Teachers' Professional Development Training for Their Professionalism

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Abstract: The Teacher Professional Development (TPD) program is a dynamic initiative dedicated to nurturing the professional growth of educators, ultimately enhancing their efficiency. This article focuses on the study and analysis of the implementation status of TPD programs in Nepal in comparison to the policy guidelines of the TPD framework 2015 and aims to improve the implementation of TPD programs for the utilization of resources. The main strength lies in investing in teachers' training that will ultimately lead to improved teaching and learning conditions in Nepali classrooms. Although the results show that the program is well adapted for the professional development of Nepali teachers, there are many gaps in the various stages of program implementation, which could make the TPD program more effective in transferring training to the classroom. It doesn't seem to be effective in translating the TPD policies into practices. This study also paved the way for further research to improve the transfer of training to classroom practices/.

Introduction

Teacher Professional Development (TPD) is widely believed to play an important role in maintaining teacher professionalism and improving the quality of school education. My 20 years of teaching experience has shown that professional development and refresher training can refine teachers' instructional strategies and help students meet curriculum learning goals. Teaching students in a happy environment while imparting knowledge and skills will enhance their education. We suppose TPD is very effective for implementing learner-friendly activity-based instruction in 21st-century. For developing the qualified human resources, TPD provides the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitude (Dhungana et al., 2021). If there are trained teachers, they can facilitate well and conduct the classroom teaching as per the needs of the students. In addition to skills and subject knowledge, teachers also need to engage in reflective practice for professional development (Pokhrel et al., 2016). The Education Sector

Development Plan for 2009-2015 provisioned of funding for teacher training. Under these decentralized arrangements, local training institutions are responsible for identifying the needs and developing and delivering professional development programs for teachers.

To improve the TPD program, the revised TPD Framework 2015 was taken in action. This framework attempted to ensure the quality education and focused on students' achievement through transformative ways of classroom teaching-learning set up. Similarly, it endeavored to conduct both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for the betterment of the students. Sometimes, despite the regularity of the teachers, the achievement of the students becomes lower unexpectedly. It is supposed that there may be lack of the proper TPD to fill the possible gap between teachers' classroom instruction and students' achievement. Similarly, it needs competence-based training methodologies for ensuring the professional development programs (Pokhrel et al., 2016). How do stakeholders understand teacher professional development Policy 2015? And, to what extent does TPD training enhance the teaching quality of teachers? Questions like to occur in our mind so we motivated to write this paper entitled Teachers' Professional Development Training for Their Professionalism.

The TPD has very strong conceptual, theoretical, and policy foundations. The goal of TPD is to ensure that all teachers have the knowledge and skills required to effectively facilitate students` learning processes (MoE, 2009). To produce such human resources in teaching continuous TPD is essential to ensure teachers have the necessary skills, pedagogical, and content knowledge to develop an effective environment for students to achieve the national goals. Then it was modified and formed the Teacher Professional Development Training Policy 2015.

The extant literature shows that the nature of TPD programs is less practical and more aspirational. For instance, the TPD program in Nepal is a very ambitious program which mainly aims in encouraging the professional development of teachers (Acharya, 2019). Along with, it aims to train all permanent teachers (MoE, 2015); however, there are many barriers to overcome. According to Khanal and Adhikari (2020), the major barriers of professional development opportunities may be the lack of refresher training opportunities, exposure visits, self-learning resources and ICT support, teaching materials and other support, post-training support for the transfer of learning and opportunity to participate in training. Being a teacher, I also experienced the same problems. Even though the TPD program is very well designed for the professional development of teachers in Nepal, there are many gaps in different stages of program implementation. Pokhrel et al. (2016) claimed that competence-based training

strategies are needed within TPD programs. But, in practice, TPD program is not up to the level to develop such competency in teachers which is reflected in classroom implantation.

Activity-based pedagogy is a very important part of the 21st-century education process which is an essential component in TPD. The TPD program has been realized as a powerful approach to implementing child-friendly activity-based education in the twenty-first century (Pokhrel & Behera, 2016). Various training can implement the curriculum in an intended way through activity-based pedagogy. Similarly, offering workshops can help teachers improve their self-efficacy in learning, thereby changing their belief systems about teaching and learning through activity-based learning approaches (Acharya, 2019).

