

TEACHER TRAINING IN NEPAL: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

“No single element is more essential to students’ success than excellence in teaching. Fine buildings, equipment, and textbooks are important, but it is the skill and dedication of the teacher that creates a place of learning.” (Hickok, E. 1998).

The quote highlights the role of teachers and it is generally accepted that teachers are the key actors who contribute to the making of people through education. Teachers are often considered as ‘good people’ and in the context of Nepal especially in the rural areas; it is the teacher who is often consulted for any important work in the community. “The teachers are in the business of making good people, or of enabling their students to become good people. They do this specifically by helping them to become smarter” (Tate, 2007: 1). Thus, preparation of teaching force is, therefore, a key concern of the government throughout the world. It is the teacher who lays the foundation of all the professionals when they attend the elementary and secondary school (Farris and Rieman, 2014). Nepal government too has invested a huge amount of resources in teacher training thinking that training would result effective pedagogic skills among teachers and they could then use those skills in their classrooms so that students will have better achievement. However, while reviewing the available literature on teacher training in Nepal, it shows that very little has been achieved in this area in the last few decades. This article is an attempt to review the impact of teacher training in Nepal and identify the major issues in them so as to find out the ways of improving the teacher training in Nepal.

TRAINING PROVIDERS AND TYPE OF TRAINING PROGRAMS

There are two types of teacher training in Nepal and they are conducted by the two different institutions; university and Ministry of Education. Secondary level pre-service teacher training programs are conducted by different universities such as Tribhuvan University (TU), Kathmandu University (KU), Purwanchal University (PU) and Nepal Sanskrit University (NSU), Mid-western University and Far-western University being Tribhuvan University the largest among others. These

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programs are of three to four years duration. Primary and secondary level in-service teacher training programs are conducted by National Center for Educational Development (NCED) and these programs are of different duration ranging from a few weeks to ten months. NCED also runs primary level pre-service teacher training program through its affiliated primary teacher training centers.

REVIEW OF THE RESULTS OF THE TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAMS IN NEPAL

Despite the efforts made by the universities and Ministry of Education in training teachers, available literature shows that there has been a very little impact of these teacher training programs on the students' achievement both at primary and secondary level. Various studies carried out by different individuals and organizations in different stages and different project documents (Mathema and Bista, 2006; CHIRAG, 1995; BPEP Master Plan i.e. MOES 1997–2002: 345d; NCED, 1998; Shrestha, 2004: 39; NCED, 1998; CERID, 2002; CERID, 2003: VI; NCED, 2000a: 33-34; DOE, 2006: 5-25) show that performance of trained primary teachers have not been satisfactory. Similarly, some other studies (Thapa, 2007; Bista, 2002 and FOE, 2003: 21) mention that trained secondary level teachers have not been able to make differences in their classroom teaching.

Some studies (Bista, 2002 and FOE, 2003: 21) have raised doubts over the performance of the training providers and posed doubt over the quality of their graduates. Faculty of Education (FOE) at Tribhuvan University has produced thousands of graduates but a research report produced by the Faculty of Education itself confesses, "There is no evidence to be assured that FOE campuses have the institutional capacity to provide high quality teacher education that the education system of the country requires" (FOE 1998 in Bista, 2002: 10).

ISSUES IN TEACHER TRAINING IN NEPAL

One can assume that the training should help teachers perform better in the classroom practice so that student will have improved performance. One of the indicators of the quality teacher training is that the students' success rate in the examination is increased due to the better classroom teaching after training. Even in a lay person's analogy, if a teacher is trained, s/he will perform better in class and students will learn more effectively and it will help students do better in the examination. This analogy does not seem convincing in many of the teacher training programs not only in case of Nepal but also in a developed country. Here is an example of the US where Jacob and Lefgren (2004: 52) write "Despite the importance of teacher training in most school districts, there is surprisingly little evidence on the effect of teacher training on student

achievement”. Teacher training in Nepal also presents the similar picture regarding the impact of teacher training in the students’ performance in the high school results. Though about 90% of the teachers teaching in community schools have been trained, the SLC results have always been around 50% or less and the average marks in the SLC in the core subject, as indicated in the table below, is less than 45% and the marks in the key subjects such as English, Mathematics and Science is even lower to 31%. 35% and 26% respectively.

a. Average Marks in Core Subjects, 2071

REGION	AVERAGE MARKS					
	ENG(75)	NEP(100)	MATH(100)	SCI(75)	SOC(100)	HPE(75)
EAST	29.17	41.23	32.52	24.14	35.09	35.16
CENTRE	38.00	48.75	46.53	32.68	44.20	40.76
WEST	37.35	49.56	40.19	26.91	42.37	41.60
MID WEST	27.76	41.13	29.26	23.74	32.71	36.37
FAR WEST	24.30	39.46	28.05	21.36	35.09	33.71
NEPAL	31.31	44.02	35.31	25.76	37.89	37.52

