Policy Analysis of Teacher Professional Development in Community Schools in Nepal

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Abstract

This study intends to analyze the Teacher Professional Development (TPD) policy provision for community schools' teachers in Nepal. Specifically, this paper examines the policy text, teachers' understanding, local practices, and how policies affect their professional lives. I adopted the qualitative research design to explore the subjective experiences of teachers. The unstructured interview was administered with three community school teachers. Along with the TPD policy document was analyzed to explore the policy provision on teacher training was analyzed. This study indicates that the teacher professional development framework emphasizes giving the competency-based training package in two phases for teachers. Teachers are perceiving positively to this training program, positively in the development of professional skills, viz., lesson plan preparation, teaching materials construction, and action research preparation. Though it was found that teachers are taking this training program only for their promotion purposes rather than improving the teaching and learning activities in the classroom. This study claims that the TPD policy is conceptually sound, but due to poor implementation, the policy does not seem to have achieved the expected results. However, it seems to have contributed to the professional knowledge, skills development and promotion of teachers in their professional lives.

Keywords*: teacher professional development, anthropology of policy, professional skills, promotion, modular training*

Introduction

Teacher professional development (TPD) refers to a teacher's professional growth, which helps to systematically increase professional knowledge, skills, and experience in the field of teaching (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). Professional development can be achieved through formal experiences, such as attending various workshops, professional meetings, and mentoring. On the other hand, the informal process also contributes to the growth of professional knowledge and skills, such as reading professional publications and watching professional development-related television documentaries (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). Teacher professional development (TPD) is necessary for quality education, and it makes the teachers' professional (Poudel, 2022).

Teacher professional development is concerned with the teachers' knowledge, skills, and expertise in his/her subject and profession. It is the essential aspect of quality education that helps to reform the traditional instructional practices and emphasizes adapting modern technological instructional tools into the teaching and learning process. Teacher professional development (TPD) plays an important role in the field of quality education. It emphasizes improving the knowledge, skills, and instructional techniques for teaching learning

activities. Teacher professional development helps to address the issues of teacher quality development and quality education. TPD is a key element of teacher quality development and quality education. Therefore, teacher professional development (TPD) is necessary for improving the quality of community school education in Nepal.

As a major component of TPD, the teacher training program began formally in Nepal after the establishment of the Basic Teaching Center in 2004 B.S. (Sharma, 2060, p.105). When the National Teaching Center was established in 2011 B.S., this center marked the beginning of teacher training in Nepal. At that time, among the trained teachers in the country, only one held an M.Ed., six had a B.A. or B.Ed., and twelve had received basic teacher training (Sharma, 2060, p. 105). At that time, the demand for trained primary teachers was increasing day by day. To fulfilment of these teachers' demands, a mobile teacher training center was established outside the valley in 2013 B.S. (Sharma, 2060, p.106). The SSRP 2009-2015 has prioritized teacher preparation and development. Similarly, this report proposes the minimum qualifications for teachers. In this context, this paper analyzes the policy provisions, understanding, and interpretation of TPD policies from the teachers' perspectives who have already taken TPD training.

Statement of the Problem

Regarding the professional development of teachers, the education policies developed and issued at various times addressed the teacher professional development issues. But the teacher professional development policies could not address the issues of teachers' profession and quality education. There is a lack of effective implementation and monitoring of the TPD policies. The TPD policies could not modify the teachers' instructional activities in the classroom and could not improve the quality of education; policies seem only for formality. It shows that the TPD policies could not address the teacher professional issues and the improvement of the quality of education. Many studies have been conducted in the field of teacher professional development, but there is a lack of research analyzing TPD policies from the teachers' perspectives and understanding. In the current situation, the government of Nepal issued the TPD framework 2072, but there is a lack of study about how teachers understand and interpret the TPD policies. How do the TPD policies work in their professional lives? So, this study will aim to fulfill this gap in policy studies.

