

# Professional Development Strategies in the Narrative of Nepali Teacher

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## Abstract

*This paper explored the stories of four Nepali secondary level English teachers adopting strategies for their professional development under the guidance of narrative inquiry along with interview as data collection tools. Their sharing was taken as the core information for the study. Findings suggest that teachers update their knowledge in order to be familiar with new trends of English language teaching from workshop, seminar, action research, teachers' support group and conferences. Apart from these, online courses have also given an ample opportunity to foster professionalism. Teachers impart their knowledge in classroom with students and they develop their professionalism.*

**Key words:** Strategies, Teacher group, Seminar, Training and Teacher Professional Development.

## Introduction

The demand and need of teacher professional development (TPD) is beneficial for the growth and development of teachers in their professional life. It is the ongoing process as it enables teachers to update their knowledge, sharpen their skills, and acquire some new techniques of learning for the lifelong span of time. Richards et al. (2005) have mentioned that professional development is the next step of learning, when his or her teachers' period of formal training is over. This shows that TPD is the process of updating knowledge and implement the skills in particular area.

Aljassar et al. (2020) stated that the rapid development in teachers' profession can be witnessed all over the world as it offers teachers opportunities for in-service training are crucial to the long-term development of teachers as well as for the long-term success of the programs in which they work. In this support, Fullan (1995) mentioned that teachers' professional development is the sum total of formal and informal learning pursued and experienced by the teacher in a compelling and dynamic change. The need for ongoing teacher education has been a recurring theme in language teaching circles in recent year, has been given renewed focus as a result of the emergence of teacher-led initiatives such as action research, reflective teaching, and team teaching. A professionally competent teacher is an outcome of different processes and factors. It is a prolong engagement in particular activity to drive overall development.

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Besides this, a teacher also needs to have a drive for developing himself/herself professionally. Bharati and Chalise (2017) stated that teacher development includes both formal and informal means of helping teachers to master new skills, widen their knowledge, and develop an innovative insight into their pedagogy, their practice and their understanding of their own needs, since a teacher's professional development is an aspect of his or her personal development as a whole. Teacher development is the way of developing wider level knowledge and develops the soft and hard skills. It cannot be achieved within one day rather prolong and active engagement is needed. Teacher- professionals have to continuously strive for new knowledge in any fields.

In reference to above context, the realization was made that the need of this research exploring the stories of Nepali teachers regarding how they climbing the ladder of their professionalism up. Without tracing the strategies used by teachers of English in Nepal, teacher professional development cannot effectively be suggested. In the context of Nepal, various sorts of programs and trainings are being conducted to enhance professional development for all. Among these, *how do Nepali teachers of English update their teaching skills in general and how do they upgrade the strategies for their professional development in particular?* had major area of concern in their field of teaching and learning.

## **Research Methodology**

Methodological instructions seem mandatory in directing and shaping the overall process of research. The methodological part also introduced and legitimated the ontological, epistemological and axiological assumption of this research. As I carried the goal of exploring the strategies adopted for teacher professional development by secondary level teachers, the notion of narrative inquiry was embraced (Connelly, et al. 1990) Mostly interview was followed to gather information from secondary level English teachers of Kathmandu valley.

Narrative inquiry brings storytelling and research together by using stories as research data as a tool for data analysis Barkhuizen, et al. (2014). With this, I employed narrative analysis that supported me to incorporate stories and vignettes of participants. A semi-structured set of interview questions were prepared based on the questions, the participants were with the purpose of analyzing their strategies of developing their teaching qualities. While embracing the notion of narrative inquiry, the experience of participants were separately transcribed and codified for molding them as in stories form.

## **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

Teacher development is the way of developing wider level knowledge and develops the soft and hard skills. It cannot be achieved within one day Prolong and active engagement is needed. Teacher development includes both formal and informal means of helping teachers to master new skills, widen their knowledge, and develop an innovative insight into

their pedagogy, their practice and their understanding of their own needs, since a teacher's professional development is an aspect of his or her personal development as a whole.

As the participants shared during the interview, they have been encountering layers of experience on their teacher professional development. Uplifting teaching skills can be possible in different ways in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Kapar, 2020).