Office of the Controller of Examination, 2015

This shows that there is no positive correlation between the trained teachers in school and students success rate and “no significant difference in the mean scores of students taught by trained or untrained teachers” (Education and Developmental Service Center, 2011, p. 14). This indicates that the training has had no impact in the students’ achievement and training did not lead to the better performance in the students’ results. There might be several factors that might explain the performance of the students but teacher training is also one of the factors that should influence the performance of the students in exams. A study commonly known as the SLC Study mentions that the training has negatively impacted the students’ performance. It says,

Several factors may explain the negative impact of teacher training on student performance. First, teacher training courses in Nepal, whether pre-service or in-service, intend to promote the so-called child-centered, participatory, and interactive teaching methods, which are not properly aligned with the public examinations that measure the amount of the contents knowledge of students. Second, too many teacher training courses involving hundreds of thousands of teachers have disrupted teaching in schools seriously removing teachers from classrooms. Third, there is no perfect match between teacher’s training and their assignment in schools (Mathema and Bista, 2006).

The training interventions of the government and non-government sector train a huge number of teachers every year. New teachers are recruited and trained every year and most of the new teachers who enter the teaching profession already have teaching qualifications from different universities and thus considered as trained teachers. Still the result of the students is very low and it shows that training has not reached the classrooms.

The same study Mathema and Bista, 2006) mentions that

Teachers (including head teachers) of remote rural schools have a tendency to avoid teaching. They look for training opportunities to escape work. Teacher training has enhanced teacher absenteeism rather than school effectiveness (p. 24).

This explains that there is a lack of motivation among the teachers to actually learn from the training rather it is a time pass and an excuse to get out of the work.

Application of training skills in classroom practice is another issue in the existing teacher training programs. One of the reasons could be that “the existing modes of teacher training are lecture dominated and classroom centered” (CHIRAG, 1995). In some cases it has also been found that some of the training programs such as the training provided by Basic and Primary Education Project (BPEP), Primary Education Development Project (PEDP), Distance Education Center (DEC) have not been effective to train the teachers for the effective delivery of the lessons in the classroom. Basic and Primary Education document (BPEP Master Plan, 1997–2002: 345d) mentions “the current teacher training programs are producing a new cadre of under-trained teachers for the primary education system”. However, the document does not specify how and why such “under-trained” teachers are produced. These documents present that the training has not been translated in the classroom behavior.

Monitoring and follow-up is another issue that prevails in our teacher training program as there is “no provision of knowing how the trainees are doing in school after the training period is over” (NCED, 1998). Pointing out the problem of the primary teacher training program, Shrestha (2004: 39) mentions that when the government of Nepal reduced the 10 month primary teacher training to 6 months duration, the problem started from this time. Similarly, he also mentions that politicization of education meaning making political decisions to provide permanent tenure to all temporary teachers irrespective of their qualifications and performance in schools was another factor that led to the poor performance of schools in Nepal.

At the ministry level, the government initiates the reform projects and conducts the training programs for the given period but sustainability of the innovations in terms of cost of training and capacity of the government to pay the cost in those projects is often ignored (Shrestha, 2004).

The training goes to class if the teachers receive what they need to improve their classroom practices. It could be the content knowledge and/or the pedagogical skills that teachers might want the training to address. Thus, the training should be given based on the needs of the teachers rather than what the trainers feel the need. In the context of Nepal,

In-service training is usually centrally determined and supply- driven. For a few days a year, a small number of privileged teachers were pulled-off from their classrooms to remote training centers to be lectured to about what to do in areas that were not necessarily their main concerns and in settings that were often distant from their day-to-day concrete experiences. They were then sent back to an unchanged school where they met the indifference or outright hostility of envious colleagues, without opportunities to reinforce their newly acquired skills in the classroom (Sinha, 2009: 144).

So is the scenario of the pre-service teacher training programs conducted by the universities mostly for secondary and higher secondary levels. The graduates complete the courses, attend the practice teaching and then go to the schools to teach there. Recently, NCED also conducted ten month competency based in-service secondary level teacher training program in core subject areas of English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies and Health and Population Education. The pre-service training conducted by the universities are often the campus based and once the students graduate from the institution, the university does not have any provision to establish contact with them anymore and the university system is unaware of their performance at the school level. This might have created a gap between what is taught at the university and what teachers are doing in schools.

