Effectiveness of Teacher Training in Using Latest Technologies

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INTRODUCTION

Teachers who teach English as a second language (ESL) in a developing nation often feel the need for updating their knowledge of new teaching trends by attending in-service training programs or professional development courses. It is believed that such learning paves the way for providing a curriculum that integrates the use of technology within and beyond the language classroom. In this context, it must be stated that teacher training programs prove to be effective when they offer practical experience to teachers in new teaching methods. OECD (2009)'s comparative report defined effective professional development as, "on-going, includes training, practice and feedback, and provides adequate time and follow-up support. Successful programmes involve teachers in learning activities that are similar to ones they will use with their students, and encourage the development of teachers' learning communities" (p.3). Mathew (2014) defines the terms, teacher training, teacher education and teacher development. She quotes Widdowson (1983) and Richards and Nunan (1990), according to whom training, "deals with familiarising student teachers with techniques and skills to apply in the classroom" (p.29). Mathew explains teacher development as "a voluntary process, ongoing, bottom-up, since the starting point is the teachers' own experience where new information is sought, shared, reflected on, tried out, processed in terms of personal experience and finally 'owned' by the teachers" (p.29). Similarly, Evans (2002) quotes Grossman (1994, p. 58) according to whom professional development of experienced teachers could be in the form of "workshops, study groups, Ž reside chats, a district-wide colloquium for middle school teachers, action research projects, and conversations with the professor-in-residence …'(p.3). A professional development experience could be presented as a workshop or other formally related meetings. (Quattlebaum, 2012). In this chapter, the author would elaborately discuss the workshop, which she conducted for teachers (who represented various Indian states) and trained them in using the hand-held devices for teaching language skills. Further, she would throw light on the responses given by the participants, which reflected the effectiveness of the program.

BACKGROUND

Need for Teacher Development

Leadership and Teacher Development Branch (2005) believe that the high quality of professional learning helps teachers to improve their effectiveness in teaching. Carlson and Gadlo (n.d) consider the importance of teacher training in technical skills and say that teachers "need professional development in the pedagogical application of those skills to improve teaching and learning" (p.119). They advocate the need for providing lifelong professional preparedness to teachers through a three dimensional approach of giving pre-service training, in-service training through workshops, seminars and short courses that provide pedagogical and technical support to teachers. Teachers have to plan their teaching based on learners' needs and learning styles. They

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-2255-3.ch664

need to expand their knowledge by learning the changing trends in teaching and learning processes. With the emphasis on using digital technology, it is advisable for teachers to get trained in using the latest technologies in order to provide individualized learning and instant feedback to students' performance. Sanders and McCutcheon (1986) classify teaching practices in three ways and one among them is 'structuring practices' which discusses the need for creating conditions for teaching-learning processes to take place. Training programs are nowadays conducted both online and face-to- face for educating teachers in using advanced technology and it is believed that such hands-on experience would help them to create proper learning conditions to students.

Teacher development programs have relevance to Mezirow (1997)'s theory of transformational learning. According to the theory, faculty development programs "aim at changing individuals' thoughts and actions"(Saroyan, Amundsen, & Li, 1997, p.96). Mezirow believed in the aspect that adult learners would change their practices when they change their basic assumptions about learners, role of teachers and the educational goal. Applying the transformational theory for conducting teacher training programs in using technology, it could be said that it educates teachers about the need for using the required tools for promoting students' language skills, students' level of comfort in using the devices, the way to integrate the use of tools with regular teaching and the extent to which technology would enhance their teaching style.

Saroyan, Amundsen and Li (1997) discuss the faculty development program that they designed based on Ramsden (1992)'s theories and Mezirow's transformational theory. It was a product-oriented program and focused on enabling participants to design a course and demonstrate skill and exhibit self-confidence in teaching it. In the micro-teaching session, they were asked to select and use the strategies which would foster learning among students. They were encouraged to give a self critique besides getting the feedback from peers. They were asked to give their inputs in the beginning and after the program so that their change of perception towards teaching could be evaluated. The data collected was related to the instructional formats that were developed on the basis of Ramsden's and Mezirow's theories. It was evident from the analysis of the feedback given by the participants and teachers that they had changed their view of teaching as knowledge transmission to more focused activity of attaining learning outcomes.

Considering the need for educating teachers in using mobile technology, it is worthwhile to mention that Montrieux, Vanderlinde, Schellens and De Marez (2015) conducted a qualitative focus group study for reviewing the impact of tablet devices towards teaching and learning practices. They used Vanderlinde and Braak (2010)'s e-capacity model for framing a few research questions while conducting the semi-structured interview with a select few teachers and students. According to the e-capacity model, teachers need to have the competence for handling technology and showing teacher development. The interview was conducted after the teachers and students made use of tablet devices for six months. The analysis of the responses given by teachers and students revealed that the introduction of innovative technology helps teachers to integrate technology with traditional teaching. It was found that the "innovative teachers" had adopted the role of coach and had changed their teaching style in order to mobilise students' learning processes.

Similarly, Lynch (2015) presents the outcome of the two studies which revealed that school students (35% of them according to the study) were more interested in doing teachers' lessons or activities by using their tablet.

Maduakolam & Bell (2003) discuss the product-based faculty professional development model that was designed in order to train teachers to use and integrate advanced technologies into instruction and infuse technology into all teacher education courses. In the workshops that were conducted, the participants were given hands-on experience of creating instructional resources and