

Exploring Causes Behind Ineffectiveness of In-service English Language Teacher Training in Nepal: A Causal Layered Analysis

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Abstract

Teacher professional development has remained the focus of the government of Nepal since the late 1940s. Various initiatives have been taken by the government for the professional development of the teachers. However, the transfer rate of the training skills to the classroom is found to be very low. Despite the continuous involvement of the teachers in in-service training opportunities, there is the dominance of teacher-centred activities in the classroom and learners' learning achievement has remained unsatisfactory. The aim of this study was to explore the causes behind the ineffectiveness of the in-service English language teacher training in Nepal. The main method used was the Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) (Inayatullah, 2004). Systematic analysis of the existing literature revealed that ineffectiveness of the training is caused by various factors which are operating at four different levels, viz. litany, systems, worldviews and myths and metaphors. However, the causes at system level are more serious and hence need early attention for reform initiatives in the future. At the system level, there are different teacher-related, training-related and school-related factors playing an unsupportive role for the effectiveness of the training. Based on these findings, some recommendations for future actions have also been made.

Keywords: *Casual layered analysis, in-service teacher training, litany, myths, worldviews,*

Introduction

Teacher professional development has remained as an area of high priority of the government of Nepal since the late 1940s. Various institutional arrangements have been made, and reform initiatives have been taken so far for teacher training and development. The Nepal National Education Planning Commission (NNEPC, 1954) formed after the dawn of democracy “suggested four types of training that had to be coordinated under a single institutional organisation” (NCED, 2010, p. 17). The National Education System Plan (NESP, 1971-76) created a favourable environment for teacher training by making “teacher training mandatory to obtain [permanent] tenure in schools” (Awasthi, 2010, p. 17). Institute of Education (IOE) under Tribhuvan University (TU) conducted different types of primary teacher training programmes till the late 1980s (MoE, 1997). From 1986,

in-service teacher training became the role of the Ministry of Education and “only pre-service or teacher preparation programmes became part of the TU/FOE’s jurisdiction” (NCED, 2009, p. 8).

National Center for Educational Development (NCED) was established in 1993 as an apex body for human resource development in the field of education (NCED, 2009). NCED conducted various in-service teacher training programmes through its 34 Educational Training Centers (ETCs) until 2015. After the restructuring of the country in 2015 along with the promulgation of a new constitution, the main responsibility of in-service teacher training is that of province-level seven Education Training Centers (ETCs). At the federal level, Center for Education and Human Resource Development (CEHRD) develops national standards and curricula for teacher professional development.

Various educational reform initiatives, in the field of education, have been taken since the early 1980s such as Education for Rural Development (ERD Seti-Project) (1980-1985); Primary Education Project (PEP, 1984); Primary Education Development Project (PEDP, 1992-1998); Basic and Primary Education Project (BPEP, 1992-1998); Basic and Primary Education Programme II (BPEP II, 1999); Secondary Education Development Project (SEDP, 1983 - 1998), Secondary Education Support Programme (SESP, 2003-2009), Teacher Education Project (TEP, 2002 - 2009); Education for All (EFA, 2004-2009) and School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP, 2009- 2015). Currently the School Sector Development Plan (SSDP, 2016 – 2023) is in operation. Teacher training was one of the major components of each of those programmes. All these projects have given significant focus on teacher professional development (TPD), and currently TPD has been taken as a strategy to enhance quality of education. For instance, SSDP (2016-2023) has envisioned the enhancement of teaching methods as a tool for increasing quality in education (MoE, 2016).

