



SYNTHESIS NOTE OF KIX EMAP LEARNING CYCLE 5: TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AT SCALE

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The KIX EMAP Hub facilitates cross-country knowledge and innovation exchange and mobilisation, learning, synthesis, and collaboration among national education stakeholders in 38 GPE partner countries in the EMAP region. The Hub also offers opportunities for peer learning and exchange by means of professional development and inter-country visits.

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ABOUT THE KIX EMAP LEARNING CYCLES

The KIX EMAP Learning Cycles are professional development courses offered to national education experts from 38 GPE partner countries in the Europe, Middle East and North Africa, Asia and Pacific (EMAP) region. Teams of national experts analyse, contextualise, and produce new knowledge on policy analysis and innovations. These professional development courses allow participants to share experiences, exchange knowledge, and contribute to the strengthening of their national education systems. The Learning Cycles are also an opportunity for national experts to publish their studies and findings internationally, and disseminate them on diverse online platforms, with support from the KIX EMAP Hub.

ABOUT THE LEARNING CYCLE ON SECONDARY TEACHER WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT

Facilitated by the TPD@Scale Coalition for the Global South, through the Foundation for Information Technology Education and Development, Inc. (FIT-ED), the Teacher Professional Development at Scale (TPD@Scale) Learning Cycle ran from 23 September until 16 December 2022. Across 11 weeks, this Learning Cycle enabled participants to examine how Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)-mediated Teacher Professional Development (TPD) programmes can be scaled through adaptation/localization for a large number of teachers to improve students' learning outcomes. National teams from thirteen countries participated in this Learning Cycle: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Georgia, Kyrgyz Republic, Maldives, Moldova, Mongolia, Nepal, Sudan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Vietnam and Yemen.



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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

EMAP	Europe, Middle East and North Africa, Asia and Pacific
GPE KIX	Global Partnership for Education Knowledge and Innovation Exchange
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
TPD	Teacher Professional Development

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INTRODUCTION

Teacher-related issues remain a policy priority across the EMAP region. This includes pre- and in-service teacher education, teacher recruitment, deployment, and management, amongst others. The KIX EMAP Hub organised a Learning Cycle on Teacher Professional Development at Scale in response to this policy priority across the region. It was facilitated by the TPD@Scale Coalition for the Global South, through the Foundation for Information Technology Education and Development, Inc. (FIT-ED), and ran from 23 September until 16 December 2022.

As part of this Learning Cycle, national teams developed policy briefs which analysed the existing context of Teacher Professional Development (TPD) in their country and proposed a model for implementing TPD@Scale. TPD@Scale in this Learning Cycle refers to information and communications technology (ICT)-mediated TPD programmes that engage large numbers of teachers. 'Large numbers' is understood from the system (cluster, district, provincial or national) perspective rather than from the absolute numerical perspective. TPD@Scale draws on the known characteristics of effective TPD, theoretical and practical knowledge on scaling, and the emerging findings from the new field of 'learning at scale.' TPD@Scale programmes may blend online and offline methods, systems, resources, and activities to meet the professional learning needs of teachers in diverse contexts.

In the first section of these policy briefs, teams articulated the key challenges they faced regarding implementing TPD at scale and shared some recommendations to address these challenges. In the second section, they presented proposals to adapt and localise effective TPD@Scale models to put in place large-scale TPD programmes mediated by ICT to achieve equity, quality, and efficiency, along with identification of the necessary and sufficient conditions that support this large-scale TPD in their contexts, including the need for a shared vision, national ICT plans, adequate consultation with different stakeholders, mechanisms for recognising teachers' participation, and guidance mechanisms for teachers.

This note synthesises the findings from the first section of the policy briefs developed by national teams from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Kyrgyz Republic, Maldives, Mongolia, and Vietnam who participated in this Learning Cycle on TPD@Scale. Since the second section includes proposals to scale TPD projects and programmes that are very specific to country contexts, the proposals are not included in this synthesis note.

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CONTEXT OF TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Teacher professional development is a life-long process, beginning from the initial preparation that teachers undergo, and continuing until their retirement from service.¹ This process includes formal experiences such as trainings, workshops, and mentoring, and informal learning through reading academic papers and articles, learning from peers through professional learning communities, etc.

Recognising the importance of TPD for changing classroom practice and improving student learning, most countries in the world have put in place well-defined systems to support teachers throughout their careers. Most ongoing education reform initiatives in countries also include a focus on TPD, including the use of innovative approaches to TPD, such as the use of ICT for blended learning models, a shift towards practice-based learning, and a focus on peer learning, amongst others.

The policy briefs provide a brief overview of the overall context of TPD in their respective countries. This includes pre-service and in-service training requirements and provisions, use of digital components, and any other TPD activities.

