Moving Towards Successful Teacher Professional Development in the Global South (Extract)

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What do we know about successful TPD in the Global South?

Several recent studies have provided characteristics and principles for consideration in the design of TPD (see Allier-Gagneur et al., 2020; Bainton et al., 2016; Burns & Lawrie, 2015; Haßler, 2020; Haßler et al., 2020; Naylor & Sayed 2014; Popova et al., 2021; Power et al., 2019; Westbrook et al., 2013). Though there is no clear consensus, some emerging themes present themselves as areas of common relevance across a range of different studies focused on successful TPD in low-income contexts. Ultimately, successful TPD effectively models desired practice and enables teachers to learn through practice in ways which address their own learning needs; is rooted in collaborative inquiry and reflection; creates conditions in which teachers have and use their agency; and offers access to expertise in various forms.

The following are five key themes that we have identified across various studies focused on TPD in the Global South. Case studies in the boxes that follow illustrate the identified themes in practice. It should be noted that the case study examples are "at scale" examples with available data. We acknowledge that there are also smaller innovations that can also provide useful insights.

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SUCCESSFUL TPD:

① RECOGNIZES TEACHERS AS PROFESSIONALS.

Teachers often begin participation in TPD with years of previous experience and it is important that this experience is neither ignored nor undermined. Teachers' practical and professional knowledge should be recognized to both motivate them to engage and participate in TPD and to leverage their diverse experiences and knowledge through collaborative dialogue and peer learning. With this in mind, teachers should be afforded the choice and agency to identify their own professional learning on their journey as reflective practitioners (SUMMA, 2021b). This can be done by addressing teachers' self-identified needs, modelling communicative pedagogy, and providing opportunities for critical inquiry, active learning, and teacher collaboration to support them in addressing their learners' needs (Haßler et al., 2020). Box 1 illustrates how an international NGO's approach to TPD empowers teachers as change agents in their school communities.

Box 1. Teachers as change agents

STIR Education's approach to TPD uses communities of practice run by district officials and other teachers to improve teachers' professional behaviors and sense of agency to make positive changes in their classrooms and schools. Teachers share effective practices that work for them, are provided with evidence and research on what improves student engagement, and are tasked with "challenges" to improve school culture and classroom outcomes over a specific time period. After joining the program as an "associate changemaker," a teacher becomes a "changemaker" after the first year, a "lead changemaker" on finishing the first challenge, and finally a "fellow" after the second challenge, recognizing their efforts, progression, and achievements during the program (ID Insight, 2018).

An independent World Bank-funded randomized controlled trial of the STIR intervention in Delhi showed that even when only a fifth of the teachers in a school had access to the intervention, the entire school saw a strong statistically significant gain in learning levels in Maths (0.11 standard deviation average across the entire school). This strong "spill over" of learning gains across the whole school coincided with a statistically significant gain in teachers' growth mindset and motivation. In Uganda, teachers reported increased confidence in their abilities as teachers, increased experimentation, use of teaching aids, and improved questioning techniques in class (Wolfenden et al., 2018).

② SUPPORTS TEACHERS TO FOCUS ON THE LEARNING NEEDS OF ALL THEIR PUPILS.

Current TPD design and evaluation generally emphasize changing teacher behaviors and this is assumed to lead to better quality of teaching and learning. Where linkages to learner outcomes are made, these are often narrowly defined in terms of literacy and numeracy, and the needs of the most marginalized students (and teachers) are rarely considered. Teachers should be encouraged and supported to undertake inquiry and experimentation in the classroom that relates to their subject matter, students, and setting. Any consequent changes in classroom practice and interactions should highlight multiple aspects of students' learning and their perspectives on what they value, not only assessment scores. Effective TPD programs support teachers to recognize and respond to marginalization and its consequences for learning. This often involves a change in perspective on practice leading to a broadening of their repertoire of practice, as the case study in Box 2 illustrates.

Box 2. Improving student learning and outcomes through TPD

The Early Language, Literacy and Numeracy Digital (ELLN Digital) TPD program in the Philippines aims to improve literacy and numeracy teaching in K-3 classes. This blended program combines flexible self-study of interactive offline materials with participation in weekly school-based face-to-face sessions. Each week, teachers are expected to complete an activity or assignment that frequently involves a classroom-based activity. These collaborative Learning Action Cells (LACs) are facilitated by a peer mentor. Peer mentors are supported by Learning Facilitators who are available to visit and provide support through phone and SMS (Oakley et al., 2018).

