Are we there yet? Technology integration in English language teaching in Balochsitan, Pakistan

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Abstract

Pakistan is one of the countries of the world striving to improve the quality of education since 1947, adopting the emerging innovative ways of learning and teaching. Technology integration in education is one such practice, where technological devices, computers with an internet connection have been provided in the schools with an aim to expedite students' engagement in the learning and teaching tasks and so their learning process. Current study provides insights into the ground practices of the school-based stakeholder (SBSs), i.e. headteachers, teachers and students regarding technology integration in the English language learning and teaching at secondary level, in the context of Balochistan, Pakistan. Qualitative exploratory case study method was employed to carry out the study. Findings of the study depicted not only the existing practices of SBSs, but also the challenges faced by them during their attempt to integrate technology in English language teaching. This article also provides some recommendations for the community of education with a particular focus on Balochistan, Pakistan, for effective technology integration so as to maximize the benefits of technology integration in schools.

Keywords: Technology integration, English language teaching, School-based stakeholders (SBSs).

Introduction

Pakistan has been putting its all efforts to uplift the quality of education trough adopting the emerging techniques into education, since independence. To serve this purpose, first educational conference in Pakistan has fully recognized the effective role of technology in education, intended at utilizing available technological devices to expediate the learning and teaching. These Technological devices included radio, films, projectors, gramophone, magic lanterns, educational films' dubbing and broadcast systems in Schools (GOP-ED, 1951). This was also evident in the Balochistan education sector Plan 2013-2018, aiming to access the experts to develop the expertise of local educationists using ICT (PPIU-ED-GOB, 2013) after 18th amendment which conferred the education to be a provincial matter (Final Report of Implementation Commission, 2010). Computer labs in each secondary school were established to integrate technology in education to engage learners in the learning process in 2002. Moving ahead, Pakistan has also integrated technology in pre-service teacher education programs. For instance, Associate Diploma in Education (ADE) and Bachelor of Education (Honours), (B.Ed. Hons) teach technology integration in education in third semester, to provide hands on experience to prospective teachers (Higher Education Commission, 2012). Earlier, it was also conveyed through the National Education policy that every teacher should not only possess the ICT skills but also have enough competency to effectively integrate it into subject area (MOE-GOP, 2009) further emphasized by ICT policy (MoIT-GOP, 2012).

In the meantime, it is also obvious that policy intents are the set objective conveyed through top-down approach, to be achieved by the policy implementors at school and classroom level (Fung & Lui, 2017) as is the case of technology integration. In this regard, administrative support plays significant role to expedite or impede the technology integration in education including English Language Teaching (ELT) at school level (Machado & Chung, 2015). Moreover, English language teachers are responsible to effectively integrate technology in their classroom to facilitate students with different opportunities to learn English language (Gunuç & Babacan, 2017). Most significantly, student is the ultimate beneficiary of the entire education system (Mafuraga & Moremi, 2017). So, investigating the experiences of headteacher, English Language Teachers and students could portray much

better sketch of technology integration in English language teaching or vice versa.

Literature Review

This part is divided into two sections, first section sheds light on the benefits of technology integration in education around the globe and the second section discusses the challenges faced during the technology integration in education including English language teaching.

Benefits of technology integration

Technology integration in education has been done across the globe including Pakistan as it has been the focus of education policies since last four decades (UNESCO-UIS, 2013). In Pakistan, it was evident in the first educational conference held on December 4, 1951 at Karachi, which apprehended that all available technological resources would be integrated in education to facilitate the learning and teaching process. Let us take an example from the first educational conference "Where facilities for broadcasting or the exhibition of films do not exist, the epidiascope, the gramophone or the magic lantern can be used. These aids to education accelerate the process of learning by encouraging and implementing it" (GOP-ED, 1951. p.451). Additionally, it would be significant to mention that UNESO has developed indicators' set for Information and Communication Technology (ICT), so as to facilitate the countries of the world to not only integrate technology in education but also assess the level of technology integration in education according to the national and international level (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2009). In this regard, the future classroom toolkit, was found to be very beneficial to enhance the quality of technology integration in education since it has been developed and piloted in 2500 classrooms in Europe and it yielded encouraging results (Ellis, Blamire, & Assche, 2015).

