

**Summary of Success Stories
From the
Education Sector Reform Assistance
Program**

**Dr. Lorelei Brush
November 2, 2005**

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During a week-long consultancy (September 17-24), Dr. Lorelei Brush trained six experienced teachers to write success stories. The teachers were given the task of visiting schools over a period of two weeks, conducting focus groups of teachers in each school, and then following-up the focus groups with classroom observations and additional interviews to gather the data they needed to write success stories. The group produced a total of 34 success stories, which Dr. Brush edited, returned to the writer(s) for checking, and then sent them to a professional editor and lay-out staff to put the stories into the format prescribed on the USAID website.

These stories may be divided into 4 general categories as follows:

1. *Collegiality*. In this first group, the stories describe the effects of sharing knowledge and views among teachers and between teachers and their managers. The major impact, felt in many places within the educational hierarchy, is a reduction in stress and an increase in mutual respect and enjoyment.

Educational Supervision: What Makes It Effective?

Provincial Forum Seminar: Learning from One Another's Experience

Learning Resource Center Promotes Teacher Creativity

Collegiality: How Peer Support Enhances Professional Development Activities

Head Teacher Invites Teachers to Share in School Management

Converting the Head Teacher's Office into a Learning Resource Center

Self Help – The First Step Toward School Improvement

Re-culturing a School

A School Becomes a Learning Family

2. *Teacher Training Process*. In this second group, the successes are attached to the process of mentoring. Not only is the notion of a mentor seen as effective, but so too is the process of using that mentor over a period of time. The follow-up allows for the introduction of lots of material, a chance for teachers to try out the new ideas, and the opportunity to return to the ideas and evaluate how well they have worked.

Teachers as Mentors

Mentoring Program Converted a Clinic Dispenser into a Teacher

Mentoring – A Process of Enhancing Life Skills

Role of a Mentor and Its Positive Impact in the Classroom

The Importance of Follow-Up to the Success of Teacher Training

3. *Active Learning Techniques*. The third group shows the results of teacher training by describing an expanded set of teaching techniques now employed in the classroom. Some of the stories speak to the general idea of increasing the set of teaching

strategies used in the classroom; others directly address teaching a subject or evaluating students. The general theme is active learning on the part of students, a change from the traditional lecture methodology, and the result is that both teachers and students are learning more and having fun.

Use of Active Learning Techniques Facilitates Student Mastery

Expanding Teaching Strategies

Successful Multigrade Teaching: A New Strategy

Role Play: An Effective Strategy to Engage Students in Learning

Turning Straw and Grass into Teaching Aids

Mathematics Teaching Has Become Fun

Discovering the Importance of Writing

A New Approach to Teaching Social Studies

Learning to Be Healthy and Tidy

Portfolio Assessment: A Gauge of Students' Learning

4. *Humanistic Approach.* This final group describes a more indirect effect of the training – a change in the atmosphere of the school. That change, in turn, has a strong effect on teachers and students. When teachers learn alternative teaching and assessment methods, they find they need not use corporal punishment. When students are seen to be at the center of the school and are given care and respect, everyone concerned enjoys the learning process a lot more.

Humanistic Approach: Love, Care and Respect

Bringing Smiles to Children's Faces

Promoting a Positive Learning Environment in a Girls' Primary School

Learner-Centered Classrooms Decrease Absenteeism

Keeping Children First

Taking Responsibility: A Motivation for Student Learning

Training Helped to Change the Temper of the Classroom

Improving Discipline in Primary Schools

Corporal Punishment – A Diminishing Practice in One School

The Impact of Teacher Training on a Slow Learner

Collegiality



Pakistan Education Sector Reform Assistance

A Teacher Professional Development Success Story

Educational Supervision: What Makes It Effective?

A threatening supervision visit turns into a welcomed facilitation.



“Friendly behavior and encouraging comments fuel teachers to work actively.”

—Haider Shah, Assistant District Officer

In a desert area of the Sindh Province in Pakistan, people still ride camels to go from one place to another. Schools are few in number, and children have to walk as much as five kilometers to get to school. Most of the year it is very hot. Educational officials tend to put off traveling to these schools to monitor academic progress and resolve teachers’ issues. An exception is Haider Shah, an Assistant District Officer who seems very willing to make the trips and eager to help teachers resolve their issues.

Shah participated in a series of inspiring professional development training workshops on educational leadership and management organized by the Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) program funded by USAID. “I realized that I could not help teachers until I, myself, understood the role of mentor and learned techniques to use with teachers. ESRA training helped me to improve my behavior with teachers. Now I do not highlight their shortcomings but rather I encourage them in their strengths.” He also shared that he used to call teachers into his office for supervisory visits, which often meant that the teacher would close the school for the day. Now he places a priority on children getting an education, and he takes the time to visit teachers in their schools.

Shah is also more organized now. He has developed a team of supervisors with clearly assigned tasks and schedules for supervisory visits. All of his staff travel to the schools and learn firsthand about teacher issues.

Shah is also friendlier now with teachers during his field visits. He talks with them about their problems, suggests new teaching approaches, and provides them with the human and physical resources they need, to the best of his ability. The teachers he supervises more openly share their problems, and he feels more confident that he can help in whatever way is needed.

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Pakistan Education Sector Reform Assistance

A Teacher Professional Development Success Story

Provincial Forum Seminar: Learning from One Another's Experience



“This seminar gives us the chance to meet with our colleagues from across the province. It fosters social interaction and motivates us professionally.”

—Najmu Nissa, master trainer



“We never knew each other before! But our social relationship is now also a professional strength.

My thanks to ESRA for developing this network.”

—Kubra Shah, master trainer

Context

Government primary school teachers in Pakistan do not have a history of meeting in groups. Teachers went to work for the required time and then returned home. The idea of meeting with other school teachers sounded odd: what would be the reason for such a meeting?

Initiative

Recently, USAID has funded the Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) program to foster teacher professional development. Master trainers learn how to be mentors for other teachers in their local areas and conduct a yearlong training program. In addition, ESRA has established two forums for its participants: (1) a Professional Development Forum to bring teachers together on a monthly basis to interact with one another and learn from one another's experiences; and (2) a Provincial Forum Seminar to bring master trainers together twice a year to share their achievements and challenges.

Results

“The Professional Development Forum and the Provincial Forum Seminar are the activities where we learn from the experiences of our colleagues,” shared one master trainer. A second master trainer added that these events serve as a catalyst to motivate trainers, building a sort of competition among colleagues. They provide opportunities to discuss common issues in the process of behaviour change and allow people to explore alternatives and resolve or minimize problems. They also provide a time and place to recognize exemplary work, an important feature of project success.

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Pakistan Education Sector Reform Assistance

A Teacher Professional Development Success Story

Learning Resource Center Promotes Teacher Creativity

A display board for the classroom can be made with an empty cardboard box and some rope covered with paper and wool.



“Now I spend most of my time preparing resources for my workshops, as I want to give teachers something new and more creative each time.”

—LRC staff



“My mentees have started bringing raw materials with them, and I am pleasantly surprised by their creativity.”

—LRC staff

Context—In most government schools in the province of Sindh, Pakistan, teachers have received training, but it is rare for them to sit together to reflect on their teaching practices. They have all accepted that the appropriate teaching method is lecture: it is the way they were taught in school and in university, and they have not been introduced to any newer teaching methods such as those that engage students in their own learning.

