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Professional Development of Teacher Educators in the Kamrup District of Assam

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Abstract: Professional development is crucial to improve the standard of teacher preparation and the initial stages of the education system. Effective teachers and researchers may be produced by professionally developed teacher educators, who in turn can effectively teach young learners. The standard of teacher educators has been directly influencing the standard of student teachers since ages. Knowing that teacher educators play a significant role in the education system and that their professional development has a positive impact on the whole education system and knowledge society, many researchers from different places set out to investigate the status of professional development at the grassroots level in various institutions. The learning process of student teachers is thoroughly researched, while teacher educators' learning is rarely given as much attention. Therefore, it's crucial to concentrate on how teacher educators view their work and professional growth and development. As the twenty-first century got underway, the necessity for teacher educators and their ongoing professional development attracted the eye of the concerned authority and the researcher. As a result, it was recognized in both Government policies and research literature. Therefore, the researchers wanted to study the professional development of teacher educators in the Kamrup district of Assam. The study was conducted on 60 teacher educators who were selected by using Simple Random sampling technique. For the present study, the Descriptive method was used and a self-structured questionnaire was used for collecting the required data. After collecting the data, appropriate statistical techniques were used to analyse the data.

Keywords: *Teacher education, Teacher educator, Professional Development of teacher educators, Challenges of professional development, Suggestions.*

1. Introduction

It is impossible to undervalue the role that education plays in establishing a country. But when there is quality, it is important how to improve education quality and what are the contributing aspects that can result in improved education are now the two most crucial issues facing the field. In this regard, several perspectives have been advanced. The American Commission on Teacher Education declared that "The caliber of a nation is determined by the caliber of its people; the caliber of its people is not only, but in a significant degree, determined by the caliber of their education, and the caliber of their education is more strongly determined by only one aspect, namely the caliber of their teacher." (2015). High-quality teacher education is urgently needed on a global scale, yet up until the 20th century, teacher educators' professional development was not given enough attention. In

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this regard, a substantial body of research on teacher educators' professional development has not yet been published (Loughran, 2014; Lunenberg et al., 2014). Murray underlined the importance of the teacher educator profession as an understudied and misunderstood occupational category at the start of the twenty-first century. The learning process of student teachers is thoroughly researched, while teacher educators' learning is rarely given as much attention. Therefore, it's crucial to concentrate on how teacher educators view their work and professional growth and development. As the twenty-first century got underway, the necessity for teacher educators and their ongoing professional development attracted the eye of the concerned authority and the researcher. As a result, it was recognized in both Government policies and research literature.

It is often said that the quality of teacher educators is an important component in improving teacher education. This is so that the caliber of teacher educators' professional work may be gauged, together with the caliber of pre-service and in-service teacher preparation. Following that, the professional degree of training received by instructors would decide the caliber of the educational system. For them to effectively complete the difficult duties at hand, educators must be thoroughly conversant with school reality, the social environment, and community expectations. It is well acknowledged that teacher educators frequently are thought to have a substantial influence on enhancing educational efficiency and effectiveness. However, teacher educators can only do their duties successfully if they consistently expand their expertise. For every profession to fulfil the requirements of the contemporary world, continuous learning and professional development are very essential. On a professional level, teacher educators must actively participate in the development of policies, methods for implementing them, and program monitoring.

More and more people are realizing that teacher educators must devote their whole careers to professional growth if they want to maintain their status as professionals. The qualities of teacher educators participating in training the future generation of teachers are becoming more and more in the spotlight [European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE), 2008]. This trend follows widely accepted viewpoints on enhancing teacher education. The workforce is the major focus of this attention; specifically, how to guarantee there are enough beginning teacher educators (Snoek et al., 2011).

The professional development of teacher educators is an ongoing professional learning process through which teacher educators keep themselves up to date with new knowledge, information as well as new skills and use appropriate evidence to evaluate continually themselves and learn to adapt different teaching practices according to the needs of the learner. It is mainly a set of guiding principles to help teacher educators to fulfill their responsibilities towards students, parents, colleagues, and other professionals, the community as well as the teacher education programme. It is important to distinguish the value-added elements of teacher educators' professional development in terms of the matters pertaining to their line of work, including the improved qualifications and contributing professionally by attending refresher courses, orientation programmes, conferences, seminars, workshops, and symposiums throughout their career. A teacher educator's professional development will need to be centered on the specific requirements of the teachers and be flexible enough to meet those needs as they arise (Kumar &Mohalik, 2017).

The professional development of teacher educators is very crucial for preparing prospective teachers. There is a growing consensus that teacher educators largely influence the quality of teachers, teacher education in particular, and the quality of education in general (Lunenburg et al., 2014). However, the Professional Development of teacher educators is understudied as compared to the professional development of teachers.

