CHAPTER V

5.1 Discussion of the Findings and Conclusion

The focus of the study in the area of English language teaching in the colleges of teacher education in the region of Shillong reveals interesting results.

It is the expected norm that the trainees' interest to take up English as a major component of specialization is driven by an attempt to enter the professional field of English teaching. But the overall English curriculum seems to have its limitations in terms of the following aspects.

The duration of the training course is a major setback in satisfying the professional needs of most of the English trainers and trainees.

It has been made clear that a majority of the English teacher trainers are not completely satisfied with the duration of the course. These opinions were expected to arise considering the workload that the English teacher-trainers have in meeting the needs of every English teacher-trainee, mostly in terms of completing the syllabus, correcting assignments and lesson plans, students project dissertations, and so on.

The time period uncertainty even with the regular trainees, especially in meeting their professional needs, is also somewhat expected. Because of the time constraints, most trainees could not obtain enough satisfaction in achieving successful results in teaching English. It may be inferred that the short time period and lengthy programme objectives of the pre-service training leaves the trainees more unsatisfied and confused with the training system. This uncertainty and dissatisfaction conveys a pervading desire for more time in the teacher training course completion.

The satisfaction derived from the time-bound programme particularly in relation to the English course content reveals that all the components listed in the English syllabus could not be easily tackled within the given duration. The trainees, particularly of the regular B.Ed programme, have expressed difficulty in the course completion because of the mere fact that they are over-laden with other work besides focusing on English as a specialization. The one-year duration of the training programme is felt to be too limited for the trainees to have accomplished all the requirements of the English syllabus.
Clearly, there seems to be more dissatisfaction with the regular pre-service trainees than the distance in-service trainees. This is not alarming considering the one year difference in both the B.Ed programmes.

The time factor is one of the many reasons that the English teacher trainees are not happy and contented.

With regard to the teacher training outcomes, it is felt that though a clear majority of the regular and distance English teacher trainees admitted to be well prepared and trained in enhancing their students’ learning through proper exposure to the concepts, knowledge and skills of the English language, there were those who felt quite inadequate.

Perhaps, this feeling of inadequacy and ambiguity has room for building up teacher-efficacy through future professional skill development programmes. This would then ensure better knowledge and exposure in terms of organizing subject matter for student learning, planning instruction as well as designing learning experiences for all students.

Relating classroom learning to the real word context was not a difficult task for most English teachers and trainees. The teachers were found to be sensitive to the learning needs of the learners, but there seems to be quite a number who considered it a challenge to attain such a task.

Teachers’ teaching in some instances does appear to be detached from the real world experiences of the learners. When learning becomes unrealistic for the learners, they lose their connection with the real life situations and hence get themselves trapped in a world of confusion. It is therefore the teachers’ readiness to tackle these situations in the classroom that brings out the teacher training programme’s effectiveness. This indeed requires time and a great deal of practice in the classroom environment.

According to Darling – Hammond (2006) it is necessary to “have a program framework with the concept grounded in a view of teachers as reflective practitioners and strategic decision makers who understand the processes of learning and development- including language acquisition and development- and who can use a wide repertoire of teaching strategies to enable diverse learners to master challenging content.”(p.122)
Lesson plans form a major component of any teacher preparatory programme. It cannot be doubted that all teacher-education colleges provide a reasonably good grounding in view of lesson planning and preparation as well as exposure to the various methods of teaching English.

However, current realities show that the pressures of a loaded English syllabus, a large number of students and a constraint of time, besides various other factors, prevents most English teachers from writing clear lesson objectives and particularly, putting into practice the skills that they learnt from the training programme.

To check teacher-effectiveness, it is important that authorities evaluate and made sure that proper lesson plans are followed with reasonably effective teaching methods.

The overall observation of the trained English teachers and trainees gives the feeling that the skills obtained from the training programme particularly in the area of English teaching enabled them to apply the skills effectively in their classrooms, taking their learners' behaviour and learning styles into consideration and using the appropriate means of improving progress in learning. But this is not sufficient for most English teachers and trainees. They constantly require guidance and a need to update their knowledge and skills in the developmental field of English language teaching.

