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A Study on Effectiveness of Teachers
Professional Development Training

Motilal Subedi
Balmukunda Upadhayay/ २४

संस्कृत व्याकरण : परम्परा र उपलब्धि

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Creative and Critical Thinking in Language
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A Study on Effectiveness of Teachers Professional Development Training

Motilal Subedi and Balmukunda Upadhayay

Abstract

It should be noted that the teacher is key in the whole process of educational delivery without making his/her competent, schools cannot be run well. Effective teaching skills consist of high levels of student engagement based on good classroom and time management skills; the ability to scaffold learning that is adapted to students' current levels of understanding; cognitively engaging students in higher-order thinking; and encouraging and supporting success. The study on the effectiveness of Teachers Professional Development (TPD) reports the number of modules taken by the teachers, the participation and the involvement of the teachers in the programme, the implementation and utilization of the skill and knowledge of TPD, and the changes that have brought in the teachers regarding presentation of subject and other skills. The article also reports evidence of a range of positive changes in teachers and in their students.

Key Words : TPD, Training, Professionals, skills, and Effectiveness

Introduction

The professional development of teachers is studied and presented in the relevant literature in many different ways. But always at the core of such endeavours is the understanding that professional development is about teachers learning, learning how to learn, and transforming their knowledge into practice for the benefit of their students' growth. Teacher professional learning is a complex process, which requires cognitive and emotional involvement of teachers individually and collectively, the capacity and willingness to examine where each one stands in terms of convictions and beliefs and the perusal and enactment of appropriate alternatives for improvement or change. All this occurs in particular educational policy environments or school cultures, some of which are more appropriate and conducive to learning than others. The instruments used to trigger development also depend on the objectives and needs of teachers as well as of their students. Thus formal structures such as courses and workshops may serve some purposes, while involvement in the production of curricula, the discussion of assessment data or the sharing of strategies may serve other purposes. Not every form of professional development, even those with the greatest evidence of positive impact, is of itself relevant to all teachers. There is thus a constant need to study, experiment, discuss and reflect in dealing with teacher professional development on the interacting links and influences of the history and traditions of groups of teachers, the educational needs of their student populations, the expectations of their education systems, teachers' working conditions and the opportunities to learn that are open to them.

Jordon (2009) says that effective teaching skills consist of high levels of student engagement based on good classroom and time management skills; the ability to scaffold learning that is adapted to students' current levels of understanding; cognitively engaging students in higher-order thinking; and encouraging and supporting success. The research reported here suggests that in elementary

classrooms, effective teaching skills are effective for all students, both with and without special education needs.

Training involves understanding basic concepts and principles as a pre-requisite for applying them to teaching and the ability to demonstrate principles and practices in the classroom (Rechards and Farrel 2005:3).

Many inexperienced teachers focus on getting students to memorize and regurgitate success. However, does this show true student achievement? Without a background to what does and does not constitute authentic student learning, new teachers sometimes create lessons that don't lead to the results they were expecting. However, teacher preparation programmes can help students understand how to find and apply effective benchmarks for student achievement.

Khania (2007:73) says that in absence of necessary skills and abilities, teachers do not seem to be able to impart expected skills and knowledge to students effectively. The teacher training programmes developed so far have not incorporated pedagogic skills and knowledge determined through needs assessment. In other words, the training programmes for the secondary teachers are based on mere speculations of training experts and arm-chair decision.

When it comes to teaching, reading a book is not enough. Even hearing teachers talk about teaching methods is not enough. New teachers need practice teaching combined with effective mentoring in order to help them understand what is required from them in their new position. This happens through student teaching in the classroom setting. However, it is imperative that student teachers are placed in appropriate classes that meet their interests. Further, the supervising teacher must be involved and provide feedback each day to help student teachers learn.

