Teacher Professional Development Program in Nepal: An Inquiry of the Benefits and Challenges

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Abstract

Several education sector plans and projects have been implemented in Nepal for the advancement of educational transformation in the past few decades. Among them, the recent- year plans such as SSRP (School Sector Reform Plan, 2009-2016 AD) and SSDP (School Sector Development Plan, 2016-2023 AD) have introduced Teacher professional development (TPD) as one of the key components for education reformation and quality education. This article attempts at exploring the consequences of TPD program, particularly, the benefits and difficulties of TPD activities to the teachers in the secondary level schools in Nepal. In the study, the headmasters, and secondary level senior teachers of the selected schools were the informants. Likewise, an interview questionnaire was used as the research tool to collect required information; and the information collected was analyzed and interpreted thematically. Some of the major benefits of the TPD program to the teachers found in the study were that they could participate in training and workshops; and that they could get opportunities to be involved in discussion and collaborative activities. On the other hand, problems in the implementation of their knowledge and skills into the classroom, and lack of infrastructural, financial and pedagogical support for TPD activities were some of the major difficulties. The concerned authorities need to be more responsible to make improvements in the existing TPD situation at the secondary schools in Nepal.

Keywords: pedagogical skills, professional development, quality education, teaching materials

Introduction

Teacher professional development (TPD) is recognized as an important component in fostering quality education and driving educational reform. An optimal transformation in education demands enhancements not only in the physical infrastructure of educational institutions but also in the professional quality of teachers within those institutions. As teachers are the primary affecting factor in

ensuring quality of education, they significantly shape the success or failure of the entire educational system (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2002). Moreover, the quality of teachers has a direct impact on students' progress, growth, and development. Therefore, the notion of increasing the number of highly qualified professional teachers has emerged as a central focus of modern education systems, both in developing and developed countries. Consequently, a greater emphasis has been given on promoting the professional development of teachers.

TPD is essentially a continual process that aims at enhancing the quality and professionalism of teacher educators. It involves teachers acquiring and mastering essential knowledge and skills necessary for effective teaching practices, thereby advancing their careers (Hoyle, 1980). Perry (1980) characterizes TPD as the personal growth and improvement of teachers' skills, confidence, and expertise, emphasizing the ongoing enhancement and updating of their disciplinary knowledge. Similarly, according to OECD (2009), TPD encompasses activities that develop an individual's skills, knowledge, expertise, and other attributes as a teacher. Jiang (2017) outlines three key aspects of TPD pertinent to teaching careers: (i) teacher training (that enhances classroom teaching skills and techniques); (ii) teacher education (that aims to refine teachers' theoretical knowledge; and (iii) teachers' development (that focuses on improving their practical teaching and cognitive levels). In brief, TPD is an ongoing process that plays a vital role in ensuring educational quality by preparing high-quality teachers, enriching their professional lives, and fostering overall development. It involves a cycle of training, practice, feedback, self-observation, and ongoing support throughout teachers' professional life.

TPD focuses on advancing teaching careers and cultivating professional educators. To be considered a professional teacher entails obtaining specialized training, knowledge, and expertise to excel in the field of education. A professional teacher is distinguished by their extend experience and specialized skills, rather than solely engaging in teaching as an economic pursuit. Professional educators actively expand their knowledge and skills through ongoing research and engagement with teaching issues, assume new roles and responsibilities, and regularly engage in self-reflection and evaluation (Richards & Farrell, 2005). As Jiang (2017) highlights, professional teachers possess not only deep expertise but also the organizational, evaluative, and guiding capacities necessary for effective teaching. Thus, TPD is

indispensable for enhancing teachers' professional life, elevating the quality of education, and driving educational reform initiatives.

The notion of teachers' professional qualification was first introduced in Nepal in 1971 through the National Educational System Plan (NESP). Subsequently, after 22 years, the National Center for Educational Development (NCED) was established under the Ministry of Education, with the aim of enhancing teachers' professional development, particularly prioritizing in-service teacher training programs (ITTP). The ITTP evolved into the Teacher TPD program with the implementation of the School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) 2009-2016. This initiative placed a strong emphasis on TPD training to boost teachers' knowledge, competency, and overall capacity (MOE, 2009). The primary objective of TPD training was to refresh and empower teachers' knowledge and skills to enhance classroom instruction and improve student learning outcomes. Teacher management and professional development emerged as crucial cross-cutting themes in the School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) 2016-2023, which underscores the importance of equity and quality in education (MOE, 2016).

