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CAPTURING THE DYNAMICS OF CHANGE THROUGH CLASSROOM RESEARCH

REPORT ON TEACHERS' STUDIES AND 2017 CONFERENCE

Why Teachers' Voices?

To support teachers to become classroom researchers through collecting evidence from classroom inquiries in a systematic manner and then creating a platform for them to share their observations and learning experiences with national and international education experts and officials.

Expected Outcomes

- Teachers are confident to conduct classroom research on their own classroom practices and to learn from their experiences to improve their teaching.
- They consider classroom research as a practical approach for their Continuous Professional Development (CPD).
- They share their research observations in different national conferences.
- Their experiences of classroom research are well recorded and published as a book.

Areas of Study

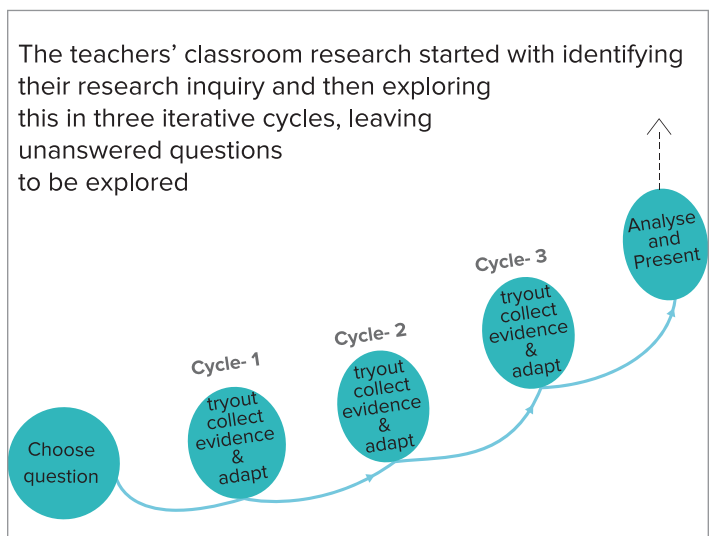
English in Action (EIA) identified areas of classroom research, such as:

- Use of group/pair work
- Creating an inclusive learning environment
- How to make peer and Head Teacher support work
- Teaching large classes
- Using a particular technique in the classroom
- Improving speaking skills as a teacher
- Students' perceptions of their role and their learning



The Journey

160 teachers were selected from EIA intervention schools. Four teachers worked as a group in a particular Upazila. One in each group of four, was a mentor and the rest were mentees.



Several workshops were arranged to support the teachers.

1. Mentor Workshop

To orient 40 mentors about classroom research approach and how to mentor their group.

2. Regional Workshop 1

To orient teachers about their research work and to start the research process by identifying their inquiry within their chosen areas of study.

3. Regional Workshop 2

To support teachers with collating their data and to reflect systematically.

4. Regional Workshop 3

To support teachers to filter their data and extract their key observations and learning points to present at the conference.

5. Teachers' Voices Conference

To present their research observations and learning in the conference to education administrators and experts.



What Teacher- Researchers Did and Learnt from their Research

The Teachers' Voices Conference (TVC), the idea of EIA, was preceded by the year-long TVC journey during which continuous support was provided by EIA both face-to-face and online.



The titles of the studies showed that teachers had chosen an aspect of classroom-teaching that was closest to their context and something they were dissatisfied with and/or wanted to go deeper into. While many teachers explored group work/pair work, the focus, content and structure all varied from one teacher to another. Some teachers worked with different grouping strategies, while others looked at timing, instructions for tasks, the language of instructions and the content. It was interesting to see how they arrived at different learnings: in one case, it was grouping bright and not-so-bright that worked; while in another, grouping all bright and all not-so-bright worked; yet in another case, it was grouping the 'middle-range' learners with bright that did the trick. The purpose of group/pair work was also varied: it was seen as an effective strategy for a large class, to improve absenteeism, to improve inclusion (gender-wise, bright/not-so-bright, shy/talkative), to improve pronunciation, reading ability, and writing skills.