Kelly (2014) says that effective teacher training programs will address teacher burnout. First, it helps new teachers to understand what can lead to teacher burnout. In some cases, this is just the stress of daily teaching. However, it can also be caused by not varying the information and methods of teaching enough. Teacher training programmes that focus on particular subject areas like social studies or mathematics can help students learn about different ways in which a subject can be presented.

It has been essential that the competencies of the teachers should be identified, teachers training needs to be assessed and a sound training programme be developed which could be beneficial for teachers in the Nepalese context (Khania op. cit).

New teachers have many challenges that they face each day. Effective teacher training helps prepare new teachers for these challenges. While teacher training and student teaching won't completely prepare new teachers for every issue they will face, it can help them feel more confident about many common problems that arise for teachers each day. Without this background, teachers might feel like failures and eventually give up.

In theory, in-service teacher training is training taken by a teacher after he/she has begun to teach. The training aims at enhancing the skills, knowledge and performance of the working teachers. In-service teacher training is important for a teacher because the working conditions and the demands from the society are always changing for professionals like teachers (Gnawali, 2001). Thus, in-service training

is necessary to meet the demand of time and demands of the society.

Different scholars have viewed TPD from different standpoints. Richards and Farrell (2005:1) asserts that professional development is next step when once teachers' period of formal training is over. Craft (1996: 6) says professional development is sometimes used to describe moving teachers forward in knowledge or skills. Similarly, Victoria (in Burn, 1999:216) argues professional development or growth means enabling teachers to generate their own ideas about classroom practice.

Review of the Literature

Reimers-Villegas's (2003: 1) says that TPD should move towards achieving 'double roles of teachers', that is to say, both subject and object of educational reforms. Firstly, teachers are the object of the educational reform. This means their professional development should be considered. They should be brought in such activities which help them ensure their professional development. Secondly, they are the objects of the educational reform. This means by their involvement they are responsible to bring changes in their classroom in particular and in education at large. They will be expected to be professionals and to play the role of change-agents. In our context as well teachers are expected this kind of dual roles from the TPD programme. We expect to change teachers' role from technicians to classroom researchers to equip them with the skills to deal with their own pedagogical problems in their own settings. It is not always possible to bring teachers in the Educational Training Center (ETC), Lead Resource Center (LRC), and Resource Center (RC) to discuss all the issues they have. Therefore, if they are able to carry out action researches, they can solve their own problems. This is what we expect from our teachers.

Khanal (2006: 125) finds out that it is training that helps teachers impart quality education by making them confident and knowledgeable in dealing with different subject matter. The students taught by the trained teachers enhance the self exploring capacity.

NCED was established in 1993 under the Ministry of Education (MOE), as an apex body for human resource development. Since then, the centre is undertaking activities related to teacher development, capacity development of educational personnel under the Ministry of Education and conduction of research activities in education. In the past, the training programmes were conducted by different organizations and it was difficulty in coordination and avoiding duplications. As a result, it was realized that the integrated and coordinated approach and efforts could be more realistic, effective and efficient. Therefore, previous Distance Education Centre and Secondary Education Development Centre were merged with NCED in 2004 to form a greater NCED which deals with all aspects and levels of teacher training, management, and professional trainings. The Council for Educational Human Resource Development, headed by the Minister of Education, provides policy guidelines to NCED (NCED, 2011).

The Government of Nepal has launched TPD training under the programme SSRP to provide 30 days in service teacher training programme. TPD training has been running in different training center as well as the resource schools. It has been run in the training center and the resource schools of Rupandehi district (NCED, 2011).

NCED has made a claim that it has brought this program after a series of discussions and interactions with various stakeholders. NCED (2011) reports that a working framework was developed and stakeholders' observations and aspirations were gathered through consultative meetings and workshops. It is worth mentioning that national consultative workshops were conducted for two rounds with participation of representatives from universities, teacher unions/professional organizations, implementing agencies and national/ international experts.

