

Maximising the impact of online teacher development courses to improve teaching and learning: lessons for national directors and education officers

Summary

The Government of Bangladesh is making substantial investment in blended learning for teachers. Teachers undertake face-to-face trainings in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) priority areas, such as supporting students' foundational learning. In parallel, teachers access CPD courses on the Muktopaath eLearning platform, focused on these same priority areas. This Policy Brief explores teachers' participation in one set of eLearning courses, Anonde Gonit Shikhi (AGS), and makes evidence-based recommendations on how the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) central team can encourage and support teachers to translate learning from both the online courses and face-to-face trainings into the intended changes in teaching practices and student learning in the classroom.

About the research

The research is a collaboration involving The Open University UK, the Institute of Education and Research, University of Dhaka and forty peer-researchers from rural primary schools in Bangladesh and is funded by the EdTech Hub. Findings come from over 500 interviews with teachers, by teachers. The research took place with teachers from 10 marginalised Upazilas across char, coastal, haor and hilly areas of Bangladesh between 2022 and 2023.

The research explores these teachers' access and use of techniques and activities from Anonde Gonit Shikhi (Let's learn Maths with fun) online courses, if and how this is changing the teaching and learning of foundational numeracy, and how DPE can promote and support emerging good practices.

	Research Cycle 1	Research Cycle 2	Total
Teacher peer-researchers	40		40
Teacher participants	200	118	318
Participant interviews	400	118	518

Findings

Access and use:

1. Even in marginalised rural communities, almost all teachers had been able to access and complete AGS online, predominantly through their own mobile phone and data. Many teachers sought help from others, most often other teachers, to do this.
2. Although many teachers claimed occasional use of AGS activities in class, very few gave specific examples. Some teachers had made no attempt at using AGS in class. For many teachers, this lack of classroom use was, because:
 - a. It was not clear to them that they were expected to use the activities in class.
 - b. They thought they needed technology such as laptops, projectors, and the internet, to use the activities in class.



Credit: 3MPower Team

Enablers of use:

3. Teachers were more likely to use the AGS activities regularly in class, when they have:
 - a. encouragement from their head teacher,
 - b. support from other teachers.

Benefits of use:

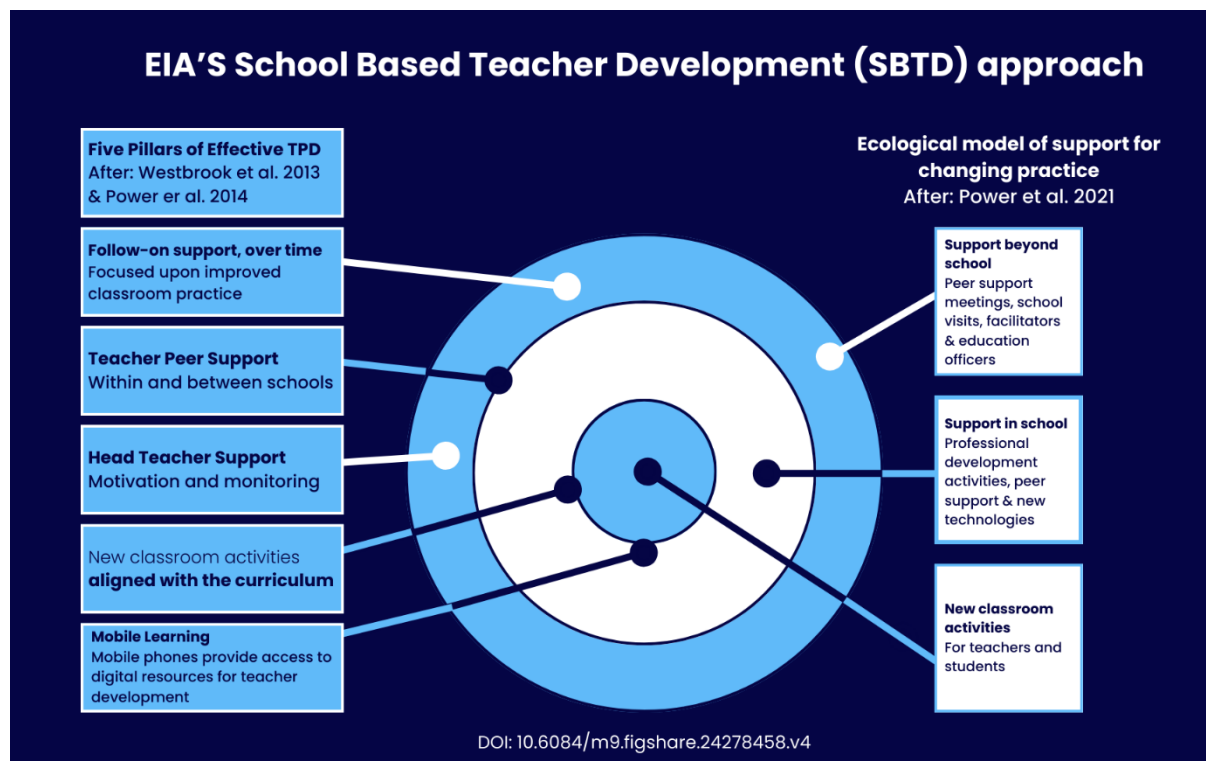
4. Teachers who use AGS activities regularly in class see positive impacts on:
 - a. student behaviour,
 - b. student inclusion,
 - c. student numeracy skills,
 - d. teacher motivation.
5. Teachers, who use AGS regularly, also see positive impacts on teacher development within or between schools by:
 - a. increased sharing of experiences of teaching numeracy,
 - b. greater teacher collaboration.