Recently, TPD has been supposed to be a pivotal mechanism aimed at enhancing classroom pedagogy and improving student outcomes in Nepal. Through TPD training, teachers are more likely to acquire enhanced subject knowledge and improved pedagogical skills. Both the recent plans SSRP (2009-2016) and the SSDP (2016-2023) prioritize the TPD program with the objective of "enhancing teachers' qualifications and professional competencies to better facilitate student learning processes" in Nepal (MOE, 2009; MOE, 2016), With the completion of the implementation of the SSRP (2009-2016) and the SSDP (2016-2023), there has been a growing concern among educators and researchers regarding the exploration of issues related to TPD and the evaluation of the consequences of TPD programs.

Currently, TPD stands as a significant concern for educational institutions worldwide. Recognizing the pivotal role of teacher preparation and professional development in education reform, the government of Nepal has prioritized mandatory training requirements and regular updates for teachers (MOE, 2009). Consequently, various initiatives such as NESP, SSRP, Secondary Education Support Program (SESP), SSDP have been implemented, with substantial investments made towards TPD in secondary school education in Nepal. However, empirical studies assessing the impact of such investments on TPD programs are scarce. Furthermore, there

remains a notable lack of empirical research analyzing the benefits and difficulties of TPD programs in secondary schools in Nepal. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the outcomes of TPD programs for teachers in secondary schools in Nepal to address the research gap mentioned above. The research question guiding this study is: What are the benefits and challenges experienced by teachers participating in TPD programs in secondary schools?

Review of Literature

Several studies and research works are available that explore different issues related to TPD. This section includes some of the more relevant literature reviewed thematically under different sub-headings.

Teacher Profession and TPD Process

A profession is essentially an occupation that demands specialized training or knowledge, along with a high level of education and expertise in a particular area. A professional teacher, therefore, possesses specialization and a specific set of pedagogical skills. Ur (2002) contrasts a professional with a layperson, an amateur, a technician, and an academic. She defines a layperson as someone lacking specific skills and knowledge and not belonging to any professional group, while an amateur performs tasks proficiently or poorly, often for enjoyment rather than as a vocation. A technician, according to Ur, is skilled in craftsmanship but may lack the ability to articulate, relate, or innovate those skills. On the other hand, an academic is engaged in thinking and research, aiming to refine understanding, though not necessarily being an immediate agent of change in the real world. In contrast, a professional is actively involved in improving real-world actions and serves as an immediate agent of change. Ur describes a "professional" as someone who executes a particular function with a certain degree of expertise. She argues that professional teachers are responsible, autonomous, committed individuals who continuously engage in learning and contribute to knowledge dissemination.

According to Richards and Farrell (2005, p. vii), for professional development, teachers need to participate in the activities such as:

- engaging in self-reflection and evaluation
- developing specialized knowledge and skills about many aspects of teaching

- expanding their knowledge base about research, theory, and issues in teaching
- taking on new roles and responsibilities, such as supervisor or mentor teacher, teacher-researcher, or materials writer
- developing collaborative relationships with other teachers

Hence, professional teachers are accountable individuals who consistently refine their skills through self-evaluation and collaboration. They exhibit a high level of expertise, possessing the necessary knowledge and skills essential for a successful teaching career.

Professional teachers are continuously engaged in the ongoing process of Teacher Professional Development (TPD), which constitutes a perpetual journey of learning. Ackerman (2006) conducted a study titled 'The learning never stops: Lessons from military child development centers for teacher professional development' to investigate the impact of TPD training on teachers' learning. Employing a qualitative interview method, the study sampled 13 caregivers and 8 training and curriculum specialists from the mid-Atlantic region of the U.S. The findings of the study highlighted that quality teacher training proved beneficial in enhancing learning outcomes. However, it was found that many states had minimal educational requirements for teachers, and they encountered difficulties when attempting to access effective professional development.