Many researches have been done to explore the ways to effectively integrate technology in English language teaching and on the benefits of technology integration in English language teaching. In this connection, Çakici (2016) explicated that technological devices like computer, smartboards, internet, mobile phones, video games and media players are being utilized in English language teaching in schools. Moreover, on the basis of an extensive literature review Azmi (2017) explained that

technology integration in English language teaching improves students' language acquisition/learning, motivates them to have language mastery through independent learning and assists English language teachers to maximize learning objectives. Similarly, he further explained that technology integration in English language teaching makes the process of learning and teaching more engaging through the use of multiple text (multimodality) and provides access to a variety of information around the globe. Simultaneously, it provides opportunities for the teachers to give individual feedback to the students. Concurrently, it enhances students' motivation, commitment, collaboration and communication among students. In addition, Rabah (2015) explored in his research in Canada that technology integration in English language teaching increased students' engagement in the tasks, improved the learning process and gave rise to the glocalization in this 21st century. Simultaneously, Muyia and Nafukho (2015) have suggested the use of social media, blogs, twitter, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, Myspace, Google C and Virtual worlds for the purpose of training and development in organizations. Due to the fact that these platforms provide opportunities to the users to collaborate, create and share knowledge synchronously and asynchronously, proposing a model of its usage. In the similar way, Becker, McCaleb and Baker (2015) argued that technology integration in education possess the capability to enhance students' engagement in the task through purposefully designed activities. Moreover, they suggested that online/hybrid courses could be an appropriate medium for course delivery in the 21st century.

Challenges faced during technology integration

Rabah (2015) in the research conducted in Canada pointed out some significant challenges in technology integration in English School. These challenges were lack of support from school leadership, fluctuation of investment in technological equipments, resources and infrastructure, lack of additional professional development support, technology integration in assessment and curriculum plans. In the same manner, Ahad, Hasan, Hoque and Chowdhury (2018) in their study in Bangladesh highlighted the challenges faced during technology integration. These were that loss of work due to sudden shutdown of the system and lack of technical ability to use technological devices in the institutions. Additionally, Çakici (2016) identified that technology integration carries the challenge of lack of

teachers' technological skills, classroom management issues, requirement of technical support and teachers' lack of confidence to effectively integrate technology into their classroom practices. Most significantly, Azmi (2017) notified that absence of planning to use technology in English language teaching and lack of smart objectives could lead to the waste of efforts and time, leading to the failures of language objectives' achievement. Furthermore, it might demoralize English language teacher and negatively influence technology integration in English language classroom.

Research Method

The main focus of the study was to explore the experiences of school-based stakeholders (SBSs) in a public sector secondary school. So, three subsidiary questions were developed to answer the main research question.

Main research question

What are the experiences of school-based stakeholder (SBSs) of technology integration in English language teaching?

Subsidiary research questions. 1) What are the experiences of headteacher regarding the technology integration in English language teaching at secondary level in the school? 2) What are the experiences of English language teachers to facilitate the technology integration in their English language teaching in secondary level of a public sector school? 3) What are the experiences of students about technology integrated English language learning in secondary level in a public sector secondary school?

This research was carried out through the qualitative research paradigm since it provides opportunities to generate an in-depth data unlike quantitative research which generates generalizable data. Moreover, it carries a lot of benefits. For example, it facilitates to contextualize the study, assists to explore the meaning-making process since meaning-making directs the practices of individuals, provides flexibility to modify the research tools, site and participants (Creswell, 2014). Moreover, it supports to investigate the phenomenon through different perspectives involved in technology integration in English language learning and teaching in Balochistan, Pakistan (Busch, & Danby, 2016). To serve the purpose of the study exploratory case study method was adopted (Ponelis, 2015). Research site was a public sector secondary school and research participants included one

Headteacher, two English language teachers and 12 students (6 each from class 9 and 10) through Purposive sampling (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). Out of six students from the two classes, two high achievers, two mediocre and two low-achievers were selected to represent all categories from their classes based on their previous class results. Two semi-structured interviews of the headteacher and each English language teacher were conducted, two focused group discussions of each group of students were also conducted. Two classroom observations (one each) were also carried out.

Data analysis

Data analysis was a continuous process from the beginning of the study till the completion of data collection. Audio-recorded interviews were audio transcribed into English, directly. Transcriptions were re-read to segregate codes to generate micro theme for cross thematic analysis. This not only facilitated to separate the themes along with noticing the emerging thematic relations with each other but to prepare the questions for the next semi-structured interview and focused group discussions as well to enrich the data. Followingly, all the themes were summed up in the entirety. Most significantly, interviews translations and summaries were shared with the participants for the verification purposes to enhance the validity of the data analysis process.

Findings

Findings of the study has been presented into two sections. Section one, talks about the experiences of SBSs of technology integration in English language teaching in secondary level. Section two, sheds light on the challenges faced by SBSs during their attempt to integrate technology in English language teaching.

Experiences of integrating technology in English language teaching
SBSs were integrating technology in English language teaching at secondary level. Their experiences are explained as under.

Useful websites were recommended. It was consistently evident during the study that the SBSs were fully aware with the usefulness of websites in the English language teaching referring it to the students.