## **Teacher Development Strategies**

There is a good saying that Teacher needs to be developed with the help of a certain strategies. Having said this, teacher education is life long process where many opportunities can be got in teaching learning field. In this line, Richards and Farrell (2005) mentioned that teacher education is not just about teachers and their education. From their line, Mr. 1<sup>st</sup> shared;

*Umm,,,, professional development means for teachers in modern context means to be with the world with a modern technology. Teacher can be developed through varies ways as I tried for it, I found using workshop, short term training, and collaborative work beneficial for teacher professional development.*

From Mr. 1<sup>st</sup> View, I personally understood teacher can be developed through workshop and collaborative. It also suggested by Richard and Farrell (2005) that is infinitely more than the two teachers work together makes a work much effective. It is often called upon to tackle critical issues and questions that go far beyond their boundaries. Similarly, Mr. 2<sup>nd</sup> shared;

*Ahh,,,, professional development means the process through which teacher transforms into someone better. Teacher has a lot of sheds; someone understands subject matter better and someone who understands the students better, I have been using teachers group as a tool of teacher development. I found it effective in using for teacher professional development. In teacher group every teacher has got equal chance to share his or her knowledge therefore; it seems essential.*

In a comprehensive and authoritative report titled Studying Teacher Education, two leading American educationists, make it abundantly clear that education and teacher education are social institutions that pose moral, ethical, social, philosophical, and ideological questions. Teacher education is one of the essentials for the teachers. It helps to update rather outdate in their area.

In recent time, there is the strain necessity on teachers' knowledge, skills, dispositions, cognition, and beliefs but also factors such as educational, social, cultural, and ideological movements as well as major swings in the political pendulum. Teacher is a change agent in the nation, so he/she has to be conscious in each and every parts of the society. Then only he/she can bring change in the society. In this regard Ms. 3<sup>rd</sup> shared that;

*Ahhh,,, Professional development is learning activity of a teacher and with the learning activity how a teacher teaches or educates children. Yes,,, there are many ways through a teacher can be developed professionally,,,,, but, the best ways I encountered is teacher group and teacher collaboration. Ummm..... In context of Nepal, teachers do want to talk and collaborate with each-other. Therefore, our professional development seems colorless.*

Teacher education is typically framed in terms of skills or activities that either flow from or result in innovations in practice (Richards and Farrell, 2005). Self-monitoring, observation, reflection, keeping a teaching journal are the best tools to develop competencies in the field of teacher education. A teacher begins his/ her professional journey from reflection and then gradually he she moves towards research on that his or her interest. Finally, Ms. 4<sup>th</sup> shared;

*Umm,,,, I still remember when I was a new student at my teaching career, I used to use a verity of tool. Teacher can be developed by using different strategies because I tried for it, Professional development means for teachers in modern context means to be with the world with a modern technology.*

From this it can be said that teacher can be developed with different ways. Teacher professional development is a process of lifelong learning and gives an ample opportunity to reflect on classroom practice. It establishes professional relation among teachers to enhance teaching strategies and subjective knowledge. In the context of Nepal, various sorts of programs and trainings are being conducted to enhance professional development of all teachers. Not only that, national and international conferences are also organized in Nepal in order to provide insights of current trends. These conferences have appropriate themes which are happening all across the world regarding English language teaching.

## **Workshop and Webinar**

Through participating in any short term workshop learning in which all the learners remain engaged to acquire knowledge and skills, can one of the ways to developing teaches professionally. Here Mr. 1<sup>st</sup> added;

*Amm...I have been participating in many national and international webinar, training, and workshop since decade. While there, I have got a lot of changes on me from my teaching side. My teaching is being witnessed different then other teacher as per my student reflection. From webinar and training we can get variety of new ways of teaching and learning that make a teacher updated and unique in his or teaching.*

Here, Mr. 1<sup>st</sup> has highlighted that getting involved in different webinar can be one of the best strategies for a teacher to be developed professionally as he tried this technique and has already been benefited from it. In this regard Richards and Farrell (2005) mention that in

a workshop, participants are expected to learn so many things in the classroom and to get hands-on experience with the topic, such as developing procedures for classroom observation or conducting action research. Similarly, Mr 2<sup>nd</sup> has also shared;

*Umm,,, as I understood,,,, Workshop and workshop related programs have embraced a kind arena of opportunities in which multiple layers filed and options are seen for teachers' professional growth and their benefits,. I have been fortunate to learn lot from them. There was no webinar I would not have learnt all these.*

