Teacher Training – Best practice

- Include regular in-service courses complimented by comprehensive teacher materials, distance learning by the MoE, and regular support from a trainer/supervisor in the classroom. One or all of these should lead to an MoE recognised teacher qualification.

- Support materials for trainers and teachers are all inclusive with details of activities, background information and the possible answers to brainstorming or group discussion activities. (When stress on the teacher is reduced because they are better informed on what to do in a real life situation, they make better decisions on which method to use.)

- Effective teaching and learning practices are used actively in all training courses, including micro teaching and experiential learning. Trainers/teachers who actually ‘do’ a student activity can experience the learning benefits themselves. (Learning comes from doing the work itself - it is real learning.)

- Demonstrate good classroom management techniques, positive and immediate feedback techniques, and methods of informal student assessment on the training courses. This raises learner self-esteem and leads to better learning retention. Trainers learn by doing.

- Give teaching practice for trainers and teachers (‘Limiting beliefs’ can be challenged with successful teaching practice.)
Training courses should model supportive supervision with “reflection sessions” (Good communication skills promote interpersonal intelligence. The brain thrives on immediacy of feedback)

Include content knowledge teaching, using effective methods. (The teacher, often untrained and unqualified, experiences a real learning situation and by learning content needed for future AL classes gains a real benefit.)

Include psychosocial issues/activities for both teachers and students. This reduces stressful situations and helps build interpersonal skills.

Include recent brain-based research in training courses.

Promote the inclusion of the disabled at every level of the ALP.

Include training to support learners of different abilities.

Include familiarisation to the ALP, its administration, assessment, M&E, management systems and instruction on how the teacher can promote better community and female participation.

Use female and disabled trainers in the training cascade to mixed groups of trainers/teachers as positive role models.

Maintain professionalism at all times.
Pitfalls in Teaching and Learning

- The training materials were developed for qualified trained teachers yet are used by unqualified and untrained teachers, often with only primary education.

- Many teachers revert to traditional teaching styles without regular support and in-service courses.

- Many teachers believe that rote learning is a successful method for covering the curriculum as they know it works and this ‘limiting belief’ may prevent the adoption of new methodologies.

- Condensing a curriculum and producing materials for it takes time, expertise, and funding.

- The ALP is adopted from another country but has not been adjusted to the local situation/context.

- When the country has two national languages, care should be taken in a mixed training group over the language used.

- The MoE, INGOs, and NGOs are often male dominated. Issues concerning female education are not dealt with or not taken seriously. As males tend to favour different learning strategies to females, girls taught by male teachers may not learn as quickly or effectively.

- The teacher training course and classroom practice are different.

- Often training courses assume a level of pedagogical knowledge that untrained teachers do not have. Training is conducted as presentation and group work discussions. Teachers either copy this group work/discussion unsuccessfully with their AL class or do not feel equipped/confident in other methodology.

- Accreditation for the student consists of an exam that relies heavily on memorisation. Teachers focus on the exam and traditional methods that favour pass rates rather than learner-centred methods that promote lifelong learning skills.
Cascade model of teaching training

Well documented problems are:

- Concepts at the top of the cascade do not meet the needs of teachers at grassroots level
- Dilution of the initial training so that the recipient receives scant benefit
- Quality of teaching at grassroots level unable to achieve the objectives of the programme
- Success dependant on quality of the trainers

One-off training courses using the cascade model are particularly vulnerable and for the dissemination of teaching skills have proven largely ineffective.

Advantages of cascade training

- is flexible
- is participatory
- is field based
- can train large numbers in a relatively short period,
- makes only moderate demands on professional training resources
- is cost effective
- empowering
- builds capacity at each level

For cascade training to be effective it must be supported by

- detailed trainer’s materials
- lesson plans
- training resources
- central monitoring
- the trainers at each level must receive on-going professional development.
Readiness for Change

- The quality of teaching and learning is closely related to the quality of human resources available and the ability of groups of people or institutions to internalize change.

- To improve teaching quality it is necessary to move at the rate teachers can change their behaviour in the classroom.

- Tackling the strongly ingrained cultural method of rote learning where groups of teachers have no experience of newer methods will take time.

- Introducing methods too unfamiliar will lead to their rejection. Success has to be seen to be believed, and anything new will be viewed with scepticism.

Master Trainers and students experiencing a Grade 1 numeracy activity
Teaching and learning approach

In APEP the training cascade was used for 5 training courses to:

- maintain the quality of training and skills development in the cascade,
- meet the needs of the AL mentor
- ensure implementing partner ‘buy-in’

A detailed plan for training using the cascade with sets of supporting materials for each tier was developed.

CiC specialised in teacher training so had:

- An experienced team of Senior Trainers and Materials Developers
- Access to an extensive collection of Afghan training materials
- A mix of female and male trainers, Dari, Pashto and Uzbek speakers, experience from the provinces and refugee settings, and a disabled trainer
Underlying rationale for the AL training courses

The design of the Grade I-VI training courses, Trainer’s Manuals and Mentor’s Guides was based on a set of guiding principles which all trainers and mentors were expected to follow:

- Working with the community
- Encouraging female participation
- Trainers/mentors are role models
- Teaching is child/children-centred
- Teaching and learning is activity-based
- Learning is by doing
- Participation of all trainees/children
- Using low cost materials
- Preventing corporal punishment
- Using praise
- Keeping good and accurate records
- Planning to prevent poor performance
- Learning from any mistakes we make
- Training goes down the cascade and feedback comes up the cascade
- Using supportive ‘clinical’ supervision
Successful aspects of the training courses

Trainer’s Manual and Mentor’s Guides

- To develop the skills of each tier and support quality, the Trainer’s Manual contained the same information for both sets of trainers.

