

Chapter 6

Inner Transformation of Teachers and Educators: Journeys and Arrivals to the Missing Dimensions in Professional Development Programs

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ABSTRACT

As humanity progresses in civilization, it becomes increasingly clear that comprehending the complexities of life goes beyond a purely material, physical, or technological perspective. Educators recognize the need for broader approaches to shape our existence. It could be the reason that numerous scholars and educational practitioners emphasize the importance of harmonizing technological advancements with human life's inner, psychological, cultural, artistic, and spiritual dimensions. While many initiatives and programs already exist to enhance professional development in times of crisis, there remains a lack of evidence-based guidance for teachers and educators regarding their inner transformation. In this chapter, the authors delve into the realms of spirituality and consciousness, new biology, quantum sciences, and nature studies and education to explore the holistic form of professional development. This approach encourages teachers and educators to acknowledge their role as co-creators of the world, emphasizing inner awakening as a vital element of professional flourishing.

INTRODUCTION

While looking for various ways for school reforms, including place-based contextualized teaching and learning and context-responsive continuous professional development of teachers and educators, the

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Inner Transformation of Teachers and Educators

Participatory Action Research (PAR) team in the *Rupantaran* project began to realize ‘inner transformation’ as a missing dimension in education and research. This gap was evident in teachers’ professional development programs. The team began to recognize that teacher education and professional development programs have a critical task: (1) to help teachers and educators understand how to shift their taken-for-granted frame of reference and (2) to become more balanced, compassionate, tolerant, and motivated in the teaching profession. Mindful of the gap, research-degree students and research supervisors from Kathmandu University and Tribhuvan University in Nepal, and the Norwegian University of Life Science, Norway, began looking for other ways, specifically on the inner workings of teachers and educators, to help them tap into their inner potential. Meanwhile, the team decided to document the reflections as a book. The insights for the book were generated from a series of North-South dialogues among project team members, reflective workshops with in-service teachers, and a literature review. Also, the project brought together the best of transformative wisdom from a range of spiritual and transformative practices backed by scientific evidence from various fields, wisdom traditions, and the leading theories of transformation (e.g., Bandura, 2001; Dirks’s, 1997; Luitel & Taylor, 2019; Mezirow, 1991; Taylor, 1988). The process eventually set the foundation for teachers’ and educators’ inner transformation and professional growth. Informed from experience, in this chapter, we reflect on the overall process and insights from designing this framework for teachers’ and educators’ inner transformation. The framework stands on the transformative belief that true and lasting transformation happens when we (the teachers and the educators) dare to face our fears, confront our limiting beliefs, embrace our authentic selves, and continuously unfold maturity through agency and resilience. Also, the framework seeks the lifeful integration of transformative arts, play, and playfulness in the everyday rituals and professional life of the teachers and the educators (La Jevic & Spring, 2008). This transformative framework we introduce, thus, has emerged with two-fold objectives: (1) inner transformation, and (2) outer manifestation. The objectives posit that the inner transformation and professional growth of teachers and educators are not separate entities but rather a journey of continuous practice and praxis that intertwines the two.

ENCOUNTERING THE MISSING DIMENSIONS

The education profession requires educators to address the imperative for improvement and adaptation. However, the discussions surrounding whose improvement is being pursued and for what purpose have not been adequately explored within the sphere of teachers’ and educators’ professional development. Drawing from our experiences in the field of education, we observed a notable absence of emphasis on the concept and practice of personal transformation, not only in teacher preparation programs but also in professional development initiatives for current teachers and educators (National Center for Education Development [NCED], 2016a, 2016b, 2017). When we began working closely with teachers, particularly in facilitating the professional development of novice and in-service educators for context-specific teaching (refer to Dhungana et al., 2021; Wagle et al., 2023), we became acutely aware of this gap. As evidence, we encountered a group of teachers who had chosen to remain subservient and silent regarding their schools’ disempowering rituals (like non-participatory decision-making). They would hold back their agency and struggle to comprehend their purpose and identity as educators. Their passive calls to ‘give us training on how to teach’ would restrict them from learners’ autonomy. Also, it would restrict them from continuous learning through continuous self-and-communal reflection. The teachers’ tendency was seemingly contradictory to the fundamental attribute of an educator as a catalyst for

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