

The cases: Policy and design

Case 1: Peacekeeping English in Poland

Mark Crossey

The project

Background

The programme which became known as Peacekeeping English Project (PEP) commenced in the Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania under the name of the 'Baltic Battalion ELT Project' and in a further five Central and Eastern Europe states, among them Poland, in late 1994. It was funded by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Ministry of Defence, and was consciously moulded as a high-level ELT change project acting with and within the reforming Ministries of Defence of Central and Eastern Europe. It was also closely, although not exclusively, associated with NATO's Partnership for Peace programme, which also commenced in 1994 (Green and Wall 2005: 379).

The PEP was a pioneering initiative on a number of fronts: developing new projects in partnership with Ministries of Defence was something new for the British Council. PEP also operated in arguably one of the most politically sensitive project contexts in the modern history of language training. The programme was designed and established as primarily an English for Special Purposes (ESP) reform programme, featuring consultancy on curriculum design, language training policy, and the design of centralised testing mechanisms. All of these were normally conducted employing the existing teaching structures of the host countries.

In this brief case study, I look back at my own experience as project manager of the Polish PEP from its inception point and throughout its early development.

Design and aims of PEP Poland

The PEP Poland was funded by the British Government originally in order to meet the perceived English language needs of the militaries of the NATO accession states of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). This was at a time when there was still considerable interest from NATO in these states ensuring that their militaries adapt to civilian management and move away from the Soviet-style counter-insurgency model to a lighter defence structure. PEP, therefore, inevitably had a political character, with its managing body, the British Council, openly regarding the project (by means of its representation of values such as transparent governance) as a key aspect of UK Defence Diplomacy (Meixner 2005).

Further analysis of the goals of the programme are unclear from what early documentation survives, as there were no standardised reporting mechanisms for the programme until 1999 and scoping study documentation for PEPs varies in terms of methodology and approach from country to country. However, it is fair to state that the programme's UK government sponsors consistently looked for, on an annual basis, evidence of numbers of military personnel trained, as well as evidence of high-level English language training policy change from each country project. It was made clear to British Council London that such evidence was needed by the UK Government on an annual basis to secure further funding. In 1999, London PEP Steering Group was formed, with representation of the British Council, the Ministry of Defence, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and, eventually, the Department for International Development. This body was key to defining and agreeing goals of the programme as well as geopolitical priorities.

Key indicators related to, for example, involvement in high-level change, such as examination reform, were now included and standardised in programme reporting and became integral to its work and goals. The work of the Steering Group was vital for the programme. Only at this point was agreement between the UK and host Ministries of Defence on co-operation in many areas of key policy reform agreed and stipulated. It is likely that this added to the political prestige of PEP, as work on high-stakes areas such as ministry-administered language testing were then formalised and built into the programme¹.

At this point it is worth comparing the UK approach to military ELT with that of US counterparts (Woods 2006), the latter preferring a direct input of US-designed and taught courses, as well as a number of attractive placements in the United States of America. PEP Poland, specifically, was soon engaged in high-level consultation on curriculum reform, selection policy, and achievement testing. In a way, this was an inevitable course of action, as the size, history, and nature of the Polish forces at this time meant that they lacked the selection mechanisms for well-targeted ESP inputs.

Stage – design

This study looks at the inception stage of PEP Poland, in particular focusing on how design translates to early implementation and how features of the local political context, as well as project management structures, can shape and characterise a given country project for years to come.

Story

Key factors for success in the design and engagement stage

The Polish project developed or shared with other Central and Eastern Europe PEPs several key characteristics which helped ensure its deep, long-term impact. First, its working model of three to four UK ELT consultants working directly within the

¹ It has been claimed that examination reform, for instance, is seen as a necessary agent in any overall ELT reform project and that it is simultaneously 'the most powerful area of influence in educational reform', albeit 'probably the most difficult to penetrate and influence from an outside perspective' (Bolitho 2005:190).

Polish Ministry of Defence and its most influential military language wings offered it unique leverage and access to key decision makers, ensuring that the UK voice on ELT reform was heard. This was a key factor in securing follow-up UK government funding for the PEP in future years. More than that, the direct day-to-day work with relevant Polish Ministry of Defence staff on remoulding a national ELT programme² was a unique, trust-building experience which directly enhanced bilateral relations in a comparatively sensitive field (there being at the time a dozen foreign nationals at most directly engaged within Polish Ministry of Defence structures).

Another key driver for project impact was that the PEP Poland was comparatively well resourced at a time of significant financial constraint within the Polish Armed Forces and was able to 'encourage' more reform-minded ELT centres with high-profile resources such as self-access centres. The project also had a light, non-institutionalised character: its UK PEP staff were employed by the British Council on a fixed-term contractual basis and were based within Polish Ministry of Defence structures – which again reduced overall programme costs; level of project activity and costs could, therefore, be easily adapted by agreement with the Polish partners. This flexibility in planning was also, once again, a key factor in ensuring continued UK government support.

Another factor making the context favourable for the British intervention in Poland, at least in terms of its political impact and profile, was that (unlike most other countries in the region) there were initially no analogue organisations, such as the US Defense Language Institute, working *in situ* in Poland. This left the British project with the high profile and impact afforded by a highly desired commodity: communicative ELT know-how and resources.

A final important factor was that a context of flux, brought about by huge and traumatic structural change within the Polish armed forces, created power vacuums in education and training policies. While it was a sensitive and high-risk environment, this in some ways made change easier to effect, at least in terms of centralised policies and legislation. This meant that the British Council PEP consultants, comparatively unconstrained by institutional policies and priorities, but also working to high levels within the Polish Ministry of Defence and with the support of the British Embassy Defence Section, were able to act with an enviable degree of professional flexibility.

Key weaknesses in the PEP Poland design and engagement stages

A number of factors in the setting up of this, at the time, unique programme represent useful learning points for similar high-level ELT interventions.

The initial scoping visit for what was to become the PEP Poland was actually conducted by the UK Defence School of Languages, which held the contract for the project in several Central and Eastern European states for one year (1995/6). This Ministry of Defence body was, at the time, seen as the traditional provider of

² At the time the Polish military ELT programme was possibly the largest such in the world, as a previous Defence Minister had made the study of English compulsory for all serving officers.

specialised foreign-language services for UK military personnel, as well as military English courses, normally funded by the British government, for selected foreign delegations. It also delivered highly regarded methodology courses for military English teachers from all over the world. However, its capacity to scope new international programmes was limited and arguably hindered by its military and perceived political associations.

These limitations were reflected in the scoping process for PEP Poland in several key ways. First, recommendations for UK inputs focused heavily on the need to introduce ‘NATO-standard’ testing mechanisms, supporting curricula and INSETT (in-service teacher training) programmes, but were not backed by evidenced support from Polish Ministry of Defence practitioners, who mostly seemed to value the input of ‘native-speaker teachers’ and ‘genuine representatives of UK life and culture’ – evidence of any Polish support for the *a priori* goals of overall reform (as desired by the UK side) could be found in the statements of ministry officials only.

This mismatch in perceptions led to delays in commencing the higher-level inputs desired by the UK, as after the opening of the project each consultant was initially placed by the Polish Ministry of Defence within a leading language training wing, each with its own agenda, and direct communications with the Ministry of Defence training department suffered accordingly.

Perhaps more importantly though, no conclusions of the scoping study, either in its full or any abbreviated form, were shared by the United Kingdom with the Polish Ministry of Defence, which was simply informed of the UK’s decision to proceed with a project by the UK Defence Attaché. This apparent lack of openness was noted by the Polish side, which assumed it to be the result of post-Cold War suspicion on the part of the UK Ministry of Defence. This had the unintended effect of further politicising the project in its opening stages.

Most significantly though, there was a lack of investigation of and reference to the key role which English language learning and certification was then playing in the traumatic change context of the post-Warsaw Pact Polish forces. In particular, as certification in English language proficiency had become essential to most forms of career progression (and retention of key positions), ELT had become a potent political tool in shaping the future of the Polish forces. The British Council team soon found that this potent issue became a fundamental consideration when making any key policy and activity decisions.

Overall, it arguably took at least two to three years for the Council-managed PEP Poland to overcome the shortcomings of the initial scoping process. PEP Poland’s eventual success resulted, in part, from its unexpectedly long duration: from an initial plan to operate for three to four years, the PEP Poland actually completed in 2006, 11 years after opening.

Other factors that had a negative impact on project goals related to the difficulty of aligning Whitehall planning and realities with sound project design principles. Funding for the PEP was decided on an annual basis, was very often confirmed at the last minute (as it was largely secured from an increasingly marginalised source: the Global Conflict Prevention Pool), and despite plans to do so, UK stakeholders were never able to commit to a three-year project cycle. This insecurity was central to the PEP and affected most of its operations for its project life.

Lessons

PEP was a groundbreaking programme which delivered impressive results in terms of numbers trained and a demonstrable improvement of vital communicative English skills on the part of military personnel, often used in dangerous peacekeeping contexts. In the specific case of PEP Poland, initial problems relating to engagement with stakeholders and project design resulted from lack of experience on the part of both sides in co-operation in the field. It is an indication of how important both sides regarded the input to be that these initial misunderstandings were overcome to deliver a programme which shaped communicative ELT in the Polish military for years to come.

However, there were some valuable learning points for the profession. First and foremost, a project scoped without significant buy-in from local stakeholders on the development of its goals and input (or with buy-in from the 'wrong' local stakeholders) will be seen as having a political provenance which will, in turn, impact on project outcomes, however effective the project may be in terms of content. Secondly, overall central programme management needs to be sufficiently resourced in order for individual country projects to remain on track and avoid becoming to a larger degree the creation of the local context. With regard to programme funding channels, projects dependent entirely on politically low-priority funding pots which are decided on an annual basis cannot develop an effective or credible project plan and will experience a highly political character to their activities and presence.

Conversely, the significant political weight of a foreign intervention such as the PEP (offering a high-demand end product), when managed with sensitivity, can ease implementation of project objectives in difficult and traumatic change contexts, as well as bring significant multiplication effects throughout large national training structures.

