

Voices of Experience toward TPD: from insiders' perspective

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Abstract

This paper strives to penetrate into the depth of current practice of teacher professional development in our Nepalese context. In this process, the writer has meticulously attempted to investigate the potential areas of its practice and explore the solid picture of ground reality. In course of collecting information the writer collaborated with teachers, head teachers and roster trainers at different workshops, training programs, talked individually as well as collected views through e-mails with a number of stakeholders from two zones i.e. Gandaki and Dhaulagiri. It is because of this it is assumed that this paper represents a good blend of stakeholders' opinions about TPD in our context. This paper goes against the traditional way of one-fits-all-package because it focuses to the notion that 'nobody better can understand the location-specific needs of the teachers'. Therefore, it grapples with to search the local-solution to local- problem regarding teacher' professional development. Finally, this paper concludes with the practical ways to bolster teacher professional development practice in our context.

Cursory Historical Background

The history of teacher education in Nepalese context does not have long-rooted history. We can start it with the inception of Basic teacher Training centre in 2004 B.S. This was the first effort shown from the government side with the view to training primary level teachers. The second effort was the establishment of National Teacher Training Centres (NTTC). At that time very few teachers were trained. However, the centre had to discontinue its functions by the recommendations of the Nepal National Education Planning Commission (NNEPC) in 2010 B.S. for the establishment of College of Education to provide two-years and four years teacher education programs to the prospective lower secondary/ secondary level teachers of Nepal (Awasthi 2003, p.17). As a result, College of Education established in 2013 B.S. Due to the growing interest of the primary level teachers to be trained even outside of the Kathmandu valley, people felt a need to establish other training centres out of valley. Consequently, Mobile Teacher Training Centres (MTTC) were established. These centres/ schools were later converted into Primary Schools Teachers' Training Centres after the recommendations made by the All Round National Education Committee in 2018 B.S. (Educational Glimpse 2009).

The National Education System Plan (NESP-2028-32) brought a new impetus in teacher education making teacher training compulsory. This policy created a favorable environment for the expansion of teacher training institutions throughout the kingdom. All the institutions such as College of Education, National Teacher Training Centres came under the single umbrella called Institute of education (IOE) under the Tribuwan University (TU). Later, the Royal Commission for Higher education-2039 B.S. converted Institute of Education into Faculty of education. Today, we have faculty of education under Tribuwan University which is involving in preparing prospective teachers providing pre-service education. National Centre for

Educational Development (NCED), after its expansion of scope to merge the then Secondary Education Development Centre (SEDC) in 2061 B.S. has become the apex body for the development of educational manpower under the Ministry of Education, is involving for the in-service teacher training programs. These two sides of the government are providing pre-service and in-service programs for the teacher development.

Current provisions in Teacher Professional Development (TPD)

As we know that different provisions were made by the Government of Nepal for the development of teachers' teaching career. They were virtually in project-based mode. Now, in the present time Government of Nepal revealed an attempt to reform the education structure and training delivery modality. All the meticulous efforts shown by the government of Nepal to reform the educational system took final shape in the form of school sector reform program (SSRP 2009-2015 in the Teacher Development Policy Guideline 2011)). The teacher development is one major component of it. Government of Nepal has made some provisions for the teacher professional development program under the SSRP policy. Teacher Development Policy Guideline 2011 provides policy actions in seven different policy fields. They are attempted to encapsulate in the following manner:

- **Policy field-1: career preparation:** This policy field is concerned with the basic qualification or eligibility criteria for the entry in teaching force for both basic and secondary levels. This policy field has a sub-policy as professional and academic qualification will be made mandatory for all to enter into teaching force at both the basic and secondary levels.
- **Policy field-2: Qualification Upgrading:** This field is meant to provide indicative policy actions in relation to framework, modality and outcome of qualification upgrading initiative. Voluntary provisions will be made for the permanent teachers having qualifications lower than the new qualification criteria to upgrade their qualification within the earliest possible timeframe.
- **Policy field-3: Professional Development:** This field is designed to build framework and modalities for in-service teacher training program. Under this policy field there are some sub policies they are; every teacher working in all government aided schools will be provided access to one-month teacher Professional Development (TPD) course within the next five years' period, i.e. by 2015, multiple avenues of teacher development will be introduced for continuous professional development of the teachers and separate training provision will be made to develop 'inclusive teachers' as special cadres for the requirement of teaching multilingual students, special needs and so on.
- **Policy field-4: Teachers' accountability and career development:** This policy field is concerned with the policy actions about the strategies on how to maximize the present practice of professional accountability of teachers. This policy is supported by the provision that school based provision of fast career growth from lower to higher career stage will be established within the same level and same position on the basis of the continuous assessment of teachers' performance by SMC and HT.

- **Policy field-5: School Leadership:** This policy field is predominantly concerned with the development of leadership skill of the head teachers in government-aided schools. This effort will be supported by another sub-policy, that is, various capacity building measures will be taken for improving exiting community school leadership.
- **Policy field-6: Public-Private Cooperation:** This field is concerned with the establishment of public-private cooperation for the training programs to the schoolteachers' professional development. There is one sub policy that says training provisions will be created under public-private cooperation model for the access of institutional schoolteachers and head teachers.
- **Policy field-7: Arrangements of Institutional Capacity:** This field is designed to offer action details for strengthening exiting institutional arrangement for dealing with programs related to entire capacity development under the Ministry of Education.

