

Educational Policy and Teacher Professional Development: A Thematic Review

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Abstract

Educational policy is a key factor to reinforce quality education in every nation. The policy always grows under the influence of global and local trends and needs. This article explores policy formation mechanisms and concentrates on the relationship between teacher professional developments with educational policy. It highlights major strategies of teacher professional development in the educational policy of Nepal. It uses thematic articles and research articles to discuss the policy issues from the global and local levels with issues like language policies and educational policy. It uses National Educational Policy 2076 and SSDP 2016-2023 for a detailed analysis of teacher professional development strategies projected and secured at the national level. It has used interpretive mode to discuss the teacher professional development strategies projected in national educational policy 2076.

Keywords: educational policy, multilingualism, teacher education, and teacher professional development

Introduction

This article reflects on educational policy and teachers' professional development visions projected and practiced at the national level. It reviews theoretical assumptions and policy practices in a global context to relate and discuss the National Educational policy of Nepal. In general educational policy has an influence from political ideologies, besides, it also replicates cultural value systems. The educational policy becomes a keystone to future generational linguistic and knowledge-oriented growth. So, this article argues that educational policy paves a way to lead and achieve educational outcomes that is dependent to teachers and their professional development. So, it concentrates on educational policy in relation to teachers' professional development. It also presents a debate on language policy to reflect policy issues in connection to teachers' professional growth.

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Discursive values of Educational Policy

Educational policy is normally designed in nation state to regulate uniformity in educational achievement. In this regard, policy is taken as a design for education outcomes, whereas there is debate on educational policy to be taken as process too. Bell and Stevenson (2006) argue that policy is a process rather than a product as it “is not something that happens exclusively ‘up there,’ but is something that happens ‘down here’ too” (p. 10). They claim that product and process have simultaneous relations as policy implementation in schools and other educational sectors become important to achieve learning outcomes as predicted by the policy. It clarifies that policy has a two-dimensional process to regulate national policy where school, teachers and other educational stakeholders in implementation level contribute in generating issues to be addressed in policy; and there is government to plan and endorse policy. In this sense government can incorporate social, cultural and political ideologies as per effective practice in ground level. Bell and Stevenson (2006) discuss policy formation and implementation as a policy into practice model. They explain that policy formation is wider as it comprises dominant discourse in socio-political environment, and adopts dominant trends as for strategic direction. Similarly, policy implementation undergoes with organizational principles and operational practices where policy is supposed to function. In this regard educational policy has no beginning and ending demarcation as it is in a cyclical process. In this process, they find that socio-cultural contexts have a significant contribution in diversifying the policy making since global factors contribute to streamlining the global uniformity and national factors diversify as per the local education needs. Even more, in implementation level the role of institutional policy agendas may differ while addressing needs and growth of human resources. The institutional level policy functions with human and other resources, and educational stakeholders in a direct contact. It shows that educational policy has global, local and institutional influences.

A trend of the process of educational policy exhibits the source of fact and information for revision of educational policy. Wiseman (2010) mentions that the process of educational policy-making relies on evidence-based content that looks for ‘what works’ or ‘the best practices’. In this process of educational policy-making educational researches mainly relies on empirical or quantitative data and information that specify the best practices of specific context and time. A critique of such a policymaking

process is that it could not provide different contextually appropriate products of policy. However, evidence-based policy-making approach relies on empirical data so that the educational quality could be measured with desired educational outcomes. It is taken as quality mark since it provides a chain of reasoning to relate quality performance of students to institutional achievement. Similarly, it also provides evidence of disparity in educational practices with a clear comparison between high achievers and low achievers. In educational policy researches evidence-based practice has brought different productive educational policies too. Wiseman (2010) illustrates that evidence-based policymaking has contributed to the product value of education as in the Education for All program, policy of girls' education movement, and so on. Nevertheless, educational policymakers need to address multiple issues that empirical data cannot address, for example, the issue of multilingual context, localized learning behaviour, indigenous knowledge system, and so on. In this way the debated of making educational policy 'up there' in reference to 'down there' becomes referential to have progressive educational policy design in a continuous and cyclical manner including all educational stakeholders.

