English Language Teachers' Resource Centre: A Model for Developing Contexts

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Abstract

It is an irony that when the importance and demand of the English language in the developed as well as developing countries have increased several folds in the last five decades, the standards of its teaching and learning have decreased considerably. The deterioration of standards has been attributed to inadequate English language teaching (ELT) policy, poor teaching environment, inadequate infrastructure, or to ELT practitioners who in most countries are largely untrained. In order to address the problem, the respective countries have been engaged in modernising and improving their curricular practices and teacher preparation programmes for some time now. What is rarely considered is the fact that a good teaching programme requires adequate teaching resources. Central to the amelioration of English language teaching process is unarguably the resource that is available to support the teaching and learning processes. While it is necessary that the teachers are adequately trained, establishment of an English language teachers'' resource centre to cater to the developing needs of the teachers (and learners) is essential. This article provides a rationale for the establishment of a teachers' resource centre, and, based on the experience in Nepal, suggests a model for its development and operation in other developing contexts. It discusses features as well as constraints of such a centre, and outlines ways in which it can, despite the constraints, be sustainable.

Key words: English language teaching, ELT resource centre, resource centre facility, resource centre management, English language teachers

Introduction

The only man who is educated is the man who has learned how to learn; the man who has learned how to adapt and change; the man who has realized that no knowledge is secure; only the process of "seeking" knowledge gives the basis of security.

- Rogers (1969 p.2)

Languages, including the English language, are structured around the socio-political and economic composition of the Nepalese society and are closely related to the socio-economic background of the people. Languages, therefore, are aligned in accordance with their socio-economic relevance and are accorded space in the national system of life accordingly (Giri, 2009). The English language, for example, though it is not an indigenous language of Nepal and was imported for ideological reasons (L. Awasthi, 2010), occupies an impeccable and indispensable place in the socio-economic system, and therefore, the drive for its learning is paramount. Its teaching and learning dominates all other languages including Nepali (Rana, 2008). As such, the parents of school and college children go incredible length to get their children to learn English. Their main concern today is to provide their children quality English language education (ELE) which helps them gain access to educational opportunity and employment. English is, therefore, socially, economically and

educationally elevated higher than all other local languages. As a result of this, though it is a "foreign" language, it has become one of the most sought after subjects in education and the most important language in terms of popularity, demand and use. It is spoken at all socio-economic levels and "a large percentage of the population speak at least some English, with varying levels of accuracy and fluency" (Eagle, 2000 p. 34). It also extends beyond academic pursuits to the social and business transactions making English a primary language of communication in trade, tourism, commerce, mass media, international projects, so on and so forth. So much so that, as Yadav (1990) puts it below, it has gone beyond the "foreignness" and become a *lingua franca* for a large number of people:

> English cannot be considered a foreign language like French or Arabic. In the context of Nepal, it is the only language of education and communication for a majority of people and the number of such people is increasing at a fast rate. It needs, therefore, to be given the recognition of this reality in our national language policy document, and funds should be accordingly allocated to the effective teaching/learning of English in Nepal (Yadav, 1990 quoted in Eagle, 2000 p. 37).

When planned formal education commenced in the 1950s, English, as a product as well as a tool of the previous elitist system, was carried over to the new education system and was introduced as a compulsory subject in the upper primary level. However, due considerations were not given to teacher development, material production, resource allocation, and infrastructure development, a pitfall the Nepali education system has not hitherto been able to bail out. As a result, English language education in public schools is more or less a ritualistic exercise.

English language education, thus, despite its perceived instrumental value in the process of reform and modernisation, falls short of meeting the needs arising from the country's rapid modernisation process particularly in the fields of economy, science and technology, tourism, and increasing contact with the outside world. Furthermore, the ELT suffers from inadequate resources, under-qualified or untrained teaching force, and lack of facilities and infrastructure. ELE is deteriorating, as a consequence, and there is a massive failure in English at the secondary and post secondary levels. In fact, the results between 1981 and 2009 demonstrate that 69% to 80% of all students who sat the national English examinations both at secondary and post-secondary levels failed due to their failing in English (J. Awasthi, 1995; MOE, 2009). This huge waste of resources could be due to its poor delivery at the pedagogic level.