Case 2: Mismatched perspectives: In-service teacher education policy and practice in South Korea

David Hayes

The project

This case study discusses in-service teacher education (INSET) policy and practice for teachers of English in South Korea. In common with many other countries, educational policy makers in South Korea have been extremely concerned to enhance the quality of teaching and learning of English in schools, seeing proficiency in English as a key constituent in strengthening national economic competitiveness in response to increasing globalisation. In late 2006, the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MEST) announced a major programme of continuous professional development (CPD) initiatives for teachers, as part of a package of reforms in primary and secondary schools to help to realise this goal. These initiatives included both short-term and long-term residential INSET courses. The courses involve considerable financial commitment on the part of MEST, with, for example, the cost per teacher of the six-month 'Intensive English Teacher Training Program' (IETTP) running at 13 million Korean won or £7,500 per participant, £4,122 of which was spent on a five-month course in Korea and £3,378 on a one-month overseas course in North America or Australia. However, in spite of the opportunities available, take-up of courses is not as high as it could be, with, for example, less than half of the 1,000 available places on residential INSET courses being taken up in recent years. Official concerns about the quality of English teaching and learning in government schools remain.

Stage – design

In this case study, I shall focus on factors relevant to the design of effective INSET programmes. One reason for the low take-up of courses in South Korea may reside in the divergent perspectives amongst teacher development providers and school teachers about the most productive forms of INSET, and about teachers' capabilities and their classroom needs. Another factor is also an absence of the kind of in-school follow-up which research indicates is crucial to maximising the impact of INSET. The mismatch in perspectives between teachers and trainers

regarding INSET, and between research and practice with respect to follow-up, has implications for the design and organisation of INSET courses, with a consequent influence on their impact on teacher classroom behaviour.

Story

Key goals for MEST's programme of INSET courses in South Korea are:

- *to improve English teachers' communicative competence as well as to reinforce pedagogical skills*
- *to involve English teachers in long-term professional development while in service.*

(Chang, Yeon, Kim, Jung, and Hayes 2008: 13)

There is thus a view amongst educational administrators that (a) teachers' English language proficiency is somehow deficient; while (b) their pedagogical skills do not need improvement as such, but only some kind of modification; and (c) that INSET is conceived of as a long-term process which continues throughout a teacher's career. The administrators' view of the priority of language improvement over classroom teaching skills is epitomised in the design and evaluation of the IETTP courses, which MEST sees as the key element of its CPD initiatives. The medium of instruction for the course is English, trainers are predominantly native speakers of English from other countries, training centres have an 'English Only Zone', and one month (rising to two months in 2011) is spent in an English-speaking country. Pre- and post-course language tests are administered to teachers and improvement is measured statistically. In contrast to this formalised, external testing of language competence, classroom teaching skills are evaluated simply by means of a 'self-assessment checklist', i.e. the determiners of teachers' initial efficacy in the classroom and how their skills might have changed in response to the course input are the teachers themselves. (I highlight this, not to question the teachers' ability to self-assess, but to point out the contrast between the two modes of evaluation and the weight given to formal language testing.) Figure 1 outlines the evaluation process for an IETTP course.

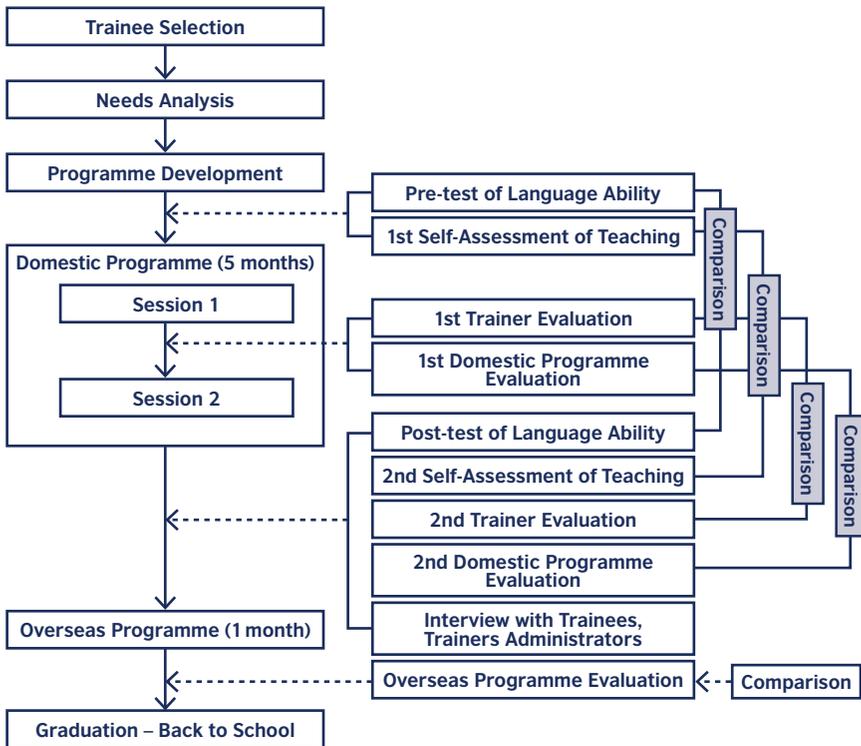


Figure 1: Evaluation process for IETTP courses (from Chang, Jung, Hayes, Yeon, Kim, and Lee 2010: 138)

Summative evaluation of INSET at the very end of short courses and at selected points in longer courses like the IETTP is typical in South Korea, as elsewhere. This kind of evaluation is generally formulaic and rarely goes beyond participant satisfaction surveys which are clearly unable to assess long-term impact. As we can see from Figure 1, the exit point is ‘Graduation – Back to School’. There is no sustained follow-up to courses which examines how teachers take the knowledge they have gained and the skills they have practised on a course and integrate them into their regular classroom practice. This is as true for short INSET courses as it is for the longest IETTP course.

Perceptions of South Korean teachers and course providers regarding in-service courses were examined as part of research into INSET in South Korea, Indonesia, Japan, and Thailand for the British Council Primary Innovations Project (PIP). Data was collected by local researchers using standard research instruments which were developed for use across the countries, but which were open to modification to suit particular contexts. All data was collected in participants’ first language and then translated into English. Questionnaires on INSET experience were distributed to 100 teachers and 50 INSET providers in each country. The 100 Korean teachers (100 per cent response rate) who completed questionnaires came from 18 different areas of the country, from the capital, provincial cities, and rural areas; the 42 INSET providers (84 per cent response rate) who completed questionnaires came from

16 different areas. Two hour-long focus group meetings, one in the capital and one in a semi-rural area, with six teachers, took place once questionnaires had been returned. There were also two online discussions with six INSET providers from the capital and six from the provinces. The focus groups were intended to illuminate, through in-depth discussion, topics and themes central to INSET policy and practice in South Korea.

The PIP teacher focus groups further explored the issue of observation in relation to INSET courses and revealed that, where teachers are observed in schools, such observation is considered unhelpful, because 'it is just for showing what we prepared for them', i.e., as advance notice is given of observations, teachers generally prepare and often rehearse lessons which are then obviously staged for the audience. Observation is not, then, linked to an INSET course in such a way that it could be regarded as a follow-up to the course to assist the teacher in implementation of what he or she has learnt on the course. This is in spite of the fact that:

Follow-up support to teachers during the implementation phase of change has long been identified as an important feature of more effective [INSET] programmes. (Ingvarson, Meiers, and Beavis 2005: 9)

South Korean experience is not uncommon in this respect. In their survey of INSET programmes in Australia, Ingvarson, Meiers, and Beavis concluded that:

...one of the most significant findings in this study across the 80 [INSET] programmes was how rarely designers built in opportunities for comment and coaching in the workplace, despite research on their centrality to learning new and complex skills. (Ingvarson et al. ibid.: 18)

Nor do teachers have any opportunity to share their experience of INSET courses with other teachers. The predominant pattern in South Korean schools is of teachers working alone in their classrooms and only collaborating with each other when it came to schemes of work or other administrative requirements. When asked about working with other teachers in the PIP survey, 50 per cent of respondents said that they did not do so; and those who did reported that they collaborated on such things as required schemes of work rather than on reflection on practice or on mentoring schemes with other teachers. There literally did not seem to be any time for effective collaboration. In the focus group discussions, teachers reported that they 'do not have any chance to collaborate with other teachers for their work or improvement of teaching methods'. The situation was the same for the INSET providers who were 'pressed with lots of paperwork and administrative work' and thus not in a position to visit schools to assist teachers with integrating knowledge and skills gained on their courses into existing patterns of classroom teaching.

With respect to the prioritisation of English proficiency, teachers' own views of their language skills seem to be contradictory. In the PIP survey, teachers reported that they felt confident in using English to manage the class and promote interaction. For example, on a scale of 1 (no skill) to 4 (highly skilled), in response

to the statement 'Using English I can manage the general learning environment effectively', 51 per cent said they had 'good skill' and 20 per cent that they were 'highly skilled'. Yet, in spite of their confidence in using English in the classroom, only 7 per cent of teachers thought their English language level was 'excellent', with the majority saying it was either 'good' (32 per cent) or 'adequate' (43 per cent), and 18 per cent reporting that it was 'not very good'.

These contradictions perhaps have connections to the official view expressed both in MEST's goals for INSET and in the views of INSET providers whose ratings of teachers' English language competence were not high. In the PIP survey, 21 INSET providers rated teachers' English as 'adequate', nine as 'not very good', and 12 as 'good'. None rated teachers' English as 'excellent'. From the PIP focus group discussions, INSET providers felt that teachers focused too much on receptive skills when teaching, while productive language skills were in dire need of improvement. So, though teachers might feel confident in their use of English in the classroom, if they are told often enough that their language skills are deficient, they may well come to believe it. Further, placing primary emphasis on language proficiency inevitably contributes to pedagogic skills being seen as of less consequence for English teachers.