Language Policy Making as an Educational Dimension

Language policy revolves around global languages and local languages. The issue of global language comes as a matter of global communication for existence in global economy, whereas issues of local language is related to identity. In the context of English language teaching, language policy becomes an important factor of educational function. In relation to English language teacher, language policy becomes ideologically influencing component since Spolsky (2012) states that language policy is "an officially mandated set of rules for language use and form within a nation-state" (p. 3). The educational delivery depends on monolingual teaching or multilingual teaching issue as defined by national educational policy. The nation-state incorporates socio-political standards as for representative value. Language is related to demographic situations, nationalism, ethnicity, identity and other power dynamics in a nation (Spolsky, 2012). In postmodern context language is not only the matter lingua franca but related to socio-political identity. The later trend of language policy could not proceed with a notion of nation-state homogeneous language identity as it has to incorporate other speech communities and linguistic rights of minorities.

The historical development of language policy is always rotating in terms of identifying nation with a single language and/or preserving diversified languages of the nation. Jernudd and Nekvapil (2012) discuss that Académie française, a language academy in 1635 (in late pre-modern phase) aimed at bringing unity and order in state through unity and order in language use and form. The French model of language planning and policy contributed to make language a significant element in European movements as these movement oriented towards legitimizing social and linguistic demands in and after 1860s. They mention language planning of Soviet Union in 1920s and 1930s, which had to incorporate and provide recognition to 100 ethnic languages, focused on a right of self-determination in their ethnic languages. During same time, the Prague linguistic school brought the language cultivation process by using key concepts of language planning by focusing norm, function, and intellectualization of language. It used the norms of flexible stability of the standard language and it also promoted functionality of language dimension as in Swedish language policy. The classical language planning in 1960s and 1970s focused on researches on socio-linguistic dimensions. Jernudd and Nekvapil (2012) claim on a premise that the language planning takes place in national-state that plans for development of entire society. They elaborate the criticism against classical language planning in 1980s as critics pointed out that it promoted social and economic inequality in developing nations. There were existence of multiple language uses that represented different socio-cultural value systems. The debate on their representation in national policies became important influencing through educational practices.

The concept of plurality of languages become central in postmodern age that values respect and recognition of languages in local and global contexts. It has brought the concept of language management as a process with communicative dimension and socio-cultural aspects of language that strengthened the researches on second language teaching and learning. In this way the shift of nation-state language policy to multicultural language policy or unilingualism to plurilingualism has been philosophical debate in language policy. Reaume and Pinto (2012) point out the key concept of plurilingualism that assumes language is a repository of knowledge in relation to its indigenous culture. However, the concern is about feasibility of such preservation of languages and individual freedom to contribute content and linguist elements in particular language. They claim that language is a living ecosystem which incorporates evolution and adaptation with certain changes. It is more appropriate concern in this recent linguistic debate, as Garcia (2012) explains that in 21st century

the plurilingual and pluricultural context has created complex phenomena. Language policy needs to address the relative values of ethnic identity and linguistic identity. It directly effects the performances and pedagogical practices of a language teacher. A language teacher has to grow with linguistic consciousness to adapt and appropriate teaching a particular language. In this way educational policy depends on dynamism of language policy and socio-political ideologies. 5

Multilingualism and Language Issues in South Asia

The historical development of multilingual society, according to Aronin, Fishman, Singleton and Ó Laoire (2013), has gone through certain changes. In the past, multilingual context was there with the limited and purposive scenario as in the context of having slaves. In the present multilingualism has been “an inherent and salient property of post-modern society” (p. 4). They discuss three properties of multilingualism as suffusiveness, complexity, and liminality. Suffusiveness refers to the present context of a society where every facet of life is dependent on the arrangement of multilingual individuals. The complexity of multilingualism is visible in language policies of all nations where the social, historical, and geographical factors are intertwined. Similarly, liminality refers to different dimensions of multilingualism like the case of immigrants. These properties of multilingual society are relevant to define educational concern of language in South Asia, even more, the issue of English has been integrated into multilingual educational practices.

