

Teacher Professional Development Program: Boom or Bane?

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Introduction

In recent days, the educational climate in teacher education has shifted from teacher training to teacher professional development with the view to transferring today's schools from knowledge-transformation to knowledge-creating schools and classrooms as learning-communities. This means teacher professional development program is adopted in our teacher education practice to promote teachers with creative and critical spirits in their minds and work rather than diffident and mechanical. Moreover, from this program our outsiders have many more expectations on the part of our insiders to be both personally and professionally sound. Our planners as outsiders at policy making level have envisioned bringing drastic changes in current educational scenario by implementing the teacher professional development program.

The term 'Teacher Professional Development' is being buzz-word or by-word. It is in every body's tongue and mouth, particularly those who are working under the Ministry of Education (MoE). This program has been launching under the School Sector Reform Program (SSRP) as its one major component since 2066-2067. This means it has crossed three years' practice with its many ups-and-downs in the real field. We outsiders from MOE, NCED, DOE, DEOs, ETCs, LRCs and RCs have experienced both positive as well as negative effects from this program. The voices of experiences will be discussed in the following sub-headings.

Voices of experiences

In the name of teacher professional development we cannot wholeheartedly ignore the contributions of teacher training. It is perpetually blurring at the background of teacher education. This means training also has prominent role to play in teacher development or teacher professional development. But, our teachers in ground have perceived teacher training and teacher professional development program as the same. They think that TPD is the continuation of the previous training programs. This kind of perception of our teachers, head teachers and other concerned people like PTA and SMC create conflicts between the 98.2% data of the trained teachers from community-based schools (NCED-2066) and teachers' demands about the what 'aspect' and how 'aspect' of their teaching in TPD program. There is a clear wide gap between the expectations of insiders' with the expectations of outsiders. It is, therefore, necessary to make our insiders clear about training and development. Here, I don't mean that training does not have any role for solving immediate pedagogical problems of teachers and empowering them optimally and

finally to bolster their professional development. These, to a large extent, facilitate to enhance teachers' professional development, but the way teachers do activities in these two sides of teacher education differ largely. In order to make clear about these two terms Head and Taylor (1997, p. 5) have given the differences between them which will facilitate to understand. They are;

Training

- Compulsory
- Competency based
- Short- term
- One-off
- Temporary
- Skill/ technique/knowledge based
- Product/certificate weighted
- Done with experts

Development

- Voluntary
- Holistic
- long- term
- Ongoing
- Continual
- Awareness based
- Process weighted
- Done with peers

The above mentioned distinctions between training and development indicate that in comparison to training, in development the teachers are expected to act from high level. But unfortunately, what has happened is whatever the data of trained teachers we have in our hands, the data and the teachers' classroom behaviors do not match. Their classroom behaviors still demand the toolkit of some techniques and specialist knowledge of classroom teaching and classroom management. On the contrary, NCED has made a claim that it has not brought this program without any rigorous discussions and interactions with stakeholders. NCED (2011 in TPD policy guideline) purports that:

A working framework was developed and stakeholders' observations and aspirations were gathered through consultative meetings and workshops. It is worth mentioning that national consultative workshops were conducted for two rounds with participation of representatives from universities, teacher unions/professional organizations, implementing agencies and national/international experts.

Now, a dire problem arises here. NCED, sole responsible agency for taking initiations in implementing every provision of the policy guideline claims one thing at the same time ground reality becomes different than that. This will be crystal clear that if we see the insiders' voices about the current practice of teachers' professional development program. Their voices will be encapsulated in the following manner;

- Most of the teachers expressed downsides toward their professions.
- Some of the teachers have only heard about the term TPD but they are not aware of it.
- Some teachers are not ready to fill out the demand-collection form.
- TPD program has conducted without collecting teachers' real needs.
- TPD module could not prepare and implement in accordance with the place and teachers' needs. Same module is used in many TPD hubs. There is the system of copy and paste. It neglected the concept of "site-based TPD".
- Teachers who are near to pension out are not ready to fill out the TPD form. They feel action research and project work are extra load for them.
- Roster Trainers seem less competent and confident in their subject matter although ETCs 'ka' is providing 12 days TPD TOT program every year.
- Resource Persons could not be bias-free in selecting roster trainers from their RC areas.
- Head teachers did not pay their due attention to help their teachers in technical aspect. They always seem running for the administrative work.
- Resource Persons (RP) think that the present framework of TPD is time consuming. It demands whole year to engage.
- Teachers feel that TPD is compulsory than necessary and,
- Most importantly, there is no conceptual clarity of TPD among practitioners

From the above mentioned ideas about the voices of experiences what we can say is that in real field whatever the beneficiary points it has in its literature our teachers and head teachers have faced myriad challenges to tackle while grasping the essence of teacher development as outsiders' i.e. planners, implementers, managers, facilitators and so on, expect on them. It is, because of this I have given the title of this article as the TPD: Boom or Bane?

Then what is teacher professional development?

Different scholars have viewed it from different standpoints. Richards and Farrell (2005, p.1) assert that 'professional development is next step when once teachers' period of formal training is over'. Craft (1996, p. 6) says professional development ' is sometimes used to describe moving teachers forward in knowledge or skills'. Similarly, Victoria H. in Burn (1999, p. 216) argues 'professional development or growth means enabling teachers to generate their own ideas about classroom practice'. By considering the above mentioned ideas about TPD it will be fruitful to mention Reimers-Villegas (2003, p. 1) ideas about TPD which we have also expected to achieve in our context. What Reimers-Villegas says is TPD should move towards achieving 'double roles of teachers', that is to say, both subject and object of educational reforms. Firstly, teachers are the object of the educational reform.

This means their professional development should be considered. They should be brought in such activities where we can ensure their professional development. Secondly, they are the objects of the educational reform. This means by their involvement they are responsible to bring change in their classroom in particular and in educational scenario in general. They will be expected as being and behaving as professionals and to play the role of change-agents. In our context as well we outsiders are expecting this kind of dual roles of teachers in TPD program. We expect to change our teachers from technicians to classroom researchers because our teachers will continuously have their own pedagogical problems in their own settings. To solve such problems it is not always possible to bring teachers in educational Training Center (ETC), Lead Resource Center (LRC), and Resource Center (RC). Therefore, if they become themselves as the *classroom researchers or action researchers, they can solve their own problems*. This is what we want on our teachers.

Now, to achieve the above mentioned essence of TPD we focus our teachers to do is the following activities;

- Workshops
- Self-monitoring
- Teacher support groups
- Keeping a teaching journal
- Peer observation
- Teaching portfolios
- Analyzing critical incidents
- Case analysis
- Peer coaching
- Team teaching
- Action research
- Subscribing to ELT magazines and journals
- Joining professional organizations such as NELTA, IATEFL and TESOL and attending their conferences wherever possible
- Forming local teachers' groups and holding regular meetings to discuss common problems
- Inviting fellow teachers / teacher trainers and guest speakers to contribute lectures and workshops
- Reading professional publications
- Publishing an ELT newsletter on a local or national scale
- Self-directed study
- Using distance learning materials
- Receiving on-the-job coaching, mentoring or tutoring
- School-based and off-site courses of various lengths

- Job shadowing and rotation
- Experimental 'assignments'
- Collaborative learning

Conclusion

TPD which is mentioned in the above discussion seems very necessary condition for the improvement of current educational scenario in our context. However, due to the required time and efforts from the teachers' side to involve and engage in classroom activities our most of the teachers are confronting many challenging situations. They have experienced it as the obligatory condition than the necessary program from their survival. It is therefore, we are thinking this TPD program is boom or bane in our context.

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