The revised TPD framework includes three types of TPDs: Teacher Training, Self-initiated learning, and Experience-sharing programs (MoE, 2015). The teacher training is further divided into three categories: Teacher certification training, Refresher training, and Local need-based training modules. All these three types of training enhance the efficiency of teachers to improve the class activities. Local teacher training centers run standardized courses for teacher certification. Teachers can demand subject-specific training as well as need-based training on the local need. Generally, the teacher certification training is designed in two phases of 15 days each. Furthermore, the 15 days are divided into two parts i.e. 10 days of face-to-face training and 5 days of in-school practice teaching. Within this, the teacher will have to submit a report in a standard format to complete the module. Each module is given 50 marks and the teacher is evaluated out of 100 marks for certification. One has to score at least 50% in each module to be certified as a trained teacher. Certified teachers are eligible for refresher courses based on their demand (MoE, 2015).

The existing TPD policy encourages self-initiated learning for teachers (MoE, 2015). Learning by doing is the self-initiated learning process. Teachers learn from their own experience. The existing TPD framework provides opportunities for experience-sharing sessions at the school level, resource center level, and district level (MoE, 2015). Pokhrel and Behera (2016) mentioned that teachers like to share their practices and save for the future. Teachers expect to play an active role not only in training but also in identifying needs and developing training modules and resources.

Sometimes, the TPD programs are supposed to be quite ambitious and cannot consider any potential obstacles. However, if they are well structured and designed, they can improve the professionalism of teachers and classroom instruction. The incentive nature of certification programs encourages teachers to take the initiative in their teaching and learning, as well as in collaborative learning and experience sharing. To achieve the objective of education policy,

teacher professional development programs should be ongoing initiatives that include new pedagogies and technologies.

Research Methodology

The research design for this study was qualitative. For this study, the participants were two teachers who were chief of the education training center and trainer of Bagmati Province. They were invited to participate in the study based on their roles, responsibilities and familiarity with TPD. We deliberately chose the chief of the training center and one trainer from the same training institution, as well as two teachers who had just finished the TPD program at the Education Training Center of the Bagmati Province to gather information on the training center`s real practices, teachers' perceptions of the training, and classroom implementation. The first author personally interviewed each participant one by one for half an hour to forty-five minutes based on the semi-structured interview guidelines that first author had prepared earlier. We were able to assess the TPD policy's application and practice using this data. We transcribed the entire interview of all participants and then translated them from Nepali into English.

The transcribed and translated data were then properly examined and coded. Based on the requirements of the research, coded data were thematized (Terry et al., 2017). By describing the context analytically and avoiding personal biases, we upheld the credibility of the data. We adhered strictly to the ethical guidelines by preserving the anonymity and confidentiality of the research participants. We used a descriptive and thematic analytic approach to examine the data to generate meaningful themes.

Result and Discussion

The findings highlighted the three key facets of teacher professional development that significantly contribute to improving teachers' efficiency and professionalism. We had meticulously examined and presented these aspects both thematically and descriptively. Specifically, our analysis delved into the training process, teachers' perceptions, classroom implementation, and monitoring procedures as a whole.

Teacher Professional Development Training Process

Teacher Professional Development (TPD) is a continuous process that aims to enhance the efficiency in professionalism of all permanent teachers of public schools in Nepal. The term Teachers Professional Development Training is usually for the professional development of

teachers (Adey, 2007). This training focuses on strengthening the expertise of teachers in their respective subjects, providing pedagogical refreshments, and updating teachers with the latest teaching strategies (Orlich et al., 2012), new technologies, course materials, and developments in the field of teaching and learning. The teacher's improvement means a positive change in the school environment that surge in enthusiasm and learning interest, which indirectly improves the learning achievement of students.

Proper planning, the right start, and the right environment are essential for a successful professional development program. TPD training is provided by the Education Centers. Such centers provided the trainings for teachers from Primary Level to Secondary Level. According to the Head of the training center of Bagmati province, "curriculum and course content of the training is designed by Center for Education and Human Development Center and approved by the Council of Education of the central government". He added, 'some courses are generic and others are subject specific'. Training is conducted in two phases and the candidates are selected on the basis of seniority. They request the education department at the local level for the participation of teachers in training as well as they personally inform the selected teachers for the same. When I asked the teacher participants about the enrollment in training, they expressed their difficulty in taking training. One of the participants expressed his experience:

> This training is provided by the government itself for the betterment of teaching which is eventually beneficial for the students. So, our schools should consider that and manage us during the time of our training. But, during my training phase, I had to take my classes at the school in the morning as our classes run in the morning, registered for half-holiday, and then had to attend my training, which didn't give me enough time to revise and prepare for my training.