Initiative—The USAID-funded Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) program has changed teaching practices through its in-service teacher training and Learning Resource Centers (LRCs). The LRC in Saleh Pat, for example, is filled with teaching resource materials developed by its trainees. Most of the materials are prepared with locally available products like stones, empty water bottles, used boxes, string, soft drink caps, hay, used calendars, and left-over greeting cards. Teacher trainees have used these materials to make models of famous historical tombs and to demonstrate the culture of urban and rural life. There is even a model of a factory made of empty water bottles and match sticks. Empty boxes have been transformed into flash cards that can encourage higher order thinking.

“The LRC is the place where teachers get the opportunity to work in groups to enhance their content and pedagogical knowledge. Their joint efforts and creativity result in marvelously creative achievements,” shared one center staff member.

Outcomes—The LRC is a source of inspiration for local teachers. They often take sample materials from the LRC or use the ideas to develop materials for their own schools. The teachers have become very resourceful in finding trash that can be recycled into teaching aids. Along with their own creativity, they have watched their students taking more interest in learning because of the new resources. One LRC staff member shared, “I had never thought about how much we ourselves are creative resources. Look at what we can do with low-cost or no-cost materials!”

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Pakistan Education Sector Reform Assistance

A Teacher Professional Development Success Story

Collegiality: How Peer Support Enhances Professional Development Activities



Teachers in a collegial discussion

Challenges

Educating girls has been a challenging task in the city of Turbat, Pakistan. On the one hand, only women may teach in girls' secondary schools. On the other hand, societal rules make it difficult for girls to attend university away from home, and there is no university nearby in which girls can qualify to become teachers. Not all of the teachers in the Government Girls High School Chahsar are qualified, and with little or no training many of them were floundering. They had problems managing their large classes, and no mechanism was in place to encourage a sharing of problems or solutions. All 15 teachers were shy about sharing what they felt were shortcomings.

Initiative

As a part of USAID's Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) program, the school's teachers were invited to attend a series of training sessions in which they worked in groups. They enjoyed the interaction so much that they continued to talk during school hours. They discussed their problems in teaching difficult material and in managing the classroom, and they also proposed solutions. Many were surprised that they had common problems. Over time, the idea of peer assistance gained popularity. Supported by the headmistress, teachers started visiting one another's classes and providing feedback.

Result

As a result of talking and sharing problems with one another, the visits and discussions with peers helped them to improve not only their teaching skills but also their content knowledge, especially in the subjects of mathematics and science. The collaborative culture that arose in the school had a very positive influence on the students as well. They saw the smiling faces of their teachers and felt more able to approach them with questions. The friendly environment built students' interest in and motivation for learning—and also improved attendance.

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Pakistan Education Sector Reform Assistance

A Teacher Professional Development Success Story

Head Teacher Invites Teachers to Share in School Management

Shared management involves teachers in school development in a poor region of Pakistan.



“I learned how sharing responsibilities with teachers gives them confidence to care for their students like their own children.”

“Training at ESRA workshops polished my concepts of an ideal leader and manager at a primary school.”

—Azra Rajput, primary school head teacher

The Government Girls Practicing Public School is located in a low-income area of the Sindh Province of Pakistan. The school used to work in a traditional leader-follower manner, with the head teacher as the center of command. The staff were unaware of how their collective involvement could help enhance the school’s performance. Teachers took little interest in professional training to modify their teaching methods because they thought that they might not be allowed to use new skills creatively. However, Azra Rajput, the Head Teacher, has recently learned how sharing decision making with her teaching staff promotes a sense of ownership of the school in them.

Rajput is one of the head teachers selected for the professional development training workshops for leadership and management, organized by the Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) program funded by USAID. In all, this component of ESRA will train 34,000 teachers, head teachers, and administrators in Pakistan.

“I always thought that head teachers should not behave autocratically with teachers,” Rajput said. “However, training at ESRA workshops polished my concepts of an ideal leader and manager at a primary school.”

Rajput is applying her leadership skills to improve the teaching and learning at her school. She shares school problems with teachers and asks for their opinions. Further, she listens to disagreements among them in management and teaching/learning methods. This has developed trust, confidence, and a sense of ownership of the school among her teachers, and they, in consequence, have turned their classes into learning workshops.

Teachers now willingly attend training sessions for professional development and are focusing more on activity-based teaching, brainstorming, and group work to enhance student learning in the classroom. One teacher said that they not only are bringing change to their classrooms but also are working as a team to help one another to develop their school as their baby.

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A Teacher Professional Development Success Story

Converting the Head Teacher's Office into a Learning Resource Center

A head teacher breaks the barrier between administration and teaching staff by making her office a learning resource center.



“The training has given me the right direction. Before the training, I felt that something was missing in my character. Teachers and students were afraid to come to my office. They only came in an emergency. But now they have become my friends and openly come to my office without any hesitation.”

—Musarat Pathan, head teacher

Traditionally in Pakistan, head teachers are authoritarian leaders who control the school. They are not known as academic experts who create a supportive teaching and learning environment. Their routine activities involve seeing to discipline, keeping school records updated, and maintaining the physical condition of the school. But Musarat Pathan is not a traditional head teacher. After participating in training through the USAID-funded Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) program, she changed her role from an unbending authoritarian to a helpful facilitator.

The training gave Pathan an interesting idea—to close the gap between her office and the work of teachers and students. She decided to establish a Learning Resource Center for the school right in her own office. “I thought this would be the best way to fill the gap. My office will now attract teachers and students; they will come to use resource materials and can also stop to discuss academic issues with me.”

Pathan’s office is no longer a threatening place for teachers and students. Now it has a welcoming and colorful look. Pathan proudly shows the richness and variety of materials developed by teachers and students and actively encourages teachers to use them. She has created a wholly different culture in her school and given a new definition to the role of head teacher. As a learning facilitator, she has transformed her office from a horrifying place to a welcoming, lively learning center.

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A Teacher Professional Development Success Story

Self Help—The First Step Toward School Improvement

Abdul Baqi, Head Teacher of Jamia Masjid School in the province of Balochistan, Pakistan, was confronted with many problems in the smooth running of his primary school. The topmost problem for him was the dilapidated condition of school property. Because of construction around the school, the boundary wall was in poor condition. From overuse, the floor of the school was in shambles. Numerous reminders to the education department bore no fruit.

Fortunately for the school, Baqi was selected for leadership and management professional development training through the Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) program supported by USAID. In one session the facilitators discussed the role of the Parent Teacher School Management Committee, which could involve itself in school improvement projects. Baqi shared his concerns about his school's physical condition with the facilitators and picked up several ideas about how he could make his School Management Committee functional. When he returned home, he called a meeting of the committee and discussed his concerns about the physical plant. The committee decided that instead of waiting for government funds, they would raise money on their own. Within a week they had the required amount, and soon thereafter they used the funds to rebuild the boundary wall and lay a new floor. Community members provided the labor – even students and teachers took part.



Headmaster and students in a safe place after construction

One profound effect of the renovations was that teaching and learning in the school acquired a new zeal. The teachers were more relaxed and able to concentrate on education because they were no longer worried about outside interference. Students were more comfortable sitting on the smooth floor. A second effect was that other schools in the district decided to make their School Management Committees functional and solve their own problems following the self-help principle.

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Pakistan Education Sector Reform Assistance

A Teacher Professional Development Success Story

Re-culturing a School



“When teachers give us responsibilities, we feel pride that our teachers trust us and we put more effort into being successful.”

