

The Impact of the District Centre Scheme Courses on Professional Development

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Abstract: Although teachers of English are generally appointed after acquiring pre-service training, there has been very limited opportunity for them for their professional development as there are only a few professional development courses to help grow them professionally. The DCS of the EFL University which has been in operation since 1985 which help teachers develop professionally offers unique professional development courses for teachers of English. Its aim is to improve the standard of English language teaching in teachers who have been working in deprived contexts. It operates through a group of resource persons (master trainers) trained at EFL University who then train teachers and conduct programmes in their respective regions. It offers different teacher training courses such as Orientation Programmes, One year Correspondence-cum-Contact Course and Need Based Courses. The aim of this paper is to assess the impact of the DCS courses in developing the professional skills of the teachers. It also seeks to find out what areas of their professional development have improved through this scheme and its programmes.

Key Words: Professional Development, District Centre Scheme, Resource Persons, teacher training, English language teaching.

1. INTRODUCTION: THE SCHEME

As the official statement of DCS states The District Centre Scheme for English is an outreach project of EFL University, Hyderabad. It aims to bring about qualitative improvement in the teaching and learning of English in the country at the school level (Class VI-X) through its innovative teacher training programmes. This is a unique project, perhaps only one of its kinds in the country through which the university reaches out to ordinary teachers working even in the remote corners of India. Thus, through this project the common masses get benefits of the results of research and training in English language education that the departments of the university have been engaged with. The project has been in operation since 1985 and it has trained more than 76,000 teachers in 66 districts of different states of India. Currently there are 28 District Centres across India.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF DCS:

District Centres for English are opened to achieve the following objectives

- to provide saturation level training to all teachers of English in the state /union territory, especially those in rural and backward regions and areas through short orientation courses supported by long-term course in the distance mode
- to offer need based training to teachers on a sustained basis
- to identify and develop leadership potential among high school teachers of English and develop a cadre of specialists in materials production, teacher training, and testing and evaluation
- to provide opportunities to teachers to grow and develop professionally by promoting collaborative learning and teacher development programmes
- to develop each District Centre into an ELT Resource Centre for the benefit of teachers of English in the district and for the benefit of the community as a whole
- to provide support to institutions like SCERT/ELTIS/SIE in the state for training and development of English teachers from primary to secondary levels

3. SETTING UP A DISTRICT CENTRE:

State sends an application for opening a District Centre for English.

The DCS advisory committee approves based on the location (rural, tribal, state appointed resource persons for each centre. Such resource persons are called at EFL University, Hyderabad to undergo a 3 month course known as Resource Persons Training Course.

4. THE RESOURCE PERSONS' COURSE:

Resource persons' courses are conducted for the newly deputed resource persons who go and start working at their newly opened Centres. The R.P course is offered at EFL University for three months. Faculty members from EFL University teach on the programme. Here, two major areas are given importance- Professional development and Proficiency in language skills of the R.Ps. The major components of the course are: Reading, Writing, Speaking, Grammar, Using media and technology, Vocabulary, Task-Based Teaching, Teaching Materials, Testing and Evaluation, Distance Learning, Principles of Language and Literature Teaching, Study Skills and so on. In addition to all these, they are also taught how to maintain accounts and records and administer the programmes of the Centre as per the norms. The R.Ps are senior teachers of English teaching at the High School levels. After undergoing the course they go back with to their Centres and work with confidence and leadership zeal. They are committed to excellence and dedicated to train the teachers of their region.

While the R.P Course is organized by EFL University at EFL University, the following programmes are conducted by the District Centres for English at their respective Centres.

