Operational Research on TPS Implementation

Teacher Professional Support

Submitted to

EGRP II

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Team Leader

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

EGRP II has been working towards improving early grade literacy of grade 1-3 students of community schools in Nepal, and one of its working areas is the improvement of TPS. EGRP II supported CEHRD in developing and planning for master trainers of trainers at the province level, who will then roll out training for Teacher Professional Support (TPS) actors in their areas. Therefore, this report presents a qualitative study regarding TPS implementation in four different districts (Achham, Baglung, Parsa, Rasuwa). The research presents the finding on the ongoing TPS practices at the local and school levels.

The overall objective of this study was to examine how the implementation of TPS has been in the selected districts. The specific objectives of the research were to explore the understanding and practices of TPS at different levels of implementation and to examine the common challenges faced and innovative practices implemented by TPS actors at the local level to ensure effective professional support mechanisms.

Methodology

The operational research used a qualitative approach to data collection. The research was conducted in four purposively selected districts. Four schools were selected in each district, and all the selections were made in consultation with RTI, CEHRD, and CDC, taking care of urban-rural locations as well the prevalence of Nepali as L1 and L2 speaking learners. The research/tool orientation workshop was held to conduct Dry Run and refine the tools where needed.

The major research tools for the study were key informant interview (KII), focus group discussion (FGD), and observation. Secondary data collection was done through document/literature review (EGRP project documents, relevant documents available from Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, RTI publications). The team conducted 60 KIIs, 5 FGDs, and 16 Observations with the use of guidelines for KIIs, FGDs, and Observation checklists.

The qualitative information from the KIIs and FGDs was transcribed and translated. The qualitative data after transcribing were anonymized and coded before analysis. The data were analyzed using the thematic analysis approach. The themes and subthemes were described and cited with best-represented quotes with a range of views and ideas voiced by the participants around key themes.

Findings

Overall, the implementation of TPS could be taken as a positive result. There were practices and examples at different local levels where the LEU officials and expert groups were active regarding TPS. The understanding of HTs/teachers and expert groups regarding TPS needed to be widened and made clear. Overall, the TPS stakeholders could be empowered by rolling out rigorous orientation and training for effective and efficient TPS implementation.

- There is some understanding of TPS among the HTs, Teachers, SMCs, TLGs and roster experts (differing from different local levels, based on how and when they were formed and to what extent they were mobilized or in active operation), whereas LEU, EDCU officials and other stakeholders have a clear understanding of TPS.

- In terms of practice, the LEUs and HTs, who are key to directly providing support to schools/teachers, should work more to fulfil their function. Some local governments showed praiseworthy efforts in implementing the TPS (at least formed a roster of experts groups and TLGs, and sometimes mobilized them). However, they cited the COVID-19 situation as impeding its effective implementation.
- The majority of expert groups had received orientation regarding their roles in TPS, and some had also started visiting schools in some LGs. Few of the members needed more clarity about their role and approach to TPS.
- Few exemplary schools had also formed TLGs and were holding monthly meetings. Teachers thought the support from TLG and Expert Group would be helpful, yet had not felt it so given the practice to be at the initial phase.
- TPS has a high potential. If the capacity of the Expert Groups, HTs/BLCs, and TLGs are increased with orientation and training, it will help in making them more clear about their roles and responsibilities.
- Some LGs and Schools had shown good examples by mobilizing expert groups (Achham and Rasuwa) and TLGs (Baglung and Rasuwa; one school, in particular, did not have a formal TLG, yet doing better in Achham).

Conclusion

The understanding of TPS was found good amongst most of the local levels. However, the systematization of the practice needs strengthening since the practice was at the initial stage, and COVID-19 affected the implementation. The TPS stakeholders at federal, provincial, district and local levels clearly understand their roles. The Expert Group at the local level and teachers and HTs/BLCs at the school level were found not fully informed of their TPS roles as per the revised TPS guidelines. Still, the TPS actors are implementing their roles by starting the school visit, providing feedback and holding meeting with HT, Teachers, Expert groups, and the local levels. The administrative challenges limiting the local level for dedicating time for school visits was one of the major problems. Finally, the training and orientation regarding TPS need to be done to enhance the TPS actors' capacity and ability.

In the context of TPS, teachers need more feedback and support from different TPS actors. The current reach of TPS has been sporadic and not available to all schools (since some local levels had just formed roster groups, HTs/BLCs were not aware of their roles). Therefore, more rapid and immediate interventions as discussed below are needed to make the TPS available to all schools. More importantly, all stakeholders need to follow the TPS procedures and guidelines as a legal document and execute their roles sincerely.

Recommendation

- CEHRD should provide necessary guidance to TPS implementing actors, especially EDCUs and local levels, such as providing feedback, suggestion, and support during planning, resource management, and mobilization of TPS actors (LEU officials, Expert Groups, HTs, TLGs).
- In coordination with EDCUs and LEUs, ETCs should plan and offer TPS training and training materials to build the capacity of HTs, expert groups, resource teachers, LEU, and EDCU officials.
- EDCU should coordinate and collaborate with schools and LEUs to monitor and supervise early grade teaching practices. Sometimes, joint monitoring and sometimes, designated schools (e.g. multiple schools from each local level, in coordination with the LEUs) can be

visited. While visiting schools, it is important to hold interaction with SMC, PTA, early grade teachers, HTs regarding the TPS guidelines.

- The training on TPS is not adequate (even though they have not yet reached all Local levels) to clarify the functions of the TLG and Expert Groups, HTs, and BLC on TPS. Therefore, EDCU should coordinate with ETCs and LGs to strengthen the TPS system by ensuring the TPS training to local stakeholders.
- Effective monitoring by the local governments is the immediate need now for TPS. LGs should build capacity and effectively mobilize (with an action plan) the Expert Group, TLG, SMCs, and HTs/BLCs to monitor and discuss the practical challenges of teachers. LEU officials should visit schools and observe grade 1-3 classes (using the form given in Annex I of the TPS Management Guidelines or modified) and provide feedback to teachers. They should also ensure the availability of TLMs and observe their proper utilization.
- The Expert Groups need to be proactive in discharging their roles. They should observe classes in grades 1-3 at least once a month and provide feedback and support as required. They should continue adopting the empowering, encouraging, and motivating approaches (appreciative inquiry) while providing on-site feedback to the teachers.
- HTs and BLCs should be more vigilant and responsible for TPS at the school level. They should observe classes at least once a month and provide feedback and support, which could be taken as monitoring and coaching mechanisms at the school level itself. They should also establish a necessary mechanism to share the learning and experiences of teachers who have just returned from training.

ABBREVIATIONS

BLC	Basic Level Coordinator
CDC	Curriculum Development Center
CEHRD	Center for Education and Human Resource Development
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
EGR	Early Grade Reading
EGRP	Early Grade Reading Program
ETC	Education Training Centers
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GoN	Government of Nepal
HT	Headteacher
HRDD	Human Resource Development Division
IC	Integrated Curriculum
KII	Key Informant Interview
LEU	Local Education Unit
LRC	Lead Resource Centers LRCs
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology
NEGRP	National Early Grade Reading Program
RM	Reading Motivators
SIP	School Improvement Plan
SMC	School Management Committee
SSDP	School Sector Development Plan
TG	Teacher's Guide
TLG	Teacher's Learning Group
TLM	Teaching-Learning Materials
TPD	Teachers' Professional Development
TPSMP	Teacher Professional Support Management Procedure
TPS	Teacher Profession Support
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

INTRODUCTION

Study Background

The assignment involves conducting qualitative operational research for the Early Grade Reading Program II (EGRP II) on the practices of Teacher Professional Support (TPS). Overall, this assignment adopts qualitative means and evidence to examine how the TPS has functioned in a sample of 4 districts (viz. Achham, Baglung, Parsa and Rasuwa). The research explicitly focuses on the ongoing TPS practices at the local and school levels.

NEGRP, EGRP and EGRP II

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) leads the National Early Grade Reading Program (NEGRP) with support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and other donors under the Ministry's School Sector Development Plan (SSDP 2016-2021). NEGRP has been well recognized for its interventions in improving early grade reading, including improving instructional design, development, printing and distribution of teaching-learning materials, community and parent engagement, teacher training and support, and monitoring and learning assessment. The program focuses primarily on improving the reading skills of students in early grades, especially in grades 1-3.

The Early Grade Reading Program (EGRP) was a five-year (2015-2020) project that supported the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) to improve the foundational reading skills of Nepali primary school students in grades 1-3. Led by RTI International with other consortium partners, EGRP was implemented in 16 districts, Saptari, Bhaktapur, Kaski, Manang, Banke Kanchanpur, Dadeldhura, Dang, Dhankuta, Dolpa, Kailali, Mustang, Parsa, Rupandehi, Bardiya, and Surkhet. The EGRP aimed at increasing the proportion of grade 1–3 public primary students who could read fluently and understand the grade-level text; improving national and district early grade reading service delivery by completing the design and demonstration of an evidence-based reading model which the Ministry of Education could feasibly replicate and scale up nationally, enhance teachers' capacity, and increase family and community support for early grade reading. EGRP also worked with the federal government to formulate and disseminate policies and guidelines that standardized and harmonized the implementation of the NEGRP for all stakeholders working in the early grades. The EGRP also supported the Government of Nepal (GoN) develop an early grade reading "minimum package" specifying the necessary basic components to implement the NEGRP.

EGRP II is a 2-year, USAID-funded program of technical assistance to the GoN implemented from June 1, 2020, through May 31, 2022. EGRP II supported the GoN in the context of the shift towards the recently developed Integrated Curriculum (IC), ongoing decentralization in Nepal's governance system, and prolonged disruptions in teaching and learning due to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

Building on the foundation of the first EGRP that was implemented from 2015 to 2020, EGRP II aimed to improve the early grade literacy of grade 1-3 students of public schools in Nepal. The program is achieving this by supporting IC development and rollout (Objective 1), strengthening local capacity for early grade reading (EGR) service delivery (Objective 2), improving TPS (Objective 3), and assisting with COVID-19 response in the education sector (Objective 4).