In terms of English language planning and policy, most of the South Asian countries have taken it as the main foreign language, official language, and even medium of instruction to the students of minority communities (Kirkpatrick & Bui, 2016). They argue that the spread of English in this region is to have a belief on English as a solution to social issues like unemployment, class division and poverty. So, these region adopts English as a medium of instruction in its educational policy. They claim that the spread of English has established a value that language is a powerful tool to address deep seated social values and social issues. It led educational ministries and policy makers to protect and empower their native and local languages, however, the high level of population intent to have access to English language. English language became a tool for educational business as private schools in this region branded themselves as English medium schools. Kirkpatrick and Bui (2016) further point out the conflicting policy regulations and practice on South Asian countries to protect and promote local

languages and maintain communication and access to global market. The multilingual context of South Asian countries has put the policy makers and academicians into paradoxical plans as in Malaysia they dropped Malay only education system and adopted English as lingua franca; whereas Nepal has multilingual language ideology along with English as a medium of instruction policy.

In this context Malaysian language Kärchner-Ober (2013) argues that policy balances national ideology, pragmatic issue and emotional relationships towards languages. The children grow up with three or more languages and dialects by maintaining Bahasa Malaysia as language of unity. The language policy in Malaysia has kept balanced position between the paradoxical relationship of national language as for unity, and English language to compete global market. Kaplan and Baldauf (2008) discuss some common issues of language policy in Nepal, Japan and Tiwan as they are facing issues related to literacy, English as foreign and/or second language, and giving priorities to minority and local languages. Giri (2015) argues on use of English not only as foreign and/or second language but also as a Nepali language. In this multicultural context the suffusive aspect of language creates different propositions of linguistic identity. The teachers' roles and professionalism gets connected to such diversified linguistic realities and needs. Educational policy needs a flexible and innovative approach in the professional development of teachers in general and of English language teachers in particular.

Educational Policy and Teacher's Professionalism

Educational policy envisions quality education that projects teacher's professionalism as a pivotal agency to lead it. In this regard teacher education and professional development programs are the bases for regulating educational activities. Wisniewski (1987) reflected that the educational achievement in United States in 1980s has a key factor, i.e. involvement of teacher educators in formation teacher education policy as their grounded insights were shifting and they had conflicting political biases while reforming educational policy. The teacher educators had contextualized experiences of the need for teachers so that the educational policy became adaptable to the teachers and conceptualized necessary aspects for professional growth of the teachers. Martin, Kragler, and Frazier (2017) mention that there is an interconnection in purpose between educational policy and teacher's professional development, that is to sustain quality education in school. They further discuss the result of educational policy that

assures teacher's accountability and implementation of quality pedagogy. In this sense teachers become a key factor to get educational mission and vision implemented. Besides, educational policy steps on either institutional theory or sense-making theory. Martin, Kragler, and Frazier (2017) explain that institutional theory comprises teacher's classroom instructional behavior, whereas sense-making theory makes the policy adopt the reality how teachers and/or administrators implement the policy. These theoretical referencing in educational policy concentrates on collaborative effort in attaining learning outcomes. They argue that continuous communication between policymakers and educators can harmonize the professional development of teachers and educational policy, as both consist same goal to have quality learning outcomes. It shows that educational policy needs to strive for quality education by empowering teachers' professionalism.

Similarly, while discussing teacher education policy, Vegas and Ganimian (2013) elaborate it under eight categorical provisions so that teachers' professional development can be attained continuously. They illustrate the teacher policy issues in educational policy as "setting clear expectations; attracting the best into teaching; providing training; matching teachers with students' needs; providing strong principals; monitoring; supporting teachers; and motivating teachers" (p. 2). These provisions are meant to empower teacher's contextualized efficiencies and their performance for quality education, since teachers are central agency for overall educational outcomes.