- Only one Trainer’s Manual would be produced for the cascade per grade, and more time could be devoted to improving the quality of the training sessions and translation.

- The Mentors Guide contained many of the same topics.

- Providing the cascade with almost identical courses for trainers reduced the disruption caused by staff turnover.

- Piloting the training courses on cohort 1 yielded comprehensive feedback used to fine tune course and Trainer’s Manual development.

- The development of the training courses became more focused on content and experiential learning. Participating in a group activity designed for students to understand the concept gave trainers both the ‘knowledge’ and the reason why the activity ‘worked’. This won over the sceptics, gave the trainers what they needed in terms of knowledge and skills, and the motivation to use the methodology in the next tier of training. The introduction of for example word problems and study skills was so new to trainers that ‘winning them over’ to ALP methodology was essential in the early stages. The training courses for Grade IV, V, & VI contained progressively more content knowledge.
Inclusion of Life Skills Topics

- The first life skills topics requested by many communities: landmine, peace and health education
- Grade IV: Personal skills development, careers advice and study skills
- Grade V and VI: sensitive topics: psychosocial issues, feminine hygiene, maternal health and topics on HIV/AIDS.

Master Trainers in Grade 4 Drugs Awareness role play awareness

Female students in Kunduz province using a role play activity for drug
Inclusion of Accelerated Learning Practices

The ‘accelerated learning’ aspect of the ALP was introduced at two levels. Training sessions in Grade I, II & III focused on:

- Detailed information on the ALP
- Setting up a safe and secure learning environments
- Removing punishment as a tool for management
- Managing students effectively using positive feedback
- Effective methods and materials for language and maths

Training sessions in Grade IV, V, & VI focused on:

- Information on brain research – background, findings and applications
- Relating the findings on brain research to the activities used in the training sessions in Grade I – III
- Application of theories of motivation, self-esteem, goal setting, the learning environment and multiple intelligences
- Personal skill development particularly for interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence
- Study skills and self-directed learning skills

Effective teaching methods that were successfully transferred down the cascade included the following:

- Group work focusing on an activity e.g. sorting, problem solving, discovery
- Pair work – for brainstorming ideas, ranking exercises, problem solving, checking
- Circle work – science demonstrations, games
- Case studies – both written and role played
- Role plays and drama – life skills, language, maths
- Question and answer
- Quiz competitions
- Games – all subjects
- Hands on activities, individual, pair or group
- Micro-teaching/training
- Agree/disagree - active decision making
- Interactive presentations
Senior trainer support to the provinces

Daily reflections and tutorials
- The daily reflections were to develop the trainers’ ability to self-critique, think objectively and deliver observations in a supportive way.
- The end of day tutorial for 30 minute recalled training outcomes, clarified points, gave feedback on the course and discussed issues raised in training sessions. It was also a technique to aid retention and recall.

Training practice
The Master Trainers delivered a training session they had observed. Using a simple observation system of noting good points and points to improve (with good points always to outweigh improve points), the Master Trainers did not feel they were the object of criticism. This had a number of benefits:
- Master Trainer skills were improved
- The quality of the written training session could be evaluated
- Weak Master Trainers could observe a difficult training session twice
- Conducting a difficult training sessions in training practice removed Master Trainer doubts about their ability to conduct it in the provinces.
- Dari/Pashto language sessions could be conducted for the Pashto/Dari mother tongue trainers for second language purposes
- The success of skill development in training practice gave confidence to those perceived as ‘weak’ i.e. female trainers and those with quiet personalities, and demonstrated they were just as capable as more vocal Master Trainers.
- Females developed more ‘voice’ and were recognised by male trainers as equal to the role.
Feedback and evaluation

- Feedback from Cohort 1 was particularly valuable as it could still influence the content of the Trainer's Manual.
- Each course conducted contained weekly evaluations and an end of course questionnaire to obtain detailed feedback on training sessions. The use of homework provided another avenue of evaluation and opinion.

Role modelling professional skills

- The trainers always provided a professional role model by conducting themselves as experts and professionals: starting punctually; dressing professionally; having all materials prepared; the training sessions organised; and demonstrating professional support skills.
- It was important for female Senior Trainers to take on the same roles and responsibilities as their male counterparts. Many male Master Trainers had never been trained by a female, and regarded female trainers as inferior. By using female trainers to conduct 50% of the courses at the top of the training cascade CiC modelled that female trainers were equal to their male colleagues.
- One disabled female Senior Trainer demonstrated she was just as capable of giving training as any able bodied trainer which ultimately had a huge impact on the ALP. She was responsible for advocating that disabled children should attend AL classes, and influenced the courses to recognise disabilities and include strategies to teach disabled students.