Like EGRP, EGRP II supports the GoN in implementing the NEGRP in the 38 target districts in coordination and collaboration with relevant stakeholders. NEGRP promotes a "minimum package" of evidence-based interventions designed to improve early grade reading, including

curriculum, teaching and learning materials development, teacher training and support, community and parent engagement, and monitoring and learning assessment.

Teacher Professional Support

Previously, teacher professional development and support mechanisms were conducted through Lead Resource Centers (LRCs) and resource centers (RCs). TPS at the primary level was provided by the resource person (RPs). In the aftermath of federal restructuring, there are only 7 Education Training Centers (ETCs) (one in each province) [earlier, there were 29] and no further new mechanisms have been instituted in place of the LRCs/RCs/RPs. This situation is considered to have seriously jeopardized the teacher professional development function of the SSDP. Therefore, it was important to develop some forms of teacher professional development and support mechanism(s). Though teacher training is still going on through the 7 ETCs with reduced capacity, other forms of TPS (i.e., LRCs/RCs/RPs) are not formally operational. Thus there has been a gap in the TPS system.

In light of this situation, GoN tested a series of TPS reforms over the past seven years with technical assistance from the EGRP. From 2016-2017, a system of "Reading Motivators" (RMs) was piloted to provide tailored support to EGR teachers within a group of schools. This model was well received by schools but was discontinued due to concerns about cost and sustainability, the competing demands on time for the RMs, as well as the infrequency of RM visits. The GoN then used the lessons learned from this experience to develop a new Teacher Professional Support Management Procedure (TPSMP) in 2018 and began to roll it out in 2019. This procedure gave the responsibility to the Headteacher (HT) in each basic school (or Basic level coordinators (PIC) teacher in the case of secondary schools) to provide ongoing TPS in the classroom. In the initial phase, the procedure also utilized the existing resource centers with resource persons (RPs) to provide support to HTs/PICs and teachers within a cluster of schools. However, the position of RP was dissolved in 2019 within the GON's new federal structure. Additionally, the procedure called for HTs/PICs to observe each early grade class at least once a month and to form Teacher Learning Groups (TLGs) and convene monthly in-school review meetings. LEU officials were assigned to play a key role in overseeing effective TPS implementation at their Local level in coordination with the RPs.

One of the key objectives of the EGRP II was building the capacity of LGs for TPS, which was a key input in helping teachers build and sustain improved practices for EGR instruction. The activities included supporting the CEHRD's Human Resource Development Division (HRDD) with revising TPSMP, supporting local governments to roll out TPS, and conducting joint monitoring and coaching side-by-side with local government officials. Based on experience and research from EGRP, from 2020-2021, EGRP II supported CEHRD in revising the TPSMP. It was revised in 2021, building on the 2018 procedures. The revised document includes a core set of recommended TPS approaches as well as a number of options that Local levels can adapt based on their local context.

Objectives

Considering the context and background laid out above, the overall objective of the research was to examine how the teacher professional support (TPS) mechanism has been in place and to recommend areas for further improvement. The study focused on understanding how well LEUs and schools have adopted the approach and how teachers, HTs, LEU officials, and cluster-level experts have understood the importance of ongoing teacher support.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the research.

1. What are the understanding and practices of TPS in place at different levels of implementation?
2. To what extent do TPS stakeholders at the federal, provincial, district, local, and school level understand their role in TPS?
3. To what extent and how effectively are those stakeholders implementing their TPS roles, and how far are teachers satisfied with the support they receive?
4. What are the common challenges faced and solutions/innovative practices implemented by TPS actors at the local level to ensure effective professional support mechanisms?

These research questions' major emphasis would be to study the implementation of TPS, particularly focusing on the role of different stakeholders, teacher training and professional support activity, and TPS implementation capacity among school managers, local governments, and other relevant stakeholders. Inquiries about the impacts of COVID-19 on curriculum rollout, teacher practices, teacher professional support, and assessment opportunities were embedded in these research questions.

Rationale

In the NEGRP program, TPS is one of the major components. It is the mechanism of ongoing professional support to teachers. It can be in different forms (e.g. coaching support provided by RPs, or classroom observation feedback provided by RMs, learning from peers through TLG meetings and so on). TPSMP came to help institutionalize TPS and make it sustainable. The main objective of TPS is to provide professional support to the teacher of early grades to the local government level. The HTs and BLCs provide professional support to the teachers by observing their classrooms, their teaching-learning style and providing feedback to improve their instructional practices. In the same way, the resource persons were responsible for providing support to the HTs/BLCs along with a group of teachers from different schools.

With the implementation of the new curriculum, teachers needed ongoing coaching to adopt improved practices to implement the integrated curriculum (IC). For this, GON adopted a TPS system in which the school is the main locus of activity, and HTs/BLCs are intended to provide classroom observation and feedback and also convene teacher learning groups with early grade teachers. Though the GON has developed TPS Management Procedure 2077 and TPS Guideline 2077, many TPS actors have difficulties in implementing the system due to various factors such as heavy workloads and fewer personnel, as well as confidence with EGR instructional approaches, as shown by the EGRP report 2020 (RTI, 2020).

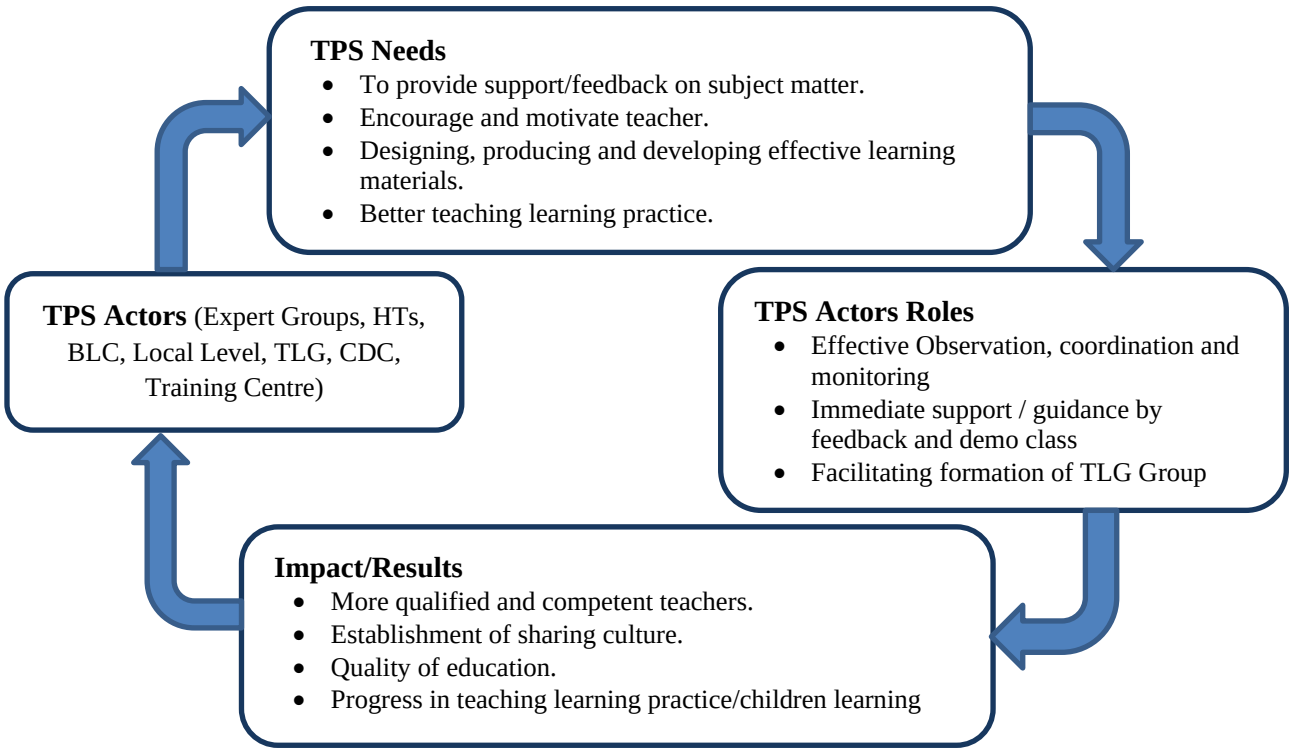
Contextualizing TPS

The TPS provision helps teachers meet with other professional experts and learn from each other. Moreover, TPS motivates teachers and provides the opportunity for professional growth, support, and development (OECD, 2009). The National Education Policy (2019) has also envisioned teacher learning management through in-school or across schools class observation, experience sharing, and professional collaboration (Art.10.44.9).

TPS, as per the TPSMP, can play a vital role in creating opportunities for uplifting the quality of education in the early grades. This can help create an exemplary model where family/community and schools work collaboratively in the teaching-learning processes. As per the TPSMP, after receiving training, the HTs or the BLC has the role of observing and evaluating the teaching practices once a month in early grades (1-3). They will be using the specific observation tools learned in the training duration of 5 days. They will provide feedback and support to the teacher after the observation. The bi-monthly review meeting is organized

under the responsibilities of the HT and BLC for early grade teachers, where they will discuss the TPS issues and reflect on the challenges, opportunities, best practices and learnings. The following figure provides a clear insight into the practice of TPS.

Figure 1: Model for TPS Actors' Roles and Impact



CEHRD is responsible for preparing a detailed classroom observation toolkit. This toolkit includes a different checklist on teacher's delivery, participation of students, class preparation, attendance of teacher and students, use of learning materials in the class, class preparation by the teacher, physical infrastructure fulfilling enabling conditions (CEHRD, 2018). The Local Education Unit (LEU) has a major role in implementing the TPS. Their role is to monitor and provide essential support for the program. Local governments have to monitor the TPS and its progress by visiting and observing at least one class in each school.

