

Overview of Implementation and Advantages of TAG under TEJAS Project

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Abstract: It is rightly claimed by UNESCO, “An Education System is as good as it teaches.” This highlights the need for both well-trained and talented teachers who reflect and unlock the potential of children, that inspire creativity and drive ambition. Recognizing the significant relevance of quality education and the increasing demand for quality in education, the Government of Maharashtra in 2015 brought the historic Government Resolution (GR) of Pragat Shaikshanik Maharashtra that paved way for a transformative vision for the improvement of the education system in the state. To realize this vision, the government included the TATA Trust and the British Council to initiate the innovative TEJAS project (Technology-Enabled Education through Joint Action and Strategic Initiatives). VI- This project aspires to have teachers form a good quality circle of committed professional teachers whereby the latest technologies and most modern teaching approaches will be integrated. TEJAS is a dynamic platform for empowering educators through collaborative learning and capacity building, leveraging technology to bridge gaps in TPS practices and student engagement. The paper discusses how TEJAS will be implemented, its unique features, its benefits, as well as its contribution to an improved teacher competency leading to a New Age Education System. Through TEJAS teachers are being challenged to innovate and strive for excellence with the pace of change and keeping the focus on building students through active learning and holistic development by culturally inspired teaching.

Keywords: Teacher Activity Groups (TAGs), Teacher Professional Development (CPD), Technology-Enabled Education, National Education Policy (NEP), ICT Integration in Education, English Language Proficiency for Educators

1. Introduction

Under the same project, for the improvement of the quality of English language teaching through each other's support, the government of Maharashtra is conducting the TAGs (Teaching Activity Groups). This project is lead by the Hon. Director, RAA, Aurangabad (Regional Academic Authority), and his core team. Through the initiative, several TAGs user established by motivated and committed teachers in order to support each other.

The Quality of an education system is closely linked to the quality of its teachers, as evidenced by UNESCO's statement that “An education system is only as good as its teachers.” Teachers contribute to creativity, ambition, and even a love of learning that lasts a lifetime. However, improving teacher quality continues to be a major challenge, particularly in large and diverse education systems such as that of India (Govinda & Varghese, 1993) [3]. The Government of Maharashtra, acknowledging this need, launched Government Resolution (GR) of Pragat Shaikshanik Maharashtra in the year 2015, which was a pioneering step to enhance the quality of education through quality innovations (MHRD, 2015) [6].

TEJAS (Technology-Enabled Education through Joint Action and Strategic Initiatives) responding to this vision, is a landmark initiative being undertaken jointly by the Government of Maharashtra, TATA Trust and the British Council. TEJAS aims to enable teachers by embedding industry-grade technology into professional development programs to build a sustainable model for continuous learning and quality teaching. However it also builds on the

best practices available globally in education and cope with accessibility, inclusive, skill enhancement and a technology-driven framework (British Council, 2018), [1].

This contributes to the usage of TEJAS project and its implementation in Maharashtra, analysing its process, results and the transformation that it has brought for the education system of the state. It provides a model for how teacher education could harness technology and collaboration to transform learning and teaching outcomes.

2. Aims of TAG's

Teacher Activity Groups (TAGs) — a key element of TEJAS — slope educational empowerment and collaborative professional learning. The specific aims of TAGs include:

1. **To Build a Community of Self-Helping Teachers:** TAGs are designed to be the collaborative network where teachers share and work through success and challenges together. These community-based approaches have been demonstrated to have a significant impact on teaching effectiveness and professional satisfaction (Wenger, 1998) [8].
2. **To Motivate Teachers to Help Each Other:** TAGs foster a culture of collaboration and co-evolution, encouraging members to support one another. Peer mentoring is known to be an effective professional development tool (Knight, 2007) [5].
3. **To Gain More Confidence in Communicating Fluently in English:** A major concern of TAGs is improving teachers' skills in English communication as this is vital for effective lesson delivery and to develop global competencies in their students (British Council, 2018) [1].
4. **To Be Better Able to Introspect on Teaching Practices:** Such reflective practices as articulated in TAGs help teachers to critically analyze their methods and adjust them for improved results. Effective teaching is built on reflection (Schön, 1983) [7].
5. **To Implement New Ideas in Classrooms:** TAGs promote to educators in adopting innovative and technology-based strategies for engaging their practices. And research shows [4] that the value of academic pedagogy is likely to greatly increase student learning outcomes.
6. **To Promote Continuing Professional Development (CPD):** CPD lies at the heart of TAGs; a well-designed system of assessment that keeps teachers as lifelong learners, able to adapt to the changing needs of education. The CPD is well established as a vital means of maintaining high standards of teaching (Day, 1999) [2].