Professional development activities must address the needs of teachers. Othman (2005) conducted a study titled 'Managing teacher professional development in changing times: A study of in-service teacher professional development in Malaysian Smart School' to examine in-service professional development activities and their impact on implementation. The study utilized semi-structured interviews to gather insights from teachers and school administrators (principals and senior assistants) of Malaysian Smart Schools (MSS). The findings underscored the importance of aligning TPD activities with market demands and needs rather than prioritizing traditional values and morals of teacher professionalism, especially in the era of globalized world dynamics.

TPD Indicators and Activities

There can be several indicators that characterize teacher professional development. The Education Review Office (ERO), operating under the

Government of Nepal's Ministry of Education, has identified seven indicators of teacher professional development in their 'Work Performance Audit Tool-2020'. These TPD indicators, as outlined by ERO (2020, p.12), include:

(i) Measures implemented for TPD (Teachers' participation/involvement on TPD related activities, opportunities for further education, meetings/discussions organized etc)

(ii) Creative and collaborative work (workshop, seminar, project work, subject teachers meeting etc.)

(iii) Capacity building work (capacity building training, resource class conduction)

(iv) Journal, bulletin, wall post, article publication

(v) Study visit (inter-school visit, model school visit, geographical visit)

(vi) Learning/study material management (daily/monthly, half/yearly newspaper/journal)

(vii) Teacher encouragement/reward

Richards and Farrell (2005) describe five principal domains of teacher professional development, which encompass: (a) subject matter knowledge, (b) pedagogical expertise, (c) self-awareness, (d) understanding of learners, curriculum, and materials, and (e) career advancement. To foster comprehensive professional growth, teachers engage in various activities, which can be classified into four types, as articulated by Richards and Farrell (2005, p. 14):

(i) Individual activities (self-monitoring, journal writing, critical incidents, teaching portfolios, action research)

(ii) One-to-one activities (peer coaching, peer observation, critical friendships, action research, critical incidents, team teaching)

(iii) Group activities (case studies, action research, journal writing, teacher support groups)

(iv) Institutional activities (workshops, action research, teacher support groups)

In summary, TPD encompasses a range of individual and group activities, including self-updating, creative collaboration, learning resource management, study visits, and publication endeavors.

Plans and Projects for TPD in Nepal

Various national education plans and projects have been conducted in Nepal with the overarching goal of enhancing the quality of education, with TPD being recognized as a fundamental component within these initiatives. Notably, these initiative plans and programs are: National Education System Plan (NESP)-1971, Teacher Education Project (TEP) (2002-2007), Secondary Education Support Project (SESP) (2003-2008), School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) (2009-2016), and School Sector Development Program (SSDP) (2016-2023). These initiatives have placed significant emphasis on TPD as an integral aspect of education reform efforts.

The NESP-1971 aimed to revise the disorganized education system prevalent at that time. NESP identified various shortcomings within the existing educational landscape, highlighting deficiencies such as a shortage of trained teachers, lack of standardized textbooks, and inadequate physical resources in educational institutions, all of which hindered the development of a modern education system (MOE, 1971). To address these challenges and enhance the quality of education, NESP placed significant emphasis on teacher training and improving the standards of teacher education. The plan also included provisions for in-service training and teacher training scholarships, with the goal of fostering the professional development of educators.

The TEP- 2002 was initiated to address the issues of poor teaching quality and low student achievement. Its primary objective was to enhance the infrastructure for teacher training and establish a robust and enduring teacher education system (ADB, 2012). The project encompassed four key components: strengthening institutional capacity, developing teacher education materials and resources, delivering training to educators, and ensuring that teachers were equipped effectively to serve the needs of marginalized groups, including girls (ADB, 2012). Through these initiatives, the project focused on promoting the professional development of teachers through comprehensive teacher training programs and the development of learning materials.

The SESP-2003 was undertaken by the Department of Education under the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with key educational bodies such as the National Centre for Education Development (NCED), Curriculum Development Center (CDC), and Office of the Controller of Examinations (OCE). The project comprised five core components: (i) enhancing teacher effectiveness through the improvement of teacher training curricula and the provision of training in core

subjects; (ii) developing new secondary curricula and textbooks for core subjects; (iii) enhancing the student assessment system; (iv) supplying learning materials, scientific equipment, and infrastructure improvements for school laboratories and building extensions; and (v) boosting up the planning, management, and monitoring and evaluation capacities of the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES) (ADB, 2004). Notably, teacher training, a crucial aspect of TPD, was accorded significant priority within the project's framework.