Due to changes in the education system structure in Nepal, the position of resource persons is no more, but each school is expected to have one person who has received the training to mentor the early grade reading teachers. In fact, the School Supervisors and Resource Persons were mobilized from the district unit, and as long as the district unit of education exists (in the federal context), SS/RPs could have been continued. Either the HT or the BLC is mainly responsible at the school level. Likewise, the local government is also responsible for discussing TPS in HTs' meetings and visiting schools and making necessary arrangements for providing support to teachers. Likewise, expert groups at the local level and teacher learning groups at the school level are also the TPS mechanisms though these have been formed and mobilized in selected EGRP districts only. The teacher is also required to apply the knowledge and skills learned through EGR training and feedback received by the expert group members in the classrooms. They should make proper use of teaching-learning materials (TLMs) that are available to them. During the processes, the teacher should work in peer/groups and support untrained and unskilled teachers (USAID, 2015; CEHRD, 2018).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The operational research was carried out using a participatory approach involving all key stakeholders associated with the IC implementation. The research employed the qualitative approach of data collection to gather information from the relevant stakeholders to get their understanding and experiences along with knowledge and experiences in the implementation of the IC.

Research Sites

The research was conducted in four purposively selected districts, namely Accham, Baglung, Parsa, and Rasuwa districts, where the EGRP II has been working on. This research was carried out during the time of COVID-19. All schools were completely shut down during the times of COVID-19 and had recently started the school during the fieldwork. The aspect of COVID-19 had been carefully considered while analyzing the findings in the report.

Participants and Research Tools

The key participants involved teachers (Grade 1 Nepali subject), headteachers, a few SMC members/parents, Expert Group Members, LEU officials, EGRP II DC, Regional MEL Coordinators, ETC Technical Experts, CDC, and CEHRD Officials, and EGRP II Staff at the central level (see Table 1). The sampling approach also ensured coverage of a diverse set of contextual characteristics such as gender, language, geography, and stage of NEGRP rollout.

Given the nature of this study, qualitative data collection tools like interview and FGD guidelines and observation protocols were developed [the tools are attached as a separate file]. The KII and FGD included the components of understanding of IC, the practice of IC implementation, and the impact of COVID-19 on IC rollout. Moreover, classroom observations were done in at least two schools from each local level. Likewise, the secondary data collection method mainly included relevant literature review (EGRP project documents, relevant documents available from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, RTI publications, and so on).

Tools Orientation

The tool orientation workshop was held on 4 December 2021, orienting the field researcher on how to conduct Dry Run and update/refine the tools. Furthermore, ethical considerations and contextual research experiences were shared by all the researchers. The orientation was facilitated and led by Team Leader in the meeting hall of Vertex Consultants, Kathmandu. Likewise, the important takeaway from RTI officials led the team members to consider the background of IC, its current status, challenges, and possible opportunities carefully. Moreover, a mock KII session was held among the researchers in pairs, whereby some questions were noted (that need rephrasing) to ease the researchers while asking them.

Dry Run

The dry run was conducted a day after orientation for two days [5-6 December 2021] in five schools to understand the effectiveness of the tools. The researchers (3 male and 2 female researchers) visited schools in two Local governments, namely Chautara Sangachokgadi Municipality and Balefi Rural Municipality. More particularly, classroom observations took place in three schools, whereas 4 KII with teachers and 5 KIIs with headteachers could take place. Besides, the EGRP district coordinator, SMC chair, one Expert Group member, and one LEU official were also interviewed.

During the inception, priority was given to Observation and KII with grade 1 Nepali teacher, headteacher, SMC Chair, Expert Group Member, and LEU official to determine the quality of the tools and possibilities for amending the tools. Overall, the dry run was an opportunity for

researchers to observe each other, ensure interview/observation methods were being procedurally implemented, and work out note-taking conventions.

Data Collection Procedures

The research team visited the four districts- Achham, Baglung, Parsa, and Rasuwa for data collection. The team conducted a total of 60 KIIs and 5 FGDs in the districts as per the sample size mentioned above. The team recorded audio recordings as well as note-taking for each KII and FGD. The team observed the classroom to observe teacher application of the IC; pedagogical approaches and use of IC teaching and learning materials by using observation checklists.

Table 1: Number of Research Participants

Districts	**Parsa (15 KII, 1FGD)**	**Achham (12 KII, 2 FGD)**	**Baglung (16 KII, 1 FGD)**	**Rasuwa (12 KII, 1 FGD)**
Teacher	4 (2F, 2M)	4 (F)	4 (1 M, 3 F)	4 (3F, 1M)
Head Teacher	4 (2F, 2M)	4 (M)	4 (1 F, 3 M)	4 (M)
SMC	1(M)	-	1 (M)	1 (F)
LEU/CDC	2(M)	2(M)	3 (2M, 1F)	3 (2F,1M)
Trainer	1(F)	1 (F)	1 (M)	
Expert	1 (F)		1 (M)	
ETC	1 (M)			
EGRP DC	1 (M)	1 (M)	2 (M,1 MEL)	
FGD	1	2	1	1
Observation	4	4	4	4
Total	• 60 KII (Including 2 KII with EGRP staff and KII with 2 CDC officers, KII with 1 CEHRD Official) • Observation: 16 and FGD: 5			

We largely relied on KIIs to collect data from the participants. Using the appropriate KII guidelines (separate KII guidelines were devised for each group of participants, e.g., teachers, headteachers, LEU officials, etc.). Each KII session lasted for around 40 minutes. We also held a few (at least one in each district) FGDs with the participants. We mainly held FGDs with the TPS Expert Groups. In addition, we also observed a class (Grade one Nepali) in each visited school. The observation form was used to note the key observations. There were sixteen class observations, 4 in each district. Moreover, using unique and significant cases were further explored as case stories.

Data Transcription, Theme-Based Analysis, and Interpretation

The qualitative information from the KIIs and FGDs was transcribed and translated into English. The qualitative data after transcribing were anonymized and coded before analysis. The coding helped the research teams to derive some themes and subthemes. And the data were analyzed using the thematic analysis approach – as the themes emerged from data. Participants' quotes were thickly cited while interpreting the data.

Ethical Considerations

The study team was conscious of ethical guidelines and considerations while conducting the research. Following the ethical norms throughout the assessment was our major concern. We abided by the basic ethical principles of research such as informed consent, the autonomy of the participant, no-harm, and fair presentation of empirical data. Moreover, the principle of systematic inquiry, competence, honesty, and respect for the participants was strictly followed in the whole process of dry run, class observation, data collection, and assessment. We also adhered to RTI's

research guidelines regarding written informed consent, photo consent, and consent for recording audio-visuals.

Quality Control Mechanism

For the tool validity, the contents of the tools were matched with research objectives, indicators, and related literature, and made a decision on the contents to be used in the tools. Sample tools were developed and field-tested in the dry run in the Sindhupalchowk district.

Experienced researchers were recruited and trained to administer the tools and data collection. In-depth training was provided to field researchers during the dry run. The tools were amended based on the comments and feedback received during the dry run. The tool is then formatted to make it user-friendly, ensuring clarity on the structure and wording of questions.

The team leader took the daily update to monitor the field activities. The field site supervision was conducted by the team leader and senior researchers covering all research sites providing backstopping support during the data collection and class observation time.

Report Writing and Submission

A report outlining the key findings of the qualitative analysis was prepared. The first part of the report focused on the findings related to the understanding of TPS. The second part of the report focused on the implementation of the TPS, including some emerging issues of COVID-19.

The initial draft reports were presented to EGRP II and government partners. The team has presented the findings of the report through a dissemination event through presentation via the online platform. The research team noted recommended comments and feedback. With the comments and feedback from EGRP II and government stakeholders, the report was finalized and submitted to EGRP II.

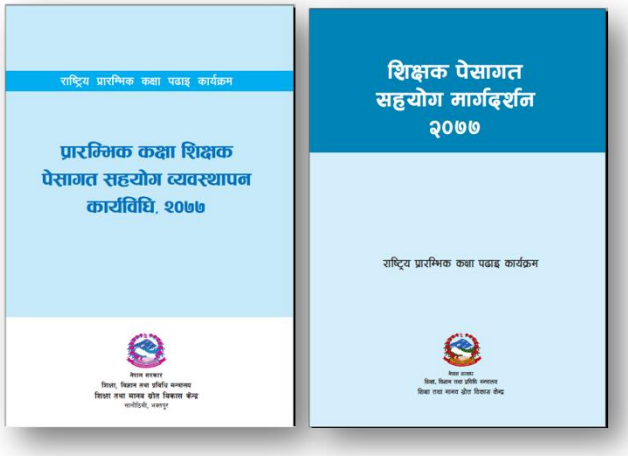
STATUS OF TPS IMPLEMENTATION

TPS Orientation and Training

Efforts of Federal/Provincial Agencies

The CEHRD, as the apex body of implementing education initiatives, has taken the lead in implementing the TPS. For this, it has largely worked on policy areas, including developing National *Early Grade Teacher Professional Support Management Procedure 2077 and Teacher Professional Support Guidelines 2077*. In fact, *Teacher Professional Support Guidelines – 2077*, approved by the MoEST in April 2021, is a more detailed handbook that goes into depth on TPS roles, responsibilities, and approaches.

Figure 1: Cover pages of the approved TPSMP and the TPS guideline



The KII, FGDs, and interaction with all the TPS stakeholders reflected and inferred that the effort is commendable of the TPS stakeholders. The difficult situation of Covid-19 had affected all the local levels, due to which the formation of expert group members was delayed. The school visit by the expert group and LEU had already started at some local level. TPS management procedures and guidelines were provided, but it was not studied properly by the relevant stakeholders.