It is a paradox, therefore, that while the importance and demand of English in educational, professional and social spheres in Nepal is growing due to globalisation, internationalisation of education and global advancement of information/communication technology (ICT), the standard of ELE is deteriorating (Kansakar, 2010). Since English is the language of the world body of knowledge, international communication, tourism, trade and business, it plays an important role in educational and economic development of a country. Improvement of the quality of education and enhancement of economic development processes, therefore, depends, to a large degree, on the amelioration of ELE. In other words, the quality of ELE is directly linked to the quality of education which itself is dependent upon the availability of adequate teaching and learning resources. In this article, based on the analysis of the ELE situation in Nepal, and taking English language teachers as a case study, I look into the value of ELT resources and make a case for the establishment of an English language teachers' resource centre. On the basis of the experiences in setting up a resource centre in Nepal, I present a model for the centre. I also outline constraints and challenges such a centre in developing contexts is likely to encounter.

The Context

As discussed above, the English language has been, since its introduction into the formal education system in the beginning of the 20th century, an inseparable part of Nepal's academic and development pursuits the demand for which in all spheres of life is growing rapidly (Jha, 1992). At the school level, the purpose of its teaching is to help develop ability in learners to communicate

with speakers of English and to acquire knowledge, ideas, skills and techniques imparted formally and informally through English (MOE, 2009). A functional proficiency in the language enables them to get into post-secondary education and/ or into a lucrative workforce (Giri, 2007). English, thus, has educational and economic values. It also has been a *lingua franca* and the core of all academic and research activities. In private schools and colleges, for example, it is the only medium of instruction. It is also the main language in major disciplines of higher education. Outside formal education system, English is the second most used and sought after language. In modern Nepal, therefore, English has become the language of economic success, and of occupational and professional development. Ability to speak/use English helps with educational, socio-economic and professional gains, and provides access to openness, world expertise and to information. It has become so crucial that an educated Nepali is virtually deprived of all sorts of opportunities if he or she does not know English.

Nepal, like most developing countries, however, is struggling to meet the growing demand of quality English language education. ELE is a huge profession and is growing at a very fast rate. Quality ELE, however, remains elusive. The elusiveness of quality ELE can be attributed to the lack of quality English language teaching (ELT) resources, both human and material.

ELT Resources and the Teachers' Quandary

"There can be no education development without teacher development" (Elliott, 1993 p.5) goes a popular saying. The *Nepali* education system is at least in theory based on this premise. In practice, however, teacher development seldom gets its due consideration and as a consequence, as is evident from the figures below, the teacher factor remains as a major problem.

Figure 1: Number of (fully) trained teachers

Total no. of teachers	Number of trained teachers	Percentage of trained teachers	Teacher-student ratio
1,65,552	36800	22.2	1.38

(Source – MOES, 2009 p. 5)

Most English language teachers, as Figure 1 illustrates, are under-qualified and untrained with an annual growth of less than one percent. They generally have a poor grasp of English and lack a proper understanding of ELT principles. Such teachers, consequently, tend to do what they do best, i.e. explain English texts in the vernacular *Nepali,* abandoning efforts to develop the target language proficiency and skills in students. To make the matter worse, more than half of the untrained teachers cannot see any difference between teaching social studies and teaching language (Awasthi, 1995). For them, teaching is "lecturing" or "preaching" whether it is history or the English language. Furthermore, there is a misconception among the teachers about how languages, particularly foreign languages, are learned. They believe that a language is made of words, which are uttered, and combined, into sentences. To learn a language, therefore, one needs to learn words, how to pronounce them, and then apply grammar rules for combining them into sentences. In technical terms, they believe that one needs to have mastery over the lexicon, phonology, and syntax of the target language. That is to say, for most schoolteachers, there are lists of words and expressions to be memorised; grammar rules to be memorised and practised; and comprehension texts to be understood, and questions to be answered. These often constitute the core-activities of English class and homework assignments (P. Dahal, 2001). This folklore still has a tenacious hold on how languages like English should be taught in the foreign language context of Nepal.

The training of teachers has been a slow process and is fragmented and based on a piecemeal approach. Its standard and quality has also been questioned recently (TKP, 2002; P. Dahal, 2001). The in-service training programme of the Department of Education (DEO; MOE) is ritualistic and therefore ineffective, usually run by under-qualified and poorly trained trainers. These trainers themselves do not have a proper understanding of the theories and practices of ELE, of language learning psychology, and so on (Kerr, 2000). The pre-service training run by universities, on the other hand, is isolated from the actual ELT situation and is idealistic in

nature. Most training courses are developed on the basis of the theoretical knowledge of the course instructors with little or no consideration of the need, school level courses, or the constraints in which ELT takes place. As a result, the training does not reflect the existing ELT situation, nor does it serve the practical needs of an average teacher (MOE, 2009).