—Students

Context—Government Girls Middle School Sherkhani Bazaar is situated in the province of Balochistan, Pakistan. It used to be a traditional school with students sitting in rows listening to the teacher impart knowledge. Communication went in one direction only—from teachers to students—and there was little cooperation or coordination among teachers, students, parents, and government authorities. One group of teachers said, “Students used to feel that we were bad giants, like those in fairy tales, and they prayed for us to get sick.”

Initiative—A part of the Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) program, funded by USAID, involved training a teacher to become a mentor for others. She then conducted workshops for the headmistress and other teachers, and they began to plan for change. They delegated tasks to teachers and students, such as looking after the library, planning the morning assembly, keeping the school clean, adding plants to the decor, distributing resources, and maintaining records. The responsibilities rotate from time to time. They introduced the ideas of “Student Prefects” to monitor and discipline students, “VIPs” (very important persons) to help teachers, “Best Student” of the week to acknowledge students’ efforts, and a “Student Pass” for leaving the classroom to go to the washroom or to get a drink of water. One teacher said, “When we give responsibility to the students, they feel good about themselves.” Planning together, the staff developed a chain of communication among the groups to keep everyone informed on school issues.

Outcomes—Shared responsibilities and effective communication among all the stakeholders in the school has developed student and teacher confidence and trust in one another and a shared sense of responsibility for the school. Students say, “When teachers give us responsibilities, we feel pride that our teachers trust us and we put more effort into being successful.” The teachers sense a new collaborative culture in the school. One teacher said, “Now we have a road map with a shared understanding, which is fun. We have become problem solvers.” Everybody understands their roles and works together as good friends for the benefit of the school.

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Pakistan Education Sector Reform Assistance

A Teacher Professional Development Success Story

A School Becomes A Learning Family



“We [teachers] used to be like enemies, never talking politely.... If parents came to talk to us about our absenteeism, we were rude. There was no accountability required of us, so we did whatever we wanted. Now it is just the opposite.”

—Zaratoon Bibi, mentor

Government Girls Community Primary Model School Nodiz is in a small village in the province of Balochistan, Pakistan. It has only 277 students and 6 faculty members, of whom Zaratoon Bibi is one. She was appointed a teacher in this school when she had only a secondary school degree herself, but while she was teaching, she continued her education to achieve a Primary Teachers Alternate Certificate and then a BA. From the time of her first appointment, she noticed that there was no accountability for teachers. They would come to school for a week and then not appear for long periods of time. When they did come to school, they were often rude to one another rather than supportive.

Then Bibi was selected to be a mentor, or teacher trainer, and was invited to join the mentor training offered by the Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) program funded by USAID. She noticed immediately the friendliness of the facilitators and their encouragement for her to express her ideas and feelings. She liked learning about lesson planning; child psychology; and the motivational, developmental, and evaluation stages of teaching. However, she was hesitant about instructing her headmistress and senior teachers when she returned to her school. Once she began, she discovered that the others were just as curious as she had been about these new ideas. The faculty agreed that they needed to learn from one another, and Bibi committed herself to share what she had learned.

Today, every teacher comes to school with written plans and creative teaching resources. Many have enlisted their families to help prepare materials. Teachers share their concerns and seek help from one another. For instance, teachers bring articles from newspapers, quotations from books, and old sayings to display in the staff room. Bibi keeps a suggestion box for teachers and brings up suggested issues for group discussion and action. The faculty has noticed an increase in student participation in activities, student confidence, and attendance. Students and teachers have formed a friendly learning family. As one group of students reported, “We are enjoying our learning together as a group.”

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Teacher Training Process



Pakistan Education Sector Reform Assistance

A Teacher Professional Development Success Story

Mentoring program has proved an effective training model for Pakistani teachers.



Mentor working with teachers on a science unit.

Teachers as Mentors

Challenge—For a long time, there was a lack of effective professional development for primary schools teachers in Pakistan. Government-run teacher training programs are theory based, and most teachers do not find them relevant to the classroom situation, so the trainings have hardly made any change to the traditional practice of lecturing.

Initiative—A new mentoring program has been introduced by the USAID-funded Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) program in which selected primary school teachers are trained as mentors. The mentors each lead 300 hours of field-based training for local teachers. As a result, hundreds of teachers have been trained in local schools or centers.

This program is practical in its substance and in its location: teachers have easy access. In addition, mentors can easily visit the teachers to provide classroom-based support on individual issues.

Results—ESRA’s mentoring program has given teachers many innovative ideas. Before the training, many believed that there was a lack of resources in government schools. But now they have learned that teachers themselves can be a huge resource. If they are motivated, committed, and trained properly, they can develop resources themselves and create a child-centered atmosphere in the classroom. Now, they don’t waste any materials at home or in school. They recycle to convert seemingly useless things, like what’s in the garbage, into useful resources to facilitate the active involvement of students in their learning.

Follow up by mentors has proved to be as important as the initial training they provide. It is easy for teachers to return from a training session and resume their old habits. But ESRA mentors visit their “mentees” regularly and help them implement the new methodologies. They try out an idea, discuss it, improve it, and then are more willing to try the next new idea. The process is working to change the classrooms of Pakistan!

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Pakistan Education Sector Reform Assistance A Teacher Professional Development Success Story

Mentoring Program Converted a Clinic Dispenser into a Teacher



“The mentoring program organized by ESRA changed my thinking, and I left a well-paying job to become a primary school teacher at a lower pay scale.”

—Ghulam Mustafa, primary school teacher

Ghulam Mustafa, a primary school teacher in the Sindh Province of Pakistan, used to consider teaching a dull job with low pay. He taught part time and worked full time as a dispenser in a doctor’s clinic. He refused to attend teacher training programs until one day he was effectively taken by his colleagues to attend a mentoring program organized under the Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) program.

ESRA has been funded by USAID to organize training programs for teachers, administrators, master trainers, and mentors. A total of about 17,000 people will be trained by ESRA in the province of Sindh by the end of the project in 2006. First, mentors or master trainers attend sessions, and then they extend their learning by working with area teachers.

Poignant lessons from the training concerning brainstorming, group work, and the creative use of local materials showed Mustafa how to make teaching more appealing for him and learning more exciting for his students. He and his students together collect low-cost or no-cost items to use in the classroom to make such learning tools as display cards, counting devices, and material for physics experiments. Student products are displayed in the classroom to further enhance their intrinsic motivation. Mustafa believes that the new approaches have honed his observation skills and built solid investigative skills in his students. Teaching has become much more interesting than the clinic job.

“The mentoring program opened my eyes, and the activity-based learning motivated me to take up teaching as full-time work,” said Mustafa.

Now Mustafa has left his dispenser job to spend more time in his preferred career. His mentor says that ESRA has brought a good teacher back to his classroom. His head teacher and peers say that his contributions have energized teaching and learning in the whole school.

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A Teacher Professional Development Success Story

Mentoring—A Process of Enhancing Life Skills

Challenge—Amir Hussain and Adil Jahangir were chosen to be mentors for primary teachers in a district of Balochistan Province in Pakistan. They knew their first challenge would be to establish credibility for themselves and their program. Many of the teachers who would become their ‘mentees’ were colleagues who were more experienced and older than both of them. Some were once their own teachers. In addition, the men needed to overcome some rigid society values, such as the beteacher is always right, and (3) students should accept authority without discussion.