These reform initiatives have helped in achieving the quantitative targets. It means that almost “98.2 % of the working teachers-in-permanent positions at all levels of schooling-primary, lower secondary and secondary-have been made trained” (NCED, 2009), and this figure is likely to have increased by this year. However, the effectiveness of the training programmes that have been conducted so far has been questioned on several grounds. “Although a variety of training courses have been provided, including child-centred and activity based learning, there has been insufficient transfer of these methods to classrooms” (MoE, 2016, p. 28). The studies have revealed that the “transfer of teacher training to the classroom has remained at 50 % only” (NCED, 2009, p. 66). This has created an alarming situation to justify investment for the remaining 50% training. These findings indicate the necessity of rethinking the provisions of in-service teacher training in Nepal. The in-service training programmes have made very little impact on teachers’ classroom practices. Despite their involvement in various training opportunities, the teachers have been found to be using the traditional teacher-centred methods and techniques, and there is no significant

improvement in the students’ learning achievement. Education Review Office (ERO) reports that:

When the results of 2013 were compared with those of 2011, the achievement has not been improved over these years. For instance, in 2011 it was 49% for Nepali, whereas it is only 48% in 2013 - going further down by around 1% in 2013. (ERO, 2016, p. ix)

In this background, this study aims to explore the causes behind the ineffectiveness of in-service English language teacher training in Nepal through the use of Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) (Inayatullah, 2004).

Litany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Training is ineffective. Training skills are not transferred to the classroom. ● Teachers lack resources and have an obligation to finish courses on time.
Systems	<p>Teacher related causes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teachers’ negative attitude towards training ● Lack of professional accountability ● Low level of motivation for professional learning <p>Training related causes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● One size fits all approach to training ● Lack of experiential learning component in the training ● Weak monitoring and technical support <p>School related:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Unsupportive school culture ● Inadequate resources ● Political interference in school
Worldview/s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Neoliberal worldview ● Learning as a transmission of facts worldview
Myth, metaphor or narrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teacher as a source of knowledge (someone who does not need to learn) ● Training as a usual ritual and trainingcentre as a time pass zone.

Causal Layered Analysis Summary

Table 1: Summary of CLA for Exploring the Causes Behind the Ineffectiveness of In-service Teacher Training in Nepal: A Causal Layered Analysis (Adapted from Inayatullah, 2004)

Causal Layered Analysis Detail

In this study, causal layered analysis (CLA) has been used as a method to explore and analyse the causes behind the ineffectiveness of the in-service English language teacher training in Nepal. CLA was first proposed by Sohail Inayatullah, as a method for future studies. It invites us to move beyond conventional framing of issues and explore the deeper causes behind it. CLA is concerned “less with predicting a particular future and more with opening up the present and past to create alternative futures” (Inayatullah, 2004, p. 2). It is based on the assumption that “How one frames an issue can both limit the understanding of the issue and dictate the types of solutions that can be perceived or discovered” (Simone, 2004, p. 486). CLA has four dimensions: Litany, Systems, Worldviews and Myths or Metaphor. The following discussion involves the analysis of the problem in each layer.

Litany

Litany is the first level of analysis in CLA. It can be defined as “the official unquestioned view of reality” (Inayatullah, 2004, p. 1). It is about “quantitative trends, problems, often exaggerated, often used for political purposes- (overpopulation, for example) as usually presented by the news media” (Inayatullah, 2004, pp. 11-12). At this level, solutions to problems are normally short-term oriented. One of the frequently observed litanies regarding teacher training in Nepal is that training is ineffective as training skills are not transferred to the classroom. Educationists and the bureaucrats make a remark that there has not been any difference in the classroom despite a larger number of trained teachers. Teachers argue that lack of resources and their obligation to complete the course in time are hindering them from applying training skills to the classroom. The educationists say that there is no post-training monitoring by the training centres. Overall, a common unquestioned view is that in-service English language teacher training is not successful.

Systemic causes

The systemic cause is the second level of analysis which is deeper and “focused on the social, economic, political causes of the issue” (Inayatullah, 2013, p. 52). The analysis and interpretation at this level is based on quantitative data. The ineffectiveness of English language teacher training in Nepal is associated with various social, economic and political causes which can be broadly categorised as teacher related causes, training related causes and school related causes.