Lessons

Teachers in South Korea are not generally consulted on the development of courses beyond a needs or wants analysis asking them to say what topics they would like covered. This is not unusual in INSET practice worldwide, though experience (see, for example, Scholey, this volume, for a discussion of change processes in Turkey) does show the value of a bottom-up approach to change 'in a way that teachers could see and understand'. Perhaps as a result of this lack of effective consultation, too much INSET is grounded in a deficit theory of teachers' knowledge and skills, with educational administrators deciding that teachers are lacking in some way that impedes their professional efficacy. Moreover, in South Korea, this may contribute to the lack of positive attitudes towards INSET expressed in PIP focus group meetings, with teachers complaining that courses are 'made up of theoretical and formal lectures which are not applicable to class teaching'. It is no exaggeration to say that, at present in South Korea, INSET seems to be largely something done to inferiors (teachers) by superior others (education officials, inspectors, university professors), rather than a shared enterprise amongst equals collaborating for the improvement of education for students in school.

Given the vision of INSET as a long-term process for South Korean teachers, a corollary is that the school system should offer scope – time and resources, both human and material – for this process to occur. Research across a range of countries strongly suggests that INSET is much more likely to contribute to school improvement if it provides teachers, both alone and in collaboration with colleagues, with the space to reflect upon their prior experience and any new knowledge and skills introduced (Day, Stobart, Sammons, Kington, Gu, Smees, and Mujtaba 2006). However, if the institutional context fails to provide either group with the time to collaborate – teachers to work with each other on issues more

substantive than records of work; teachers to work with INSET providers as follow-up to courses – then a basic condition for effective INSET programmes is not being met and thus the huge sums of money expended by MEST are likely to be wasted.

This is a significant issue for educational systems in and beyond South Korea, as ‘creating a collaborative professional learning environment for teachers is the ‘single most important factor’ for successful school improvement and ‘the first order of business’ for those seeking to enhance the effectiveness of teaching and learning’ (Muijs and Lindsay 2008: 208). The South Korean teachers’ reports of their INSET experiences allied to the lessons from international research provide a clear message regarding the impact of professional development activities on school improvement and student learning outcomes which transcends national boundaries. This is that educational policy makers and administrators must work to remove those constraints which research has identified as inhibiting successful development, most notably teachers’ lack of time and opportunities to reflect on their own teaching and to share practice with their colleagues (Day et al. *ibid.*).

A concern with what actually happens in classrooms as a result of INSET must also be reflected in a more sophisticated conceptualisation of INSET evaluation. This must go beyond the teacher, the trainer, and the course itself. Muijs and Lindsay (*ibid.*) put forward ‘a hierarchy of levels of impact’ which acknowledges the importance of the institutional context in fostering change, as well whether/how teachers implement what they learn during in-service development and – something which is much more contested – whether this all results in enhanced learning outcomes for students in schools. The levels of impact are:

- Level 1: participants’ reactions
- Level 2: participants’ learning from CPD
- Level 3: organisational change and support
- Level 4: participants’ use of new knowledge and skills
- Level 5: student outcomes

(Muijs and Lindsay *op.cit.*: 198-99)

If a major reason for the lack of impact of much professional development activity is the absence of follow-up to INSET in school, where Levels 3-5 are realised, supportive school contexts and the establishment of professional learning communities – which can provide the right conditions for fostering opinion and coaching during in-school follow-up – are critical ingredients of successful INSET and CPD in the longer term. If Ministries of Education throughout the world are to realise their goals for successful English teaching-learning as a contributory factor in national economic competitiveness, they would do well to devote more time and resources to re-imagining how teachers and schools operate, rather than simply assuming that the mere provision of INSET courses for teachers will yield the changes in teacher behaviour and thus student learning outcomes that they seek.

Case 3: Designing a ‘Language-in-Education’ planning strategy in Tunisia

Hamish McIlwraith

The project

The English Language Reform Project (ELRP) in Tunisia began in 2007 and has been developed jointly by the Tunisian government and the British Council. It will result in wholesale restructuring of Primary and Secondary English language teaching and learning nationwide. The aim is to help enable young Tunisians to acquire and use the language competences described in Tunisian Ministry of Education (MoE) documents. It is based on an assumed need for Tunisians to be able to use English in an increasingly interconnected world in order to achieve the best chances for Tunisia’s economic transformation. The intended outcomes are:

- students who can use English for study needs
- school leavers who can use English proficiently at work
- school leavers who can use English effectively for international communication or dialogue.

It took three years to negotiate and develop a ten-year implementation plan. In 2007, I led a three-person team on a scoping study. The scoping report set out the business case and project brief for a reform project. Then, in February 2009, I wrote a Framework Plan that served as a Project Initiation Document (PID). The purpose of this document was to help enable the MoE and the British Council to agree on the project’s scope, aims, and objectives. I advised on the time frame, created new management structures from ministerial/executive level down to day-to-day management (with job descriptions for the lower levels), and suggested the principal stages and phases of development. I specified the main risks and options for controlling them. Later, in June 2010, I submitted a revised and updated Implementation Plan to the MoE and British Council that took into account their comments and suggestions on the Framework Plan.

Stage – design

This study examines the design stage of the ELRP and focuses primarily on the extended negotiations on the terms of reference for the plan. The main players in this process were officials from the MoE, a team of three senior English language teaching inspectors attached to the Ministry, British Council senior management and project staff, and the author of this paper. The main lesson to be learnt for those designing an English language reform project is to be acutely aware of the potential for misunderstanding and conflict which can arise from using terminology which is interpreted in vastly different ways depending on the perspective of the people or agencies using it.

Story

The ELRP took three years to plan. Three years might seem a lot of time to devote to planning, but it was probably a safe minimum considering the historical (and current) importance of French as the main first foreign language and also the huge scale of change required by the MoE. Much of the negotiation revolved around notions of language policy, a perceived threat of English to culture and (Arabic) language, and the extent to which language change can be ‘planned’ at all¹ or, specifically, in education. Eventually we agreed to use categories derived from Baldauf’s ‘Framework for Language Planning Goals’ (Baldauf: 2004). These were: Access; Personnel; Curriculum [i.e. syllabus]; Methods and Materials; Resources; Community; Evaluation. We used them to form the ELRP’s thematic structure.

The categories emerged from a broader discussion we had on how to develop the existing Tunisian Language Policy (LP). LP is a multi-layered concept operating at macro and micro levels. An example of a micro LP would be choosing the language for a sign in a shop’s window or a newsagent deciding which foreign language newspapers to stock (Kaplan and Baldauf 1997: 4). At macro (state) level, LP is the principal mechanism for organising, planning, and manipulating the use of language in society (Shohamy 2006: 45). Baldauf (ibid.) reduces these to four main reasons to reform a language:

1. for status, for example, reversing the decline of a language considered culturally significant
2. for standardisation, for example, the simplification of standard Chinese in the 1970s²
3. the promotion of prestige forms, for example, the language of high culture or diplomacy
4. strategies for language learning, viz. ‘language-in-education’ planning, i.e. the ELRP context.

¹ NB: The few attempts by governments to plan for the use of English (and keep it out) have largely been unsuccessful. This includes the attempts by France, Brazil, and Russia, which have, for the most part, failed. The Académie Française, for example, did not prevent the Académie des Sciences making a decision in 2002 to give preference to articles in English in its *Comptes Rendus*. (Spolsky 2004:63 and 90).

² <http://www.sacu.org/pinyinissues.html> (accessed 14 June 2011).

We extracted the categories for the ELRP's themes from this final reason to reform, i.e. 'language-in-education' planning. At the same time, we looked at practical ways of ensuring the ELRP's successful implementation. Initially, I was given two models of project management to use. The first was a British Council model, which draws heavily on the Association of Project Management (APM) terminology. This approach makes a distinction between 'deliverables' and 'benefits', which, in education projects, are usually described in terms of positive changes in behaviour or capacity. In British Council projects, 'deliverables' are (generally) 'products' and 'outputs'. 'Benefits' are 'outcomes'.

The second model was the PRINCE2 (PRojects IN Controlled Environments) approach, which was presented to me in my consultancy terms of reference. PRINCE2 is a management method endorsed by the UK government for projects funded from the public purse³. It is often described as an uncomplicated way of organising, managing, and controlling projects to give them the best chance of being delivered on time, on budget, and to an appropriate standard. It is not a prescription; it is generic and can be modified and applied to work in any planning context (Bentley 2005). The main focus of PRINCE2 is 'products'. In contrast to a British Council approach, PRINCE2 'products' can be all-embracing. They can be things like course books, teachers' books, CDs, tests, assessments, teacher/trainer training courses, and lists of intended learner outcomes. Even a trained teacher (in PRINCE2 planning terms) is a product. Product-based planning is fundamental to PRINCE2.

The three inspectors who, along with me, comprised the planning team looked at both planning models. The APM-derived terminology in the British Council model troubled my Tunisian colleagues for two reasons. First, they reported that the terminology was potentially confusing to non-experts. Secondly, they were concerned that the British Council model, while of good quality, was not an internationally recognised standard. (One team member went so far to suggest that a 'British Council' model would be an external 'imposition'.) It was for these two reasons that they felt that the less complex and internationally recognised PRINCE2 model was more appropriate for the Tunisian context.

This resulted in a dilemma for my British Council colleagues in Tunisia. Their initial reaction was that they needed to have the same reform plan, but in two planning formats. The first would be written in an APM-derived British Council format. This would be used as an internal British Council document and sent to London for 'concept checking', i.e. to determine whether the plan was viable (or not) according to British Council criteria. The second plan would be written using PRINCE2 terminology and used as the primary document by the MoE and British Council when implementing reform on the ground in Tunisia. The MoE would not have access to the APM/British Council plan.

³ http://www.ogc.gov.uk/methods_prince_2.asp (accessed 20 January 2010).

After some reflection, British Council colleagues concluded that, rather than help, the two plans would not necessarily be wholly compatible and thus could result in mix-ups at a later date. They therefore decided to use one model – the PRINCE2 model. One factor in their reflection was the practical question as to who was to implement the plan on a day-to-day basis.

Choosing the right person was the single most divisive issue we faced. Members of the British Council team were convinced a job so complex and vast (and, by implication, demanding someone with the experience and competence to explain project management terminology to a wider audience) meant that it was one for a UK consultant. The Tunisian team was convinced that a need for long-term sustainability and project ownership meant that only someone already fully immersed in the Tunisian system should be employed.

