



ISSN: 2350-0328

**International Journal of Advanced Research in Science,
Engineering and Technology**

Vol. 6, Issue 9, September 2019

How to Develop the Quality of In-service Teachers in Rural Areas

Win Thinzarkyaw

Assistant Lecturer, Department of Educational Theory, Yankin Education College, Yangon, Myanmar
Ph.D. Candidate, School of Education, Central China Normal University, Wuhan, China

ABSTRACT; Nowadays, every nation puts quality in its first priority as it needs qualified human resources with advanced knowledge, skills and dispositions to become a developed country. Therefore, the governments of every country want to make the transformation in every area to be in line with the 21st century's demands. As Myanmar is in the transition period from military dictators to the democratic governance, it is making reforms in all aspects of the nation. It is unquestionable that education is one of the reforming processes in order to upgrade the quality of education. As the quality of education of a nation cannot exceed the quality of teachers, it is unquestionable how the quality and standard of teachers are important in education system to meet the national endeavours. Moreover, as majority of Myanmar's population dwell in rural areas, the quality of education in those areas must be paid with great attention. In other words, the quality of teachers in rural areas deserves prioritized considerations as they are practically carrying out the nation building tasks to meet the goals of education.

KEY WORDS: rural area, quality teachers; education; professional development; national goals

I. INTRODUCTION

Improving the quality of teachers is essential to meet the national student learning standards. In high performing education systems of worldwide countries, teachers have a central role to play in improving the educational outcomes. Therefore, those results depend much on the qualities of the teachers. As teachers are lifelong learners, they must always try to fulfil themselves to be enriched with their professional knowledge and develop their professional qualities. However, there are some impediments for teachers in rural areas of developing countries to upgrade their professional standards continuously. In most of the developing countries, rural and remote areas have much of deprivation of basic needs including electricity, the Internet connection, clean drinking water and infrastructures. Moreover, as they are far away from the cities, transportation is one of the barriers for their personal and regional development. It breaks the connection between the constantly developing and changing world and such areas. Thus, it is obvious that opportunities for continuous learning and for receiving updated information are rare for the residents in those areas. Therefore, it is unquestionable that these causes affect teachers in rural areas for their professional developments.

A. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions used in this study are as follows:

- (1) What are the programmes being implemented aiming at the professional developments of teachers in Myanmar?
- (2) How can professional qualities of in-service teachers in rural areas be improved?

B. RESEARCH METHOD

The research method used in this study is a literature analysis.



ISSN: 2350-0328

International Journal of Advanced Research in Science, Engineering and Technology

Vol. 6, Issue 9, September 2019

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF MYANMAR

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar, comprising 135 ethnic groups, belongs to one of the Southeast Asian nations. India, China, Bangladesh, Thailand and Laos are the neighbouring countries of Myanmar. It is not only one of the developing countries but also one of the poorest and most conflict affected countries. According to the Census (2014), the result shows that the total population is statistically 50,279,900 and nearly 70% of the population settles down in rural areas.

After five decades of autocratic military rule, Myanmar has initiated a critical transformation to representative democracy in 2010. Since this transition period, the government has been reforming all the political, social and economic situations. Therefore, education system is also under reforms, especially the curriculum of basic education as it plays an important role for the socio-economic development of the nation.

B. CURRENT BASIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

The current basic education system comprises five year primary education (from Kindergarten to Grade Four), four year lower secondary education (From Grade Five to Grade Eight) and two year upper secondary education (Grade Nine and Ten). As part of the basic education reform program of the Ministry of Education, a new basic education structure of KG+12 (Kindergarten, five years of schooling for primary level, four-year schooling for lower secondary level and three-year schooling for upper secondary level) was introduced in 2016-2017 academic year.

According to Comprehensive Education Sector Review (2016), there are currently 40,992 basic education schools in Myanmar, reaching approximately 8.2 million of students who are taught by 273,516 teachers. The majority of these students are managed by the Department of Basic Education under the Ministry of Education. In addition, a significant percentage of students access to Basic Education through monastic, private, community and other types of schools.

As Myanmar has signed the “Education for All” declaration, monastic schools are seen as part of the solution to provide education across all sections of society and across the country. Monastic schools are managed by the Ministry of religious affairs and play an important role in Basic Education system, especially at the primary level for children from disadvantaged families and those who do not have primary caregivers. The monks are headmasters in these schools and the teachers’ salaries are very low as they are supported by the society. Now, the government supports some subsidies to the teachers working in monastic schools. They are not certified teachers and do not have long teacher training. Some of them are graduates and undergraduates and some have just completed their upper secondary education. Actually, 20% of the total teachers in Basic Education are relatively high in quantity. It is undeniable that the quality of such teachers directly affects the achievement of the students. Therefore, it is highly questionable whether these teachers with low quality and deprivation of training can fully nurture the students to meet the goals of education.