The SSRP (2009-2016) was implemented as a continuum of ongoing initiatives like Education for All (EFA), SESP, and Teacher Performance Assessment (TPA). SSRP was designed to fortify education reform efforts, with a focus on restructuring school education, enhancing education quality, and establishing performance accountability mechanisms (MOE, 2009). Central to SSRP was the professional development of teachers, which was a key component of the program. It placed utmost importance on teacher preparation and improving the quality and effectiveness of teachers. The primary objective was to augment teachers' qualifications and professional competencies to facilitate student learning processes more effectively (MOE, 2009).

The SSDP (2016-2023) has prioritized a number of cross-cutting themes such as teacher professional development and management; ensuring quality and needs-based teacher professional development and performance-based teacher management to enhance the quality of education (MOE, 2016). Several teacher professional development programs have been strengthened including one-month in-service certification training, refresher courses and other on-demand short courses. Likewise, teacher mentorship programs, professional learning communities, ICT integration, monitoring and evaluation, and partnerships and collaboration have been included in SSDP framework. The main objective of the 'teacher management and professional development program' put forwarded by SSDP is 'to enhance teachers' qualification and professional competencies to better facilitate student learning processes' (MOE, 2016, p 55).

Numerous literature sources delve into various aspects of TPD, providing valuable insights and expanding our understanding of this phenomenon. This literature review has facilitated to develop conceptual ideas and broaden knowledge on TPD. It offered an invaluable perspective for comprehending and analyzing different facets and challenges associated with TPD. However, there is a scarcity of

literature specifically focusing on TPD within the context of Nepalese school education. Furthermore, there remains a notable absence of comparative studies examining the effects of TPD programs at the secondary level in Nepal based on TPD indicators. This study endeavors to address this research gap with an in-depth analysis to explore the impact of TPD programs in secondary schools in Nepal.

Methodology

This section deals with the research design, research methods and tools adopted for making the study more systematic. It also discusses the sampling procedures, and data analysis procedures used in the study.

Research Design

This study aims at exploring the influences of the TPD program to the teachers at the secondary schools in Nepal being guided by constructivist's philosophical guidelines. Constructivists prefer qualitative designs to explore a detail understanding the participants' experiences in the society (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). In this study, the researcher has chosen qualitative research design to understand the meaning of the issues, particularly, the benefits and difficulties related to TPD.

Study Site and Sampling

The constructivists prefer non-random purposive sampling methods in which the members/items are selected intentionally, who/which in researcher's judgement, can provide needed information (Creswell, 2012, Kumar, 2011). Therefore, the convenient purposive non-random sampling method was used to select the research site and sample. Accordingly, As the research site, the smallest district 'Terhathum'of Koshi zone, and one of the smallest local level of Terhathum district 'Menchyayem rural municipality' was selected as the study site using purposive convenient sampling methods. Menchyayem rural municipality, though smallest, could be a representative of the existing components and features of other local levels/government, and that the smaller one is easier and more economical in terms of time, money and labor needed. All the four secondary schools of Menchyayem rural municipality were included as the sample of study to understand about TPD in the secondary schools. Those four schools were assigned pseudonyms as school-A, school-B, school-C, school-D for confidentiality and research ethics (Saunders, Kitzinger & Kitzinger, 2015). More specifically, the headmasters, and the most senior secondary school teachers (on the basis of the duration of their teaching experiences) of the selected secondary schools were the informants in the study. These informants were believed to provide the

information required, and to share their experiences regarding the opportunities and challenges of TPD activities they experienced.

