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TRANSFORMING ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING PRACTICES: THE ROLE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS IN THE KASHMIR VALLEY

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ABSTRACT

Continuous learning is the minimum requirement for success in any field (Brian Tracy). We always learn, even if we think we know a lot. Similarly, trainers of English language teachers need to update themselves with the new innovations and developments in the field of English language teacher training. The current study was conducted in the Kashmir Valley of Jammu and Kashmir to explore the perceptions of English language teacher trainers regarding the professional development programs they attend. These training programs are organized by various teacher training institutes in the Kashmir Valley. Data was collected through a well-designed questionnaire, and after coding, analysis was carried out using SPSS 25. The results show that English language trainers have positive perceptions regarding their continuous professional development and the training programs they attended. It was also found that there is no significant difference between the perceptions of different groups based on various demographic variables. However, for some items, a significant difference in perception was observed between gender categories.

Keywords: Training, English, Perceptions, Kashmir, Language

1. Introduction

Teachers are role models for their students, and in today's competitive world, the role of the teacher has evolved from that of a mere instructor to that of a facilitator. Teachers must be highly qualified and skilled in order to teach effectively in the classroom. To meet the challenges teachers, face in the country due to innovations and developments in the educational sector, many organizations and institutes of national importance have been established to provide training for teachers in general and English teachers in particular. These training institutes organize various short-term workshops,

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conferences, seminars, and faculty development programs for English language teachers from time to time. India is a vast country, and it is not possible for training institutes to conduct training programs for all teachers. Therefore, these institutes follow a decentralized model of training, where they train selected teachers at the national level, who, in turn, train teachers from each district at the state level. At the district level, trainers develop zonal resource persons who are responsible for providing training to English language teachers at the grassroots level.

The present study was carried out at the UT level, where district resource persons are trained to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills to train English teachers in their respective districts. The study aimed to assess the perceptions of the trainers of English teachers who attended different training programs organized by the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT).

2. Literature Review

There is a constant need for research on the professional development of English language trainers and teachers regarding their opinions and perceptions to improve the quality of English language teacher development programs. Turhan (2009) conducted a study on the perceptions of Turkish university teachers regarding professional development. He found that teachers had positive perceptions about continuous training programs. A similar study in Myanmar revealed that teachers held a positive attitude toward teacher development programs, which boosted their confidence in using English in the classroom as well as for other communication purposes (Ulla, 2017). A study on training English language teacher trainers was conducted in Vietnam by Vu et al. (2014). The findings revealed that despite efforts to train the trainers effectively, more attention was needed on course design, delivery of knowledge, and consideration of participants' contexts. Continuous professional development is necessary to bring qualitative improvements in the teaching and learning process. Asmari (2016) conducted a study in Saudi Arabia on the perceptions of English teachers. His findings indicated that teachers had positive perceptions of continuous professional development. However, they expressed concerns about the indigenization of professional development programs, support from institutions, and follow-up after the training.

3. Research Methodology

A descriptive cross-sectional design was followed in this research study. Descriptive research design is commonly used in social sciences, psychology, and education (Nassaji, 2015). It helps study variables in their natural setting without manipulating the setting. Data was collected directly from teacher trainers of English teachers who attended different training programs organized by the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) in the Kashmir Valley.

The population of this research consisted of all the trainers of English teachers who are training English language teachers in their respective districts and have participated in various professional training programs organized by DIETs and SCERT Kashmir division.

All 50 trainers of English who participated in two training programs were included in the study. A well-developed questionnaire was created to collect data from the respondents. The questionnaire was designed after consulting various studies on teacher development. It consisted of two sections: one related to the demographic information of the respondents and the second regarding the training programs attended by the trainers. The items were framed on a five-point Likert scale to elicit responses regarding trainers' perceptions of the training programs they attended.

Before administering the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted to check the validity and reliability of the research instrument. The first draft of the questionnaire was given to three research scholars and two experts from Linguistics to confirm its validity. After their feedback, some items were deleted, some were added, and others were modified. After incorporating these changes, the final draft of the questionnaire was created using Google Forms. The questionnaire was distributed to 20 participants. The data was coded, tabulated, and entered into SPSS version 25. Cronbach's alpha was used to check the reliability of the questionnaire, with a value above 0.70 considered acceptable for the reliability of the instrument.