Headteacher shared, "I instructed both English language teachers (teacher A and teacher B) to guide the students regarding useful websites to facilitate their English language learning". Moreover, it was also observed during the English language classroom observation that teacher A guided the students to utilize google and online oxford dictionary to find the meanings of difficult English words. In the same manner, Teacher B reported, "I perceive that sharing the links of English language learning websites supports students to learn English anywhere, anytime". Students also endorsed it in the focused group discussion that English language teachers shared with them some useful websites' links google, online Oxford dictionary, yahoo answers and YouTube. As one student shared, "I use google and yahoo answers to explore the meanings of difficult words and to learn grammar. (St C, C10). Similarly, another student expressed "Our teachers are so nice as they refer useful websites to learn English. To do so, I have to use my android phone as we have limited computers in the school computer laboratory (St B, C9). It indicated that SBSs were sharing useful websites with each other as a strategy of technology integration in English language teaching.

Using technology to connect and to communicate. The second main finding was the utilization of technology as a medium to connect and to communicate. This was not only limited to the effective learning and teaching of language English, but it was also used for task delegation, accessing parents and responding parents' queries, using personal devices. For example, Headteacher shared "I remain connected with via the English language teachers A and B through mobile phone and with the parents to inquire about the absence of a student and sharing the progress of students." Simultaneously, teacher B expressed, "I delegate different tasks to the class CR and he communicates it to the entire class". Additionally, teacher A put forwarded another dimension, "Parents also remain in contact to inquire the progress of their children without coming to school". Students also uttered the same as one student stated, "Technology supported us to communicate the classroom tasks with each other. We also remain connected to seek each other's support to learn English language, using Facebook messenger and text messages (St A, C10)". Another student articulated "Being Class Representative [CR] of the class, I communicate the tasks as per Sir B instructions. We also remain connected with our English language teachers Sir A and Sir B to learn English grammar (St D, C9). It was also observed

during the focused group discussions that all students possess personal android mobile phones. This technological usage was keeping SBSs connected with each other to communicate to learn English language and with parents to respond to their queries regarding their children, saving parents time and money to come to school.

Enhanced students' engagement and student-centered learning. The third finding of the study was the experiences of enhanced students' engagement and student-centered learning as a result of technology integration in English language teaching. As Headteacher expressed, "Technology facilitates individuals to learn language. I have observed that students who take support from technology remain more engage in English language tasks. So, I encourage teachers and students to use technology for English language learning and teaching". In the same way, teacher A revealed, "I personally improved my speaking through audio-clips available at some English learning websites. Similarly, the students remain engaged because, they can learn English by themselves, like finding meanings, learning grammar and improving their pronunciation". Teacher B added, "Students ask more questions in the classrooms as they have learnt the basics of grammar of English through some grammar teaching websites, so we have healthy discussions in our English language classrooms". A student expressed, "The day, I had started taking support of technology, I have improved my pronunciation and I started enjoying learning English, without relying only on the teacher (St E, C10)". Another student explained, "I seek correct pronunciations of different words on internet and I also help my friends improving their pronunciation (St F, C9)". Another student expressed, "I improved my spellings and grammar with the support from the technology (St C, C9)". It revealed that technology was a motivator and was facilitating student-centered learning in English language teaching in the school.

Challenges faced by SBSs

Poor Technological skills of ELTs and lack of technological pedagogical and content knowledge. This was the unique finding that SBSs were not confident about their technological skills and different ways to integrate technology in their English language classroom. Headteacher pointed it out, "Perhaps, they do not have sound technological knowledge,

this might be the reason that they do not integrate technology in their daily English language classrooms". In the same way teacher B explicated, "I know how to use technology, but I don't know how to integrate it in English language teaching. So, I feel, it is better to avoid it". Teacher A added, "neither technology was taught to me in my pre-service teacher education programs nor the ways to integrate it in English language teaching". One students pointed, "our teacher shares links of useful with us, responds to our questions on Facebook messenger, but does not integrate it during the English language classroom teaching (St D, C9)". Another student reported, "our ELT has his own computer center, he teaches us MS office in computer lab, but he does not use technology while teaching English (St E, C10). It was evident that English language teachers not only lack technological skills, but they also lack technological pedagogical content knowledge.

Lack of technical and financial support. Another significant challenge faced by the SBSs was the lack of technical and financial support to facilitate the maintenance of computers and to assist English language teachers to learn technology. As Headteacher shared, "due to lack of financial support, we cannot maintain and update the computer lab. Moreover, the post of an I.T teacher is also lying vacant, so we also lack technical support". In the same way, teacher A narrated "We do not have an I.T expert to resolve computer related issues. I try to do it on my own, but I am not an expert". Teacher B explained,

> Due to unavailability of funds, malfunctioning computers were not repaired. Many computers are not functioning due to minor issues. Some of them have broken mouse, some produce unusual noise while turning on and some runs very slowly. Moreover, unavailability of I.T teacher is also a hinderance to resolve different technical issue like connecting to the internet, printing issue and installation and upgradation of windows.

