

Challenges and capacity needs for adoption of Project-Based Learning in English language teaching in Telangana Government High Schools, India

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Abstract

This study examines the pedagogical orientations, classroom practices, and professional development needs of Government High School English teachers from Telangana who underwent the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) Capacity Building Programme in May 2025. To analyze the English Language Teachers (ELTs) perceptions of English Language Teaching (ELT), their awareness of Project-based English Language Teaching (PBELT), their classroom practice and readiness to use learner-centred approaches, a structured questionnaire was given to 106 English Language Teachers (ELTs) in Government High Schools. The results were found to show a shifting process from the traditional lecture method to a competency-based teaching method. 62.2% of the respondents indicated that they have a very good understanding of PBELT and 74.1% agreed that PBELT is in line with the goals of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. However, there are still practical challenges that limit the effective implementation of PBELT, including class size (70%) and professional training (30%). The results also indicate that whilst teachers have a high conceptual awareness and positive perceptions of learner-centred pedagogies, there is a need for further professional support to build the link between the conceptual understanding and the practice of the pedagogies in the classroom. The study suggests that there is a need for ongoing professional development, ongoing mentoring, reflective practices, and institutional support to support the successful implementation of Project-Based English Language Teaching in Government High Schools.

Keywords: Project Based English Language Teaching (PBELT), English Language Teaching, Teacher Perceptions, Government High Schools, Capacity Building, National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020).

1. Introduction

Traditionally, English Language Teaching (ELT) in Indian schools is characterised by textbook-based teaching and testing and more focus is given on content-based instruction rather than on communicative competence and higher order thinking skills. However, recent educational reform has supported new approaches to learning, such as the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which emphasizes competency-based, learner-centred and experiential learning that encourages critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and purposeful language learning.

In this regard, the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), Telangana, organised a Capacity Building Programme for Government High School English teachers in May, 2025. The training programme aimed to enhance teachers' pedagogical skills in the following areas:

- Reflective teaching
- Interactive classroom practices

- Interpersonal skills focusing on Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW) in an integrated way
- Contextual grammar
- Formative assessment
- ICT integration
- Project-Based Learning (PBL)
- Continuous Professional Development

Despite the government's strong policy stance for adopting learner-centred pedagogies, very little empirical evidence can be found to account for the awareness of teachers of English, classroom practices and readiness to adopt Project-Based English Language Teaching (PBELT) in Telangana. To determine effective capacity-building initiatives and to ensure competency-based English language instruction is successfully implemented, it is important to understand teachers' perceptions and professional development needs.

Thus, the current study aims to explore the pedagogical orientations, classroom practices, awareness of PBELT and professional development need of 106 Government High School English teachers who attended SCERT's capacity building programme. A structured questionnaire was used to gather data and explore teacher perceptions, practices, and readiness to use learner-centred approaches in English language classrooms.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Foundations of Project-Based Learning (PBL)

Learning is rooted in a child's experiences and in their social interactions [4,18]. With Project-Based Learning (PBL), students are encouraged to be actively involved in learning through activities, inquiry and problem solving to build knowledge. PBL is a method of instruction that allows students to be involved in projects in which they have to ask questions, learn on their own and work together with others [17]. Within language learning, PBL can be used in language education and is compatible with a communicative and task-based approach and helps to improve students' language learning abilities and cognitive development.

2.2 Project-based English Language Teaching (PBELT)

Project-Based English Language Teaching (PBELT) can help students to be more motivated and improve their language by using language in meaningful projects for authentic purposes [1]. In the same vein, project work in the learning process enhances fluency, accuracy and motivation of the learners, thus it proves to be an effective tool in second language acquisition (SLA) [16]. Moreover, PBELT advocates the holistic development of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in an authentic learning.