Shrestha (2012) although the TPD programme is necessary for the professional development of teachers in Nepal, due to lack of teachers' efforts to engage themselves in doing professional development activities most of the teachers are confronting many challenges in the classroom. They have experienced the TPD program as obligatory condition (in the sense of the top-down approach and a formality) than the necessity to enhance their professionalism. It is therefore, time has come to reflect on the whole idea of the TPD programme and critically discuss how we can go further for better result.

Thapa (2012:69) says teacher training helps to increase teaching and learning process in the classroom. Its impact in classroom situation brings a good result in all teaching learning process and children's overall development. However, in spite of the intensive teacher training, the public school's achievements seem poor day by day in the context of Nepal. Many factors play the role to transfer the training skills to the classroom successfully. The effect of training in teaching and learning denotes the betterment of overall situation of classroom activities. So this article highlights on the existing situation of teacher training and the transfer of its skills in the classroom.

Pant (2012:1) says that we have not been able to make our teacher training courses/programmes consistent and uniform within and across institution. So-called trainers have been using different modules and content according to their convenience and capacities without considering their impacts and relevance in teaching and learning. My observation is that there must be at least some kind of perceived sense of standard for which everybody should try hard to achieve and therefore, not facilitating training with the content that comes in his/her mind but with some preparation, planning and reflections of their working context.

Poudel (2014:1) concludes, EFL in-service teacher training in Nepal is crawling with lots of hindrances for trifling achievements. Efforts are being made but they are insufficient. The concerned authorities are required to work hard to address the dire needs. One sole organization NCED alone cannot cope up with all the challenges and thus other organizations of similar interests must collaborate. For this government must diversify and ease their monopolistic policy.

A lot of efforts have been put to strengthen teacher training from the government of Nepal and other sectors. However, the situation has not totally been changed. The new programme TPD has been launched by the Ministry of Education (MoE) to help the teachers develop professionally in respect to teaching. It has also been launched in Rupandehi district for more than three years. The study directly focuses on the TPD programme and its effectiveness among the teachers.

Objectives of the Study

The research study has the following objectives:

- i. to find out status of TPD programme.

- ii. to find out the effectiveness of TPD programme of Bhairahawa Cluster.
- iii. to find out the result of the programme.

Limitation of the Study

The research study has been limited to the schools of Bhairahawa Cluster and the sixteen teachers of the cluster. It has also been limited to the TPD programme and its effectiveness regarding the changes that have brought in the teachers and the students.

Analysis of the Data

Based on the collected data the following analysis has been carried out in terms of the following criteria :