Reliability of the Items

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.701	9

Table 1.1

The final questionnaire was distributed among all fifty trainers of English teachers; however, only 35 trainers responded to the questionnaire and were included in the final analysis.

4. Analysis and Results

4.1 Analysis of Demographic Variables

As seen in Table 1.2, 48.6% of the respondents belong to central Kashmir, while 37.1% belong to southern Kashmir, and 14.3% belong to the northern part of the Kashmir Valley.

Classification of Respondents Based on Geographical Location

Geographical Division			
	North	**Centre**	**South**
N	5	17	13
%	14.3	48.6	37.1

Table 1.2

Talking about the educational qualification of the teacher trainers it can be seen from table 1.3 that 48.6% of the trainers have post-graduation in English, 14.3% are M.Phil. and 37.1% of the trainers are Ph.Ds.

Classification of Respondents Based on Educational Qualification

Educational Qualification				
	Graduation	Post-Graduation (English)	M.Phil.	Ph.D.
N	0	17	5	13
%	0	48.6	14.3	37.1

Table 1.3

Table 1.4 provides the professional qualification ratio of the teachers and it can be clearly seen that 60% of the trainers have done bachelors in Education while 40% of the trainers have done master's in education as well.

Classification of Respondents Based on Professional Qualification

Table 1.4

Professional Qualification			
	D.Ed.	B.Ed.	M.Ed.
N	0	21	14
%	0	60.0	40.0

It can be seen from the table 1.5 that 77.1% of the trainers are males and only 22.9% of the trainers are females which implies that males are participating more in the trainings as compared to females.

Classification of Respondents Based on Gender

Gender		
	Male	Female
N	27	8
%	77.1	22.9

Table 1.5

Talking about the experience of training, the English language teachers, it can be seen from the table that majority of the trainers have 6-10 years of experience, 42.9% have less than 5 years of experience and 8.6% are newly recruited teachers.

Classification of Respondents Based on Training Experience

Training Experience					
	No Experience	<5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	>15 years
N	3	15	17	0	0
%	8.6	42.9	48.6	0	0

Table 1.6

4.2 Descriptive Analysis

Table 2.1 provides the descriptive analysis of the different items on a five-point Likert scale, showing the mean and standard deviation of each item.

It can be observed from the table that 54.3% and 11.4% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that the training helped them in updating and improving their English language teaching skills. 34.3% of the respondents were neutral. The mean is 3.77 with a standard deviation of 0.646.

Regarding whether the training met the needs and expectations of the trainers, 40% and 8.6% of the respondents believed that it was aligned with their needs and expectations, while 48.6% had a neutral perception of the training programs' alignment with their needs and expectations.

45.7% and 14.3% of the teacher trainees agreed and strongly agreed, respectively, that the training will bring positive changes at the ground level, while as 40% were neutral.

42.9% and 40% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that the trainers of English language teachers had enough knowledge and skills to train other English trainers. 17.1% expressed neutral perceptions regarding this statement.

42.9% and 8.6% of the trainers agreed and strongly agreed that they participate in the training by choice, implying that there is no external pressure from administrators. 37.1% were neutral, while 11.4% disagreed with this statement.

Descriptive Analysis of Items on a Five-Point Likert Scale Strongly Disagree (SDA), Disagree (DA), Neutral (N), Agree (A) and Strongly Agree (SA) with their Mean and Standard Deviation

Item Statements	SDA (f) (%)	DA (f) (%)	N (f) (%)	A (f) (%)	SA (f) (%)	Mean	SD
The training programme helped me in updating and improving my English language training skills.	0	0	12	19	4	3.77	.646
	0	0	34.3	54.3	11.4		
The training programme was according to my needs and expectations.	0	1	17	14	3	3.54	.701
	0	2.9	48.6	40.0	8.6		
The training programme will bring a positive change at the ground level for developing the English language teaching skills of English teachers.	0	0	14	16	5	3.74	.701
	0	0	40.0	45.7	14.3		

The trainers had enough knowledge and skills to train the trainer trainees.	0	0	6	15	14	4.23	.731
	0	0	17.1	42.9	40.0		
I take part in the training programmes by choice	0	4	13	15	3	3.49	.818
	0	11.4	37.1	42.9	8.6		

Table 2.1

4.3 Comparative Analysis

Comparative analysis of the statements was carried out using one-way ANOVA for more than two groups, and a t-test was used for the comparative analysis of the two groups.

