
Curriculum Expectations and Teacher Competences – An Empirical Study (Based on Kerala TTC)

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Teacher Educators are key players in the endeavour to improve the quality of teacher Education and teaching. Those who are behind the curriculum designing envisage that the major components of the curriculum should be easily transacted or transmitted to the teacher trainees through Teacher Educators. However the competency level or performance of the Primary teacher who comes out of the TTC courses and join service were found to be quite unsatisfactory. This prompted the researcher to find out where and how this lacuna appears between curriculum designing and transaction. On a close study regarding the functioning of Teacher Training Institutes, it was found that the language English is the most neglected subject in TTC classroom transaction. The great paradox in the system is that there are no specialized English teachers to teach English for a professional course like TTC. Many of the TTC teachers met were bold enough to say that they were forced to take English for TTC which is not their subject.

Keywords: English teachers, Training Institute, Teachers and Curriculum.

Introduction

On an attempt to talk to the said English teachers in English language, majority of them bluntly rejected or opposed the idea and a few who dared went ahead with some great grammatical errors. The researcher was able to narrow down some of the reasons for this problem. Based on the analysis of these problems, several remedial measures have been suggested.

Teacher Educators are key players in the endeavor to improve the quality of Teacher Education and teaching. Teacher Educators are role models. From them many teachers acquire the competences that they later display in classrooms.

Knowledge, skills and values are often imbibed from the Teacher Educators by the Teacher Trainees. Teacher Educators have a dual role to be producers of Knowledge about education, Wherever the researcher went it was found that the TTC students were much engrossed in busily copying materials into their record Books. One close study of the gathered information it was found that the children were busy completing their writing assignments.

On a query raised about the copying of the assignments it was told that they had no time to refer and write things on their own. So an easy method is being adopted by collecting a well written record book or assignment book from seniors or some talented students and get it copied mechanically into their books. The students were even bold to tell that even their handwriting is not being improved by this process as they are racing against time in scribbling these words. Of course, there will be some exceptional children who are capable of doing these works on their own. However not much monitoring is happening in this regard by the Teacher Educators. Here only the ends are taken care and not the means.

The confusion among the Teacher Educators in the Teacher Training Institutes is mainly about who will have to bear the burden of teaching English to the students. In a few institutes the so-called hapless English teachers asked a favour from the researcher to do something to get them freed from the clutches of English teaching. It is indeed disheartening to note that some Teacher Educators are forced and compelled to handle English classes.

With much reluctance and without a choice they are somehow trying to manage the situation. Maybe this is the only place where Teacher Educators openly expressed their inabilities and inadequacies in teaching English. The teachers who take English classes are not getting effective training in teaching the language. In the High Schools in Kerala from the year 2002, specially qualified and trained English teachers were appointed. But the TTC professional course which is much higher than the high school level is still being neglected with such arrangements, compromising mainly in the matter of English language teaching. Some students have even pointed out the disparities between the BRC trainer's version and their teacher's version especially in the matter of narration.

The confidence level appears to be quite low among the Teacher Educators in English. The researcher was able to talk to around 40 Teacher Educators. Simple English was used in initiating the conversation with them. Among the forty teacher educators, except one, all others responded in the mother tongue. Some tactful persuasion was given to them for assessing their speaking skills. However some of them obliged later with much difficulty and to the utter shock used the language with lot of grammatical errors. They were found realizing their mistakes and once that becomes obvious, they were immediately resorting to the mother tongue.

This was the case among the Trainees also. It was found that they were quite rhetoric in pointing the drawbacks of the system in the mother tongue. Several teachers talked about the good old days of the wonderful standards of English teaching. But ironically none among those teachers were able to speak the language and also failed to perform in the proficiency test.

Proficiency Test

When the proficiency test paper was given to them their mood got completely changed. The questions were quite easy in the sense that it was aimed to find out some basic writing skills and some basic theoretical knowledge. Most of them were hesitant to do the task. Some outrightly refused to do it. Some said they need at least a day to answer those 8 questions. Around 10 teacher Educators brought it back home and returned it in the following day and also by post. In several tests, which was taken home it was found that the very handwriting was also different from theirs. This peculiar response and standards clearly denote that these teacher Educators are

not equipped enough to handle such English classes. In one Institute the teacher Educator in English completely failed to grasp the meaning of the word 'implication'.

In the proficiency test it was asked to write about the implications of grading system in Kerala. Here the teacher wrote the grade points only on the answer column. To substantiate that when the test was administered in the TTC 2nd year classroom, the researcher found that the students were waiting without writing the answer for the first question. There were 24 students in the class. None among them knew the meaning of the word 'implication'. This word is very much there in their curriculum in repeated contexts. Another deplorable condition in the system is that some of the teacher

Educators are hiring some English graduates to come and take class for certain topics like phonetics, stress and intonation. But the Teacher Trainees are not at all happy with these kinds of adjustments. In Every Institute, the trainees were complaining about the difficult theoretical terms and the condition in which their teachers fail to explain it clearly to them. The mechanical copying and writing of the assignments is the major task going on in the Institutes.