Regarding other works relating to TPS, the CEHRD Official said:

In coordination with EGRPII, we developed the selection criteria for forming local-level rosters of experts. ...and circulated to local governments to form the roster of experts. # CEHRD Official

As per the provision, each local unit will have a roster of experts, coordinated by the LEU, and will include Nepali subject teachers from the secondary level – current and retired - or retired education officials. However, monitoring and follow-up of whether such rosters are formed and mobilized have not taken place.

The Provincial Education Training Centers are the major stakeholders in offering training. Moreover, CEHRD also played a role in preparing the master trainers. CEHRD, with the technical assistance of EGRP II, developed 80 Master trainers on TPS, and ETCs have offered DTOT as well as IC orientation and IC TPD to teachers.

EDCU is responsible for coordinating and facilitating the implementation of the NEGRP at the district level (CEHRD, 2021). Following this mandate, EDCUs act towards creating a conducive environment for teacher professional development and support, such as inspecting,

monitoring and supervising, and assisting in the implementation of improvement measures. However, the EDCU officials themselves have not visited schools so frequently.

During the last two years, I have hardly visited 5-6 schools as part of monitoring. This is also because of the situation of COVID-19 as well as administrative work load. #EDCU Chief, Achham. Similar was the case in other districts, where the EDCU officials reported fewer personnel and workloads at the EDCU as factors hindering their monitoring and visit to the schools.

Efforts of Local Governments

The efforts of local governments in ensuring the effective implementation of the TPS are praiseworthy at places (e.g. Achham II), but it was not similar across local levels and districts. Regarding the reason, most of them cited the pandemic situation. The LEUs are responsible for monitoring, managing and controlling the schools, as per the exclusive rights mentioned in Schedule 8 of the Constitution of Nepal 2015. Material distributions and some short-term training arrangements are made by all local levels. All of the local levels have reported that they do some monitoring to schools, but not regularly. Besides, their visit would not normally be to provide instructional feedback to the teachers, mostly to observe teacher absenteeism, teaching-learning activities, construction works, availability of physical facilities, etc.

We have not been able to visit schools often. The formation of the expert group has been done recently. For piloting, we have visited schools nearby. The official visit and TPS will start soon. Now we will make a schedule and monitor schools. #LEU Official-1, Achham

They could not hold school visits due to COVID. Another local level in Achham has, however, formed the expert group mobilized them to school visits. Moreover, they are now working on developing an action plan to visit all schools.

We have got some orientation and have also observed some schools. Now we are making an action plan to visit all schools regularly. #Expert Group Member, Achham

local governments have formed expert groups from other subject experts apart from Nepali, including English, Math, Science and Social Studies as per the circulation of the CEHRD.

EGRP II Support

The support of EGRP II spread over all tiers of government and also reached the school level; however, the activities were coordinated and channelled through the government structures. EGRP II also worked with selected local levels from each districts (38) as a sample implementation of TPS activities like Training to Roster Expert groups, schools visit and classroom observation, and cluster levels meetings with EGR teachers. At the federal level, it supported revising the TPS Management procedure and guidelines. Moreover, EGRP II had successfully provided technical support to CEHRD to revise TPS Management Procedure, Guideline, further develop TPS training materials, and organize MTOTs.

EGRP II had also offered local level capacity development workshops, held in January–April 2021 (round 1) and April 2021 onwards (Round 2, based on revised TPS guidelines) to raise local government officials' awareness of the importance of TPS, to increase their understanding of TPS provisions, and to clarify their roles and responsibilities in promoting effective ongoing support for teachers. Workshop sessions related to TPS covered TPS objectives and procedures as well as the roles of the key stakeholders (including Headteachers, LEU and EDCU heads,

and local elected representatives -round 1) in planning and rolling out TPS at the municipal and school levels.

At the local level, EGRP II provided local level capacity development workshops (based on previous guidelines and also a follow up based on revised TPS guidelines), which included dedicated sessions on TPS, using hands-on training techniques to cover the importance of TPS; the roles of key stakeholders at the local government and school levels; feedback mechanism, and reporting format. These workshops laid the groundwork for local levels (municipalities) to develop their Municipal Education Plans (MEPs) and education profiles using data from the Integrated Education Management Information System (IEMIS) and other sources and raised their knowledge of NEGRP in the context of the IC, EGR instructional best practices, and TPS.

Remembering their 2021 January-March activities, an EGRP II staff shared: *EGRP II regional and district teams further updated LEU officials on the use of the TPS management procedure and guidelines during LEU review and headteacher meetings. These meetings covered introductions to the TPS support mechanism and the use of TPS resource materials to help teachers improve their instructional practices. #EGRP MEL Official*

In all of the local levels visited, MEP and education profiles were discussed, and most of them reported that they were completed in a month's time; some of them have already completed (e.g. a local level in Achham). MEP and education profiles are related to TPS since the MEPs are developed based on the education profile and cover areas where teacher support is needed and include plans for addressing the TPS gaps. Though little was done about roster group orientation and TPS at school, a local level in Achham had developed both the profile and plan incorporating the aspects of TPS.

EGRP has come up with directives (in fact I had got TOT in Dipayal). With support from DC of EGRP, we developed a local level education plan and profile. #LEU Official-I, Achham

Besides, district and local government officials have also been supported in conducting joint monitoring visits to schools. Likewise, roster experts were also supported to monitor schools and provide teacher support – however, this component has just begun, and its results could not be traced very well. A case of Mellekh of Achham district was shared where the expert group has visited some schools, and Joint Monitoring was also done at least once in all sample districts.

Understanding and Roles of TPS Actors

One of EGRP II's key areas of work is to help set up teacher networks within schools and clusters so that teachers can discuss strategies, get feedback from their peers, and reflect on their practices. They can share their experiences and challenges with their peers and seek their support and advice. This support system is especially important at a time when adequate teacher training has not reached them. In this regard, the study team explored the perceptions and understanding of the TPS actors about TPS and their associated roles.

Achham, Baglung, Parsa, and Rasuwa all had formed the expert group for the effective implementation of TPS, but most of them are at the initial phase. There are examples from all districts where certain local levels and schools have already initiated the expert groups and also formed the TLG group. However, most of the teachers are not familiar with the TLGs, and the HTs, though are familiar, have not seen the TPS working. Here, the views of teachers and headteachers have been put about the status of the TPS.

Teachers/HTs

It is the teachers and Headteachers who are the key recipients and implementers of TPS. Therefore it is expected that they have some understanding of the TPS and their roles so that they can put that into practice. Though not in the specific terms of what the TPS Guidelines mention, teachers and HTs seem to understand TPS as whatever support is available to teachers to improve their practice. A teacher in Parsa said: *Teacher support means supporting teachers in whatever areas they feel the need of support, like materials, understanding vocabulary, CAS or training. #Teacher IV, Parsa*

A teacher in Rasuwa related to the gap after the RP system collapse and explained: *Now, we do not have RPs. So, we can expect support from senior teachers, headteachers, and expert group members – we have a roster of experts at the local level, whose contacts are pasted on the local level notice board, and I have taken a picture of it. #Teacher-III, Rasuwa*

This shows that teachers have realized the TPS in terms of professional support to teachers. Morevoer, the teachers were aware of the role of a teacher in TPS. They can improve their practice through self-reflection, sharing in peer-group (which they call TLG), and having regular consultation and interactions with HT or senior teachers. As a recipient of the TPS, teachers should be informed of what kind of support they may get from different TPS actors (e.g. HT or BLC, roster group members, LEU, EDCU, ETC).

Overall, teachers and headteachers have understood the provision of supporting teachers as part of TPS, and they largely expected more knowledgeable colleagues, local-level officials, ETC training, and expert group support as key to TPS. The schools that have formed the TLG had started good practice of sharing culture. In terms of TLG, many schools had not formed it and thus sharing culture was not so common.

A headteacher from Achham went on to say that "There have not seen single monitoring activities from the municipality even though our school is the closest to the municipality. Before, when there was a district education office, then at least it was better." The HT was not aware of the reason behind not being single monitoring. While the LEU Officials reported that they do not get time to visit schools, rather they ask teachers/HTs to visit the LEU to discuss their issues or sometimes they get some updates over the phone.

The teacher from another school from the same local level also had a similar idea, where she had not observed any TLG formed, yet teacher support prevailed in some way. Teachers from all schools shared that they have staff meetings (though not regular) where they share their problems. Unlike the above two cases, on another local level, the situation was more promising. The expert group and LEU have collaborated well in regard to implementing the TPS.

We have an active roster of experts. We also have other subject teachers than Nepali. We have already visited 7-8 schools, usually observed 1 class per school and also done some demo classes. The demo classes were regarding the delivery style and pedagogical style. #Expert Group member – 1, Achham

The HT and teacher of a sample school also acknowledged the fact that the expert group had visited their school and they had interactions, class observations, and also a mini-lesson demonstration. The teacher, in particular, liked the encouraging approach of the expert. They observed the teacher teaching style, their understanding of IC and their delivery. Later they

gave some feedback to the teacher regarding their positive aspects of delivery. In order not to demotivate the teacher, the expert group suggested in a positive way rather than indicating mistakes.

At a local level in Baglung also, the experts had visited a school, but the teacher and the HT did not find their visit very helpful since they did not suggest any improvement measures regarding instruction. In Parsa also, things do not seem promising yet. The EDCU Official highlighted that they have not been into the TPS yet since they have no specific modality for monitoring schools.

Expert Group Member

The expert group members who have got an orientation or training were good at understanding their roles that the TPS as such is for improving teacher practice. However, in some cases, the expert groups were nominated without the expert knowing it (without their consent), and they had not heard of TPS in the technical sense, but in a general sense, they could talk about training, materials, and coaching to the teachers to be under the TPS.

