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THE PRACTICES OF TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR ENGLISH TEACHERS IN NEPAL

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ABSTRACT

The Teacher Professional Development (TPD) Program in Nepal is a very much ambitious program aimed at encouraging the teachers for their professional development. This paper aims to study and analyze the situation of implementation of the TPD program to train the English teachers of Nepal in relation to the policy guidelines of the program and to suggest some ways to improve the implementation of the TPD program so that the great resources in the form of investment in training the teachers ultimately result in the improvement of the English language teaching learning situation of Nepal. The results show that the program is very nice and designed perfectly for the Nepalese teachers' professional development but there are many lacunas in different steps of the implementation of the program which seem to result in the failure of the TPD program in case of ELT teachers training as the transfer of training was found to be very stumpy.

Keywords: ELT - Instructional Counseling - TPD - Teacher training - Transfer of training.

INTRODUCTION

In Nepal, a new educational project School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) was implemented to improve the whole education system of Nepal in 2009. This program has restructured the education system making only two levels, 8+4 years schooling system. Most important thing was that it has started a new professional development model for the school teachers of the government-aided schools. National Centre for Educational

Development (NCED) was given the responsibility of implementing the policy of TPD describing this as Demand Based Training (DBT). TPD is an approach that enables teachers to realize change and act as change agents. Teachers through TPD develop their competences. Competence is an integrated form of knowledge, skill, attitude and behavior. The main intent of the TPD program is to refresh, strengthen and update the knowledge and skills of teachers so that there will be visible change in the classroom and help for the improvement of learning achievement (Guskey, 2002). A report published by ADB (2017) states that TPD training programs are very flexible, and content will vary based on the needs of the teachers. The modules are developed and approved locally. Typical training content includes strengthening subject matter knowledge and teaching skills where the teachers encounter difficulties, classroom delivery techniques, use of teaching and learning materials, and so on.

In the TPD Process, the head teachers are trained to collect the demands or needs of the teachers and forward them to the Resource Centres (RC) or Lead Resource Centres (LRC) or Educational Training Centres (ETC) of their district. The ten-day package is divided into three parts. In the first part of the module, the teachers are trained for five days in face-to-face mode, which is called Training Workshop. The second part of the module is called Self Study Exercise and the teachers are sent to their schools for three days for self-experience where they have to accomplish the given tasks within 20 to 30 days period. The third part of the module is called Instructional Counseling and it is of two days duration especially for counseling. In this phase, the trainers go to the schools of the trainees to observe how well the tasks of the three-day sessions are implemented and to evaluate the tasks of the trainee teachers in a meeting with the head teachers and other teachers. They also provide counseling and give the certificate of the completion of the ten-day module of TPD. This module for teacher training is called training for teachers' professional development. It is mandatory for all the teachers of government-aided schools to take at least three modules of ten-days each for getting one month of teacher professional development module within the duration of five years.

The module was revised after the implementation of SSDP and the program was slightly modified. The TPD Framework 2015 states that the efforts have been made to bring change in teacher education and teaching/learning culture. TPD training focuses on teachers' self-innovation and continuous learning. The teachers are now taken as assets, having a lot experiential knowledge and get short-term need based training guided by

growth model. TPD training has two modules, each of 15 days which are divided into two parts: First, ten days training workshop which is face to face based on the training materials designed by trainers/ roster trainers at Education Training Centre; Second, five days school based self-study exercise, a project based, when every teacher makes and implements their teaching improvement plan and performs and writes reports of two assigned tasks - either project works or action researches based on their needs; and instructional counseling which is an on-site support to the teachers. The same design of training is prescribed for second modules. Though the program has been conducted in Nepal and much has been invested in it, the situation of English language teaching is still not satisfactory.

THE PROBLEM

The English language teaching and learning situation in Nepal has not yet been able to produce the desired results as the society complains about poor English results in the national examinations. Even the graduates are often seen to have very poor communication skills in English. In Nepal, there are compulsory English courses from school level curricula to the bachelor level first year and sometimes in the second year as well. TU and other university curricula claim that in the bachelor level and above, irrespective of the discipline, the courses are taught in the English medium. Nevertheless, the students do not feel easy to speak English, read and comprehend the texts or instructions, nor can they communicate fluently in English.

