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Policy suggestions from grass root level action research

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The responsibility of developing pupil competencies adopting the syllabi designed by the National Institute of Education (NIE) lies in the hands of the teacher at the school level who has a close contact with students. Maintaining formal contacts with the Ministry of Education, NIE and the Department of Examinations, In-service Advisors attached to Zonal / Provincial Education offices facilitate the teacher tasks. The present collaborative action research was conducted with 25 teachers and 25 In-service Advisors selected through a newspaper advertisement. As practitioners they completed 50 research projects, relevant to their professional roles, with the collaboration of the researchers of NIE. Practitioners followed the action research steps of identification of problems relevant to their professional roles, analysis and reflection of the background environment connected with the problems, identification of solutions and implementing them, and evaluation of the results of the implemented solutions. Policy booklets based on suggestions that emerged from the research reports were also prepared which were useful to practitioners themselves and professionals involved in curriculum development / implementation and teacher education.

The research process was implemented with an inductive approach giving opportunity to surface the tacit knowledge and pulse at the grass root level practice. Guidance was given to practitioners in a friendly manner to make in-depth observations of experiences at their service stations. The project was planned so that the grass root level rhythm emerged, which in turn gave rise to the methodology of the research project.

The research project paid attention to three streams of theoretical knowledge that could be taken into consideration by policy makers in education. They are the approach of applying remedial measures after the identification of the causes of diseases as it is done in the medical field, (eg. the attempt by an In-service advisor to widen the vision of a teacher who had been confined to the text book), recommending new teaching learning strategies or suggesting alternative strategies in place of the existing ones taking cue from the engineering model which treats education as a mechanism (eg. suggesting 'from bottom to top' style instead of 'from top to bottom' style in copy writing) and making suggestions to arouse enlightenment of professionals (eg. suggestions regarding teacher behaviour and punishment)

Keywords: Collaborative action research, policy, teacher, in-service advisor, tacit knowledge

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