I don't know that I am in the expert group. It's the first time I heard (HT interrupts… "the LEU officer had asked for a senior teacher's name, and I have given yours.") #Expert Group Member, English subject, Achham

Even some of those who received virtual orientation were not very clear about it. They were waiting for more information to come from the local level. However, some expert groups were really proactive and had not only understood what the TPS is all about but also started implementing (performing their roles) and delivering an action plan to make it more regular and systematic. However, those with a detailed understanding of the TPS and their roles were quite a few.

LEU and EDCU Officials

LEU Officials are better placed than the expert group, HT, and teachers in regards to their understanding of both TPS and IC. They have largely grasped the understanding of TPS and were in charge of making roster groups active and also forming TLGs at schools.

An EDCU Official clarified:
It is in the TPS guidelines what each actor has to do, what is it all about, and what are each of their roles are. If we only read the guidelines, it is very simple – everyone understands. The problem is the commitment to really work. So they want somebody to come and tell them that they have to do this. #LEU Officer-I, Rasuwa

As this EDCU Official said, the LEU Officials might not have gone through the TPS guidelines or they haven't yet got the guidelines. Otherwise, understanding their roles would not have to be that much of a problem. Echoing with this EDCU Official, an LEU Official from Baglung said, "*All the TPS actors are to be provided with the TPS guidelines and asked to reflect in a Local-level or EDCU level meeting. And we will know that it is not that difficult. We don't bother about it and say that we don't know. People have become spoon-fed. This is the mentality.*"

During our discussion, it also came out that the monitoring system (RP/SS) was collapsed in the federal transition and now it is being addressed by the provision of TPS (e.g. Municipal visits, expert groups, teacher learning groups, and headteacher monitoring). The expert group

has been formed at the municipal level for monitoring and school observation. They are also providing instructional feedback to the teachers. This particular gap of observation, supervision and monitoring was somehow being filled by the current TPS practices. It showed the roster of TPS experts was functional.

TPS at the School Level

School Based Support Systems

School-based practices of teacher support systems are crucial for teacher development and, as a result, to improve student learning outcomes. An HT from a school in Achham, where no IC/TPS orientation had reached, shared that: *In our school, we have very good learning and sharing culture among teachers. We attend several meetings and we do the reporting of the class and students. We talk about how is the practice and what are the things that are missing. HT-2, FGD Achham*. This shows that it is something that comes from school leadership and the school culture, whether we have a sharing or peer-learning environment. This school, in particular, seemed to have strong dynamics among the teacher working in the school. The difficulties faced by the teacher were discussed in monthly meetings. While citing examples, teachers referred to some vocabulary (difficult words), grammar (articles), and math (division) related problems that were solved by sharing the issue with the secondary teachers. This practice also seems to be sporadically in place (a few individual teachers asking other teachers, mostly who are their relatives or close friends) in schools of Baglung, Parsa, and Rasuwa as well. However, there has not been a very systematic HT/BLC support system established as per the TPS guidelines.

In practice, the majority of the schools visited have some sort of practice of TPS. Experience sharing in TLG (formal or informal ways)/monthly meetings to discuss pedagogical issues were examples of TPS practices. HTs/BLCs did not seem fully capacitated to provide on-site support as they were yet to receive capacity development training.

Observation of Classroom Teaching and Feedback Practices

Actual class observation as per the provision of the TPS guidelines has not been satisfactory but has a lot of potential. For example, one Expert Group in particular in Achham has only visited the school and provided some feedback, and one Expert Group in Baglung has visited the school, but no feedback was provided. Likewise, one local level in Rasuwa was also reported to have visited some schools. In other districts and local levels, the Expert Groups were being just formed, and they had not yet visited the schools. Here, it is important to note that some sporadic school visits were done by the municipal authority, but actual classroom observation and support in some local level had not been started. Even the Expert Group visit was taken as a monitoring visit than coaching and support.

If we go by informing them, then they are prepared to some extent and manage something. Otherwise, there would be nothing (e.g. use of materials). #Expert Group member-II, Achham

On the contrary, not all schools and districts had a similar practice of sharing culture; there was not much sharing practice among teachers, especially the learning from the training (except from a school in Achham – where there was no TLG formed and HT/BLC had not been oriented as per the new TPS guidelines as the cluster level training was not rolled out then).

Largely, those who receive training need to share in school with other peers, which is not seen much in practice. This has become problematic because even the 'not relevant' teachers attend the training, and they do not share with the 'relevant' teachers. The cases of grade 2-3 or even

higher grade teachers (rather than grade 1 teachers) having been sent for the IC training was reported in all districts, and when such teachers came to school, they either did not share anything, or the sharing was not much helpful.

Though we asked her to share, she did not seem to understand the concepts herself. Therefore, more clear understanding is necessary among the teacher so that they can explain it to others. #Teacher-II, Baglung

Overall, regular classroom observation and feedback to the Grade 1 teacher were non-existent. Even when there were class observations, constructive feedback, and possible demo class from the observer were not adequate. However, during the TLG or monthly staff meeting (where they are held), teachers could share the difficulties and challenges that they face while delivering the classes. These challenges could be related to the content of the curriculum, and making able to explain the content more clearly.

Cases in Focus

Expert Group in Mellekh, Achham

The local education unit in Mellekh rural municipality was active in implementing the TPS through the expert group. They had excellent coordination with expert group members, and used to be present in meeting once every two months. They used to discuss the issues and challenges faced by the teacher. At first, they observed the class and then later provided the feedback directly to the teacher. They used an encouraging feedback approach where rather than saying 'you did this wrong, and they used to say 'how about you do this next time, it might help you more. This kind of feedback mechanism also helped the teacher take it as a positive message. They used to record the video of the teacher teaching and then show it to them later. They used to ask the teacher's opinion about their teaching style itself and then provide them with suggestions that could help them deliver a more effective class. This practice reflected cordial relations between the schools, teachers, and the LEU. They had also utilized the expert group.

TLG in Baglung

Formation of TLG in Sample Municipality and its Sharing Practice*
*Gyanodaya School in Baglung district had formed a teacher learning group. The teacher in the learning group meeting used to discuss the difficulties and issues that they were facing while implementing IC such as the content and pedagogical approach. They also discussed other school-related issues and also had an LEU officer in the meeting and were discussing what can be done from a different level. In the sample rural municipality, the expert group had decided to monitor with an organized plan. This initiation of TLG is a very good aspect in regards to implementing the IC and TPS. This can be seen as an example for other municipalities. This will act as a motivation for other schools and LEU to initiate the expert group immediately and form the TLG. The TLG has brought comfort among teachers while sharing the issues and difficulties while delivering the class. [*A sample municipality is a model municipality where they have implemented TPS in an exemplary way for other municipalities and schools to learn.]*

The above case highlights how the training is significant for the teacher. The expert group can definitely fulfil their role, but the teachers also need to be trained and have some understanding of IC and TPS. Also, the TPS experts can support teachers to implement the IC in the absence of training to the teachers.

Facilitating and Hindering Factors

Facilitating Factors

Some local levels have been active in forming and also mobilizing the expert groups. The role of EGRP II DC and the LEU officials seemed to be of importance in facilitating the formation and mobilization of the Expert Groups and TLGs. A local level in Achham seemed to have been comparatively doing better than other districts in mobilizing the Expert Group, whereas a local level in Rasuwa was good at forming the Expert Group and TLGs in all 15 community schools, and a School in Baglung was doing better in TLG. However, with no formal TLG, a School in Achham was doing better in terms of in-school sharing of problems and seeking solutions in content areas, where the role of HT was crucial. However, all schools and local level officials believed that mobilizing the expert group would bring positive results. Such a belief could be a facilitating factor.

Hindering Factors

There are certainly some loopholes and gaps in implementing the teacher's professional support. TPS requires flexibility and motivation from the side of the teacher. It is essential that teachers, apart from other TPS actors, also initiate the discussion on TLG, the need for classroom observation, and sharing culture. But there have been few instances that the approach toward TPS has not been made clear among the teachers and HTs.

COVID-19 had a severe impact in terms of the implementation of TPS (like it did for IC). The complete shutdown of schools for a long time created significant challenges for teachers to finish the curriculum. One of the respondents in Parsa reflected, "*Covid-19 affects us a lot. We gave the Tole Sikchya, but it was not sufficient and impactful. It created some confidence among parents and students that the education should continue despite any challenges, but it could not fulfil the need of classroom learning*."

Likewise, the EGRP II DC highlighted, "*Due to Covid-19, the orientation and training in some districts including* TPS TOT and TPS were conducted virtually, which *had not been able to make HTs and expert groups understand the essence of TPS.* In fact, the training (even though virtually) was to be considered a facilitating factor; however, due to less strong connectivity, passing of information was somehow felt challenging. Thus, the virtual training was not considered effective.

The field findings suggested that the implementation of the revised TPS mechanism is at the initial phase; the joint meeting of TPS actors has not been done frequently in the majority of the schools. There needs to be an organized plan for expert group roles to be more effective and impactful. Along with that, the classroom observation should not be limited to observing the delivery of the teacher but should also focus on giving the demo class when and where needed. In order for IC to be implemented effectively, TPS is essential. And for TPS to be implemented effectively, the preparedness of the headteachers, TLGs and expert group member are crucial.

Here, we present a summary table of the facilitating and hindering factors for the TPS.

