

AN INTERVENTION FOR CAPACITY BUILDING OF PRIMARY TEACHERS

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With the introduction of education reforms in 1997, primary cycle of the school system was divided into three key stages. Grades I and II belong to key stage one, two and three belong to key stage two and, grade V belongs to the key stage three. At each stage it is the responsibility of the teacher to help develop basic competencies in children to meet the challenges in future. Implementing a competency-based curriculum was a difficult task for the teacher. This study focused on how to help teachers in developing skills to be confident in presenting subject matter of the newly introduced subject ERA (Environment Related Activities) in multiple and interesting ways to motivate students in learning.

Twelve schools were selected from the two educational districts of the North Western province considering the convenience of the data collectors to be in the classroom for about 25-30 days. Data were collected by observing twelve grade two classrooms of the twelve schools using the guided practice approach. It consisted of three phases—observation, conversation and monitoring. For the first and the last phases, data collectors spent about 5-10 days in the classroom by observing what was happening in the classroom. The second phase was about 10-15 days, in which both the teacher and the guide worked together in planning and implementing lessons.

Data gathered from observations, interviews and documents were triangulated and ten descriptors were used in the analysis to rank the change of behaviour of teachers. They are-- 1) Understanding and inquiry learning, 2) Students' ideas, 3) Level of students, 4) Generate student ideas, 5) Making connections, 6) Student-student interactions, 7) Groupwork, 8) Student initiated activities, 9) Gain knowledge through their own activities and, 10) Assessment. It was found that teaching in these classrooms was predominantly teacher-centred. The intervention of the guide in the classroom in co-planning and co-teaching helped teachers realize their weaknesses and think of ways in overcoming them. However, out of twelve teachers four were unable to change their traditional way of teaching and another four were at a transition stage in developing student-centred behaviour. The changes that they have made were not permanent and switching back to the easier teacher dominated approach was observable. The ability of teachers to change their behaviour was slow. There were only four teachers who were able to make a shift from traditional teacher-centred behaviours to student-centred behaviours. The change was possible due to the continual guidance given by the guide to the teacher and the teacher's readiness for the change. It is recommended that the monitoring panels in the educational zones should conduct professional development activities in collaboration with the in-service advisers and experienced teachers on a regular basis to impart multiple types of knowledge and skills to enable them to (i) plan, (ii) design, (iii) present subject matter in interesting ways and, (iv) assess student abilities.

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