Initiative—Both Hussain and Jahangir began mentoring training through USAID’s Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) program with a high level of motivation. In their mentoring training, they were particularly impressed with the different life skills needed to facilitate the process of mentoring. They learned how to motivate their mentees by being flexible in their own behavior. They learned to facilitate discussion rather than simply instruct. They did not insist upon doing activities themselves, but rather asked their mentees to try the activities in their own classrooms. This process, they learned, was more effective at changing teachers’ behavior: when you try something and see that it works, you are more likely to use it again.

Results—After some initial resistance, the mentors gained the confidence of their mentees. The mentees showed their enthusiasm through regular attendance at the training sessions, real interest in the new teaching methods that the mentors demonstrated, and the acceptance of some very new ideas. For example, the mentees came to accept that it was good to have a diversity of opinions in a discussion, to respect each other’s point of view, and to disagree in an agreeable manner. They grasped the notion that ideas could be much more important than personalities in deciding what was right. All these changes are very important to teachers who live in a rigid and patriarchal society. They feel the power of more democratic processes and can introduce these processes to their students.



Respecting each other’s ideas: a result of the interactive process of mentoring

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Pakistan Education Sector Reform Assistance

A Teacher Professional Development Success Story

Role of a Mentor and Its Positive Impact in the Classroom



“She is like a good friend who helps us in our classrooms. We all work together.”

—Mentees

“I used to be less confident but now I deal with everyone confidently.”

—Mentor

Context—The Government Girls High School Killah Saifullha is located in a very remote area of Balochistan, Pakistan. Until recently, it offered a traditional type of teaching and learning. The teacher’s major focus was covering the prescribed syllabus by using the text book and writing on the blackboard, and the student’s focus was memorizing facts for monthly tests and annual examinations. This routine of examination-oriented learning frustrated staff members, students, and head teachers and sometimes caused unpleasant relationships among them.

Initiative—In 2002, USAID introduced the Education Sector Reform Assistance program (ESRA), which has offered training for mentors in five districts of Balochistan. In turn, the mentors train teachers, who are called their mentees.

Shazia Kakar is one of the mentors. She conducts weekly workshops for teachers at her school. Out of 24 teachers, 13 are attending the workshops (plus two from other schools). From April to September 2005, Kakar conducted 25 workshops, and she intends to organize another 23. Her goal is to create a stimulating environment in which the teachers discuss a wide variety of different ideas regarding teaching and learning. She said, “I was very keen to learn new ideas. My father did not want me to go away for training, but my mother persuaded him to let me go.” So far, she has taught her mentees different teaching strategies and has asked them to reflect on their teaching practices. She also observes in their classrooms and talks with them about what she sees. Her mentees are happy with her role as a facilitator, teacher, critical friend, and helper. One mentee said, “We like her very much because she develops our professional expertise, right here in our school. It would not be possible for us to go to other training centers, leaving our families alone.”

Outcomes—As a result of ESRA’s program, the school has changed. The teachers feel more confident and are more creative in their choice of teaching materials. Students do not hesitate to come forward to make presentations or write on the board. They work in groups, sharing ideas with and learning from one another. Recently, Kakar’s mentees received first prize for developing innovative classroom materials. She now feels respected by her school community. And she thanks her parents for allowing her to participate in the mentoring program.

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Pakistan Education Sector Reform Assistance

A Teacher Professional Development Success Story

The Importance of Follow-Up to the Success of Teacher Training



“When I was involved in this training, I reflected on why previous training had not helped me to improve my teaching. I got the answer to this question from the ESRA training. Those past trainings just improved my academic record, not my teaching strategies. The reason was lack of proper follow-up. So, when I started working as a mentor myself, I decided to provide appropriate follow-up to all my mentees.”

—Rehman Gul, mentor

Most teacher training sessions in Pakistan are not successful at changing behavior because they do not have a proper mechanism for follow up. Teachers attend training sessions, receive certificates, and return to their traditional classroom practices. They know that no one will come to see whether they have changed their behavior.

The USAID-funded Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) program has introduced a unique model of teacher training that uses a field-based mentoring program. A teacher from the local area is trained as a mentor and then returns to train other teachers. Rehman Gul is a trained mentor from the province of Sindh, Pakistan, who is now implementing training for other local primary school teachers. Gul believes that his training has helped teachers to change and improve their teaching methods and that his extensive follow-up has been the reason for the change.

When Gul started to visit his mentees in their classrooms, he discovered that many teachers found it difficult to implement the teaching strategies they learned in the training for a variety of reasons. He worked with them to remove the barriers and showed them that these new strategies could be successful in their own context. His timely and proper support has enabled his mentees to improve their teaching methodologies.

Gul works hard and tries to reach every mentee, even if the school is miles away in a remote area. He does not feel fatigued by his journeys but rather is happy that he can see positive changes in the schools of Pakistan.

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Active Learning Techniques



Pakistan Education Sector Reform Assistance

A Teacher Professional Development Success Story

Use of Active Learning Techniques Facilitates Student Mastery



Learning through the use of creative materials

Challenge

The main purpose of any school is to help students develop the knowledge and skills they will need to become productive future citizens. Teachers in the Government Girls Primary School Turbat in Balochistan, Pakistan were teaching the prescribed curriculum with the best of intentions, but their students were not doing well. They just didn't have an "urge" for learning.

Initiative

Fortunately for the school, its teachers and students were selected to be a part of the Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) program funded by USAID. All nine teachers participated in the extensive professional development program. They worked hard to expand their knowledge of the different ways a teacher could present material and involve students in their own learning. For example, teachers learned about brainstorming, group work, activity-based learning, and ways to develop and use low-cost or no-cost materials. Their facilitator pushed them to explore their attitude toward their students and encouraged the teachers to take greater responsibility for student learning.

Result

Midway through the training program, teachers and visitors are surprised by the changes that have taken place. Every classroom is decorated with charts and students' work. The teachers can be seen frequently interacting with students, while the children are often smiling and seem to be losing their traditional shyness. By expanding their pedagogic techniques to enable students to participate actively in learning, teachers have felt a noticeable change in the atmosphere of the school and are encouraged to continue to explore more new possibilities.

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Pakistan Education Sector Reform Assistance

A Teacher Professional Development Success Story

Expanding Teaching Strategies



“I was so shy and hesitant. I wanted to say something, but suddenly I started shivering. I couldn’t stand properly and students couldn’t hear me. They just looked at the blackboard and me. There was silence in the class.”

—Sara Hameed, teacher

The Government Girls High School Kan Mehtar Zai is situated in a remote area in the province of Balochistan, Pakistan. The school has just 237 students and 13 teachers, including the head teacher. Sara Hameed is one of the teachers. When Hameed joined the school, she was asked to teach the Urdu language to class 4. She would begin each day by asking her mother to pray for her, and her mother would answer, “You are not going to London [UK], you’re just going to school.”

Hameed was shy at school, and her frustration increased every day. She wanted to learn from her colleagues how to become a better teacher, but only one person had a suggestion – to write out what she wanted to say before she started her lesson. She said, “I kept the book in front of my face, read a passage, and asked students to repeat it.” She wasn’t sure the students could even hear her voice. The experience was so awful that she thought she would have to stop teaching.

One day she found out that another teacher from her school was going to be trained as a mentor by the USAID-funded Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) program. The mentor would then offer training to teachers like Hameed. She was excited at the chance to learn new ideas from her colleague, and she decided to keep on teaching and work hard to become a better teacher.