2.3 Teacher Readiness and Awareness

Teachers' knowledge and readiness to adopt innovative practice is the key to successful educational change [8]. Similarly, Teachers' awareness of the new pedagogical approaches is not enough; they also need to have pedagogical knowledge and skills to effectively implement the pedagogical approaches in the classroom [6]. The overall findings of these observations are important in understanding the readiness of teachers for implementing PBELT.

2.4 Policy Alignment: NEP 2020 and Experiential Learning

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 also emphasizes competency-based, experiential and learner-centred learning, which is very similar to the PBELT approach. The policy highlights the four criteria of 21st century learning: critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity (Government of India, 2020). Therefore, the policy is a framework for enacting PBELT in Indian classrooms.

2.5 PBELT Perceived Benefits

Project-based learning has a profound effect in improving the communicative competence and the motivation of the students [7]. PBL is important in promoting teamwork, innovation and critical thinking, which will equip learners to make a difference in the real world [2]. However, teachers tend to prioritise language outcomes above other, more general skills, and therefore do not always make full use of the teaching potential of PBL [10].

2.6 PBELT and Collaborative Learning

Through cooperative learning, peer interaction, social skills, and academic achievement were increased [12]. Students collaborate in project activities to communicate in realistic situations and engage in discussion, negotiation and knowledge construction. Organised group work has also proved to have positive effect on learning outcomes especially in language classroom. [15].

2.7 Implementation problems of PBELT

Some barriers were identified in implementation of project-based learning such as large class sizes, lack of teacher preparation, and classroom management issues [6]. Likewise, Time management and assessment are among the common problems faced by teachers in implementing the project [20]. The present study's findings are similar to those found in this study, where it was found that large class sizes and lack of sufficient professional training were the major problems that encountered the implementation of PBELT.

2.8 Research Gap

The literature has been rich with the descriptions of the advantages and theoretical underpinning of PBL and PBELT, but few studies have researched on:

- Perceptions and conceptual understanding of PBELT by teachers in Government schools;
- The application of NEP 2020 via PBELT in real classroom environments; and
- Discrepancies between perceived benefits and classroom practice in rural and resource-limited settings.

The aim of the present study is to fill these gaps through empirical evidence of the awareness, policy support, perceived advantages and challenges in implementing the PBELT among the Government High School English teachers in Telangana.

3. Objectives of the Study

The present study was carried out with the following objectives:

1. To review the existing practices in the classroom for Government High School English teachers in Telangana.
2. To evaluate teacher's conceptual knowledge and awareness about the learner-centred approach in English language teaching this is based on Project-Based English Language Teaching (PBELT).
3. To determine the problem in applying the interactive and project based teaching model in English language classroom.

4. To determine the willingness of the teachers to use the Project Based Learning (PBL) as a learner centred teaching method.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Procedure

The study used a descriptive survey technique in order to look at government high school English teachers' perceptions, classroom practices and readiness to adapt the Project Based English Language Teaching (PBELT). The data collection was done using an online structured questionnaire in the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), Telangana Capacity Building Programme held in May 2025. The survey was open for 4 days (May12-15).

Ethical clearance was accessed before data collection and all participants were told about the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, confidentiality and anonymity. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before they completed the questionnaire.

There were 106 responses received from Government High School English teachers from various districts of Telangana that were valid. Collected data were analysed by descriptive statistics.

4.2 Sample

The sample of the study consists of 106 English teachers of Government High Schools from different districts of Telangana who attended the SCERT Capacity Building Programme in May 2025. The participants were Government High Schools of various geographical regions of the State and they voluntarily responded to the online questionnaire (Google form).

4.3 Data Collection Tool

Data was gathered using a structured questionnaire which would provide information on teachers' perception, classroom practices, awareness about PBELT and their professional development needs. Most of the questions on the questionnaire were of the "Likert" type.