In classrooms, English is not being used. All the explanations are given in mother tongue. Effective communication in English is not happening in classrooms. Dynamic questioning is an unfulfilled envisaged thing. Most of the Teacher trainees feel that the teaching practice sessions allotted to them are insufficient. They have raised the general complaint that the regular teachers from the respective schools are compelling the trainees to conduct classes according to their suggestion. Majority of the students are not liking the way in which English is being handled in the class. They feel they need a prescribed text book for the proper grasping of English. They have complaints that demo model classes are not taken by the Teacher Educators before they are sent to the schools for teaching practice.

Appointment of Teacher Educators

Teacher Educators in the teacher training Institutes are appointed from High School teachers barring the DIETS. But even in DIETS there are no special English Lecturer post. Normally seniority becomes the criterion in the selection of Teacher Educators. In this system there are no English teachers to conduct class for the Trainees. Any other teacher needs to take this challenge of venturing into the world of English. English has gained this much prominence in the present world and still a professional course like the Teachers training course is left unattended in this matter. Even the High schools are having specially trained qualified English teachers now.

Thus, the teachers who are destined to take English are struggling hard with the English curriculum and its requirements. They themselves feel that when the final evaluation was streamlined a bit there were quite a lot of failures for the TTC examination. If the evaluation process is standardized then the rate of failures in English will be very high. The teachers who are handling English for TTC students were found committing such a lot of pronunciation errors. This modeling is sure to affect adversely the students.

Use of other materials in teaching and learning English

Libraries are seen much underutilized. Each and every student gets worried about the time restraints in completing the assignments. In several institutes it was found that the students in the

class were left alone by the teacher for the students to complete their writing tasks. In the survey it was found that hardly 2% of the teacher Educators read English dailies. They are not even in the habit of watching any English programme in the visual media. Computers and net facilities were seen underutilized.

Suggestions

It is found that only few teachers are handling English properly in classrooms. When teachers do their English, it is found to be marred by grammatical errors, pidginization and incomplete utterances. In a language situation like this, where the teachers have very little to offer to their learners, what is feasible and likely to produce results is a methodology that makes the best use of the language of the text. Or else the teacher needs special training in using the language with proper stress intonation and pauses. An effective training that helps the teacher Educators to pick some good English for themselves as they teach. Teacher Educators need to be well versed in theories also. Let me quote Wardhough (1969) “we can never ignore theory in talking about classroom practices, because good practices must necessarily be built in good theory. Every classroom practice that we have, derives from an underlying theory of some kind.” Hence some measures need to be taken to train the present teacher Educators in the various facets of the theories and its implementation level. Language acquisition is so varied and so complex a psychological function that no single theory has ever been successful in explaining it fully. In the peculiar context here the learners as well as the teacher educators are just beginners Recent Researchers Light brown and Spada (1993) have re-established the significance of corrective feedback in ESL teaching. Hence there should be some regular monitoring, support activities and corrective feedback need to be given to the Teacher Educators very frequently.

Role of a Teacher in a Communicative Language Teaching Method

In this method the role of Educator is more demanding. The roles range from controller of the class to a participant, an organizer a resource person and an assessor. The teacher educator has to be multifaceted. Teacher Educator becomes a language facilitator.

Curriculum and language learning impacts. Before we introduce any change in the learner’s curriculum the teachers need to oriented towards the curriculum. Further, the ability of our Teacher Educator’s conversational ability in English which is vital for translating the curriculum into classroom activities needs to be developed. Equipping the learners to use a language for communication is the primary aim of learning it. Only a communicative oriented curriculum can make the learning of the language relevant and purposeful.

General Suggestions

- New teaching learning centers need to be established and they should act as laboratories for the theory and practice of the teacher training.
- Pre-service and In-service teacher training need to be made inseparable. Continuing professional development strategies need to be envisaged and implemented.
- The status of Teacher Educator needs to be uplifted in the ways of better wages and better title designation.
- Teacher Educators should be given a clear chance in framing the curriculum.

- DIET faculty members and Teacher Educators may be appointed based on their academic performance
- The course should also be extended for three years leaving much scope for teaching practice.
- After the completion of TTC course a bond period can be fixed for the teachers willing, to carry on with the strategies learned.
- English language teachers with English Bachelor degree and master's degree along with training qualifications need only be appointed as teacher Educators in English in TTI's.
- Absence of professional preparation is visible among Teacher Educators.
- Periodical professional enhancement programmes need to be conducted.
- Teacher Educators need to be trained to be reflective practitioners. They should also teach the students to be critical observers.

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