

# Facilitating teachers' meetings



Teacher Education  
through School-based  
Support in India



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*TESS-India (Teacher Education through School-based Support) aims to improve the classroom practices of elementary and secondary teachers in India through the provision of Open Educational Resources (OERs) to support teachers in developing student-centred, participatory approaches. The TESS-India OERs provide teachers with a companion to the school textbook. They offer activities for teachers to try out in their classrooms with their students, together with case studies showing how other teachers have taught the topic and linked resources to support teachers in developing their lesson plans and subject knowledge.*

*The TESS-India OERs are supported by a set of guidance documents for teacher educators aimed at all those tasked with educating teachers, including initial teacher training and continuing professional development. These guidance documents offer teacher educators further practical guidance on key practices to support them in their work to embed the pedagogy modelled in TESS-India OER and Indian education policy. They include ways of organising networks and facilitating teachers' meetings, guidance on running participatory workshops and developing reflective practitioners, as well as how to use action research to improve practice. Further resources will be added later. These guidance materials will be available on the website for teacher educators or other educators.*

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*TEGN\_Meetings*

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## A good teachers' meeting will involve ...

Many teachers in India attend regular meetings in their cluster or block and may also attend teachers' meetings in their school. These meetings are a valuable opportunity to support teachers in developing as reflective practitioners, and are also where teachers will learn most if they are actively involved and not just expected to listen to presentations.

A good teachers' meeting will involve guiding teachers to reflect on and share their experiences and assumptions in order to move towards developing new practices and understandings of effective teaching and learning. This requires skilful leadership and careful planning to ensure that all the teachers are involved in the activities and that the activities are focused on the expected learning and are relevant to their classroom contexts.

## How can TESS-India OER be used in teachers' meetings?

Teachers' meetings are an excellent opportunity to support teachers with their use of the TESS-India OER. These OER aim to help teachers to develop more interactive, participatory approaches in their classrooms with their students. Teachers will learn most from meetings that are also interactive and participatory, and give teachers space to explore the activities and case studies in the TESS-India OER and reflect on their experiences of using the OER in their classrooms.

But it is important to remember that 'the expectation that ideas that are engaged with during workshops will be directly taken into the classroom for practice is misplaced' (NCFTE, 2009: 72). As the NCFTE makes clear, teachers need support in their classrooms to enact these ideas in their own lessons. The OER can provide the basis for the supportive activities that you do with teachers. You could:

- role play some of the activities, with you being the teacher and them being the students
- watch videos together
- discuss individual activities, case studies or whole units.

In this way, teachers will be actively involved in the meeting and there is more chance that they will take the ideas into their classrooms.

Change is a slow process and teacher change needs continued support and monitoring. The Teacher Education Guidance Notes on academic mentoring give some advice on observing teachers and constructing a dialogue that will help teachers to develop as a reflective practitioner.

### Case Study 1: Teacher Sanjay's experience of meetings

Every year we get the opportunity to attend in-service training at the local DIET. It is nice to get out of school. We watch presentations on PowerPoint – which are usually interesting, but not terribly useful. The trainers are very knowledgeable about the theory of education, but I am not sure that they have ever been in a classroom like mine!

Last week was different, though. The course was shorter – only two days. We were introduced to TESS-India OER and were asked to bring our lesson plans and textbooks for what we would be teaching in the next two weeks. All the OER were available and we were asked to select one on a topic that we would be teaching in the near future. Sandhya and I chose the unit on equations. First we were given about 30

minutes to read through the unit and to discuss the 'Pause for thought' sections. It was really interesting – I thought storytelling was for primary school teachers, but I could imagine some of my students really enjoying it. We were asked to write down three things that we had learned from the unit on a flipchart. The facilitator put the charts up round the room, and then we walked round and had a look. It was interesting to see what other people had learned from their units.

We then had about an hour to look at our plans for the next week and to incorporate the activities we had read about. We also watched some of the videos that were referenced in the OER. I felt a bit apprehensive about the lessons, and wondered how my students would react. But Sandhya would be trying the lessons as well – it would be good to catch up with how they went. While we were working, the facilitator came and talked to us for a while. She asked us a lot of questions that made us really think about the detail of the lessons.

I came away having planned three lessons for next week – for once an in-service course has saved me time rather than created more work!

If you are based in a block or cluster, you may be involved in visiting schools and be able to offer this continued support yourself. Headteachers are a valuable source of support for teachers, and there are TESS-India School Leadership OER that can help any headteachers that wish to develop their own practice. Continuing support can be provided by other teachers when they are encouraged to work collaboratively to plan and deliver lessons, observe each other, and discuss their lessons. Other sources of support might be the local DIET, CTE or IASE.