Educational Policy and Teacher's Professional Development in Nepal

Teachers' professional development has been a key issue in national educational policy of Nepal after the establishment of democracy in Nepal. However, teacher's professional growth is not relevant and sufficient for imparting quality education. A reflection over teacher's professional development programs, made by Asian Development Bank (2017) over TPD in South Asian countries, posits a fact that PD programs in Nepal have been supply-driven rather than designing need-driven programs. It highlights the major policy level improvisations that authenticate teachers' professional development as a need for educational development. Among different provisions for professional development training, the Ministry of Education has regulated a provision for one-year training at least in every five-year interval for teachers. Similarly, the National Center for Educational Development (NCED) has been an agency to cater to teachers' professional development training programs. Universities are providing in-depth pre-

service teacher education programs. It shows that teachers' professional development has been an important focus for educational development in Nepal, however, there a low achievement in it.

In context of Nepal, educational policy is dependent to political ideologies that have been reflected in every educational amendment drafts after political changes. Pandey, KC and Wood (1956) edited The national educational planning commission report (1956) that explains about need of education in Nepal as since 1950 it was realized that education is the most important factor to establish norms of democracy. Before 1950, education was accessible to few people either from high level of political and governmental leaders or for few elite groups. The report mentions the summary of Hugh B. Wood, the Commission's educational consultant, who pointed out teacher as the keystone in educational system and recommended proper professional development programs for teachers. The report portrays Buddhist and Aryan practices of education as strengths of Nepal to incorporate into the educational system. It also provides guidelines to incorporate dynamic, active, and self-directed learning behavior in learners of primary level. So, it envisages the teacher as a guide rather than a lecturer. The educational planning commission report (1956) proposes teaching universities in Nepal and mentions different curricula as teacher education, nursing etc. It also envisioned for the establishment of Teacher College in 1956 to provide trainings, B.Ed. and M. Ed. Programs. It assumes a teacher as an architect of human soul who the teacher should be serious towards professional, humanitarian, collaborative with fellowmen, and with a high sense of serving society. Constitution of Nepal 2015 refers to Act 31, Right to education, that every citizen shall have the right of access to basic education. It also affirms the right to get an education in its mother tongue. It has contextualized the context of multilingual education in Nepal.

Critics on Teacher Professional Development in Educational Policy of Nepal

Teacher's professional development has been a key issue among the educators, since teachers are in the transit point of implementing projected plans and policy. There are critics recommending for strengthening teachers' education and teacher professional development programs for enhancing competence of teachers. In regard to English Language teachers, Sharma and Phyak (2017) claim that in Nepal methodological and linguistic competence of teachers is improving as TPD has been a primary requisite

for every teacher. They raise an issue of critical awareness, mainly socio-political awareness, as an extensive factor of TPD in Nepal; and argue that local socio-political issue in teacher education program has a vital role in professional development. Educational policy developer and planner has to take a teacher not only as a classroom actor but also as a social transformer. Awasthi (2003) has also focused on policy level improvisation along with effective and need base teacher education programs for better educational quality in Nepal.

In the context of Nepal, a major obstacle lies in being a teacher with superfluous assumptions rather than getting involved in meticulous analysis for need and process of professionalism. Bharati and Chalise (2017) point out certain exposures to teachers who have the training and have participated in workshops and seminars for updating with innovations in pedagogic practices. However, teachers limit themselves over participation in training and become verbose of certain terms and activities. They want teachers to multiply their skills, knowledge, and passion as per the need for context. A problem starts with the late introduction to pre-service teacher education course to English language teachers as Awasthi (2003) mentions that “it started only in 1971 when IOE of TU initiated B.Ed. program in English education” (p. 24). Awasthi further claims on the need for efficient English language teachers is still high in the early decade of the 21st century.

In discussion on developing scenario of PD in Nepal Awasthi (2003) points out that formal teacher education programs were conducted through universities course in the late 90s; and professional forums like NELTA initiated short-term training to update and authenticate teaching practice along with providing professional networking for professional development. Awasthi claims that there is no proper coordination with university programs and training organized by government agencies like the National Center of Education Development (NCED, 1992) and Secondary Education Development Center (SEDC, 1983), and private institutions. There is a need for a long term vision and plan in teacher education in Nepal.

Teacher’s Professional Development in Recent Educational Plans and Policy

Shishak Peshagat Bikash ko Praroop 2072 has conceptualized self-initiated professional development beside training provisions for the quality of teachers. However, the concept of self-initiated professional development is limited to encouragement and

technology related efficiencies rather than projecting strategic professional growth. The training is major focused as it is planned under 15 days each in two steps to regulate and assess the effective measures of the training implementation. The format has also designed refresher training of maximum five days as per demand of teachers.