Several numbers of studies have been done in the field of teacher professional development, but those studies explored the problems, challenges, and affecting factors in the field of TPD. For example, Bhujel (2020) found that there are many challenges to developing the quality teacher and quality education. Those challenges are a lack of relevant instructional skills, teachers' attitudes, and the unavailability of appropriate instructional materials. Moreover, other scholars, Khanal & Phyak (2021) found the affecting factors in teacher motivation towards the teaching profession. They claimed that many factors affect in teaching profession. Among them policy policy-related factors also affect the teaching profession, like compensation and benefits, leave facility, upgrading, training, and pension. In this way, I studied several research articles, but those articles do not explore the teachers' understanding and interpretation of TPD policies. Therefore, I hope this study will explore the teachers' understanding and interpretation of TPD policies.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to analyze TPD policies based on textual analysis, teachers' understanding, interpretations, and local practices.

Research Questions

1) What are the key policy provisions for teacher professional development in community schools?
2) How do teachers understand and interpret existing TPD policies, and in what ways do these policies work in their professional lives?

Methodology

In my study, I adopted a qualitative research design and interpretivism philosophical world view. Interpretivism emphasize the individual's understanding, interpretations and draw the multiple subjective meaning and realities of the research phenomena (Hesse-Biber, 2010; William, 2024). In this study, I collected the individual understanding, interpretations and experiences about the teacher professional development policy. So, this study is based on the interpretivism philosophy. In this study. I used two methods for data collection and analysis. They are document analysis and unstructured interview. Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents, both printed and electronic materials (Bowen, 2009). In this study, I collected, studied, and analyzed the TPD-related printed and electronic materials. So, document analysis is also a key tool for analyzing the TPD policies for this study.

For understanding and interpreting the TPD policies, I selected three community secondary schools from Kathmandu valley through purposive sampling. The selection was based on my prior familiarity with the schools. I purposely selected one teacher from each school who had already taken TPD training. I used unstructured interview schedule for data collection. Unstructured interview is informal, exploratory, and there are no pre-determined interview questions (Merriam, 2009). This type of interview is based on open-ended questions; like a conversation. It is flexible in nature and explores the in-depth data from the participants. During the data collection period, I recorded the data on my mobile phone by obtaining permission from the participants. I maintained the ethical norms and values during the interview and data analyzing time. After collecting the data, I transcribed the interviews into text and the textual data was coded, categorized, and organized into themes and sub-themes based on the research questions and purpose of the study. Finally. I analyzed the data using thematic analysis approach (Brown & Clark, 2006).

Policy Perspective: Anthropology of Policy

In this study, I have adopted the anthropology of policy approach to analyze the Teacher Professional Development (TPD) policy. According to this approach, policy analysis involves examining how policies are constructed and implemented. How is policy experienced and interpreted by stakeholders (Shore & Wright,1997). This study focuses on key policy provisions and understanding the lived experiences and interpretations of community school teachers regarding the TPD policy. This approach emphasizes the experiences, understandings, and interpretations of policy from the implementer's perspectives. In particular, this approach claimed that how policies are practiced, enacted, and understood and interpreted by the community and school staff, and administrators. According to Wedel et al. (2005), the anthropology of policy emphasizes how policy works and affects society. For this purpose, using the ethnographic study method is most important while analyzing policy from an anthropological policy perspective. It shows that this anthropology policy approach follows participatory observation, talking to and living with the community members in a natural setting (Wedel et al., 2005). Therefore, this approach explores how the community member understands and interprets the policy. Similarly, Shore & Wright (1997) argued that the anthropology of policy approach uses the macro and micro levels for analyzing policy (Cited in Khanal, 2012). Macro level investigates how the state

develops policies and engages with communities and their members. The micro level examines how policies are perceived, interpreted, and enacted by local stakeholders like teachers and administrators. In this study, I have explored how the TPD policy was constructed and implemented. How TPD policy understand and interpret from the community teachers' perspectives? Therefore, I have adopted the anthropology of policy approach for this study.