Participation in TPD Training

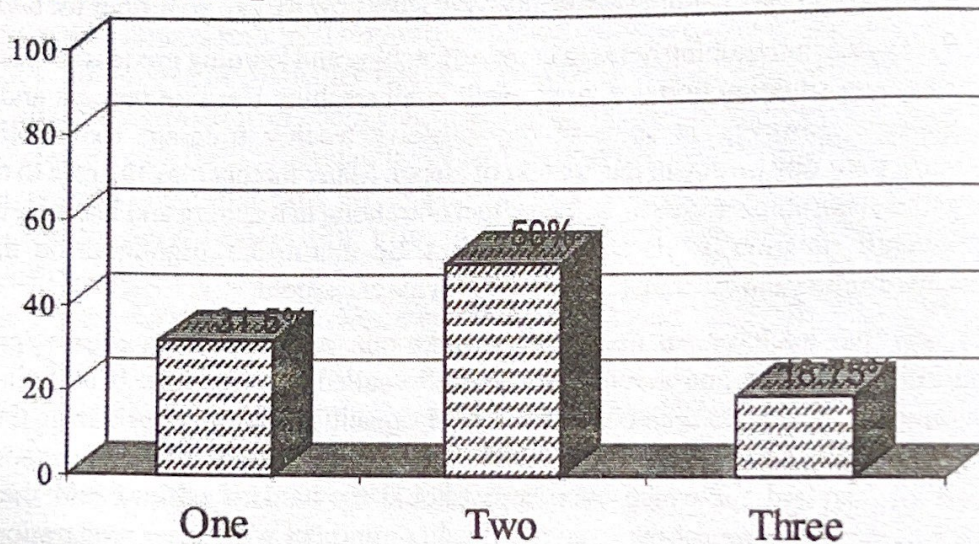


Figure 1 : Participation of TPD Training

The research shows that 31 percent of the school teachers have taken part in only one module of TPD 50 percent teachers have taken part two modules of TPD and 18.75 percent of teachers have taken part three modules of TPD. This is clear that majority of the teachers have got access to TPD training.

Participants' Involvement

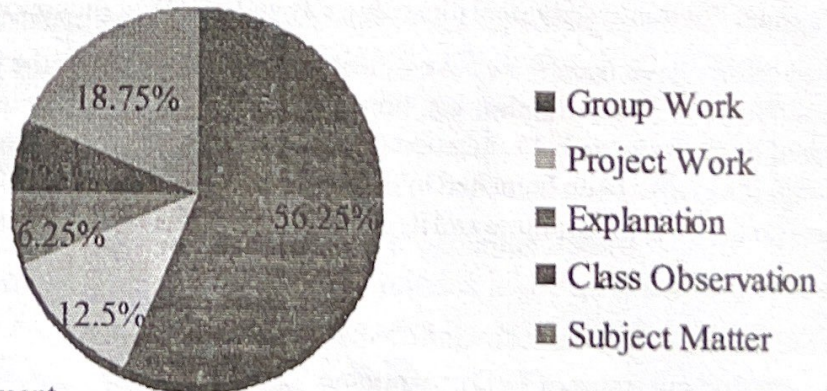


Figure 2 : Participants' Involvement

The research shows that 56.25 percent of the participants enjoyed group discussion. 18.75 percent teachers enjoyed subject matter. 12.5 percent teachers enjoyed project work. And 6.25 percent teachers enjoyed explanation and class observation respectively. They view that the group discussion of the training was effective in comparison to project work, subject matter, and explanation.

Inclusion of their Demand

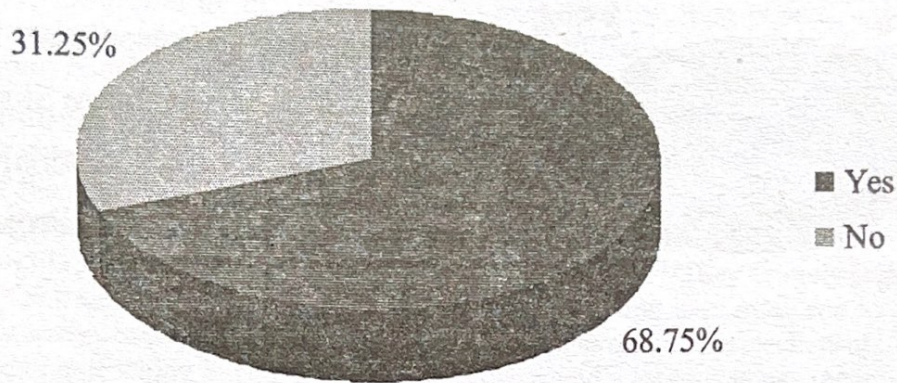


Figure 3 : Inclusion of their Demand

The research shows that 68.75 percent of the teachers' demands were included in TPD training but 31.25 percent teachers' demands were not clearly included in TPD modules. They found the subject matter that they demanded very enjoyable and they involved themselves in TPD training sessions to great extend.

Application of Knowledge in Real Classroom

The research shows 50 percent of the teachers have applied the knowledge and skill of TPD in the classroom activities whereas 50 percent of them did not apply the knowledge and skills in the classroom.

