Transforming Educator Growth: Professional Development at Tribhuvan University

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Abstract

Professional development is an inevitable facet of our life. The study aimed to explore the teachers' professional development at Tribhuvan University. To achieve the objective, I used explanatory sequential design under mixed-methods research. The data were collected from 30 teachers of a constituent campus of TU using a set of questionnaires as a research tool. The findings reveal that more than 55% teachers strongly agreed with the importance of academic degrees for better classroom performance. Less than half of them were satisfied with their reading, and writing position. Similarly, many teachers (93%) were not satisfied with their research position. More than 90% teachers have published general articles, but only 10% teachers published their academic books. Many teachers come to the classroom with full preparation; they talk to their colleagues about their issues and professional pursuits, support one another in taking professional actions, and insist on taking professional actions with the campus administration. Different strategies such as reading and writing, achieving a higher degree, doing action and mini-research, writing articles and books, attending workshops and seminars, networking, and self-monitoring are the key strategies for their professional development. The present study can be equally beneficial not only to university teachers but also for to the teachers who wish to develop their teaching career in one hand and writers, researchers and trainers on the other.

Keywords: academic excellence, life-long learning, professional growth initiatives, teacher competencies, navigating challenges

Introduction

The quality of education mainly depends on quality of teachers. Teachers are the keystones of education and education cannot be better than teachers make it (CERID, 2009).

Teachers are the initiators of change and bearers of its impact who are equipped with a sound pedagogy based on the solid foundation of updated knowledge and information (UNICEF, 1998). So, teachers should be continuously updating in their content, pedagogy and technology which is termed as teacher development. Teacher development is the process of becoming the best kind of teacher that one can be by constant change and growth (Underhill, 1986). It is a long-term, ongoing, continuous and lifelong learning process that helps prepare academically and professionally qualified teachers with their own voluntary efforts.

Teacher education is an inevitable aspect for transforming educational growth of an institution. Teacher development may involve many processes, actions, and mechanisms that are inevitably mediated by the cultural, social, political, and economic features and conditions of each particular context (Tan & Dimmock, 2014). It encompasses three different aspects of a career: personal, team, and school development which are integrated with the management of innovation, change, and reform. Teacher professional development brings three main changes: change in the classroom practices, in their attitudes, and in the learning outcomes of students (Guskey, 2002). Professional development can be best practised through attending workshops, mentoring, reading professional publications and watching television documentaries related to academic discipline.

Teacher professional development is a continuous and comprehensive process that begins with pre-service instruction to in-service training, and continues until retirement. It is the procedure of making teachers capable of applying the knowledge and skills that they have learned in classroom practice. Professional development is the sum of the formal and informal learning pursued and experienced by the teacher in a compelling and dynamic change (Fullan, 1995). Teacher development is usually compared and contrasted with teacher training which is sometimes criticized for being one-off and not helpful for teacher development.

Teacher Growth: Transformative Strategies

In the present day world, language teaching is becoming more challenging, complicated, and competitive. As a result, teachers should be more committed, enthusiastic, and intellectually and emotionally energetic in their field. There are various strategies for teacher transformation. .

Reflective practice is an important strategy for teacher development. Reflection is a well-defined and crafted practice that carries very specific meaning and associated action (Loughran, 2002). Reflective teaching involves thinking about one's teaching. Similarly, workshop is another strategy that gives an opportunity to acquire particular knowledge and skills on a specific issue. The participants of workshop are expected to learn something that they can later employ it in the classroom and to get hands on experience with the topic (Richards & Farrell, 2010).

Journal keeping is a continual written account of observations, reflections, and other thoughts about teaching. It is usually written in the form of a notebook, book, or electronic

mode, and serves as a source of discussion, reflection, or evaluation (Richards & Farrell 2010). The journal may be used as a record the incidents, and insights during lessons.