The quality of the day-to-day project manager, in particular, is crucial to overall success. He or she needs to have the experience, understanding, and strength of character to be able to stand up to, say, a powerful civil servant or a knowledgeable and well-respected school inspector in order to push through necessary change. The overall profile for the ELRP Project manager post stated that he or she should have experience in successfully tackling complex tasks and finding solutions to unanticipated problems. In addition, he or she must be collegial and collaborative in nature, be able to communicate clearly, and actively involve colleagues in making decisions, where appropriate. The specific duties included a requirement to manage the production of English Language Reform products (in PRINCE2 terms) in the three main project strands, i.e. Teacher Training; Syllabus and Materials; Testing and Assessment to prescribed quality standards. This entailed managing team leaders, liaising with the MoE, planning and monitoring project progress, managing risk, and engaging with a Steering Committee and external evaluators to assure overall direction and quality of the project.

In the end, the British Council and the MoE decided on a compromise:

The Tunisian project manager, after a successful six-month probationary period, will be shadowed and mentored by an external consultant for up to three years. (Whether this turns out to be the right strategy will have to wait. At the time of writing, the unrest across the Middle East and North Africa, which started in Tunisia, has put everything on hold.)

Lessons

There were two main lessons that surfaced during the design stage of the ELRP. The first is that while project management terminology may be generally accepted and uncontroversial in one context, this does not necessarily mean that it will not be challenged in another context; the terms may be open to subjective interpretation.

The second lesson follows on from the first, i.e. to recognise that technical terms (i.e. terminology) are a means to an end, but that they can be (and in some cases should be) refined and altered to suit the unique setting of every planning context.

Case 4:

The ETeMS project in Malaysia: English for the Teaching of Mathematics and Science

Mina Patel

The project

Malaysia is culturally and linguistically an extremely rich and diverse country. 'Malaysia, due to the exigencies of history, is a post-colonial nation with a diverse ethnic population possessing great social and cultural complexity. Malaysia has not just one but many significant languages, largely as a result of the immigrant ancestry of its multi-ethnic population' (Gill 2007). Malays form over half of the population, the Chinese are the second largest ethnic group, and the Indians make up the smallest of the three main ethnic groups. There are many more indigenous ethnic groups in East Malaysia and an increase in minority groups throughout the country made up of migrant workers coming to Malaysia.

The official language of Malaysia is Bahasa Melayu. In 1970, the language of instruction in schools was changed from English to Bahasa Melayu. As well as national schools where Bahasa Melayu is the medium of instruction, there are also vernacular schools in the primary sector, where the medium of instruction is either Chinese or Tamil. This has led to the labelling of schools as Chinese, Tamil, or Malay schools (Tan 2005: 49). In the last decade, there has been growing concern that the levels of English language among Malaysians have dropped quite significantly and that this is due to English no longer being the language of instruction in schools (Nor, Aziz, and Jusoff 2011: 36).

In 1991, the Government developed its Vision 2020 strategy, the essence of which is that by 2020, Malaysia will be a fully-developed country. In order to achieve the aims of this strategy, Malaysia has to 'overcome nine central strategic challenges' (Prime Minister's Office 2011: 2). Two of these challenges are:

The sixth is the challenge of establishing a scientific and progressive society, a society that is innovative and forward-looking, one that is not only a consumer of technology but also a contributor to the scientific and technological civilisation of the future.

The ninth challenge is the challenge of establishing a prosperous society, with an economy that is fully competitive, dynamic, robust, and resilient. (Prime Minister's Office *ibid.*)

Many believe that it was with these challenges in mind that on 6 June 2002, the Government announced the decision that Mathematics and Science should be taught through the medium of English:

Mathematics and science represent the gateway to a world of creativity, innovations, and discoveries. The MoE [Ministry of Education] is striving to emphasize the learning of mathematics and science because the future of the world rests upon new breakthroughs and cutting-edge technologies ... The decision to switch to English language as the medium of instruction was based on the rationale that a good command of English would enable students to access the internet, read articles and research papers and other materials published in English. (Ministry of Education 2004: 10)

The implementation of this policy was to begin in January 2003.

The role of English, therefore, changed significantly from being a subject that was compulsory to take, but not pass, to the medium of instruction for two core subjects.

The change in policy received varied reactions from professionals in the education system as well as the general public (Pillay and Thomas 2003: 27; Mukundan, Hajimohammadi, and Nimehchisalem 2011: 82).

Stage – design

This case study will focus on the design and implementation stages of the project. They are obviously very closely linked, and this case study will aim to show that, if a large scale programme is not designed thoughtfully and potential risks considered carefully, projects with the most noble of intentions will not have the desired impact.

Story

The decision to teach mathematics and science through English in Malaysia was an extremely bold one. Bilingual education in any form is very complex, not only from an educational point of view, but from a cultural and societal point of view as well. There are many factors and risks to consider, for example, 'a) the difficulty of providing an adequate supply of teachers who are both proficient in the language and competent in teaching through the medium of the language and b) the many anxieties and misconceptions which exist in the minds of various parents, teachers, high officials, school managers, and the media' (Johnstone 2010: 132).

July 2002 to January 2003 was a period of intense activity. Every available resource in the Ministry of Education was dedicated to realising the policy. This period 'heralded a flurry of chain actions and reactions that did not spare any strata of the education system. From the primary to the tertiary level, the affected agencies and institutions had to quickly put their plans in place and into action to achieve the stated goals' (Tan and Chan 2003: 3).

Teacher training

The Ministry of Education set up 14 working committees to plan and implement the strategy. One major working committee was that of Teacher Training. The English Language Teaching Centre Malaysia, an in-service teacher development centre which is part of the Teacher Training Division, was assigned to develop a programme to help improve the English language proficiency of mathematics and science teachers (Pillay and Thomas op.cit.: 28). The training package was made up of five complementary elements:

1. two interactive phases (weekend training and full immersion)
2. self-instructional study pack (with self-monitoring and differentiation in levels of access)
3. dictionaries with CD-ROMs and grammar books (as reference points for meaning and pronunciation)
4. internet-based learning through freeware (for pedagogical approach and activities)
5. the buddy system (for teacher in-situ support) (Choong 2004: 4).

The two interactive phases were developed as cascade programmes with master trainers from each state being trained initially and then training other teachers.

The teaching and learning of mathematics and science through English happened on a national scale and simultaneously at primary and secondary levels. Implementation began in 2003 with Year 1 of primary, Form 1 of secondary and Lower Sixth, and this was followed in 2004 by Year 2 of primary, Form 2 of secondary and Upper Sixth, and so on until all years and levels were covered by 2008.

By July 2004, 'more than 50,000 science and mathematics teachers have gone through curriculum induction training and language proficiency training' (Ministry of Education 2004: 39). However, teachers struggled to get to grips with becoming learners themselves while still on full timetables. Motivation varied enormously. Very experienced teachers, who had been teaching their subject in Bahasa Melayu for over 20 years and were close to retirement, were now being asked to go on English courses. At the other end of the continuum, younger teachers, who had been taught through the medium of Bahasa Melayu at school themselves, struggled with the concept of having to suddenly teach through another language.

In 2003, the national examinations in the final year of primary school, the third year of secondary school, and the final year of secondary school were bilingual. Students could choose to take them in Bahasa Melayu or in English. By 2008, it was envisaged that all examinations would be solely in English.

ICT

Part of the transformation of the teaching of mathematics and science was an investment in ICT. Computer rooms appeared in schools all over the country, mathematics and science teachers were given laptops, and courseware in the form of CDs was translated into English and in some cases developed especially. The CDs

contained complete mathematics and science lessons in English and were provided to complement and supplement existing classroom teaching and resources. This ICT thrust received mixed reviews. Some teachers welcomed it, others feared it, simply because they had had no experience of using technology in the classroom before this, and others relied on it heavily to make up for their own lack of language and pedagogy to teach their subjects in English (Yassin, Mars, Ong, and Lai 2009: 56).

School-based oral assessment

The third main initiative of 2003 was school-based oral assessment. This form of continuous assessment was first implemented in the first year of secondary school in 2002 and then included the second year of secondary in 2003. It was also offered to students in all years at primary school. The aim of this form of assessment was to encourage students to use English and Malay in authentic situations, and offer them increased and varied opportunities to be assessed and hence build their confidence (Ministry of Education 2004: 14).

In July 2009, six years after the policy of teaching mathematics and science through English had been announced, it was officially reversed with the Government stating that since the policy had been implemented, the improvement in English among students was only 'moderate' (Chapman 2011).

In November 2011, after considerable public pressure, 'the government has allowed an option to students who are already learning Science and Mathematics in English (PPSMI) to continue in the language in the wake of protests from a number of parents' groups... However, this solution does not mean the Government is reversing its stand to scrap the English language policy, which was decided in 2009' (Pathmawathy 2011).

Lessons

Pilot study

Large scale projects are immensely complicated and work on numerous levels. Therefore, it is worth considering undertaking a smaller pilot study first. A small-scale pilot study that is closely monitored and properly evaluated can often highlight areas of strength and concern in a project and bring to light elements that may have been overlooked. All of these are learning points that can then inform the project at national level. It is much easier and more effective in the long term to modify planning documents, rather than a large-scale project that is up and running.

Johnstone takes this idea one step further by suggesting that a feasibility study should come before a pilot study, which should then inform national project design (Johnstone 2010: 133).

Time

Large national projects need time for planning, preparation, and implementation. ELTCM (English Language Teaching Centre, Malaysia) is to be commended for developing a comprehensive training package in a very short time frame. However, by the time the training was ready to roll out, the new term in January 2003 had begun, and so trainers and teachers spent considerable periods of time absent

from the classroom, which was unsettling for both teachers and students alike (Pillay and Thomas op.cit.).

Stakeholder involvement

Johnstone (2010) describes significant factors that emerge from a study of five East Asian countries that have had experience of bilingual-type programmes. Among these factors are provision for parents and consultation, negotiations, and discussion, within and among schools and departments of the Ministry of Education (ibid.: 127, 129). The inclusion of key stakeholders in initial discussions and continuing planning will create a sense of investment and ownership for those concerned, and these individuals and/or groups are more likely to help towards achieving goals and outcomes.

