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Citation

Hedges, Claire; Rahman, Hafiz; Power, Tom and Stevenson, Jacqueline (2024). Realising the potential of online teacher development courses to improve student learning: lessons for Local Education Officers. CSGD Policy Brief #3. The Open University.

URL

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Realising the potential of online teacher development courses to improve student learning: lessons for Local Education Officers

Summary

The Government of Bangladesh is making substantial investment in blended learning for teachers. Teachers undertake face-to-face trainings in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) priority areas, such as supporting students’ foundational learning. In parallel, teachers access CPD courses on the Muktopaath eLearning platform, focused on these same priority areas. Local Education Officers have a pivotal role in the delivery of these trainings and in supporting their practical application in schools and classrooms. This Policy Brief explores teachers’ participation in one set of eLearning courses, Anonde Gonit Shikhi (AGS). It makes evidence-based recommendations on how Local Education Officers at District and Upazila levels can encourage and support teachers to translate learning from both the online courses and face-to-face trainings into the intended changes in teaching practices and student learning in the classroom.

About the research

The research is a collaboration involving The Open University UK, the Institute of Education and Research, University of Dhaka, and forty peer-researchers from rural primary schools in Bangladesh and is funded by the EdTech Hub. Findings come from over 500 interviews with teachers, by teachers. The research took place with teachers from 10 marginalised Upazilas across char, coastal, haor and hilly areas of Bangladesh between 2022 and 2023.

The research explores these teachers’ access and use of techniques and activities from Anonde Gonit Shikhi (Let’s learn Maths with fun) online courses, if and how this is changing the teaching and learning of foundational numeracy, and how Local Education Officers can promote and support emerging good practices.

	Research Cycle 1	Research Cycle 2	Total
Teacher peer-researchers	40		40
Teacher participants	200	118	318
Participant interviews	400	118	518

Findings

Access and use:

1. Even in marginalised rural communities, almost all teachers had been able to access and complete AGS online, predominantly through their own mobile phone and data. Many teachers sought help from others, most often other teachers, to do this.
2. Although many teachers claimed occasional use of AGS activities in class, very few gave specific examples. Some teachers had made no attempt at using AGS in class. For many teachers, this lack of classroom use was, because:
 - a. It was not clear to them that they were expected to use the activities in class.
 - b. They thought they needed technology such as laptops, projectors, and the internet, to use the activities in class.



Credit: 3MPower team

Enablers of use:

3. Teachers were more likely to use the AGS activities regularly in class, when they have:
 - a. encouragement from their head teacher,
 - b. support from other teachers.

Benefits of use:

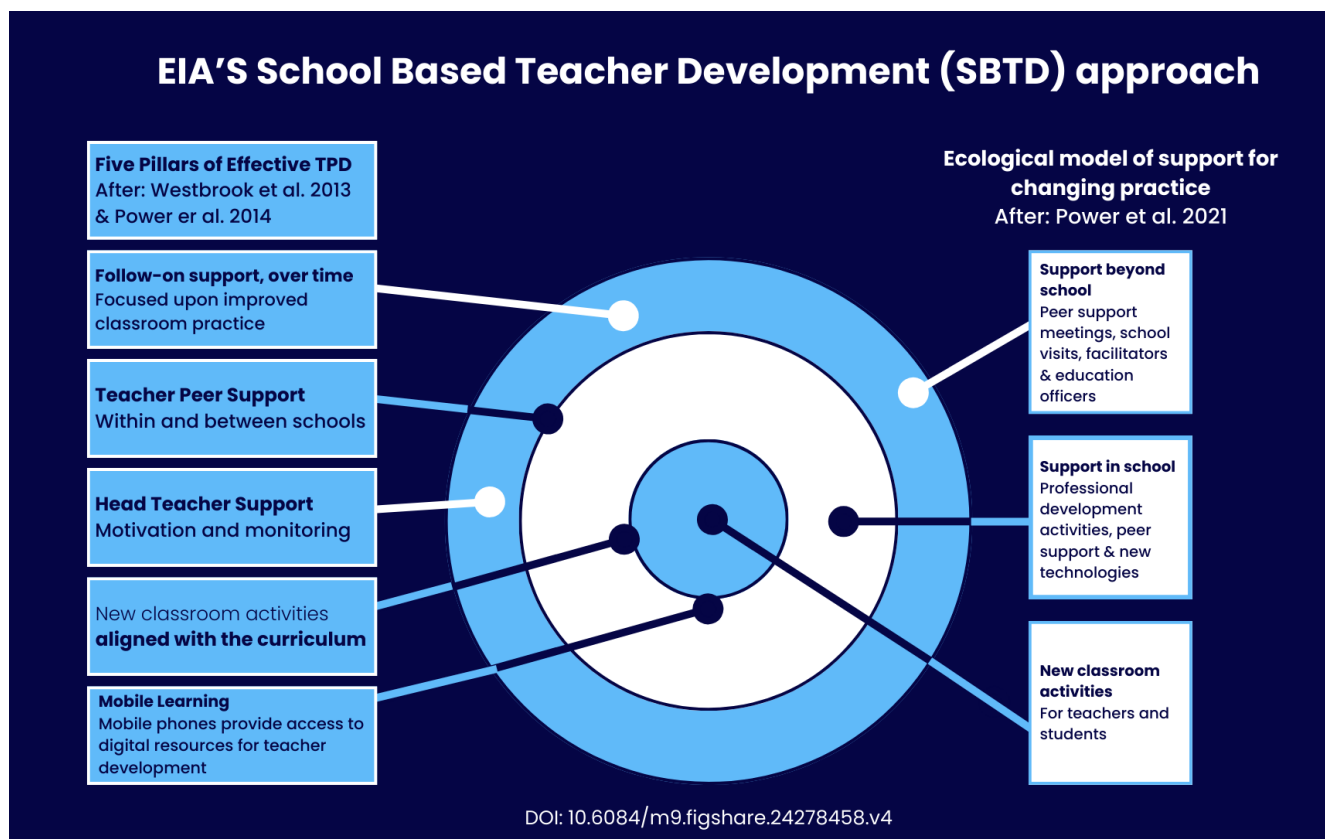
4. Teachers who use AGS activities regularly in class see positive impacts on:
 - a. student behaviour,
 - b. student inclusion,
 - c. student numeracy skills,
 - d. teacher motivation.
5. Teachers, who use AGS regularly, also see positive impacts on teacher development within or between schools by:
 - a. increased sharing of experiences of teaching numeracy,
 - b. greater teacher collaboration.

