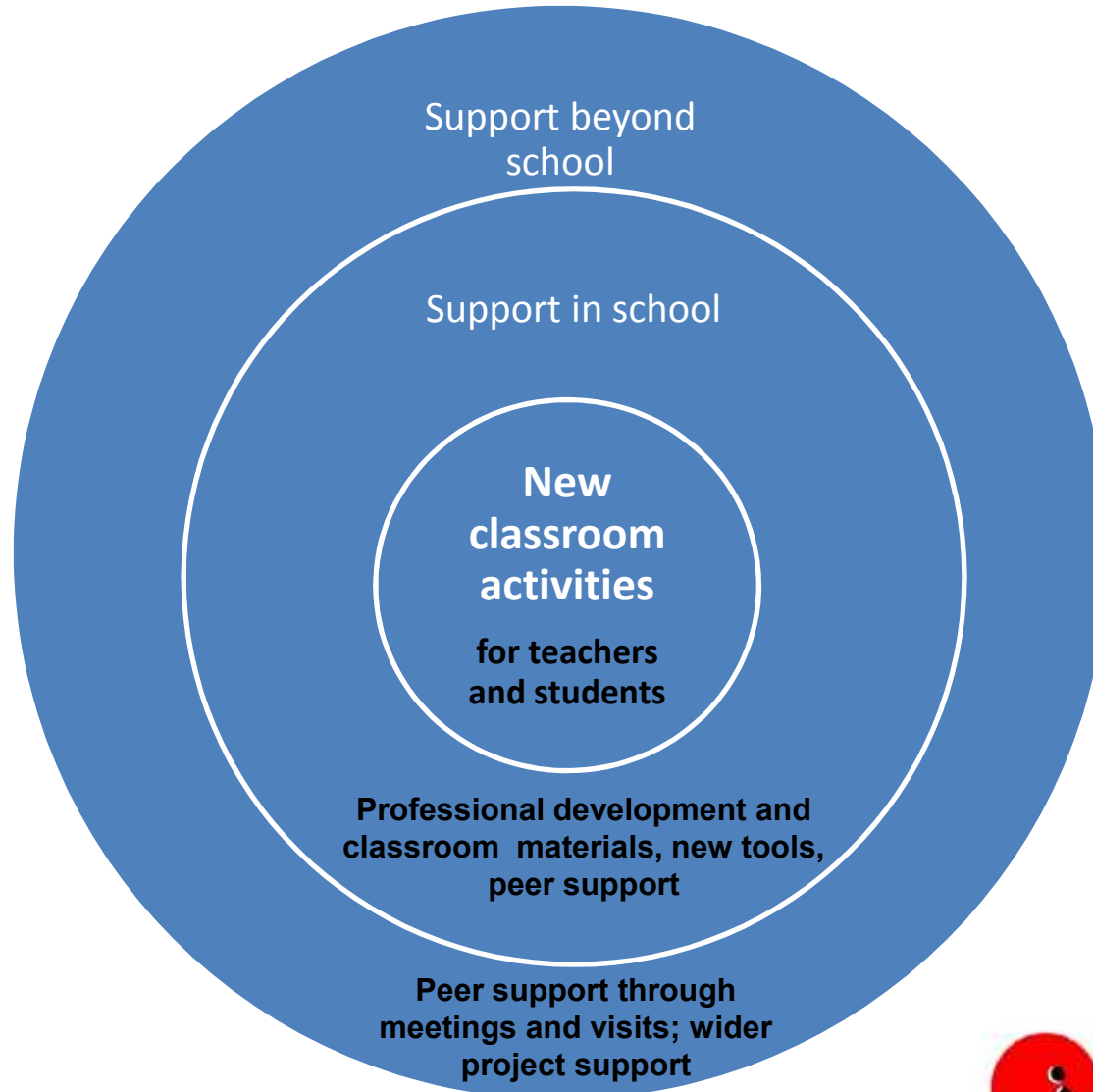
ELT Landscape

- “most reform attempts have suffered from a lack of **planning**...
- “not providing **supportive resources**...
- “isolated attempts and lack of **co-ordinated long-term focus**...
- “In spite of a general improvement in T’s knowledge *about* CLT ... little evidence of much **difference in classroom practice**”
- “it is crucial that the training needs to “**make sense**” to the trainees” (reflective practice)
- “attention given to the trainees (and trainers) **EL skills**.”
- “encourage **capacity building**”
- “an element of **peer guidance** and counselling”

A. Rahman (2006)

Key Elements

Supporting
change in
classroom
practices



Practice and Competence

86% primary and 92% secondary teachers show a *significant shift towards communicative language approaches*.

Both primary and secondary students are *regularly taking part in and enjoying activities* promoted by EIA.

Over 95% of teachers said that EIA helps them to *improve their own English*.

“My students have overcome their fear to speak in English in class.”

- Masuma Khatun, Assistant Teacher, Kanchoonpur GPS, Dumuria



Research question and method

To what extent the major education reform initiatives in Bangladesh have been successful in reaching their goals in a sustainable manner?