English Language Teachers' Day-To-Day Concerns

The education system in Nepal is chronically under-resourced, severely lacking in infrastructure and teaching materials. School teachers are demoralised and suffer from low morale and motivation. The isolation of remote areas in the mountainous terrain, the effects of a ten-year civil war, and a culture impregnated with respect for traditional hierarchical, rule- and memory-based modes of instruction, exacerbate this situation.

The average English language teachers face a number of issues and concerns on the daily basis. These issues range from the politics in relation to which English to teach to the practical matters such as how to frame a good test, and how a test can serve realistically and fairly. These concerns may be divided into five categories. The first category of these relates to the politics of English. Though the Department of Education (DEO, MOE, Government of Nepal) has explicitly indicated in the past that the target of teaching and learning English in Nepal is the British English (See for example CDC 1998), it remains inexplicit about the matter in the new curricula leaving the issue for the ELE practitioners themselves to resolve. With the influence of American English, Indian English, Australian English and other Englishes on the rise, the average ELE practitioners, with limited knowledge of the World Englishes, struggle to do so. Therefore, the issues of which English, what kind of English (general or specific), what kind of English for what kind of learners, and so on remain for the teachers themselves to deal with.

The second category of issues is related with the theories of English language teaching. Most teachers, since they are untrained, are not familiar with the Communicative Approach (or for that matter any other methods) to language teaching on which the current English curricula is based. With a limited orientation of two weeks provided by the DEO, most teachers are unable to handle the theoretical aspects of English language teaching, and leave their training venues confused with too many unanswered questions and concerns.

Thirdly, the rising influence of globalisation and ICT also makes their day-to-day activities complicated. More and more new ideas, new words, and new concepts emerge on the daily basis. To keep themselves updated in the fast changing world is a real challenge for such teachers.

The English language is taught throughout Nepal (in both private and public education systems) through a centralised system of education with a centrally prepared curriculum. The pedagogic practices as well as the examination systems are still steeped in a traditional focus on knowledge of the language, rather than its usage. In addition, memorisation of information and rote learning are encouraged. Despite the curriculum renewal, the "old" English test format of the national examinations is still in use despite extensive criticism of its validity, reliability and theoretical adequacy (Giri, 2005). Clearly, there is a negative "wash-back" effect from the old test that negates the potential of the new English curriculum to make a difference to the way English is taught (Khaniya 1990).

Finally, examination as a powerful instrument and strong catalyst for change shapes the nature and ingredients of goals, content and process of instruction. In turn, the ingredients in a dialectical process shape the examination itself. The effect of an examination on the modes of instruction is, thus, inevitable. How it affects the instruction, however, depends on its nature, and the skills and training of teachers and on how they use it. However, the Nepalese teachers of English are unable to understand the effects of tests or examinations and the role they can play in improving their practices.

There are, on the one hand, university graduates who have acquired theorised knowledge of ELE theory and practice, but on the other hand, there are those who have little or no idea that learning a language is much more than the learning of

words, their pronunciation, or grammar rules and then applying them. There is a need to bridge the gap between the two discourses – the theorised knowledge imparted by the universities and everyday life experiences of the average teacher. English Language Teachers' Resource Centre is an attempt to bring the two discourses together in a productive way.

The English Language Teachers' Resource Centre

In language education, a programme is said to be as good as the teaching-learning strategy adapted to translate it into practice. Central to this is the resource designed to affect the process. In other words, the factor that influences the effectiveness of classroom delivery of a curriculum (or a course) most is the nature and quality of resources made available to the deliverers (teachers) and the receivers (learners). It is, therefore, important that teachers and learners are provided with appropriate resource materials and are trained on how to use them. This involves developing and mobilising all available resources and then ensuring their full and effective use.

In an ELT situation, especially where English is taught as a second or foreign language, there is often a need of an organisation, a resource centre, within a school system, ELT department or an educational network that helps with the development and use of resource materials, a venue that offers its users a wide variety of services such as providing a reference for the queries, concerns and information, and a forum which offers professional development initiatives for ELT practitioners.

The term "resource centre" may have different meanings in different contexts. However, the one that is proposed in this article is an educational institution the purpose of which is to meet the developing needs of teachers and other users of the centre as identified by the teachers and others themselves. In other words, a resource centre is a place, which primarily provides reference to the centre users for their "self-identified" or "negotiated" needs (McCall, 1992). For the purpose of this article, it has been termed as "English Language Teachers' Resource Centre" (henceforth

ELTREC).