Teacher related causes

Teachers’ attitude towards professional development activities and their sense of professional accountability are crucial for the transfer of training skills to the classroom. A study revealed that “as teachers’ attitudes towards professional development activities increase, the teachers’ level of participation in professional development activities also

increases” (Bayar, 2013, p. 103). But it is often reported that teachers in Nepal lack a positive attitude towards training programmes and have a low level of professional accountability. “Skill is there, attitude is the problem, and the context and environment is less supportive” (NCED, 2010, p. 102). Furthermore, it has also been found that “Despite some improvements, teacher absenteeism remains a problem Many teachers, even when present in the school, do not spend sufficient time on tasks to ensure student learning” (MoE, 2016, p. 28). This point further justifies that the teachers have a low level of professional accountability.

In addition, it is often reported that the teachers have low motivation for professional learning. “There are insufficient rewards for effective teaching and in general the teaching force lacks motivation and public support” (MoE, 2016, p. 18). A study found that “low salary, lack of professional exposure, lack of respect for teaching profession, inadequate teaching environment, unsupportive situation, teacher dissatisfaction and obscure situation” (Sah, 2016, p. 1) are the factors that are affecting the motivation of teachers in Nepal.

Training related causes

One of the crucial factors associated with the low level of transfer of training is the design and delivery of the training itself. Teachers have diverse training needs and work in different socio-cultural contexts. For instance, a study revealed that “teachers’ experiences ranged from 5 to over 25 years” (NCED, 2010, p. 8). But the training programmes are too generic and usually adopt a one size fits all approach which cannot address the real needs of the teachers. A study revealed that there is a huge gap “between school life situation and the training delivery contexts (it was argued that training is often 2 feet higher than the trainees’ reality!!)” (NCED, 2010, p. 102). Moreover, the training is more theoretical, much like the pre-service teacher preparation course and lacks experiential learning component. A study by CERID (2003) reports that “Most of the contents were covered through these strategies: some were explained only, some were covered through the participants' presentation, and some were covered through trainer's demonstration (no practice by the participants)” (CERID, 2003, p. vii). These findings indicate that we need to rethink the design and delivery of the existing training programmes.

Likewise, the monitoring and technical support system after the training is very weak. “Major problems lie in before- and after-training activities. Trainees do not perform before training activities and trainers less perform after the training activities” (DOE, 2006, p. 3). Similarly, it was found that “weak monitoring and follow up support from District Education Officers, School Head teachers, School Supervisors and Resource persons have been hindering transfer of training skills in the classroom” (Thapa, 2012, p. 71). These findings indicate that the existing monitoring and support systems and mechanisms need to be rethought.

School Related Causes

Lack of supportive school culture has been frequently raised as a factor affecting the transfer of teacher teaching in Nepal. A study by NCED (2010, p. 102) reports that “the context and environment [for teaching and learning] is less supportive.” It is frequently reported that teachers get very less support from the school management and administration to implement new reform initiatives. Additionally, there is often a change in resistance and “responsibility avoidance nature” (CERID, 2003) and “lack of collaborative culture” among teachers (Thapa, 2012, p. 71). Teachers are often found to be discouraged by the administration and their colleagues from trying out new teaching methods and techniques.

In the same vein, schools in Nepal are struggling for resources. “Lack of minimum enabling conditions in public schools is so much widespread that the resources available could do a little, if at all, in improving school conditions” (NCED, 2010, p. 59). The training is conducted in a resource-rich condition, whereas the schools do not even have minimum daily-required resources.

The ineffectiveness of teacher training is also caused by political factors. A research found that political interferences has negative impacts on schools such as “hiring of incompetent teachers, misuse of budget, frequent closures of schools, use of students in political activities and engagement of teachers in political activities more than in teaching” (Loo Niva Child Concern Group Nepal, 2013, p. 54). It was also reported that when teachers remain “busy in various activities of party organisations, the result is students' low academic performance... (“Teachers in politics hampering students' performance,” 2017, p. 1). This political scenario has a negative impact on teacher’s professional development as well as students’ learning.