Such situation is due to the lack of effective teaching because it is the only source of learning a English in the rural Nepali context where the students are in constraints of resources and good exposure to English. This situation can be improved by training the teachers effectively and making them able to teach properly. But, the trainings of English teachers have not been proved efficacious in the Nepali context. In addition, the policies regarding the training of teachers have constantly been changing without making proper analysis and evaluation of the previous policies. The attitudes of the teachers towards the trainings have also been found to be less positive towards their professional development. Researches show that the trainings are not being successful in changing the attitudes of the teachers towards their profession, students, institute as well as the society and nation. In a research report submitted to the Education Support Advisory Team of Danida, Wagley et al. (2003) claim that the teachers who were trained had not been able to

demonstrate the positive changes in the classroom instruction. The head teachers said that the training of the teachers had not been serious in enriching the capacity of the teachers. The training programs according to them, were rather ritual. Again, the teachers were monitored in the classroom to see whether they were able to translate the skills they receive in the training program. They said that there was a gap between the training and actual classroom situations. The training contents had not been able to address the real classroom issues such as large classes, heterogeneity of the students, working in difficult circumstances, use of locally available materials etc. The DEOs said that the trainees themselves should be competent first (p. 13). They further mentioned that the trainings so far had been criticized, as there was no difference in the performance of trained and untrained teachers. This had been because of the four factors: training had not been comprehensive; it was not need based, it had not focused on practical applications, and training skills had not been monitored in a scientific basis (p. 25). In the same vein, Wagley et al. (1999) also recommended that the focus of the training should not only be on the content and pedagogical skills. It should be on changing the attitude of teachers to accept teaching as profession, arousing their interest in participating in training programs for professional development, tailoring the training in such a way that it should be directed towards implementation of skills in classroom practice and motivating the teachers to be accountable towards their roles and responsibilities.

Hence, the situation of teacher training does not seem to be satisfactory. It is not the only aspect of the training phenomenon, which is not systematic; there are dissatisfactions in all aspects of the teacher training phenomena. The trainers do not believe that the teachers are capable of grasping the things discussed and practiced in the trainings. The authority does not believe that the transfer of training is satisfactory. The teachers blame all the system and say that the trainers are not capable of training them successfully and the trainings are rituals only as they do not bring change in the classroom practices. The head teachers think that the trainings are just the waste of time for teachers, as they themselves are not changed even after the trainings. They also blame the policy makers that they made instable and unsuccessful programs thinking that they could bring positive changes in the Nepali teachers. This made me think seriously that a study around these problems related to the policy, practice and the future directions of English language teacher training of the basic school teachers in Nepal would be worth researching. As the basic school level of education is the foundation of whole education of a person and the

nation, it is necessary to improve and make it more systematic. This actually encouraged me to study the TPD program of the basic school English teachers.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Teacher training in Nepal is one of the most studied areas of research which is studied by many individual researchers, government agencies and non-government organizations. The findings of the research provide the guidelines for the policy makers, ELT practitioners and researchers. For this research as well, I have studied and analyzed many research reports and theses and paved my way for the research. Among many research works some of them are presented here.

Jacob and Lefgren (2002) studied the impact of teacher training on student achievement: quasi-experimental evidence from school reform efforts in Chicago, which described the teacher training impacts on the student achievement. Recent school reform efforts in Chicago provided an opportunity to examine in-service training using a quasi-experimental research design. Using regression discontinuity strategy to estimate the effect of teacher training on mathematics and reading performance of elementary students, they found that marginal increases in in-service training had no statistically or academically significant effect on either reading or mathematics achievement, suggesting that modest investments in staff development might not be sufficient to increase the achievement of elementary school children in high poverty schools.

In the same way, emphasizing the need of school supervision as one of the components of teacher training, Bhandari (2003) in an article 'Enhancing quality education through school supervision: a model for discussion' described that a principal factor that affected the student achievements was the quality of teaching. Teaching quality depended upon the kind of teachers having adequate academic preparation, pedagogical skills, professional commitment, significant teacher attrition rate and motivation. Bhattarai and Gautam (2005) published a research article presenting a review of changing status of the English language situation in the Nepali context and the changing perspectives revealed through the curriculum, textbooks and the ELT market. Analyzing the situation, they tried to convey the message that the teachers had to modify their skills and knowledge according to the changes in the area of science and technology and language use. They further pointed out that the English teachers at present need to equip

themselves with the information technology (IT) skills in order to avail the vast treasure of the literature in ELT.

Likewise, Khaniya (2003) described that his involvement in two major activities in education had led him to look into why even after making enormous efforts and investment in primary education in Nepal, it had not been possible to enhance the learning achievement of the students to the desired level. He pointed out that it is teachers who made classroom and school effective so they needed to be equipped with knowledge for the subject matter and pedagogic skills through a comprehensive teacher training program. A majority of teachers was found to be untrained and even if some were trained, they had a short period of training which meant that teachers did not have sufficient knowledge and skills to perform the given task.