The first ever English language teachers' resource centre in Nepal was established in 1986 at a regional campus of *Tribhuvan* University. It was set up on the British Council resource centre model, which has been in practice for a number of years now in some of the developing countries in Asia and Eastern Europe. The model was later replicated in a modified form for *Nepal English Language Teachers' Association* (NELTA) resource centres. NELTA, a non-governmental professional organisation of English language teachers of all levels, now runs a network of several resource centres in a number of its branches today.

ELTREC, as an educational agency, draws upon the theoretical resources available in an academic institution, and expertise and experiences of ELE practitioners in order to address their practical concerns. Like any other typical socio-educational entity, it is influenced by all kinds of socio-cultural and educational pressures and needs and is constantly evolving in response to their emergent needs. The ELTREC, therefore, addresses four broad educational aims: ELT practitioners' day-to-day queries and concerns; the development and dissemination of teaching and learning materials; professional development of ELT practitioners; and finally, research, consultancy and information about the theory and practice of ELT. More specifically, it:

- addresses issues, questions and concerns of everyday ELT practice,

- provides language teachers and learners guidance, materials, equipment and premises with a view to helping them achieve their learning needs,

- organises provisions/activities for professional development thereby allowing teachers and trainee- teachers to update their professional know-how,

- provides centre members materials and equipment in order to support their specific professional as well as academic needs,

- provides a secure environment, both in terms of premises and personnel where users can work independently,

- contributes to the improvement of classroom

practices by involving the trainees in the centre activities, by providing material support and by making them realize their responsibility(ies) in improving the learning process. In other words, it develops the users' professional esteem and responsibility through involvement,

- provides teacher educators and material developers with production facilities for producing supplementary and in-house materials,

- provides professional development programmes such as short term training packages, workshops, seminars and so on,

- supports its members for an efficient delivery of a language course,

- breaks down the isolation in which many English language teachers are working by networking, and disseminates the latest from the ELT world.

The ELTREC virtually serves any member of the ELE community, i.e., from simple ELE enthusiasts to teachers of the English language of all levels to ELE researchers. In other words, it caters to a wide range of users including: learners, teachers, teacher educators, teacher trainers, ELT experts and consultants, researchers and other enthusiasts. For example, learners may visit the centre to find some practice materials, teachers to get some supplementary classroom teaching materials, and researchers to find out answers of their questions, to get references or to update their information of ELE. The ELTREC offers the following services:

- answers to everyday queries and concerns

- teacher training or training facilities round the year,

- support in developing instructional and learning materials,

- material assistance to teachers [by lending audio or video materials for their classroom purpose],

- professional help for the teachers for career development,

- advisory services to improve ELT in schools

- information on the concurrent ELT activities

In the following sections I describe the model of

the centre, its components and the programmes each component runs.

The Model of the ELTREC

In order to cater to the diversified needs of a wide range of centre users, the resource centre must have adequate facilities of all kinds. For example, it has to have an adequate, spacious venue to house the centre facilities, equipments to store, retrieve and distribute materials, adequately trained people to work at the centre, and a well-established network with people and organisations for receiving, developing and then disseminating its materials and services. The ELTREC has, therefore, the following facilities – library, self-help facility, teacher training facility, material production facility, information facility and advisory facility.

Some facilities mentioned above rely heavily on soft materials such as print and electronic materials whereas others are dependent on equipments and hard materials. Based on what has been discussed so far, a theoretical model for developing an ELT resource centre is proposed. The following diagrammatic representation is a model of the ELTREC incorporating all six facilities mentioned above:

Figure 2: An ELT Resource Centre Model
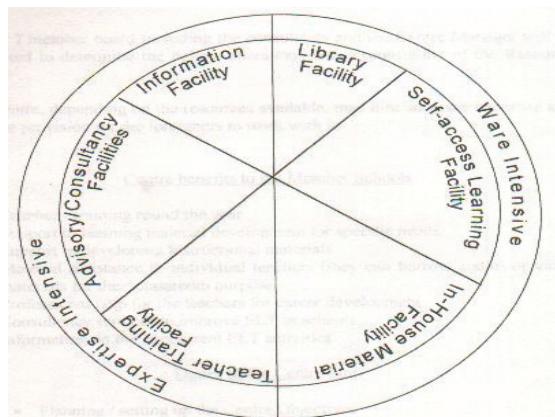
The model described here should not be taken as an absolute one. It has been developed based on the prevailing needs and is revisable and adaptable as the needs grow or change.