The rationale for incorporating subjects such as the principles of English teaching; lesson plans; computer aided language teaching; curriculum and instruction and the psychology of learning and development was felt significant as these areas form the backbone of any English teaching profession.

Based on the findings, a clear majority of the trainees as well as the trainers considered the importance of these subjects and the impact they make on the entire teaching programme. One of the most noticeable aspects that seem to be of less significance is the use of computers in the teaching of English. This is perhaps due to the absence of exposure and access to technological materials and also the lack of familiarization to computers.

Since most of our primary school educational systems in the State fail to encourage the free use of computers to English teachers, they are found to be rather technologically handicapped and even technology unfriendly. In fact even the teacher education colleges seldom provide any access to computers and the Internet. Therefore, teachers need to gain access to such instructional tools and to use the resources
available to enable them to teach English from a broader perspective. A lot of work is therefore needed to instill confidence among the trainers and trainees in the effective use of the computer and its technological applications.

There were no significant differences in the opinions about the effectiveness of the English teaching materials in the teacher education programme between the English trainers and the trainees.

It may be noted here that materials form a crucial part in the reinforcement of the training programme. The materials provided for the English teacher trainees of the B.Ed programme of IGNOU and the PGDTE trainees of EFLU are found to be more complete with rich information content than the materials provided by the B.Ed programme of NEHU. In fact, the English lessons broadcasted in All India Radio, which is called the Gyan Vani benefits listeners, particularly English teachers to a great extent.

The trainees agreed that the English teaching materials have clearly defined objectives, with reasonable grading and organization and a degree of interactive and communicative element. The materials used in the training programme thus seem to be sensitive and to the trainees' professional requirements.

The English trainees' evaluation of their competences after having been trained in the skills of teaching indicated positive developments. The trainees felt confident that they have gained and developed the ability and skills to communicate and give presentations effectively. This is further strengthened by their ability to organize learning activities, manage the classroom and assess their learners' competencies. Moreover, the trainees' knowledge in effective teaching strategies enabled them to cope with the other skills and abilities.

Although the scenario looks quite positive, it is generally felt that the teacher education colleges in our region, can do much better and improve on building the trainees' competencies from time to time by engaging them in such activities that would allow them to tap into their abilities and to learn to adapt to new ones.

Much has been written about the role of beliefs in facilitating second language learning.

The overall perception is that English trainees and trainers considerably felt that grammar is important and it cannot be ignored. If the goals of language instruction
include teaching students to use grammar accurately, meaningfully and appropriately, then a compelling case can be made for grammar.

The beliefs about the importance of vocabulary in English teaching also provided encouraging results. Learning vocabulary and functional grammar through the use of communicative tasks and activities was seen to be more meaningful to the learner.

The view of learner autonomy in language learning entails a learner-centred environment where the learners are given the chance to use the language appropriately in given contexts and situations. Though the English trainees and trainees considered it crucial to attend to their learners’ needs, the real and current environment shows that the learning situation is still more teacher dominated.

As far as the personality traits of a teacher is concerned, a majority of the English trainees and trainers felt that a teacher’s sense of humour is needed to facilitate a fun yet productive learning experience. Moreover, an English teacher is expected to be proficient in the subject matter he teaches besides attending to the student’s needs. The English trainees and trainees do realize the consequences of an ineffective teacher and the negative learning impact it would have on the learners.

Integration of the language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing is also felt to be most indispensable in the teaching and learning of English. Clearly, the trainees as well as the trainers were also aware of the importance of critical thinking skills.

On the opinions about the purposes of English learning, the general observation is that most trainees and trainers felt that the purpose for learners to learn English does not necessarily stem from their desire to learn grammar so much as their desire to learn about the English culture and traditions. More realistically the respondents agreed that English opens doors for professional development.