Workshops can also provide opportunities for participants to examine their beliefs or perspectives on teaching and learning, and use this process to reflect on their own teaching practices. An expert plays the prime role to organize and manage the workshop and he or she addresses the particular issue. Here, Ms. 3<sup>rd</sup> added;

*You are right ,,,,,Definitely, teacher's workshop plays very pivotal role for teacher development. Teacher support, workshop, and conferences are the backbone for a teacher because it teachers different teaching method. A teacher becomes smart when he/she takes part in any teacher's workshop. In workshop every participant has equal role to be performed.*

From Ms. 3<sup>rd</sup> view, I came to know that taking part in any teacher's workshop seems beneficial as it shared a lot of technique and strategies of teaching. As she shared, workshop makes teacher resourceful. Every participant remains busy in doing any tasks and then he get an ample idea about the topic. So, Workshops are one of the most common and useful forms of professional development activities for teachers (Richards, Gallo, & Renandya, 2001). It provides network, collegiality, and knowledge about the issue. Workshop-based learning is such a familiar format for professional development that enhances meaningful learning.

## **Teacher Support Group**

Teacher support group can be defined as two or more teachers collaborating to achieve either their individual or shared goals to make teaching learning activities more meaningful. The technique of lifting up teachers for their professional growth through teacher support group (TSG) seems crucial in context of Nepal. In support this strategy of teacher professional development my participants have shared the real flavor of it differently. Mr. 1<sup>st</sup> said;

*Umm.....teacher support group is witnessed essential for teacher growth as teacher can be supported and made scaffold by them. Teacher can support teacher where no other is needed therefore; it seems essential to be accommodated.*

In this line, Richards and Farrell (2005) stated that the Teacher Support Group changes energy into a strong synergy. The group provides a safe place where teachers can take part

in such activities as collaborating on curriculum and materials development, and review, plan, and carry out activities such as peer coaching, team teaching, action research, and classroom observation (Richards & Farrell, 2005). The group provides a safe place where teachers can take part in such activities as collaborating on curriculum and materials development, and review, plan, and carry out activities such as peer coaching, team teaching, action research, and classroom observation. For this regard, Mr. 2<sup>nd</sup> shared:

*Teacher support group has a strong network where teachers can be supported with support of other teacher within the group. An experienced teacher can support a novice teacher. The teacher support group works as a teacher network of teachers where teachers get benefited by each other.*

In reference to the view of Mr. 2<sup>nd</sup>, the teacher support group is one of the most effective techniques for novice teachers. Teacher support groups, as Lieberman, et al. (1998) point out, play a major role in providing opportunities for teachers to validate both teacher knowledge and teacher inquiry. It helps to review and reflect on the teaching learning process. In the a similar line, my last participant Ms. 3<sup>rd</sup> shared that;

*Amm, yes,,,, a teacher group for teacher is one of the best ways to develop his or her quality in many ways. The culture of supporting teacher is the major concern of the teacher group technique as a teacher can support teacher where no other is needed therefore; it seems essential to be accommodated.*

This narration made it clear that the teacher group is one of the best strategies of developing teacher professionally. The group can develop materials as a collaborative effort in order to facilitate teaching learning process.

## **Writing Journal for TPD**

Teaching journal is an ongoing account of observation, reflections and thoughts about teaching. It is in the form of notebook, electronic mode which can be the source of discussion, reflection and evaluation. Richards and Farrell (2005) opined that the journal may be used as a record of incidents, problems, and insights that occurred during lessons; it may be an account of a class that the teacher would like to review or return to later; or it may be a source of information that can be shared with others. The first view;

*Yes,,, yes,, Indeed, journal writing is one of the best ways to make us professional in the field teaching as it provides ample opportunities where a teacher has to search, traced, read, write and get published. As journal writing requires a lot of research full study to do, it absolutely makes a teacher studious and active. Then they study a lot, their teaching knowledge will be updated.*

Journal writing enables a teacher to keep a record of classroom events and observations.

