

New Trajectory in Teacher Professional Development

Mr. Raju Shrestha

Synopsis

With the advent of modern technologies and methodologies around the globe, teacher professional learning has been extremely reshaped. They have created a rich and robust impetus for politicians, policy makers, planners and practitioners to think and rethink about the nature and process of teacher learning. COVID-19 abruptly appeared as a strong stimulus to ignite the modern spirit of technologies and methodologies, though it has some disruptive forces to trigger panic situation to the human society including teacher community. It has taught us different ways of developing teacher professional resiliency at the face of pandemic situation including online learning, virtual learning, self-determined and self-directed learning.

Scene setting

The term 'teacher professional development' is not new concept for us. It is much discussed, much written and less explored area. Simply, professional refers to someone who is trained and qualified and displays a high standard of competent conduct in his or her practice. In the field of language pedagogy and learning, attempts are made to make teachers truly professionals by involving them in a wide variety of activities and programs. Teacher professional development may require many things including training, qualification and commitment, communication and collaboration forums and networks, entry requirements and so on.

Different scholars have viewed it from different perspectives. Some say teacher professional development is next step when once teacher's period of formal training is over (Richards and Farrell 2005). In the same way, some others state that professional development is sometimes used to describe moving teachers forward in gaining new knowledge and skills (Craft 1996). It can also be said that teacher professional development or growth means enabling teachers to generate their own ideas from classroom practice (Victoria H. in Burns, 1999). By considering these ideas about teacher professional development, it will be fruitful to mention Glatthorn's ideas about teacher professional development. Glatthorn (1995 as cited in Reimers-Villegas 2003) states that:

Professional development, in a broad sense, refers to the development of a person in his or her professional role. More specifically, it is the professional growth a teacher achieves as a result of gaining in creased experience and examining his or her teaching systematically. Professional development includes formal experiences such as attending workshops and professional meetings, mentoring, etc. and informal experiences such as reading professional publications, watching television documentaries related to an academic discipline, etc. (p. 11).

Overall, from the above definitions certain characteristics of teacher professional development can be drawn that support and promote our understanding. Martine, L.E. et.

al. (2014) list some of the flagship characteristics of successful teacher professional development programs. They include:

- Professional development is **instructive**. It supports teachers as they gain content knowledge and acquire instructional strategies.
- Professional development is **reflective**. Teachers need to reflect deeply over time, focused on theory based practice.
- Professional development is **active**. Teachers are thinkers and intellectuals. They should be engaged in the learning process.
- Professional development is **collaborative**. Collaboration challenges teachers to expand their thinking.
- Professional development is **substantive** (i.e., content based). It should be extensive and intensive focusing on specific topics.

Finally, teacher professional development which we are talking cannot be done by a single means. It involves multi-level changes which therefore demand multi-level experiences and activities. It demands from the teacher to be classroom learner to action researcher about classroom problems, cultural diplomats within the cross-cultural settings of classrooms and so on (Sharma and Shrestha 2012). It demands every teacher to be reflective, creative and critical practitioners. Therefore, teacher professional development is a personal journey or personal mission rather than something that can be done and prepared by others. English teachers are the self-agency (Shrestha 2077). They put all the responsibilities on their own shoulders for their own learning and development how much they want to grow or develop.

Survey of the practice of teacher professional development

The genesis of teacher professional development can be traced back in 2004 B.S in Nepal. This is the time of formal teacher education in Nepal. Since then the concept of teacher professional development got priority. This sector has crossed many ups and downs to arrive in the modern form of teacher professional development. When we review the historical trajectories of developments of the field we see four types of legacies or trends being practised (Shrestha 2077). They are:

- **The first wave** (beginning in the 1960s) - Focus is on teaching skills and pedagogy. The goal is teacher internal effectiveness.
- **The second wave** (around 1990s) - Focus is on student learning and content knowledge. The goal is interface effectiveness.
- **The third wave** (after 2000s) - Focus is on collaborative culture of organization. The goal is future effectiveness.