5. TEN-DAY ORIENTATION PROGRAMME:

The ten day Orientation Programme is conducted for all teachers of English. It orients them to modern approaches, methods and techniques of teaching English. Components of modules on Reading, Writing, Speaking, Study Skills etc. are provided to the participants in capsule form. It also helps them develop their proficiency in English. **Certificate of Teaching in English (CTE Course)**

The DCEs also conduct a Correspondence-cum-Contact Course for teachers known as CTE. It is offered to teachers who after joining the 10-Day Orientation Programme opt for this and wish to continue their learning and grow professionally. This course is for teachers who have been working at the High School levels. After their enrollment they have to undergo contact classes for two spells; one called as Initial Contact Programme for five days, the second one known as Mid-term Contact Programme for 10 days and Final Contact Programme for 10 days. In the final contact programme they participate in the contact classes and write their final exams. The components of the CcC are based on Professional and Proficiency development.

6. NEED BASED COURSES:

Need Based Courses are conducted after finding out need of the teachers. Resource Persons visit nearby schools and observe classes and interact with teachers and find out the needs of the teachers. Based on their needs they organize need based courses. Such courses are usually for two to three days. So they are easy to organize. Examples of such courses are- Communication skills, Comprehensive and Continuous Evaluation and so on.

7. SEMINARS/ WORKSHOPS AND PUBLICATIONS:

The Resource persons also conduct seminars and workshops on relevant themes pertaining to teaching and learning in which teachers present papers and participate. They also bring out journals and text books involving the teachers in the process. It also conducts programmes for heads of schools and administrators to seek their participation in the training programme of the Centre in general.

8. DATA COLLECTION AND DATA ANALYSIS:

We collected data from 13 Resource Persons and 33 teachers through questionnaires to know the effectiveness of the courses and areas of improvement. From the 8 resources persons it was gathered through recorded interviews that teachers have picked up techniques of teaching such as communicative language teaching approach and have been using them in their classroom. They have also picked up study skills and the use of dictionary which was not done earlier. Teachers have got oriented in recent approaches of teaching. They have made their classes lively and more active. They look enthusiastic and confident. They have shed the fear of speaking English in the classroom. Their skills in spoken English have improved. They have also picked up effective writing skills. They have made progress in reading skills. We also collected data from 30 teachers who underwent training programmes under DCS. According to their response, it has been found that they find the DCS materials interesting and interactive. A detailed table of the data has been appended. The courses are helpful for their proficiency development and professional development. They so pointed out that the courses helped in their grammar teaching as well as in spoken English. Their skills of teaching have improved. They have learned to make their classes interactive and activity based.

In addition to the above mentioned survey, there has been a study by Mr. Shashikant Puri on the impact of the Orientation Programmes on the teachers for his M.Phil. Degree awarded by Dept. of English Dr. Baba Saheb Marathwada University, Aurangabad in 2015. Following are the details of the research.

Title of research "A study of effectiveness of Orientation Training Programme conducted by District Centre for English among English language teachers in Beed District

Objectives:

- To study the English language teachers language competency through pre test.
- To implement Orientation Training Programme.
- To study the effectiveness of Orientation Training Programme among English language teachers
- To compare the effectiveness of Orientation Training Programme among primary and secondary English language teachers language competency
- To compare the effectiveness of Orientation Training Programme among male and female English language teachers in Beed District.

The researcher took 100 teachers of English as his sample and taught them 60 periods of Orientation Programme module and after this, he gathered feed-back from the teachers.

Major findings:

- Orientation training programme is effective to develop the English language competency of English language teachers in Beed District.
- Orientation Training Programme is similarly effective for primary and secondary to develop language skills and in grammar and vocabulary.
- Orientation training programme is similarly effective for male and female English language teachers in Beed District. 4 English language teachers in Beed District developed their language competency through Orientation Training Programme. 5 .the components of Orientation Training Programme are mostly effective to enhance the language competency of English language teachers in Beed District.