Districts	Facilitating Factor for TPS	Hindering Factor for TPS
Achham	-The teacher, HT, LEU have accepted the concept of TPS being very effective. If implemented well, then the school will benefit from TPS a lot. This realization has been made. -The expert groups discuss the teacher's problem, observe the class and provide feedback. -The Roster expert group at the Local level has been formed.	-Not all the teachers have received the TPS as the expert group is yet to conduct a visit to the school. -The field visit and interview from the local level suggest that TPS (in the form of the expert group, TLG) has not been implemented completely, and it's in the initial phase.
Parsa	-The teacher has understood that TPS is a good concept of developing teaching-learning methods through observation and feedback. -It helped to make teachers and headteachers aware of the appropriate methods for monitoring and classroom observation. -The link between TPS and IC helped in making the expert group and local level aware of its importance.	-The implementation of TPS is still not in effect in many schools (no TLGs formed, HT/BLC not oriented). -The sharing culture among teachers after receiving TPS (also TPD training) is not seen much in practice.
Baglung	-The Teacher Learning Groups have been formed in different schools after the TPS implementation. -The Teacher Learning Groups have helped the teacher to discuss the problems issues they are facing in the classrooms as well as the good practice.	-The TPS training was for the expert group for a short duration, only for three days.
Rasuwa	-The schools are practising discussion, interaction, and learning achievement plans among teachers to discuss the teaching-learning practice and monitoring. -Expert group, EGRP II staff, LEU officers are visiting the school to provide TPS and classroom observation. -TPD training helped introduce different teaching-learning methodologies in the classroom, which helped the children learn more efficiently, effectively, and in a quicker way.	-The LEU officials are engaged mostly in the official work, due to which they are not able to carry out monitoring and classroom observation frequently.

Status of Implementation of TPS during COVID-19

COVID -19 had a severe impact on implementing TPS. Most of the local levels were late to form the expert group to implement TPS due to the lockdown, which was the effect of COVID-19. This delayed the implementation of TPS. The local level in Achham informed, "*We have formed the expert group and have already done a few visits. If there was no COVID-19, we would have been doing TPS for a long time. The formation of TPS was late due to COVID-19. Then we planned for a school visit, but again the lockdown affected us for immediate implementation of TPS.*"

The school visit was also initiated in several rural municipalities in the coordination of the local level. The LEU and expert group members had practised the monitoring and observation in a couple of schools in Baglung and Achham. In particular, in Achham, the expert group had already initiated the formal school visit, observation of the class, and feedback session with the HT and Teachers. Despite the situation of COVID-19 and its severe impact, it was admirable that almost all of the local level had formed the expert group. Most of the schools during the

lockdown were completely shut down. Alternative learning mechanisms was followed where a majority of the school did the community education (*Tole Sikchya*), but the KII with the respondent suggested it was not effective. It was difficult for the local level to form the expert group member during this time. Also, the already formed expert group member had difficulty conducting the school observation as it was not possible. But since the school has opened, many local levels have rigorously started the implementation of TPS by mobilizing the TPS actors and expert group members.

LESSONS LEARNED

Emerging Issues and Potential

The TPS has been taken as a positive approach by all the schools and local education units. It has made a good impression among the headteachers and school teachers that TPS is essential for the teacher and effective classroom delivery. It helps and provides a lot of motivation for the teacher as the concept of providing immediate support to the teacher is an innovative idea. The teacher, HT, LEU have accepted the concept that TPS will be very effective. If implemented well, then the school will benefit from TPS a lot. This realization can be seen among the relevant stakeholders such as LEU, EDCU, SMC, Headteachers, and primary teachers. The TPS is essential in the current scenario to adhere to an integrated curriculum's effective implementation and delivery. The study reflects that TPS needs to be strengthened more. Currently, it seems that TPS is in its initial phase but has shown its positive impact among the teachers and LEU. TPS is an innovative component in the integrated curriculum where the classroom observation, feedback, problem resolving mechanism, and teachers meet to discuss the classroom delivery.

The present emerging issue is the strength and collaboration among the relevant stakeholder who is necessary for implementing the TPS effectively. Some model local levels have become examples for other schools, municipalities, LEU, and EDCU. But, for its effective and impactful result, the TPS needs to be enhanced by the school personnel, LEU, and parents. TPS is a two-way process. The role of SMC, PTA, and LEU has a strong position to strengthen the implementation of TPS. One of the respondents in Achham informed, "*The expert group has been formed but all the teachers have not yet received TPS because it has not been implemented completely. It is in the initial phase."*

In the absence of teacher training, TPS would help teachers to use the teaching-learning materials/implement IC appropriately. Most of the school grade 1 Nepali teachers have not been using the teacher guides. Some did not have teacher guides, some had TG but did not have the IC orientation, and some did not have guidance. Therefore, TPS plays a credential role in providing support to a teacher for the confusion and making them clear about the concept and approach of an integrated curriculum and the proper use of TG. It is definitely important to acknowledge the situation of COVID-19, which has affected the schools severely. This is also one of the reasons for TPS being in its early phase. One of the respondents said, "*The TPS training and professional training are essential for the teacher's professional development. Frequent training is essential. Training for headteachers and teachers is necessary to enhance their capability and make them one of the leaders in providing TPS. But we have been slow in its implementation also due to COVID-19. It has affected us a lot while implementing the IC and TPS effectively*."

The TPS awareness helped teachers and headteachers regarding the appropriate methods for monitoring and classroom observation. Along with that, it established a support system for the teachers in their difficulties and confusion areas in teaching learning process as a part of IC implementation. The link between TPS and IC helped in making the expert group and local level aware of its importance. There have also been some difficulties and challenges while implementing the TPS due to COVID-19 and inefficiency of the LEU, EDCU, and schools. But at the same time, there have been many cases that show the potential of the TPS and its impact on the teacher and classroom delivery. The teacher and HT have been aware enough to acknowledge that TPS is essential for effective teaching-learning practice. One of the Headteachers in Achham said, "*TPS is essential for us and support is also needed. Also, if the training is given every six months, then it is better as the curriculum is new and vast*."

The practice in the schools in four districts has suggested the positive glimpses of TPS. The study reflects that implementing stakeholders of TPS are rigorously trying to work in building the capacity of the expert group. They have a comprehensive belief that capacity building of expert groups will strengthen the practice of TPS, and once they are mobilized, then the teacher will receive the needed support and help immediately.

Similarly, it is equally important to understand that the HT has an important role in implementing the TPS. The HT can act as a leader or play a leadership role in boosting the confidence of the teacher through classroom observation and feedback. The observation then should bring some discussion and provide the space for the teacher to discuss the challenges and difficulties while delivering the IC in the class. One of the respondents in Parsa suggested, "*It is not entirely the job of the expert group. The HT can also be an important person while supporting the teachers as HT is the one that observes and communicates with the teacher on a daily basis. Therefore, TPS should also be implemented in such a way where HT plays an important role in providing support to the teachers*."

Certain potentials can be seen in the LEU and the expert group. But it is also difficult for LEU to manage and dedicate their time to monitoring and classroom observation. It was found that LEUs are extremely busy in their administrative work, which does not leave much time for them to focus on the observation and visit to the schools. There is interest and awareness among the LEU officials regarding the importance of classroom observation. Therefore, LEU officials and EDCU officials do need some time dedicated to the monitoring and observation of the school. There needs to be proper regulations and guidelines which will provide ample time for LEU and EDCU officials to visit the schools. This is extremely necessary as it not only does establish the continuous practice of observation but also motivates the teachers to be in their best form.

One of the respondents in Baglung also highlighted, "*The understanding of TPS needs to be made clear among HT, teachers, SMC and PTA. The monitoring is the immediate need now for TPS, and the expert group and headteacher need to be mobilized properly in a planned way. The expert group needs to coordinate very well with the local level and EDCU level regarding monitoring and reporting*." This obviously presents a good argument that the local level and EDCU are essential stakeholders for coordinating monitoring and observation of the classroom. Therefore, LEU and EDCU officials definitely have a major potential to implement the TPS in an effective, impactful, and sustainable way.

Challenges	Opportunity
Local levels don't have enough officials and cannot manage time for holding meetings and orientations, let alone visiting schools. They are are engaged mostly in the official work, due to which they are not able to carry out monitoring and classroom observation frequently.	There is a high potential for TPS. The early experience of teachers through classroom observation, feedback, and formation of TLG have provided zeal and motivation for them. If implemented effectively, this will boost teachers' confidence. Likewise, the Expert Groups have the potential to provide on-site support to the teachers and foster needed pedagogical content knowledge in teachers. HTs/BLCs have the opportunity to become instructional leaders, providing coaching and support to teachers based on their classroom needs.

COVID-19 has created difficulties for the implementation of the TPS. It delayed the formation of expert groups, orientation among them and practice of TPS. This can be taken into consideration for all the districts. All four districts were severely impacted by the COVID-19, which led to the complete shutdown of schools.	The collaboration aspects in all the districts between LEU, EDCU and expert groups are very important. First of all, it will create a mechanism for cross and check. Secondly, it will motivate the teachers in the schools and empower the expert group member in identifying the difficulties and challenges faced by the teacher while delivering IC in the class.
The training and orientation done through online mediums created challenges. Virtual training/orientation showed to be less effective than the one's done in-person.	The implementation of TPS at the sample local level reflected that it could be a ground-breaking practice in improving the quality of education in the schools. Therefore, the training and refreshment programs need to be done physically to create more strong connections, networks and understanding among the teachers, expert group members, LEU officials and HT. If possible, some insights into SMC are equally important to strengthen the capacity and confidence of the teacher.
Some local levels are showing great enthusiasm for the implementation of TPS as they have also formed the expert groups and TLGs. But many of them are not able to give their time to TPS because of their busy schedule and administration work.	As explained earlier, the local level has high potential in implementing TPS, and it was clearly seen in the field as well. If the local levels are provided with some dedicated time to look into TPS, its implementation would be more effective.

TPS Best Practices

We have here highlighted a few incidents that could be innovative in practice and could also serve as lessons for other similar contexts.

The expert group was formed last year, including only Nepali experts; this October, we have included other subjects as well. There should have been 11 members but we have 12. Last year, we observed 3 schools focused on the children's reading skills for Nepali subjects. In the recent observation, we did it in two ways; some expert group members stayed in the class observation. In contrast, I observed the management, administration, the use of books and learning materials.