Evaluation of the pilot ELLN Digital program found that *"teachers shifted their views on how literacy should be taught in K-3 classrooms"* (Oakley et al., 2018, p. 22). Teachers reported learning new ways to assess their pupils and plan differentiated teaching. This has led to a positive impact on students in terms of their *"motivation, eagerness to learn, enjoyment, and overall participation"* (Oakley et al., 2018, p. 21).
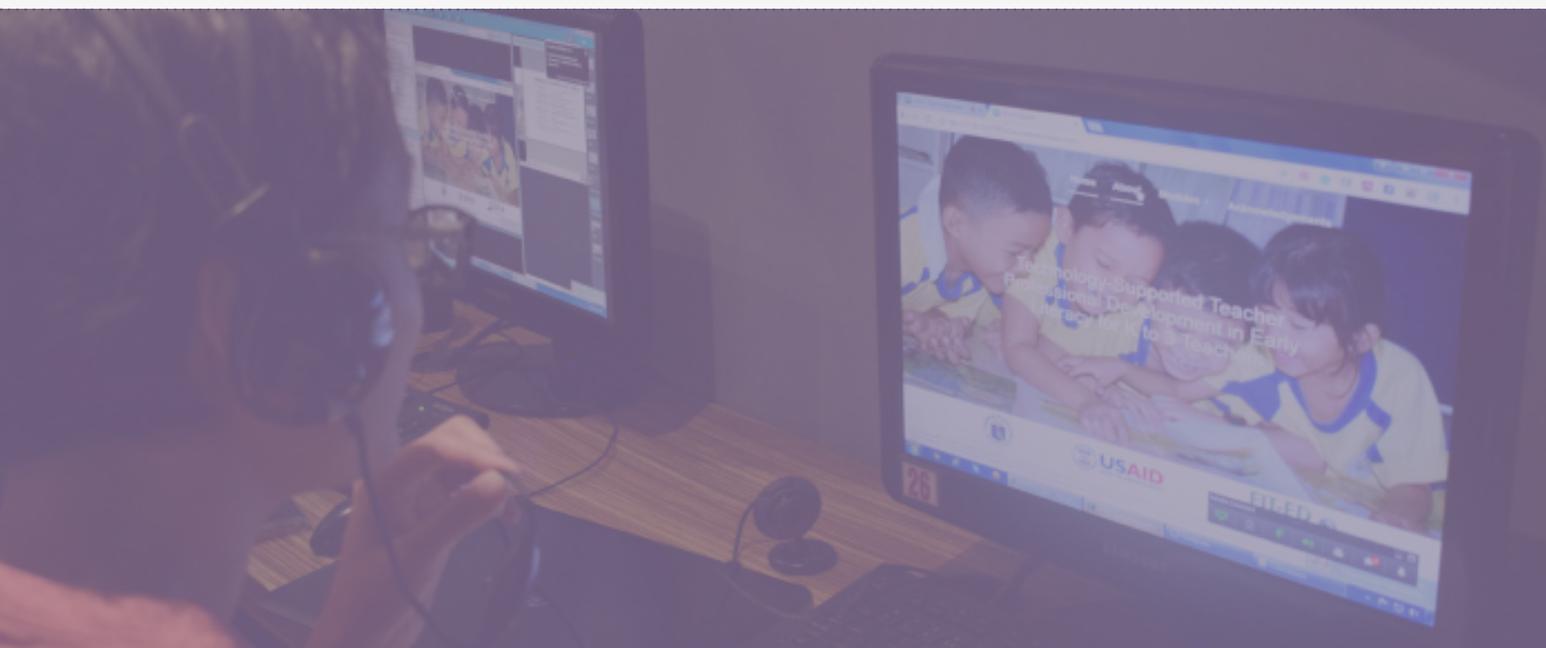
③ IS SITUATED, AUTHENTIC, AND PRACTICE-BASED.

Numerous studies, including recent evidence from Ecuador (SUMMA, 2021a), highlight the importance of TPD being contextualized and focused on classroom practice and conditions as well as providing guidance for experimenting with new practices in an exploratory way that relates to the subject matter, students, and context of each teacher. Also important is the need for TPD content to relate to the learning needs of the teacher, which in turn will relate to the learning needs of their students (Akyeampong et al., 2011; Allier-Gagneur et al., 2020; Burns & Lawrie, 2015; Bainton et al., 2016; Haßler, 2020; Haßler et al., 2020; Naylor & Sayed, 2014; Power et al., 2019; Westbrook et al., 2013). In contextualizing any TPD programs, while there are particular meso factors (e.g., country, region, school level, subject, national languages) that are normally considered important for such adaptation, there is some evidence that there are likewise micro factors pertaining to the distinct circumstances of the school and the teacher that may be equally significant (Haßler et al., 2019). Although tailoring at the school and individual teacher level will be challenging, greater consideration of how TPD can be decentralized and tailored to school contexts and teachers' needs is vital, as the experience of Teacher Education through School-based Support in India (TESS-India) illustrates (*see Box 3*).

