



LANDSCAPE MAPPING STUDY REPORT

Afghanistan | Maldives | Nepal

A Multi-Modal Approach to Teacher Professional
Development in Low Resource Settings

Report Summary



Project Funded By:

International Development Research Centre (IDRC)

Project Consortium:

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About the Landscape Mapping Study

The Landscape Mapping Study (LMS) is part of a larger project designed for under-resourced and developing contexts of teacher education and professional development of teachers and teacher educators in low resource settings. The project is Multimodal Approach to Teacher Professional Development to address evolving changes in low resource settings (MATPD). The purpose of the study was to understand the status of teacher education and Teacher Professional Development (TPD) in Maldives, Afghanistan and Nepal and to identify the affordances as well as challenges that might arise in the implementation of the MATPD project. The landscape study involved extensive desk study of the literature like government policy documents, reports and published research studies in the context of Maldives, Afghanistan and Nepal. This was substantiated by analysis of interviews of key stakeholders in the three countries involving education officials, teacher educators, principals and a few teachers.

LMS is the first research outcome in the project to understand the issues related to TPD in each country's context. Presented below is the summary of the main findings of the LMS based on key areas concerning TPD and professional development of Teacher Educators.

AFGHANISTAN

Following the takeover of the former government on 15th August 2021, by the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA), the Education Sector in Afghanistan, remains at cross-roads with most senior government officers who used to work with the Ministries of Education and Higher Education having left the country, staying at home, or awaiting guidance on resumption of their positions in the Ministries. There is also a lack of a clear directive from the de-facto-authorities on allowing women's full participation in the workforce¹ and stalled continuity of girls' education beyond grade 6.

Lack of an equitable distribution of teachers across Afghanistan is one of the challenges faced by the education sector and there is a need to increase the number of qualified teachers (women and men alike) by up to 30%. Cultural restrictions among women have been one of the challenges after poverty that prevent teachers, especially women, from participating in education and improving their professional development.

Subject content and pedagogy are key focus areas for TPD in Afghanistan. Other key areas include child-centered learning, mentorship, and coaching. However, to improve TPD there should be more emphasis on-site support-based interventions rather than workshops. Teachers need to be trained on how to use formative assessment and student feedback to improve instruction and must be given effective, timely and actionable feedback by their superiors. Despite the fact that the first teacher training college (TTC), Dare-al-Mallimeen, was established in 1912, there is a need to reform the technical aspects, delivery modes, financing, coordination, and equity in the professional development of teacher educators and teachers in Afghanistan. Furthermore, given the lack of definitive TPD policy guidelines and literature - Distance learning, Ed-Tech and action research need to be improved as part of enhancing TPD as well. As with many other countries, education in Afghanistan has been politicized and a protracted insecurity has negatively affected education delivery and professional development of its teachers.

Despite the rapid development of technology uptake in Afghanistan, most teachers do not have access or capacity to use internet and ICT tools, especially in rural areas and weaker economic classes. Besides, ICT-related learning is mostly taught theoretically to students and teachers alike. In order to improve access, a much needed and currently lacking capital infusion is. Unfortunately, general education and TPD in Afghanistan are highly dependent (49%) on donor support and thus face a massive fund crunch. Moreover, the professional development of teacher educators is practically missing in the policy debates and the ecosystem of Afghanistan's education sector.

MALDIVES

In Maldives, the teacher education institutes are run by the government as well as private players. There are two government universities and seven private higher education institutions that offer teacher training programs. The programs are offered in "Block Mode" here. However, among the higher education institutions only the two public universities and a few colleges have their own funds in order to conduct research to guide the policy making.

Regarding teacher recruitment, although there are no established guidelines on teacher and teacher educator recruitment, both are recruited using rigorous processes including multiple interviews and rounds of teaching demos. The expatriate teachers are selected directly by the Ministry of Education but there are discrepancies between inner and outer

islands in terms of teacher recruitment standards, with outer islands exhibiting lower standards.

In terms of financing, the Maldives spent lower percent of its GDP on education as compared to other South Asian countries. Moreover, the breakdown of the Ministry of Education budget based on demographic, enrollment, and other policy goals to improve quality education is unclear.

The TPD model in the Maldives has a policy of TPD but one which is inconsistently followed. It is mandatory for each teacher to complete 15 hours of professional development per year, and the responsibility of such PD lies with the schools. However, many professional development spaces do not fit well with the needs of the teachers, and those in pre-service teacher education lack sufficient micro-teaching before the teacher goes on to teach in their classrooms. Though mentoring and coaching is deeply needed in the country's education system and is a mandatory part of pre-service and in-service teacher education models, it is not meaningfully implemented and practiced in schools. With such a dearth of support, there are a significant number of untrained teachers working in outer islands of Maldives which poses a challenge to the quality of teaching and learning in these areas. In-service teacher education in inner islands are delivered through online courses and training aimed at developing teacher competencies. However, it is unclear whether these include lessons in inclusive education. On the other hand, inclusive education is a part of pre-service teacher education where teachers are trained to work with IEPs. Regarding the workforce, teaching is highly feminized in The Maldives.

The professional development of teacher educators is an area that is academically unexplored in The Maldives' context. Regardless of the investment, the expected aims from the professional development are not achieved, since single professional development sessions for each programme, such as one for Moodle or GEM, are too limited for gaining sustained changes in skills and knowledge. Rather, teacher educators require ongoing professional development sessions to support their everyday teaching practices.