The following trends emerged as noteworthy across countries:

1. Teacher qualifications and pre-service training

All six countries lay down clear stipulations regarding the pre-service training and qualification criteria for primary and secondary teachers. This generally includes a bachelor's degree in pedagogy or education (it may be a diploma for pre-school or elementary teachers), with additional qualifications such as subject specialisations required for secondary/subject teachers. In contexts such as Mongolia, a newly adopted education law allows Mongolian professionals in fields other than teaching to qualify as teachers by attending a specialised teacher preparation programme. In Bangladesh, while primary school teachers must undertake a regular, 1.5-year pre-service training programme called the diploma in primary education, pre-service teachers are required to enrol in the programme no later than three years after being hired as teachers due to the training centres' massive training demands that need to accommodate a large teacher population.

2. Induction period

Some of the countries have put in place policies to support newly qualified teachers through an induction period. For example, in Bangladesh, all teachers receive a 15-day induction training on general subjects and pedagogical techniques upon entering the job field, with the trainings usually held at the sub-district level. In Vietnam, an induction period of twelve months is stipulated for those with a bachelor's degree, and nine months for those with a college diploma.

3. In-service teacher professional development

A range of in-service teacher training/professional development requirements and provisions are in place across contexts. This includes a requirement of 80 hours of needs-based TPD per academic year in Bhutan; 15 hours per academic year in the Maldives; to a much more comprehensive requirement in Vietnam.

In Vietnam, teachers are required to undertake 120 hours of in-service training every year, which includes 40 hours of instruction with the content/modules designed by the Ministry of Education and Training and the Ministry of Internal Affairs; 40 hours of formal training on professional skills organised yearly by the Bureau of Education and Training, Department of Education and Training or the Ministry of Education and Training; and 40 hours to update themselves on new policies and guidelines organised by the Bureau of Education and Training or the Department of Education and Training. Further, teachers are required to participate in professional meetings that take place at their schools every two weeks, and teacher professional meetings that are organised by the Bureau of Education and Training for clusters of 3–4 schools. Finally, additional trainings on any new curricula are also organised through special projects.

Another example is Mongolia, which has put in place a modular training model. Modular training is conducted annually for all teachers and employees of educational institutions. The training comprises two levels: targeted and specialised courses. To earn one credit, teachers are free to choose from

¹ Villegas-Reimers, Eleonora. *Teacher Professional Development: An International Review of the Literature*. UNESCO, 2003.

specialised, personal development courses offered by selected professional development providers. Targeted training consists of two types of training: compulsory and selective. Each teacher is required to attend two TPD (compulsory and selective) courses twice a year. The government provides the funding to schools directly, and this budget is used to cover the costs of training chosen by or assigned to teachers.

In the Kyrgyz Republic, teachers have an opportunity to periodically attend TPD courses provided by public institutions. To qualify for a Certificate of Completion of the Advanced Training Course, teachers must complete a 72-hour course. The schedule for the advanced training is approved annually by order of the Minister; and all schools are required to familiarise themselves with the schedule and provide lists of teachers for training. School administrations keep track of the planned training schedule and send teachers to attend courses as needed, and the training expenses are covered through the government budget.

4. Digital components

Both Mongolia and the Kyrgyz Republic integrate digital components to support TPD. In Mongolia, a Moodle platform is used in combination with the digital platforms of private entities. The mandatory training is provided through the Moodle platform, and other trainings are organised using the digital platforms of private companies.

In the Kyrgyz Republic, trainings have been transitioned to an online format since 2019 through a platform which provides access to 66 courses. The introduction of online courses reduced the costs associated with teacher travel and doubled the number of attendees.

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CHALLENGES WITH TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The policy briefs also identify several challenges with existing teacher professional development requirements and provisions in their contexts.

1. Quality and design of training

Training quality emerged as a significant challenge across contexts. This includes the lack of an enabling environment for learning, inexperienced trainers, insufficient ICT preparation, inaccessible materials, and a lack of contextualisation and adaptation. The duration and scope of TPD initiatives were found to be limited in some contexts, such as Bhutan and Vietnam. The lack of relevance, and impractical or unattractive content emerged as another challenge across countries, with insufficient opportunities for gaining hands-on experience in the concepts introduced during the training.

2. Uneven access and limitations of online training models

Across contexts, TPD opportunities are unevenly distributed, limited in duration and scope, and often underfunded. Digital divides including unstable internet connections, inadequate devices, and reluctance among older teachers to adopt online methods limit effectiveness. This challenge is particularly exacerbated in countries such as the Kyrgyz Republic which rely heavily on online TPD.

In some contexts, such as Mongolia and the Kyrgyz Republic, women teachers face additional constraints due to household responsibilities and interruptions. This, combined with an increased feminisation of the teaching profession, may further impact equitable access to relevant, high-quality TPD opportunities.