The questionnaire included the following section:

- **Section A:** Demographic Information
- **Section B:** Perceptions of English Language Teaching (ELT)
- **Section C:** Classroom Practices (LSRW Skills, Contextual Grammar, and Interactive Questioning)
- **Section D:** Assessment Practices
- **Section E:** ICT Integration
- **Section F:** Professional Development Needs

4.4 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentage) were used to analyse the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire. The results are presented by using figures and interpreted based on the awareness of teachers to Project-Based English Language Teaching, the teacher's perception of the policy implementation, the perceived benefits, the collaborative practices and the challenges faced by teachers in implementing Project-Based English Language Teaching in Government High Schools.

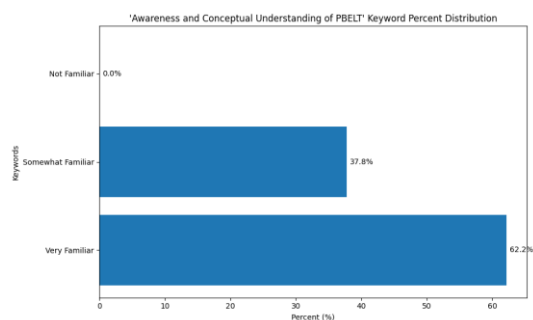


Figure 1. Teachers' PBELT (Project-Based English Language Teaching) Familiarity

In figure 1, the participants' situation in the level of their familiarity with Project-Based English Language Teaching (PBELT) is presented. Of 106 Government High School English teachers, 62.2 % were very familiar with the concept of PBELT while the remaining 37.8 % were somewhat familiar. All respondents indicated that they did not know about PBELT.

The results indicate that, in general, the participating teachers have a high awareness of PBELT. The high number of "very familiar" responses shows that the majority of respondents had a good conceptual understanding of the approach, but the number of "somewhat familiar" responses suggests that further professional development may be needed to improve practical knowledge and classroom implementation. These conclusions must be, however, viewed within the context of the study sample. The high level of familiarity might be due to the nature of this trained group, who were all the respondents of this study and who were participating in the SCERT Capacity Building Programme. Therefore, it is not recommended to generalise the findings beyond the study population.

Overall, the results show that the teachers that participated in the study have a favourable base to adopt PBELT. Further ongoing professional development, mentoring and classroom support could further build teacher confidence and competence in the effective use of project-based approaches.

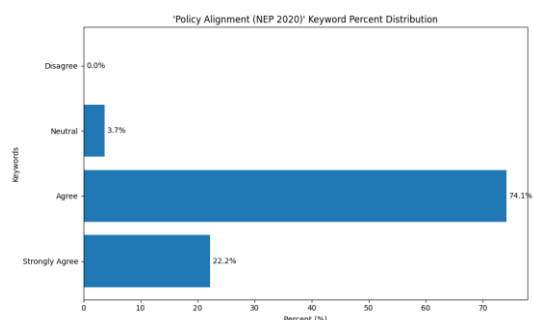


Figure 2. Teachers' Perceptions of the Alignment of PBELT with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020

Figure 2 shows teachers' perceptions about the consistency of the implementation of Project-Based English Language Teaching (PBELT) in relation to the goals of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

The majority of the respondents (74.1%) agreed, and 22.2% strongly agreed, that PBELT is in line with the policy objectives. The percentage of “neutral” (3.7%) and “disagree” (0%) was not significant.

The results show that there is a high level of agreement among the participating teachers about the compatibility of PBELT with the principle of competency-based and experiential learning as promoted by NEP 2020. Such a positive perception indicated that teachers believe that PBELT is an instructional approach that can foster learner-centred practices, collaboration, critical thinking and meaningful language learning.

But when there is no disagreement, it should not be taken at face value. The respondents were the participants of the SCERT Capacity Building Programme, so their responses may be reflective of an already professionally trained population, and may also be subject to social desirability bias – participants were likely to respond in ways that aligned to the goals of the training programme. Therefore, the results of the study cannot be generalized to all Government High School English teachers in Telangana unless in-depth studies are conducted.