In this regard, Wagley et al. (2003) pointed out that the teachers who were trained had not been able to demonstrate the positive changes in the classroom instruction. The head teachers said that the training of the teachers had not been serious in enriching the capacity of the teachers. The training programs according to them were rather ritual. Again the teachers were monitored in classroom to see whether they were able to translate the skills they received in the training program. They said that there was a gap between the training and actual classroom situations. They further pointed out that the training content had not been able to address the real classroom issues such as large classes, heterogeneity of the students, working in difficult circumstances, use of locally available materials etc.

Nepal Millennium Development Goals Progress Report (2010) produced by MOE and UNICEF appreciated the teacher training procedures in Nepal and pointed out that the teacher training had been intensified in an effort to improve the quality of education, with a focus on child-friendly, student-centered teaching-learning, and gender and cultural sensitization. More than 87 percent (then) of primary teachers were fully or partially trained. The School Sector Reform Program (SSRP) 2009–2015 had taken further steps in improving access, equity and quality within the system to meet the Education for All (EFA) and MDGs, with a focus on meeting the diverse learning needs of children in different social and cultural contexts. It had defined free education to cover most of the direct costs of schooling (e.g., free textbooks, and no fees for admission, tuition and examinations). It had introduced the concept of ‘entitlement’ to support the education of children from marginalized communities, and affirmative action policies for recruitment

of teachers from marginalized groups. In order to improve the quality of education, it had emphasized the provision of 'minimum enabling conditions' for every school; a national framework of norms and standards; and the integrated development and management of teachers (MOE 2008).

In the same way, Parajuli and Das (2013) described the teacher training in Nepal and pointed out that the ministry of education had declared that almost all teachers were trained. Most of the teachers participated in different refresher training and curriculum for effective teaching strategies given by GOs, NGOs and INGOs. The things learned were not transferred to the real classroom due to lack of teaching materials and teacher's motivation. Even till now teachers were found using the traditional talk and chalk method and made the students inculcate the things that had been shared in the classroom. Exclusion and disparity based on gender and caste were culturally reproduced through traditional pedagogical approaches which further decreased the interaction between elite and disadvantaged groups of society. Thus, the purpose of education should be teacher empowerment.

In this way, many research works were carried out on various aspects of teacher training and they were much comprehensive. They provided useful feedback for future development as well as systematization of the teacher training programs. But this study tries to analyze the TPD process for the English teachers which will study and analyse the TPD program and how it is implemented for training the English teachers.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Though the study was conducted with the aim of studying the complete TPD phenomena in Nepal specially focusing on English language teaching, this paper was prepared with the following objectives:

- a. To analyze the implementation of TPD training of English teachers in Nepal.
- b. To study the transfer of TPD training in English language teaching.
- c. To suggest the ways of improving ELT training in the Nepali context.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research paper was based on a study of the total TPD phenomena. For this the tools for data gathering, participants and the process of data gathering are briefly

presented here. I purposefully selected five resource centres (RC) of three districts namely Rupandehi, Rasuwa and Arghakhanchi. In this research, the major informants were the trained teachers teaching English in the primary level schools, their head teachers and the trainers who trained them. I purposefully selected 20 teachers four from Rasuwa and eight from Arghakhanchi and Rupandehi each. I selected ten head teachers of the schools from where the sample teachers were selected and five ELT trainers of the five resource centres (RCs). Thirty two trained teachers from the five TPD sessions were also selected for the focus group discussion (FGD).

I visited the DEOs, contacted the focal persons of TPD and discussed the plan of my study and their training program and time. Then I visited the RC and the prospective teachers who could be selected for the TPD. I visited their schools, contacted the HTs and the participant teachers and observed their classes, recorded their interview. I also observed them during training, watched them in the FGDs as well as observed their project work phase and counseling parts and the classes after the TPD training.

STUDY RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After studying all the main aspects of TPD program for more than a year in the selected RCs and schools of three districts of Nepal and I found the following facts related to the TPD program. The TPD training, which was expected to be very important to improve the education system of Nepal, was not found to have been implemented as per the expectations of the policy guidelines. At the implementation level, the TPD program was not found to be following the guidelines of the program, which adversely affected the ambitious TPD program resulting in the traditional like unmanaged training meant for certification only.

TPD was not planned and managed properly as it could have been. The participants were not informed of it in advance. Most of the participants did not recollect what they had written in the demand collection form completed long ago. This indicates that the demand forms were not collected and processed regularly and the TPD program was not carefully managed that resulted in unsatisfactory transfer of the training. In most cases, the modules (content booklets) for the training were not prepared in advance and wherever prepared, those were not provided to the participant teachers. The trainers themselves were not found to be well prepared, the TOT for the roster trainers was also found not regularly conducted, which caused problems in the training management. The

trend of selecting and sending the teachers for the TPD training was also not found systematic and planned. Most importantly, I found many teachers who had never taught English in their career history were also sent to take the English training. However, they were supposed to get the certificate of teaching English without teaching it. This indicates that the teachers have the interest to be trained as per the government rules and regulations. As such, they were compelled to attend the English teacher training even if they have not taught it.