Learner readiness

In educational change programmes such as the one described in this paper, teachers are the main change agents, but we often forget those at the heart of the change process, those at the very core of the change we want to bring about: the students. We must ensure as much as we can that students are considered as active participants in the process and not just passive recipients, and that the change is implemented at a level and pace that will build their confidence and motivate them to want to learn.

One initiative at a time

Change takes effort, energy, time, and sometimes courage. One big change can be substantial, two daunting, but three can be completely overwhelming, and teachers can find it difficult to integrate or even prioritise practices or initiatives. There is a strong argument for implementing one initiative first, laying its foundations, and then building on it with other initiatives over time, rather than implementing too many initiatives at once.

Case 5: Materials design and development in English for the world of work in Turkey: Policy, strategies and processes

Mike Scholey

The project

The tourism sector is a key area of the Turkish economy and in 2006 the Turkish Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and the British Council instigated a textbook and INSET (in-service education and training) project to transform the language skills of 22,000 students studying in Turkey's 106 Hotel Management and Tourism (HMT) vocational high schools. One of the major findings of a small baseline study carried out by the author (the UK consultant to the project) was that the HMT schools appeared to be considerably underperforming in terms of the vocational English language knowledge and communication skills which their students could realistically be expected to acquire during Grades 11 and 12, before leaving to work in the hotel and tourism sector. The most important initial aims for the MoNE, the British Council, and the author were to decide on remedial alternatives for the project intervention and develop a 'consensus of accountability' (Bray and Luxon 1999: 38).

Stage – policy, strategy, and design

This case study focuses on the initial stages of the ELT reform project: policy, strategy, and design.

Story

Project policy

A crucial question to ask in initiating educational innovation according to Kennedy (1999c: 4-5) is whether we want radical, continuous, or incremental change. The author (in his role as consultant) proposed that only radical measures were going to ensure a new fit between practice and context. Consequently, the first tasks were to:

- convince the MoNE of the changes in vocational English pedagogy deemed necessary to bring about the desired changes in ELT practice
- persuade the MoNE that it was possible for radical change to the ELT culture in Grade 11 to be effected quickly
- overcome pockets of resistance to change within the system
- solicit the support of the tourism industry for the intervention
- formulate specific project objectives, such as improvement in vocational content and skills, and training model(s) and procedures.

Throughout the three-year project, all the parties were aware of the need to keep communication channels open in all directions – either formally or on an organised/informal social basis – so that any dissatisfaction, doubts, or difficulties could be dealt with promptly and any problems nipped in the bud. In this way, unpredictable delays in the three-phase process would be minimised and, most importantly, the consultant’s target of producing three draft textbooks in the intensive writing phase would not be compromised. Implicit trust in each other’s commitment and preparedness to change plans and processes to accommodate new realisations – in so far as this was possible or feasible –was expected and displayed from the outset.

The management of the project was thus both organic and flexible, and at the same time well-organised – a process which worked within a strong project framework and also according to the local contingencies and developing needs generated by the different stakeholders during the three years.

Project strategy

Kennedy (citing Bray and Luxon op.cit.) enumerates three sets of expertise required if the above vested interests (the project stakeholders) are to be managed successfully:

- *knowledge of subject content*: selected vocational school subject teachers of HMT and selected English language teachers (ELTs)-cum-materials writers
- *control skills (e.g. project strategy and design, and materials writing/design expertise)*: MoNE officials, British Council manager, Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT) trainer (the British Council trainer brought in to give the two-week pre-writer selection TKT course), UK consultant
- *process skills (dealing with people, working in teams)*: MoNE; vocational and regional education administrators; head teachers involved in piloting schools; vocational school ELTs; selected vocational HMT subject teachers; British Council; TKT trainer; UK consultant.

Smith (1999: 45) suggests that good practice in project innovation lies in, *inter alia*, ‘achieving agreement between all the different stakeholders on the way the project is implemented’. Although this may seem obvious, it is far more easily said than done, and making use of the different sets of expertise enumerated above

through genuine collaboration – and linked to the concepts of ownership and consensus building – was a key and conscious element of the *English for Work* innovation process. What was both significant and crucial in this project was the teamwork between the British Council, MoNE officials assigned to the project, the writing team, and the UK consultant: the very time-consuming and constant to-and-fro consultation process was a sound investment, ensuring shared ownership of decision making to maximise the chances of success of the project.

According to Holliday (1999), our own professional discourses can prevent us from seeing the real worlds of the people we work with, so that cultural continuity (adjusting an innovation to enable the best possible fit with a host environment) may not be achieved. The author was also constantly aware of the dangers of interfering, in this curriculum innovation, with the established Turkish socio-educational context. As Holliday (ibid: 31) also notes, the unrealised, unconsciously constructed logic of many of the management and project concepts we propound or subscribe to may be a product only of our own discourse, making us ‘see others in our own terms, and not in theirs’.

It was recommended in the baseline study report and later agreed by all parties that the best way to change the system was to do it from within the classroom, using a bottom-up approach and in a way that teachers could see and understand – i.e. what was changing and why. New materials have an immediate impact on classroom teaching, pushing teachers to reflect on the innovation and encouraging them to change their methodology and content. Brewster (1999: 90) notes how the development of teacher-made materials ‘acts as a catalyst, encouraging teachers to combine theory with practice while providing a highly motivating course outcome’; acknowledged, too, is the important benefit of a boost to teachers’ professional confidence and competence through the acquisition of transferable curriculum development and training skills.

The model of innovation adopted, then, had the potential major advantage of a widespread and sustained impact. A second advantage was that the selected writers could themselves act as INSET trainers later on in their schools and school clusters. The model of intervention also tied in with the MoNE’s desire for a high-impact, long-term solution, rather than a series of short-term, stopgap measures.

Specialist vocational teacher training in methodology, whereby the trained teacher would cascade-train in an INSET framework in the regions, had been discounted at the project proposal stage. Cascade training can be an unreliable training model, as rarely are sufficient time, commitment, or motivation either available or sustainable for effective INSET after the initial stimulus event has taken place. Instead, the project strategy was for the new materials, in combination with the core group of properly trained and committed HMT ELTs-cum-materials writers, to be the key agents of change.

The real curricular and methodological innovation would be done via the production and piloting of (hopefully) high-quality vocational language learning materials, written by Turkish teachers in Turkey, about Turkey, for Turkey. After an initial two-week TKT course, the writing group was given training in methodology,

materials writing, and tightly focused INSET, with the author acting as trainer, INSETT (in-service teacher training) materials developer and observer. Later, the team would first do initial INSET themselves, training between 80 and 100 teachers, under the guidance of the author, with, later still, INSET work with ELT colleagues – as opposed to an anonymous mass of regional participants – in their own local school clusters. Many HMT ELTs were ripe for training, having had none for several years, and the innovation would soon, hopefully, result in a rapid improvement in the effectiveness and quality of vocational language learning in their schools.

Project design

The project model comprised three main phases: preparation and selection; writer training, materials writing, and piloting; INSET and dissemination. In Phase 1, the MoNE identified participating schools and 40 teachers, and the writing team was selected from this group by the UK consultant. In Phase 2, the author took a huge risk (which necessitated a correspondingly high level of trust on the British Council's part and a similar degree of faith on the MoNE's) by proposing that all of the textbooks could be written in six weeks. The writing team would be 'good' teachers representing schools in different regions of Turkey. They would be released by their schools to attend the TKT training, which would be followed by the six-week residential materials development and writing programme on the principles and processes of materials writing, and they would concurrently produce and draft three textbooks for piloting.

The MoNE arranged the intensive materials writing programme away from the commitments and distractions of home, in a comfortable MoNE-owned hotel/ vocational school on the Aegean coast (with three MoNE-nominated HMT subject specialists), where the pleasant residential working environment could support and enhance the intensive training programme and the production of the new materials.

The viability of the whole project was predicated on the successful outcome of this six-week programme, which would be followed by editing, piloting of the materials, and a short post-writing INSETT methodology course for the writers elsewhere. Immediately after that, there would be INSET and dissemination activities.

The materials, once written, would be edited by the writers under the guidance of the author, piloted, re-edited, and later published by the MoNE through the regular Ministry textbook publishing processes and procedures. Finally, there would be a national conference in Istanbul to disseminate the rationale for and the objectives of the new teaching approach and materials from three different perspectives: the MoNE's, the British Council's and the consultant's.

All of the intended project outcomes listed below were achieved:

- A small cadre of vocational HMT ELTs was trained in contemporary teaching methodology, materials development, and short INSETT course design and methodology for INSET work.
- A large number of other HMT ELTs from the regions were apprised of the new materials and the rationale underpinning them, and trained in their use.

- A handbook/rationale for the use of the new materials in the classroom was produced (in Turkish) for both MoNE use and for head teachers of HMT vocational schools.
- Pilot school head teachers and ELTs understood and appeared to be committed to changes in the classroom teaching and learning of English for HMT.
- The rationale for and content of the new materials was disseminated at a national conference for all Turkish ELT/HMT stakeholders.

Stakeholder experience

A brief characterisation of a Turkish writer-participant's viewpoint should give the foregoing outline of the project policy, strategy, and design a clearer perspective. When Özlem Keskin, a young teacher from an HMT vocational high school in Istanbul, expressed an interest in the project, she was unaware of its real aim and the lengthy training it would involve. She was expecting to improve her teaching skills and interact with colleagues from other HMT high schools, but little else. A much greater challenge awaited her, however. Overcrowded classes, unmotivated students, and a lack of effective classroom materials were some of the difficulties she regularly faced. 'It was really motivating to realise that this materials gap was going to be filled.' During the six-week workshop in which she was trained in the CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) textbook writing process, her excitement and self-confidence grew, as her participation in the sessions came to be appreciated by both trainers and colleagues. However, she worried about the difficulty of both learning to write and creating the books at the same time, and doubted the group's ability to perform within such a limited time frame. This aside, the most inspiring aspect of the process, she explains, was that she always got the encouragement she needed from the trainer/consultant, who constantly motivated the team to think positively, outside the box. She feels that creativity was the most important element in the process, combined with her own knowledge and previous experience. 'It was amazing to discover that, as teammates, we stimulated each other's creative thinking and the ideas flowed astonishingly freely. This made me believe in the power of teamwork, despite occasional serious disagreements.' Özlem began to observe and enjoy the professional progress she was making, with the piloting stage being another turning point, when she was able to observe how well task-based teaching worked in the classroom. Later, she had the opportunity to present the project and share her experiences with colleagues at a national dissemination conference. 'I now feel confident enough to take part in similar projects and even to work on my own textbook someday. The best part for me,' Özlem concludes, 'was realising I was capable of designing my own activities to meet the needs of my own students, and I feel privileged to have left my signature on a project which was the first of its kind in my country.'