Worldview

Worldview, also called discourse or culture, is the third dimension in CLA. It is “the big picture, the paradigm that informs what we think is real or not real, the cognitive lenses we use to understand and shape the world” (Inayatullah, 2013, p. 52). At this level, the analysis is concerned with finding out deeper assumptions behind the issue and re-visioning the problem. The assumptions which came to exist as a result of deeper social, linguistic and cultural processes are explored at this level. The ineffectiveness of the English language teacher training is also the consequence of some of the deeper assumptions held by the educational stakeholders such as the neoliberal ideology and their views about teaching and learning.

Neoliberal worldview

Education systems around the world have been affected by the rise of neoliberal ideology. The neoliberal worldview is “associated with a preference for the minimalist state, concerned to promote the instrumental values of competition, economic efficiency and

choice, to deregulate and privatise state functions” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 31). Neoliberalism considers education as a component in the broader economic system and views that “education is essential for economic prosperity” (Hodge, 2015, p. 40). The influence of this ideology can be easily observed in the education system of Nepal as well. One of the national goals of school education is: “To prepare skilled, entrepreneurial and productive citizens who are oriented towards employment and self-employment, and who have a positive attitude and respect to work.” (CDC, 2019, p. 44). The goal has a clear focus on economic efficiency.

The view on education as a tool for economic growth has encouraged the English language teachers to teach for the test rather than for life because their success is measured in terms of the students’ result in national examinations. The schools are considered as business firms and their success lies in their capacity to attract the students, who are the customers having choices. Similarly, teachers and leaders are monitored and regulated heavily by the authorities using tools of steering at a distance such as Professional Standards (AITSL, 2011) in Australia or Teacher Competency Framework (NCED, 2015) in Nepal. However, in the use of such standards “there is a risk they may lead to the de-skilling of the profession ... and that teacher educators will have less autonomy and less flexibility to devise teacher education curricula” (Santoro, 2013, p. 317). In such a situation, teacher training cannot become effective. Nepalese English language teachers frequently argue that they are not able to use training skills in the classroom because they have a pressure to complete the course in time and prepare the learners for the examinations.

Learning as a Transmission of Facts Worldview

The stakeholder’s deeper assumptions about teaching and learning which are the products of a long historical and cultural forces have also contributed to the ineffectiveness of the English language teacher training programmes. The history of the education system in South Asia shows that rote memorization has been the main method of learning. “This long-lived oral tradition connected with the deep-rooted culture of idolism, has given the teacher the position of a ‘trusted’ guru. The students are taught at a very early age to trust the teacher without question” (ERO, 2011, pp. viii-ix). The modern formal education system in Nepal is based on the traditional Hinduism and Buddhism systems of education which were founded on religious basis. In those education systems, the students had to learn by heart and the guru was considered as a God and all sources of knowledge. Singh (2010, p. 128) mentions that “Hindu system of education was of Gurukul model where Guru (teacher) disseminated knowledge to his students. ... Students had to learn by rote the Vedas, the Meemansas, literature, astrology or whatever text or course they wanted to specialise in (p.128). This rooted tradition has shaped (enframed in the words of Heidegger, 1977 as cited in Bailey, 2014, p. 48) our current view of learning, teaching and training as a passive process of transmission of facts.

Both teaching and training practices in Nepal are still more theoretical and “chalk and talk’

[lecture] is the dominant method of training/educating teachers” (Awasthi, 2010, p. 25). The teacher’s beliefs and existing classroom practices, which are shaped by this tradition and culture, are very difficult to break down. There is a contradiction between what the teachers have been doing in the classroom for a long time and what they are told to do as better methodological practices in the training programmes. The implication of this worldview is that it is necessary to challenge this view of learning, teaching and training.

Myth or Metaphor

Myth or metaphor often called the narrative is the fourth layer of analysis. “Metaphors are often the vehicles of myths” (Inayatullah, 2013, p. 52). This is the root level of questioning and analysis. Inayatullah (2004, p. 13) argues that “These are the deep stories, the collective archetypes - the unconscious and often emotive dimensions of the problem or the paradox.” This level of analysis allows us to deconstruct the conventional metaphors by challenging the present and then to articulate alternative metaphors creating the possibility of alternative futures.

