



## POLICY BRIEF

# Designing Teacher Professional Development @Scale for Equity in Education

The TPD@Scale Coalition for the Global South works to support national governments and their partners to design, implement, and research sustainable, large-scale teacher professional development (TPD) programs that deploy appropriate technologies to address longstanding systemic issues in teacher capacity. It works to ensure all children and youth have access to quality learning opportunities that recognize their individual needs, celebrate and validate what they bring to education, and support their life chances. The TPD@Scale Coalition does not aim for incremental change or change that merely disrupts. Instead, it aims for paradigm change and transformation in how teachers experience professional learning throughout their careers.

*This policy brief provides an overview of TPD@Scale and its origins. Drawing on experience from TPD@Scale programs in the Global South, it introduces three major insights for sustainable, large-scale TPD that aims for professional growth for all teachers and improved learning outcomes for all students.*

**The Challenge:** Across the globe, there is an urgent need to address inclusion in education and improve learning outcomes. An estimated 258 million children, adolescents, and youth are not in school, and a majority of school-age children in low- and middle-income countries are not achieving minimum proficiency in basic skills.<sup>1</sup> Empowered, motivated, and capable teachers play a central role in this process; the interconnection between quality teaching and learning outcomes is well-documented. This demands high-quality, equity-focused TPD to be made available to all teachers.

## TPD@Scale: A General Model

TPD@Scale draws on two bodies of global theoretical and practical knowledge:

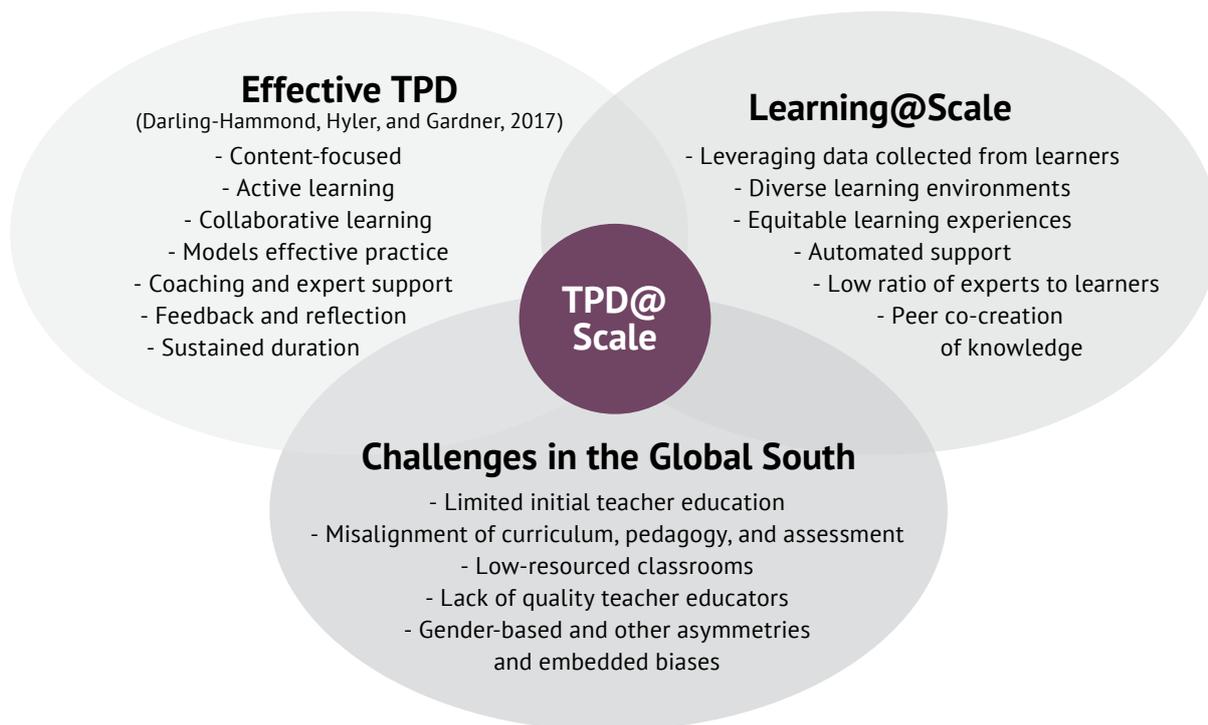
- Effective TPD
- Learning@Scale

However, much of this evidence is from research in the Global North. Critically, TPD@Scale interprets and situates this evidence in the histories, conditions, and needs of different countries of the Global South and the identities, motivations, current capabilities, and prior education of their teachers (see *Diagram 1*).