There were also studies that investigated into inclusion, developing reading and writing skills, understanding student perceptions, increasing student talk in class and increasing teacher's use of English in class and so forth. A wide range of strategies were put to test over three iterative cycles that teachers tried out with every successive cycle informing the next one. Unanswered questions remained giving the clear message that researching is a continuing process.



Teachers learnt that when you take into account students' perceptions of what they like to learn and how, it makes their own job that much easier and more meaningful. Teachers talked about the need to change their own attitudes, to be more friendly and to give priority to students. The year-long work, that involved questioning held beliefs and attitudes, seemed to have given rise to new and fresh perspectives which teachers arrived at through reflection and sharing. It was their learning/discovery, as opposed to a teacher educator's 'wisdom', and therefore probably longer lasting.

What Teacher- Researchers Presented at the Conference

The conference itself, organised by EIA and hosted by Dhaka University, was a much-awaited two-day event, in which teachers talked and others listened to what they had to say about their research in their classrooms. It was held at the Institute of Education and Research, Dhaka University, the prestigious research organisation of Bangladesh; its long collaboration with EIA made it all the more special as the venue for sharing teacher-research carried out all over the country. There were about 180 participants in all, of whom 90 were teacher-presenters from different parts of the country and 90 were representatives from the Government of Bangladesh, Dhaka University, NGOs and other organisations.



The two-day event buzzed throughout with research related terms: **action, reflection, observation, evidence, findings, unanswered questions** and so forth.

Deep discussions took place that created an academic and research atmosphere where everyone was looking critically and practically at what worked in their own and others' classrooms and what didn't. *"Research is not copy-paste. Think deeply and deeply, and find your question."*



Titles of teachers' studies range from **'Boys and girls work together through pair and group work', 'Absenteeism in the class', 'Creating an inclusive learning environment', 'Exploring learner expectations by taking feedback from students'**. There were in all 60 individual presentations by teachers and 2 poster presentations involving 30 teacher presenters. The programme also showcased 8 video case studies of teachers narrating the research journeys they had traversed throughout the year. In addition, there were panel discussions on 'Celebrating TVC' and 'Teachers' researching into classroom practices: beyond TVC' with different stakeholders as panelists, presentations by EIA staff and international plenary sessions by Professor Rama Mathew, Delhi University, India and Thomas Power, The Open University, UK.



The language used clearly illustrated a shift in perspective from that of a prescriptive 'do it, it works' approach to a reflective 'try it and see what works and why and in what context' one. *"I found my class was boring to my students and took a challenge to make it joyful. I collected students' opinion and did a lot of supplementary activities and found that students started to enjoy my class."*

The 'unanswered questions' at the end of the presentations signalled the unfinished nature of research and the ongoing pursuit of researchers to continue exploring beyond the conference. *"Before I considered myself a teacher and now I am a teacher and a researcher!"*



What participants' said

Relaying students' voices

"Our teacher gives us lots of activities in the class and we can say what we like and what we want."

Learning from students

"Now I don't need to worry about how my class went, I just ask the students."

Learning from other teachers

"When mentees observed and we spoke, we looked at videos of my classes and they gave a real picture and suggestions - not just saying 'how nice' as other teachers do."

Perspectives of large classes

"Through self and peer assessment by students, I now get a clear picture of students' learning in a short time."

Views on research

"Collecting evidence from students is the most useful because I want to make activities to be student-centred."

Views from Government Officials

"This kind of work should be extended to all teachers for all subjects."

Feedback from teacher participants

"From the presentations we understand how many solutions there are to each problem"

Teachers' own discovery

"I wanted to find out causes of inactiveness of weaker students. They actually think questions are not for them! In cycle 3, I did big changes on strategies like making friendship based grouping and making weaker students as group leaders. Group work without planning for weak students cannot be effective for them. They actually love to participate ... we should motivate them to speak."



"English in Action (EIA) is a UK aid-funded programme implemented by the Government of Bangladesh and managed by Cambridge Education, a member of Mott MacDonald."



Implementing Partners



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