In general, the results show that the teachers who participated in the study think that PBELT is in line with the goals of NEP 2020 and offers a favourable policy environment for the implementation of PBELT in the English class of Government High School.

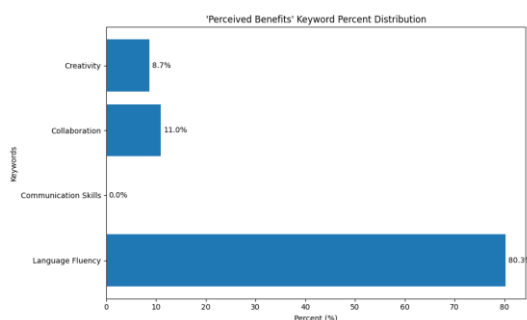


Figure 3. Teachers' Perceived Benefits of Project-Based English Language Teaching (PBELT)

The teachers' perceptions of the main advantages of Project-Based English Language Teaching (PBELT) are shown in Figure 3. More than half of the respondents (80.3%) indicated that language fluency is the greatest advantage of PBELT. A relatively smaller proportion of teachers identified collaboration (11.0%) and creativity (8.7%). Communication skills were not reported as a unique benefit by any of the respondents.

The findings reveal that the teachers who participated in the study mostly connect PBELT with the improvement of students' language proficiency especially language fluency. While collaboration and creativity were also noted as positive outcomes, there was relatively less emphasis, and it is possible that teachers value the linguistic outcomes of PBELT more than its contribution to twenty first century skills.

The lack of responses in the communication skills should be viewed with some care.

Language fluency and communication skills may be conceptually related and respondents may have seen them as similar, not different. This indicates the possibility of a restriction in the wording or design of the questionnaire item and not an indication that the communication skills are not seen as outcomes of PBELT.

In general, the results show that teachers are aware of the effectiveness of PBELT in improving language learning. Meanwhile, the relative lack of attention to collaboration and creativity suggests that there is a need for further professional development for a more comprehensive understanding of the wider educational effects of Project-Based English Language Teaching, such as developed higher-order thinking skills, collaboration and creativity.

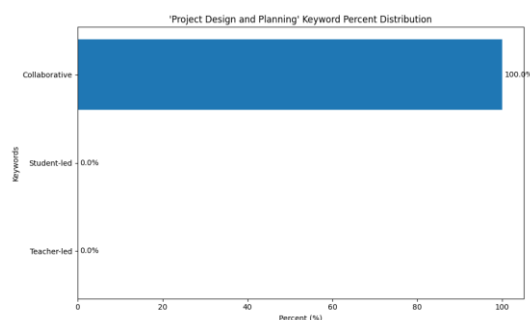


Figure 4. The teachers' perceptions of project design and planning in PBELT

The teachers' perceptions of project design and planning in Project-Based English Language Teaching (PBELT) are shown in Figure 4. 100% of the respondents said that they preferred collaborative project design, and none of the respondents said they preferred student-led or teacher-led project design.

The results show that the teachers involved in the study have a strong correlation with PBELT in relation to collaborative learning and classroom-based activities in groups. This indicates the understanding of PBELT as an instructional process that emphasizes cooperation, shared responsibility and active involvement of the learner; it is consistent with constructivist principles of teaching and learning.

However there is unanimous preference for collaborative project design, which should be interpreted with caution. Collaboration is well known as a key element of PBELT so it could be that people thought this was the best or most likely answer. The fact that there was no response for the student-led and teacher-led approach, therefore, might not mean that these instructional approaches are not part of project-based learning, but rather how the questionnaire item was understood.

Generally, the results indicate that teachers feel that collaborative learning is an important element of PBELT. This reflects the need to build and develop teachers' capacities of facilitating groups, working collaboratively in class and project planning through ongoing professional development.