So far, Hameed has attended several workshops and has learned to plan her lessons, use a variety of teaching strategies, and prepare interesting teaching materials. With her new knowledge, she has overcome her shyness in front of students and believes she has figured out what it means to be an effective teacher. Her mentor has told her how impressed she is with her efforts. The district commissioner said, “She has developed students’ confidence and her own, too.” Hameed says, “When people tell me they appreciate my work, I feel good and work even harder.”

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Pakistan Education Sector Reform Assistance

A Teacher Professional Development Success Story

Successful Multigrade Teaching: A New Strategy



A multigrade teaching strategy at work

In most rural areas of Balochistan, Pakistan, primary schools have only a single teacher. Khudad Khan, the teacher in Government Primary School Saya, has six grades to teach in his school: pre-primary to Class 5 sit under one roof. He used to teach one class at a time.

When he was occupied with one class, students in the other classes chatted or sat idle. He had terrible classroom management problems. Not only did the uninvolved students make noise, but sometimes, they left school altogether and returned home having learned nothing that day. Khan simply could not find time to teach each class each day.

With this problem in mind, Khan began a professional development program sponsored by USAID's Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) program. During one weekly session, his trainer talked about multigrade teaching strategies. In one strategy, the teacher picked common topics or themes that could be discussed simultaneously by different classes. For example, the theme of forests was common to the syllabuses of Classes 3 to 5. Under a second strategy, Khan learned that he could integrate different subjects under one theme. For example, he pulled issues from social studies, science and the Urdu language into the theme of 'the environment.'

When he started implementing these strategies for multigrade teaching, he faced some difficulty in selecting common themes and topics. With the support of his trainer, however, he was able to overcome these difficulties, and now he is comfortable with the practices. In his school, all students are engaged in learning. There is still some noise in the classroom, but it is acceptable because it is "academic noise" – or the noise of children learning.

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Pakistan Education Sector Reform Assistance

A Teacher Professional Development Success Story

Role Play: An Effective Strategy to Engage Students in Learning

Role plays build confidence.



“Role play is helping improve children’s confidence. They are taking an interest in all these different characters.”

—Primary school teacher

Context

In government primary schools in the province of Sindh, Pakistan, students often lack the confidence to speak in public. At least part of the reason is that they are rarely offered the chance to speak in class other than to answer the teacher’s questions. Recently, however, some teachers have started using role play as a way to change students from passive listeners to active participants in learning.

Initiative

Under the USAID-funded Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) program, teachers are provided with professional development workshops that help them reconceptualize their job in the classroom. One technique that the trainers have suggested they try is that of role play. Teachers may use puppets to teach different mathematics concepts, cast children as characters to act out the story they are reading, or ask the class to develop a script about the people and the age in history they are studying. To make social studies come alive, some children may even play trees that fall in a storm or the animals on a ship that is wrecked.

Results

Children have become more excited and interested in learning. They seem to become the characters they are portraying and create realistic dialogue. They use easily available materials to make their sets and costumes, finding ways to use sheets, socks, old clothes, and plastic bags. Teachers have seen that children are remembering ideas better now than they did when learning involved rote memorization. They are even increasing their skills in English as they learn their lines for role plays in this subject.

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Pakistan Education Sector Reform Assistance

A Teacher Professional Development Success Story

Turning Straw and Grass into Teaching Aids

A mentor in a Learning Resource Center in Pakistan has turned straw and bamboo into teaching materials.



“I use bamboo and straw in most of the materials that I use as visual aids.”

—Shahid Mohammadi, primary school teacher



Mohammadi's students brought small branches to make a number tree.

Main SalehPut is a very poor area in the province of Sindh, Pakistan, where a large number of people live in huts made of straw and bamboo. It is also the location of a Learning Resource Center, established by USAID's Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) program, and the site of many workshops for local teachers. Since schools are poorly funded, classrooms are given few materials to use as teaching aids. However, because of workshops on this issue, one primary school teacher, Shahid Hussain Mohammadi, has learned to make effective teaching aids from the locally available straw and bamboo.

Mohammadi has made sign boards, wall clocks, geometrical shapes, mathematical symbols, charts showing the results of experiments, and even small cards for group work by using straw, leaves, bamboo, and grass. He is very pleased with these teaching aids because students can help make them, the materials can often be reused, he can replace parts when they are worn, and it's OK if they are damaged or destroyed during an activity. He has also organized workshops for other teachers and helped them to make useable teaching aids. “ESRA trainings have not only taught me the use of low-cost no-cost materials, but they have also motivated me to share my skills with my colleagues, especially those who are unable to come to the workshops,” Mohammadi said. The teachers he has taught have shown tremendous creativity in designing and making new teaching aids so that they can all provide inexpensive but quality educational materials to the children of their home towns.

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Pakistan Education Sector Reform Assistance

A Teacher Professional Development Success Story

Mathematics Teaching Has Become Fun

Teachers learned interesting and innovative ways to teach mathematics and relate it to the real life of students.



“Before the training I was not even clear about some mathematical concepts in graphic displays and geometry. Through this training, I not only understood the ideas, but also I learned to teach them through interesting, exciting, activity-based methods.”

—Primary school teacher

Challenge

In Pakistan, mathematics is generally considered to be a dry and tedious subject. Many students call it the “language of monsters” because it involves hideous and unattractive numbers and symbols. Mathematical ideas challenge teachers who find it hard to link the concepts to the real world of students. So, they just work with the numbers and ignore their meaning.

Initiative

Teachers from a government boys primary school in the province of Sindh were surprised to learn a number of activity-based methods of teaching mathematics during a training session through the USAID-funded Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) program. They learned interesting ways to teach mathematics in the primary school, such as using pebbles to teach counting and basic concepts, making graphs, and drawing to demonstrate geometrical shapes.

Results

Teachers themselves have now developed an interest in teaching mathematics. They have generated innovative teaching materials, such as puzzles to put on learning tables, activity cards to use for multiplication, and pebbles to use in graphs.

Now both teachers and students seem to enjoy mathematics. Teachers use their ingenuity to construct lessons and don’t follow the book rigidly. They have figured out ways to integrate mathematical concepts into the issues of their daily lives.

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Pakistan Education Sector Reform Assistance

A Teacher Professional Development Success Story

Discovering the Importance of Writing

“What will I do when this training program ends? I still have lots of ideas to share with my colleagues.”



“This is the first time that a Government primary school teacher has become a master trainer.”

—Yasmeen Yaseen, teacher



Written work done by Yaseen's students: “Not only me, but also my students are becoming writers.”

—Yasmeen Yaseen, teacher

The socioeconomic status of primary school teachers in developing countries such as Pakistan is markedly low. Teachers receive relatively low salaries and only minimal verbal encouragement. The combination of limited recognition for good work and few opportunities for promotion is discouraging. Teachers rarely think about publishing articles or conducting research about different teaching strategies. However, Yasmeen Yaseen, a primary teacher from the province of Sindh, is fighting the trend by writing about her professional successes. Her glowing face is evidence of her satisfaction.

Yaseen has attended a training program run by USAID's Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) program and has become a trainer for other teachers. She reports, “I had the ability to write, but I didn't have the courage to publish.” Now, through the ESRA program, she has developed her confidence to the point that she has written about her own journey. As she reports, “I feel that I am a researcher now because I know how to design a workshop by reading books, searching, and creating new ideas.” She has completed her one-year training course, and already she has improved her own school.

