Challenges in conducting evaluation and research: experiences of English in Action in Bangladesh

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Challenges in Conducting Evaluation and Research: Experiences of English in Action in Bangladesh

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Overview

- English in Action
- EIA evaluation and research
- Challenges & way forward
- Concluding remarks
Supporting English language teaching and learning
2008 => 2017
Implementer:
Funder:
UK aid
from the British people
BMB Mott MacDonald
The Open University
UCIEP
Since 1972
FIVDB
BBC Media Action
Transforming lives through media around the world
ENGLISH in ACTION
Scale

PILOT
750 teachers

UPSCALE 1
4000 teachers

UPSCALE 2
8000 teachers

I&S
64,000 teachers

76,000 teachers
10.5 million students
Across Bangladesh: 112 upazilas so far

2012: 35
2013/14: 70
2015 onwards...
## Teacher professional development & classroom materials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audio visual</th>
<th>Print based</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening activities</td>
<td>Activity Guide, Posters, Flashcards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video with narrator</td>
<td>Teacher Guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English language for teachers audio</td>
<td>EL4T workbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaker</td>
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</table>
Large-scale quantitative measures of English language competence are influenced by classroom practice and perceptions.
EVALUATION AND RESEARCH

Small-scale qualitative

Teachers lives

Student Lives

New elements

Pilot teachers
EVALUATION AND RESEARCH

- Economic premium study
- Logframe/needs-based studies
- UCEP study
- Employer survey
- Community study
Challenges & ways forward
Challenge 1: Little background information & literature directly relevant to the project

• Need of information to design the programme

Way forward:
⇒ Review existing literature
⇒ Baseline studies – ascertain state of:

- Technology infrastructure
- Spoken EL competence (Teachers & students)
- English lessons
- Motivations of students & teachers
- EL teacher training provision
- English teaching materials
Challenge 1: Little background information & literature directly relevant to the project

Baseline studies provided:
⇒ Evidence-based platform to design programme
⇒ Benchmark against which to evaluate progress of EIA teachers & students
⇒ Example: EL competence
Challenge 2: ‘Reactive effect’

Classroom observation

• ‘Reactive’ effect (Webb, 1966; Bryman 2008)
• Do teachers behave as they normally do when being observed?
  • Obtrusive nature of the researcher?
  • Impact of presumed hierarchy?
  • Validity of data collected? Authentic teacher practice?

⇒ classroom practice
⇒ community study
⇒ teachers lives
⇒ students lives
Challenge 2: ‘Reactive effect’

Way forward:

• Training & documentation:
  - Ask researchers not to judge - objective
  - Explain study to T &HT fully, & not there to judge
  - Reassure T confidential use of data
  - Researcher introduces self to class
  - Be as unobtrusive as possible (sit at back, be quiet, try not to disturb)

• Triangulation – compare findings with those of other studies to validate findings

• Report the findings with relative caution
Challenge 3: Translation & interpretation

- Research studies for a large-scale programme with a number of partners
- Different personnel involved => multiple levels of interpretation

Community study:

1. Designing study & instrument
2. Interviews
3. Fieldnotes & voice recorded
4. Transcription & translation by researchers
5. Analysis of data
6. Interpretation & write-up
Challenge 3: Translation & interpretation

Way forward:

• International team designing instruments – English => Bangla; internal/external checking process.

• Piloting instruments - check understanding by teachers & students

• Checking of analysis by bi-lingual, experienced researcher
Challenge 4: Issues while collecting data

- Political unrest – strikes
- Nationwide primary teacher strike
  ⇒ Limited travelling opportunities; security of researchers in the field; disruption of fieldwork plans
- Teacher transfer/involvement in other activities (e.g. surveys)
  ⇒ Can’t gather data from intended teachers/students
Challenge 4: Issues while collecting data

Way forward:

• Selecting extra respondents/cases – alternative respondents/cases to collect data from
• Scheduling travel around political unrest
• Allocating extra time for fieldwork/flexibility in plans and schedules
• Researchers in the field asked to take extra caution and sometimes to postpone work.
Concluding remarks

• Be informed! – obstacles & context
• Think through and prepare for all potential eventualities... (Murphy’s law)
• Thorough training & briefing for field researchers
• Attention to detail/being thorough at all stages of the research
  – Planning, implementation, analysis, write-up
References