Box 3. Tailored resources for personalized TPD

TESS-India's comprehensive toolkit of 191 open educational resources (OER) equips teachers with the knowledge and skills to actively engage their students in meaningful learning. The toolkit consists of 105 teacher development units, 20 school leadership units, 10 principles of practice, 55 videos of authentic classroom teaching, and a repository offering sample teaching and learning pathways through the OER. Resources are available in multiple formats, languages, and language versions for different states. Central to the resources are activities for teachers to undertake in their classrooms; these reflect core aspects of the school curriculum and model participatory pedagogic approaches.

Created in collaboration with over 200 Indian and international teacher professional development experts, the online toolkit enables teachers to turn teaching policy into real practice. The online resources can be selected, sequenced, and adapted flexibly according to the priorities of states, districts, schools, or individuals. Teachers can use the resources to study independently or with the support of teacher educators.

Teacher educators are also supported by free massive open online courses (MOOCs) available in English and Hindi. Over 50,000 participants have completed these MOOCs (Koomar et al, 2020). Evidence from Wolfenden et al. (2017) suggests that the program engaged teachers to attempt more interactive and participatory practices in both lesson planning and in-classroom teaching. Wolfenden and colleagues' (2017) study also describes the enhanced digital literacy of teachers following engagement in the program.

4 **INCLUDES OPPORTUNITIES FOR REFLECTIVE PRACTICE AND PEER LEARNING/ COLLABORATION, AND ESTABLISHES TEACHER COMMUNITIES.**

Where TPD has been successful and resulted in improved instruction and student learning outcomes, it has been grounded in teacher collaboration (Burns & Lawrie, 2015). In one evaluation from Ecuador, several teachers affirmed that the process of transformation is not achieved via training but rather, on a day-to-day basis through experimentation and reflection in the classroom. They also stated that these experiences are enriched by the formation of teacher communities where ideas and experiences are shared (SUMMA, 2021a). A mistaken presumption, however, is that teacher-to-teacher collaboration occurs naturally and needs little planning or investment. The value of peer-to-peer collaboration is realized when particular conditions are present, the most critical being time and space for collaboration; head teacher/school leader support; presence of a more experienced facilitator; access to expertise (ideally a combination of face-to-face and remote support); and crucially, teachers feeling "in-charge" of their own learning (Burns & Lawrie, 2015). Evidence from China's Peking University X-Learning Centre also demonstrates the importance of informal learning among teachers within and across schools (TPD@Scale Coalition for the Global South, 2019). Box 4 illustrates how TPD strategies deliberately provide opportunities for individual and collaborative learning among teachers in Rwanda.

Box 4. Reflective school-based teacher communities

Funded by UKAid and implemented by a consortium led by the Education Development Trust, Building Learning Foundations (BLF) Rwanda focuses on establishing solid foundations at the primary level (P1 to P6) in all government and government-aided schools through three pillars: teacher development, leadership for learning, and system strengthening.

For the TPD pillar, the program provides self- and peer-learning toolkits to all English and Mathematics teachers at the primary level. The toolkits consist of printed books and supporting audio-visual materials on removable media that cover subject-specific pedagogy and content. The toolkits have been designed to be used on teachers' own mobile phones. In addition, each school has been provided with two smartphones so that teachers can watch the instructional videos and film their own classes for self-reflection and peer discussion. Teachers meet at least once a month and use adaptable, guided communities of practice session plans to discuss and reflect on toolkit content as well as any practical classroom challenges that they face.

5 **IS SUSTAINED OVER TIME.**

Teacher practice is difficult to change and takes time to embed (Burns & Lawrie, 2015). In order to embed any change, it is important to recognize TPD as an essential component in career-long professional learning for teachers. As such, a variety of sustained approaches is needed. As evidence suggests, TPD that is focused on both teacher practices and learner outcomes; uses a variety of modalities (e.g. coaching, audio-visual materials, and workshops); provides follow up support; and provides opportunities for peer learning, has been proven to be more effective over time (Hardman et al., 2011). Box 5 describes how TPD initiatives were successfully sustained in Vietnam.

Box 5. A comprehensive and sustained approach to TPD

The Escuela Nueva model, originally established in Colombia in the 1970s, has evolved over several decades within and beyond Latin America. The model has also been successfully adapted to the Vietnamese context where the approach has been proven to have statistically significant effects on student outcomes in both Vietnamese and Mathematics.

Central to the program's success were careful and thoughtful adaptations to the Vietnamese context; a whole school approach; and a comprehensive strategy that involved sustained awareness building and a motivational campaign which effectively targeted school communities and other key stakeholders. Over the four years of the program, teachers engaged in ongoing experiential learning where learner-centred pedagogy was modelled effectively; micro-centers which promoted professional learning networks at the school level were established; and teachers received school-based support through learner guides (Parandekar et al, 2017).