



How does change arise? Decentring ELT/TESOL

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WARWICK

APPLIED LINGUISTICS



<https://bit.ly/decentring-ichels2022>



Preliminaries

What's 'ELT'?

What's 'TESOL'?

What's 'decentring'? - to be defined!

First, some words on 'innovation' and 'change' ...





Plan

1. 'Innovation' and 'change'
 2. Decentring ELT
 3. For teacher associations
 4. For teachers (1): building on success
 5. For teachers (2): teacher-research
- 



1. 'Innovation' and 'change'



[Home](#) » [ELTons Innovation Awards](#) » [ELTons 2021](#)

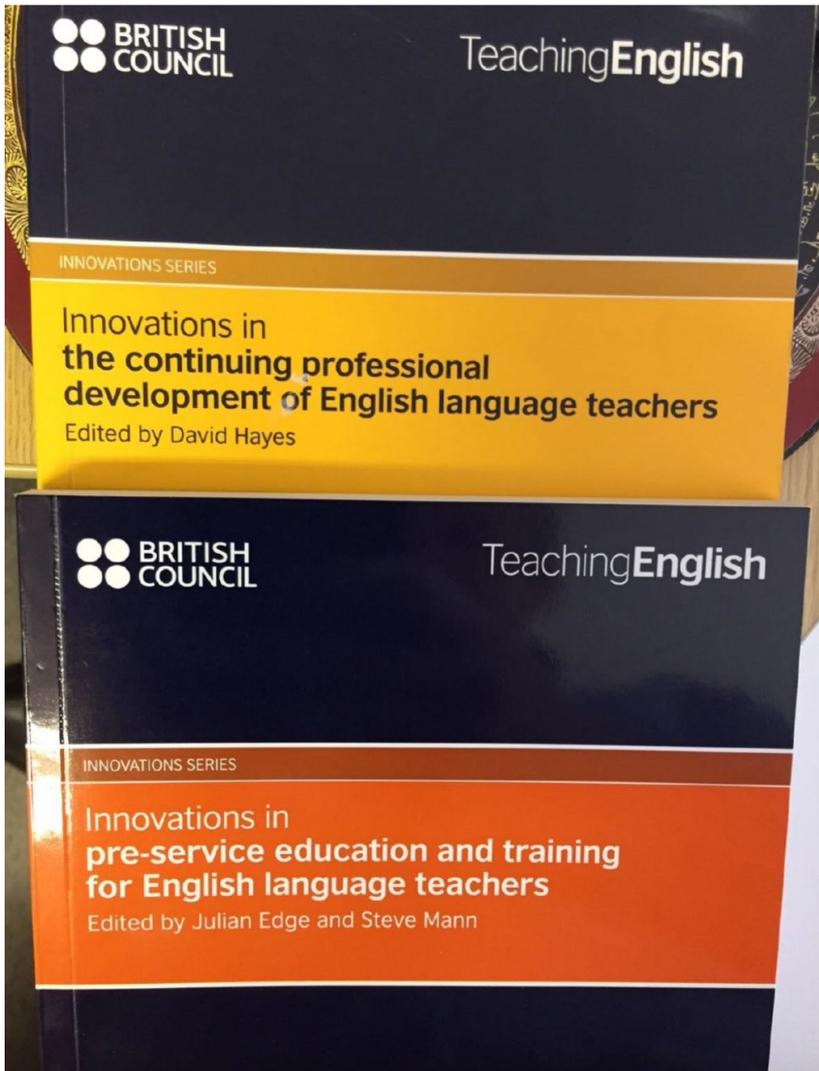
ELTons Innovation Awards 2021 - Applications

Applications for the ELTons Innovation Awards 2021 have now closed. Further announcements of the finalists will be made later in the year.



Please note: Applications for the ELTons Innovations Awards 2021 are now closed.

Now in their nineteenth year, The British Council ELTons Awards for innovation in English language teaching and learning celebrate the newest and most original courses, books, publications, apps, platforms, projects, and more, which find new ways to meet the real-life needs of English language learners and teachers around the world.