To put critical eyes on the different waves of teacher professional development, Nepalese teacher professional development practice adapted all the three waves. We started from content and pedagogy focused practice to collaborative culture. In recent years, we are practising collaborative culture or to be more specific, reflective practice. We crossed the two previous eras in teacher professional development sector. They are content knowledge era and pedagogic knowledge era. However, most of the teachers still lack both content and

pedagogic knowledge. Recently, with the advent of modern technologies and methodologies, a new kind of spirit appeared in pedagogy and learning. The spirit of new pedagogies supported and promoted by modern technologies and methodologies further ignited by the abrupt appearance of COVID-19. It created adverse atmosphere in all spheres of human society. At the time of adversity, looking for appropriate learning atmosphere in both educational institutions and training agencies is like sketching future trajectories to make new journey in ancient route. Planners and practitioners were thinking about new strategies to inject in the conventional practice of teacher and student learning to give new dynamism. In Nepal too, Centre for Education and Human Resource Development (CEHRD), an apex body for designing and developing policies about teacher professional development did a meticulous effort to respond lockdown and shut down situation of COVID-19. Consequently, “Teacher Professional Development through Distance Mode, Standard Operating Procedure- 2077” has been developed. This document introduced a new wave in the field of teacher professional development. This new wave can be taken as the fourth wave in the domain of teacher professional learning. This is given below.

- **The fourth wave** (after 2020s) – Focus is on professional resilience, developing adaptive capacity, online and virtual presentation through synchronous and asynchronous modes of delivery.

In Nepal, based on the fourth wave we have recently adapted flipped model of professional development. This model of teacher professional development is discussed in detail in the following heading.

Shift in the model of Teacher Professional Development

Flipped learning, in simple terms, refers to home work at school and school work at home. This concept was originally developed for classroom learning. Later, idea is transmitted to the teacher learning too. Flipped learning has four pillars. They are:

- Flexible environment
- Learning culture
- Intentional content
- Professional support

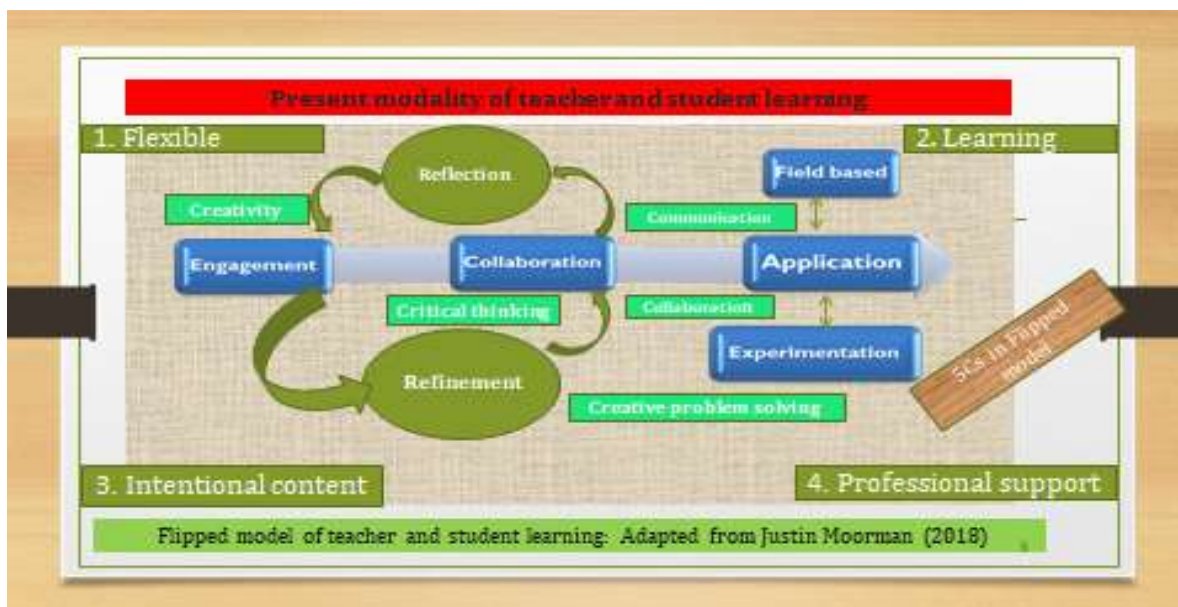
Applying the principle of flipped classroom, Justin Moorman (as cited in OECD 2018) introduced the idea of **“flipped” professional development (PD)** for teachers. This model allows teachers to personalize learning based on their professional development goals and places them at the centre of their own development. According to Moorman, flipped PD activities are divided into three phases:

- Engagement
- Collaboration
- Application

By and large, flipped model is based on online mode of delivery. In online training delivery, there are two main modes of learning. They are: synchronous and asynchronous modes.

