

# Open Research Online

---

The Open University's repository of research publications and other research outputs

## TESS-India: An approach to supporting teacher development and improving classroom practice

### Other

#### How to cite:

Cross, Simon; Adinolfi, Lina and Wolfenden, Freda (2019). TESS-India: An approach to supporting teacher development and improving classroom practice. The Open University, Milton Keynes, UK.

For guidance on citations see [FAQs](#).

© 2019 The Open University



<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Version: Version of Record

---

Copyright and Moral Rights for the articles on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. For more information on Open Research Online's [data policy](#) on reuse of materials please consult the policies page.

---

[oro.open.ac.uk](http://oro.open.ac.uk)



TESSIndia

**TESS-INDIA** AN APPROACH TO SUPPORTING TEACHER  
DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVING CLASSROOM PRACTICE

“TESS-India gave us a vision of how the classroom could change and how things could be different.”

District Director





# ABOUT TESS-INDIA



TESS-India is a multi-award-winning initiative that aims to strengthen and transform professional development and classroom practice in India. The programme provides an innovative, practical and scalable approach to pre- and in-service teacher education, with an emphasis on inclusive, participatory child-centred pedagogy.

At the centre of TESS-India is a toolkit of almost 200 freely available Open Education Resources (OER). These TESS-India OER comprise of teacher development and school leadership units, professionally filmed videos of classroom teaching, and principles of practice. They are the product of a collaboration between more than 200 Indian and UK educational experts, led by The Open University UK, in partnership with the Government of India's Ministry of Human Resource Development and with support of the British Council and Save the Children India.

Resources in the TESS-India toolkit can be selected, sequenced and adapted according to the priorities of states, districts, schools or individuals. Whether used for teachers' independent study, by teacher educators, or in teaching and training, the toolkit is a flexible and comprehensive go-to resource. The following pages outline what the toolkit offers and key accomplishments in implementing the toolkit, as well as ideas for making it work for you.

*"After exposure to the TESS-India programme and materials, I felt I could do something different. I felt this is what could help me to improve the quality of education and my students too. It has changed my life."*

(Senior Faculty Member, State Institute of Science Education, MP)

# ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- > Creation of 125 teacher development units for elementary and secondary level.
- > Identification of 10 core principles of classroom practice that form a set of Key Resources.
- > Production of 55 videos of authentic classroom activity.
- > Formation of 7 State Resource Groups with corresponding teacher education networks that develop and implement the TESS-India programme in 7 states.
- > Application of an extensive quality assurance process, including endorsement by an independent review panel and final approval by State Resource Groups in each state.
- > Comprehensive process of translation and adaptation (localisation) of OER in the toolkit for use by each of the seven participating states, resulting in 8 versions in 6 languages – English, Hindi, Assamese, Kannada, Odia and Bengali.
- > All OER published in print, digital and mobile-ready formats that are free to use, translate or adapt as desired.
- > TESS-India OER embedded into state, government, in-service and pre-service courses for teachers and teacher educators across all 7 states, including Diploma of Education and Bachelor of Education qualifications.
- > More than 50,000 teacher educators and pre- and in-service teachers participated in a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) with a hybrid face-to-face support model. More than 50% completed the course – significantly higher than average MOOC completion.
- > Development of a complementary set of 20 school leadership units.
- > School leaders trained to support teachers in bringing change in classroom practices using TESS-India OER, such as its integration into the NUEPA and Shaala Siddhi programmes.
- > Programme estimated to have reached more than 1 million educators across India to date.
- > Programme evaluation identified increased levels of motivation among teachers and greater enjoyment and engagement in learning among pupils.

## FOCUS DISTRICT SUCCESSES

TESS-India has supported several Focus Districts to explore specific application of the OER. These are good examples of how the programme has achieved success by linking together school, cluster, district, block and state-level activities with support from SCERTs, DIETs, BRCs and CRCs. Particular district-level successes include the following:



Bihar

**BIHAR** Integration into 66 teacher education programmes; development of self-learning materials and a learning plan template; and academic support structures in place for 360 schools in Vaishali district.



Madhya Pradesh

**MADHYA PRADESH** Use in pre-service teacher training programme; distribution to all elementary teachers as key part of Padhe Bharat Badhe Bharat (Storytelling) programme; state funding for every teacher to receive an SD card loaded with the TESS-India toolkit for their smartphone; mapping of videos to Shaala Siddhi; and making OER available on the state learning platform.

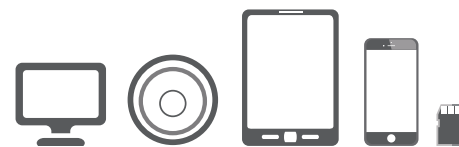


Odisha

**ODISHA** Integration into 219 school-based mentoring systems; embedded into teacher education curriculum and learning modules; and a replicable model of mentoring has been extended into other districts.



