



Teachers' Professional Development in Higher Education at Tribhuvan University: A Review-Based Analysis

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Abstract

Teachers' professional development (TPD) is crucial for improving the quality of higher education. This article reviews the current state of TPD at Tribhuvan University (TU), Nepal, assessing policies, programs, challenges, and opportunities. The article highlights the need for a structured and sustainable approach to faculty development from existing literature, policy documents, and empirical studies. It suggests reforms to enhance teaching effectiveness, research capabilities, and engagement with global educational trends.

Keywords: *Professional Development, Higher Education, Pedagogical Practices, Research Engagement, Institutional Support, Faculty Development, Policy Reforms*

Introduction

Higher education institutions (HEIs) are central to advancing national development as they are responsible for nurturing skilled human resources that contribute to various sectors of society. These institutions impart knowledge, drive innovation, promote research, and foster critical thinking and creativity among students. In particular, the role of teachers within these institutions is pivotal. As agents of knowledge transfer, teachers must engage in continuous professional development (CPD) to remain effective amidst evolving educational paradigms (Fullan, 2001; Knight et al., 2006). At Tribhuvan University (TU), Nepal's largest and oldest university, teacher professional development (TPD) has become an increasingly pressing issue. As Khanal and Adhikari (2020) highlighted, significant TPD challenges at TU require urgent attention. These challenges are not just limited to the teachers; they encompass outdated teaching methodologies, limited research engagement among faculty members, and insufficient institutional support. This



paper explores the TPD framework at TU, identifies critical gaps, and proposes policy recommendations to enhance teachers' professional development.

The necessity of TPD in the context of higher education cannot be understated. Continuous professional development equips educators with contemporary pedagogical skills and knowledge, enabling them to respond effectively to the demands of modern educational environments. According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), TPD can improve student outcomes when it is consistent, collaborative, and aligned with the institution's educational goals. Well-developed teachers are better equipped to inspire students, foster creativity, and encourage analytical thinking – essential skills in today's competitive job market (Desimone, 2009; Timperley et al., 2007). Additionally, the changing landscape of education necessitates that teachers stay updated with the latest educational practices and continuously engage in research to improve their methods and curricula (Day, 1999; Avalos, 2011). Integrating new technologies in teaching practices further underscores the importance of TPD. Educators must become proficient with such technologies to enhance student engagement and learning experiences (Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010; Mishra & Koehler, 2006).

The challenges are not just limited to the teachers; they encompass outdated teaching methodologies, limited research engagement among faculty members, and insufficient institutional support. This paper explores the TPD framework at TU, identifies critical gaps, and proposes policy recommendations to enhance teachers' professional development. The necessity of TPD in the context of higher education cannot be understated. Continuous professional development equips educators with contemporary pedagogical skills and knowledge, enabling them to respond effectively to the demands of modern educational environments. Well-developed teachers are better equipped to inspire students, foster creativity, and encourage analytical thinking, essential skills in today's competitive job market. Integrating new technologies in teaching practices further underscores the importance of TPD. Educators must become proficient with such technologies to enhance student engagement and learning experiences (Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010). Despite the recognized importance of TPD, educators at TU face significant hurdles. Many faculty members rely on traditional lecture-based approaches that do not inspire active learning or critical thinking among students. This reliance on outdated practices can



significantly hinder the quality of education provided, thereby affecting student success and institutional reputation. Another major challenge is the limited research engagement among the faculty at TU. Research is integral to higher education, enhancing teaching practices and informing curriculum development. However, the lack of a robust research culture can lead to stagnation in educational methodologies and negatively impact the institution's ability to evolve. Research engagement improves teaching quality and contributes to the institution's academic prestige (Brew, 2006).

Furthermore, institutional support for TPD at TU appears to be insufficient. Effective CPD programs require institutional commitment, resources, and leadership that prioritize the professional growth of educators (Guskey, 2000). Unfortunately, the prevailing environment at TU often does not provide the necessary infrastructure or incentives for faculty to engage in meaningful professional growth initiatives. The existing TPD framework at TU can be characterized by its infrequency and lack of structure. There are occasional workshops and training sessions, which are often not mandatory and provide little follow-up or reinforcement. According to the National Teacher Education Policy in Nepal, a comprehensive framework for TPD is essential (Nepal, 2019). However, the implementation of this framework within TU remains inconsistent. While some departments may have made strides in developing TPD programs, a cohesive university-wide strategy is lacking to promote sustained engagement and improvement across faculties. This fragmented approach leads to disparities in professional development opportunities, as some disciplines may receive more focus and resources than others. Moreover, the evaluation of TPD programs at TU is limited. Without robust mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of TPD initiatives, it is challenging to identify successful practices or areas requiring improvement. Teacher evaluations often do not consider ongoing professional development, which creates a disincentive for faculty to pursue TPD opportunities.