## Planning for a teachers' meeting with TESS-India OER

Thoughtful, informed planning is key for successful teacher meetings, as it is when planning a lesson. It is crucial that you think about the objectives that you want to achieve in the meeting, the kinds of activities you will use to meet your objectives and who will be attending. The activities must be relevant to the teachers' classroom practice and give them opportunities to discuss and try out ideas that they can then use in their own classrooms. Remember that it is not sufficient that teachers know the theory about participatory pedagogy; what is most important is that they develop confidence in trying out these approaches in their own classrooms.

A good starting point for introducing the TESS-India OER is the TESS-India Key Resources. These are ten resources that offer teachers practical guidance on key practices for a participatory pedagogy. These include ways of organising students, learning activities and teacher–student and student–student interactions. The Key Resources are:

- Planning lessons
- Involving all
- Talk for learning
- Using pair work
- Using questioning to promote thinking
- Monitoring and giving feedback
- Using groupwork
- Assessing progress and performance
- Using local resources

- Storytelling, songs, role play and drama

The Key Resources can be found on the TESS-India website:

<http://www.open.edu/openlearnworks/mod/subpage/view.php?id=56420>.

Each Key Resource has a number of ideas, so a good approach is to start with just one. Think about the teachers in your area: what have you identified as a learning need for them? Are they reluctant to allow students to talk? If so, you might start with 'Using pair work'. Do they find it difficult to ask different sorts of questions to their students? 'Using questioning to promote thinking' might be helpful for these teachers. Are teachers struggling to incorporate CCE into their classroom teaching? 'Assessing progress and performance' has practical suggestions about formative assessment.

TESS-India has a number of short video clips linked to each of the Key Resources. Each video clip shows a teacher in a primary or secondary school in India trying out more student-centred, participatory approaches with their students. The videos are not intended to demonstrate model practice; the aim is that they inspire teachers to try out similar approaches in their own classrooms and to offer ideas for discussion. If you can, it is a good idea to play one or two of these videos to teachers and ask them to discuss the questions in the video clip. It doesn't matter if the video lesson is in another subject – there is something for all teachers to observe and learn from all the videos.

The chart 'TESS-India Key Resources and Video Resources mapping matrix' shows you which TESS-India Teacher Development OER link to which Key Resources. So for example, if you choose to focus on 'Questioning', you might ask the teachers to look at one of the following TESS-India OER appropriate to their subject:

Phase/subject area	Suggested TESS-India Teacher Development OER with a focus on questioning
Elementary English	Using the textbook creatively Learning English in the creative arts
Elementary Maths	Comparing and contrasting tasks: volume and capacity Physical representation in maths: handling data
Elementary Science	Using demonstration: food Teacher's questioning; forces
Elementary Language and Literacy	Speaking and listening Groupwork: language across the curriculum
Secondary English	Whole-class reading routines Strategies for teaching vocabulary
Secondary Maths	Developing mathematical reasoning: mathematical proof Creating concepts of abstract maths: equations Enacting vocabulary and asking questions: exploring the circle
Secondary Science	Questioning: why do we fall ill? Probing understanding: work and energy

(The matrix can be found on the TESS-India website:

[http://www.open.edu/openlearnworks/mod/subpage/view.php?id=76080.](http://www.open.edu/openlearnworks/mod/subpage/view.php?id=76080))

You could ask the teachers to read through the OER in pairs and discuss one of the case studies, or you could select one or two activities and case studies from the OER to use in the meeting. The short 'Pause for thought' sections in each OER offer questions to prompt teachers to think about student learning in the case studies and how the teacher responds to the ideas and behaviours of their students.

## Case Study 2: Rakshi facilitates a teachers' workshop

*Rakshi was due to facilitate a workshop for teachers at a DIET. This was part of the teachers' annual professional development.*

Last year, I ran a five-day workshop on assessment for learning. I was really pleased with my presentation – I had lots of slides and I had read all the documents from the SCERT. But when I visited the schools during the year, I did not see any evidence of assessment being used for learning – the teachers seemed to be confused about it and I realised that although I had explained the theory very well, I had not given them any practical help. This year, I discussed some changes with the head of the DIET. Drawing on my own experience of attending a series of short meetings, I asked if I could do three one-day meetings spread over a term instead of one long meeting. I explained that I would ask the teachers to try out new approaches in between the meetings so that we could talk about their experiences. She agreed and promised to come to the second meeting.