> Students also narrated the same issues. As one student shared "one day, during the computer period, I asked the teacher, why many computers are not functioning? The teacher replied, because, neither we have funds nor an I.T. teacher to resolve these issues (St F, C10)". This depicts that lack of technical and financial support was also a hindering factor in the effective technology integration in English language teaching at the public sector secondary school.

Discussion

Findings of the study have shown a basic level of technology integration in English language teaching. Such as sharing of useful websites' links with students, using it as a medium of communication and connection, increasing students' engagement and student-centered learning in English language teaching. It depicts the poor implementation of technology integration in English language teaching. Since, this poor implementation of policy intents is un-desirables due to the fact that a lot of investment had been done to establish computer labs in every school across Pakistan. Furthermore, clear instructions of technology integration in English language teaching are available, but due to unavailability of technical and financial support and teachers' poor technological and technological-pedagogical and content knowledge skills, the policy intents' implementation at the classroom level has not been fully achieved yet. On one hand, it is a waste of physical and human resources, one the other hand, it is hindering students to learn English language through technology integration. It leads to their under-performance in the examination and their poor English language skills. Most significantly, it is also leading to the existing BESP's (PPIU-ED-GOB, 2013) failure. According to Wang and Woo (2007) technology integration means incorporating technology in curriculum, topic and lesson. Particularly, Koehler and Mishra (2009) model of Technological, Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPACK) is also very useful for effective integration of technolog in English language teaching. In this regard, critical role of in-service teacher education institutes should not be ignored, since they are responsible for all cadres' in-service trainings across Pakistan. So, these institutes should not restrict themselves to donor-driven trainings. Instead, they should become pro-active and align the in-service trainings with the guidelines of policy intents. This study is a nudge for the in-service training institutions. Another relevant aspect is performance of I.T. section of education department. For an example, non-allocation of maintenance and upgradation budget for the computer labs and keeping the I.T. teachers' post vacant without any justification posing consequences to the students' English language skills. In the same vein, it seems that due to lack of funding universities are also unable to intervene to conduct action research and to design and implement in-service teacher trainings. Concurrently, there might be a possibility that BESP (PPIU-ED-GOB, 2013) has not catered the in-service teacher trainings needs, as it was

evident during this study. Bhola (2014) is of the view that policy implementation is significant component of policy process. Due to implementation of policy without satisfying necessary requirements, like teacher trainings related to technology and technology integration, teachers under performance in technology integration in English language teaching is obvious. Without proper trainings English language teachers could not integrate technology effectively in English language teaching. Furthermore, they are also unable resolve technical issues and incapable to upgrade the system. These findings also depict the need of alignment of governance with the policy intents. For instance, governance by the higher authorities has not considered the significance of technology integration in English language teaching so it led to poor policy implementation at the classroom level. Although trial and error plays important role in the policy implementation, but it would not be beneficial in long run for effective policy implementation. Considering the fact that English language has significant role in Pakistan. Because it not only opens doors for high profile jobs but it also opportunities to move abroad. It should lead to the realization that students are the central beneficiaries of our education system who make the future of Pakistan. To achieve a better future, we cannot leave SBSs without appropriate guidance which leads to the waste of time, finances and other resources. We might facilitate them through appropriate trainings and assisting them regularly in their efforts to embrace students with the benefits of technology integration in English language teaching. This could be an appropriate strategy with following recommendations to ensure the effective technology integration in English language teaching. However, it depends on our decision that whether we want to improve the current situation or not.

It only requires to take the first step the begin the journey of success.

Recommendations

- In-service teacher training institutes should play their role actively through identifying the training needs using research pathways to align teachers' skills with the policy intentions.
- I.T section should immediately appoint competent individuals on the vacant positions of I.T. teachers and budget should be allocated for the maintenance and upgradation of computer labs.
- The co-ordination mechanism should be developed and implemented among different branches of education department, Bureau of

curriculum, pre-service and in-service teacher training institutes, policy development wing, provincial directorate and secretariat.

- Incentives and awards should be introduced for the English language teachers and the schools for an effectively integration of technology in English language teaching.
- Improved accountability mechanism should be developed and implemented for an effective technology integration in English language teaching.
- More researches should be carried out to further explore the status of technology integration in English language teaching at primary, secondary and higher secondary level.
- Universities should also conduct research in this area, especially, action research could be a good strategy to respond the issue.
- Universities should also design and implement in-service teacher trainings.

Recommendations for further researches
- Action research is desirable in this arena to enhance in-service teachers' technological skills and also to equip English language teachers with the TPACK model.
- The same study could be replicated in the elementary and/or secondary level schools.
- Study with mixed-method approach could also be done with the same objectives.

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