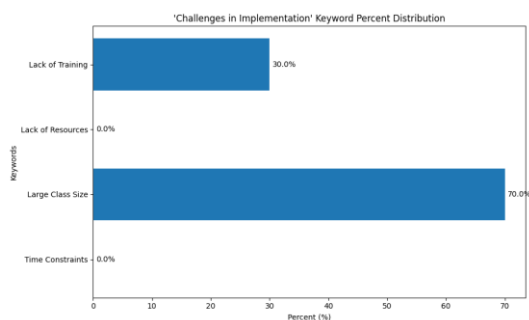


Figure 5. Difficulties in Project-Based English Language Teaching (PBELT)

The major problems teachers see in the use of Project Based English Language Teaching (PBELT) are shown in figure 5. Large class size (70.0%) was the most commonly mentioned challenge followed by lack of professional training (30.0%). None of the respondents mentioned the need for more resources or time as the main issue.

Results indicate that the main problems faced in implementing PBELT in Government High School classrooms are structural and professional problems. The organization of collaborative learning activities, monitoring of group work and providing individual support to teachers during the implementation of projects may be more difficult in large classes. Likewise, the demand for further teacher training shows the need for ongoing capacity building programmes to boost teachers' confidence and teaching skills.

Lack of response to availability of resources and time limitations should be read with care. All the above-mentioned have been hitherto often cited in previous studies as issues of implementation but were not found to be the main concerns of the respondents of the present study. This disparity could be due to the nature and experience of the teachers who participated and not necessarily because these problems do not exist.

Overall, the findings highlight the need to improve professional development programs and tackle classroom management issues to enhance the successful implementation of PBELT in Government High Schools.

5. Findings

The key findings of the study were:

1. High awareness of PBELT: The result indicated that the teachers who were involved in the study had high awareness of PBELT. The majority (62.2%) of the respondents said they were very familiar with the concept while the rest of the teachers (37.8%) responded that they were somewhat familiar with PBELT. No one said he or she was not familiar with the approach.

2. Positive perception of policy alignment: Majority of respondents felt that PBELT was closely aligned with the objectives of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. There was a very strong agreement (74.1% agree and 22.2% strongly agree) that PBELT supports competency-based, learner-centred and experiential learning, which the policy fosters.

3. Perceived benefits of PBELT: Most of the teachers related to the benefits of PBELT as language fluency (80.3%), followed by collaboration (11.0%) and creativity (8.7%). This suggests that teachers mainly identified the language outcomes of PBELT.

4. Preference for collaborative project design: 100% of the respondents said that they prefer implementing PBELT through collaborative project work. This discovery is an indicator of the teachers' awareness that cooperation is an essential part of project-based learning.

5. Implementation challenges: Teachers reported as greatest challenges, large class size (70.0%) and lack of professional training (30.0%). Based on these findings, it can be seen that the use of PBELT in English learning in government high school still needs to be developed through ongoing teacher training and institutional support.

From the overall results, it can be concluded that the Government High School English teachers who attended the SCERT Capacity Building Programme had a positive perception about PBELT and had seen the relevance of PBELT in the current education reforms. Meanwhile, the results indicate that there is a need for continuous training and enabling school organization to enhance teachers' classroom practice of project-based approach.

6. Discussion

The results of this study show that the English teachers of the government high school who attended the SCERT Capacity Building Programme (CBT) had a generally positive attitude to Project-Based English Language Teaching (PBELT). Teachers' familiarity with PBELT and their perception of the relevance of learner-centred, competency-based, and experiential approaches in English language teaching, as per the objectives of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, indicate that learners' interest in English learning is being nurtured. The results align with NEP 2020 policy focus which calls for a learner-centred pedagogies where learners are encouraged to think critically, collaborate, be creative and have meaningful learning experience.

While teachers had positive perceptions of PBELT, the results also suggest that teachers were mostly linked to the enhancement of language fluency, with less attention paid to other educational aspects of PBELT, such as collaboration and creativity. This trend indicates that teachers see the high value of PBELT in the language domain, and a more focused attention on the impact of PBELT on twenty first century skills might be necessary in teacher education programs and in-service teacher training. This is consistent with previous research findings that report teachers may focus more on the language outcomes than the more general skills when using PBL.