These goals highlight TAGs transformative potential in developing a sustainable ecosystem for teacher empowerment, innovation, and culminating in education quality improvement.

3. Implementation of TAG

NEP 2020 focuses on reconceptualising teacher education to cater to changing education sector needs (Tiwari, 2024) [9]. Through the Teacher Activity Groups (TAGs), the TEJAS project resonates with this vision by promoting teacher professional development and technology-driven methodologies. Integrating ICT aspects into teacher training has been vital during and post-pandemic, enabling educators with skills required for the classrooms of the future (Subaveerapandiyar & Nandhakumar, 2022) [10]. TEJAS also includes technology-enabled activities like video-based learning aimed at improving the English language skills of educators in rural India and teaching methods. Educator Training Programs according to NEP 2020 Learn, Educate and Advance through Multi-Disciplinary Learning (LEAD School, 2024) [11] TAG framework aligns with these targets by providing organized and participative sessions that develop both the English language and pedagogical skills of teachers.

Today, Teacher Activity Groups (TAGs) are strategically designed to be an opportunity to connect for maximum credentials, engagement and effectiveness. So each TAG is at a cluster level and each cluster has around 9-10

schools. One teacher per school forms the TAG, so when you have around school of 9-10 teachers. The TAG is led by the TAG coordinator, who has special training from the Regional Academic Authority (RAA), Aurangabad, to motivate and facilitate the group. The implementation process is carefully monitored and guided under the leadership of the Honorable Director of RAA and their devoted team that leaves no stone unturned to make sure implementation is happening as per quality and goals set for the process. You are only trained on data until the month of October in 2023.

One of them is the block level plan in which the Cluster Head is the supervisory authority with assistance from Block Resource Center (BRC) officials and Block Education Officer (BEO). TAG meets in three-hour blocks, once a month. These professional development sessions are all designed to follow a specific agenda in order to ensure effective learning.

3.1 TAG Resource Book

To support the TAG initiative, every participating teacher receives a TAG resource book, divided into three sections to focus on distinct areas of language proficiency:

1. **Language Development:** This section includes activities and exercises to practice practical and functional English for everyday use.
2. **Learning by Reading:** Teachers are encouraged to explore various uses of English by engaging with thoughtfully selected articles, thereby broadening their comprehension and application of the language.
3. **Learning by Watching:** This section promotes the development of English proficiency through curated video content, offering contextual and visual learning opportunities.

3.2 TAG Meeting Schedule

Each TAG meeting follows a consistent schedule to ensure productivity and engagement. The structured agenda includes:

1. **Warmer/Reflection (15-20 minutes):** An interactive session to reflect on past learnings and create a conducive environment for participation.
2. **Language Development (45 minutes):** Practical activities and exercises to enhance language skills.
3. **Learning by Reading (45 minutes):** Discussions and activities centered on understanding and applying concepts from reading materials.
4. **Learning by Watching (45 minutes):** Video-based learning sessions aimed at improving listening and comprehension skills in English.
5. **Reflection and Action Plan (15-20 minutes):** The session concludes with reflections on the meeting's outcomes and the creation of an actionable plan for the next month.

3.3 Interactive Activities

TAG meetings are activity-rich and designed to make the learning of English enjoyable and engaging. Some of the key activities include:

- **Chain Drill:** A participatory exercise to practice sentence construction and fluency.
- **Chinese Whisper:** A fun game to improve listening and speaking skills.