NEPAL

Nepal is a federal state with 7 provinces and 753 local governments. There are 3 types of schools in Nepal: community, private and religious with community schools forming the largest group. Nepal's school structure comprises 8 years of basic level education and 4

years of secondary level education. The Covid-19 pandemic also has had a serious impact on students' learning and their social, emotional, and psychological well-being with a significant number of students not having access to devices or the internet.

Teacher Education is the responsibility of universities for pre-service and the apex teacher training body - Centre for Education and Human Resource Development (CEHRD), erstwhile NCED. The training vertical at CEHRD conducts professional development programs based on the teacher competency framework and the TPD framework for the teachers in the system in forms of refresher training, certificate training and local need based training. Action Research and Lesson Plan creation are mandatory components of the TPD. However, with change to a federal structure, there has been a reduction in the number of functioning ETCs, thereby reducing the capacity for in-service training and teacher support, impacting the number of teachers trained. Furthermore, with decentralization, there is a policy mandate to carry out continuous professional development of teachers at the school level consisting of customized training, seminars, collaborative research, reflections, mentoring, coaching, etc. SSDP TA in collaboration with CEHRD recently launched a pilot teacher mentoring program in this context to facilitate continuous professional development of teachers.

Though professional development of teachers is a key focus area for policy makers as reflected in the national education policy and several education sector plans such as SSRP, SSDP and SESP, the budgetary allocations are quite low. Although there are inclusive policies for teacher recruitment and inclusion of children with special needs, there are constraints in terms of attitude of teachers and even parents. The professional development programs have not translated into effective quality classroom instruction and practice due to, but not limited to factors such as reduced number of training centers, unclear division of labor between government departments, centrally designed trainings programs, low capacitated roster trainers, weak monitoring and evaluation, poor infrastructure and low budgetary allocation. ICT resources for teachers are available along with a few online communities for teachers, but there are constraints faced in terms of teachers' attitudes and skills for using ICT and little use in professional development of teachers. Moreover, professional development of teacher educators does not find a mention in the policy or in budget allocations. Their training is not formalized and there does not seem to be a robust process in place for their selection with very few platforms available for their own professional development. Teacher educators do engage in

research but action research and collaborative professional development activities like development of communities are rarely adapted by them to work with teachers

Implication for design and implementation of professional development activities for teacher educators in MATPD project

The LMS identifies the following gaps in supporting teacher educators and teachers professional development

- 1) Lack of opportunities for teacher educators to work with teachers and develop a contextualised knowledge of teachers work and challenges
- 2) Few avenues for supporting the development of communities of educators and spaces to share and build on the knowledge of teaching learning process and of TPD
- 3) Need for supporting the development of research culture among teacher educators and teachers through opportunities to engage in field-based research, identifying challenges and finding contextualised solutions
- 4) Need for online/blended curriculum for teacher educators and teachers to improve their practice and incorporate the skills of reflection and collaboration in their practice
- 5) Use of top-down/ centralised approaches for TPD indicate need for the system to explore collaborative modes of professional development including mentoring and coaching
- 6) Need to develop the knowledge about how constructive and student-centered pedagogies can be contextualised in each country's contexts to support meaningful learning of students in school.

Some of the country specific challenges identified through the study indicate the need to focus on use of ICT in remote areas of Nepal and developing inclusive pedagogy, multigrade teaching in remote islands of Maldives and gender inclusion in case of Afghanistan.

Some of the affordances recognised through the LMS indicate a move towards inclusive schools in Nepal and Maldives and inclusion of ICT while NGOs are trying to support the education and professional development of teachers in Afghanistan.

About Multi-Modal Approach to Teacher Professional Development (MATPD) Project

This initiative is funded by Global Partnership for Education's (GPE) Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) and managed by International Development Research Centre (IDRC). The project, A Multimodal Approach to Teacher Professional Development in low resource settings (MATPD) is a collaborative endeavor. A South-South collaboration of higher education institutions and a global non-profit entity, the consortium is addressing the quality of teacher educators and teachers professional development through distance teaching and learning through this project. Villa College, Maldives is the lead partner of the consortium. The Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) is the co-lead and knowledge partner for the proposed innovation; while the Swedish Committee of Afghanistan is the third partner, implementing the project in Afghanistan.

The (MATPD) project aims to strengthen the teacher educators' capacity in the system through multiple professional development activities. The theoretical assumptions behind the design of the project is that to improve the TPD opportunities of the teachers, there is urgent need to address the skills, knowledge and attitudes of the teacher educators to adapt collaborative and constructive professional development activities and meaningfully integrate ICT in professional development as well as the for the classroom teaching learning process. These competencies can be developed through opportunities of practice-based professional development and social learning. The practice-based professional development activities for teacher educators involve:

1. Courses on constructive teaching-learning using distance education technologies, action research and mentoring which includes practice-based assignments to be conducted with in classroom and teacher education contexts
2. Interaction with academic mentors and field mentors to develop action research proposal and reports to experience the mentoring process themselves to enable them to use these processes with teachers in their action research
3. Implementation of the action research proposal with a group of (5-10) teachers to address their professional development and/or supporting classroom teaching learning process using the skills of collaboration, mentoring and reflection

4. Engagement in professional learning communities to share and build their knowledge of collaborative modes of professional development and constructive teaching learning process

These will empower the teacher educators to use tools of distance teaching-learning for

- (a) constructivist teaching-learning,
- (b) use of mentoring principles and tools for providing academic support to the teachers to help improve their teaching practice; and
- (c) use action research processes and on ground experiences to address/solve local contextual educational problems of the teachers.

We will study the change in belief, skills and knowledge of the teacher educators with regards to the TPD approaches through research. We hope that it will indirectly impact the teaching-learning practices of the teachers through their interactions.