Method:

Document analysis

Interviews with teachers and various project personnel

Timeline: Major Education Initiatives in Bangladesh

1. **OSSTTEB** - Orientation of Secondary School Teachers for Teaching English in Bangladesh **(1990 to 1995)**
2. **ELTIP** – English Language Teaching Improvement Project **(1997 to 2010)**
(Not continued as expected)
3. **SESIP** – Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project **(1999 to 2010)** conceived as a follow up project of Secondary Education Development Project (SEDP)
4. **TQI** – Teaching Quality Improvement **(2005 to present)**
5. **SESDP** – Secondary Education Sector Development Project **(2002 to 2013)**
6. **SEQAEP** – Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement Project **(2008 to 2013)**
7. **EIA** - English in Action **(2009 to 2017)**

Major Findings from Different Projects

Textbook Reformation

- OSSTTEB developed and modified grade VI to VIII **English textbooks focused on communicative approach**. However, the **orientation** of teachers for the new textbooks **was not well organized**.
- ELTIP introduced **new CLT based textbooks** for grade IX-X and XI-XII but failed to bring any reform in the national examination system.
- SESIP has been working to **improve the curriculum, reform student assessment** and public examination system. The project has set up an Assessment Unit (AU) which is closely working with the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB).

Teachers' Professional Development

- **BEd in English curriculum** was developed by OSSTTEB
- SESIP **strengthened professional capacity** of the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE). 67 teacher educators have received foreign training for this purpose.
- The objective of TQI is to **improve the quality of teaching in secondary education** in Bangladesh. Teachers' Registration and Certification Authority (NTRCA) was initiated by TQI to improve the teacher recruitment system.
- Twenty five teacher trainers and the Project Director were trained in the UK under ELTIP.
- SEQAEP identified English as an area to improve and **provided support to English teachers**. It has trained Eight thousand teachers in English and Mathematics so far.

Teacher Training and Monitoring

- Teachers trained by OSSTTEB were not found to implement their learning in the classrooms properly.
- TQI involved the Head Teachers (HTs) for monitoring classroom practices. However, the lack of follow-up training opportunities was a major problem for the project.
- Trained teachers of ELTIP seemed to be familiar with the CLT approach but not always capable of applying it in their classrooms effectively. In addition, the lack of regular monitoring also caused problems.

Management and Implementation

- **Project design** of SESIP was **highly relevant to our context but** seemed **too ambitious without an effective coordination mechanism.**
- As part of the TQI initiative, teacher and head teacher competencies were introduced. The project aimed to **institutionalize teacher's classroom performance monitoring by the Head Teacher.**
- *“The project (ELTIP) was fairly successful. The key factors for its success were that it had strong administrative capability, was well-organized, ...implemented successfully in all spheres. Also, it engaged the local pool of talent in the ELT sector of the country.”*

(Hakim Islam, Consultant ELTIP)

Management and Implementation

- SESIP has **strengthened capacity and management system** of MoE and other concerned agencies. It developed decentralized management system through School Performance-based Management System (SPBMS). Upazila Academic Supervisors (UAS) have been appointed by SESIP.
- SEQAEP have established Parent Teacher Associations (PTA). Fifty thousand PTA members have received orientation training.

Learning from the previous reform initiatives

Lack of integration and contextualization

All respondents mentioned that new projects do not utilize the learning experience from previous projects:

*“...everybody is trying to **reinvent the wheel**, and that’s where most of the energy and money go into...”*

*“...to ensure the continuation of the projects, we need to incorporate the recommendations of the impact studies of previous projects---I mean lessons learnt from other projects. **In the previous projects, what we achieved, or we failed to achieve – the knowledge and experience can be used effectively in the new projects. In practice, this never happens; as a result, we see overlapping actions in many projects such as TQI, SESDP or SEQAEP”.***

Habibur Rahman, Consultant and Materials Developer

Learning from the previous reform initiatives

- A lack of school support from the HT and senior colleagues was a problem for ELTIP.

“.....The problem is that the trained young teachers in the context of Bangladesh, are quite powerless. They may not be allowed to teach English as a subject. Even if they are allowed, they do not have much influence over the head teacher or senior teachers...”

Sultana Khan, former National consultant, ELTIP

- Selection of appropriate personnel for projects was an issue.
- Government ownership

Way forward?

- Monitoring project activities – involving education officers
- School-based teacher professional development – involvement of HTs and peer teachers
- Embedding effective classroom practices and materials in the national curriculum – working with the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB)
- Working with teacher professional development programmes - pre-service and in-service
- Reforming English assessment system
- Research capacity building – collaboration with the Institute of Education and Research (IER), Dhaka University

Food for thought

- How does a lack of sector-wide programme affect progress in secondary education initiatives?
- A2I – ‘open resources’
- How can we ensure that trained human resources are properly utilized in further reform initiatives?
- What measures can we take to tackle different types of mal-practices that affect project implementation?
- How can we align the English assessment system with the targeted communicative curriculum?