In training, there was a program for making word cards, charts, and visual presentations. There was also a 2-hour class recently about the pinwheel chart. They are using it in school also a letter card. Recently, one teacher gave a good class using the picture of a smile, happy to the student. I think we are the first to make a village education plan in Achham district.

Along with that, we have formed 3 clusters of learning groups, and meetings are going on. The group mostly is of Nepali teachers. They discuss the teaching practice, and it is a learning group for Nepali teachers.

We are developing a calendar for going for observation, the expert group will give the demo class if the situation comes. We are also planning to give a session for HT.

#Expert Group member – II, Achham

We are also calling the ward chairpersons for classroom observation along with the expert group .#LEU Official-2, Achham

TLG formation can be taken as an implementation of TPS option mentioned in the TPS Management procedure. The teacher was keen and motivated to organize the meeting and share the teaching-learning practice to develop their own capacity as well as establish sharing culture among the teachers.	*The practice of school in frequent discussion and consultation among the school teachers after the TPS has been fruitful. The innovative practice of developing a learning achievement plan among teachers to discuss the teaching-learning practice and monitoring is quite exemplary.*

There have been some exemplary practices in the sample local level in different districts. An Expert Group member in Achham said, "*Before we did not use to listen to the problems of the*

teacher and give feedback and talk with them; we usually went spontaneously uninformed. Before we go, we inform the teacher, hear their problems, observe and provide feedback." This is one of the positive initiative under TPS. This concept has established the understanding among the expert groups and LEU that constructive observation should not create fear among the teacher and have an appreciative approach in the feedback. Moreover, where the MEPs are developed, the revised TPS guidelines have been followed to include components of TPS.

Additional Capacity Development and Support Needs

It came from all districts that there were fewer preparations of the roster experts and almost none for the teacher learning groups at the school level. Likewise, the HTs and BLCs seemed largely unfamiliar about their roles as per the TPS guidelines.

I have got TPS guidelines but … sometime,I study … not implement them fully. It would be better if we get orientation on it. #HT-V, Parsa

Despite the fact that TPS is crucial, the way it was formed (expert group) and the way of orienting them (virtual, short-orientation) was not adequate. The understanding of the TPS needs to be clear among the implementing stakeholders in order for effective implementation of TPS. Further, in-depth physical training and orientation are needed for the teachers (on TLG), Headteacher/BLC (on classroom observation and feedback) and Expert Group members to make them realize the importance of TPS and how they can play their roles more effectively. TLG is one of the TPS options included in TPS Management procedure. Therefore, more intensive orientation and role association at different levels – who does what and reports to whom, who should be accountable to who are to be clearly communicated. Though the TPS Guidelines have the classroom observation form, HTs/BLCs were not aware of the TPS guidelines themselves.

Therefore, capacity needs are felt mostly at the local level and school level (though in the TPS model local levels the understanding is somehow better); at the local level, capacity building of the LEU officials and also the roster experts, and at the school level, capacity building of the HT/BLCs as well as making the TLG functional. Sample local levels can also play a major role in providing necessary information of the effective implementation of TPS to other local levels. Besides, SMC and PTAs can also be mobilized with some training and tools.

FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Key Findings

- The understanding of TPS was found satisfactory among the HTs, Teachers, SMCs, TLGs and roster experts (differing in different local levels, based on how and when they were formed and to what extent they were mobilized or in active operation), whereas LEU, EDCU officials and other stakeholders have a clear understanding of TPS. Teachers and HTs seem to understand the aspect of TPS as whatever support is available to teachers to improve their practice. The TPS awareness helped teachers and headteachers regarding the appropriate methods for monitoring and classroom observation. Likewise, the expert group members who have got an orientation or training were good at understanding their roles that the TPS as such is for improving teacher practice
- As such, the TPS actors at federal, provincial, district and local levels have better understood their roles. The expert group and LEU have collaborated well in regard to implementing the TPS.
- Most of the local levels have formed the expert groups, and some have even formed TLGs. However, all the teachers have not yet received TPS because it is in the initial phase. The majority of the schools visited have some sort of practice of TPS. Experience sharing in TLG (formal or informal ways)/monthly meetings to discuss pedagogical issues were examples of TPS practices. However, HTs/BLCs did not seem fully capacitated to provide on-site support as they were yet to receive capacity development training.
- The teacher, HT, LEU have accepted the concept that TPS will be very effective. If implemented well, then the school will benefit from TPS a lot. Also, the implementation of TPS at the sample local level reflected that it could be a ground-breaking practice in improving the quality of education in the schools.
- However, the LEUs and HTs, who are crucial to providing support to schools/teachers directly, have not made it a core part of their function due to their busy time schedules in administrative work.
- The local governments and EGRP II (providing technical support to LGs) have shown praiseworthy efforts in implementing the TPS (have formed and mobilized a roster of TPS actors).
- The positive finding of TPS is that the formation of TLG has brought comfort among teachers while sharing the issues and difficulties while delivering the class.
- In most of the local levels, the implementation of TPS was also delayed and challenged due to COVID-19.
- EGRP II team have provided the local government and LEU personnel with the TPS management procedure and guideline. The majority of expert groups have received orientation and training regarding their roles in TPS, but some are not sure about their role and approach to TPS.
- Few exemplary schools have formed TLGs and are holding monthly meetings. Teachers think the support from TLG and Expert Group will be helpful, yet have not felt it so given the practice to be at the initial phase.
- The major challenge is the capacity gap of the Expert Groups, HTs/BLCs and TLGs since orientation and training about their roles and responsibilities have not been adequate.

- Yet, some LGs and Schools have shown good examples by mobilizing expert groups (Achham and Rasuwa) and TLGs (Baglung and Rasuwa; one school, in particular, does not have a formal TLG, yet doing better in Achham).
- Overall, the implementation of TPS should be taken as a positive result. There are practices and examples in different local levels where the LEU officials and expert groups are active regarding TPS.

Conclusion

The understanding of TPS was found good amonst most of the local levels. However, systematization of the practice needs strenghtening since the practice was at the initial stage and COVID-19 affected the implementation. The TPS stakeholder at federal, provincial, district and local levels have clear understanding about their roles. The Expert Group at the local level and teachers and HTs/BLCs at the school level were found not fully informed of their TPS roles as per the revised TPS guidelines. Still, the TPS actors are implementing their roles by starting the school visit, providing feedback and holding meeting with HT, Teachers, Expert groups, and the local levels. The administrative challenges limiting the local level for dedicating time for school visits was one of the major problems. Finally, the training and orientation regarding TPS need to be done to enhance the TPS actors' capacity and ability.

In the context of TPS, teachers need more feedback and support from different TPS actors. The current reach of TPS has been sporadic and not available to all schools (since some local levels had just formed roster groups, HTs/BLCs were not aware of their roles). Therefore, more rapid and immediate interventions as discussed below are needed to make the TPS available to all schools. More importantly, all stakeholders need to follow the TPS procedures and guidelines as a legal document and execute their roles sincerely.

Recommendations

For CEHRD

- Give necessary guidance to TPS implementing actors, especially EDCUs and local levels, such as providing feedback, suggestion, and support during planning, resource management, and mobilization of TPS actors (LEU officials, Expert Groups, HTs, TLGs).
- Capacitate EDCUs to provide more localized training and orientations in collaboration with local levels (7 ETCs are not adequate).

For ETC

- In coordination with EDCUs and LEUs, plan and offer TPS training and training materials to build the capacity of HTs, expert groups, resource teachers, LEU, and EDCU officials.
- Training and refreshment programs need to be done physically to create more strong connections, networks and understanding among the teachers, expert group members, LEU officials and HT. Moreover, frequent training is essential for HTs and teachers to enhance their capability and make them of leaders in providing TPS.
- Likewise, TPS training for the expert group for a short duration. If the duration of training is increased, it would be helpful for the expert group to have a clearer understanding of TPS regarding visiting schools, observing classes, and providing on-site feedback and support periodically (based on an annual action plan).

For EDCU

- Coordinate and collaborate with schools and LEUs to monitor and supervise early grade teaching practices. Sometimes, joint monitoring and sometimes, designated schools (e.g. multiple schools from each local level, in coordination with the LEUs) can be visited. While visiting schools, also hold interaction with SMC, PTA, early grade teachers, HTs regarding the TPS guidelines.

- More training on TPS is necessary (even though they have not yet reached all Local levels) to clarify the functions of the TLG and Expert Groups, HTs, and BLC on TPS. Therefore, CEHRD should coordinate with ETCs and LGs to strengthen the TPS system by ensuring the TPS training to local stakeholders.
- Training should be extensive for the master trainers as well as expert group members. In some cases, the master trainer and expert group themselves felt that they needed more training regarding TPS.

For Local Governments

- The monitoring is the immediate need now for TPS, and the expert group and headteacher need to be mobilized in a planned way. This could also be done by making a plan and policy at the local level with the motive of implementing TPS.
- LEU officials and EDCU officials do need some time dedicated to the monitoring and observation of the school.
- Build capacity and effectively mobilize (with an action plan) the Expert Group, TLG, SMCs, and HTs/BLCs to monitor and discuss practical challenges of teachers. Allocate budgets to mobilize expert groups. Expert group members should be invited to share their experiences and reflections on class observations in the monthly HTs meeting at the local level.
- Further orientation to the HTs/BLCs is necessary to guide them for the effective implementation of the TPS.
- Visit schools and observe grade 1-3 classes (using the form given in Annex I of the TPS Management Guidelines or modified) and provide feedback to teachers. Also, ensure the availability of TLMs and observe their proper utilization of them.
- Hold monthly HTs meetings, discuss problems in early grades and explore ways to address those issues. One designated officer (TPS Focal Person) could be managed to oversee the TPS activities in the schools at the local level.
- A separate resource teacher can be managed or a designated TPS focal person needs to be provisioned at the local level.