Cooperation of the school is essential in the training process, but the finding of the study shows very little cooperation of administration. However, existing literature reveals the role of the administrator in the successful implementation of the TPD program. For example; Administrators play a critical role in teachers' professional development (Ganser, 2000). Professional development training not only builds up the confidence in teacher, but it also helps to improve the learning achievement of students. It is the responsibility of the school administration to manage the environment of learning and inspiring teachers for professional development. However, the presence of non-supporting administrators is an obstacle to the improvement of public education.

The 21st-century education process demands pedagogically sound and skillful teachers to tackle enthusiastic, multicultural, and smart students. Teacher professional development training is

based on workshops and activities that take place in one phase online and another phase in physical presence. A previous study also shows a similar aspect, for example; activity-based professional development training supports to move from overly didactic practices to student-centered, activity-based teaching and learning to help develop a better understanding of concepts (Maro, 2013). These positive changes include increased student participation in the classroom activities, a greater support, and an openness to the questions from teachers.

Two phases of teacher professional development training are designed to meet the demands and needs of teachers which are skill-oriented and action-oriented. The 10-day training focuses on developing course expertise in teachers, a more effective teaching process, and integrating teachers with other basic things. Then the teachers need to implement the things practically that they learned in school like making and implementing a course plan and another thing for 45 days. When I asked a teacher about project work, he was exhausted and stated:

> We were given many homework, assignments and project works. We were also given some research to do, and we were assigned to complete those research papers, and projects within 45 days and had to submit within 51 days which is a very hectic task when school does not support.

This view shows the hardship of a teacher to complete his training process. If so, how could be training process be effective and how could a teacher implement his learning in the classroom? The literature also emphasizes on administrator's role such as, to support teachers` professional development, the administrator should provide continuing professional development opportunities and support (Kilag & Sasan, 2023). Even though the government is running training programs effectively, it is very difficult to develop skillful manpower if all stakeholders are not cooperating from their side.

Training a large number of teachers simultaneously remains a challenge and the success or failure of training depends on how it is implemented by trainers assigned. In-service teacher training (TPD) is needed to improve the quality of teacher's teaching process (Ngeze et al., 2018). Trainers can change the previous mindset of teachers during training through their active involvement by including various 21st-century pedagogical skills which are helpful to improve the professionalism of teachers. When I asked the head of the training center about assigning a trainer in TPD, he replied:

> There are permanent trainers with us in the training center who have been assigned from Lok-Sewa (Public Service Commisison). Then we have a roster of trainers. The roster trainers are from different specializations. They may be subject experts, experienced teachers, university professors, or freelancing trainers, who have a very strong grip over

their subjects and have training skills. They are assigned to different training activities when needed.

Trainers are transformer of the teaching-learning process in the classroom. Therefore, selecting a trainer is a very important task in teacher professional development training. They can remove the 'thirstiness and hungriness' of teachers in terms of their desire to learn skills and techniques during the trainings. One of my participant teachers shared her experience, "Most of our mentors were school teachers themselves, so the ideas and techniques they gave us were very much practical, helpful and effective." In this context, Acharya (2016) claimed that the professionally developed teachers have the skills to generate new approach of teaching and develop the skill of good communicator. Resourceful and experienced trainers are motivated and good in their field and can transform the learning environment.

Teacher's Perception of TPD Training

Pedagogically enriched, resourceful, sound knowledge of content and skillful delivery in the classroom are the main motives of 21st-century teachers. It is seen that if the teachers are following the training processes effectively and the training providers follow the TPD framework properly, this training is highly beneficial to the teachers. Teachers can transform themselves from traditional to modern and practical teaching methods. One of my research participants expressed his experience, "TPD taught us to be more technology friendly. It also taught us many teaching techniques focused on digital skills and platforms. It developed a mentality that, our traditional way of teaching can be transformed in a modern way." These findings of the study shows that teachers were satisfied with the TPD process as they were able to learn more new techniques and soft skills that are useful in the classroom. It is important to use appropriate soft skills (Sharma, 2010) and techniques to deliver the content prescribed by the curriculum. TPD training is effective when it can include skills and techniques useful in the classroom and teachers can deliver the content in a joyful environment with the active participation of students.