On the other hand, the training halls for the TPD were found to be of different types; some were suitable for it whereas some were not at all. This shows that there was no adequate budget for the development of physical facilities of the training centres; therefore, whatever was in the RCs was used for the TPD. The trainers were found to be good but they did not seem to have adequate time for the preparation of training packages. However, there was a room for proper improvement and development in case of many trainers in the part of their performance. Three of them were found to be doing a double duty: teaching their regular classes in their schools and managing time for the training. This shows that the program does not have the required human resources of their own to train the teachers as a result they are employing senior teachers to manage the trainings. It was also found out that the trainings were normally conducted in the Nepali language. The trainers were of the opinion that the teachers were not able to understand the contents shared in English and so they were compelled to conduct the training in Nepali. With such practice, we can presume the situation of English classes in the schools. Almost all the trainers conducted the trainings in Nepali. This cannot be a plausible reason as to why the training is not imparted in English. Many of the participants took leave from the sessions very frequently and some remained absent without information. Some of them joined the training on the third day only, which raises issues of discipline of the trainee teachers. All these activities raised questions against the management of the training at the RC level. The teaching materials available for the training were generally the board markers and some sheets of news print paper. Those were not sufficient for the trainers. At present, the teachers need some soft skills as well as computer skills to be used in the classroom teaching. There are computers and internet facilities in many of the schools. The teachers have to be able to search some common online resources and be able to use them for classroom teaching. Techno-based materials were not used during the training period.

The most important part of the TPD training is the project work and counseling. Almost all the teachers reported that they had never experienced the activities. Mostly the concerned people did not visit the schools. Even if they visited, they would just see the reports, TIP etc., in many cases, their tasks were not evaluated in their schools, and there were no counseling sessions at all. This indicates the lack of responsibility in the concerned trainers who are supposed to visit the school for counseling. I realized that most of the face-to-face part of the training was done by the teachers and the counseling part was taken by the DEO officials and the RPs who do not have time to do so. They normally call the teachers to the RCs to evaluate their project works and declare that the TPD training was completed. The trainee teachers became less active when the teachers, as trainers, visited their schools in place of the SIs from the DEO. The teachers' attitude changes when a teacher as the trainer visits the school for counseling. Such tendency of the teachers in case of following the TPD norms ultimately upsets the ELT situation and ultimately achievement of the students. Moreover, the transfer of the training skills was found to be hopeless as the observation of the classes of the trained teachers showed. This resulted in thinking of the waste of the huge financial resources in the name of teacher training in Nepal.

The findings mentioned here show that the preparation for the TPD training was not properly accomplished which resulted in the selection of teachers hastily, making training unmanaged. The TPD impact on the teachers was found to be less efficacious. There is no proper coordination among the HTs, RPs and the trainers as well as the teachers to participate in the TPD program. As a result, they sometimes select teachers, who have never taught English, for the training of the English teachers. I also found that the demands of the teachers were not addressed properly; as such the TPD became less systematic than it was in its initial years of implementation.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this way, the research findings related to the implementation of TPD program for English teachers presented here cannot satisfy the society and the concerned authority in comparison to the investment in the teacher training and professional development sectors. The transfer of the teacher trainings in the actual classrooms is the crux of the training programs which was found to be hopeless and very few changes were observed. Much resource from the government of Nepal, international donor agencies, professional

organizations like NELTA, and many other NGOs have been invested in the improvement and development of ELT. But the outcomes from all those efforts are still not satisfactory. Change is a natural and gradual process and the transition from one kind of practices to another are really difficult and time and resource consuming. There are a lot of rays of improvement in the area of ELT in Nepal and almost all are aware of the need to change them and develop their skills of teaching by updating their professional knowledge and skills. Let's hope for the better ELT situation in the days to come as a result of successful implementation of the teacher education programs and their professional development programs.

All the research works accomplished bear some implications which make them more valuable and important. In this paper, I have minutely studied and analyzed the implementation of the TPD training at the grass root level to record its visible strength and lacuna, particularly in the pre-training preparations, the training activities and the training management for the different phases of the TPD training. The observations of classes of the fully trained teachers showed that the transfer of training of the TPD program much less than expected. These findings will be the guidelines for the practice level officials and trainers to successfully implement the TPD training. The trainee teachers, their head teachers and the trainers, RPs, SIs as well as the DEO officials can draw insights from this study for the successful implementation of the TPD training. The findings will not only be helpful in improving the teacher training processes but also in improving the classroom practices of the English teachers and increasing the transfer of training.

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