As seen in Table 3.1, there is no significant difference in perception between trainers belonging to different geographical divisions of the Kashmir Valley. For all the items, the significance value is above 0.05. This means that all the trainers from different regions of Kashmir Valley believe that the training programme helped them in updating their teaching skills, met their needs and expectations, will bring positive changes at the ground level, the trainers were knowledgeable and skilled, and that they participated in the training by choice.

Comparative Analysis Anova for Geographical Division

Item Statements	Geographical Division	Mean	Std. Dev.	F Value	Sig.
The training programme helped me in updating and improving my English language training skills.	North	4.00	.707	.387	.683
	Centre	3.71	.588		
	South	3.77	.725		
The training programme was according to my needs and expectations.	North	3.80	1.095	.413	.665
	Centre	3.47	.624		
	South	3.54	.660		
The training programme will bring a positive change at the ground level for developing the English	North	4.40	.894	2.952	.067
	Centre	3.59	.618		

language teaching skills of English teachers.	South	3.69	.630		
The trainers had enough knowledge and skills to train the trainer trainees.	North	4.40	.894	.395	.677
	Centre	4.12	.781		
	South	4.31	.630		
I take part in the training programmes by choice	North	3.60	.548	.054	.947
	Centre	3.47	.874		
	South	3.46	.877		

Table 3.1

There is no significant difference between different levels of educational qualification regarding perceptions of the various items about the training. As seen in Table 3.2, for most of the items, the significance value is above the threshold of 0.05. However, for the second item, there is a significant difference between the different groups based on educational qualifications. Trainers with a post-graduate degree in English perceive that the training met their needs and expectations more than those in other qualification groups, who perceive it less positively.

Additionally, there is a significant difference in the perceptions of the trainers regarding the fifth item, which relates to whether they participate in training by choice. As shown in the table, M.Phil. trainers are more likely to agree that they participate in the training by choice, compared to the other categories, where the mean is lower.

Comparative Analysis Anova for Educational Qualification

Item Statements	Educational Qualification	Mean	Std. Dev.	F Value	Sig.
The training programme helped me in updating and improving my English language training skills.	Grad	0	0	.510	.605
	Post Grad (English)	3.88	.697		
	M.Phil.	3.60	.548		
	Ph.D.	3.69	.630		
The training programme was according to my needs and expectations.	Grad	0	0	5.300	.010
	Post Grad (English)	3.88	.697		
	M.Phil.	3.00	.000		

	Ph.D.	3.31	.630		
The training programme will bring a positive change at the ground level for developing the English language teaching skills of English teachers.	Grad	0	0	.380	.687
	Post Grad (English)	3.71	.686		
	M.Phil.	4.00	.707		
	Ph.D.	3.69	.751		
The trainers had enough knowledge and skills to train the trainer trainees.	Grad	0	0	.543	.586
	Post Grad (English)	4.35	.702		
	M.Phil.	4.00	1.000		
	Ph.D.	4.15	.689		
I take part in the training programme by choice	Grad	0	0	4.436	.020
	Post Grad (English)	3.29	.772		
	M.Phil.	4.40	.548		
	Ph.D.	3.38	.768		

Table 3.2

It can be seen from the table that no significant difference in perception is observed among the trainers belonging to different groups on the basis of professional qualifications. All trainers similarly believe that the training programme helped them in updating their teaching skills, was aligned with their needs, will bring positive changes, that the trainers had sufficient knowledge and skills, and that they participated in the training by choice.

