Teacher Effectiveness in Support of Quality Learning in the Asia-Pacific Region

Enhancing the Status of Teachers
(Based on a recently concluded research)

A Country Brief
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Enhancing the Status of Teachers in Nepal

1. The Context

Nepal, a multi-lingual, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural country, has a population of 26.6 million, with 1.40 as annual average growth rate (NPC, 2011). Nepal’s Human Development Index is 0.463 with a rank of 157 out of 187 countries (UNDP, 2013). In terms of Human Development Index, Nepal is one of the ten nations making the swiftest development gains over the years (UNDP, 2010). Despite significant progress made in health and education, Nepal still remains one of the poorest countries with poor economic development (ADB, 2010) with a wide gap in the education sector between villages and the cities.

The teaching workforce in Nepal, though one of the largest, has been questioned for its contribution to enhanced learning outcomes of the students as majority of the students (more than 50%) fail in the national School Leaving Certificate Examination (SLC result report, 2013). And also, the quality of education has been very much criticized for being irrelevant and little market driven. Overall, the marketability of the education system has been the central point of criticism, the teaching force cornered as being one of the contributors to this enigmatic situation.

The status of teaching profession is contingent on a number of factors as motivation, respect and dignity, authority and flexibility given to teachers with due recognition to their preparedness, promise and performance. Teachers can be developed as the great contributors to society when we attract the deserving right people into this profession and retain them for high academic achievements of the students taught by such promising teachers. Thus the correlation between teachers' performance (quality delivery) and students' learning outcomes becomes significant with the increased status of teaching profession.

2. The Practice

Teachers' growth as a professionally competent, academically sound and pedagogically skilful personality has an established relation with his/ her continuous professional development. In Nepal, with the formation of Education Policy Committee (EPC) under the headship of the Minister of Education in 2007, the School Sector Reform (SSR) initiative was adopted in 2008 as per the recommendation and guidance of the policy committee. Consequently, SSR-Core
document (2008) and SSR-Plan (SSRP 2009-15) as long term strategy plan of the government aimed at (i) expanding access and equity, (ii) improving quality and relevance, and (iii) strengthening the institutional capacity of the entire school education system to improve system performance through the enhanced status of teachers. National Centre for Educational Development (NCED), an apex body of educational training under the ministry of education, has been providing one month long capacity building, demand driven/need based in-service training for the professional growth of teachers in the name of teacher professional development (TPD) in order to raise their status. The TPD is based on both face to face and school based delivery modality to address the needs /problems identified by the teachers themselves. The TPD is considered by the government a strong tool to raise the status of the teachers as it is treated as a requirement for all teachers to refresh and renew their academic and professional strength by being a lifelong learner as well as a reflective practitioner. Its focus lies on content-based problems, material preparation, teaching method, teaching improvement plan(TIP) preparation, continuous evaluation, classroom management, action research, adoption of new approaches (Human value, gender equity, inclusion) and instructional planning.

3. Effectiveness of the TPD Program

As the TPD is a demand- based training, a huge majority of the teachers demanded for it in the subject areas of their difficulty so as to have further understanding on it or greater clarity. Their specific focus was on content of teaching subject, student learning techniques and behavior, construction and use of materials, teaching methods and assessment techniques.

The training was effective to help teachers solve minor classroom problems, share problems, experience with colleagues, clear the concept of difficult content areas, identify areas of weaknesses for improvement, help develop study habit in students and improve their motivation, apply action research and case study techniques in teaching and, overall, revisit the classroom delivery technique in order to make it student-centered.

Concerns are there, however, regarding less pro-active school administration, teacher absenteeism during training period, inadequate duration of training period with little hands on experience, more theoretical underpinnings of the training delivery, inadequate training facilities, irregular monitoring and supervision, and demand for more expert trainers.

**Issues on the enhancement of the status of teachers:** Issues such as transfer of training, assessment skills, classroom management skills, teaching improvement plan, collection, preparation and use of materials, regular professional support to teachers for transfer of training from counselors, resource persons, school supervisors and Head teachers and monitoring and
supervision of the transfer of training in the classroom are still persisting as little addressed issues.

4. **The needed competencies to enhance the status**

Given the issues related to the training of the teachers and their status thereof, a number of competencies have been identified by NCED and the training is being revisited along this line. The competencies newly developed for the teachers in order to raise their status are:

1. The teacher is equipped with latest know how of the teaching area to address the needs of the modern learners.
2. The teacher is able to address the diversities of the learners based on the analysis of their needs and interests.
3. The teacher can help achieve the learning outcomes determined by the curriculum as a response to the psychological needs of the students.
4. The teacher is capable of developing conducive learning environment utilizing best the time allocated by the curriculum in tune with the learning interests of the students.
5. The teacher is capable of identifying learning abilities of the students and manages the classroom accordingly; also, s/he should be able to provide suggestions to the parents based on the identification of the abilities of the students.
6. The teacher is committed to develop his/her professional abilities and use critical as well as creative and research based teaching activities along with the use of collegial learning approaches.
7. The teacher is capable of shouldering responsibility in an impartial way which is in line with the existing rules and regulations.
8. The teacher is able to demonstrate exemplary behavior to all being responsive to civic values and standards.

5. **Ways forward**

There are several ways to enhance the status of teacher by uplifting his/her status from a person to a professional; here we are basically talking about the training as one of the strongest tools to reach this end:

- **Orientation to the teachers by Head teacher is one of such techniques** to help the teachers identify, prioritize and organize their needs for their address during training.
- **Organizing a two -day-workshop among HTs, teacher representative, and subject experts** to verify, prioritize and develop the needs into a training package.
- **Counseling through expert teachers at a school or resource center** to help pinpoint the needy areas of help from the resource person.
Provision for continuous refresher and exposure training to both the trainers and teachers to help update knowledge, techniques, methods, and skills in the related areas of education.

Mandatory policy for continuous and sustainable implementation of TIP in classroom to help redefine the classroom and the learning needs of the students.

Base the Achievement Improvement Plan (AIP) of the teachers in tune with their performance so as to make them accountable toward students' learning outcome.

Emphasize action research, case study and project work for the teachers with necessary logistic support to help them make their classroom more meaningful and rewarding.

Managing separate training for the teachers who have subject specific and content bound problems is deemed necessary to avoid confusion with the generic training which is applicable to all irrespective of their areas of expertise and specialization.

Teacher status in the society is very much contingent on a number of factors that are both personal and professional in nature. The crux of the problem lies in finding a relation between and tying them together so that we can transform the person teacher into a well performing professional teacher. A well performing professional teacher is a status symbol for all and all our efforts should therefore be directed toward making this persona a well functioning persona.