Action research is a teacher initiated classroom research that aims to resolve practical teaching issues and problems (Richards & Farrell, 2010) that takes place in the teachers' own classroom and involves a cycle of activities such as planning, acting, observing and reflecting. Universities offer different courses like foreign language teaching, pure and applied linguistics, education, psychology to pursue higher degree. After completing such courses, they are certified. Similarly, teachers tend to develop their professionalism through mentoring. Mentoring is a kind of personal and professional partnership in which a more experienced and expert individual can support a less experienced one, or newly recruited to the job, organization or profession (Butcher, 2002).

Teaching portfolio is is a purposeful collection of documents and other works of a teacher that tells his/ her effort, skills, abilities, achievements and contributions. It consists of a set of documents and artifacts that have been selected on a principled basis and that are organized to tell a story (Richards & Farrell, 2010). It can be helpful for teachers' professional development in terms of course planning and preparation, actual teaching presentation, evaluation and feedback provision process, and currency in the field (Seldin, 1993).

Reading is one of the most important types of professional development to achieve theoretical as well as practical information. Most schools and colleges have a library of professional literature where we can start our reading habit. Professional journals, available in print and digital form in university libraries, are an excellent and convenient source of reading materials (Ur, 2012). Also, the references or bibliographies at the end of most articles and book reviews will give an idea for further reading.

In-service and online training are other strategies for teacher development. Online training courses are becoming a more and more common kind of teacher professional development. The instructors can complete these programs at their leisure from the comfort of their homes. By reading articles and resource materials of other professionals, and writing his/her own experience for publication will help to develop our professionalism. Writing journal articles and academic books help to organize our thoughts and ideas on a certain theme.

Teacher Growth Initiatives at Tribhuvan University

The overall quality of higher education is directly and permanently driven by teacher education. The most direct and effective way of enhancing educational quality is to modify faculty education and recruitment and improve in-service faculty skills and knowledge including continuous upgrading their skills through in-service professional development (UGC, 2022). Teacher education has direct and lasting impact on the overall quality of higher education. Many advanced countries provide significant focus on in-service faculty members training. Collectively, faculty training and in-service professional development are key factors in improving student achievement.

In order to institutionalize teacher education programs in Nepal, the Faculty of Education (FOE) was first established as the College of Education in 1956 before the establishment of Tribhuvan University. Since then, FOE has offered a variety of educational programs in a wider range of subject area like ICT education. FOE is the leading institution in the field of teacher education and the largest faculty at Tribhuvan University in terms of the number of students and affiliated campuses. FOE aims to produce qualified teachers, teacher educators, and educational researchers for the nation. Through its various programs, it also seeks to produce curriculum designers, educational planners and managers, and human resources required for the nation's educational sector. Besides, FOE is educating its teachers through in-service training, course orientation programs, research grants and publications although they are not sufficient. However, there are not any teacher education courses in other faculties and Institutes except faculty of education. Moreover, other faculties and Institutes such as Management and Engineering are also offering some teacher training, course orientation, research and publication to their faculties. The research centers like Research Center for Educational Innovation and Development (CERID), Center of Economic Development and Administration (SEDA), Center for Applied Science and Technology (RECSAT), Centre for Applied Research and Development (CARD), information technology innovative centre and research directorate are contributing for enhancing teacher professionalism through research grants and publication.

Many central departments, constituent and affiliated campuses receive annual grants from UGC for the development of their faculties and staffs. Similarly, QAA accredited colleges need to offer teacher development programs such as training, mini-research grants and publications. So, the teachers of the university are expected to explore their knowledge, skills and practices through training, research works and publications. Such research works and publications are encouraged and be financially helped to get published in research journals. In spite of having its great importance, many university teachers are not working for their professional growth. As a result, it is difficult to quench the thirst of students in this modern society.

Previous Studies and Research Gap

In the realm of language teaching and learning, teacher professional development is a growing concern of present day world. Teacher development is a process that aims to increase the academic excellence of the teachers as well as their knowledge and efficiency. So, teacher development activities are the parts and parcels of present day education. It is suggested that the teachers should develop themselves through different tools and techniques such as seminar workshops, writing journals and research works for enhancing professionalism.