# TESS-INDIA TOOLKIT



The TESS-India Toolkit comprises Open Educational Resources (OER) including teacher development units, principles of practice units, professionally shot videos and a compendium.

## 125 Teacher development units

Created to respond to the pedagogic challenges facing school teachers in the Indian education system, each unit comprises case studies, practical activities to try out in the classroom, reflective tasks and useful teaching resources. Particularly important are the classroom activities, which are intended to help teachers to prepare, enact and reflect on new practices in their classroom, and use these experiences to enhance their subsequent practice.

The teacher development units are organised into subject areas: Language and Literacy at elementary level, and Mathematics, Science and English at elementary and secondary levels. The units have been adapted and translated for use in seven Indian states, but can be further localised for particular contexts and groups of teachers to ensure greater relevance and impact.

## 10 Principles of practice

These underpin the teacher development units and represent what the team consider to be some of the core elements of effective classroom teaching and learning, independent of subject area. Each principle is described in its own unit, also termed a Key Resource. The principles of practice can offer useful starting points for engaging with the full range of TESS-India teacher development units.

1. Involving all
2. Using questioning to promote thinking
3. Talk for learning
4. Pair work
5. Monitoring and giving feedback
6. Groupwork
7. Assessing progress and performance
8. Planning lessons
9. Using local resources
10. Storytelling, songs, role play and drama





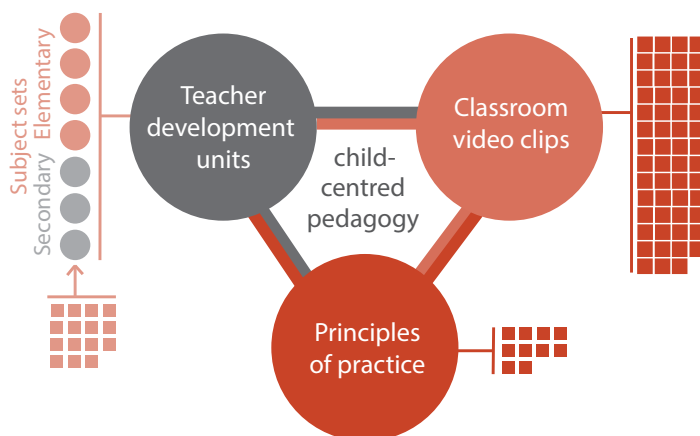
## 55 Professionally shot videos

Complementing the set of teacher development units and principles of practice, these authentic videos show Indian teachers employing new practices with their pupils in their classrooms. 'Seeing the theory in action' is an excellent way to reinforce understanding of

TESS-India's principles of practice and inspire other teachers to try them out in their own lessons. The videos are available to watch on TESS-India's YouTube channel: [www.tinyurl.com/tess-india-youtube](http://www.tinyurl.com/tess-india-youtube)

## 1 Compendium

The compendium offers sample learning pathways through the TESS-India teacher development units. *The TESS-India compendium for teacher development: improving classroom practice* is based on the ten principles of practice and focuses on the four elementary-level subject areas. Visit [www.TESS-India.edu.in](http://www.TESS-India.edu.in) to download or learn more about TESS-India resources.



## Testimonials

"The TESS-India materials have changed the way I teach and interact with my students."  
Teacher, Odisha

"I feel more confident in taking classes after the TI program started in our state. My children are also enjoying the classes and interact more with me. My classroom has changed."  
Teacher, Bihar

TESS-India main website

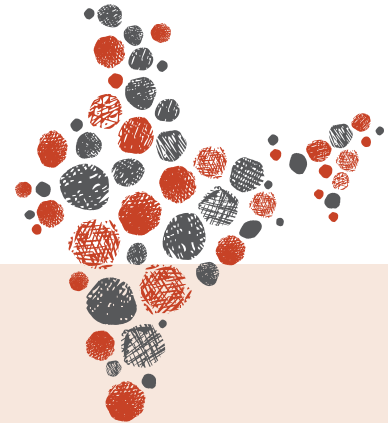
Browse and download the TESS-India OER resources for primary and secondary teaching at [www.TESS-India.edu.in](http://www.TESS-India.edu.in)



# TAKING TESS-INDIA FORWARD

The TESS-India programme has successfully employed several approaches to help raise awareness and promote positive change in classroom teaching practice.

The following have been proven to work and can be adapted to other contexts.



## 1. MENTORING PROGRAMMES

Peer mentoring may take place between CRCC and head teachers, or DIET faculty and in-service teachers. Classroom observations were recorded on tablets or smartphones to prompt discussions between mentors and teachers, and to review practice. The TESS-India units can be saved to these devices and referred to during these meetings.