Research Methods and Tools

Guided by qualitative research design, semi-structure interview methods were used in the study. These methods are supposed to be more suitable in qualitative study to obtain in-depth information allowing the researcher to be an insider (Mertens, 2010). An interview questionnaire developed by the researcher (see appendix) was used as the research tool, which was prepared carefully well so as to receive required information. The semi-structure interviews were carried out with the most senior teachers, and the headmasters of each school for about half an hour each to collect their experiences related to the TPD activities. The interviews were recorded by using the recording devices for further use.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

Guided by qualitative research design, thematic data analysis was adopted to analyze the qualitative data in this study. According to Lapadat (2010), thematic analysis is a process of managing data, organizing and summarizing them, and presenting their interpretation. In this study, the information received from the informants through semi-structure interviews were transcribed, and were read and re-read to have their clear understanding. Then, they were segmented, and categorized to generate themes. Finally, the meanings of the themes were interpreted incorporating the facts and information received through interviews, and relating them with past literature.

Results and Discussion

This section deals with the findings of the study achieved through the semi-structure interviews. The analysis and interpretation of the findings regarding the issue 'the benefits and difficulties of TPD activities' has been discussed thematically. It includes the qualitative analysis and interpretation of the of the teachers' experiences regarding the open-ended questions concerned with the influence of TPD program.

Benefits of TPD program to the Teachers

Teacher professional development plan outlined in the SSRP 2009-2015, and in SSDP 2016-2023 prioritized professional growth of the teachers. Its primary objective was to guarantee that every teacher possessed the necessary knowledge and skills to proficiently facilitate student learning. The SSRP and SSDP stressed

elevating the minimum qualifications of teachers, implemented mandatory training programs, and focused regular updates to keep teachers abreast of advancements in their field. The subsequent subheadings provide analysis and interpretation delving into participants' perspectives on the opportunities generated by the TPD program.

Teacher Training and Workshop

Participating in training sessions and workshops offered by the TPD program was considered one of the most valuable benefits for teachers. The participants exhibited a positive attitude towards these opportunities. Engaging in such activities not only equipped them with fresh knowledge but also provided a rejuvenating experience, helping them stay up-to-date with the latest trends. A teacher from School B opined:

Participating in TPD training and workshops provides us with an excellent opportunity to enhance our teaching skills and knowledge by fostering an environment for collaboration and sharing ideas. These training and workshop programs engage us in effective teaching practices, and enable us to refine our teaching methods and access valuable resources, Additionally, they offer a space for group meetings where we can discuss useful techniques and materials beneficial for our teaching endeavors.

The Participants expressed that teachers who undergo TPD training exhibit a greater understanding of the interconnectedness between the curriculum, textbook, and teacher's guide. Moreover, they possess knowledge regarding the significance of learner-centered methodologies and techniques, including discussions, role-plays, as well as task-based and project-based approaches. Teachers firmly believed that TPD not only enhanced their own teaching practices but has also positively impacted students' learning achievements.

Indeed, TPD constitutes a continuous process encompassing two primary dimensions: teacher training and teacher development. Teacher training focuses on the "what aspect" (content) as well as the "how aspect" (methodology and technology). Consequently, TPD training equips teachers with insights into effectively delivering content by integrating appropriate pedagogy and technology. This knowledge, introduced as Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPCK) by Koehler and Mishra (2013), stands as a significant benefit derived from TPD training and workshops for the teachers.

Teaching-Learning Materials

Another key benefit of the TPD program was furnishing schools with teaching-learning materials. The Ministry of Education, as part of its priorities, has emphasized the creation and provision of essential teaching materials, including textbooks, teacher guides, as well as various visual and audio-visual aids. Furthermore, the preparation and compilation of teaching-learning materials constitute a significant aspect of the TPD training package. This initiative not only promotes and reinforces the notion of creating teaching materials but also enhances teachers' skills in utilizing them effectively. Furthermore, schools are being provided with necessary teaching-learning technological equipment, including desktop computers, laptops, projectors, smartboards, CDs, and VCDs. The utilization of such technological tools has played a role in enhancing the quality of education. One of the participants in school A argued,

The instructional materials along with modern technologies have proven instrumental in delivering content and concepts effectively. They serve to captivate students' interest in lessons and boost their motivation levels. Additionally, they foster interactivity within the classroom environment, thereby contributing to a more engaging learning experience for students. Ultimately, this enhances the retention of knowledge among students.