Comparative Analysis Anova for Professional Qualification

Item Statements	Professional Qualification	Mean	Std. Dev.	F Value	Sig.
The training programme helped me in updating and improving my English language training skills.	D.Ed.	0	0	.011	.917
	B.Ed.	3.76	.625		
	M.Ed.	3.79	.699		
The training programme was according to my needs	D.Ed.	0	0	.085	.772

and expectations.	B.Ed.	3.57	.676		
	M.Ed.	3.50	.760		
The training programme will bring a positive change at the ground level for developing the English language teaching skills of English teachers.	D.Ed.	0	0	1.414	.243
	B.Ed.	3.86	.655		
	M.Ed.	3.57	.756		
The trainers had enough knowledge and skills to train the trainer trainees.	D.Ed.	0	0	.314	.579
	B.Ed.	4.29	.717		
	M.Ed.	4.14	.770		
I take part in the training programme by choice	D.Ed.	0	0	.007	.934
	B.Ed.	3.48	.928		
	M.Ed.	3.50	.650		

Table 3.3

Table 3.4 shows that all the trainers of English belonging to different groups of teaching experience have the same perception regarding all the items because, for all the items, significance value is above the threshold value of 0.05% which implies no significant difference between the different age groups.

Comparative Analysis Anova for Teaching Experience

Item Statements	Teaching Experience	Mean	Std. Dev.	F Value	Sig.
The training programme helped me in updating and improving my English language training skills.	No experience	3.67	.577	.052	.949
	<5 years	3.80	.775		
	6-10 years	3.76	.562		
	11-15 years	0	0		
	> 15 years	0	0		
The training programme was according to my needs and	No experience	3.67	.577	.048	.953
	<5 years	3.53	.834		
	6-10 years	3.53	.624		

expectations.	11-15 years	0	0		
	> 15 years	0	0		
The training programme will bring a positive change at the ground level for developing the English language teaching skills of English teachers.	No experience	4.00	.000	.287	.753
	<5 years	3.67	.816		
	6-10 years	3.76	.664		
	11-15 years	0	0		
	> 15 years	0	0		
The trainers had enough knowledge and skills to train the trainer trainees.	No experience	4.33	.577	.089	.915
	<5 years	4.27	.799		
	6-10 years	4.18	.728		
	11-15 years	0	0		
	> 15 years	0	0		
I take part in the training programmes by choice	No experience	3.33	.577	.256	.775
	<5 years	3.60	.632		
	6-10 years	3.41	1.004		
	11-15 years	0	0		
	> 15 years	0	0		

Table 3.4

It can be seen from Table 3.5 that no significant difference is found in the perceptions of males and females, as the mean scores for all the items are nearly equal for both groups. However, a significant difference is observed regarding the item that relates to whether participants take part in the training programme by choice. The mean score for males is higher than that for females, which implies that males participate in the training programmes by choice, whereas females do not as frequently as compare to male

Comparative Analysis t-test for Gender

Item-Statements	Gender	Mean	Std. Dev.	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means	
				F-Value	Sig.	t-Value	Sig. (2-tailed)
The training programme helped me in updating and improving my English language training skills.	Male	3.85	.602	1.365	.251	1.371	.180
	Female	3.50	.756				
The training programme was according to my needs and expectations.	Male	3.52	.753	1.948	.172	-.373	.712
	Female	3.63	.518				
The training programme will bring a positive change at the ground level for developing the English language teaching skills of English teachers.	Male	3.78	.698	.109	.743	.536	.596
	Female	3.63	.744				
The trainers had enough knowledge and skills to train the trainer trainees.	Male	4.30	.724	.633	.432	1.007	.321
	Female	4.00	.756				
I take part in the training programmes by choice	Male	3.9	.747	1.040	.315	-1.042	. 050
	Female	3.1	.765				

Table 3.5

5. Conclusion

Teachers are the wealth of a nation. Good and capable teachers contribute to effective teaching and learning. English language has attained a prestigious position across all sectors of life, which places high demands on teachers to teach students effectively in the classroom. With advancements in language pedagogy and language technology, teachers must continually update themselves with the new skills and attitudes necessary for effective teaching.

Training institutes in the Kashmir Valley are consistently organizing training programmes for English language teachers and trainers. This paper analyses two such programmes conducted by the State Council of Educational Research and Training, examining the perceptions of English language trainers.

From the data, it was observed that trainers who attended the different programmes had positive perceptions regarding the training programme they participated in. They acknowledged that the training programmes helped them update and improve their English language teaching skills. They also appreciated that the training programmes were aligned with their needs and expectations. Furthermore, they believe that the training programmes will bring positive changes at the grassroots level in the training of English language teachers. The trainers were satisfied with the knowledge and skills of the instructors, and they acknowledged that they participated in the training programmes by choice.

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