The reliance on traditional teaching methods is a significant gap that undermines the learning experience. This situation calls for innovative teaching strategies that actively involve students in learning. The limited engagement in research among faculty not only stalls individual professional development but also contributes to a stagnant academic environment that fails to foster cutting-edge learning and teaching practices. Many faculty members report a lack of



institutional backing for their professional development initiatives. There is a need for more structured programs and resources aimed at TPD and an institutional commitment to prioritize faculty growth. The sporadic nature of TPD opportunities means that teachers are not consistently engaged in professional development. This lack of continuity can diminish enthusiasm for TPD among faculty members. The absence of an effective evaluation strategy for TPD initiatives hampers the potential for enhancing teaching quality and accountability among faculty members.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, review-based methodology, analyzing existing literature, policy documents, and empirical studies related to teacher professional development at Tribhuvan University. Data sources include peer-reviewed journal articles, books, institutional reports, and government policy documents. The study also examines best practices from global higher education institutions to provide comparative insights into faculty development initiatives. The study identifies key gaps, challenges, and opportunities for enhancing TPD at TU by synthesizing various perspectives.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The analysis and interpretation are based on conceptualizing teachers' professional development, professional development policies at TU, current TPD programs at TU, opportunities for enhancing TPD at TU, and challenges in TPD at TU.

Conceptualizing Teachers' Professional Development

Teacher Professional Development (TPD) is a comprehensive suite of activities designed to enhance educators' skills, knowledge, and effectiveness in their teaching practices. This development is crucial as it impacts individual teachers and has a broader effect on student learning and institutional success. It can take various forms, each catering to different aspects of educators' professional growth. For instance, formal training programs typically involve structured courses focusing on specific content areas, teaching methodologies, or educational technologies. Workshops are interactive platforms where teachers can engage with new concepts, share



experiences, and apply innovative strategies in a collaborative environment. Research engagements encourage teachers to explore educational theories and practices through inquiry, fostering a culture of continuous learning and adaptation.

Peer collaboration is another vital component of TPD. Teachers can observe one another's practices, provide constructive feedback, and share resources and effective strategies by working together. This collaborative approach nurtures professional relationships and builds a supportive community for sustained improvement. Exposure to new pedagogical strategies is also key. In today's fast-evolving educational landscape, educators must remain informed about the latest advancements and trends in teaching and learning. It could include integrating technology into the classroom, adopting diverse instructional approaches to accommodate different learning styles, or implementing assessment techniques that enhance learning outcomes.

Moreover, effective TPD within higher education should intentionally align with institutional goals and global academic standards. This alignment ensures that professional development initiatives are relevant and contribute to the institution's mission, reinforcing its commitment to academic excellence and continuous improvement. In conclusion, TPD is an essential component of a thriving educational environment. By investing in the development of teachers through diverse and relevant activities, institutions can cultivate a culture of excellence that benefits both educators and students alike.

Professional Development Policies at TU

Tribhuvan University (TU) adheres to the guidelines established by the University Grants Commission (UGC) of Nepal, emphasizing the significance of faculty development programs. These programs include essential components such as orientation and refresher courses to keep educators updated on the latest teaching methodologies and subject knowledge. Additionally, the UGC encourages research grants and sabbaticals, providing faculty members with opportunities to pursue significant research endeavours and enhance their academic credentials. Training on integrating Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in teaching is another crucial aspect, equipping educators with the necessary skills to incorporate technology effectively into



their classrooms. The UGC also promotes faculty exchange programs, fostering collaboration and knowledge-sharing between institutions. However, despite these promising initiatives, implementing these programs often faces challenges. Bureaucratic inefficiencies and constrained financial resources hinder the effective execution of faculty development initiatives, leaving many educators without the support they need to grow professionally. Paudyal (2021) noted that these obstacles impede faculty development in Nepal's higher education landscape.

Current TPD Programs at TU

TU has launched a variety of professional development initiatives aimed at enhancing the capabilities of its faculty members. The Faculty Training Programs, which the Centre organizes for Educational Development and Research (CEDR), are central to these efforts. These programs emphasize pedagogical innovation and research methodologies, ensuring faculty are well-equipped with contemporary teaching strategies and research skills. Additionally, TU periodically hosts workshops and seminars, offering valuable opportunities for professional learning. However, the irregularity of these events and the absence of structured follow-up mechanisms limit their overall impact. To bolster higher education research, the institution has made a limited amount of research funding available through competitive grants; however, there are ongoing concerns regarding the accessibility of these funds, as highlighted by Pokhrel (2020). Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic prompted a rapid integration of ICT training for faculty, accelerating the adoption of digital learning tools. Despite these advancements, the long-term sustainability of such initiatives remains uncertain, raising questions about how TU will maintain and build upon these developments in the future.