The unanimous preference for collaborative project design is in line with teachers' understanding of collaboration as an inherent quality of PBELT, and it confirms to the constructivist view of learning through social interaction and construction of shared knowledge.

The lack of items that reflect a preference for either student-led or teacher-led approaches should not be interpreted with great certainty, however, but might rather be a result of how the respondents understood the question in the questionnaire.

The results also show that there is a theory-to-practice gap. Teachers are highly aware of and positively perceive PBELT, but they cited large class sizes and inadequate professional development as the biggest obstacles to implementation in the classroom. The results of this study indicate that conceptual acceptance is not enough for successful implementation. Professional development and structural factors continue to play a key role in moving teacher positive attitudes to effective classroom implementation.

The discussion should also be understood within the context of the scope of the study. The respondents were teachers who were involved in a SCERT Capacity Building Programme and the findings cannot be extrapolated to all Government High School teachers of English in the state of Telangana. Despite this, the research findings yield valuable insights into teachers' awareness, perceptions and implementation challenges, which can serve as a basis for teacher education courses as well as teacher policy support for PBELT.

7. Recommendations

Project-Based English Language Teaching (PBELT) in Government High Schools is recommended based on the findings of the present study as follows:

1. Increase teacher professional development

Mechanisms for professional development should include hands-on learning on how to implement PBELT, with a focus on project design, classroom management, assessment practices and the integration of learner-centred instructional practices.

2. To promote a comprehensive understanding of PBELT

The teacher orientation programmes should focus on the wider educational benefits of PBELT such as collaboration, creativity, critical thinking and communication, as well as on language development. This would help teachers see that PBELT is a method which helps in the development of the students in all aspects.

3. Explore Classroom and Structural Limitations

Educational authorities should take policy action to enable good practice in the implementation of PBELT, taking account of some of the challenges these present, such as large class sizes, and promoting flexible grouping solutions when appropriate. These would help enable students to participate effectively in project-based activities.

4. Provide Resource and Support systems.

Teachers should be provided with model lesson plans, project templates, assessment rubrics, digital resources, and banks of activities that can be used to plan and implement PBELT effectively in the English language classroom.

5. Promote Reflective and Learner-Centred Teaching Practices

Teachers should be encouraged to practice reflective teaching and ensure that teacher – student guidance and autonomy are well balanced when implementing the project. This can encourage the active involvement of learners and effective facilitation of project work.

6. Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation will be in place to support the development and monitoring of the project.

Mechanisms need to be established to monitor and evaluate the implementation of PBELT in schools. Feedback, observations and reflective review procedures can help continuous improvement and effective implementation of project-based teaching.

8. Conclusion

This study has provided empirical evidence that English Language Teaching (ELT) teachers in Government High Schools, who participated in the SCERT Capacity Building Programme, had a high level of awareness of Project Based English Language Teaching (PBELT) and felt that PBELT matches the learner centric and competency-based principles of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The results showed that teachers mainly saw PBELT as a good way to improve language fluency, with not as much focus on the language learning ability's contribution to collaboration, creativity or other twenty-first-century skills.

The study also found a theory-practice gap as teachers' perceptions of PBELT were positive, while practical problems were identified in terms of the number of students in a class and the need for further professional development. These findings indicate that conceptual awareness is not enough to effectively implement project based approaches. Policy intentions need to be translated into classroom practice and sustained professional development programmes, institutional support and favourable classroom conditions are essential to this.

In conclusion, PBELT has proven to be a promising learner-centred approach in English language teaching in Government High Schools. However, its successful implementation requires ongoing capacity building, policy support and pedagogically informed classroom practices. Future studies could focus on long-term implementation of PBELT in different school environments, as well as assessing how its use affects students' language skills, collaborative work, creativity, and learning.

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