## 2. MOOCS

MOOCs are a potentially cost- and time-efficient method of reaching thousands of educators and engaging them in new approaches to teaching and learning. They also offer teachers and teacher educators the opportunity to gain confidence in digital learning skills and a greater understanding of OER. TESS-India adopted a hybrid approach where the online independent learning was supported by in-person teaching or facilitation sessions over the duration of the course. The TESS-India MOOC remains available for use and can be found at [www.tinyurl.com/tess-india-oer](http://www.tinyurl.com/tess-india-oer)



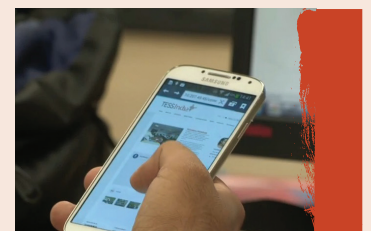
## 3. EMBEDDING IN LOCAL EDUCATION SYSTEMS

TESS-India has supported many highly effective local integration initiatives. Examples include state funding to give every teacher a SD card loaded with the TESS-India toolkit of OER, organising certificate presentations for MOOC completers or embedding the units into activities associated with other state-wide frameworks such as Ujwal and Shaala Siddhi. Concentrating efforts in one or more educational districts can help to focus activities and align them with local needs.



## 4. SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media has an important role to play in promoting the TESS-India programme and, even more importantly, in allowing educators to share and discuss their own experiences of using it. TESS-India-focused WhatsApp groups have expanded in their scope to include sharing and discussing other resources and educational issues. A Facebook group was set up at state level.





## 5. STRATEGIC TEAMS

Changes in classroom practice require systemic change across operational levels by bringing educators together with a common purpose and goal – at international (UK), government, state, district and local levels. Small teams embedded at a strategic level in each state helped to coordinate activity across multiple layers of the education system (i.e. SCERT, DIET, District Resource Groups, BRCC and CRCC). State Resource Groups (SRGs) were created in each participating state and were critical to develop capacity, cultivate interest and understandings, represent local needs, and monitor impact.



## 6. EVALUATION AND EXPANSION

Monitoring and evaluation activities can enable educators to decide what initiatives are most effective and help them identify opportunities to scale up and expand. They can also highlight local needs, such as multilingual education in tribal areas, and provide evidence that support applications for further funding. Continued partnerships with national government and state authorities are very important.



## 7. STRONG, INTEGRATED PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Effective project management and coordination is essential to programmes – especially at large scale, although it often takes place ‘behind the scenes’. Excellent planning and communication will help to engage all participants and stakeholders. Attention should be paid to the systematic ongoing orientation and involvement of educational administrative officers across different levels.



## 8. ADAPTING AND SHARING NEW OER

The TESS-India toolkit is intended to be adapted, used and then re-shared with the educational community. Localising the units or videos to your context or curriculum is important. The TESS-India compendium for teacher development: improving classroom practice is an example of how elements of the original units can be selected, re-sequenced and re-shared.







“We think this project is outstanding in its innovative and impactful teaching and learning approach... in terms of impact, [TESS-India] contributes to the development of new forms of teacher education, using web-based, globally available technology.”

(Guardian University Awards, 2017)

## LINKS

The following links give you all you need to download and use TESS-India teacher development units:

- > **TESS-India main website**  
Browse and download the TESS-India OER at:  
[www.TESS-India.edu.in](http://www.TESS-India.edu.in)
- > **TESS-India video channel on YouTube**  
Join more than 9000 subscribers on the TESS-India YouTube channel:  
[www.tinyurl.com/tess-india-youtube](http://www.tinyurl.com/tess-india-youtube)
- > **TESS-India MOOC**  
Study a copy of the *Enhancing teacher education through OER MOOC*:  
[www.tinyurl.com/tess-india-oer](http://www.tinyurl.com/tess-india-oer)
- > **TESS-India academic reports**  
Read academic papers and reports by searching ‘TESS’ or ‘India’:  
[oro.open.ac.uk](http://oro.open.ac.uk)

“[TESS-India] is a powerful model for improving the quality of education for hundreds of thousands of children in India. It present[s] ‘innovation through decentralisation’ in providing an open curriculum framework, allowing teachers in India to create their own ‘off the shelf’ practical resources and contextualise learning pathways for their students. It is a multilingual and accessible approach that’s adaptable to local need...”

(BOND Innovation Award, 2015)



Winner of Guardian University Award (International Projects category) (2017)



Winner of Open Education Consortium, Creative Innovations Award (2016)



Winner of BOND Innovation Award (2015)



The TESS-India programme was funded by UKAid and OPITO and led by The Open University UK in partnership with the Government of India's Ministry of Human Resource Development, with support from the British Council and Save the Children India.