Key Concepts in ELT

'Key Concepts in ELT' is a feature of the Journal that aims to assist readers to develop an appreciation of central ideas in ELT, and to approach the content of articles from a perspective informed by current debate on aspects of theory and practice.

The list given below is an up-to-date guide to all 'Key Concepts' that have been published in the Journal. The list contains links to the original articles, which are available to download free of charge (PDF file).

If you have a suggestion for a Key Concept piece please fill out the form on our [Instructions to Authors page](#).

- [Resilience](#) (*ELT Journal* 72:2)
- [Activity](#) (*ELT Journal* 71:4)
- [Proficiency](#) (*ELT Journal* 71:2)
- [Criticality](#) (*ELT Journal* 70:4)
- [Collaboration](#) (*ELT Journal* 70:2)
- [Creativity](#) (*ELT Journal* 69:4)
- [Intelligibility](#) (*ELT Journal* 69:2)
- [Authenticity](#) (*ELT Journal* 68:4)



Volume 63, Issue 4
October 2009

Article Contents

Innovation in ELT ^{FREE}

[Martin Wedell](#)

ELT Journal, Volume 63, Issue 4, 1 October 2009, Pages 397–399,

<https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccp053>

Published: 15 July 2009

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Although innovation in ELT has grown apace in recent years, much of it has been unsuccessful (see, for example [Karavas-Doukas 1998](#); [Carless 1999](#); [Nunan 2003](#)),

- 
- Innovation seems to be a key concept in language teaching
 - But many past top-down, outside-in innovations seem not to have ‘worked’.
- 



positive vs. negative terms?

Innovation.....Tradition

New..... Old-fashioned

Paradigm shift..... Continuity

Revolution..... Evolution

Usual reality of slow change (if at all) - based on teachers' experience of 'what works' not just acceptance of 'what is new' coming from outside





What about our experience in the pandemic, though ('fast change')?

- We developed new skills / We have new tools
- How/Why?
- Through our own experimentation, resourcefulness, cooperativeness

Teacher-learner autonomy: “the ability to develop appropriate skills, knowledge and attitudes for oneself as a teacher, in cooperation with others” (Smith & Erdogan 2008, p. 83).







Assumptions

- 'Innovation' is a buzz-word, but change often fails to result
 - Critical turn: apparent end of paradigm that 'the centre knows best' / that 'new is better' ?
 - However, inappropriate impositions/imports continue; critiques alone don't improve this situation
 - Constructive approaches are needed which build on and develop teachers' own (local) knowledge and expertise
- 



Some constructive approaches

- celebrate local achievements / identify local expertise (cf. Hornby Trust 'Decentring ELT' initiative)
 - identify, build on and share success – 'enhancement approach'
 - develop teacher-research
- 



2. Decentring ELT

<https://bit.ly/decentring-ichels2022>





“The ‘Decentring ELT’ initiative launched by the A.S. Hornby Educational Trust aims explicitly and deliberately to promote the development of contextually appropriate thinking and action (on methodology, materials design, curriculum development, teacher education, etc.), with a specific focus on the needs of learners and teachers of English in public education systems in relatively low-income countries. “





3. For teacher associations



Examples of activities carried out by English language teacher associations in Africa, Latin America, and South Asia which involve:

- localization/devolution
- encouragement of success-sharing
- support for teacher research
- investigation of members' needs and/or capabilities
- attempts to bring about wider change

D. Banegas, D. Bullock, R. Kiely, K. Kuchah, A. Padwad & M. Wedell (2022). 'Decentring ELT: Teacher Associations as agents of change'. *ELT Journal* 76/1: 69–76.