3. Inadequate follow-up and monitoring

Across contexts, the lack of sufficient follow-up to TPD trainings emerged as a significant challenge. Follow-up support, mentoring, monitoring, and hands-on practice were frequently found to be missing, reducing the sustainability and impact of training initiatives. These challenges were further exacerbated by weak monitoring and evaluation systems, and opportunities for reflection.

4. Lack of opportunities for mentorship and collaboration

Teachers across countries identified a lack of mentorship, peer support, and collaboration opportunities as a significant challenge for their professional development. For example, in Bangladesh, there is evidence that primary school teachers would like help from their peers in planning lessons, creating content, observing classrooms and giving corrective feedback. Time restrictions and the social structure of the schools, however, limit teachers' use of such embedded improvement initiatives². Similarly, teachers in Bhutan identified a lack of professional learning communities and guidance as a challenge.

5. Misalignment between professional demands and TPD

In some countries such as Mongolia, teachers identified increasingly complex demands in their professional lives due to a sharper focus on students' learning outcomes and academic achievements, greater demands from employers and parents, evolving curriculum and content reform and a growing demand to use new technology.

In the Kyrgyz Republic, it was found that the trainings did not meet the needs of teachers in a dynamic information and technology environment. Similarly, in Bangladesh and Bhutan, it was found that teachers encountered challenges in acquiring skills and competencies related to ICT, as insufficient training was provided to meet the growing demands in this area.

2 Rahman, M. M., Pandian, A., & Kaur, M. (2018). Factors affecting teachers' implementation of communicative language teaching curriculum in secondary schools in Bangladesh. *Qualitative Report*, 23(5), 1104-1126. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2018.3220>.

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RECOMMENDATIONS ON STRENGTHENING TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Based on the current situation of TPD and the challenges articulated in the policy briefs, the following recommendations to strengthen teacher professional development emerged across contexts:

1. Structured, practice-based TPD with robust follow-up

Across countries, a key recommendation is to implement more structured TPD initiatives which allow for adequate opportunities for hands-on application. Classroom-based TPD initiatives are also recommended so that teachers have an opportunity to immediately apply what they have learnt in an actual classroom scenario. The importance of ongoing monitoring, assessment, reflection, and feedback also comes through across countries; especially monitoring approaches that go beyond inspection models but provide opportunities for real learning and course correction.

2. Contextual relevance and localisation

Across contexts, it is recommended to design TPD initiatives that respond to varying systemic factors such as ICT infrastructure and tools, teachers' digital skills, issues of equity across different subgroups of teachers, relevance, and effectiveness. Strengthening the quality of TPD content, to whether delivered through in-person or blended approaches, also emerged as an important recommendation.

The design of TPD initiatives also needs to consider the access of different groups of teachers. For example, in contexts such as the Maldives, not only do different sub-groups of teachers (subject teachers vis-à-vis primary school teachers) have different professional learning needs, but transportation between different islands is also expensive, thereby limiting access even if trainings are found to be relevant.

3. Professional standards, quality assurance, and accreditation

In response to the challenges with TPD quality, a recommendation from Mongolia and the Kyrgyz Republic is to establish clear criteria for evaluating TPD quality, with systematic accreditation of TPD programmes, and alignment with national and international educational standards. Teacher training institutions must adopt consistent quality assurance systems to ensure consistency in educational standards.

4. Use of technology for increased access and diversification

While the use of technology-based or technology-mediated platforms is recommended to support localisation and personalisation, these platforms should not fully replace school-based TPD activities. The idea is that technology-mediated platforms should be designed in a way that cater to individual needs whilst also supporting collaboration and teacher interaction through peer learning networks and collaborative communities. Thus, TPD opportunities need to be provided in a range of forms: in-person and online (synchronous and asynchronous). Simultaneously, TPD initiatives should also support teachers' digital skills and equip them to meet the demands from the curriculum as well as students. Most importantly, schools also require adequate ICT infrastructure to support quality, technology-enhanced teacher learning.

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CONCLUSION

This synthesis note summarises the status of teacher professional development in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Kyrgyz Republic, Maldives, Mongolia and Vietnam. It highlights existing challenges and summarises key recommendations emerging from the policy briefs to strengthen teacher professional development at scale across these EMAP countries.

While all countries have established formal structures for pre-service and in-service training, significant gaps remain in terms of training quality, equitable access, contextual relevance, and sustained support for teachers after training. These challenges are further exacerbated by evolving professional demands, uneven digital infrastructure, and limited opportunities for mentorship and collaboration.

The recommendations reinforce the need for classroom-based TPD models that incorporate adequate opportunities for application, ongoing monitoring and feedback, and mentorship and peer learning. While technology can play a critical role in expanding access and providing personalised learning opportunities at scale, it should not be intended as a replacement for in-person professional development initiatives.

To conclude, strengthening TPD at scale requires coordinated policy efforts, sustained investment, and centring teachers' needs and realities in order to realise the ultimate goal of empowering teachers, improving classroom practice and student learning, and transforming the overall education system.

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