Teacher Professional Development from Comparative Perspectives of Asian and African Researchers – Results from the Research Collaboration under A·A Dialogue

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A group of researchers from African and Asian universities have been conducting a joint research around the theme of “teacher professional development (TPD)” over the past decade. This is one of the three group researches under the network of Africa-Asia University Dialogue for Educational Development (A·A Dialogue 1), a UNESCO UNITWIN network comprising thirty universities for which Center for the Study of International Cooperation in Education (CICE) of Hiroshima University serves as secretariat.

A·A Dialogue began in 2004 and is presently in its third phase. At the end of each phase the network has compiled a report of research outputs. Fifteen universities contributed papers for the TPD group of the phase I while eleven universities contributed to the phase II. The group has conducted a comparable joint research around a theme of TPD under the framework as illustrated in Figure 1. This short paper presents some selected papers produced by the TPD group during the first and second phases.

Malaysia: The study focuses on TPD and teacher professional identity (TPI). Negative emotions such as dissatisfaction, stress and alienation adversely influence teachers’ professional performance. The survey on 467 primary and secondary school teachers reveals that teaching is dominantly their first choice profession, they make conscious efforts to acquire good teaching skills and aspire to be a role model for students. Teachers generally make positive self-assessment of their competencies. But the same teachers have less positive assessment on trust among teachers, spend insufficient time to discuss teaching and learning among teachers, and do not feel strongly that the school management is supportive and encouraging. They take part in numerous forms of formal teacher professional development (TPD) activities including in-depth subject knowledge, classroom management, new teaching methods, student assessment, caring students from diverse cultural and language background, among others. However, they rarely conduct any research, observe other teacher’s teaching or teach with their colleague.

1 For details, see the website of A·A Dialogue at http://aadcice.hiroshima-u.ac.jp/index.php
**Indonesia**: The research piece from Indonesia reports the progress of implementing “lesson study” in four districts of West Java as a form of continuous TPD. Based on experiences gained from the JICA-assisted project on improving in-service teacher training, Indonesia University of Education in cooperation with the West Java Provincial Education Office has been disseminating this model. Activities comprise: kick-off meeting among district education stakeholders, baseline survey on teaching-learning processes, training of principals, supervisors and facilitators, subject-based lesson study, entire-school lesson study, followed by an evaluation with an endline survey and sharing/publication of experiences. The research used a questionnaire survey returned by 131 lesson study facilitators and has found that important improvements were obtained in teachers’ knowledge, teaching skills and teacher accountability in teaching. Teachers became more sensitive to student activities and students’ difficulties, while principals supported participation of teachers in lesson study and facilitated sharing with other teachers. Measures that have been institutionalized for sustainability include nominating at least one school as a center of excellence for entire-school lesson study, well-performing facilitators are assigned to other new districts for further rolling out, and holding a conference by Provincial Office for exchanging experiences.

**Thailand**: The cabinet in 2009 approved a 5-year “New Breed of Teachers” Project running for 2010-2015. The Project intends to produce 30,000 teachers, especially in scarce and much needed subject areas, namely science and mathematics. Of the two project components, first, the regular five-year teacher training curriculum at state universities’ faculty of education admit qualified high school graduates or third-year students of the lower vocational certificate program. Second, graduates from specific fields of undergraduate programs who are interested in becoming teachers will go through one and a half year program. These students will be employed as permanent state teachers without taking the competitive examinations otherwise normally required. For the success of this round of reform, apart from known challenges of how to select responsible and qualified teacher training higher education institutions, how to select motivated and appropriately qualified students, and whether really new teaching approaches capable of captivating students’ attention, this piece of contribution raises a number of points of caution. First, most educators and teacher educators are not aware that curriculum and its contents are outputs and outcomes of theories and theoretical debates. Second, assumptions need to be verified that teacher educators are familiar with and are skilled in transmitting knowledge and skills on how to teach, and instilling right attitudes of good teachership. Third, members of faculty of education need to appreciate the urgency of discussing philosophies of education. The last point relates to the inconsistency between the political and economic goals of the present education reform and the other goal of improving cognitive skills by reforming the teaching-learning process. The research emphasizes the importance of looking beyond teachers at the school, district, province and national levels.
**Ethiopia**: The paper examines views of teachers, opportunities and challenges of school-based continuous professional development (CPD) in primary schools in Addis Ababa City. Ethiopia is implementing a new TPD program since 2011 building on experiences gained from experimenting and evaluating a number of projects related to teacher development. Using the questionnaire survey (returned from 281 primary school teachers), interviews and focus group discussions, the paper found that mentoring, action research, school in-house workshop, advice from colleagues, directives from the school leadership, visits to other schools, learning from students, study groups, observation of colleagues work, and learning from individual readings are ten factors that contribute most to the CPD process in this order. It has also revealed that the new CPD follows a bottom-up approach in that it is planned, executed, analyzed and evaluated at the school level, opening opportunities to contextualize the program; a motive for executing the school-based CPD is career development; CPD offers an opportunity for self-enhancement, improving the quality of education and empowering teachers. On the other hand, CPD has the following challenges: lack of adequate knowledge on theoretical underpinning of CPD by teachers and coordinators; weakness of interest, initiative and commitment, in particular by experienced teachers; an overly ambitious plan (time to be spent on activities) and hasty expectation on immediate return from CPD; and limited financial resources at the school level. While most of the participating teachers and school leaders admit the importance of CPD, it has not yet been translated into improved student learning.

As the quality of education, and above all students’ learning outcomes attracts enhanced attention for the post 2015 education agenda, there is a clear agreement that roles of teachers are essential and TPD is expected to be at the center of focus. The network of Africa-Asia University Dialogue for Educational Development is committed to pursuing a quality joint research as an approach that is conducive to nurture the culture of exchanging knowledge and mutual learning among member universities and researchers while aiming at achieving an impact toward educational development.
List of References