As a classroom teacher, Yaseen has encouraged her grade 5 students to write their own stories, jokes, riddles, and picture books and to collect newspaper cuttings and quotations. Her classroom has a book corner with examples of students' written work. She has written articles for local newspapers and has begun writing a longer piece documenting the professional development process and the reflections of the teachers she is training through ESRA. She credits ESRA with encouraging teachers to become professional educators, which should positively affect their socioeconomic status. One of Yaseen's trainees said that she has “turned into a magician because of her constant stream of creative ideas.”

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Pakistan Education Sector Reform Assistance

A Teacher Professional Development Success Story

A New Approach to Teaching Social Studies

Social studies classrooms have lively discussions among students.



“Teaching topics like population was quite difficult until we tried a role play strategy.”

—Primary school teacher



“Training has awakened our minds.”

—Social studies teacher

Challenge

Social studies instruction has traditionally been through the lecture method in Pakistan’s primary schools, with tests at the end of each unit. Students and teachers alike felt that it was the most boring subject. But times are changing in schools that are part of the Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) professional development program funded by USAID.

Initiative

ESRA trainers have introduced new content and a variety of methods to be used in teaching social studies, such as role playing, building models, exploring through the use of globes and maps, and going on field trips. One teacher reported, “I did not want to teach social studies before because I considered it a boring subject, but this training has helped me to use different methods and now it is exciting.”

Results

Teachers have greatly expanded their social studies curriculum. They proudly show off the models they have made of locally available materials. One of the teachers commented, “I touched a globe for the first time in the training, and now I really enjoy using it.” Students of class 4 and class 5 pore over the globe and locate lots of different places. They talk about the countries that border Pakistan, including the weather and the people. They especially enjoy acting out roles like those of mother or father, historical characters, or professionals of different sorts to clarify for everyone the concepts they are studying.

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Pakistan Education Sector Reform Assistance

A Teacher Professional Development Success Story

Learning to Be Healthy and Tidy

Health education makes a visible difference to children and families in Pakistan.



These children are a picture of health and happiness.

Health education is a novel aspect of the primary school curriculum in the poor areas of developing countries like Pakistan. Poverty and insufficient information about the potential hazards of an unhygienic environment have contributed to a lack of awareness among children and families about the benefits of a healthful and tidy environment. However, just these topics form a part of the teacher training curriculum organized by the Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) program funded by USAID.

The ESRA program helped teachers recognize that poor health may lead to poor performance and absenteeism in the classroom. In addition, it included lessons that teachers could use with children to demonstrate low-cost methods of keeping a healthful and clean environment. Teachers learned activities that they could use to involve students in maintaining their own good health and keeping the classroom tidy. For example, teachers and students can construct waste bins and tissue boxes by using easily available materials, and they can make charts on which to record actions that keep children and the environment clean. Because of these activities, the classrooms, corridors, and even the playgrounds of local schools now look well tended.

The children not only know about various health and hygiene issues in the classroom but also have taken their knowledge home so that parents, friends, siblings, relatives, and communities can benefit. Students look healthy and tidy and feel delighted at the difference they are making for others.

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Pakistan Education Sector Reform Assistance

A Teacher Professional Development Success Story

Portfolio Assessment: A Gauge of Students' Learning



Teachers reviewing a student's portfolio

Challenge

In the remote village of Koshak in Balochistan, Pakistan, the teachers in the government primary school were making an all-out effort to raise the quality of education. As in many other schools in Pakistan, quality has traditionally been measured by looking at student examination results at the end of the academic year. Even parents seemed to be satisfied with examination grades as a sufficient measure of what their children had learned.

Initiative

Under the sponsorship of USAID, the Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) program started an extensive teacher training course that included all the teachers in the school. They learned many techniques for improving teaching and learning, including a variety of techniques for assessing their students. One technique that Koshak's teachers decided to adopt was that of portfolio assessment. For each student, they agreed to construct a folder or portfolio that exemplified accomplishments. Portfolios contained student work in major subjects like language, math, and science; drawings; photographs; attendance records; and achievements in extracurricular activities.

Results

The results were dramatic for students, parents, and teachers. When students saw that their work was valued, they were motivated to do well. They could review their past work and see how they had progressed. Parents were invited to look through their children's portfolios, which encouraged them to take a closer interest in just what their children were learning. Teachers expanded their focus from a concentration on end-of-the-year exams to attention on what students understood today.

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Humanistic Approach



Pakistan Education Sector Reform Assistance

A Teacher Professional Development Success Story

Humanistic Approach: Love, Care and Respect



“I was unaware of child psychology and was not giving any importance to students’ ideas and perceptions.”

—Bismillah Khan
Kakar, teacher

Pakistan’s Government Primary School New Kali Sam Khail Muslimbagh is situated in a very remote area of the Balochistan province. The local inhabitants are Pushto speakers called Pathan, but many people from other parts of the country who are speakers of Punjab, Hazara, and Urdu have settled in the area. These new residents have cultural practices that are different from the Pathan, which brings cultural diversity into the schools.

This school faced problems in accepting diversity. Teachers traditionally either lectured or asked students to work individually and memorize facts to pass their examinations. No one thought to adjust teaching practices to respond to student diversity. When one teacher, Bismillah Khan Kakar, was invited to attend training offered by USAID’s Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) program, he felt it would be a waste of his time, but the authorities made him attend.

His eyes were opened to very different processes of teaching and learning. He recalled, “I used to be like a police inspector, thinking I knew everything and students didn’t.” He started changing his behavior. He looked upon his students as individuals and showed them respect, care, and love. He organized creative in-class activities, using inexpensive or free local materials, and encouraged students to take part in them. He also tried to meet students’ individual needs. His new attitude motivated both his students and his teaching colleagues. After a time, he heard people call him “magician.” His wife told him he was mad, but he kept on smiling. He loved his job.

Recently Kakar received a “best teacher” award called Salaam Pakistan, which made him very proud. But he is even more proud of the fact that his students enjoy learning. One of his students from class 5 said, “We love him because he works hard, gives us practical work, and behaves politely to us.” If students miss classes for three days, he goes to their home, talks with them and encourages them to come back to school. He has even posted powerful messages on the wall of the school that relate teaching and learning to the cultural beliefs and social norms of the different groups in the school. All of the messages reflect the positive potential of change.

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Pakistan Education Sector Reform Assistance

A Teacher Professional Development Success Story

Bringing Smiles to Children's Faces

Teaching has become fun in a school located in a remote village.



The smiling faces of students

Challenge

Children in remote areas of Pakistan rarely find a friendly atmosphere in school and are often afraid to go to school because of the strictness of teachers and the practice of corporal punishment in the classroom. Government Primary School Abu Bakar Mahar in the province of Sindh, Pakistan, is located in a desert, far from the main town and a paved road. Students from many villages come to the multigrade school and study with the single teacher, who is responsible for five grades. Not too long ago, children were hesitant to come to school, and absenteeism was a serious problem.

Initiative

Over the past year, the teacher received extensive training under the professional development component of the USAID-funded Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) program. He realized that he was often irritated by the need to manage curricula for five different grades. When he focused on one grade, children from other grades bothered him with questions. The training helped him use child-centered methodologies, including strategies for teaching multiple grades at once and group work in which he could encourage older students to help younger ones. This reduced his workload and kept children stimulated.