“Sometimes, when I am in my home area, I meet other teachers near the marketplace and discuss the techniques. We mainly share our experience with these activities, who used what, how one’s students were feeling, what challenges they have ...that kind of stuff.” (Teacher, Nikli).

Reflections

Findings from this research affirm the potential of AGS to help teachers to improve student learning in numeracy. However, to realise this potential, teachers need support to become regular users of the techniques and activities that are promoted by the AGS online and face-to-face trainings, in the classroom.

The following diagram sets out a model for effective support.



Recommendations

To maximise the success of AGS, or other, professional development programmes to improve teaching and learning in marginalised schools, we recommend that DPE adopts a range of actions.

1. Harness teachers' high levels of access to online courses

Fully link AGS face-to-face trainings and online courses, utilising teachers' ongoing access to AGS resources on their phones to support teachers to continue their learning together when back in school.

2. Develop Education Officers' and teachers' understanding of the importance of using AGS activities in class

Communicate key messages to field-level Education Officers that support regular use of AGS activities by teachers in class, for example:

- the purpose of AGS is for teachers to try the activities regularly with students in class,
- teachers do not need technology in class to use the AGS activities.

Offer professional development to field-level Education Officers about how AGS can be successfully implemented in schools and classrooms.

3. Promote head teacher support for use of AGS activities in class

Support head teachers, through trainings and meetings, to facilitate school-based implementation of AGS in their schools, in ways that encourages teachers' application in class.

Encourage District Education Officers and Upazila Education Officers to develop a monitoring and feedback framework to support school-level implementation of AGS in their District and Upazila.

4. Promote support between teachers

Encourage field-level Education Officers to use teachers, who are regular AGS users, to contribute to Upazila CPD events on implementing AGS in class, drawing on the teachers' own experiences of using AGS techniques and activities with their students.

5. Share the benefits of regular use of AGS activities in class

Communicate to field-level Education Officers, head teachers and teachers the benefits of regular use of AGS activities in class, highlighting the positive impacts on students' and teachers' motivation and learning.

Credits

This brief was written by Claire Hedges, Hafiz Rahman, Tom Power, Jacqueline Stevenson, in collaboration with the 3Mpower Research Leadership Team and Ea nrlly Career Researchers. The views

expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent those of the Centre for the Study of Global Development or The Open University.

Further reading

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