NCED carried out a study in 1998 with a view “to critically examine the various stages involved in the primary teacher training system and document how each of the stages is contributing to the overall effectiveness of the training” (NCED, 1998). This study identified some gaps in the teacher training policy and implementation weaknesses. The findings revealed that the key actors of the training ‘the teachers’ were not consulted in the training policy design and implementation modality which resulted into the lack of ownership of the training by the teachers. The training was mostly top-down and supply driven rather-than demand driven “need of teacher training is not adequately and appropriately addressed in the School Improvement

Plan (SIP) and District Education Plan (DIP)". Obviously, if the training is offered from the top without actually assessing the actual needs of the teachers, it will not yield the desirable results. Therefore, the teachers were not found serious in attending the training and its implementation thereafter.

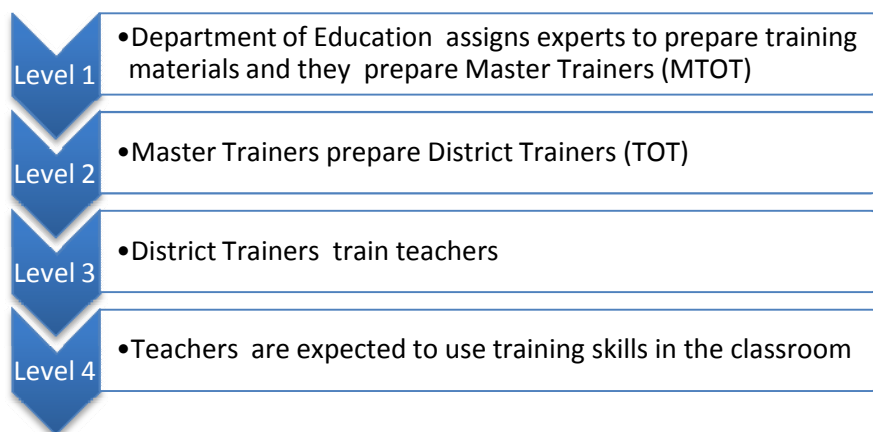
Similarly, poor physical facilities, lack of motivation and search of part-time jobs due to low salary of teachers and lack of preparation time for classes were identified as the main causes of poor performance of the trained teachers. Interestingly, the study concluded "Overall, training delivery seems satisfactory. However, teaching delivery has not been satisfactory, which is an issue of transfer. For this several factors can be attributed to the transfer of training skills".

Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development (CERID) conducted a study in 2002 entitled *Effective Classroom Teaching/Learning* with a view to document the situation of the use of curricular materials and transfer of training skills for classroom delivery in a small sample of 16 schools of the three districts of Nepal. The study found that;

Training provides teachers with skills and practice (techniques) for teaching preparation (lesson plan, materials collection), teaching methods, instructional materials use/construction, and evaluation. These relevant skills acquired during training were not used during classroom delivery in most of the cases in the observed classes. Training manuals cover methods of classroom organizations, ways to enhance classroom environment, proper use of blackboard, various methods and use of group techniques, students' attendance board, testing. These skills (in the training manual) are yet to be translated widely in the classroom (CERID, 2002).

Another study carried out by CERID (2003) focused on the cascading model of the teacher training in which the training is designed by the experts at the center, Master Trainers Training (MTOT) is conducted at the center and these Master Trainers train the trainers (TOT) at the district level. The trainers then run teacher training program at the school level in different clusters through the resource centers (RCs). The study looked at all these layers of teacher training and looked at the performance of the teachers at the school level in order to assess the impact of the training in teachers' performance. This study found the mixed modality of training delivery by different trainers in the same training provider.

CASCADING MODEL OF TEACHER TRAINING



This study shows the problem at the training delivery level. In the cascading model, it is also difficult to make sure that what was intended by the expert while preparing the training materials goes to the teachers at the training level simply because of the many layers between who prepare the training materials and the ultimate recipients at the school level. A study conducted by NCED also confirms this, “there is (a) room for dilution as well as misinterpretation/distortion in the cascade model (NCED, 2000a: 33-34). The same study also records “weakness was found in MTOT as well as misinterpretation or dilution in spite some of the strengths.”

A study carried out by the Department of Education (DOE) in 2006 found that “trainees’ participation before the training was completely missing which hindered transfer of training. Similarly, there was no contact between training stakeholders after the training. This is another reason for low rate of transfer of training” (DOE, 2006: 23). This shows that the training was top-down and supply driven rather than needs based. Also, “trainees do not use training resource materials provided to them because they are not obliged to use them. Nobody cares whether they implement learning from the training as well as teaching resources provided to them in training. There is no reward for good performer and punishment for poor performer” (DOE, 2006: 25). This kind of situation poses a serious motivational issue among the teachers regarding the training. Also, the study has pointed out the flaws in the design of the training as the trainees teachers’ participation was lacking in the planning phase of the training.