Result and Discussion

In this study, I have analyzed the data based on the hierarchy of research questions and purpose by formulating theme and sub-theme accordingly obtained data from the documents and informants. Basically, focuses on main three theme; TPD policy provision, understanding and interpretation of TPD policy, and works of TPD policy for professional lives of the teacher.

Policy Provisions for Teacher Professional Development

There is a policy provision to provide professional development for teachers as in-service training. For this, the teacher professional development framework – 2072 prescribes the two phases of training. Each phase is 15 days. Among the 15 days, the teacher directly involved 10 days in the training center and 5 days do practice in their school. Specifically, certification training, refresher training, and local need-based training are prescribed in the framework. Certification training could be taken by the permanent teacher on a subject-wise. Refresher training could be taken who have completed the certification training. Local need-based modular two-day training could be designed and conducted through the training resource center. This modular training intends to develop specific skills in teachers. There is a written evaluation examination policy provision for the teachers' progress in the 10-day training. And the teacher submits the report based on practice teaching in their school. There is a policy provision for preparing the lesson plan, class observation by a peer or subject teacher, and doing the action research on an educational issue during the practice teaching period.

Understanding and Interpretation of TPD Policy

Teachers generally understand that TPD policies offer teachers professional knowledge and skills related to competency development in the profession. This knowledge and these skills bring a change in professional skills of the teacher, which helps to improve students' learning outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). In this context, my participant T1 said, *"The teacher professional development policy provides the opportunity to participate in the teacher training. This training supports the development of teacher professional knowledge and skills, but the teacher professional development policy could be effectively implemented."* This statement makes it clear that if the government effectively implemented the Teacher Professional Development (TPD) policy in Nepal there will be developed teachers' professional knowledge and skills through the teacher training. Again,

T1 interprets that "*There is no possibility to take teacher training at the same time for all teachers, if it is possible, the quality of education and students' performance will be increased.*" This statement emphasizes that the teacher professional development training should be provided to all teachers to improve the students' performance and the quality of education. Similarly, participants T2, & T3 argued that *"Teachers' professional development policies are fine and important for teachers' professional knowledge, skills, and competency development. If the TPD policies are effectively implemented, the teachers become professionally competent."* This statement clarifies that TPD policies are necessary and important for developing the teachers' professional knowledge, skills, and competence. For

this purpose, the policies should be effectively implemented. In this way, as my participants suggest, the teacher professional development policy is necessary and important for professional competence.

Focus on Dissemination, Implementation, and Monitoring of TPD Policy

As the participant understands, the TPD policy requires effective dissemination, implementation, and monitoring of its activities regularly. In this study, my participant T1 said, "*TPD policy is well formulated for teacher professional knowledge and skills development. But it is impossible to provide the training to all the teachers at the same time. If it is possible, they will develop professional knowledge and skills. There is a lack of dissemination and monitoring of the implementing TPD policies.*" This indicates that the TPD policy is well formulated, but there is a lack of dissemination and monitoring of effective implementation. If it is possible to provide the training to all teachers, it helps to develop their professional knowledge and skills. On the other hand, participant T2 said

"*TPD policies are well formulated and fine. TPD policy has emphasized developing professional competence and skills. But in practice, teachers only take training for certificate and promotion purposes. It is necessary to disseminate, implement, and monitor the TPD policy and training in the real classroom.*"

This opinion of participant T2 clarifies that TPD policies are well developed, fine, and emphasize developing the professional knowledge, skills, and competence of teachers. The teachers give priority to certificates and promotion rather than the transformation of TPD knowledge and skills in the classroom. There is an unavailability of dissemination, effective implementation, and an evaluation mechanism of the implementation of TPD policies and training. Similarly, participant T3 said, "*TPD policy is necessary and important for the development of teachers' professional knowledge and skills. It makes professional competence in teachers, but there is a need to disseminate and monitor the policy implementation.*" This opinion stated that the TPD policy is necessary and important for developing the professional knowledge, skills, and competence in teachers, but policy dissemination and implementation should be evaluated by the policy developer and implementer. In this way, the participants emphasize the dissemination of TPD policy, effective implementation, and monitoring the implementation of TPD policy and training in the real classroom.