Lessons

1. Any major change in curriculum, methodology, materials, or teacher training requires several kinds of systemic adjustment in school systems. Such adjustments invariably involve the head teachers having to reconsider their own perspectives on teaching/learning; being prepared to accept some degree of disruption – possibly major changes to the syllabus, materials, timetabling, learning and assessment processes; and modifying their notions of what constitutes worthwhile and effective INSET for their teaching staff. In order to minimise any resistance from this direction, it was appreciated at the baseline study stage that any systemic change in the HMT schools necessitated by the innovation would require some INSET for head teachers themselves, preferably via efficient dissemination of the nature of, rationale for, and means of the proposed curriculum change. This was done during Phase 3, with an explanatory handbook on the new materials being translated into the mother tongue for MoNE and school administrative use. The consensus among the heads involved was that if change were materials-driven, then it would largely take care of itself and lead to minimum disruption in their schools.
2. There was a need to consider both how the national stakeholders – in traditional project-speak, the ‘recipients’ of the curriculum innovation – were ‘perceived, accommodated, and managed’ (Holliday op.cit.: 25). Technical project documents such as the logframe and timelines for resource input – often incomprehensible to stakeholders – were largely avoided during Phases 2 and 3, and were not a concern for the author, who had his hands full with practical training. Also avoided were ‘naïve notions of mutuality’ and ‘appearance of agreement ... with regard to project documentation’ (Holliday: *ibid*), although there was an acceptance – with good grace – of the inevitable and necessary initial going through the motions of agreement, as there invariably is on such projects some unfamiliarity on both sides’ parts with each other’s administrative *modus operandi*.
3. For the UK consultant to be involved with the same personnel from different levels of the administration for the duration of the project and get to know and trust the same people over innumerable professional meetings *and* social gatherings was a crucial ingredient of the project and contributed enormously to the successful achievement of the planned outcomes. Whenever a problem arose, large or small (such as whether the authors should be thinking about a follow-up textbook for Grade 12; or whether the same authors’ names would be allowed to appear on the textbooks – contrary to MoNE regulations; or how many ELTs would attend the INSET course, etc.), it was dealt with rapidly and effectively, so that any dissatisfaction among the team was addressed and had a largely satisfactory outcome. In this way, project team motivation and morale were maintained, worries and problems were minimised, and a cohesive and largely satisfied and happy team was moulded.

Conclusion

The project reached a successful conclusion within the planned time frame and with all stakeholders seemingly satisfied with project productivity and outcomes. According to the Minister of National Education, Dr Huseyn Celik (British Council 2008), the project 'brought into focus for the Ministry many of the issues related to English language teaching and learning', and the findings and recommendations of the project formed the possible 'basis for reform of ELT throughout the vocational education sector'. What is required now is an impact study to evaluate how and to what extent the project intervention has affected the classroom teaching and learning in the HMT vocational schools.

Case 6: Mind the gap: Language policy reform in Rwanda

John Simpson

The project

Context and rationale

Rwanda, one of the smallest and most densely populated countries in Africa, is a current locus of English language teaching reform: as in other developing country contexts, the reform relates to wider issues of economic development and poverty reduction. In dealing with these issues, the Government of Rwanda (GoR) places a high premium on the growth of human capital with the necessary knowledge and skills as a vehicle for socio-economic development.

GoR views the creation of a knowledge-based economy as central to its Vision 2020 (Government of Rwanda Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning 2000) and Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (Government of Rwanda Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning 2007), and sees English as the gateway to global knowledge. The 2010-2015 Education Sector Strategic Plan (Government of Rwanda Ministry of Education 2010) identifies the sector-wide establishment of English-medium education as a cross-cutting priority and states that a major challenge will be the enabling of all teachers and learners to become proficient in English.

Within this context and in line with the constitution, which stipulates that Kinyarwanda, French, and English are official languages, these three languages are taught in schools so that Rwanda can have regional and international advantages associated with trade and foreign relations. Ensuring fluency in these languages is considered important to national development and the self-actualisation of citizens.

The East African Community

Rwanda is a relatively new and active member of the East African Community, where the use of English has become more prominent and the need for literacy in English greater. In order to compete effectively in East African Community markets and become a regional IT (information technology) hub, Rwanda wishes to expand its use of English. The sector-wide shift to English-medium education is thus a bold and ambitious plan to help meet GoR's goals of East African Community integration, including harmonising its education system with other East African Community member states.

Science, technology, and ICT (Information and Computing Technology)

As a further means of stimulating economic development, GoR is investing heavily in science, technology, and ICT, and has made these priority areas in education, with English playing a key role in this process.

Language policy

Previously, a trilingual language policy offered a choice of medium of instruction based on the linguistic background and experience of the pupils. However, the high cost of learning materials and teacher training made it expensive to maintain three languages of instruction. Against this background, GoR revised language policy in 2008 to prioritise English as the medium of education. This has led to a new configuration of roles and relations amongst the three languages, with Kinyarwanda the foundation for initial literacy, English the main language of learning, and French an additional language. Sector-wide English-medium education is thus enshrined in the mandate of the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) through cabinet policy decision.

English language teaching challenges

Since English has a relatively short history and small footprint in Rwanda, the decision to adopt it as Language of Instruction is recognised as neither a small nor a short-term undertaking. Some of the main challenges in implementing the revised policy in classrooms are: the need for teachers to develop their language skills and ability to teach effectively in English; increasing pupils' exposure to English, particularly in rural areas; a shortage of learning materials in English; and the language level of some textbooks being above the pupils' existing competence.

Project description

Across the sector and in key parts of the system – curriculum, textbooks, examinations, and inspection – lack of English proficiency is a constraint on quality education. The situation is exacerbated by there being few opportunities for teachers and students to use the language outside the classroom. As the main planned intervention to facilitate the transition to English-medium education, the Rwanda English in Action Programme (REAP) sets out to address these challenges by providing support to teachers and learners developing English language proficiency. MINEDUC's preferred option has been decentralised face-to-face training for around 50,000 teachers, supported by self-directed study, school-based mentoring, and an assessment tool to help ensure all teachers perform in English to the level required. Students will benefit from the provision of English language support in core curriculum subjects, including audio-visual materials.

Project goal and purpose

The goal of REAP is to contribute to the sector-wide establishment of English-medium education, the purpose being to enable all teachers and learners to become proficient in English by providing them with appropriate learning opportunities and school-based support. The beneficiaries are both teachers and students – male and female – in urban and rural schools. The programme will operate in two three-year phases to help meet the demand for English proficiency amongst teachers, teacher educators, and students,¹ as well as amongst the staff of GoR education agencies.

Stage – policy

This case study focuses on the first stage of English language teaching reform: language policy formation. In the Rwandan English language teaching reform cycle, the policy formation stage, which is critical to the success of other stages in the cycle, offers a number of lessons for policy makers: language policy not only shapes the project framework, but issues arising in the policy design process can have a knock-on effect – with potentially serious implications – for other stages downstream.

Story

Introduction

This narrative of the first stage of English language teaching reform in Rwanda revolves around both the strengths and weaknesses in the policy formation process, in particular an observed gap – or series of gaps – in this process.

Vision and urgency of GoR's development agenda

On the plus side, GoR has a clear vision and sense of urgency for national development. This imperative includes strong investment in the education sector, as 'one of the main pillars of development'². Education policy, including English language teaching reform, is linked to its perceived ability to contribute to the achievement of GoR's broader agenda of economic development and poverty reduction.

The education context of English language teaching reform

English language teaching reform takes place amidst a number of other key initiatives in the sector: the roll-out of Education for All and Nine Years Basic Education, the strengthening of science education, new policies on girls' education and special needs education, curriculum and textbook renewal, reform of national examinations, introduction of early childhood studies, etc. In such a context, it is perhaps not surprising that English language teaching reform competes for time, attention, and resources with other major education developments; or that the risk arises of there being more change-in-the-making than the system and its personnel can comfortably cope with. Understandable as it is that GoR wishes to address a range of issues in the sector, there is the added risk that the quality of individual reforms may be jeopardised by their number and – in a skills-deficit, resource-constrained context – lack of capacity and funds to implement numerous large-scale changes concurrently.

Reform drivers and dynamics

A corollary to the combination of powerful systems drivers (national goals of regional integration and economic development) and GoR's desire to propel forward contributory activities (evident in the fast-tracking of reforms to expedite

¹ In a 2009 baseline survey, 85 per cent of primary teachers and 66 per cent of secondary teachers presented at lower levels of English - beginner, elementary, or pre-intermediate.

² Extract from President Kagame's address to staff and students at the National University of Rwanda, reported in The New Times on 17 May 2011.

goal achievement) is that it may be necessary for stakeholders and development partners to work harder so as to create time and space for dialogue between decision makers and language policy experts, before key policy decisions are taken. Should this not happen, an information gap may be created in which decisions made by government officials may not be as well informed or taken in the round, were language policy experts to provide input and advice on issues pertinent to language in education.

Policy process and streams

Language policy formation may be conceived as essentially a process coalescing around three broad streams which may be understood as follows:

1. personal/professional desires – encompassing aspirations to English, fluency in which is perceived to facilitate access to socio-economic benefits such as a wider range of jobs, enhanced remuneration, and increased mobility
2. pedagogic issues – based on research findings and understandings of best practice regarding choice of Language of Instruction and learning outcomes in formal education
3. political drivers – such as the government’s national vision and desire for English as a gateway to global knowledge, science, and IT.