As mentioned earlier, modern education in Nepal is based on the traditional Gurukul education system based on Hinduism. In Hindu philosophy, the role of a teacher (guru) is very significant. Guru is considered as the God and remover of ignorance. “In early Hinduism he [guru] was a vital factor in imparting Vedic knowledge; in later thought the guru became the visible embodiment of truth and in some cases he was worshipped as an incarnate deity” (Mlecko, 1982, p. 34). In Hinduism, there is a popular sacred utterance (*guru mantra*):

Om
Guru Brahma, Guru Vishnu,
Guru Vevo Maheshwara,
Guru Saakshaata, Parabrahma,
Tasmai Shri Guruve Namah

Meaning in English:

I bow down to Brahma, the God of creation,
To Vishnu, the God of preservation,
To Shiva, the God of destruction and transformation,
To the guru within and the guru beyond and beyond,
I make my offerings to the remover of my darkness, my ignorance.
(Source: Adapted from <https://modernyogi.gr/en/guru-mantra-en/>)

This tradition of supremacy of the teacher in teaching and learning process still exists in Nepal and there is the influence of this in teacher training as well. Both teachers and teacher educators enjoy becoming a sage on the stage rather than to guide the learners from the side.

Thus, one of the myths about teacher training in Nepal can be “Teacher as a source of knowledge.” This implies that teachers believe that they know everything and therefore do not need to learn anything new because they have a long teaching experience. Here are some relevant lines from a verse composed by a professor of English in Nepal:

Ask yourself what you've been doing so far my friend
I tell you you've been walking the same path my friend

What you call experience proudly and bask on it
That's nothing but beating the same old drum my friend

(Rai, 2021, p. 1)

Similarly, ‘Training as a usual ritual and training centre as a time pass zone’ can be another myth or a hidden assumption about the issue. Teachers’ tendency to arrive late in training and lack of motivation and enthusiasm for learning justifies the fact. A study found that teachers have used training as a ritual rather than an opportunity for learning. “The desire to learn and use the skills was generally not strong. For most of the teachers training was meant to attend it only and was a routine affair” (CERID, 2003, p. 21). Some teachers participate in training for an allowance and certificate for promotion. This myth challenges the necessity of the training programmes altogether.

Our knowledge or beliefs about what is true, i.e. ideology, is the product of power and myths and metaphor are consistent with dominant ideology. The myths or metaphors, in the form of figurative use of language, can create new forms of reality. According to Fletcher “[L]anguage not only reflects a certain reality, it also actively creates that reality and sustains the power relationships that depend on it.” (2015, p. 23). Therefore, it is necessary to develop alternative myths and metaphors which have a power to challenge and to alter the dominant ideology. Alternative myths and metaphors that need to be established in my context are:

- Teacher is a facilitator and a collaborator in the learning process.
- Training is an opportunity for learning and professional renewal.

Vertical Links Between the Levels

A clear vertical link can be observed between the layers. For instance, the myth that ‘Teacher as a source of knowledge’ has a connection with the worldview that ‘Learning as a transmission of knowledge and memorization of facts.’ The idea is that it is the responsibility of the teacher to transmit knowledge from his/her mind to that of learners because the latter are regarded as the empty vessels. And the same thing is expected in training situations between the facilitator and the teachers. Likewise, the myth that ‘Training as a usual ritual’ has a connection with the ‘neoliberal worldview.’ Teachers’ perception of training as a usual ritual has a hidden meaning that since they have to prepare

learners for the tests and therefore lack time, they are not going to try out new skills in the classroom. They are taking training for the sake of training.

Similarly, the connection can be found between the worldviews and systemic causes. For example, the teachers' lack of professional accountability and motivation to professional learning are clearly associated with the economic factors such as low salary and training allowances. This is where neoliberal worldview operates. Furthermore, the design and delivery of training and post-training monitoring are also related to the economic factors. Economic factors are often reported as a reason behind the governments' inability to make training contextual and school based. Likewise, the systemic cause of 'training becoming more theoretical' is associated with the world view that 'learning is a transmission of facts.' In this way, though the causes are operating at different levels, there are clear connections between the causes among the layers.