Promotion Tools for Teachers

Teachers take TPD policy and training as promotion tools rather than professional growth. In this study, T1 said, "*TPD policies provide the opportunities to participate in training, but most of the teachers take teacher training only for promotion purposes.*" This statement shows that the TPD policies provide opportunities to participate and learn professional skills, but most of the teachers do not implement the learned skills in real teaching. They take training only for promotional purposes. Similarly, T2 argued that "*If there is no value of teacher training in promotion purpose, there is no meaning of TPD policy and training.*" This also emphasizes teachers' focus only on promotion rather than quality education and pedagogical knowledge and skills. On the other hand, participant T3 argued that "*TPD policy is well formulated and this policy expects to develop the professional knowledge and skills manpower through teacher training, but generally teachers have taken teacher training for promotion. They could not implement the knowledge and skills in real teaching.*" This statement clarifies that the TPD policy is formulated for the professional knowledge and skills growth of the teachers. Most of the teachers participate in teacher training and get the professional knowledge and skills, but they generally do not apply them in real teaching, and they only focus on promotion

certificate. In this way, in my study, most of the teachers emphasize the TPD policy and teacher training as promotion tools.

TPD Policy Works in Teachers' Professional Lives

The TPD policy offers teachers opportunities for professional skill development through training. In this context, T1 said, *"TPD policy provides opportunities to participate in teacher training. I have learned many skills, such as preparation of lesson plan, instructional materials, democratic practices in the learning process, and acquired the knowledge and skills for conducting action research."* This statement clarifies that the TPD policy works to support the teacher's professional skills development through different activities, the formulation of lesson plans, conducting action research, and a democratic classroom. Similarly, in the sense of professional skill development T2 said *"TPD policy works in our professional lives by providing the opportunity to participate in training and developing the teacher professional skills, like lesson plan, teaching method, materials, and preparing action research report"* This statement clarifies that TPD policy works the teacher's professional lives by providing opportunities to participant and gaining professional skills through training. On the other hand, T3 argued that *"TPD policy provides an opportunity to participate in training and gain professional knowledge and skills. It brought ease to the teaching learning process. So, TPD policy works by supporting the teacher's professional knowledge and skills development."* This shows that TPD policy works and supports the teachers' professional lives by developing the professional skills of teachers through training, and it has brought ease in teaching and learning activities. In this way, TPD policy enhances teachers' professional lives by developing the teacher's professional knowledge and skills.

Opportunity for Professional Promotion

TPD policy enhances teachers' professional lives by providing opportunities for professional growth and promotion. In this sense, T1 said *"TPD policy offers certain marks who have completed the TPD training. This score is most valuable for promotion."* This statement clarifies that the TPD policy provisions a score for teachers who have completed professional development training. This score plays a crucial role in supporting their promotion. Similarly, T2 argued that *"TPD policy provisions the teacher training for the permanent teacher, and after completing the training, the teacher gets the opportunity for promotion."* This clarifies that the TPD policy enhances the professional promotion of teachers in their professional lives. On the other hand, T3 said, *"TPD policy provisions the training for teachers, and after completing the training, the teacher obtains a certain score, which helps enhance their professional promotion."* This statement clarifies that the TPD policy helps teachers to participate in training and promotes professional promotion from the obtaining score of the training. In this way, the TPD policy provides opportunities for teachers to participate in training and supports them for professional promotion.

Conclusion

There is a policy provision to provide professional development for teachers as in-service training. For this, the teacher professional development framework-2072 prescribes the two phases of training. In the teacher's perception, this training is essential to develop their professional skills as well as for refreshment. However, most of the teachers are taking this training for their promotion purposes rather than for professional skills development. Along with this, the majority of teachers are not getting the chance to participate in this TPD training. Thus, the monitoring mechanism needs to be effective in how teachers transfer the skills in the classroom that they learn in the TPD training.

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