- **Synchronous mode**- Synchronous mode refers to happening together, live or in real time. A video meeting in Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc. is one good example of synchronous mode of training and learning (PETC Trainer’s Handbook for Adapting Teacher Training from Face to Face to Online 2077). Trainees and facilitator meet at the same time from different places through different online channels/tools such as Zoom Meet, Microsoft Teams, Skype, etc. They join in online meeting and collaborate and share their experiences, expectations, experiments and get exposure on the contents being planned to discuss. It is online face-to-face mode. In loose terms, we can say this is real time learning.
- **Asynchronous mode**- Asynchronous mode refers to happening for each person individually- without expectation of any or immediate interaction. An email exchange, messages sent through WhatsApp, Viber, Slack, Facebook messenger, Moodle, Offline reading, etc. are good example of asynchronous mode of training and learning. Trainees receive some relevant and useful pre-loaded materials by the facilitator either through e-mails or uploaded in learning portals or site. Materials can be questions, queries, doubts, e-books, journal articles, research papers, slides, newspaper, audio clips, video clips, web links, etc. supported by some kind of worksheet given by the facilitator. Trainees have to go through the materials and make notes or prepare worksheet. This is, in loose term, offline mode where trainees have to sit at their own place and do searching, selecting, reading, reflecting, exploring and exploiting the main messages and meanings being based on the mandates given by the facilitator. Trainees have to prepare daily diary as a separate event. Based on the diary maintained in the asynchronous mode, they share when they meet in synchronous mode.

In flipped model of professional development, trainee teachers will have extensive study and intensive discussion on the subject matter. Therefore, during this flipping process, we see engagement, collaboration and application of learnt knowledge and skills. This is the fourth or latest practice of teacher professional development that is currently being practised in Nepal. The simple framework of flipped model of professional development



has been presented in the following figure.

This practice gives much emphasis on asynchronous mode of learning with the ultimate aim of developing a culture of self-directed and self-determined learning.

Flipped model of professional development also expects to develop digital competencies on the part of practitioners. Digital competencies here refer to 5Cs- they are: communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creative problem solving and creativity. These are the soft aspects that are expected to develop to tight the nuts and bolts of teacher professional knowledge and skills.

Overall, flipped model is based on the principles of adaption like personalizing, localizing, modernizing and customizing learning for teacher professional resilience. This sounds good in theory but practice determines its usefulness and relevancy in fostering teacher professional development in real sense.

Shifting in new model is not panacea

As we know that action speaks louder than words, venture in words must be properly followed by venture in actions. Adam Urbanski, vice president of the American Federation of Teachers points out that “Change is mandatory; improvement is optional. Change for the sake of change is no value.” Every significant change should trigger powerful emotions including loss of known, fear of unknown, anxiety about failure, anger at those who resist or push too hard, uncertainty over the consequences of what is being changed (Clove and Goldsmith 2007). So, those teachers who do not want to prepare themselves won't get benefits from this model of development. Teachers should be more active, better prepared, curious, enthusiastic and entrepreneurial, never ending satisfaction seekers in their personal and professional development. Otherwise, there is no difference than the previous models. Only shifting or introducing change is not panacea. It is the attitude, behavior and efforts of the practitioners that determine significance of new changed context.

Summary

In today's digitally rich learning environment, technology based and self-led model of learning is better than conventional expert-led model. Self-led model will be supported and promoted by digital technologies. The need of digital technologies in professional learning has further been promoted by the pandemic situation created by COVID-19. Until and unless we don't focus on self-regulation and adaption of the available resources for the sake of personal and professional development, we don't grow and develop. Therefore, the direction of teacher professional development in Nepal should be towards professional resilience. The decisions for professional development should be self-determined and self-directed. And the delivery should be done by using digital technologies.

References

CEHRD (2077). Teacher Professional Development through Distance Mode: Standard Operating Procedure-2077.

- CEHRD (2077). PETC Trainer's handbook for adapting teacher training from face to face to online.
- Cloke, K. & Goldsmith, J. (2007). *The end of management and the rise of organizational democracy*. Jossey-Bass: A Wiley Company.
- Craft, A. (1996) *Continuing professional development: A practical guide for teachers and schools*. London: Rutledge Famer.
- Evans, L. (2002) *What is teacher development? Oxford Review of Education* 28-1-123-137. Taylor and Francis.
- Martin L. E, Kragler, S, Quatroche, D. J. & Bauserman, K. L. (2014). *Handbook of professional development in education*. The Guilford Press, New York: London.
- OECD (2018). *Teaching for the future: effective classroom practices to transform education*.
- Reimers-Villegas, E. (2003). *Teacher professional development: An international review of the literature*. UNESCO: International institute for educational planning.
- Richards, J. & Farrell, T.S. C. (2005). *Professional development for language teachers*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Sharma & Shrestha (2012). *Readings in English language teacher development*. Kathmandu: Sunlight Publication.
- Shrestha, R. (2077). *A resource material for secondary English teachers*. Kathmandu: Sunlight Publication.