Recognizing the importance of both the availability and effective utilization of teaching-learning materials, the TPD program prioritized incorporating these resources and modern information and communication technologies (ICTs) into educational activities. Schools were able to derive certain benefits from the implementation of such supportive materials.

Participation on Subject Committee Discussion

The subject committee meeting, a crucial element of the TPD program, holds significant value in enhancing teacher quality. It entails a group discussion platform where teachers can openly address their challenges, uncertainties, and strategies related to teaching and learning. They engage in dialogue regarding the effective delivery of subject matter, exchanging insights on crafting quality lesson plans, and gathering essential teaching materials. A notable advantage is the opportunity for experienced teachers to impart their teaching experiences while newer teachers share contemporary trends and concepts. Both experienced and novice teachers stand to benefit from these collaborative discussions within subject committees.

In this study, participants expressed considerable appreciation for the subject committee meetings, deeming them highly advantageous. A teacher from School D remarked, "I find the subject committee discussions incredibly valuable as they help me resolve many of the confusions and challenges I encounter while teaching from the textbook." Another participant highlighted the opportunity to exchange teaching experiences, methods, and materials, emphasizing the collaborative effort in finding optimal solutions for effective teaching practices.

The subject committee meeting holds significant importance primarily for sharing ideas and exchanging resources among the teachers. It serves as a valuable platform for collaborative endeavors such as conducting action research, engaging in project work, writing articles, organizing seminars or workshops, and facilitating the publication of educational materials like articles, journals, or bulletins. These meetings present opportunities for enhancing creativity and disseminating experiences and knowledge among participants.

Difficulties of TPD to the Teachers

Participants conveyed their experiences of facing numerous challenges and obstacles throughout the TPD process. The difficulties primarily revolved around implementation of acquired ideas and knowledge into the classroom setting, quality of TPD training and workshops, and accessing supplementary materials. These challenges have been discussed below in brief.

Problems in Implementation of Knowledge and Skills Gained

One significant challenge faced by teachers was the difficulty in implementing the methods and the techniques learnt during training and workshops. The classroom environment often proved to be unsuitable for applying the methods or techniques practiced in these sessions. A teacher from school C expressed, "While we gain valuable knowledge and skills of the methods and techniques in training and workshops, our classroom dynamics present significant challenges in their application." Teachers cited factors such as availability of tools and materials, class size, workload, and students' varying levels of knowledge as major obstacles on their teaching activities.

Teachers noted several challenges regarding the availability of teaching materials such as maps, posters, and modern tools like laptops and projectors, which were often insufficient in number or absent altogether in many schools. Additionally, some schools faced issues with large class sizes hindering the implementation of

student-centered and interactive techniques like role-playing and discussions. Furthermore, teachers' workload (teaching seven periods a day) contributed to fatigue, limiting their ability to teach energetically. The workload also affected the quality of their class preparation and presentation. Moreover, many students lacked the necessary basic knowledge and required tools/materials to effectively carry out tasks and projects.

Lack of Demand-based TPD Training and Workshops

Participants expressed dissatisfaction with the TPD training they attended. The teachers often found the content of the training did not meet their specific needs or demands. In school B, a teacher opined,

The training programs often fall short of satisfaction as they frequently lack alignment with participants' specific needs. Trainers typically arrive with pre-designed training packages that often fail to adequately address the demands and requirements of the attendees. Moreover, many of the theories and methods discussed in the training sessions are perceived as disconnected from the practical realities of the classroom.

The excerpt above indicates that while TPD training programs proved beneficial for enhancing teachers' individual knowledge and skills, they often fell short in terms of practical applicability within the classroom setting. Some of the techniques and methods discussed in these sessions did not align with the actual needs of the classroom. The headmaster in school A reacted, "The organizer of training consult neither to us not to our teachers to understand what our teachers would demand in the training session. This may make the teachers just the passive listeners in the training hall".

Additionally, although the training courses were intended to be conducted in multiple phases for continuity, they were not consistently organized at regular intervals. This lack of regularity posed difficulties in recalling previously learned concepts and integrating them with current learning experiences.