“By doing these activities, they [the students] learnt better in the classroom. I think these types of activities should be more emphasized in the classroom like ours.” (Teacher, Alikadam)

Reflections

Findings from this research affirm the potential of AGS to help teachers to improve student learning in numeracy. However, to realise this potential, teachers need support to become regular users of the techniques and activities that are promoted by the AGS online and face-to-face trainings, in the classroom.

The following diagram sets out a model for effective support.



Recommendations

To maximise the success of AGS, or other, professional development programmes to improve teaching and learning in marginalised schools, we recommend that Local Education Officers adopt the following:

- 1. Harness teachers' high levels of access to online courses**

Assistant Upazila Education Officers (AUEOs) and Upazila Resource Centre Instructors (URCIs) fully link the AGS on-line courses with the AGS face-

to-face training, so that teachers see that the AGS on-line courses provide resources and activities 'in their hands', whenever they need, to support them in learning with other teachers in their schools and in implementing AGS approaches in their classrooms.

- 2. Develop teachers' understanding of the importance of using AGS activities in class**

District Education Officers (DEOs) and Upazila Education Officers (UEOs) communicate key messages to head teachers and teachers that

support regular use of AGS activities by teachers in class, for example:

- the purpose of AGS is for teachers to try the activities regularly with students in class,
- teachers do not need technology in class to use the AGS activities,
- teachers, who do use AGS activities, see many benefits.

AUEOs and URCIs gain a detailed understanding of AGS themselves; for example, by completing the courses so that they can share their learning experiences with teachers.

3. Promote head teacher support for use of AGS activities in class

UEOs encourage and support head teachers to make AGS and its application in the classroom a focus of in-school CPD activities.

4. Promote support between teachers

AUEOs and URCIs offer Upazila CPD on implementing AGS in class facilitated by teachers, who are regular users, drawing on their own experiences of using AGS techniques and activities with students.

5. Provide follow-up support and monitoring over time

DEOs and UEOs develop a monitoring and feedback framework to support school-level implementation of AGS.

AUEOs and URCIs observe and offer encouragement and feedback to teachers to put AGS activities into practice in their classrooms in line with this framework.

Credits

This brief was written by Claire Hedges, Hafiz Rahman, Tom Power and Jacqueline Stevenson, in collaboration with the 3MPower Research Leadership Team and Early Career Researchers.

The views expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent those of the Centre for the Study of Global Development or The Open University.

Further reading

Power, T., Shaheen, R., Solly, M., Woodward, C., & Burton, S. (2012). English in Action: School Based Teacher Development in Bangladesh. *The Curriculum Journal*, 23(4), 503–529. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585176.2012.737539>

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