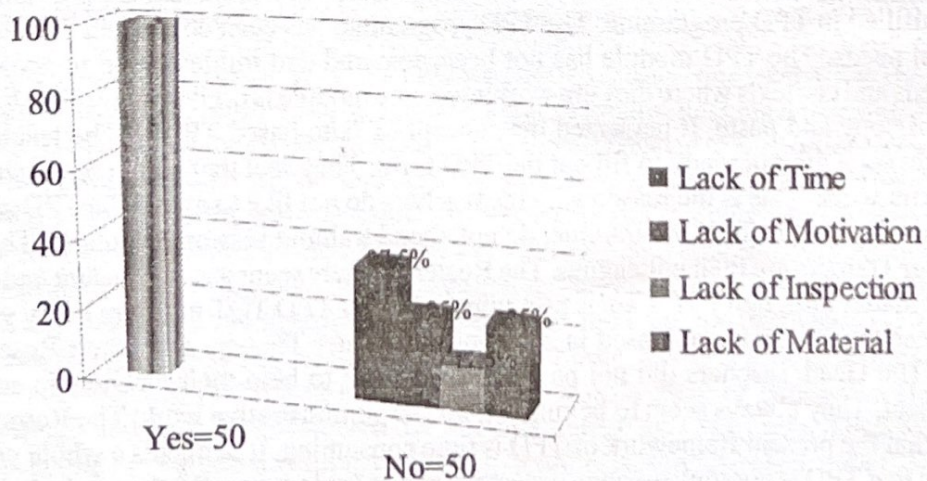


Figure 4 : Application of Knowledge in Real Classroom

The bar chart shows that 37.5 percent teachers did not apply the knowledge due to the lack of time, 25 percent did not apply due to the lack of motivation, 25 percent teachers did not apply due to the lack of materials, and 12.5 percent teachers did not apply due to the lack of inspection.

Transformation of Skill and Knowledge

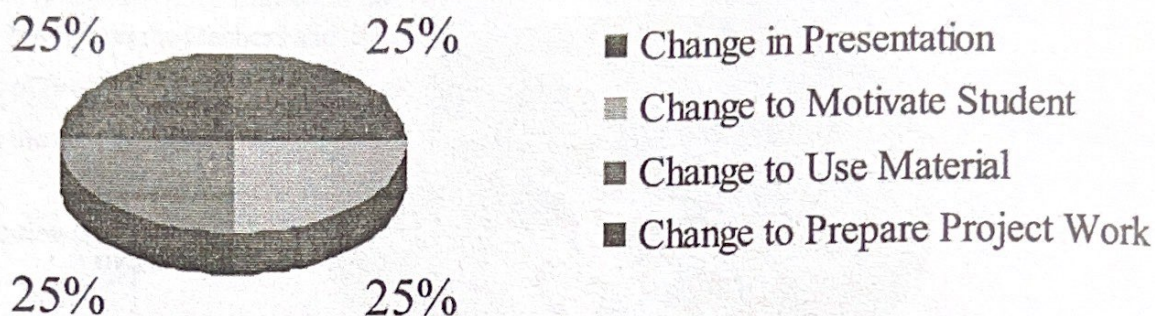


Figure 5 : Transformation of Skill and Knowledge

The research shows that 25 percent of the teachers found immense change in presentation, 25 percent teachers found immense change to motivate learners, 25 percent teachers found immense change in preparing project work, and 25 percent teachers found immense change in utilizing materials. They also found themselves confident in dealing with subject matters. The learners also found themselves very enjoyable while the skill and knowledge were utilized in classroom activities.