Difficulties in Management and Use of Supplementary Materials

Participants noted that the available teaching-learning materials in schools were insufficient. Teachers typically rely solely on textbooks, chalk, and dusters (occasionally markers in some schools), neglecting other useful supporting and supplementary materials. As the participants shared, there were three primary reasons

behind this: lack of time for preparation and collection of teaching materials, insufficient fund to manage materials, and inadequate class supervision. Many teachers had not cultivated the habit of assembling teaching materials for their subjects. Moreover, given the demanding workload of teaching seven periods a day, it is challenging for teachers to prepare the necessary materials daily. Additionally, there was no provision for regular or occasional classroom observations by peers, headmasters, or school supervisors; which pushed up carelessness. Furthermore, there was no established system for penalizing or incentivizing teachers based on their efforts or activities.

The teachers were not satisfied with the way that the teaching aids and supplementary materials were provided to the schools. One of the participants in school A reacted,

It is the responsibility of the government to provide essential teaching materials to schools. However, what is commonly found in most schools are merely textbooks. Worse than this, the timely provision of these books is often lacking. Moreover, there is a glaring inequality in the distribution of supplementary materials. Only a few selected schools receive the modern tools such as ICTs and Internet.

According to most of the headmasters, the primary issue affecting the management of teaching materials is the insufficient budget. "While a few selected model schools receive funding for purchasing teaching-learning materials and ICT tools, this unequal distribution has led to a reluctance in utilizing supplementary materials in classrooms" the headmaster in school C complained.

Truely, only a minority of schools have access to modern technological tools like laptops, projectors, smart boards, and internet, while many others remain unfamiliar with these resources. Moreover, as Poudel (2020) highlighted the weaknesses in the use of ICTs in schools, even in schools where such tools were available, they were often underutilized due to teachers' lack of technological expertise. The teachers had not got adequate opportunities to participate in training programs focused on the pedagogical use of modern tools and technologies.

Problems in Publications

One significant challenge for the teachers in most of the schools was the publication of journals. The teachers expressed that two primary issues hindered this activity. Firstly, they lacked sufficient time for research and writing due to their heavy workload, with the majority of their time consumed by lesson preparation and

teaching. Secondly, they faced a lack of financial support necessary for such publications. The headmaster in school A viewed, "I called a meeting some months ago to discuss about the publication of a journal. Most of the teachers raised the problem of time management". It is true that the teachers needed to be engaged in their preparation to teach six to seven periods a day.

Problems in Observational Tours Management

Observational tours, as a part of TPD activity, are highly beneficial. These programs offer teachers practical insights into school administration and teaching-learning practices. However, the diverse physical and academic contexts of different schools make it challenging for teachers to directly apply the ideas they glean from these observations. One of the teachers in school C opined,

I had got a chance to visit a model school in my local area once. During the visit, I gained valuable insights into school administration, classroom management, and teaching techniques. However, I struggle to find a supporting environment in my own school to implement the ideas I learned.

Furthermore, the issue of financial scarce also affected the scheduling of observational tours. The headmaster in school D reacted, "We face problems in organizing the observational tours for the teachers due to the scarcity of fund to manage the expense of such tours".   Consequently, schools rarely organize such programs. Additionally, the effectiveness of these observations is often diminished by the absence of experts who can provide explanatory feedback and constructive suggestions based on the events or activities observed.

Numerous obstacles hindered teachers' active participation in TPD activities, as outlined in the preceding paragraphs. Consistent with Ackerman (2006), schools lacked adequate educational resources and infrastructure, and teachers encountered numerous barriers in accessing meaningful professional development opportunities.

Conclusion

TPD, an ongoing process, is essential for enhancing teachers' capacity and ensuring quality education. TPD can be assessed through various indicators such as teacher training, qualifications, workshops, seminars, journal publications, observational tours, and students' learning achievements. This study revealed that the TPD programs, a key component of SSRP and SSDP, had both benefits and challenges to teachers. The highlighted benefits were: opportunities to the teachers for training and workshops for skill updating, idea sharing among the teachers, and

working collaboratively with experts. Conversely, the difficulties identified were: challenges to the teachers in the implementation of the methods and techniques learnt, inadequate teaching materials and technological tools in schools, and lack of financial support for TPD activities. This finding led to conclude that there is a pressing need to the concerned authorities to take greater responsibility for addressing these difficulties, and strengthening improvements in the existing TPD situation.

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