Decentring ELT: Challenges and Opportunities (Brief report on The A. S. Hornby Educational Trust's 60th anniversary online conference, in collaboration with AINET and the Centre for English Language Education, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar University Delhi, 3–4 December 2021)





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Teacher
Association
Research

Cameroon –
Aug. 2013+



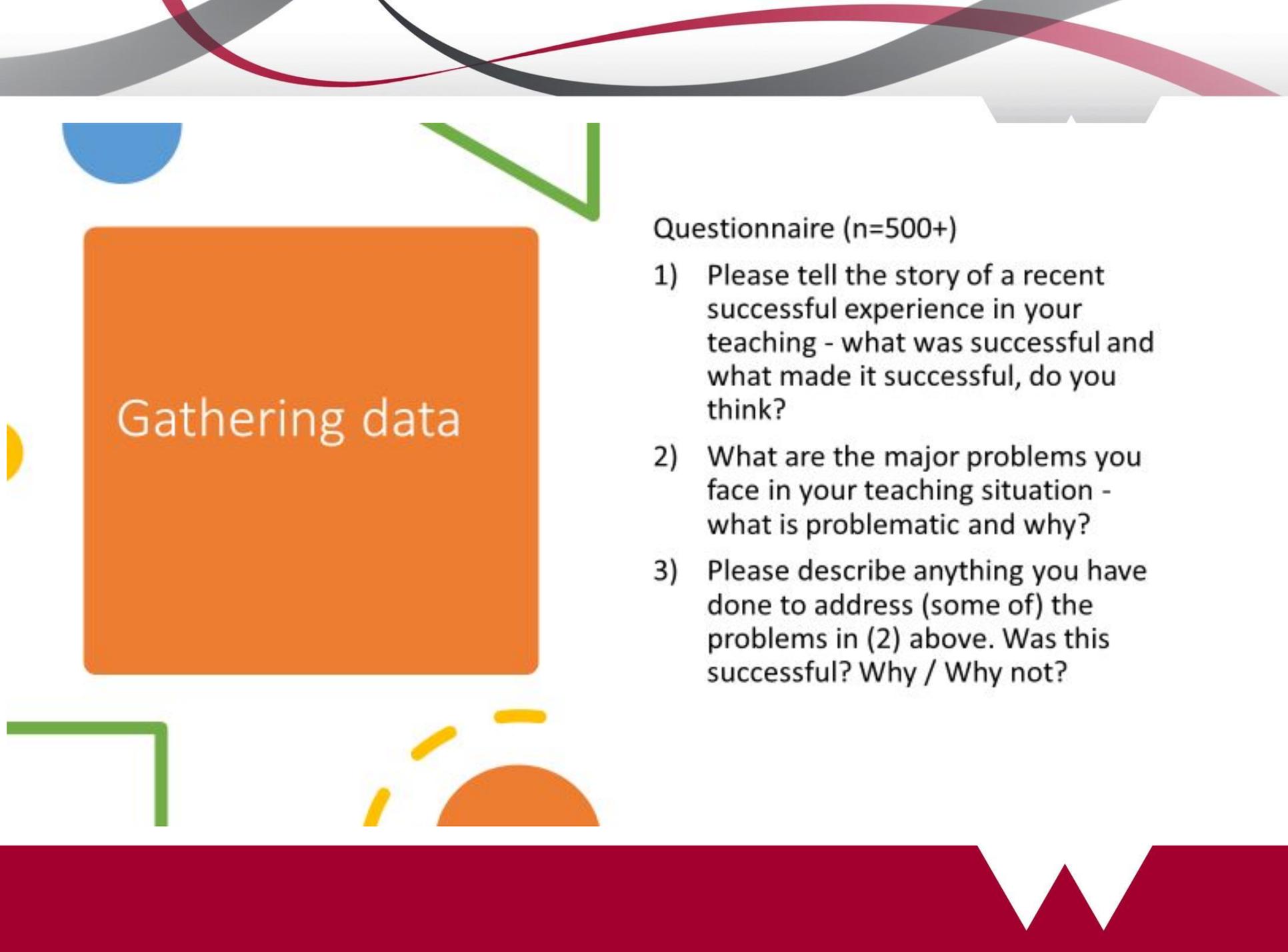
Smith, R. and Kuchah, K. 2016. '[Researching teacher associations](#)'. *ELT Journal* 70/2: 212-221



Gathering research questions

E.g.:

- What accounts for students' absenteeism or poor attendance in English lessons at high school?
 - Why do students indulge in collusion and cheating at tests and exams?
 - Why do many teachers shun professional development meetings?
 - What methods of teaching are appropriate in teaching a multigrade class?
 - How can CAMELTA convince the ministry to accept new ideas on teaching?
- 



Gathering data

Questionnaire (n=500+)

- 1) Please tell the story of a recent successful experience in your teaching - what was successful and what made it successful, do you think?
- 2) What are the major problems you face in your teaching situation - what is problematic and why?
- 3) Please describe anything you have done to address (some of) the problems in (2) above. Was this successful? Why / Why not?