### Learning@Scale

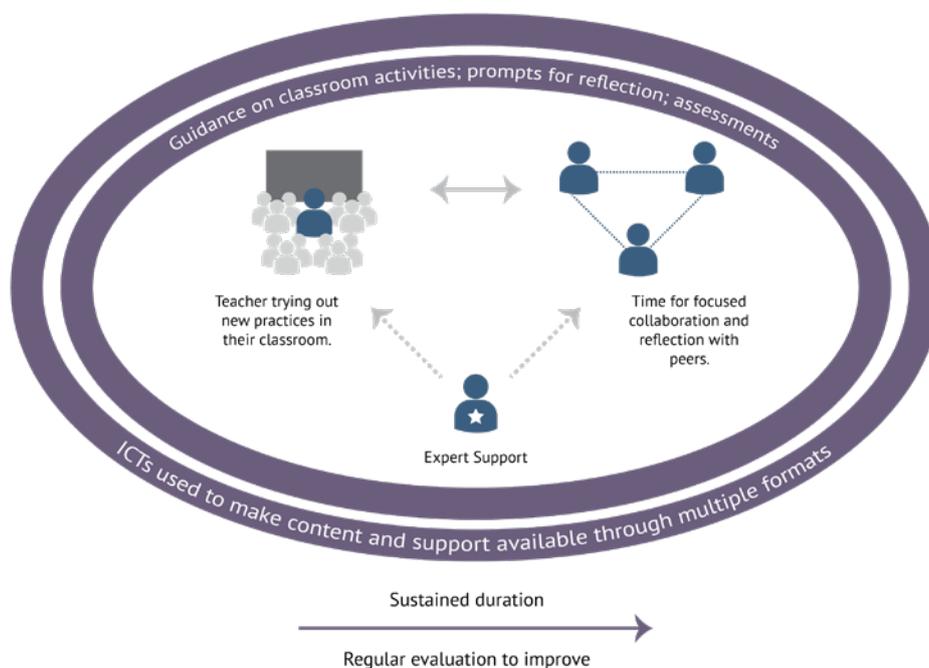
Learning environments mediated by information and communication technologies (ICTs) that effectively enable participation of large numbers of learners who do not have to be physically co-located

**Diagram 1:** Evidence drawn on by TPD@Scale



TPD@Scale researchers and implementers have applied this knowledge to develop sustainable, inclusive, equity-focused, large-scale TPD programs. They recognize teachers as professionals with diverse digital learning environments (personalization) and support them to construct new understandings about teaching and learning. These TPD@Scale programs are characterized by the following components:

**Diagram 2:** Core components of TPD@Scale



These core components comprise the general model of TPD@Scale. These core components can take multiple forms within and across sites of TPD depending on factors such as school environments; educational policies and priorities; current established practices; digital technical infrastructures and capacity; the nature of school leadership; funding envelopes available; and the appetite for change.

Decisions around the forms of these core components are filtered through the lenses of equity, quality, and efficiency:

- **Equity**, defined as equity in learning for teachers that supports them to respond to the specific learning needs of all their students in ways which lead to increased student participation and learning achievements
- **Quality**, defined as movement in teachers' practice that will enable greater student learning
- **Efficiency**, defined as the use of resources to ensure that desired outcomes are achieved in an equitable way