During COVID-19, there was no possibility of face-to-face training. To adapt that situation online mode of TPD was designed. Now teachers are facilitated one phase online and another face-to-face mode of training. Online courses apply flexible delivery methods to help different potential learners, address issues, and despite some challenges, offer multiple avenues and opportunities for those wishing to continue their education into the future (Paudyal, 2020). One of my participants (Teachers) said:

> We prefer physical training. There is more interaction, and all the group work and practical work can be performed under the observation of the trainer. But, in online session, many of our trainee members just joined the sessions, they did not have any interactions, and it was not even known whether they were attending or not as they had the microphones and cameras off.

The effectiveness of the mode of training depends on how skillful are the mentors and how are the mentees. It also depends on the course materials with live material construction, model preparation, hands-on activities, and things which are to be done practically, that are suited to be done physically. If the mentees are very interested and dedicated then online mode is effective in engagement and use of online tools with many more things.

Trainings are meaningful when teachers can change themselves and effects are seen in the classroom and students' achievement. My study revealed that TPD was able to update the teachers with new and more effective ways of student-centered teaching. One of my participants (teacher) shared;

> It taught us that to teach students we teachers ourselves should be learning more and new content and techniques. This training taught us that we teachers should not only teach but also make sure that the students are learning, so to make sure, we need to make them active participants and active learners. And, we can do it by adopting better and more effective modern techniques.

This view shows how teachers perceive about how to be more effective in the classroom, but it is a matter of concern whether they are implementing in the classroom what they learned from training or not.

Implementing and Monitoring of TPD in the Classroom

TPD training was not up to the standards outlined in the policy guidelines, despite expectations that it would be crucial for enhancing classroom practices in the educational system. Although teachers participate and complete their training with great enthusiasm, classroom implementation is often subpar. One of my participants said, "Just after the training, I was high on high energy, so we were implying most of the things, but after a bit of time, I found myself getting back into my traditional way of teaching." It is the real situation of implementation of learning in the classroom. Teachers prepare lesson plans just to complete the training project, but they do not teach in the classroom by preparing daily lesson plans. The lesson plan is the main guideline for delivering content prescribed by the curriculum. At the implementation level, it was noted that the TPD program did not follow program guidelines. This has severely

affected this ambitious TPD program, with both conventional and uncontrolled training that are being provided for the certification purposes only (Kshetree, 2021). It is a very pitiful condition of the TPD program which is not able to motivate the teachers to apply the skills and experience of classroom training.

Our TPD program perceives very poor monitoring of classroom work, providing feedback, and inspiring teachers. Both the training center and the school administration do not provide monitoring of teachers during the school-based field training period. Monitoring and feedback support the teachers to transform their teaching and learning activities effectively. When I kept questioning the participants about monitoring and feedback from the school administration, one of the participants expressed his dissatisfaction:

> No, not yet all. Even we cannot hope that the one who didn't even consider making an environment for the teachers to take training effectively, how could he check the teacher's efficiency. He just monitors us whether we have gone to class on time or not, nothing else.

I asked the head of the trainer about monitoring, and he responded as follows:

> There is absolutely no way for us to collect feedback. However, we conducted some small-scale studies last year that suggested proper deployment. Although we haven't spoken to the pupils personally, we can state that there has been positive progress in terms of perspective.

Frequent observation and criticism improve a teacher's effectiveness and foster a good attitude toward professionalism. The classroom implementation portion of training suffers from a lack of motivation and feedback. In this line, Acharya (2016) argued that opporrunity for attending workshop seminar and conference, and job security develops professionalism in their profession.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the research results on the implementation of the TPD program in the field of professional development and training transfer are not satisfactory. The training process is designed to meet the needs of teachers, but it poses some challenges, such as lack of cooperation from school administrators and the heavy workload of teachers during the training process. However, teachers were satisfied with the training process because they were able to learn new skills and techniques that were useful in the classroom. Teachers prefer in-person training because it allows them for more interaction and practice. Research shows that TPD has helped teachers improve their teaching skills and become more student-focused. Despite

the challenges, research shows that TPD can be effective in improving teacher instruction and student learning if it is designed and implemented efficiently. Therefore, future TPD programs should take into account the challenges faced by teachers and school administrators and provide adequate support to ensure successful implementation.

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