Family, peers and schools play vital role for professional growth. In this regard, Montoro (2012) found equity, leadership, and family involvement as the the highest means of evaluation of professional practice. Similarly, Hooks (2015) identified accountability and feedback as the most striking factors for influencing TPD. Smith (2016) focused on goal-driven professional development model that leads to adjustment in instructional practice and the self- regulation of teachers' instructional skills.

Hermans et al. (2017) examined the evidence of teacher professional development in teaching English pronunciation. The teachers were extrinsically motivated to change their teaching behavior and classroom practice after using a computer assisted teaching tool. Likewise, Bharati and Chalise (2017) explored the strategies and perception of secondary level teachers for teacher professional development. They identified that newly appointed teachers hardly get teacher induction program in Nepal where many experienced and competent teachers tend to assist novice teachers; however, there is no formal collaborative teacher learning activity.

Furthermore, Panthee (2021) explored opportunities and challenges of teacher professional development in public campuses of Nepal. The study revealed that the teachers of public campus teachers get more opportunities to enhance various professional development skills, knowledge, and techniques of teaching. However, such campuses are also facing many challenges to manage their faculties. Similarly, Faizuddin et al. (2022) explored the challenges of managing continuous professional development for high school principals in Indonesia. They found some challenges such as resistance to change, technicality and workload, unprofessional recruitment and unclear training syllabus in managing CPD programs at schools.

Ghimire (2023) also explored the significance of teachers' professional development to the teachers of community campus with their expectation, and responsibility. The findings portrayed that teaching only in the classroom is not enough for teachers' professional development. Besides, the teachers should participate in training, research work, writing journal article, teachers discussion programs, and attending in seminars/work-shops/conferences.

The review of literature reveals that many research works have been carried out in the area of professional development at the different levels of school educations, and community campuses of TU. However, no research work is there about educator growth in the constituent campuses of Tribhuvan university, Nepal. So, the researcher is keenly interested to carry out the present research. Thus, the main problem of the present study is outlined below.

What are the transformative strategies for teacher growth at Tribhuvan University?

Method

This research design is a mixed-methods approach that involves two distinct phases: the quantitative phase, followed by the qualitative phase (Creswell, 2011).This design is particularly useful when a researcher wants to start with quantitative data to identify trends or patterns and then use qualitative data to explain or elaborate on those findings. The total population for this study was the total University level teachers of Nepal. However, the researcher sampled only 30 teachers from a constituent campus of Lumbini Province using purposive sampling procedure. Here, the aim of using purposive sampling was to obtain information from various levels of teachers (i.e, professors, readers, lecturers, contract, and part time teachers) teaching under different faculties and institute. First of all, the researcher

prepared a set of closed and open-ended questionnaires and then visited all sampled teachers and requested them to fill up those questionnaires to obtain intended information. After collecting the data, the researcher analyzed the data in terms of making different tables and creating themes under different headings.

Results and Discussion

After collecting the data from 30 university level teachers, the data were presented and and analyzed under following headings.

Exploring Faculty Opinions on Academic Degrees and Scholarly Research

A set of closed ended questionnaires were asked to identify the views of the teachers about the importance of academic degree and research for enhancing professionalism. The results of the study have been given in the following table.

Table 1

Importance of Academic Degree and Research

Statements	SA	A	NA/DA	DA	SD
Academic degree helps in better performance in the classroom.	16	14	-	-	-
Doing action and mini- research improves the quality of teaching.	8	19	3	-	-

Note: *SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, NA/DA= neither Agree nor Disagree, DA= Disagree, SA= Strongly Disagree*

Table 1 reveals that 16 (53.55 %) teachers strongly agreed with upgrading academic degree could help in better performance in the classroom whereas only 14 (46.66%) teachers opined that they agreed in the same statement and no teachers opined in other three options such as neither agree nor disagree or strongly disagree. Similarly, 8 (26.66%) teachers were strongly agree, 19 (63.33%) teachers were agree whereas only 3 (10%) teachers were neither agree nor disagree with the importance of mini-research and action research in university education. Moreover, no teachers opined in favor of disagree and strongly disagree. It is concluded that the majority of teachers strongly stated the importance of upgrading academic degree for better performance. Similarly, majority of teachers agreed with doing action and mini-research for the improvement of quality teaching.