Way Forward

Based on the insights gained from the CLA, the following recommendations have been made in the form of strategic actions for improving the effectiveness of in-service English language teacher training in Nepal:

Transforming Educational Training Centers as a Learning Organisations

Education Training Centers (ETCs) should be transformed as learning organisations. This strategy is directed towards promoting continuous professional learning of the staff of the ETC by developing an appreciative learning culture. This strategy helps to improve the quality training programmes. Senge et al. 1990 define learning organisation as:

an organisation where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continuously learning to see the whole together. (as cited in (Louise & Marco, 2016, p. 16)

It is often argued that individual learning is essential for organisational learning though the former does not guarantee the later. "Individuals learn all the time and yet there is no organisational learning. But if teams learn, they become a microcosm for learning throughout the organisation" (Senge, 2006, p. 220). Team learning is fundamental to develop any organisation as a learning organisation. Therefore, team learning should be emphasised.

Using Appreciative Inquiry as a Guiding Approach to Professional Learning

An Appreciative inquiry (AI) should be used as a guiding approach to professional learning

programmes. The AI involves exploring the positive aspects in the organisation that are critical for organisational success. It is based on the assumption “that every organisation has something that works well, and those strengths can be the starting point for creating positive change” (Cooperrider, Stavros, & Whitney, 2008, p. 3). The ETC staff and roster trainers should be invited to share their ideas and stories about their past and present achievements and strengths that are valuable for making the training programmes more effective.

Redesigning of the Training Curricula and Improving the Training Delivery Process

The existing training curricula should be redesigned making them competency-based and incorporating the experiential learning components. This strategy will help in addressing the problems of training becoming more theoretical and far beyond the contextual realities. Competency-based curriculum focuses on holistic development of knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and volition in the teachers. Competencies include “a description of the essential skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours required for effective performance of a real-world task or activity” (Richards, 1986, p. 144). Competence also means “the ability to apply knowledge and skills in a given situation or context” (Halinen, 2018, p. 84). The use of knowledge and skills by the teachers is influenced by their values and attitudes, and their willingness to take action.

In addition, the curricula should focus on experiential learning. Kolb (2015, p. 38) defines learning as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience.” Experiential learning focuses on the process of adaptation and learning rather than on content or outcomes. The trainees should be involved in learning by doing and experiencing. They should have sufficient opportunity to practise and demonstrate pedagogical skills. The curricula should address the pressing classroom problems faced by the teachers identified through the systematic need analysis. The content should be directly linked with the school curricula and textbooks.

Enhancing Monitoring of Training and Teacher Support Mechanism

This strategy helps in addressing the problem of weak monitoring of teacher training and teacher support system in Nepal (DOE, 2006). A study revealed that “the effectiveness of a CPD [continuous professional development] program relies on the institution’s ability to offer expert support, and follow-up sessions for teachers” (Ezel & Erozan, 2021, p. 101). Keeping this finding in mind, frequency and quality of monitoring should be improved by using systematic tools for monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring should be done both during and after the training and it should be ensured that monitoring is not done simply for formality. The participants’ action plan made during the training should be tied up with monitoring. The insights gained from monitoring and evaluation should be used for the continuous improvement of the training curricula and packages.

Conclusion

The Causal Layered Analysis of the issue of in-service English language teacher training in Nepal has revealed various factors playing roles at different levels: Litany, System, Worldview and Myths or Metaphor. The problem at the system level seems to be more serious and therefore, any intervention for the improvement should be targeted at this level. Negative attitude of the teachers towards teacher training and one size fits all approach to training are two of the factors at this level. Based on the finding, four recommendations have been made: Educational Training Centers should be transformed as learning organisations, appreciative inquiry should be used as a guiding approach to professional learning programmes, the training curricula should be redesigned making them competency-based and the training delivery process should be improved; and monitoring of training and teacher support mechanism should be enhanced.

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