Three of the six projects namely, library facility, self-help facility and in-house material production

facility, may be termed as [equipment or hard] ware-intensive in that they are based on hard materials and equipment such as, print materials, book racks, bookshelves, storing selves, furniture, computer, printers, scanners, photocopy machines, listening booths, tape recorders, and so on. Without hardware support, these facilities cannot be successfully operated. The last three projects, i.e., teacher training facility, advisory and consultancy facility and information facility, may be called expertise- intensive in the sense that they function on the bases of the expertise available at the centre.

The six facilities of the ELTREC are described in detail below:

The Library

A library is an integral part of a teacher's resource centre because independent learning and the "joy of discovery" come from a library (Crawford, 1995). "Good libraries empower us users and unfold our imagination, disclose pleasure: challenge our preconceptions, impart insights, assuage fears, prick our conscience, inflame our sensibilities, and provide professional refreshment. What we learn from good books becomes part of us" (Kranich, 2001).

In terms of materials, equipment and services, the library should provide what its users want. It should be well-equipped to cater to their needs. It houses materials that include books, newspapers, magazines, journals, audio-video tapes and other learning and teaching materials. These materials can be classified, arranged and catalogued in terms of areas of *specialisation* (e.g. language skills, language elements, teacher training, English for different disciplines, and so on.); *types* of materials (readers, workbooks, test books, audios, visuals, computer softwares, and so on.); *accession* number, and, *levels* (e.g., beginners, lower intermediate, upper intermediate, advanced, and so on).

Setting up a library within the ELTREC is probably the most feasible project because some form of library exists in most school systems and ELT departments. The existing library can be converted into a centre library. This is also the most preferred facility in the sense that most of the users are, in one way or other, familiar to using it. However, the library in a resource centre should not be limited to its traditional concept of lending books. Its use can be extended to pathways learning, catering to the specialized needs through indexing, task based (project or research) learning and so on.

A language resource centre library should have the following sections:

- listening and speaking practice stations (booths)
- a reference section with non-loans materials
- a book section
- a non-book material (periodical, journal, magazines, newspaper) section
- a specialized materials section (e.g., audio-visuals, pathways materials, etc.), and
- a reading section

The "Self access" Learning Facility

A "self-access" facility can serve two main purposes of the centre. Firstly, it can offer pathways, self-learning and self-study materials to different and specific groups of learners. Secondly, it can help teachers improve their own language proficiency and language teaching abilities in the changing contexts of ELT. In the recent years, for example, there has been a shift in language teaching and learning from structural curriculum based on the audio-lingual approach which aims at accuracy (i.e. formal or linguistic competence) to functional syllabus following the communicative approach, which aims at developing communicative competence. This involves teaching of a communicative syllabus which requires of the concerned teachers to have a profound mastery over the formal aspect of the language as well as its communicative aspect. Thus, a teacher-training course has to have two main components in it, firstly, it has to have a language improvement component aiming at improving the general language proficiency including their communicative competence of the trainee-teachers, and secondly, a methodology component in which various methods and techniques of teaching English are explored and different classroom skills needed for successful teaching developed.

The first component of a teacher-training course can be conducted with the help of "self-access" learning facilities. A "self-access" learning facility enables language learning to take place independently as well as with the help of instructors. It caters to the varying needs of individual teachers, and, provides them with skills/tools/materials for developing study skills and their own materials.

The self-access learning facility contains a variety of learning materials suitable for all kinds of centre users, i.e., from beginners to experienced. It has a bank of audio-video cassettes, audio-video players, practice materials, textbooks, workbooks, test books, supplementary materials, computer for computer assisted language learning, and, listening and speaking practice facilities

Classification of materials in a "self-access" facility, categorising them, labelling and arranging them for easy access and convenient use by all levels of centre users, are extremely important because easy retrieval ensures proper and maximum use of the materials. The materials in a "self access" facility, therefore, should be classified in terms of levels, language areas/skills, topic or sub topic, accession number, and the purposes the materials serve.

Having accumulated hardware and software, it is important to set up a system to ensure how such of the materials will be properly used. The following issues should be considered while putting materials in a "self-access" facility:

- Accessibility (they should be easy to access)
- User training (there should an in-built orientation programme to train new users)
- Relevance of materials (materials in the self-

access facility should be appropriate in terms of level and need of user groups), and

- Security of the materials (there should be a checking scheme in order to ensure that no materials are taken out of the centre without checking them out at the counter.)

The self-access system may be a menu-driven system, a supermarket system, controlled access system, open-access system or a combination of two or more of these systems. Given the limitations in terms of resources, both money and material, it is advisable to begin with a "controlled-access" system where learners are directed to a specific set of materials which are designed, developed and chosen by their tutors with a specific purpose in mind. Materials in such a system can be arranged in conjunction with a course. The course instructor instructs the trainees/learners on what they should look for and where their library hour be spent in the centre.