In addition to the policies mentioned above, NCED has provided the modality of the TPD program to be conducted. This modality can be presented in the following manner;

- **Part-1: Training cum workshop** which will be conducted in face-to-face mode. It is conducted for five days in Educational Training Centre or in TPD hubs.
- **Part-2:** The second part of this module is about **self-study exercise**. It is done in school-based event upon the completion of the part-1. It runs for 30 days' gross period by engaging the participants independently in the structured sets of assignments and counted towards credits of 3 days equivalent.
- **Part-3:** The third part of this module is about the **instructional counseling**. This part is done after the completion of the part-2. It runs for 2 days under the complete guidance of the same set of trainers invariably mobilized to check and collect the assignment and to provide on-site professional support.

Voices of the Experience

In the present time, our teachers who are involving in teaching field 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. In the name of teacher development, insiders like teachers, head teacher, roster trainers and even by the Resource Persons (RP) perceive it as like that of the previous programs. They think that this program is also the continuation of the previous ones. 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 Tylor (1997, p. 5) has given the differences between them which will facilitate to understand. They are;

<u>Training</u>	<u>Development</u>
-Compulsory	-Voluntary
-Competency based	-Holistic
-Short- term	-long- term
-One-off	-Ongoing
-Temporary	-Continual
-Skill/ technique/knowledge based	-Awareness based
-Product/certificate weighted	-Process weighted
-Done with experts	-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.
- There are teachers who claim that they do not get chance to attend in TPD module/ program.
- Some teachers are not ready to fill out the demand-collection form.
- Sufficient questions are not mentioned in 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.

- 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.
- Most importantly, there is no conceptual clarity of TPD among practitioners

What is Teacher Professional Development?

Teacher education is a process that takes place over time rather than an event that starts and ends with formal training or graduate education. It is in this sense that in teaching field we never stop learning. The complexity of the dynamic interplay among teachers, learners and subject matter continually gives birth to an endless number of questions to answer, problem to solve and issues to consider. There are many challenges await us at every turn in our professional path (Brown 2001, p.426). How many challenges we notice and deal with them successfully is the main basis for our career growth. Teacher education is a super-ordinate term which encompasses two broad goals of it. They are; training and development (Richards and Farrell 2005, p.3). Training as we know that involves in preparing teachers about the content and the methodology or 'what' aspect and 'how' aspect. To be more precise, training refers to the activities directly focused on a teacher's present responsibilities and is typically aimed at short term and immediate goals. Development, on the other hand, generally refers to general growth not focused on a specific job (ibid, p.4). It is the process of becoming the best kind of teacher (Head and Tylor 1996) that a teacher personally can be. Teacher development which we are talking cannot be done by a single means. It involves multilevel changes which therefore demand multilevel experiences. It demands from the teacher to be from classroom teacher to action researcher about classroom problems, cultural diplomats within the cross-cultural settings of classrooms and so on. It requires from the teacher's side to be reflective, creative and critical. Therefore, teacher professional development is a personal journey (Brown, 2001, p.2) or personal mission rather than something that can be done and prepared by others.

Practical ways to develop teacher profession

After receiving the voices of experience and the concept of teacher professional development what we understand is our teachers do not have conceptual clarity of TPD program. They are being unable to practice as outsiders expect them. Now, we need to understand 'expertise does not necessarily come from aboard, but needs to be developed in terms of local knowledge'. This means we should follow the humanistic nature of practice, that it to say, **self-agency** (Roberts 1998, p.18) which we can exercise individual choice to determine our own

personal growth and development. We ourselves should involve in the investigation and exploration of classroom reality which is dynamic and complex. For this we should strive to theorize the local exigencies (Kumaravivelu, 2001,p. 539) of students because ‘nobody better can understand learning styles and needs of the learners’ which is location-specific, culture-specific and context-specific and practice what we theorize. Therefore, our teachers should follow the principle of ‘theorize what you practice and practice what you theorize’, these are the two sides of the same coin expertise development or teacher development (Tsui, 2003, p.277). Now, focusing on the local solutions to local problems I have attempted to mention some of the **practical strategies of teacher professional development** in our context.

They are attempted to encapsulate in the following manner:

- Firstly, develop the concept of ‘upsides’ toward the teaching profession.
- Develop inquisitive mind to learn new thing.
- Think that teacher development is continuous and personal mission.
- Prepare plan to read x number of teacher resource books in one academic year.
- Make a plan to join in a local professional organization.
- Make a plan to attend at least two professional conferences/ workshops in a year.
- Make a plan to observe at least two fellow teachers classes in a year.
- Subscribing to magazines and journals.
- 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.
- Publishing newsletter on a local or national scale.
- Arranging book exhibitions with the help of publishers and organizations.
- Make a plan to carry out action research about classroom problems.
- Involve in project work activity.
- Make a plan to deal with learners’ errors treatment.
- Be familiar with the recent issues and discoveries in the field of language teaching.
- Be in touch with the respective subject trainer to discuss about the professional problems.
- Develop TPD handbook to record your professional problems.
- Develop awareness about language teaching. Awareness is empowering.
- Trainers, if possible, should assist to the teachers by providing practical books of professional development.

Conclusion

Teacher Professional development program which is running in the third with the view to making community-based teachers able grasp the essence of teacher development. We outsiders are also struggling to facilitate them to understand and bolster their professionalism. We have tried to reach and address each potential area to make them aware towards their

profession. I do hope that in the remaining two years of our scheduled time we will be successful to achieve our expectations.

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