Gaps in the policy process

In reviewing the early stages of the English language teaching reform in Rwanda, some important questions arise. The first is: might the drive to reform as a means of helping achieve the government’s goal of fostering regional integration – including harmonisation of education systems – and economic development, have eclipsed the desirability of giving due weight to pedagogic considerations in policy formation, particularly an understanding of the role of the first language in promoting early literacy and learning? The second is: might the enthusiasm for English language teaching reform have contributed to a policy dialogue gap between decision takers and language experts which may, in turn, have influenced the cabinet’s decision in February 2009 to adopt a ‘straight-for-English’ policy in the sector-wide reform, by substituting it for Kinyarwanda as Language of Instruction from P1 (Primary One)?

Benefit of hindsight

In terms of how language policy makers can best be supported in the decision-making process, one wonders whether, had expert advice on pedagogic issues been available at the time, the cabinet would still have taken the decision to go ‘straight for English’ in its policy reform? Had such advice been available at the time, would it have led to a moderation of policy? If so, it would then have obviated the need for cabinet to reverse its decision two years later, in February 2011, when Kinyarwanda was reinstated as Language of Instruction from P1 – P3 (Primary One – Primary Three), partly, it seems, on the basis of a new appreciation of the role of the mother tongue in supporting early years’ learning³.

Lessons

Although REAP is a work in progress, with the first implementation phase now under way, there are a number of lessons to be learnt from the initial stage of language policy formation:

1. The need for greater awareness of the dynamics at work in policy formation, in particular the various streams that coalesce in the process; and improved understanding of the link between options and streams – for example, privileging the mother tongue, as a consequence of foregrounding the pedagogic stream, or English (or another world language), by way of emphasising political or personal/professional considerations. Arguably, adopting this wider frame of analysis enables a richer discussion of Mol (medium of instruction) issues; and taking into account the personal/professional, pedagogic, and political strands of the debate yields a more balanced view of some of the key challenges in shaping language policy.
2. The need for an inclusive or holistic approach to policy formation which brings together politicians, pedagogues, and practitioners in dialogue which helps to better inform and enhance the quality of English language teaching reform, rather than create what some observers may perceive as a top-down process, whereby key policy decisions appear to be taken in relative isolation by government.
3. The need to find earlier and better ways of resolving tensions within and between the policy streams referred to, in particular between political or socio-economic drivers of English language teaching reform – in the case of Rwanda, regional integration and economic development through access to global knowledge – and pedagogic principles, informed by international research and best practice on Language of Instruction and learning outcomes. If such could have been achieved at the outset of English language teaching reform in Rwanda, it might possibly have led to a different GoR decision from that made in 2009 to go ‘straight for English’ as Language of Instruction from P1, and thereby done away with any misunderstanding or confusion arising from the reversal of this policy decision two years later.
4. The need for a co-ordinated approach to major changes in education, including English language teaching reform, that leads to better integration of policies, rather than a tendency to deal with large-scale initiatives separately and thereby risk gaps occurring between the various policies, besides a loss of efficiency in implementation.

³ A New Times article of 16 February 2011 attributed the motivation for the policy change to recognition of the positive relationship between mother tongue and learning in lower primary, as stated by the Minister of State for Primary and Secondary Education.

Case 7: Textbooks, teams and sustainability in Russia

Catherine Walter

The project

In the first decade of the 21st century, the British Council, in co-operation with the Russian Ministry of Education and numerous regional and local education authorities, carried out a project to develop English language textbooks for primary and secondary schools in Russia. The project was based on a previous successful British Council project in Romania; however, there were several ways in which this project differed from the Romanian project. First of all, the scale of the Russian project and Russia's vast geographical area presented much greater challenges for communication during the project and for dissemination. Secondly, the textbook project was only one (albeit a major one) of a nexus of projects designed to have innovatory systemic effects on the teaching of English in Russia. Thirdly, in addition to tangible products and services, the textbook project, like the others in the nexus, had as a specific goal the development of a team which would learn to work together effectively and creatively, and would become a continuing educational resource for the country. There are many ways in which this project was exemplary; the current case study will focus on the extent to which those design elements of the project which aimed to contribute to sustainability actually achieved that purpose.

Stage – design

This case study will focus on the design stage of the Russian textbook project, where choices were based on national and local priorities, where publication was shared between a Russian and a British publisher, and where project participants were recruited very widely and taught to work in teams. Discussion of the lessons learnt from this will inevitably include reporting of outcomes, dissemination, and embedding.

Story

Designing for sustainability

In 1998, the British Council in Russia, in partnership with the Ministry of Education, began the development of textbook series for primary and secondary school learners of English. The original impetus for the project came from the Ministry

of Education and from the English teaching community in Russia. The project was structured so that the books should be published jointly by a Russian publisher and a British publisher, who would share origination costs with the British Council. The national and local demand was for textbooks that were innovative in being output-oriented, i.e. incorporating continuing evaluation of student progress; that used the best of modern language teaching methodology; and that responded to the needs of Russian learners.

The textbook project was part of a nexus of British Council English language projects in Russia which were designed to be mutually supportive. The other projects in the nexus addressed in-service teacher training for primary and secondary teachers, pre-service training for secondary teachers, a national post-secondary English language examination, resources and professional development for university teachers, and mentor training. The synergistic approach adopted for this nexus of projects was a key feature of the design of the projects, and *inter alia* was intended to ensure the sustainability of project outcomes. For example, in-service and pre-service training project members helped organise piloting of the textbook materials nationwide, in collaboration with regional and local education authorities. Piloting was intended not only as an integral part of the development of a quality product, but also in order further to embed the materials in local and regional educational communities. In-service and pre-service training project teams were well placed to seek co-operation in piloting from regional and local education authorities, school administrators, regional teacher trainers and methodologists, teachers, students, and parents. A key principle in the design of the project was that, at all stages, it should be, and should be seen as, a partnership between British and Russian participants, with the Russian participants taking the preponderant role.

In accordance with the Romanian model, teams of potential authors for the books were selected from among practising schoolteachers via a national competition. In addition to a good standard of written and spoken English, and an understanding of modern English language teaching methodology, the candidates were chosen for their aptitude for materials writing, their openness to new ways of working, and their ability to work well in a team. A team of 16 teachers from eight Russian regions was selected to write the secondary materials (*New Millennium English*, henceforth *NME*), and when English language teaching was extended to the primary level, a new team of 14 teachers from six regions was selected to write the primary series, *Millie*. Selection of potential authors was carried out jointly by the British Council, a team of UK consultants from University College Plymouth St Mark and St John, the Ministry of Education, and for *Millie*, the National Training Foundation, an independent body financed by the World Bank, which part-funded *Millie*. There was an eight-to-ten-week residential training course and probationary period led by the consultants who would continue to work on the project before the course teams began their work. Each team had a British Council project manager and an academic manager with experience in the Russian educational system, in materials development, and in project management. The care taken in the selection and development of the author teams and their management derived from a concern for the quality of the books that would be produced, but also for the development

of a team of authors/teacher educators who would become a national educational resource after the end of the project. This was specified as one of the key outcomes in the original project frameworks.

Another key principle was to avoid the projects being confined to the privileged Moscow and St Petersburg regions. The author teams were deliberately chosen from across 10 regions of Russia. Although it was clear that this would pose challenges in terms of communication within the teams, the intention was to avoid a product that could be seen as the property of one locality and to ensure that individuals with skills in materials writing, presentation, and teacher education would be available to the educational community across the country at the end of the project.

In summary, then, this ambitious project sought to ensure the sustainability of its outcomes by:

- embedding the project in a nexus of mutually supportive projects
- constructing the project at all stages as a Russian-British partnership, with Russian partners taking the major role in initiation of the project and the publication of the materials
- taking great care in the selection, development, and management of the authors
- ensuring that the author teams were well distributed across the country and not just in the two major cities; and engaging regional and local educational communities.

Lessons

Were the outcomes achieved and sustained?

In 2006, Richard West, Radislav Milrood, and I undertook a review of the nexus of British Council English language teaching projects that included the textbook project. We studied project documentation and carried out 47 semi-structured interviews and three focus groups, for a total of 71 respondents from 17 towns and cities. Respondents were from all groups with an interest in the project: the Russian Ministry of Education, the British Council, the publishers of the textbooks, the Russian Federal Department for Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement, the National Training Foundation (an independent body financed by the World Bank), university pedagogical research departments in three cities, regional education authorities, teachers piloting or using the books, and project participants at all levels.

In 2010, I returned to Russia at a time when, on the one hand, the project outcomes were clear: the two textbook series had been published and were being commercialised; and on the other, there had been a period when British-Russian relations had not been at their most cordial. Notably for the present narrative, the British Council's presence in Russia had shrunk from 13 regions to Moscow alone. I interviewed a sample of 12 of the respondents from the earlier review, both in

Moscow and in a major provincial city; the sample included British Council staff, publishers, university pedagogical researchers, regional educational authority officials, and former project participants.

In this section I will use the data from the 2006 and 2010 reviews to make brief comments on each of the design elements discussed above and their impact on the success and sustainability of the project outcomes.

It was felt overwhelmingly by project participants in 2006 that the synergy between the different projects in the nexus was vital both for their development as authors and for their relations with local educational communities in the piloting process and, later, in local adoption of books. In 2010 it was reported that alumni of the pre- and in-service training courses were often key sources of pedagogical innovation for other teachers in their schools and supporters of the textbooks, and that working with the textbooks was recognised as a good preparation for the unified university entrance examination. It is clear that designing a nexus of complementary English language projects can magnify the effects of individual projects.

There were some problems in finding appropriate publisher partners, and lengthy discussions with one British publisher had to be terminated, when it became obvious that they wished to control the project and to use it mainly as a means of promoting their other English language teaching products. This points to the importance of thinking through partnership arrangements in advance, in ways that confer benefit on all partners. However, when appropriate partners were finally found, the publishing process went fairly smoothly, and the Russian publisher reported learning valuable professional knowledge and skills from the UK publisher, and vice versa. The books are being successfully distributed country-wide. There have been some problems with Ministry of Education approval of the books (always a lengthy process in Russia and susceptible to various pressures), but there is no doubt that the clear Russian ownership of the materials and the experience of the Russian publisher will have helped in the process. This output of the project, the textbook series, can be said to be both successful and sustained; sales continue to grow; the Russian publisher is now said to be the largest publisher of English language teaching materials in the country and has expanded its range of textbooks in other disciplines. The binational publishing partnership is a powerful model, if carefully handled.