For more on 'teacher association research':

<https://bit.ly/decentring-ichels2022>





4. For teachers: (1) Building on success



Context:

2008+ TELCnet (= Teaching English in Large Classes network), founded by Fauzia Shamim and Richard Smith

2013 Hornby Trust Regional Workshop on Teaching in Low-resource Classrooms, Kathmandu – Amol Padwad and Richard Smith



TELC-net: telcnet.weebly.com

2008+

TELC-net: The Teaching English in Large
Classes research & teacher development
network

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About TELC-net

Network rationale

Large class size and/or a lack of material resources are challenges faced by many teachers and learners around the



TELCnet research principles

- 1) Don't see small-class teaching as the norm and teaching in low-resource contexts / large classes as a 'problem'. Instead, start with descriptions of practice, in particular 'good practice' as perceived by teachers and students themselves
- 2) Focus on issues of practical concern to teachers themselves – support teachers to develop appropriate methodology 'from the bottom up', for example through practitioner research.
- 3) Qualitative, exploratory 'case study' / story-based approach

(Smith 2011)





Story of Madhav Timilisina (a teacher in a rural
Nepalese secondary school)

(written reflections elicited in TELCnet research by
Prem Phyak, 2011)





[...] Nearly four different ethnic communities are in the catchment area of my school. Students from Newari community speak Newari language as their first language and Paharis, Tamangs and Magars have their own language (except Paharis) and culture. Using some aspects of their language and talking about their feasts and festival in the class, I address their linguistic as well as cultural identity.





As a result, they all feel welcome in the class even if it is crowded. They never feel that teachers do not care about them. It helps me make my students feel supported during my class. I find students working vigorously when I make groups mixing all ethnic identities. [...]





A few talented students generally dominate the large size classes. They can help the teacher to teach effectively. My way of mobilizing them helps me. I place them in different benches and assign them to help other weak students.

Another way that I use is to administer Proficiency test before I start the course. According to the score they obtain, they are placed in such a way that the weak students will get helping hands.





It is, of course, a troublesome job for the teacher to have individual care in a large size class. A student hardly gets half a minute within a 40-45 minutes' class.[...] It is not possible to reach to each individual.





To solve this problem, I just go through the answers of one student per bench and ask him to help his friends. I have found peer correction and self-correction techniques useful in such classes.

Large size class is not only a problem or burden of teachers but also an opportunity to explore new techniques and tools.



Hornby Regional Workshop on 'Teaching in low-resource classrooms', Kathmandu 2013



Building on success

Starting with success: Think of and share a successful teaching/learning experience in your recent experience? What made it successful?









Teaching in low-resource classrooms: voices of experience

Edited by Richard Smith, Amol Padwad and Deborah Bullock





- Sagun Shrestha adopted this approach in his teacher training in Nepal
- It proved to be an effective model



Further developments

'NELTA ELT Clinic' at the 23rd International Conference of NELTA
(Nepal English Language Teachers Association) - 2015



Success story conferences in 2018 and 2019 (Kathmandu)



Bi-national (Nepal (NELTA) – Bangladesh (BELTA) Success Story Forum – 2021

Success Story Forum

Let's celebrate our teaching and learning successes!