C. APPOINTMENT OF UNQUALIFIED TEACHERS IN RURAL AREAS

According to Comprehensive Education Sector Review (2016), the number of children enrolled in Basic Education schools increased by approximately 400,000 students (from 8.2 million to 8.6 million) between 2011 and 2014, which was the year when Myanmar surpassed the Education for All (EFA) target of 98 percent for the Net Intake Rate (NIR) at Grade 1. The result of Myanmar Living Conditions Survey (2018) shows that the net total lower secondary school enrolment rates in rural areas increased by about 20 percent between 2010 and 2017, while the net total upper secondary school enrolment rates doubled in the same period. These data shows that there was an increase in both enrolment and transition rates at all levels of Basic Education with a significant improvement in the enrolment of lower secondary schools.

The increase was largely due to the government’s free education programme that was introduced successively starting with primary education in (2011-2012), lower secondary education in (2012-2013) and upper secondary education in (2015-2016) academic years. The program provides all students with free text books and uniforms and removes



ISSN: 2350-0328

International Journal of Advanced Research in Science, Engineering and Technology

Vol. 6, Issue 9, September 2019

registration fees, stationery fees and parent teacher association fees in all government schools under basic education. In addition, the government has been providing school grants to all basic education schools in order to reduce the burden of school operating costs traditionally borne by communities. Actually, school grants are using for the infrastructure of the schools, especially for school buildings because most of the schools lack basic infrastructure.

Therefore, the government has opened new primary schools and upgraded the primary schools to lower secondary schools. So, in order to reduce the high teacher-student ratio, the Ministry of Education has appointed approximately new 72,000 daily wages teachers over the last three years (Comprehensive Education Sector Review, 2016). In rural and remote areas, the university graduates who are residents of these regions were recruited as primary teachers. These teachers received only one month of pre-service training, meaning that these schools have the least experienced teachers compared to urban schools and recently they have been appointed as government primary school teachers.

D. THE IMPEDIMENTS FOR TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL AREAS

The percentage of the teachers who have attained their capacity building training after they became teachers is only 40% in Myanmar (Lall, 2013). This means that other 60% of the newly recruited teachers did not get any training for their professional development after becoming teachers. Most of them are working in rural areas. The reason is that transportation in rural areas is very poor and difficult, especially during the rainy season. Another reason is that there is no electricity and the Internet connection in most of the remote areas. As a result, they cannot get information in time for the trainings that are mostly given in the urban areas. That is why the teachers from rural and remote areas have been deprived of opportunities for their professional development.

III. FINDINGS

In Myanmar, two universities of Education Yangon and Sagaing Universities of Education (YUOE, SUOE), one university of education for the nationals, University for the Development of National Races (UDNR) and twenty five education colleges are now giving pre-service and in-service trainings to improve the qualities of both prospective and in-service teachers. The students who join the universities of education have to study for five years to become senior high school teachers and the ones who join the education colleges have to receive training for two years. After studying for one year in education colleges, the trainees receive the certificate for primary teachers and if they continue their studies for another year, they will get a diploma for junior high school teachers. Moreover, these universities and education colleges give trainings twice a year on vacations for in-service teachers who do not have teaching certificates. Furthermore, as curriculum reforms are on its way in Myanmar to be in line with the curriculums of the ASEAN countries, education colleges will take care of the teacher training programmes with reformed curriculums.

The Myanmar Quality Basic Education Programme was conducted to support the government of Myanmar to improve access to and quality of school readiness in primary-level education for all children from 2012 to 2016. This programme includes the combination of intervention such as Child Friendly School training, Early Childhood Care and Development training, School-based In-service Teacher Education training and improved educational planning training in some selected areas funded by the international nongovernment organizations (Unicef, 2016).

The government is now running mentoring program by appointing two mentors in each township in certain districts. They take the responsibilities of supervising the teaching of the teachers. They visit the schools once a month and give feedback about the teachers' teaching. The teachers can discuss the problems that they meet in their classrooms with them and they can ask for some advice on how to deal with those problems.

IV. DISCUSSION

It is undeniable that teachers in rural areas need to develop the qualities of their profession. Most of the teachers in rural areas have second jobs because of their low salaries. Even though government supports subsidy to the government staffs including teachers who are serving in rural and remote areas, it is not enough for them because the prices of goods are very expensive in those areas. Thus, some teachers have to go to farms before and after the school time. It means that they have no time to devote in their professional development. In some areas, there is no electricity, no library and no internet connection to get information about what the earth is going on.