As I had focused on assessment last time, I felt I would get more teachers to attend if I changed the focus. I decided to focus on the TESS-India OER 'Involving all'. This was because there has been discussion in the newspapers recently about the big gap in achievement between children from well-off families and those from poorer families, and I had seen that not all the students were participating in some lessons when I visited the schools. In the first activity, I showed a video from 'Involving all'. I asked the teachers to watch carefully and write down everything that the teacher was doing. Then I asked them to watch it again, but to focus on what the students were doing. Then we gathered together all the things that they had noticed. They asked if they could watch it one more time, as other people had noticed different things.

Working in groups of three, I asked them to choose one TESS-India OER from a list that I had provided. As primary teachers they have to teach a range of subjects, so I asked them to choose an OER from the subject that they felt most confident about. I asked each group to select one activity from the OER and to discuss how it would work in their classroom. I got them to report back to the whole group, but this was problematic – some spoke for far too long and the people listening had not read the activity themselves. Next time I will ask each group to give one thing that they have learned from the OER that they will try out in their classroom.

As a final activity, I gave the teachers 15 minutes to work on their own to plan an activity using what they had learned from the OER for a topic they would be teaching next week. Then they discussed their plans in pairs. Their 'homework' was to try out the plan and report back in the next session.

At the end of each meeting it is a good idea to set expectations for the next meeting. Depending on the type of meeting, you might agree an activity with the teachers for everyone to try before the next meeting or you might ask everyone to try out one particular activity or approach in their classes. Remember to ask about this at the start of the next meeting. You might find it useful to look at some of the ideas in the guidance notes on participatory workshops

([http://www.open.edu/openlearnworks/pluginfile.php/159529/mod\\_resource/content/2/TEGN\\_Workshop.pdf](http://www.open.edu/openlearnworks/pluginfile.php/159529/mod_resource/content/2/TEGN_Workshop.pdf)).

## Your role

As a teacher educator you will be responsible for structuring and planning the teachers' meeting, paying careful attention to the learning needs of the teachers who are attending and the contexts in which they are working. Your role is to support the teacher in translating educational intents into practical action in their classroom and an effective way to do this is to model this in your meeting – to offer activity-based, participatory and joyful learning experiences for the teachers.

You will probably have higher educational qualifications than the teachers and you will almost certainly be at a more elevated position in the education hierarchy. But you may have little experience in teaching at elementary level, for example, and it is important to recognise the skills, experience and capabilities of the teachers that you work with. We know that dialogue is central to learning in a participatory pedagogy (Petty, 2014), and this dialogue can be between teachers, not merely between you and the teachers.

### Case Study 3: Sachin explores his role in educating teachers

Sachin was recently appointed as teacher educator. He had been a teacher himself but took the opportunity to study for a higher degree, and now he was in charge of offering training himself.

He looked back on the training he had received as a teacher, where he had been expected to listen as others told him what to do. Whilst he found the trainers' ideas interesting, he knew it had little effect once he was back in his classroom. He knew that the skills that he had used in the classroom were what he had learned when someone showed him, followed by him trying it out for himself.

He was a little concerned that if he acted differently from his old trainers, people would not respect him – but then he thought, it is those who you learn most from that you respect most. So he decided that his role would be to plan and facilitate good participatory learning experiences and always involve all the participants. He expected that teachers would be learning from him, but he would also be learning from them, especially as he had been out of the classroom already for a few years.

## References

- National Council of Educational Research and Training (2005) *National Curriculum Framework (NCF)*. New Delhi: NCERT.
- National Council of Educational Research and Training (2009) *National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE)*. New Delhi: NCERT.
- Petty, G. (2014) *Evidence-based Teaching: A Practical Approach*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

## Teachers' meeting planning template

Time allocation	Activity	Activity purpose	Resources required
<p>Note here how long you will spend on the activity</p>	<p>Do you have a mix of activities (for example, some for small groups, some for larger groups and some for individuals)?</p> <p>Is the number of activities appropriate for the length of the meeting? (For example, in a one-hour meeting you should aim for a maximum of three activities.)</p>	<p>What do you hope to achieve by doing this activity?</p> <p>Is the activity purpose clear to the teachers?</p>	<p>Do you need copies of the TESS-India OER?</p> <p>Are you using a tablet, or a flipchart?</p>
<p>Is the timing realistic? Are you allowing enough time for everyone in a group to contribute?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activity title</li> <li>• What will you be doing?</li> <li>• What will the teachers be doing? How are the teachers organised – in pairs, small groups or as a large group?</li> <li>• Will you link back to the previous meeting in the first activity?</li> <li>• Will you set a task for the next meeting? Or ask teachers to bring something to the next meeting?</li> </ul>		



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