Search



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Presentations

April 10, 2021 (First Sharing Session)

1. Adda in English (AIE) – Group Adda and One-on-one Adda



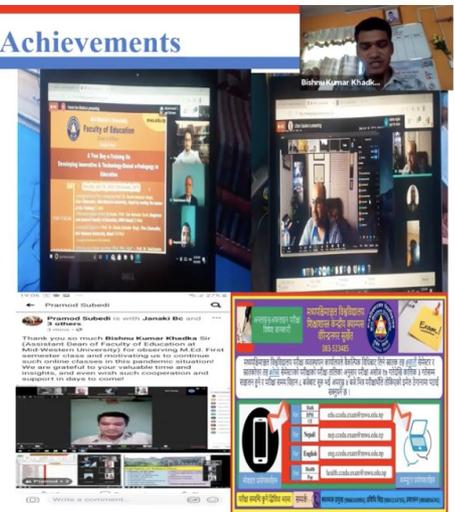
Watch the recording of the first sharing session here:



Success Story: Achievements

- ◆ **Maintain Academic Calendar** : Classes run smoothly and examination conducted timely
- ◆ **Opportunity**: learn use of ICT in teaching-learning & evaluation system
- ◆ **Online community formation**: messenger group, social media, emails, zoom link etc.
- ◆ **Exposure**: Opportunity to share to the online community
- ◆ **Policy formation**: Digital, Virtual and Alternative Teaching-Learning and Operating Systems Policy Guidelines 2020, Alternative Examination Management & Evaluation Directives 2020, EMIS System,
- ◆ **Transformed Pedagogy**: e-Pedagogy, e-Exam
- ◆ **Academic Writing**: online journals, assingmt

April 10, 2021





For teachers (2): teacher-research



Turning problems into 'How can I...?' questions

I have too much homework to mark. It is impossible to give effective feedback to everyone.

*How can I provide feedback to students?
What are the different forms of feedback can I use?*

It is difficult to get students' attention to stop them working on a pair or group task.

How can I attract students' attention during activities?



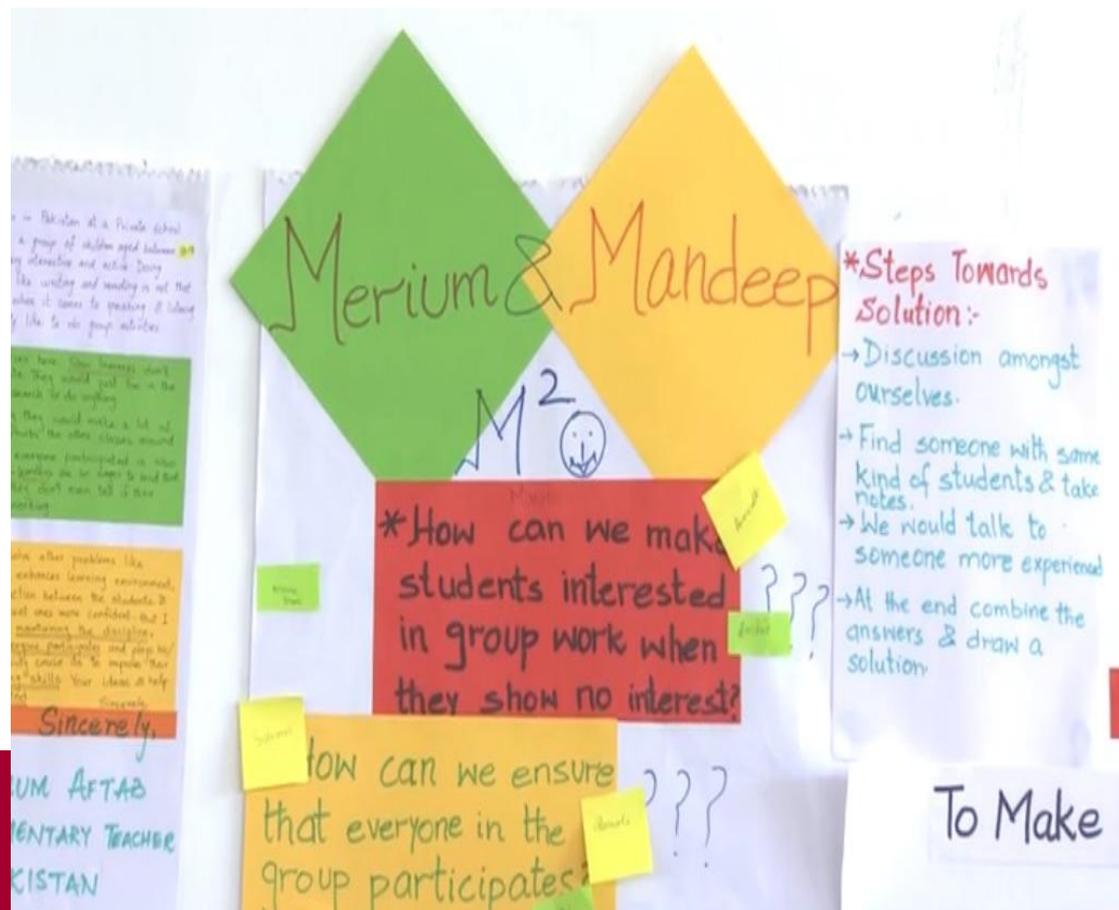
Not all students participate due to being in a large class.