Key Issues of TPD

The respondents point out that most of the teachers have native attitude about their own teaching profession. The teachers have only heard about the term TPD but they are not fully aware of it. Some teachers are not ready to fill out the demand-collection form. They think that the problems they have cannot be fulfilled in TPD programme. The TPD programme has been conducted without collecting teachers' real needs. The TPD module has not been prepared and implemented in accordance with teachers' needs and contexts where they are working. Same module is used in many TPD hubs. There is the system of copy and paste. It neglected the concept of "site-based TPD". The teachers who are going to retire soon are not ready to fill out the TPD form. They feel that action research and project works are extra work. This is the reason why the teachers do not like to attend the TPD sessions. The teachers, who take part in TPD programme, do not attend training sessions regularly. Their reason is that the Roster Trainers are their colleagues. The Roster Trainers seem less competent and confident in their subject matter although ETCs 'ka' is providing a 12-day TPD TOT program every year. In some cases, the Resource Persons are biased in selecting the Roster Trainers from their Resource Center (RC) areas. The Head Teachers did not pay much attention to help their teachers in academic and technical aspect. They always seem to be running for the administrative work. The Resource Persons (RPs) think that the present framework of TPD is time consuming. It demands a whole year to finish. Teachers feel that TPD is compulsory than necessary and, most importantly, there is lack of conceptual clarity of TPD among practitioners.

Conclusion

The study helps us conclude that teacher training is crucial to teacher learning. To be more specific, TPD (Teacher Professional Development) is indispensable as far as the respondents are concerned. TPD is inevitable mostly to help them develop their professionalism of teaching. It is also equally important to be up-dated with modern and innovative strategies of teaching. The study has shown that TPD is very important facet of teacher's professional development as well as teaching strategies development. However, a lot of modifications in respect to selecting experts, involvement of trainees, presentation of subject matters, fulfillment of trainees' demands, and cumulating the problems should be enhanced in the days to come.

It is very apparent that the teachers have got different trainings of different natures. The training has brought valuable changes in the teachers as well as the learners. They also participated TPD training. Of them 31.5 percent teachers just completed only one module whereas 50 percent teachers completed two modules, and 18.75 percent teachers completed three modules. The teachers found TPD training sessions very enjoyable to great extent. They actively participated and enjoyed all the training sessions. They enjoyed group discussion in comparison to explanation, project work, class observation, and subject matters. Fifty percent of the teachers applied the skill and knowledge in teaching in classroom and they also found a lot of changes regarding teachers' activity as well as students' activity. They found to have enough confident regarding the presentation of subject matters, motivating students, preparing project work, and utilizing materials after the TPD training.

The study has pointed out that the trainers should be qualified so that they could facilitate the TPD trainees very effectively and clearly. The TPD training should be very applicable, practicable, and useful so that the maximum benefit of the training could be acquired by the trainees. The participants of the TPD training should be increased so that all the teachers could be highly benefitted. The TPD training should be conducted regularly as a result all the teachers could be beneficial. The training session should be focused on mostly discussion and material production rather than other activities like explanation. The trainers should be appointed the experts of the related discipline to achieve better result of the training. The problems related subject matters should be prioritized rather than common problems in the sessions. The sessions should be prepared in such a way that the trainers as well as the trainees could get all the enjoyments.

It is very clear that to achieve the goals of TPD we need to engage our teachers in the following activities like workshops, self-monitoring, teacher support groups, keeping a teaching journal and so on. It is very obvious that the achievement of TPD is directly related to peer observation, teaching portfolios, analyzing critical incidents and case analysis. Teacher need to focus on peer coaching, team teaching, action research, and subscribing to magazines and journals. The involvement to the organizations like NELTA, IATEFL and TESOL and attending their conferences wherever possible are also necessary to achieve the goal of TPD. Joining professional organizations such as Forming local teachers' groups and holding regular meetings to discuss common problems, inviting fellow teachers / teacher trainers and guest speakers to contribute lectures and workshops, reading professional publications, publishing different newsletter on a local or national scale and self-directed study should also be considered for the attainment of TPD goals. Distance learning materials, receiving on-the-job coaching, mentoring or tutoring, school-based and off-site courses of various lengths, job shadowing and rotation, experimental 'assignments' and collaborative learning should be usefull to follow to go to the target of TPD

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