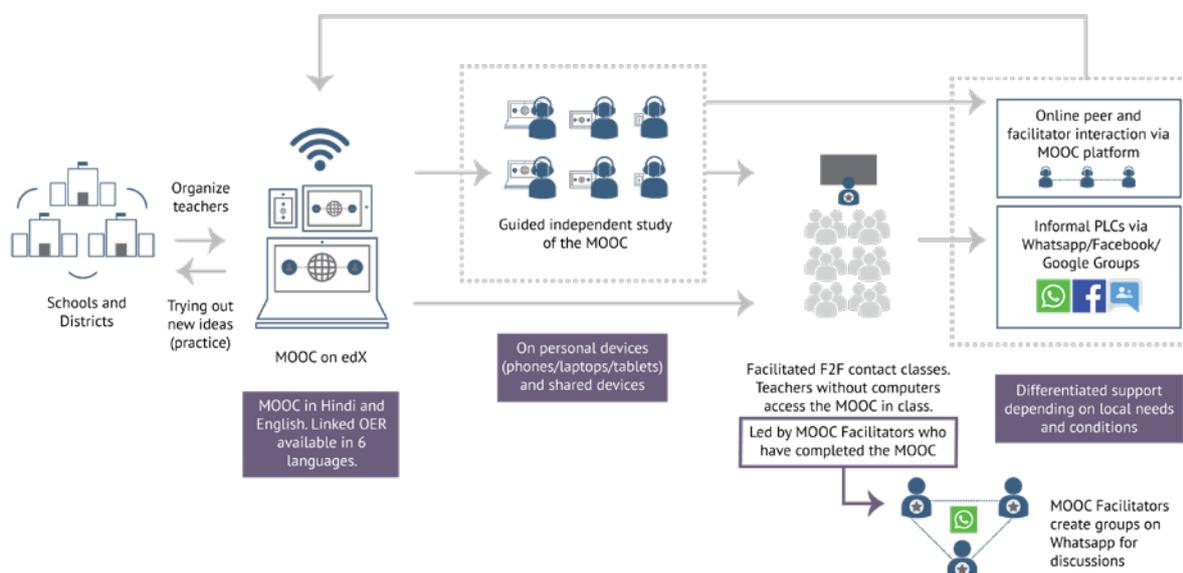
It is important to recognize that there are inherent tensions between equity, quality, and efficiency; a delicate balance exists between them. For example, if reaching teachers working with marginalized groups is privileged (greater equity), this may necessitate higher touch and higher cost interventions (potentially higher quality but lower efficiency). Constant improvement is required to move towards equity while striking the proper balance between quality and efficiency.

This work, across different contexts, has led to three key insights for designing, implementing, and sustaining TPD@Scale structures and programs.

## Key Insight 1: Design for scale, localize for inclusion

Scale is both the end state and is integral to TPD@Scale. Scale for TPD@Scale is conceptualized as widespread use through modifications or adaptations of the general model to create hybrids that incorporate local perspectives and needs. Adapted models hold true to the underlying set of ideas and work practices (the core components) but are contextually relevant for local conditions and challenges, individual and collective capacities, organizational conditions, and environmental and policy priorities. Issues of exclusion are not universal; rather, these need to be understood at local as well as district and national levels. TPD materials may be adapted to reflect local problems of practice (e.g., meeting the learning needs of displaced children) or for particular subgroups of teachers, translated into the local languages, made available on different online and offline platforms to reflect levels of connectivity, and so on. Similarly, spaces for focused peer collaboration and support may take a range of forms: in-person, synchronous or asynchronous online, or through phone calls, among others. TPD@Scale thus pays attention to the particular issues of equity and inclusion (at both teacher and student level) in each site of implementation.

**Diagram 3:** The TESS-India MOOC (45,000 participants) achieved 52% completion through a blend of global and local learner support.<sup>2</sup>



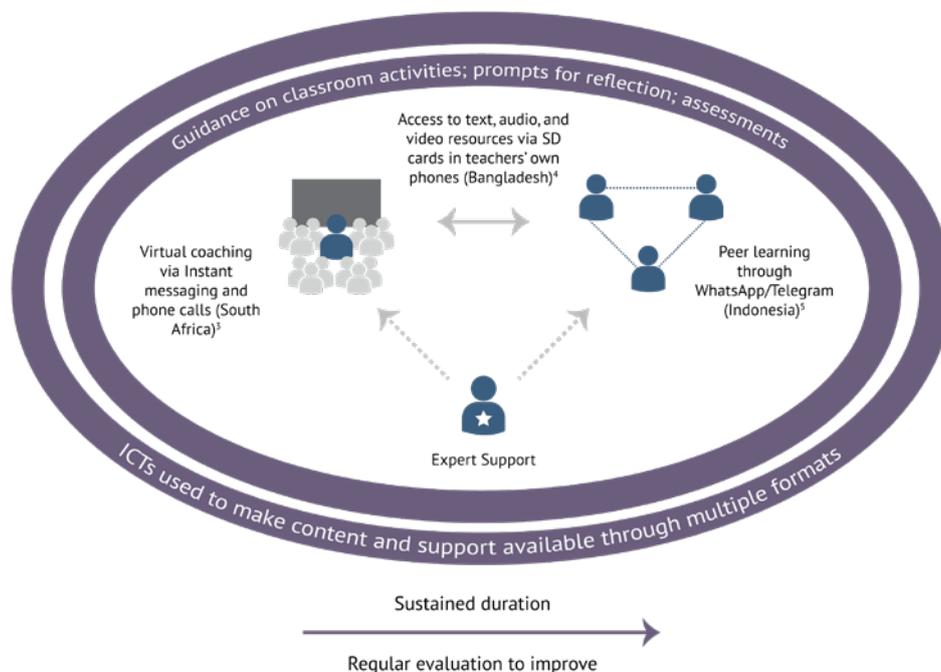
*Implication:* A successful TPD@Scale model needs to be designed at scale to integrate with existing structures and to pay close attention to local needs for full inclusion.