Teachers should upgrade their academic degree to gain different knowledge and skills related to teaching and learning. The general pedagogical knowledge, subject-matter knowledge, knowledge of strategies, techniques and tools, knowledge of child's linguistic, social and cultural diversity, knowledge of child's political and social justice and knowledge of technology are essential for the teachers(Villegas-Reimers, 2003).

The Satisfaction Levels of Teachers in their Academic Functions

Teachers were asked to identify their views about their satisfaction in their academic activities for the development of professionalism. The results of the study have been given in the following table.

Table 2

Teachers' Satisfaction with their Academic Activities

Are you satisfied with your … ?	VS	S	N	DS	VDS
Reading and writing level	3	19	4	4	-
Teaching performance	4	23	3	-	-
Research position	-	7	13	8	2

Note: *VS=Very Satisfied, S= Satisfied, N= Neutral, DS= Dissatisfied, VDS= Very Dissatisfied*

Table 2 reveals the satisfaction level of teachers on their academic and research activities. Regarding their reading and writing, 19 (63.33%) teachers were satisfied, 3 (10%) teachers were very satisfied; 4 (13.33%) were neutral and only 4 (13.33%) teachers were dissatisfied in their academic activities. Similarly, 23 (76.66%) teachers were satisfied with their teaching exposure, 4 (13.33 %) teachers were very satisfied and 3 (10%) teachers were neutral in those activities. Moreover, 13 (43.33%) teachers were neutral, 7 (25%) teachers were satisfied, 8 (26.66%) teachers were dissatisfied and only 2 (6.66) teachers were very dissatisfied with their research position. It is concluded that the most teachers are satisfied with their reading and writing level and teaching performance whereas majority of teachers are not satisfied with their research position.

Teachers are also called researchers. Teacher researchers are considered simultaneously with the ways to improve their practices, change the situations in which they work and understood their practices within the larger society (Villegas-Reimers, 2003).

Teacher Performance: Academic and Research Achievements

University is regarded as the centre of excellence. Teachers of university are engaged in different academic and research activities. They publish different journals, books and do research works. The views of teachers on their academic and research works are presented in the following table.

Table 3

Teachers' performance on their academic and research achievements

S.N.	Have you …	Yes	No
1.	published general articles?	27	3
2.	published peer- reviewed articles?	10	20
3.	conducted any action research and mini-research?	5	25
4.	written and published any academic books?	3	27

Table 3 indicates teachers' views on their academic and research works. A majority of teachers 27 (90 %)) have published general articles and very few teachers 10 (33.33 %) have published peer-reviewed articles. Similarly, few teachers 5 (16.66%) have conducted action and mini-research and only 3 (10%) teachers have published their academic books.

It is concluded that majority of teachers have written general articles whereas very few teachers have published and conducted peer reviewed articles and academic books, and conducted action and mini-research.

Enhancing teacher Skills: Professional Development Strategies

Professional development is the development of a person in their professional life. It is the long-term process that includes regular opportunities and experiences to promote growth and development in the professional career (Villegas-Reimers, 2003).

There are different strategies for enhancing professionalism of teachers. A list of professional development strategies was asked to rank them from 1 to 7 numbers in terms of their choice and their response is organized in the following table.