The conditions that were believed to be favorable for the teaching and learning process such as classroom setting and environment, the use of effective tasks and activities as well as materials along with the necessary motivation and interests were seen to be readily acceptable by the concerned English trainees and trainers.

Similarly, the use of effective teaching procedures and strategies through materials other than the prescribed textbooks, and the use of effective verbal and communicative activities in the form of role plays, oral presentations, and so on was considered to be highly important.
Finally to absorb all these aspects of English language learning and to increase language awareness and experience, the role of practice is felt to be equally indispensable.

The challenge facing the English teachers today is the thousands of students with very little and inadequate English who need to be equipped with different degrees of competence in the use of English. In terms of real academic and individual requirements, not all students need English at the same level of competence. It is important that we should be able to identify the English requirements of various groups of students precisely, and try to provide for each group the patterns of courses that will be relevant to the needs of learners and help them reach different skills level of in language performance.

In Shillong, private universities that have recently been established have made an early realization of this problem of inadequate English proficiency among its undergraduate students who come from different school backgrounds, both urban and rural.

In an attempt to help students cope with the functional and communicative use of English, to help them understand the subject-matter of the course they undertake and to regain their socio-linguistic and cultural perspective in the use of English as well, such universities have particularly made early efforts to check this inadequacy by conducting English orientation courses followed by screening tests. This helps the students gear up for the use of functional English and also enables them to gauge their current English competence. On the basis of the student's current level of language performance, they are then streamed into two levels of English, the division showing the ascending level of progression.

The aim is to put students of near similar competence together and to strengthen and improve on their current competence level, till they exhibit confidence in all the skills of language performance.

This entire scenario narrows down to the questions of having students with weak competencies in English and of how they were made to pass English in their tenth and twelfth standard. The expertise and training of English teachers at the secondary and higher secondary level also becomes debatable, if students are so weak in English communication. It is here that the Teacher Training colleges should step in and provide answers to this problem.
5.2 Suggestions

On the basis of the findings of the study and the observations made, a number of suggestions are proposed to have a better impact on the English teacher training programme particularly in relation to the current English teaching and learning practice.

The B.Ed programme offers a complete professional training in the field of teaching, yet the place of English as an 'optional' subject in the courses for teaching specializations is a worrying aspect. Despite the fact that English is a medium of instruction across the curriculum and it is the language of the government and administration, its overall importance has not been adequately recognized.

Therefore it would be beneficial if English is offered as a core specialization subject in the teacher-training colleges and the use of English as an optional subject is removed. This would meet the language needs of all the trainees at the academic and professional level as well.

To meet the professional requirements of the English teacher trainees and to ensure quality teacher training, it is suggested that the duration of the one-year training programme be extended.

The kind of training that student teachers get in the training colleges seems to be more product-oriented rather than process-oriented as the focus is on completing the prescribed syllabus. A shift is needed to attend to current realities of a process-oriented approach that would satisfy future needs in the development of global English communication.

It is also felt essential that the teacher education colleges should have competent, trained and qualified Spoken English teachers at the training level, to ensure that there is proper weightage given to the listening and speaking skills. It would also be useful if efforts are made to conduct a collaborative training programme for all the English teachers whereby all their concerns can be discussed and solved.

There is also a need to infuse the use of technology throughout the curriculum to ensure trainees' proficiency in integrating technology into their teaching.

To check teacher-effectiveness and to sustain the quality of teaching and teacher development, it is also highly recommended that the concerned authorities
conduct regular and appropriate teaching evaluation for the qualified and trained English teachers.

Lastly in view of the growing role of English in the state of Meghalaya, it is high time that the English teaching programmes in the training institutions become geared to professional and realistic practice oriented goals to meet the specific needs and expectations of the people of the state.

In future research, it would be useful to collect evidence about how teachers perform and how the students of these teachers achieve and it would also be interesting to find out the concerns of the trainers and trainees of the English teaching programme in the other Teacher training colleges of the districts of the state of Meghalaya and the country as a whole.