## Key Insight 2: Match technology choice with professional learning needs

Contextually appropriate use of ICTs is central to TPD@Scale. This creates value at multiple levels: the use of ICTs enables designers to overcome some of the challenges of scale (efficiency) while ensuring the flexibility essential for inclusion and personalization, i.e., meeting the professional learning needs of different subgroups of teachers (equity and quality).

Teachers have diverse starting points and different professional needs depending on their particular priorities, concerns, and contexts. ICTs may be used to enable access to ideas and modelling of new practice (through online platforms, CDs, SD cards, etc.); to facilitate collaboration and/or tailored support (through SMS and online tools such as wikis, messaging apps, and social media platforms); or to provide a fully immersive learning environment. In each case, the TPD@Scale model allows for a wide variation in the level and sophistication of ICT use. What is critical is that a teacher has the digital competencies, skills, and resources to effectively engage with the ICT tools, and that these are used in ways which are helpful for that teacher's professional learning in her context. For example, a teacher in a rural multigrade school might find it most useful to use a social media platform accessed through her phone for focused collaboration and reflection with peer multigrade teachers across her local area. On the other hand, a teacher in a large urban school might have designated time to reflect with colleagues face-to-face in school and see less need to engage with them online.

**Diagram 4:** Examples of technologies used to meet different professional learning needs

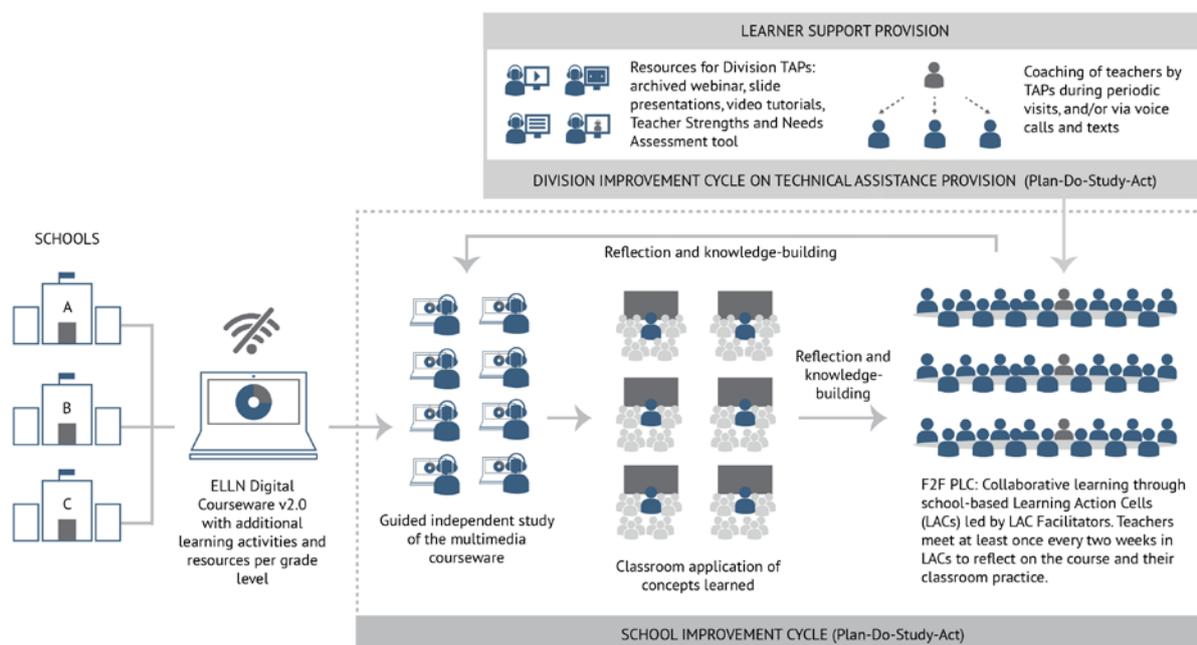


*Implication:* ICTs must be viewed as tools that allow teachers access to new ways of practicing and to new identities, but their deployment should respond to the teachers' current work practices, context, and professional learning needs.