After some time, when they become familiar to the system, the learners or centre-users then can be introduced to the "menu driven system" in which materials are classified according to levels, skills, topics, functions, and so on. and are cross-referenced. The ultimate aim of such a facility should be to gradually lead them to the "supermarket" system in which they are allowed to browse and select materials of their need or interest. The course instructor may have to make most of the decisions about choosing learning materials for them initially because most students will not be able to make their own decisions in the beginning stage of their learning. It will be, however, inappropriate if the instructors make all of the student's decisions all the time. An ideal situation could be, as shown below, to prepare and
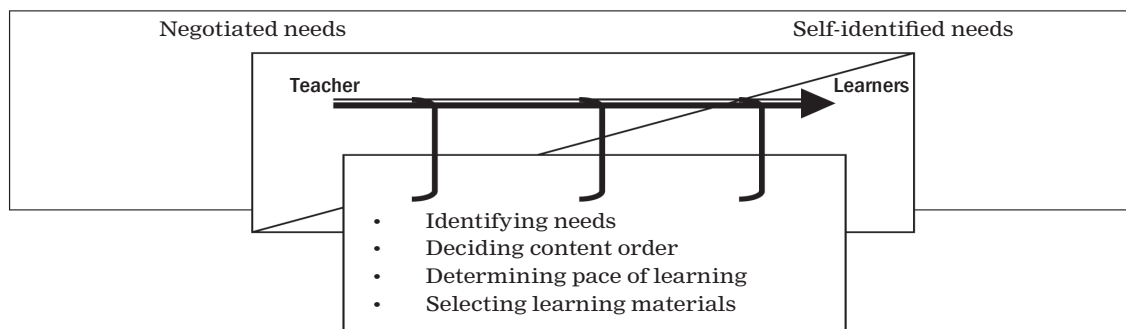

Figure 3: Progression of learner self-identification of needs (based on Dickinson, 1978; Sheerin, 2008)

train the users/ learners for a gradual progression from "negotiated needs" towards "independent, self-identified needs" (McCall, 1992).

As the figure 3 shows, course instructors or tutors initially help learners make their language learning decisions on the bases of the pace, mode and route of learning. However, in the later stages, the learners are encouraged to make their own language learning decisions independently.

The Material Production Facility

This facility aims at producing in-house materials. The in-house materials are usually more useful, appropriate and affordable than commercially marketed materials because commercial materials are published in a different context for a different purpose and for a different group of learners. The classifications, especially the level classification, may not be applicable in developing ESL/EFL contexts. Many of such materials may be culturally unacceptable, or they may contain themes that are inappropriate to the students of a particular context. Furthermore, they are usually not affordable. Therefore, the teaching staff of a school or college department should be encouraged to develop materials for their own needs. Making production facility available to teachers will only encourage them to write and publish their own materials.

So far as publication of materials is concerned, materials that are (a) clear in terms of aim and content, (b) appropriate to the needs and levels, (c) correct in terms of language, explanations and answers, (d) well designed, and (e) attractively presented, can be published and even marketed for similar purpose in other local schools and colleges.

The Teacher Training Facility

An important facility in the ELTREC is the training facility to train and orient language teachers. In fact, training at the centre should be an on-going project. Short-term and long term teacher training courses should be designed and run for the teachers to learn, share and disseminate their professional experience as well as the activities and programmes of the centre.

There are several types of training the centre can run. Among them are -

- workshop seminar on the classroom techniques or for the presentation of certain skills, function, topic and so on.

- materials update seminar which provides the participants an opportunity to see the new materials that the centre acquires or produces

- workshops for material production: participants prepare materials for their own students such as pathway learning, remedial materials and so on.

- seminars involving teachers and experts where they discuss the common problems and about how they can be dealt with.

- Seminars on tests and examinations, and so on.

The Advisory Facility

This is an important facility in the ELTREC. In addition to helping the teachers address their day-to-day concerns and issues, the ELTREC can also provide advisory or consultancy services to other individuals and organisations with a view to improving ELE in their institutions. The academic/teaching staff of the centre, for example, can advise students on their learning queries of exams and course readings. Similarly, it can help teachers with their everyday queries and concerns. In other words, the centre may be used for pastoral advice for meeting developing needs of the local teachers, teacher-educators and other members of the English language community. The centre can, for example, provide consultancy services to other governmental and non-governmental institutes and organisations in the matters relating to improving teaching and learning of the English language, teacher training, and material development.