How can I design activities or group work so all students participate?

It is difficult to promote active learning in large classes when resources such as textbooks, flash cards are limited.

*How can I help students to be active in their learning without using resources?
What does it mean to be engaged in active learning?*

Narrowing down to one main topic and seeking answers to questions from colleagues



1. How can the single teacher manage the classes when he is sick/in leave?

5. How we will manage the period of 45 minutes for 2-5 English classes at same time?

6. At broad, how can a teacher in this school manage from 8:30 am to 2 o'clock in afternoon?

From where can we find the solutions?

- ↳ from peers,
- ↳ teachers from other schools
- ↳ experienced teachers
- ↳ experienced resource persons

The steps how we have put our solutions:

- Discussed among the group
- Took suggestions from other
- Took suggestions from the
- We compiled the solutions together

Solutions:

- Engage the different classes with a...
e.g. if one class is engaged with reading...
classes will be busy with some other activities.
- For grammar classes, we can club the classes together and engage them in the same activity.

SOME IDEAS...

Monitor each group
see whether each
member is working
at!

Group
be ca
final a
encour
partici

Acknowledgement

Ms Razia

Ms Shafiq

Mr Laxmi

Mr Sampat



After the 2013 Kathmandu workshop, teachers tried out ideas gathered from colleagues and evaluated the results (a kind of 'action research')