Result

This teacher has completely changed the atmosphere in his school from scary to pleasant. Children may be seen reciting poems and playing games, activities that provide a clear example that students feel happy and relaxed at school. In addition, the absenteeism problem has been reduced. Before the training, students seemed frightened and worried all the time, but now they have smiles on their faces.

Now the teacher regularly uses group work and encourages older students to help younger ones, which reduces his workload and gives him the time to think up innovative and fun activities to keep him and the children stimulated.

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Pakistan Education Sector Reform Assistance

A Teacher Professional Development Success Story

Promoting a Positive Learning Environment in a Girls' Primary School



Students are using their model of a forest during a lesson on the benefits of forests.



A learning corner in the classroom

“After I participated in ESRA training, I realized that teachers can easily improve the way the classroom looks, but they must work hard to change the processes of teaching and learning.”

—Head teacher

Context

Traditionally, girls in most Pakistani government schools remain passive in the classroom and are shy to speak and express their views. They have been given very few chances to be recognized or to participate actively in the classroom. This trend seems to be changing in one girls' primary school in the province of Sindh.

Initiative

Six female teachers in the school, including the head teacher, have been trained under the professional development component of Pakistan's USAID-funded Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) program. Three years ago, their school was in poor physical condition, but when the current head teacher was hired, she tackled the problems of the school's physical infrastructure. Recently, however, she participated in ESRA training and realized that trained teachers not only can make the physical situation better but also can focus on improving the teaching and learning environment. Now she sees her trained teachers promoting a positive learning environment in their own classes and also supporting other teachers as they learn new strategies.

Impact

The whole school now has a welcoming and pleasant feel. The head teacher conducts ongoing sessions for untrained teachers to continue the process of improvement. Lately she has talked about increasing the variety of learning materials in the classroom. As a result, each class now has a learning corner with materials like flash cards, pictures, models, and drawings made by teachers and children together. Activity-based teaching is used by all the teachers. These new approaches have increased children's interest in school, reduced absenteeism, and decreased the perceived gap between teacher and student. Students are more confident and are willing to talk and share in the classroom. Teachers have modeled good social skills through their positive behavior, a change that is equally as important as the change in pedagogy in creating a positive learning environment.

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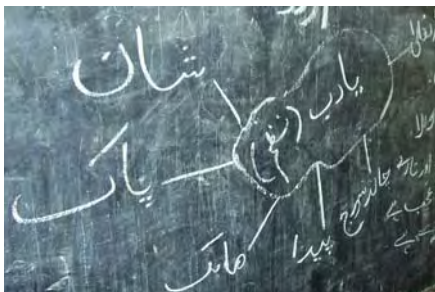
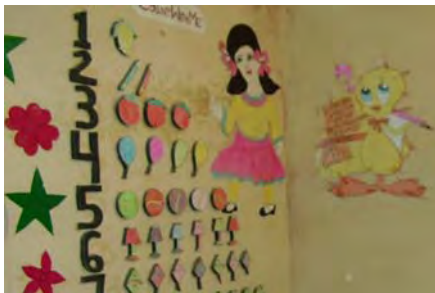


Pakistan Education Sector Reform Assistance

A Teacher Professional Development Success Story

Learner-Centered Classrooms Decrease Absenteeism

Activity-based teaching brought children back to a school.



Challenge

Government Girls Primary School Gharibabad III in Sindh, Pakistan, had been unable to attract children and their parents because of the traditional lecture methods used in its classrooms. The teachers in the school rarely engaged students in interactive and participatory work, often because they themselves had not been trained in techniques to motivate children to learn. Many parents in the area were registering their children in private schools to give them access to an education that could enhance creativity and prepare students for higher studies and innovative work. In many cases, parents were spending large sums of money, at times beyond their means, for education. As a result, student enrollment and attendance rates at the public school were falling day by day.

Initiative

The Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) program funded by USAID has organized training programs for teachers and administrators in Pakistan. In the province of Sindh alone, ESRA has trained more than 18,000 primary school teachers and administrators on teaching methods to enhance creativity and critical-thinking skills. Participating in ESRA workshops, brainstorming activities, and mentoring programs has changed teachers' ideas of their job and expanded the approaches they use with children. This can be seen in the pictures (left) showing children learning through drama, colorful wall displays made of low-cost or no-cost materials, and the results of brainstorming.

Outcomes

Teachers trained by ESRA are helping their untrained colleagues to rethink the idea of good educational practice and implement activity-based teaching methods in their classrooms. The Government Girls Primary School Gharibabad III is now gradually filling with students, many coming from private schools. One of the teachers said that parents are now coming to visit the classrooms, and the community has expressed great appreciation for the improvements in the education system. "Absenteeism is rare and many parents mentioned that their children avoid sitting home even if they are sick," said one teacher.

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Pakistan Education Sector Reform Assistance

A Teacher Professional Development Success Story

Keeping Children First



“I keep thinking of strategies which are innovative and creative. I feel that I have become a researcher after the training. Now I keep discovering creative ideas for teaching.”

—Zulfikar Ali, primary school teacher

Many teachers in Pakistan do not plan their lessons; they don't think about what to teach and how to teach it before entering the schoolroom. They rarely consider what is enjoyable for children or how to effectively present to children. They see their job as transferring knowledge to students through lecturing and assigning books to read. But this is not the case for Zulfikar Ali, a primary school teacher in the province of Sindh.

Ali discovered “how children learn” through a training organized for primary school teachers under the USAID-funded Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) program. This training helped him understand that he is working as a teacher in the school because of children and that children are not in the school because of him. From there he started thinking about what is positive and useful for children and how he could make children the focus of his teaching.

Ali keeps thinking of strategies that are innovative and creative. He feels that he has become a researcher on the topic of creative ideas for teaching. After the training, the first thing he changed in his class was the seating arrangement. He made sure that all children could see him and one another as well. Then he added new methodologies: children were asked to work together in their seating groups. Finally, Ali began keeping a record of children's work, which he could send to parents for review so that they could also be updated on their children's progress.

Ali now plans his lessons and comes to class well prepared with new ideas and supplementary material. He tries to link the curriculum with real-life issues. He encourages students to read newspapers and find out what is happening around them. He holds discussions on current issues in the class and invites students to give their points of view. His class has metamorphosed from knowledge transfer through lecture to knowledge acquisition through creative thinking.

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AIR is the lead organization for Teacher Professional Development.



Pakistan Education Sector Reform Assistance

A Teacher Professional Development Success Story

Taking Responsibility: A Motivation for Student Learning



“We thought we were doing our job when we lectured; it was the students’ responsibility to learn.”

—Primary school teacher

Context

The Government Girls Model High School in the province of Balochistan, Pakistan, is a large school with 1,300 students and 45 staff members. Like others, its staff used to believe that responsible students were quiet, took notes, and learned what they were told. Students who did not follow these practices were punished. Mostly, teachers ignored students. One said, “We thought we were doing our job when we lectured; it was the students’ responsibility to learn.” But student absenteeism was increasing.

Initiatives

In 2004, the school’s staff entered yearlong training from the Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) program funded by USAID, which showed them a different pathway to bring about improvement in their school. They learned to give more importance to students, engage them in activities, assign them roles and responsibilities in the classroom, and involve them in group work. Many teachers tried this idea of assigning responsibilities and rotating the jobs so that each student developed confidence in the role and felt ownership of the position. Students said, “When teachers formed groups and made us group leaders, we felt good and tried hard to involve everyone, do a good job, and finish quickly so that our teachers could be happy and reward us.”