Table 4

Teacher strategies for   enhancing professionalism

S.N.	Items	Frequency
1.	Reading culture	14
2.	Achieving academic degree	13
3.	Networking	13
4	Workshop	11
5.	Self evaluation	9
6.	Doing research	8
7	Writing books and articles	7

Table 4 shows that there were seven items to be ranked from the most important to the least important strategy for enhancing professional development of teachers. In terms of their response, many teachers (35%) claimed that reading culture was the most important strategy for teacher's professional development. Similarly, same numbers of teachers (35%) opined that achieving academic degree and networking are equally important strategies for teacher's professional development and were ranked in equal number. Moreover, teachers responded that writing books and articles is the least important strategy for teacher's professional development. Workshop, self evaluation and doing research are other important strategies ranked in four, five and six number respectively. It is concluded that reading culture is the most important and writing books and articles is the least important strategy for enhancing professionalism of teachers.

There are so many benefits of aforementioned professional strategies at university level. For example, workshop offers teachers practical classroom application, raise teachers' motivation, develop collegiality, support innovations, and so on (Richards & Farrell, 2010).

Career Development Strategies

Learning strategies are the techniques, approaches and deliberate actions that the learners use in order to facilitate their learning. Many strategies are adopted in teachers' professional development. Here, teachers were asked their strategies to be adopted in their development. Their response is summarized as:

The professional development strategies are reading and writing, pursuing higher degree, doing research works, attending workshop, seminar and conferences, writing articles, peerdiscussion, self-study, in-service training , writing books and articles, self evaluation, interaction, making network, peer group discussion, use of ICTs, and self-monitoring.

Different teacher professional development strategies such as personal reflection, sharing with colleagues, online discussion forum, co-planning and co-teaching, case study, peer coaching, action research, watching English movies, documentaries, self- study and reading, and writing articles (Gautam, 2013, Richards & Farrell, 2010, Gnawali, 2008; Valle, 2016).

The Significance of Self-Study

Self study helps us acquire more information about horizon of knowledge and paradigm of teaching. In this regards, teachers explained:

Self-study provides more inputs for the exploration and presentation of both knowledge and skills. It makes us strong towards subject-matter, curricular activities, and modern trends in our fields. It helps us to be updated and upgraded ourselves. Self-study sharpens our knowledge, clarifies doubt, and makes us independent, and confidence in subject matter. It develops some skills like critical and analytical power of the teachers.

Self-study of professional practice began with teacher educators studying themselves in action within their educational contexts to improve their professional practice, advance their professional understanding, and contribute to public debates about improving teacher education for the common good (Loughran, 2004).

Academic Excellence: Writing Books and Research Papers

Books and journal articles serve as permanent and transparent forums of the presentation and discussion of the research works. These works are intensive and detailed study on a topic or issue in a particular academic discipline. In this topic, teachers were asked the importance of writing books and journal articles, their response is given as:

Writing books and articles explore and share our inner potentialities into outer world. They are written to enhance our intellectual capacity and professionalism. These materials are beneficial to teachersand students to widen the horizon of knowledge and skills in respective fields.

Books play an important role in everybody's lives; they introduce us to a world of imagination, provide knowledge of the outside world, and improve our reading, writing, and speaking skills (Yadav, 2022). They boost our memory and intelligence. Books can develop our confidence in a natural way. They help us to improve our reading skills, which ultimately improves our language skills. Books develop our analytical skills.

On the other hand, writing articles enable us to produce information to potential audience all over the world and considered important as readers can accurately relate their experience and opinions with content of these articles (Saha, 2019).

Research and Development

Research is a field of systematic inquiry. It is a process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting information to answer the questions. It is a process of making questions, collecting relevant data relating to such questions, and performing analysis and interpretation in a systematic way (Hatch & Faraday, 1982; Nunan, 2010).

No doubt, there is much usefulness of research in the language classroom. Research provides a source of inputs for making classroom interactive, well organized and finding new knowledge. It helps the students make independent and autonomy in their work. It boosts confidence and self-esteem among the learners. Regarding teachers' views on the usefulness of research activities in university level, many teachers responded commonly as:

Research helps to discover recent knowledge, our educational needs, be updated in current issues, increase students' knowledge and skills, provides measures to overcome problems. It provides new insights in the field of language teaching and learning. It helps to enhance our critical and analytical skills. It helps the teachers think differently in every sector of life. It helps to get promotion, reputation and recognition.