Poyck, Koirala, Aryal and Sharma (2016) prepared a joint evaluation report (2016) on the School Sector Reform Plan Program (SSRP) 2009-2016 that elaborates as the trainings in Nepal do not address the need of teachers and do not base on a continuous approach for TPD. It believes that enhancing teacher's professional development is not possible if training is not followed by "ongoing support, encouragement, revision and deepening of the content" (p. 44). The report further discusses on effective implementation of training and teacher's professional development, which is possible only by bringing a change in teacher ethos, motivation, and attitude. As a reflection of the report School Sector Development Plan (SSDP), 2016/17-2022/23 keeps pedagogical practices as one of the key strategies for improvement of teaching and learning by achieving the plan projected in SSRP (MoE, 2016). It has also planned centrally authenticated plans for professional development by using diverse means of professional development resources like in-service programs, online self-accessing resources, and continuous professional development practices.

Appraisal of School Sector Development Plan 2016/17-2022/23 of Nepal has also kept teacher management and professional development as a highly prioritized strategy for quality education. It discusses on implementation of teacher licensing and adequate trainings. SSDP 2016/17-2022/23 points out few challenges in teacher's professional development and management, since trained teachers are not being able to transfer the pedagogic strategies in classroom, and the ineffective teacher management is due to lack of teacher career path and incentives. It plans for better teacher management and professional development through licensing, teacher trainings and proper channel of mentoring. It proposes mandatory teacher professional development to all level teachers either as in-service trainings or with refreshers trainings. The teacher training was highlighted in national Educational System plan for 1971-76 with objectives of increasing number of trained teachers and improving quality of teacher training (MoE, 1971).

National Education Policy 2076 stands on a norms that education is the foundation for overall development of nation so that quality education shall be made accessible to all citizen (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2076). It points out

the plans and policies made for teacher management and professional development to enhance quality education. However, it claims that Nepal could not attain quality education, since teaching activities are more exam oriented and teacher's motivation, responsibility and competency has not been sustained. The policy envisages that professional accountability is the major factor for teacher's professional development. It states an objective to assure professional qualification, accountability, competency, honesty, and commitment for the professional growth of a teacher. It envisions professional growth with research and innovative educational tasks. In this process the policy plans for providing a professional degree after the completion of an academic degree. It also focuses on research orientation for the professional and learning growth of teachers so that the research-oriented teacher could promote their self-study and self-research projects as a means of professional growth. The policy envisions self-motivated subject teachers in five years' time to be appointed for classroom teaching. The training centers shall be converted into teaching academies for a planning of continuous professional development. In local level the institution can collaborate with teaching academy of teaching colleges for continuous professional development trainings. It has made mandatory to take refresher's training in every two years. It envisages that collaborative professional sharing, learning and research orientations along with participation in trainings are major factors for continuous professional development. Customized trainings, seminar/workshops, exposure visits, reflection, teacher's networking, collaborative research, mentoring etc. are the basic professional development activities to be regulated. These factors are effective to bring change in professional growth of teachers, however, there is always a question over participation and transferring learning strategies to the learners.

Conclusion

Educational policy and teacher's professional development are complementary force to each other as the concern of both is to bring effective learning outcomes. There is a need of collaborative force to redefine policy and strategies for teacher professional development. Educational policy has recognized teacher professional growth with different strategic plans to sustain continuous professional development. Training has been the major concern as pre-service, in-service and refresher training. Beside these training projections, sharing and networking has been prioritized as a collaborative professional development. Mentoring from peer and head teacher is another element

for empowering teachers with their professional accountability. There is also a focus on self-motivated and/or self-initiated professional development expectations, however, there is no such strategic plan elaborated as a part of continuous and sustainable professional development of teachers. This article points out the need for research on strategic approaches to self-initiated professional development. It also projects that there are necessary research-oriented issues on training, mentoring, collaborative practices, and concretizing professional teacher education courses.

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