Outcomes

Now students feel real ownership in and responsibility for their school. They have developed a positive sense of competition among themselves. If anybody does not finish work on time, the group leader identifies the reasons, then helps the individual or seeks help from other group leaders or teachers. Absenteeism has decreased substantially. As one student said, “We believe in and practice dealing with colleagues equally. We respect others because if we respect them, they will respect us, just as our prophet has told Muslims to respect elders and love children.”

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A Teacher Professional Development Success Story

Training Helped to Change the Temper of the Classroom

The training helped a primary teacher in Pakistan to critically analyze his attitude toward students and control his temper.



Ghulam Akbar Metlo talking with his students

“I listen to students’ responses carefully and do not reject their ideas, do not discourage them, and do not mark their responses as incorrect. I appreciate and encourage them and provide feedback on how they can improve.”

—Ghulam Akbar Metlo, teacher

Most of the teachers in government primary schools in Pakistan use traditional rote teaching methods and consider the use of child-centered teaching methodologies a burden. They believe that using active methods is time consuming and if they use such methods the syllabus could not be finished by the end of the year. But this belief is not held by Ghulam Akbar Metlo, a teacher in a primary school in the province of Sindh.

Metlo was part of a group of primary teachers who attended a mentoring program under the USAID-funded Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) Program. The training sensitized Metlo, and he reflected seriously on his old teaching methodology. He realized he was unduly harsh with his students and that he could change his behavior. At first he found the change difficult, but now he is naturally more comfortable and friendly with students.

Before the training, Metlo often showed his temper: he wanted quick results. If children did not complete their tasks quickly, he became irritated and angry. But now he is calmer. He uses brainstorming and questioning strategies, gives time to students to think and respond, listens carefully to the responses, and provides encouraging feedback.

As a result, Metlo’s class has become composed and disciplined. There are no awful noises, but relaxed discussions between teacher and students. Students speak up and discuss things which they do not understand. Metlo feels satisfied with his new way of teaching; he feels that he is doing justice to his profession.

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Pakistan Education Sector Reform Assistance

A Teacher Professional Development Success Story

Improving Discipline in Primary Schools



“Group work has brought students closer to each other for a meaningful purpose. They are friends.”

—Jamila Muheeb, teacher

Disciplinary problems are a major topic of discussion in Pakistani schools. They stir up strong emotions, occupy teachers’ energies that could be spent on pedagogical issues, and inhibit students’ curiosity for learning. Government Girls Primary School Ali Khan used to have a significant problem in this area. Jamila Muheeb, one of the teachers, observed that students were noisy; they fought, hit, and kicked each other, laughed at slow learners, and refused to share their belongings (e.g., pens and paper). She herself found it especially difficult to work with slow learners. She said, “I tried to explain everything to make a concept clearer, but if the slow learners did not understand, I felt frustrated and beat them. I didn’t know what else to do.”

Fortunately, Muheeb joined a teacher training program called the Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) program, funded by USAID, and it gave her alternatives for working with students. For example, her school’s trainer, or mentor suggested that teachers develop ground rules for their classrooms; reinforce the social skills of students, such as respecting one another and raising hands when they want to talk; and introduce group work so that students could share their ideas and learn from one another.

Muheeb implemented all of the suggestions. She prepares different activities for fast and slow learners and forms groups to encourage brighter students to work with those less bright. She reports, “I am just surprised to see the way students work, help, and learn from each other. It has reduced my stress level a lot.” She has learned to give clear oral instructions, write them on the blackboard, and make sure that all the students understand them. When she poses questions, students raise their hands and even wave them about to show how much they want to share.

Today, she is excited that students are feeling responsible for their work. They share their learning and help the slow learners. They have made friends with one another and work together well. They know when to listen to the teacher and that it is good to respond. Instead of using harsh discipline to force students to follow rules, Muheeb rewards students’ appropriate use of social skills in the classroom. She is proud of the improvement in behavior in her classroom and wants to institutionalize these practices throughout the school.

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Pakistan Education Sector Reform Assistance

A Teacher Professional Development Success Story

Corporal Punishment—A Diminishing Practice in One School



Punishing hand becomes a helping hand

Challenge—In the weekly sessions of the USAID-sponsored teacher mentoring program in the schools of the province of Balochistan, Pakistan, mentor Aziz ul Haq and his mentees were struggling with the problems of student absenteeism and drop-out rates. Despite the efforts of this group, the rates of absenteeism and drop-out were not coming down. Teachers and district education officials believed that these problems had affected the overall progress of all students. In addition, they worried that the quality of education had been deteriorating.

Initiative—Haq and his 20 mentees decided to debate these issues in one particular mentoring session. Haq had some ideas about the reasons for absenteeism and drop-outs derived from the mentor training he had attended through the USAID-funded Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) program. He wanted to get his mentees' ideas before sharing his own. "The process was very interesting," says Haq. "We started with brainstorming. Quite a number of issues came up, including poverty, the lack of furniture, and our dilapidated buildings, but few teachers commented on the incentives for students to come to school. When someone pointed out that the common practice of beating students could be the reason, the idea astonished many who were present." Then there was a debate, a furious one, with many teachers arguing that beating students with a stick has been going on for generations. They thought students should be punished for their mistakes. At the end of the session, there was a consensus that the entire group of teachers would stop the practice, see what happened, and debate the issue again after a few months.

Result—After some time had passed, the group shared news about the experiment—news that surprised quite a few. The school's absentee rate had dropped from 30 to 10 percent, and fewer students were dropping out. The best explanation was the banning of corporal punishment. With the improvement in attendance, the teachers felt that the practices of teaching and learning had gained in value. Students reported liking the new behavior of their teachers and enjoying learning much more than they had in the "bad old days."

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A Teacher Professional Development Success Story

The Impact of Teacher Training on a Slow Learner



“When I saw her sitting outside of the class with a sad face, I felt bad but could not help her.”

—Primary school teacher

“I used to be a Ping Pong ball.”

—Shamma, a student

Government Primary School Seri Kahan is situated in the outskirts of a small town in the province of Balochistan, Pakistan. Its teachers used to employ a traditional lecture approach in the classroom, and one young girl in class 2, whom we will call Shamma, was not doing well. She did not understand many of the teacher’s explanations, and the teacher frequently punished this lack of understanding with a beating. Repeated punishment resulted in Shamma’s low self-confidence and in teasing from her fellow students who said she was “abnormal.” Eventually, she was demoted to class 1 and then to the nursery class. One of the teachers said, “When I saw her sitting outside of the class with a sad face, I felt bad but could not help her.” She seemed a lost cause.

When Shamma was in the nursery class, the teachers in her school became a part of the Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) program sponsored by USAID. All received training on alternative methods of teaching and classroom management. The teachers decided to move Shamma back to class 2 and use a newly learned approach. The class 2 teacher made Shamma the “Monitor of the Class,” which gave her extra responsibilities, such as taking the attendance sheet to the office, collecting homework and class work from others, and writing on the board. Her teacher said, “I realized she was gaining in confidence, showing more interest in the class, and doing her homework regularly. She started drawing pictures and showing them to me.”

Shamma is a different child. She has adjusted well to her class, is accepted by others as a part of the group, and doesn’t miss a day of school. She participates actively in group work, and if she doesn’t understand, she asks her classmates for help. Shamma said, “Now I feel good in coming to school because I have friends and teachers who treat me like my mother does. I can continue to learn.”

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