Teaching in low-resource classrooms: voices of experience

Edited by Richard Smith, Amol Padwad and Deborah Bullock



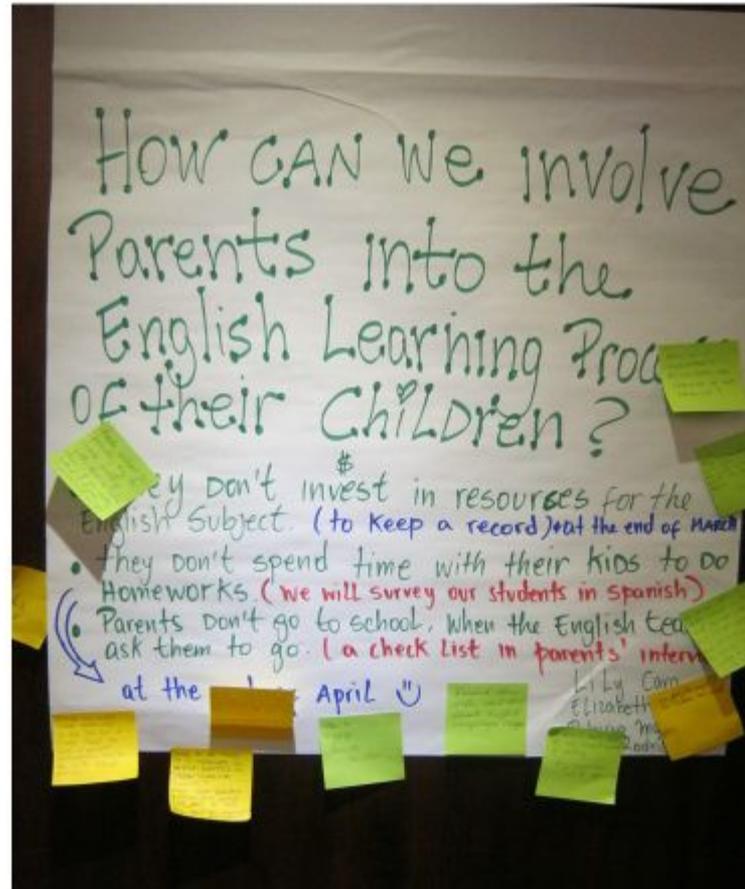
Exploratory action research

Jan. 2013+









Example:

Topic: My students speak in English only to me but not to each other.

Exploring my perceptions

In what parts of the class do I think students speak to me?

Why do I think it's important for them to speak to one another in English?

Exploring others' perceptions

What do my students think about this?

Exploring behaviour

In pair work, which students do and don't speak in English?

In pair work, when do they start speaking in English?

Exploring your own perceptions

1. Your own written reflections and/or notes
2. Other's people's written ideas on the topic
3. Notes from informal conversations with colleagues