ISSN: 2350-0328

International Journal of Advanced Research in Science, Engineering and Technology

Vol. 6, Issue 9, September 2019

Moreover, the programs implemented for in-service teachers are very short. It takes only two weeks or one month. It is a very short time to make their professional development. For professional learning, they must be lifelong learners. The daily wages teachers received only one month training to become primary teachers as they are in urgent need in schools. They should be given long term in-service training because primary education is so important that it is the foundation of the adult life. Thus, they must have pedagogical content knowledge, that is, knowledge about the nature of the child and methods of teaching, in bringing up the children to their fullest potentials.

It is undoubtedly true that both extrinsic and intrinsic motivations are required for teachers to continue their professional learning. There is also no incentive for teachers in rural areas who sacrifice a lot compared to the ones in urban areas. Moreover, the promotion system does not depend totally on the professional qualification, the mastery of subjects and students' achievement but on the length of service. It decreases their enthusiasm for continuous learning.

V. SUGGESTED PROGRAMS

In Myanmar, the duration of practical teaching experience for pre-service teachers are very short; only one month for the upper secondary teachers and two months for the primary teachers. Like other professions, like medical profession, the practicum period should be one year. Then, the interns can take the responsibilities of the teachers in rural areas for some time, giving them opportunities to continue their professional learning. It means that the teachers in those areas would get the chance to study diploma in Education, diploma in early childhood care and education, diploma in ICT, bachelor of Education and so on. For example, one teacher from each school in rural areas could be allowed a year for study for any programme on choice. That does not make burden to the school and not affect students' learning because the intern would take the duties of the other teacher in the absence. In a decade, the deprivation of rural teachers' qualities could be dealt with to some extent.

Like developed countries, rural teachers should be given scholarships as a reward because they struggled a lot in difficult situations such as lack of infrastructure, lack of clean water, lack of electricity, and so on. However, there should be some criteria in choosing the scholarship winners. It is one of best ways to motivate the teachers in rural areas to resume their studies. Moreover, opening teacher learning resource centers (TLRCs) may remove some barriers for those teachers to access and widen their participation in their own professional development in rural areas. Teachers from cluster schools can meet and discuss teaching methods, curriculum renewals, and relevant instructional materials there. Moreover, they can use the resources from TLRCs together and create teaching and learning materials together. According to the findings of Robinson (2008), the use of distance education and ICT provide opportunities for learning more widely and equitably across the teachers in rural areas. It can also improve the quality and variety of resources and support available to teachers, creating a new way to professional development.

Moreover, the government should give the teachers in rural and remote areas to apply for the loan for their continual learning. It should be better if it is an interest-free and long term loan. So, the teachers can pay back from their salaries by proportion or predefined percentage of the pay. If the government cannot do this, banks should be asked for help to give a loan to teachers with low interest. In turn, the government can reduce taxes on those banks.

VI. CONCLUSION

In this 21st century, the primary goal of education is to prepare students to become effective and responsible citizens in a global society. Therefore, it is not enough for the students to become literate citizens but they also need to develop 21st century skills, ICT skills and broad knowledge about the world. The teacher' role in this 21st century classroom is to facilitate the students and create the learning environment that provides the students with 21st century skills. In order to carry out these tasks, it is not enough for teachers only with the subject matter knowledge and ability to use teacher centered approaches. They need to learn constantly concerning with their profession including new pedagogies, assessment strategies, and curriculum objectives, etc.

However, most of the in-service teachers in Myanmar cannot give time for their continual professional learning as they have bunch of workload, whole day class hours, and second jobs to cover their income and lack of information. These reasons are major barriers to develop their professional qualities. To solve these issues, the government should have



ISSN: 2350-0328

International Journal of Advanced Research in Science, Engineering and Technology

Vol. 6, Issue 9 , September 2019

long-term plan and should create opportunities for in-service teachers including policy forums, resource centres, and refresher courses. The ministry should support study leaves and give incentives and motivations to teachers for their continuous professional development.

REFERENCES

- [1]Finance, M. o. (2018). *Myanmar living conditions Survey*. Naypyidaw: Ministry of Planning and Finance.
- [2]Lall, M. E. (2013). *Teachers' voice: What education reforms does Myanmar need?* .
- [3]Population, D. O. (2015). *The 2014 Myanmar population and housing census, The Union Report, Census Report Volume 2*. Naypyidaw, Myanmar: Ministry of Immigration and Population.
- [4]Comprehensive Education Sector Review. (2016). *National education strategic plan 2016-21*. Naypyidaw: The Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar: Ministry of Education.
- [5]Robinson, B. (2008). Using Distance Education and ICT to Improve Access, Equity and the Quality in Rural Teachers' Professional Development in Western China. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, 9(1), 1-17.
- [6]Stake, R. E. (2001). *Vision of quality: How evaluators define, understand and represent program quality* (Vol. 7). (D. M. Alexis Benson, Ed.) JAI, An Imprint of Elsevier Science.
- [7]Unicef. (2016). *Myanmar quality basic education programme*. Naypyidaw: Ministry of Education.