The process of writing about teaching events often leads to new insights about those events (Richards, et al., 2005). Writing journal gives us new insightful and innovative power to be creative writer. It can be used to monitor their own practices, to provide a record of their teaching for others to read, and to document successful teaching experiences. In this note, the second participant shared;

*Indeed,,,, journal writing has a lot of importance as I have been practicing this and I have got an ever seen benefits. We write journals and others give comments on and from that comments, we collaboratively develop our knowledge in our teaching.*

This stressed on the processes of journal writing where he highlighted the reciprocal chain and cohesive bounding of journal writing. Here, the concept of peers review, supervisors, and mentors, reading and responding to a teacher's journal are witnessed beneficial as it serves as means of encouraging reflective inquiry and can facilitate resolving problems and concerns (Richards & Farrell 2005). Writing a teaching journal provides an opportunity for teachers to use the process of writing to describe and explore their own teaching practices (Richards, 2005). I developed theme to interpret and analyze the data through interpretive lens. I divided the major insights under one heading. The third view;

*I read books which are updated in the field of ELT and I read newspaper. I have participated online courses. I have pursued many online courses from California University. All these courses have given me an ample opportunity to make my classroom more effective and dynamic. I remain update talking to friends who teach in secondary level.*

Teacher is a role model for the students to bring change in the society; teacher should be updated in his or her subjects. From above mentioned information, I can say that he has prioritized his profession and given much more time in doing online courses which helps to get innovative ideas about new trends in the field of ELT. He has done collaborative learning rather than competitive learning. The fourth view;

*I develop my profession by reading different materials related my profession. I involve in different workshop and seminar related ELT. I participate taking training in school and outside of my cities. I attend national and international conferences. I do classroom research and by earning higher degrees.*

The above mentioned information is about the professionalism. He is dynamic in the field of ELT. He is passionate to attend professional conventions and she does action research which helps to update in her professionalism. He tries to bring innovative change in the field of ELT. He prefers to pursue higher degrees which help him to be critical and creative in the related field.

## Action Research

Every teacher wants to improve their teaching therefore; action research seems beneficial for a teacher to deal teaching issues. In this note, the first user of action researcher McNiff (2013) stated that Action research is not to prove but for improve as it brings improvements in teachers' teaching techniques.

McNiff (2013) suggested the cycles of action research that need to be followed in conduction action researcher for better improvement. The cycles he stated are; Observation for need, Reflection for focuses, Plan for implementation, and Action for improvement. These cycles continue until the improvement is seen. With this benefit in mind, the participants of mine have shared their experiences of embracing the culture of action research for their improvement.

The first participant Mr. 1<sup>st</sup> shared;

*Yee,,, , I have been doing a small research for improve my teaching problem like; how to make my students engaged, how to make students in center,, and so on. While searching these technique teachers become resourceful. My students started enjoying my classes as action research made me update with a series of new techniques.*

From his response, using the culture of action research seems crucial as it provides a lot preparation before teaching. With the support of this, Meyer (2006) stated that action research makes teachers engaged in searching different alternatives in teaching. As Mr. 1<sup>st</sup> stressed his view on action research and its benefits, it is also linked to literature with Meyer's views.

Ms. 3rd's view;

*Umm,,,,, I still remember the talk delivered in NELTA conference. From there, I got motivated. I have been teaching since a decade. I started following the technique action research in 2017 with the recommendation a good professor of mine when I was in a NELTA conference. While applying action research technique I found it effective because action research makes teaching systematic and it also helps us to deal with the classroom problem in a very systematic way.*

In reference to my participants, I personally came to understand that writing reflection, attending conferences, action research and taking support from teacher are the best preferable strategies in context of Nepal. The cycles he stated are; Observation for need, Reflection for focuses, Plan for implementation, and Action for improvement. These cycles continue until the



improvement is seen. The participants shared that embracing the culture of action research is crucial for teacher professional development.

## Conclusion

There is a good saying that teacher needs to be developed with the help of a certain strategies. Having said this, teacher education is life long process where many opportunities can be got in teaching learning field. In this line, Richards and Farrell (2005) mentioned that teacher education is not just about teachers and their education. With reference to the participants' stories, this paper has concluded that the Nepali teachers of English are very smart as they use several strategies for their professional growth. Generally, they adhere to teacher support group, attending different webinar and conferences, and writing journal, reflective practices and many others as a vehicle for their professional development.

Listening to their stories, I believed that teacher professional development is one of the key needs from each and every teacher all across the world. It develops the ways of thinking and perceiving the content and concurrent trends in the field of ELT. TPD gives an energy to have prolong desire to foster professionalism and develop the career. TPD is achieved by attending workshop, seminar and training and so on. In addition, online courses are also the hot cake for teacher professional development. It is one of the landmarks for each and every teacher to update in concerned profession. Last but not least, teachers should be like gadgets need to be updated.

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**The Lumbini Journal of Language & Literature 2022**

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