Furthermore, the ELTREC, through this facility, can build a network with centres and facilities with similar goals. This will ensure exchange of expertise as well as materials which are vital for building the capacity of the centre. The Centre members will have opportunity to take part in a wider network. It can also work as a think tank and provide policy advice to governmental as well as non-governmental organisations.

The Information Facility

In the world in which so many things happen in the area of teaching and learning on the daily basis, it will be appropriate for such a resource centre to network and provide information about the activities of local, regional and international professional organizations and other related organizations such as International Association of Teachers of English as Foreign Language (IATEFL), Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), Asia TEFL, Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT), Nepal English Language Teachers' Association (NELTA), Society of Pakistani English Language Teachers (SPELT), Bangladesh English Language Teachers' Association (BELTA), Sri Lanka English Language Teachers' Association (SLELTA), and so on. This unit can also be used to provide information about the centre activities. Internet and email facilities can help create a network of ELT practitioners locally. Internet facilities can also help build professional network with similar professionals and organisations locally, regionally and internationally

Managing and Sustaining the ELTREC

At the initial stage, the ELTREC can be established with some basic facilities. More materials, equipment and facilities can be added in a phased manner as the Centre becomes operational and the needs of the users grow. The ELTREC needs all kinds of ELT softwares and hardwares. More specifically, a resource centre needs:

- English language learning textbooks, text materials, practice books, test books and exercise books of all types and levels

- English language teaching books, journals, materials and softwares of all types and levels

- one –three ELT consultants trained in the centre project areas.

- a centre management team trained for security, cataloguing, membership, centre operation and other administrative duties.

- a suitable, secure, big enough space to be made exclusively available for the seminars and meetings.

- TVs, Videos, audios, audio-recorders,

video/DVD recorders, Video/DVD players, OHP projectors, printers, computing and photocopying equipment.

computers with internet facilities

The Centre can begin its operation with a modest collection of the materials (softwares and hardwares) mentioned above. With the help of national and international organisations, more materials can be accumulated in a gradual manner as the needs grow and resources become available.

To manage the ELTREC, a 2 to 5 member team including consultants and a manager of the Centre, depending on its size, should be appointed to determine the policy, operations and responsibility of the ELTREC. The centre, depending on the available resources, may hire domestic expertise and provide provisions and conditions for international experts to work with it.

The main duty of the management team is to run the centre effectively and manage its activities and services on the day to day basis. More specifically, the duties and responsibilities of the ELTREC management team include planning/ setting up the Centre objectives, preparing the Centre management scheme, setting up projects, maintaining the projects, supervising the use of the centre facilities, organising time-table, organising user training, keeping records, lending materials, receiving and keeping materials, and so on.

Constraints and Challenges

Constraints

As it was mentioned above, it is difficult and often expensive to accumulate all required materials at a time to cater to all needs of the centre users. Making the most maximum out of the existing ones will always be the best solution. Book donations, grants and assistance are also available from various international agencies. Materials received from other countries can be used as reference materials. They can be adapted, with the permission from their publishers or they can be used as a guide to develop materials locally. However, it should be borne in mind that the centre should not be a resource- driven organization, rather it should be a need- or use- driven organization. The centre can

also receive useful materials from national and international publishers and distributors. They often provide sample copies of their productions free of cost.

Hiring people to run the Centre without enough money is always difficult unless a donor or the local government funds the centre projects. Initially, the volunteers and limited-pay staffs may be employed. In the later stages, the centre can hire a part-time assistant on the money received from the sales of the centre materials. The problem of funding can be solved in part by the sale of in-house materials. This is one other reason why an in-house production facility is so important at an ELT resource centre. Furthermore, the Centre can charge individuals and organisations for the services it provides.

Trained personnel to run the ELTREC may be hard to find in the initial stage of the project. However, several short and long term ELT resource management courses are now available at the local British Council and American Centre. To begin with, a short-term resource centre management course should be enough for its managers. However, more intensive training may be required as the Centre becomes fully operational and diversifies its services.

Schemes to improve the Centre and its services should always be its goals. The scheme for evaluating the ELTREC programmes and activities should be a part of the Centre planning. It should be decided in advance what information is required, who is the information for, why is the information required and how the information is going to be used. Provisions for receiving the information should be an on-going and in-built process. Evaluation of the ELTREC programmes may be conducted in order to find out ease of access; suitability of lay out, effectiveness of the centre systems, efficiency of the arrangements of materials; appropriateness of centre materials; appropriateness of centre programmes; adequacy of services provided; efficiency of the centre management, and for its future directions. The methods that may be applied in order to evaluate the performances of the centre are questionnaires, material evaluation sheets, case studies, tutorials, spot checks, and interviews.