Opportunities for Enhancing TPD at TU

Several promising opportunities exist to revamp TU's Teacher Professional Development (TPD) program. Firstly, implementing policy reforms can significantly enhance the structure of TPD by creating a coherent framework that mandates professional development credits for faculty members seeking promotion. It would incentivize continuous learning and growth among educators (Borko, 2004). Furthermore, fostering international collaboration is essential; by



establishing partnerships with universities around the globe, TU can facilitate faculty exchanges and joint research initiatives, broadening the horizons of its academic community (Knight, 2004).

Strengthening the research culture is also crucial; this can be achieved by increasing funding for research activities, providing faculty access to international databases, and encouraging interdisciplinary collaborations that leverage diverse expertise (Shulman, 2005). Additionally, incorporating technology into teaching practices through the expansion of digital learning tools, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), and blended learning approaches will modernize educational delivery and enhance the overall learning experience (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008; Means et al., 2013). Lastly, by encouraging peer learning by establishing communities of practice, faculty members can share best practices and innovative teaching strategies, fostering collaboration and continuous improvement (Wenger, 1998).

Challenges in TPD at TU

Despite the recognized importance of TPD, educators at TU face significant hurdles. Khanal and Adhikari (2020) emphasize that the lack of updated teaching methodologies is a critical concern. Many faculty members rely on traditional lecture-based approaches that do not inspire active learning or critical thinking among students. This reliance on outdated practices can significantly hinder the quality of education, affecting student success and institutional reputation (Brookfield, 2017; Trigwell et al., 1999). Another major challenge is the limited research engagement among the faculty at TU. Research is integral to higher education, enhancing teaching practices and informing curriculum development. However, the lack of a robust research culture can lead to stagnation in educational methodologies and negatively impact the institution's ability to evolve. Research engagement improves teaching quality and contributes to the institution's academic prestige (Brew, 2006; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

Furthermore, institutional support for TPD at TU appears to be insufficient. Effective CPD programs require institutional commitment, resources, and leadership that prioritize the professional growth of educators (Guskey, 2000; Villegas-Reimers, 2003). Unfortunately, the



prevailing environment at TU often does not provide the necessary infrastructure or incentives for faculty to engage in meaningful professional growth initiatives.

Interpretation

Teachers' professional development (TPD) at TU has emerged as a pressing concern that demands immediate attention from institutional leadership and educational policymakers. Despite various professional development initiatives, several systemic challenges impede their effectiveness and sustainability. One significant barrier is the lack of a coherent framework that integrates these initiatives into a unified strategy for growth. Many programs operate in silos, leading to fragmented experiences for faculty members. Additionally, inadequate funding limits the scope of professional development activities, making it challenging to access high-quality resources, workshops, or mentorship opportunities. A structured, well-funded, and institutionally supported approach is essential for enhancing faculty competencies. Establishing a culture of continuous learning is vital, where faculty members are encouraged to pursue ongoing education, share best practices, and participate in collaborative projects. By committing to a holistic and strategic approach to professional development, TU can empower its faculty, enhance teaching quality, and ultimately improve student learning experiences.

Conclusion

The professional development of teachers at Tribhuvan University is essential for improving the quality of higher education. While challenges such as outdated teaching methods, limited research engagement, and insufficient institutional support persist, opportunities exist to reform and enhance TPD programs. By implementing policy reforms, increasing research support, integrating technology, and fostering international collaboration, TU can create a robust professional development framework. A well-structured TPD strategy will benefit faculty members and enhance student learning outcomes and the institution's overall reputation. Continued



commitment from all stakeholders, faculty, administration, and policymakers is necessary to ensure sustainable and impactful professional development.

Implications

TU should foster a paradigm shift from traditional lecture-based methodologies to more interactive and student-centred approaches. This transformation can involve training sessions focused on innovative teaching strategies, integrating technology, and active learning techniques. Establishing dedicated research support structures can incentivize faculty to engage more meaningfully in research. It includes providing grants, establishing research clusters, and facilitating collaborative projects. TU must develop a structured framework for TPD that includes clear guidelines and resources. Institutional policies should prioritize TPD initiatives, providing funding and time for faculty to participate in professional growth activities. It is essential to design coherent and continuous TPD programs that integrate various aspects of teaching and research. These programs should be regularly structured and provide follow-ups to reinforce learning outcomes. Developing robust evaluation mechanisms for TPD initiatives can help track progress, assess effectiveness, and facilitate accountability. It can include peer evaluations, participant feedback, and measuring student outcomes as indicators of TPD success.

In summary, the role of higher education institutions in national development is intimately linked to the quality of their educators. At TU, the challenges surrounding TPD are significant and multifaceted. However, by addressing the identified gaps and implementing the proposed policy recommendations, TU can enhance the professional development of its faculty and improve the overall quality of education provided to its students. It, in turn, will contribute to the production of skilled human resources essential for national growth and development. By committing to ongoing professional development and creating an environment that values teaching excellence, TU can position itself as a leader in Nepal's higher education landscape, ultimately benefitting the institution and society.

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