There was some concern among author team members that funding, equipment, and staff support were sometimes barely sufficient and that this had some impact on stress levels. However, that aside, the development of the author team is perhaps the biggest success story of the project. Over 30 classroom English language teachers from 10 regions of Russia have developed knowledge and skills in syllabus and textbook design and development, principles of assessment and testing, language awareness, principles of teacher training, public presentations, and creative activity in teams. Their expertise is in demand throughout Russia and beyond. A National Training Foundation (NTF) pedagogical expert judged the *NME/Millie* team one of the most advanced materials development teams in Russia,

across all educational disciplines. Former members of the team have since been recruited to co-author books in other disciplines than English language. They have been recruited for consultancies in other countries in the region. They are innovators in pedagogy in their regions. The sustainability of this outcome is in no doubt and, given this, future projects might consider more substantial initial resourcing of teams.

The NTF expert also singled out for praise the innovatory model of team-based materials writing distributed across regions, not only for offering opportunities to teachers outside the main cities and for the pioneering model of team authorship, but also because a dissemination network is built in from the beginning of the project. The Russian publisher also commented on this way of working and noted how it shortened the development time for a book. A regional educational authority director interviewed in 2010 contends that his region's consistently superior results in English over the past few years, as compared with neighbouring regions, can be directly linked to the *Millie* and *NME* series and the pedagogy they promote. It is clear that the regional strategy has been successful and has had sustained effects. If this works in the largest country in the world, it is certainly a lesson worth applying elsewhere.

Case 8: Redesigning a blended learning course in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Introducing new technologies for ELT

Claire Whittaker

The project

This case study will provide an overview of the redesign process of a range of blended learning English language courses in the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina (AFBiH). In this context blended learning is defined as a combination of face-to-face, computer, and self-study modes in a single teaching and learning environment. The redesign process was led by the Military English Support Project (MESP) that was established and centrally managed from the United Kingdom by the British Council's Peacekeeping English Project, along with a number of other military English projects across the globe. The courses ranged in level from elementary to upper-intermediate and were taught in 13 centres across the country to accommodate the geographical spread of the AFBiH personnel. The low-level courses were taught by unqualified officer instructors who had received pre-service training from MESP and the higher-level courses by qualified English language teachers employed by MESP.

The redesign process was undertaken in response to the findings from a study which investigated the design of the blended learning courses in the language centres across Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The study revealed numerous and significant inconsistencies between the centres in the duration and intensity of the courses, and the syllabi. This was possibly the consequence of each centre independently developing its own courses. In light of the findings, it became apparent that MESP needed to standardise English language delivery across the centres, primarily to provide learners with comparable learning opportunities. This resulted in what became a three-year iterative redesign process.

Stage – design

This case study principally addresses the design stage of the blended learning courses or, more accurately, the redesign stage, since blended learning courses were in place when the design process commenced. In considering this redesign

stage, this case study will stress the importance of identifying the contextual drivers for change at the start of the process and highlight the iterative and therefore potentially lengthy nature of course design. It will also outline one of the challenges to the redesign process that arose from the lack of literature on blended learning course design in ELT settings.

Story

Drivers for change

Once it had been determined that the courses needed to be redesigned, the context was carefully considered, and two drivers for change that would shape and, to a degree, constrain the redesign process were identified. The first was the need to ensure long-term post-project sustainability. The reason for this was that the UK-funded MESP had a fixed end date, after which the management of the centres would be handed over to the AFBiH. Sustainability was, therefore, paramount in terms of cost (i.e. the centres should be inexpensive to run and maintain), content stability (i.e. the course content and materials should be valid for a significant period of time), and instructor fit (i.e. the courses should be relatively straightforward for the unqualified officer instructors to teach, as after the project they would have to teach all the levels). The second was the opening, during the redesign process, of an internationally funded Peace Support Operations Training Centre (PSOTC) that provided education and training for junior officers in the region through the medium of English. This, for the first time, gave the English language centres a clear goal, i.e. to prepare students linguistically for the PSOTC through the provision of General English and English for Specific Purposes courses.

In addition to the contextual drivers for change, two other 'personal' drivers for change were identified. First, opinion from users (who, unless it is otherwise stated, were the officer instructors and teachers) regarding the shortcomings of the original blend was taken into consideration. Furthermore the users were consulted at every stage of the redesign process and essentially formed the design team. The second was my views, as the lead designer, supported by my knowledge and previous experience of course design, on how best to redesign the blend for our context.

By working closely with the users, I was able to make sure that very few aspects of the evolving blend were overlooked. I was also able to widen the knowledge and experience base in relation to the three modes in the blend, in this instance face-to-face, computer, and self-study. (Interestingly this third mode is seemingly uncommon in most blended learning courses and is only referred to in passing in the literature). The self-study mode was championed by two members of the team. One was a qualified teacher of many years standing with an interest in learner autonomy and the other a highly reflective officer instructor with an interest in designing self-study materials. Their advice resulted in the mode being redesigned and integrated in such a way that it became a fundamental component of the blend, rather than playing a peripheral role, as I believe it had in the original blends.

At times the contextual drivers acted as a constraint on the choices that the design team could make with regard to the blend. This simplified the decision-making process by removing some of the challenges. One example was when the design team was divided over the removal and replacement of the language-learning software that had been used in the original blend. However, as cost had been identified as one of the key components of post-project sustainability, the software, which came with a substantial annual licence fee, had to be replaced with software that required a one-off payment.

All four drivers for change played an important role in tailoring the courses throughout the redesign process and led to ensuring the success of the resultant blend. (The success was measured through a summative evaluation using the Delphi Technique¹ that asked the users which aspects of the resultant blend were an improvement on the original blends. The results indicated that a consensus of opinion was reached in favour of numerous features of the resultant blend, although there were areas that required further development, such as testing). The success could be the result of the users' close involvement throughout the redesign process, and indeed such teamwork has been identified in various studies as being vital to the ultimate success of a design. In addition to ensuring the success of the resultant blend, close co-operation during the redesign process also, I believe, fostered a sense of ownership, which was vital, as after the project the officer instructors would be the ultimate users and owners of the blend.

An iterative approach

The English language courses continued to run during the redesign process and, in order to minimise the impact on the users (officer instructors, teachers, and learners) and to allow time for reflection and comment, they were approached in stages over a three-year period. This resulted in an iterative approach to the redesign process, which, according to the literature, is fairly typical, as 'effective designs will only evolve through cycles of practice, evaluation, and reflection' (Beetham and Sharpe 2007a: 8). In fact 'as many as three of four iterations of course design, development, and implementation may be needed to complete the transition from traditional to blended e-learning course' (Sharpe and Oliver 2007: 48). For this redesign project, this would have been a conservative estimate, as the number could almost be doubled for the transition from the original to the resultant blend. This was largely context-dependent, in view of the number of users involved in the process, their widespread geographical distribution, the number of courses that had to be redesigned (ranging from elementary to upper-intermediate), and my relative inexperience, at the time, as a blended learning course designer.

Approaching the redesign process in iterative stages, although time-consuming, was essential to allow time to implement the changes, trial them, collect response from the users (officer instructors, teachers, and learners), reflect on the findings,

¹ The Delphi Technique 'is a method for the systematic solicitation and collection of judgements on a particular topic through a set of carefully designed sequential questionnaires interspersed with summarised information and feedback of opinions derived from earlier responses' (Delbecq, Van de Ven, and Gustafson (1975), quoted in Lindqvist and Nordanger 2007: 2).

meet as a group to discuss them, and plan and prepare for the next iteration. This approach was intended to reduce the impact of the redesign process on the users, by minimising the number and size of the changes that were being implemented at any one time. Moreover, the repetitive process demanded a high degree of user involvement, which, as was previously stated, was believed to have led to the ultimate success and acceptance of the resultant blend.

The theory behind the practice

At the time of the redesign process, little had been written on the practicalities of blended learning design in ELT settings above lesson level. However, at this level, the literature advocated that the face-to-face and computer modes should be linked grammatically or thematically. It also stressed that the 'effective implementation of technology is not accomplished just as an 'add-on' to existing tools: it must be synergised into the language learning environment with the support of surrounding educational systems' (Yang 2001: 92). No references to the inclusion of a third mode, self-study, were found in the literature. Therefore, with little theoretical support or practical advice at course level, the concept of agreement between the modes, which, as the literature advocated, could be realised either grammatically or thematically, was adopted as one of the guiding principles in the redesign process.

The absence of information on blended learning course design meant that development of the blend was practice-led and context-dependent. This lack of theoretical support or practical advice could have been viewed as a challenge and certainly at times was frustrating, but ultimately it gave the design team freedom to design without restrictions and to learn by experience. Nevertheless, research is still needed on blended learning in ELT settings to enhance the quality of the blends, because there is a 'huge deficit in terms of research on using blended learning by individuals or small language schools' (Westbrook 2008: 14).

Lessons

Two key learning points emerged from this redesign project. The first was the importance of identifying the contextual drivers for change before undertaking any design or redesign process, as ultimately they will shape the direction that the design takes. This supports the view that, when designing a blended learning course, there is '...no single optimal mix. What configuration is best can only be determined relative to whatever goals and constraints are presented in a given situation' (Shaw and Igneri 2006: 3). In addition to the contextual drivers, the personal drivers for change also need to be recognised, and in this instance the success of the resultant blend was to a large extent due to the involvement of the end users in the redesign process.

The second learning point is not to underestimate the length of time required to design or redesign a course effectively, if an iterative approach is adopted. The redesign process in this case study was conducted over an arguably long three-year period and, although the reasons for this were largely contextual, it does illustrate the potentially lengthy nature of such an undertaking.

Lastly, in the course of the redesign project, a lack of literature on blended learning course design specifically related to ELT settings was identified. This needs to be addressed in order to enhance the quality of blended learning environments in these contexts and to redress the balance of studies on the matter that are emerging from the tertiary sector.