- Card Games and Riddles: Activities designed to enhance vocabulary and critical thinking.
- Classroom Simulations: Practical exercises for applying new teaching methods.
- Jump Left, Jump Right: Physical activities integrated with language learning to make sessions lively and interactive.

These activities are instrumental in helping teachers become proficient in day-to-day English usage, thereby equipping them to transfer these skills effectively to their students. By fostering collaboration, reflection, and innovation, TAG meetings play a pivotal role in enhancing the teaching and learning process.

4. Advantages of TAG

The Teacher Activity Groups (TAGs) have emerged as a game changer for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of teachers, especially in rural Maharashtra. With many pros, TAGs also play a pivotal role in helping teachers with an engaging, supportive, yet empowering platform. Key benefits include:

1. Promoting CPD for Teachers:

In this way, TAGs bring both purpose and activity to CPD, helping teachers develop and refine their subject knowledge over time. These activities made learning fun which encourage to participate actively.

2. Creating a Forum for English Communication:

TAGs present a great opportunity for teachers to speak in English and enhance their language abilities. This kind of forum allows educators to feel free to practice their language skills, while also getting a good idea of where they are with their spoken language.

3. Encouraging Peer Support and Problem Solving:

TAGs provide peer to peer learning and collaboration by bringing teachers together. What they do — when teachers help each other directly to address and solve challenges in teaching and learning — was a sense of collective problem-solving.

4. Building Confidence in Classroom English:

They develop confidence in their ability to use English in the classroom through practice and exposure. This can help them better interact with their students and implement curriculum goals more effectively.

5. Facilitating Meaningful Interaction:

TAGs offer a rare opportunity for teachers to collaborate with their colleagues in a positive environment. Such interactions prompt the sharing of ideas, experiences, and best practices, which further enrich their teaching repertoire.

6. Enhancing Practical English Skills:

How teachers learn to express everyday needs, emotions, and practical scenarios in English accurately and easily. Rural educators often have constrained exposure to conversational English, and this skill enhancement comes in handy for them.

7. Bridging the Urban-Rural Divide in Education:

For rural Maharashtra's primary teachers, TAGs are, thus, a vital stage to learn and adapt modern pedagogies. They help address the gap in both language and teaching methodology of rural to urban educators and vice versa.

8. Empowering Teachers with Innovative Pedagogy:

TAG activities, such as chain drills, card games, and classroom simulations, expose teachers to various ways of teaching that they can implement in the classroom which would improve learning and motivation among their pupils.

9. Developing a Collaborative Community:

TAGs include teachers from different backgrounds and levels of experience in curriculum, pedagogy, and classroom management; fostering a sense of belonging and a community around mutual growth and shared goals. In addition to professional contact, this works to promote moral and motivation.

The success of TAGs is a testament to the vision and efforts of RAA, Aurangabad (SIE) (EE), the Government of Maharashtra, TATA Trust, and the British Council. On behalf of all primary teachers, a heartfelt thank you to these organizations for their unwavering commitment to improving the education system and empowering educators.

5. Conclusion

Project TEJAS is a pioneering initiative focused on empowering teachers through Teacher Activity Groups (TAG). Working on collaborative learning, relevant English language skills, and contemporary pedagogical methods, TAGs have effectively bridged the broader gaps in the education system that rural Maharashtra faces. With a TAG meeting structure led by trained coordinators and enabled by well-defined support materials, a dynamic environment of enduring learning and peer interaction has been created. For teachers, through TAGs, they are improving their English language and building their confidence in the classroom and creating a tradition of support for each other as well as reflective practice. This initiative has been a transformative force in bridging the urban-rural divide and facilitating innovative teaching methodologies. Credits: Successful execution of this program is testimony to the efforts of Government of Maharashtra, TATA Trust, British Council and RAA, Aurangabad in leaving behind an impactful imprint on educators and the students alike. TAGs are an excellent example of lifting quality through focused intervention and collaboration in the heart of the education system — its teachers. Thus, continued support and expansion of these types of initiatives should be welcomed as a sign of an increasingly strong and inclusive educational future.

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