The introduction of research in universities is to bring together two important aspects: learning and discovering. The important aspect that must not be forgotten is to promote research in universities is the universities' main scope: teaching (Radoi & Pavel, 2012). While research in itself is a praiseworthy activity, in an academic medium we must remember that it should be used mainly to improve the quality of the education provided by creating new professionals.

From Theory to Practice: Applying Research

No doubt, research is very important activity in the field of teaching. However, it is less practiced in our classroom. There are various causes of not applying research methodology properly. Research is not overtly focused in a classroom. Different factors such as students, environment, lack of interest of teacher and students, government's negligence, etc are some of the problems for applying research in the classroom.. School and other stakeholders do not focus to conduct research activities in the classroom. In this reference, teachers were asked the reasons for not applying research activities, and their response is outlined as:

There is no proper environment for disseminating their research in the classroom. The campus authority does not pay attention towards the growth and application of research.

Some teachers do not do it due to the lack of administrative support. Some other teachers do not conduct research due to lack of incentives, ICT knowledge, and enthusiasms towards it. Some of the university teachers only think of their self-promotion, not being responsible for their job. They pay less attention towards classroom activities.

Navigating Challenges

There are numerous advantages of conducting and applying research in our classroom. Research is used to widen the knowledge, skills and practices of the teachers. They provide authentic and valid knowledge on a particular subject. However, many university teachers are not applying them properly due to various reasons. In this reference, university teachers were asked to provide the solution for applying research works in our classroom and their response is given as:

Tribhuvan University should focus on classroom performance of teachers rather than other outer influences for his promotion. Teachers should be evaluated in terms of their students' success rather than the documents in teachers' hands. The university teachers should be well trained and technology friendly. The teachers must be accountable for their classroom. For this, proper supervision and guidance should be made. Adequate facilities and resources for the teachers and students should be provided. Similarly, the present curriculum system should be replaced by the research oriented curriculum.

Therefore, the curriculum and material experts need to incorporate different research-related tasks and activities in the language curriculum so that students can develop collaboration, critical thinking, analytical skills, and leadership skills through the present teacher-dominated classroom, which can be changed into a liberal democratic classroom.

Conclusion

Quality education always depends on quality of teachers. So, teachers need constantly updating to develop their professional skills and competencies. The present research aimed to explore teacher professional growth at Tribhuvan University through exploratory sequential-mixed methods research. The study reveals that many teachers claimed that higher academic degree was essential for improving their performance. The teaching performance and position in reading and writing were deemed satisfactory by less than half of the teachers. Many teachers come to the classroom with full preparation; they talk to their colleagues about their issues and professional pursuits, support one another in taking professional actions, and insist on taking professional actions with the campus administration. Writing books and articles is the least important professional development technique while reading culture is the most crucial. Different strategies such as reading and writing, pursuing a higher degree, doing research, writing articles, attending workshops and seminars, networking, and self-monitoring are the key strategies for

professional development. Self-study is an important strategy at the university level as it helps us acquire more information about the level of knowledge and paradigm of teaching. Similarly, research helps us to discover recent knowledge, and our educational needs, be updated on current issues, increase students' knowledge and skills, and provide measurement to overcome problems. Writing books and articles explores and shares our inner potential with the outer world.

Teacher development helps the teachers to be updated in the subject matter so that policy makers can make the policy for enhancing professional development activities of university teachers. Proper guidance and monitoring from the authority is also necessary to develop professional activities in the university. Further, being a small scale research, the researcher collected data from 30 university teachers of a constituent campus of Tribhuvan University. So, it may not study many aspects in depth of detail. If other researchers wish to study in the same area, they can go through further such as *Professional Development in University Level: A Phenomenological Study* or *Professional Development in Constituent and Affiliated Campuses of TU: A Comparative Study.* The present research can be beneficial to those who want to develop their career by writing books and doing research in the the days to come.

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