Thapa (2007) studied the transfer of training among primary level trained teachers in three districts of Nepal and the findings he has drawn are alarming. Though there are some positive indicators such as some

teachers began their classes with some motivation activities and teachers tried to encourage students to ask questions during the lesson, most of the findings related to the skills that the teachers learned during the training are shocking. For example, the study has shown that about 90 percent of the teachers who are trained do not prepare lesson plans and only a few of them (16%) prepare teaching materials (p. 93). Similarly, only 30 percent of the teachers summarized the lesson at the end of class (p. 125). The study also shows that

there is a lack of relevance of many of the training components to the real need of the teachers and the demands of the actual classroom situations they might face, for example, innovative as well as interactive teaching in a large class size has not been exercised (Thapa, 2007: 107).

A situation analysis study of the Faculty of Education (FOE) of TU (Bista, 2002) indicates that the FOE is not functioning the way it was doing as a College of Education (COE) in the early years of its establishment. The COE “graduates played an important role in the development of education system as a whole (in the country)”. A study report indicates that the teachers and teacher educators produced by the COE acted as educators and local community organizers and made significant contribution to bring about social and educational awareness throughout the country. But the current Faculty of Education (then College of Education) has now been viewed not as an institution with that fame as it had before and the performance of the faculty seems to have gone down. The glorious history of FOE has now eroded and its status is now different. The report says,

FOE shares its fate with many other publicly financed institutions in the country. Excessive centralization, poor management, weak leadership, lack of vision, under-funding, extreme politicization, a low quality of teaching force, unmotivated and poorly committed teaching and administrative staff, inefficiency and gross under-utilization of available resources, academically unmotivated and unprepared students, irrelevant and obsolete curriculum, very poor library system, an examination system which only promotes rote learning, instructional methods which only kill students’ creativity and analytic ability, very low time-on-task due to teacher and student irregularity, all of these signal that the problems facing the FOE are serious. There is no evidence to be assured that FOE campuses have the institutional capacity to provide high quality teacher education that the education system of the country requires, let alone higher academic studies and research in the field of education (FOE 1998 in Bista, 2002: 10).

Teaching Practice which is a part of the training program is yet another issue that the teachers pointed out as a big issue of teacher training. The author of this article carried out a small study to record the observation of

the B.Ed. teaching practice students in the year 2001. The findings of the study were shocking. The teaching practice

has been a meaningless ritual rather than a learning experience. The student teachers do not get required amount of preparation for teaching before they go for practice teaching. The students do not get enough chance to practice the teaching skills in their campuses while receiving training. It seems that neither the teachers nor the students are found to be very serious in this matter. The supervision seems to be very weak and the feedback from the internal supervisors is minimum or virtually non-existent (Gautam, 2001).

The trainers do not seem to have been sincere in supervising their students during practicum. A small study carried out by FOE shows that

the teachers who are trained (from the university) have not been able to demonstrate positive changes in classroom instruction. The head teacher says that the training of the teacher has not been serious in enriching the capacity of the teachers. The training program according to him are rather rituals (FOE, 2003: 21).

This situation presents that there is some problem in the teacher training programs organized by the universities.

The pre-service teacher education programs which are based on the university system and higher education have been criticized on the ground that they have not been able to essentially capture the actual working conditions of the teachers in schools. A UNESCO study mentions that

the typical pre-service program [in the USA] is a collection of unrelated courses and field experiences. Most induction programs have no curriculum and mentoring is a highly individualistic process. Professional development consists of discrete and disconnected events. Nor do we have anything that resembles a coordinated system and the pedagogy mirrors the pedagogy of higher education where lectures, discussions, and seat-based learning are coins to the realm. Too often teacher educators do not practice what they preach. Classes are either too abstracts to challenge deeply held beliefs or too superficial to foster deep understanding. All of this reinforces the belief that the [elementary and secondary] classroom is the place to learn to teach (Feiman-Nemser, 2001:1020 cited in Schwille and Dembele, 2007: 31).

Similar conclusions were drawn in a research carried out to study the effectiveness of a Secondary Teacher Education Graduate Program in Turkey. The study concludes

there are many problems concerning the program such as high quotas of students, unsatisfactory selection of students, lack of motivation for the program and the courses both among the students and the faculty members, insufficiency of the faculty members in the areas of knowledge and pedagogy, inefficiencies in the management of the courses (especially the practical courses), lack of specific institutions and persons responsible for the program (Unver, Bumen and Basbay (2010: 1807).