## Key Insight 3: Act, evaluate, improve

The complex nature of education systems means that a linear model of innovation in which adoption and implementation of research findings or proven models from elsewhere is rarely appropriate. Successful TPD@Scale is associated with a holistic system in which stakeholders, fellow professionals (e.g., social protection, welfare, and health care workers), and communities collaborate to create and sustain a learning system through repeated cycles of improvement. Thus, adaptation is continuous and not a one-off event, generating practice-based evidence drawn upon in further adaptations. This culture of improvement strengthens the system and moves provision towards the goals of equity, quality, and efficiency for teachers and their students. It recognizes the mutuality in the relationship between the model and context: as the local context influences how individuals and organizations engage with the TPD@Scale model, so too the ideas, tools, and practices constituting the model influence the context.

**Diagram 5:** Use of PDSA (Plan-Do-Study-Act) cycles in Early Language, Literacy and Numeracy (ELLN) Digital in the Philippines



*Implication:* It takes significant time for sustainable change in TPD structures and practices to become embedded in the ecosystem. It requires implementers to work with multiple communities in intersectoral partnerships to develop a shared vision and capacity to enact improvement cycles at multiple levels.

The TPD@Scale Coalition for the Global South is currently engaged in further research to develop a framework and guidelines for adapting, implementing, and evaluating TPD@Scale in different country contexts. Through this work, it aims to support capacity-building of Ministries of Education and other relevant education stakeholders in designing, implementing, and continuously improving TPD@Scale towards greater access and participation in quality teacher professional learning.

For more information, visit <https://tpdatyscalecoalition.org> or email [tpdatyscalecoalition@fit-ed.org](mailto:tpdatyscalecoalition@fit-ed.org).

## References

- <sup>1</sup> Global Monitoring Report. (2020). *Inclusion and education: All means all*. Retrieved from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373718>
- <sup>2</sup> Wolfenden, F., Cross, S., & Henry, F. (2017). [MOOC adaptation and translation to improve equity in participation](#). *Journal of Learning for Development* 4(2), 127-142.
- <sup>3</sup> Kotze, J., Taylo, S., & Fleisch, B. (2018). [Moving towards cost-effective delivery models of teacher coaching: Evidence from field experiments in South Africa](#). Presentation at RISE Conference, 2018. Oxford, UK: RISE.
- <sup>4</sup> Walsh, C., Woodward, C., Solly, M., & Shrestha, P. (2015). [The potential of mobile phones to transform teacher professional development to build sustainable educational futures in Bangladesh](#). *Asian Association of Open Universities Journal*, 10(1), 37-52.
- <sup>5</sup> Lim, C.P., Juliana, & Liang, M. (2020). [An activity theory approach toward teacher professional development at scale \(TPD@Scale\): A case study of a teacher learning center in Indonesia](#). *Asia Pacific Education Review*. 21, 525–538.

### TPD@Scale Coalition Secretariat

Foundation for Information Technology Education and Development (FIT-ED)  
3/F Orcel II Building, 1611 Quezon Avenue, Brgy. West Triangle, Quezon City 1104 Philippines  
(Phone/Fax) +63.2.8879.0406  
(Email) [tpdatscalecoalition@fit-ed.org](mailto:tpdatscalecoalition@fit-ed.org)  
(Website) [tpdatscalecoalition.org](http://tpdatscalecoalition.org)

  [tpdatscale](#)



Foundation for Information Technology Education and Development, Inc., 2021.

Copyright by Foundation for Information Technology Education and Development, Inc.  
This work is made available under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

Recommended citation: TPD@Scale Coalition for the Global South. (2020). *Policy brief: Designing teacher professional development @scale for equity in education*. Quezon City, Philippines: Foundation for Information Technology Education and Development.