APPENDIX - A

Questionnaire

1. Name:
2. Designation:
3. Gender:
4. Age:
5. Education:

BACKGROUND IN ENGLISH

6. How many years have you studied English?
(a) 5 years (b) 10 years (c) 15 years
7. Have you done B. Ed/M. Ed with English as a method?
8. What subjects do you teach?
9. Is English additional subject given to you?
10. What course have you attended?
(1) Need Based Course
(2) CcC Programme
(3) Orientation Programme
11. For what reasons have you attended the course?
(1) To achieve proficiency in English
(2) To improve myself professionally
(3) To learn new methods of teaching
(4) To get study material
12. Did the course meet your expectations?
13. Have your skill of teaching improved after doing the course?
(1) Yes
(2) No
(3) No to some extent
14. Mention one new skill you have learned to implement in the class after doing the course?
(1) To make use of the dictionary
(2) Make the class more interactive and activities based
(3) Focus on skills, grammar and vocabulary

15. Was the course helpful to you?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No
- (c) To some extent

16. Any suggestions for improvement of the course?

- (a).....
- (b).....

APPENDIX - B

Feedback questionnaire have been submitted by the 33 participants of the District Centre for English, Beed, Maharashtra to study the impact of these courses. It is found that teachers have benefitted a lot from these courses. Their responses have been very positive. The Report of the response is attached.

9. Table No. 1.1: Total no. Of Participants with gender

Sl. No.	Gender	No. Of Participants	Percentage
1.	Male	26	78.7%
2.	Female	7	21.2%
	Total	33	100%

Table No.1.2. No. of Participants in OP and their Qualification with Percentage

Participants	Qualification			
	B.A B. Ed	%	M.A.B.Ed	%
Male	15	57.6%	11	42.3%
Female Teachers	1	14.2%	6	85.7%
Total	16	71.8%	17	128%

Table No. 1.3. Participant's age with Percentage

Age	25-30	%	31-35	%	36-40	%	41-45	%	46-50	%	51-55	%
Male	4	15.3	7	26.9	4	15.3	7	26.9	3	11.5	1	3.8
Female	2	28.5	2	28.5	3	42.8	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	6	43.8	9	55.4	7	58.1	7	26.9	3	11.5	1	3.8

Table No. 1.4. For what reasons have you attended the course?

Sl. No.	Answer	No. Of participants	Percentage
1.	To achieve proficiency in English	31	93.9%
2.	To improve myself professionally	28	84.8%
3.	To learn new methods of English	32	96.9%
4.	To get materials	16	48.4%

Table No. 1.5. Did the course meet your expectations?

Sl. No.	Answer	No. Of participants	Percentage
1.	Yes	33	100%
2.	No	-	-

Table No. 1.6. Have your skill of teaching improving after doing the course?

Sl. No.	Answer	No. Of participants	Percentage
1.	Yes	33	100%
2.	No	-	-
3.	To some extent	-	-

Table No. 1.7. Mention one new skill you have learned to implement in the class after doing the course?

Sl. No.	Answer	No. Of participants	Percentage
1.	To make use of the Dictionary	11	33.3%
2.	Make the class more interactive and activities based	30	90.9%
3.	Focus on skills, grammar and vocabulary	12	36.3%

Table No. 1.8. Was the course helpful to you?

Sl. No.	Answer	No. Of participants	Percentage
1.	Yes	33	100%
2.	No	-	-
3.	To some extent	-	-

10. RESULT:

All participants (100%) said that the DCS is a wonderful scheme for teacher development and very useful for in-service teachers of English. Their responses have been very positive. Teachers have developed professionally. Teachers are confident to use English in the class. Their proficiency level has also developed. The materials are of very good quality. The teachers have been using dictionary in the class. They also use interactive methods in the class.

11. CONCLUSION:

It is to be stated that the survey of impact conducted by DCS, EFLU Hyderabad on the impact of DCS courses as a whole shows that trainee teachers have benefitted a lot for their professional development from the courses offered by DCS. From Shashikant Puri's study also it is found that the Orientation Programme has helped a great deal to the trainee teachers. The materials used for the programmes and quality of training imparted by the resource persons (master trainers) are very helpful and mainly responsible for creating such an impact.

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2. District Centre Scheme Brochure: EFL University Hyderabad

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