Challenges for the ELTREC

The most important challenge for the ELTREC is to sustain itself in the community it serves. Sustainability of such a resource centre depends largely on how it is operated, how well it is received in the community concerned, and how the centre has established itself as a service provider. It also depends on how co-operative the providing/ supporting agencies as well as the receiving agencies are. Furthermore, such a resource centre can easily be politicised making it vulnerable to the changing course of politics of a country. The ELTREC should essentially be and remain apolitical. It should not come under the influence of any political organisation. The following criteria can help sustain a resource centre.

While planning the systems, programmes and activities of the ELTREC, it is advised that one should begin with long-term goals and move on to the medium term and then design short-term objectives to achieve the goals. This gives a clear direction to all planners and management of the ELTREC as to where the centre is heading. Furthermore, the goals of the centre must be rooted in the users' needs. In addition, the users must participate in and contribute to the fulfilment of the goals. In short, the centre must be user-oriented. The users must feel ease, safe and comfortable in using the centre systems and facilities. The centre staff should be polite, cooperative and friendly.

An ELTREC can easily turn into a gossip spot. Noise and distractions should be minimised, and working or study conditions should be pleasing and constantly monitored and maintained. Opinions on how the centre environment can be made pleasing should be obtained periodically from centre management, users, support staff, teaching/academic staff, security officers, and supporting agencies

Another challenge of ELTREC is to maintain its identity but at the same time integrate itself into the ELE community. A centre such as the one discussed in this article cannot succeed as a separate entity; it must seek integration into, and cooperation with the community at three levels - the schools and colleges, the faculty/university, and the local, regional and international ELT world. In addition, it should not go against the

existing system or policy of the community into which it is integrated. In such a case, the centre will only face resentment, resistance and avoidance from the concerned people.

A resource centre also faces the challenge of monetary constraint. The Centre must organise income generating activities to achieve self-sufficiency. For example, with a view to generating income, activities such as movie shows, special talk programmes, seminars or recreational activities can be organised. Participants to these evens can be charged moderately to generate income for the Centre operation. In addition, it must work in association with the national and international agencies to fund the Centre projects.

Sometimes the centre may receive requests for specialised services which are beyond the normal workings of the centre. The centre should, therefore, keep itself ready for the "unusual" services such as integration between classrooms and learning, projects of the centre supporting each other, centre projects supporting local projects, and centre staff supporting local libraries or other material development centres.

The most important challenge of the Centre, however, is to meet the growing and changing needs of the ELE practitioners and help them address the socio-political, economic and educational issues and tensions arising from the day-to-day ELE practice. The ELTREC must keep itself abreast of the issues, tensions and pressures, and equip itself with knowledge, information and expertise in order to be able to address them.

Conclusion

The ELTREC, as a multi-facet organisation within an educational institution or school system, does not only help English language teachers train and grow professionally, it also contributes to their classroom processes through which the future of millions of learners are shaped. The importance of such a centre, therefore, cannot be exaggerated. Multi-purpose in term of what it offers, the ELTREC is probably the most important agency that contributes so much to the amelioration of ELE in any contexts. A centre of this kind functions as a catalytic agent and a supporting mechanism for day-to-day concerns of an average ELE practitioner. In a developing context, however, it

is advisable to start with one project at a time as the financial resource is often limited, and then to build one project after another taking what comes next in the priority order.

The ELTREC draws upon the theoretical and practical discourses of the ELE to put a bridge on the traditional division between the theorised knowledge of the university graduates and everyday classroom experiences of an ordinary ELE practitioner. As a typical organisation, the ELTREC is subject to all sorts of social, political and educational issues, tensions and pressures. However, it should not divert from its original goals to become a political entity.

Capability building in the largely untrained and under-qualified teaching force is a difficult task. The Centre can be seen as educational effort for capacity building in teachers to help them deal with their everyday concerns. It is a forum to train the concerned people on how to "seek" knowledge because, as the epigraph given in the beginning of the article suggests, only the knowledge of "seeking" knowledge helps one to be able to respond to the developing need and to adapt in the fast changing ELE world. As most developing countries are trying hard to find a way forward with ELE in particularly fraught political and economic contexts, a centre like the ELTREC amidst the tensions has a promising way forward. As such, the ELTREC may well be a platform for the ELT practitioners to help themselves and each other.

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