This shows that pre-service teacher education programs suffer from multiple problems and they have not been able to yield the desirable results.

WAY FORWARD

The earlier sections show that there are so many issues in teacher training in Nepal and there could be many more which are still unexplored. In this context, it is now high time that the training providers take the training issue seriously and make the training program more effective if desirable results are expected. Based on the discussion of the issues identified by the previous studies and the experience of the author as a teacher and a trainer both in pre-service setting at the university and in-service setting in the Ministry of Education (NCED and DOE), some of the considerations to be made to improve the teacher training in Nepal by the teacher training providers and the government of Nepal are outlined below:

- (a) In case of pre-service training, the teachers should be given the choices of attending the training or opt for the alternative job. Only those teachers who are really committed to work in schools and help children learn should be selected for the training. Those who do not want to change should be given a choice of alternative business or they should be given early retirement.
- (b) Training should be linked with the teacher's performance and the Resource Persons should schedule visits to the schools, observe the trained teachers' class and evaluate their performance.
- (c) Teacher training program should include the grassroots experiences of the teachers. Rather than delivering the training by the trainers, teacher training sessions should be focused on the discussion of the issues and challenges faced by the teachers in their classrooms. Teachers should be encouraged to analyze the issues and identify the strategies to address them.
- (d) Since the teachers have to deal with the diverse group of students from various linguistic, cultural and socio-economic background, teacher training programs could be seen as a way to introduce teachers about the cognitive complexity, multi-focal worldviews, intercultural sensitivity, ethics and self-efficacy (Hill-Jackson & Lewis, 2010, p. 71).
- (e) In-service teacher training programs are ideally considered as a component of the holistic development of the school rather than an isolated event for a particular teacher based on the allocated quota. "Adequate physical facilities added with basic furniture, labs, teaching aids and materials did influence the quality of teaching-learning process. QEP presented another good example in this regard" (QEP, 2001).

- (f) Creating the interface between theory and practice is extremely important. Teachers are often told what to do by the ‘expert’ instead of engaging them in doing things by themselves. Teachers do have the ability (might need guidance) to create the pedagogy of particularity, practicality and possibility by creating the conditions for teachers to “ (a) facilitate the advancement of a context-sensitive language education based on a true understanding of local linguistic, sociocultural, and political particularities; (b) rupture the reified role relationship between theorists and practitioners by enabling teachers to construct their own theory of practice; and (c) tap the sociopolitical consciousness that participants bring with them in order to aid their quest for identity formation and social transformation” (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, p. 537) .
- (g) The teachers’ role could be considered more to inspire students to identify their own potentials and work on them. The training is, thus, expected to help teachers to find the ways and strategies to help their students in their learning journey and teachers need to be fully aware of who the learners are, what their needs are, what the community at large expects from education in the school, how the community dynamics affect the school environment and familiarity with the local culture and context.
- (h) Creating the learning community of teachers is something that has been popular in teacher learning. This could be integrated in the in-service teacher training programs to prepare them “to create, sustain, and educate in a community of learners” (Shulman & Shulman, 2004). By engaging in the community the learning becomes social and collective (Lave, 2010).
- (i) The teachers need to have the opportunities for continuous learning through research, reflection and on-going professional development activities. “Teachers report that they learn a great deal from analyzing their own and others’ practice against standards that reflect accomplished teaching, and from developing a portfolio based on teaching artifacts (videotapes, lesson plans, student work) and reflections on their work” (Darling-Hammond & Ball,, 1997, p. 20). Teachers need to be encouraged to maintain their teaching portfolio and analyze it from time to time. Such portfolio “are representative of the larger shift toward constructivism in education and provide a systematic method for the ongoing improvement of the teacher education program” (Aksit, 2016, p. 113).

- (j) Integration of technology and sharing their practices with their colleagues foster the bond among the teachers and the learning community becomes more meaningful and good learning experience. Teacher training programs should, thus, integrate technology as a part of the training program and teachers should be trained to use technology for their lessons in class.
- (k) There are different types of teachers working in the schools and they have varied training needs. One-size-fits-all approach of teacher training based on the cascading model might not work for all of them. Thus, use of multi-model training for different types of teachers could support the teachers to learn what they need in their class. The case studies collected from Sub-Saharan Africa (Mattson, 2006) and the experience of fast-track teacher training models in South Sudan (Lynd, 2005) could serve the references to review for Nepal and find its own models that address the exigencies.

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