For Expert Groups

- Be proactive in discharging roles. Observe classes (use observation form given in Annex I of the TPS Management Guidelines) at grades 1-3 at least once a month, and provide feedback and support as required. Continue adopting the empowering, encouraging, and motivating approaches (appreciative inquiry) while providing on-site feedback to the teachers. Also, offer demonstration classes if needed. Moreover, if it is needed for Grade 1-3 teachers, also organize a short-term (2-3 days) workshop on pedagogical skills, use of materials, and implementation of the IC.
- Provide precise and actionable feedback to the HTs and teachers on the proper use and management of TLMs.
- Share reflections and reviews of the ongoing TPS and experiences of classroom observations in the monthly HTs meeting at the local level.
- Coordinate well with the local level and EDCU level regarding monitoring and reporting.

For Schools

- HTs and BLCs should be more vigilant and responsible for TPS at the school level. Observe classes (use the observation form given in Annex I of the TPS Management Guidelines) in grades 1-3 at least once a month, provide feedback and support, which could be taken as a monitoring and coaching mechanism at the school level itself.
- Ensure the availability of TLMs and provide the necessary support to teachers to make maximum utilization of those resource materials.

- Establish a necessary mechanism to share the learning and experiences of teachers who have just returned from training.
- As far as practicable, ensure only trained (EGRP and IC) teachers teach in Grades 1-3. If those teachers have not got such training, seek ways to provide training to them immediately.
- Form TLG of the early grade teachers and promote sharing culture (of experiences and challenges) through regular meetings (at least fortnightly) so that innovative solutions can be sought from within the school or from other stakeholders. If there are issues that cannot be solved at the school level, discuss those issues in the SMC meeting and monthly HTs meeting at the local level.
- Include TPS activities (monitoring minutes, monthly meetings, TLG meetings, PTA and SMC meetings) in the School Improvement Plan (SIP) and ensure their effective implementation. Also, maintain a record of those activities – a progress report.

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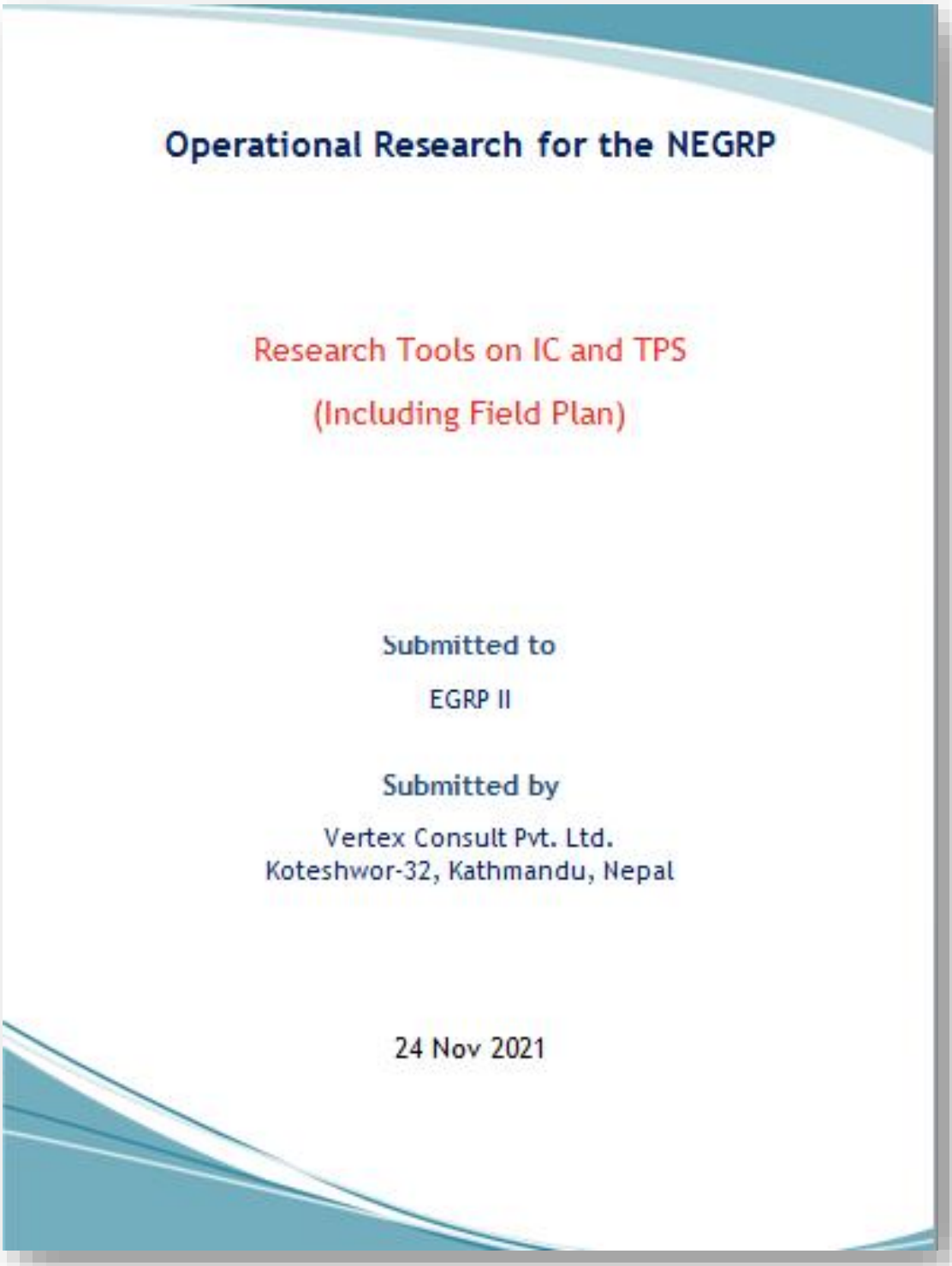
ANNEXES

Annex I: Research Tools

Attached; Submitted as a separate document.



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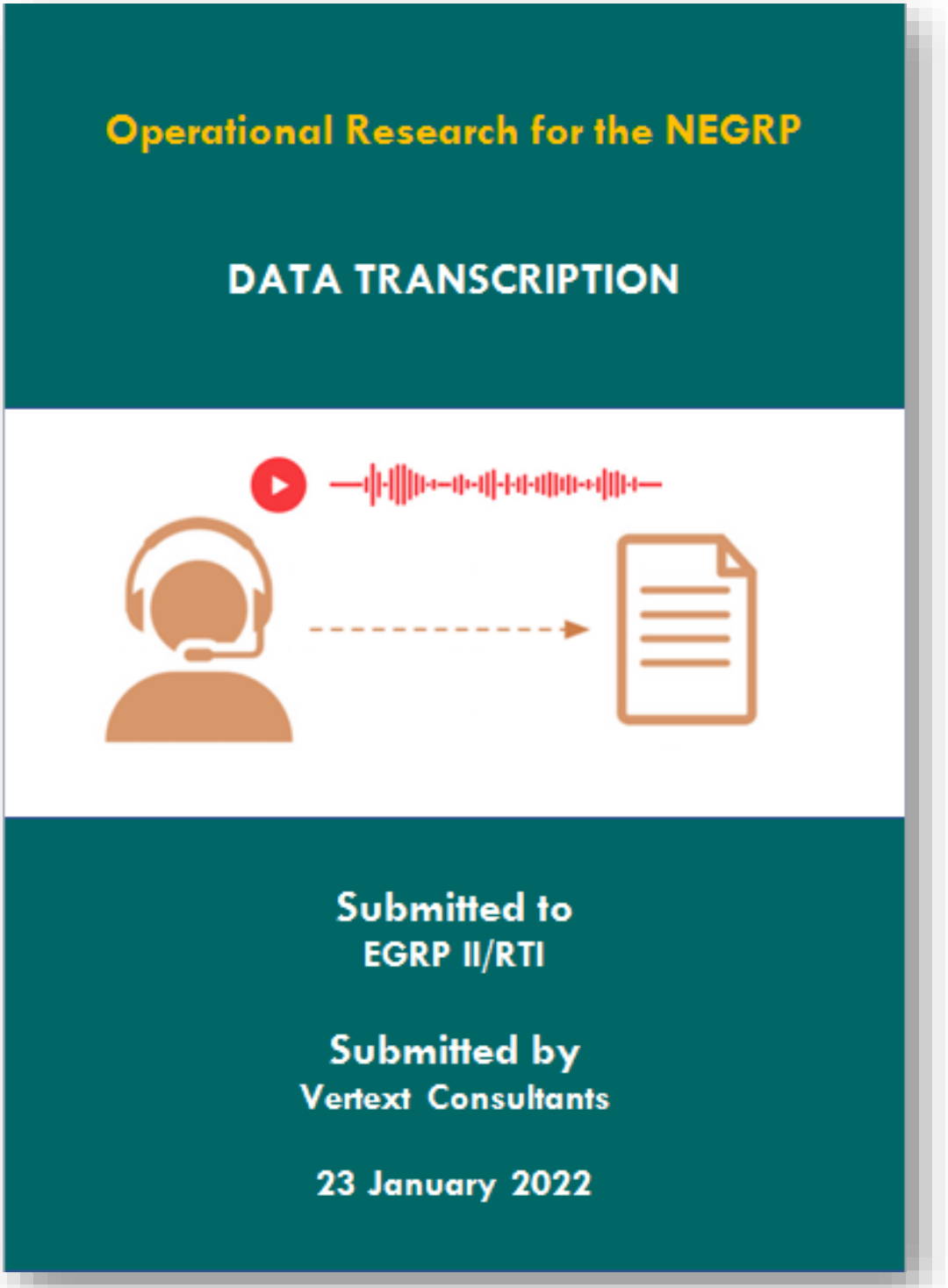
Attached; Submitted as a seprate document.