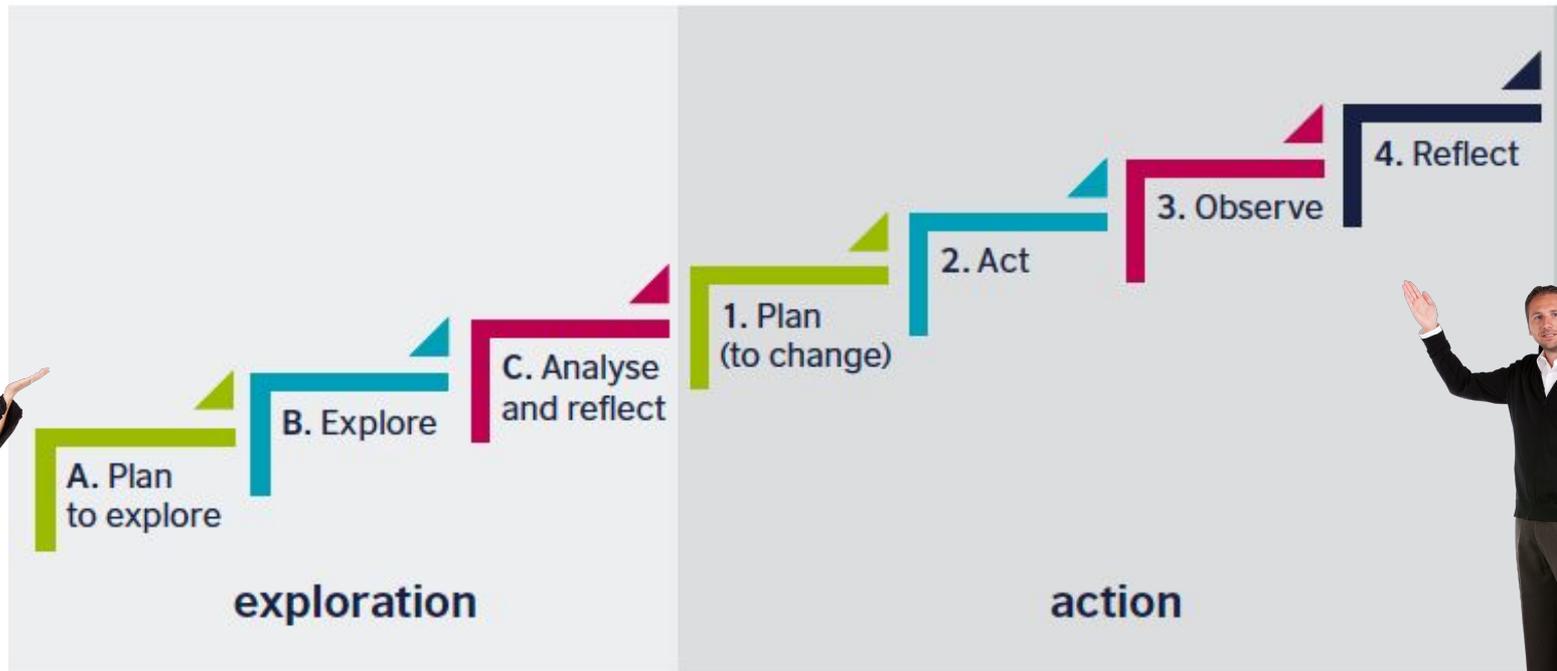
Exploring others' perceptions

4. Reflective writing by students
5. Notes or recordings of focus group discussions
6. Notes or recordings of interviews/chats with individuals
7. Responses to a questionnaire

Exploring behaviour (including performance)

8. Lessons plans and materials
9. Lesson recordings
10. A critical friend's notes about your lesson
11. Pictures of your class
12. Students' work / students' performance on tasks (written or recorded)

Exploratory action research



The British Council Action Research Mentoring Scheme (ARMS) (India, Nepal), 2017-20



2017–20 (India): 48 mentors, 235 teachers
teachers

2017-20 (Nepal): 26 mentors, 180



An example of exploratory action research

Exploring for action, acting for change:
stories of exploratory action research in Nepal

Edited by Janak Singh Negi



Shova Shahi, mentored by Janak
Negi



I have difficulties in managing a large class

Shova Shahi



My school's name is Shree Krishna Sanskrit and General Secondary School, Itram-7, Birendranagar Surkhet, Nepal. I am teaching in this school since 2014. The medium of instruction in my school is English. I teach in class 6, 7, 8 and 9.



Shova's problem

- Overcrowded classroom - 89 students, very difficult to manage
 - Students used to make disturbance, talking unnecessarily I tried various techniques
 - changing the seats of the students every day
 - giving authority to the class monitor,
 - dividing students into different groups
- ... but I could not get success



Shova's exploratory research questions and methods

Research questions

- What particular difficulties do I have in the class?
- What causes the disturbance?

Research methods

- Observation by a colleague
- 'Self-observation' (taking notes)



Exploratory research findings

- Most of the students were paying attention
 - Some sitting near the windows were looking outside and talking to others about what they saw
 - Some other students were talking about those who were looking outside the windows.
- 

Shova's plan for action

- Give more responsibilities to the students sitting by the windows – and the 'side talkers'
- Move close to the students talking unnecessarily with their friends.





Actions taken

I gave specific tasks to those by the windows:

- Taking notes and summarizing the lesson
- Writing the answers to the questions by discussing with their friends
- Sometimes, I assigned them the role of group leader.

When I noticed students talking unnecessarily, I moved near to them. I did not speak with them individually but just made frequent eye contact with them.





Shova's action research findings

After the Action: Observation

“Nowadays, the situation has changed drastically. Students do not talk unnecessarily, instead they concentrate more on their study and do the assigned tasks. Although they have not stopped side talking completely, they do not talk unnecessarily. They have started talking about the subject matter, which is a positive sign of learning.”



A practical handbook for exploratory action research

- Exploration □ Action
- Step-by-step explanation
- Not technical
- Basic research techniques explained
- Lots of examples and practical activities



A handbook for mentoring teacher-research

- Designed for those who are supporting teacher-researchers
- Simple, clear, practical.
- Based on extensive experience, mainly in Nepal, India



'Decentring ELT' revisited

'The world of ELT has been characterised by a hegemony of 'global' or 'centre' ELT approaches and materials developed outside the teaching contexts in which they are expected to be used. However, these approaches and materials ('frames for action') are not necessarily appropriate to and do not recognise teachers' and other insiders' experience and expertise in those contexts.

Work needs to be put into **empowering teachers to develop contextually appropriate thinking and action** (on methodology, materials design, curriculum development, teacher education, etc.), **in relation to the needs of their local contexts.'**

(Banegas et al. 2022. 'Decentring ELT'. *ELT Journal* 76/1)

Any comments or questions?



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Thank you for listening today!