1. Need and Significance of the Study

The professional development of teacher educators is an ongoing professional learning process through which teacher educators keep themselves up to date with new knowledge, information as well as new skills and use appropriate evidence to evaluate continually themselves and learn to adapt different teaching practices according to the needs of the learner. It is mainly a set of guiding principles to help teacher educators to fulfill their responsibilities towards students, parents, colleagues, other professionals, the community as well as the teacher education programme. It is important to distinguish the value-added elements of teacher educators' professional

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There is an increasing emphasis on the attributes of teacher educators who are active in the education of future generations of teachers (ETUCE, 2008) since they directly influence the initial teaching and training of student teachers (Furlong et al., 2000), as such, they considered their teacher educators to be role models. The student teachers can develop a variety of competencies, skills, abilities, and values with the help of the teacher educators that they may deploy later in their classrooms. The teacher educators not only maintain and improve the quality of education but at the same time also helps in the innovation and development of the education system through their role as developers and innovators (European Commission, 2013). The work of teacher educators is very valuable and of the highest caliber (Snoek et al., 2011), and raising their caliber might result in significant advancements in the education system (European Commission, 2012; Buchberger et al., 2000). Murray (as cited in Westrup, 2009) has logically argued that the quality of education depends on the quality of teacher educators as follows:

"The quality of teaching depends in large measure on the quality of the teachers; the quality of the teacher depends in large part upon the quality of their professional education; the quality of teacher education depends in large measure on the quality of those who provide it, namely the teacher educators".

Teacher educators play a vital role in the development of student teachers, who serve as the touchstone that measures the achievements and aspirations of the country. The worth and potentialities of a nation are assessed in and through the work of the student teachers who have received the highest quality training in their chosen noble profession from teacher educators. The people of a country are the enlarged replicas of their teachers. Teachers in general are considered as social engineers who mould and reshape the life of their students. The success or the failure of the education system rests upon the teacher educators. If the teacher educators are well committed and dedicated to the profession and take a keen interest in their job, only then, success will be ensured in the education system. On the other hand, if they lack in imparting quality training in education and cannot give their heart to the profession, the education system may face challenges. Hence, the teacher educator is considered a vital component of the education system.

In the present study, the researchers studied about the professional activities of the teacher educators and the challenges they faced in the Kamrup district of Assam.

Therefore, the present study focused on the Professional Development of Teacher Educators in the Kamrup district of Assam: Their Professional activities and Challenges.

2. Review of Related Literature

According to a survey of the relevant literature, there has only been a little amount of research done on the teacher educators' professional development during the previous decades. But, only in the recent studies, the researchers have shown an interest in teacher educators' professional development with regard to numerous factors and elements. On many facets of teacher educators at various levels, there are a few research papers accessible. In the present study, the researcher has used the narrative method for reviewing the related literature as presented in the following-

A White Paper has been written to discuss a still under-addressed issue in European Education Policy, i.e., the Professional Development of Teacher Educators. As identified in European Commission Report, 2013 developing the group of teacher educators is a vital part of improving the overall quality of educational outcomes in schools and higher education. In addressing this issue, the White Paper has discussed the activities of the International Forum for Teacher Educator Development (InFo-TED) group such as enabling teacher educators to learn from each other, assemble materials to aid teacher educators in their professional growth.

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ssand invest in knowledge creation and a shared European vision for teacher educator development and leadership (InFo-TED, 2019).

Teacher educators play a crucial role in preparing prospective teachers however, from the policy and research perspective teacher educators and their professional development have been neglected for a long time (Lunenberg et al., 2014). Only in recent times, the teacher educators gained some importance in promoting and advancing educational practice (Hadar, 2016; Smith, 2003).

An article was prepared to study the professional development of teacher educators and why it is essential for the profession to engage in ongoing professional development. The researcher discussed three main reasons for the professional development of teacher educators- as a means to improve the profession of teacher education; to maintain the interest in the profession, to promote personal and professional growth; to advance with the profession for promotion (Smith, 2010).

The professional development of teacher educators is the most critical demand for the present teacher education system and the education system in general. After the new guidelines of the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) and recommendations of the National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE), 2009, the role of teacher educators have become more crucial and challenging. Accountability towards the education system and stakeholders become a central point, and from this point of view, teacher educators need to change their attitude towards the training of prospective teachers (NCFTE, 2009).

As compared to the elder teacher educators, young teacher educators are more professionally developed in terms of their performance, teaching and training skills, professional ethics, constructive approach to teaching, and inclusive and equitable behaviour with students (Lohani, 2018).

Another study was conducted by the members of the Association for Teacher Education in Europe (ATEE) Research and Development Community (RDC) on 'Professional Development of Teacher Educators' and consisted of 25 structured interviews with experienced teacher educators with at least five years of experience. The participants revealed that concerns about their profession did vary and shift during their careers. At the start of their career, most participants experienced concerns quite characteristic of the induction phase (Van Velzen et al., 2010). As teacher educators became more advanced, their concerns changed accordingly and shifted towards their identity and their student teachers as individuals with different ambitions and needs. They can develop professionally by attending conferences, refresher courses, workshops, and seminars as mentioned by the participants (Klink et al., 2016).

Teacher educators have several roles and responsibilities that they must fulfil to be effective teacher educators and agents of change in the education system. Teacher educators not only need to know how to teach the subject content, but also, they need to know how to create effective teacher education programmes. Furthermore, they need the skills to work collaboratively in departmental meetings to continue the development and evaluation of teacher education programmes (Darling-Harmmond, 2006).

In different countries, workshops and seminars are considered the common routes to the professional development of teacher educators. They are often used for introducing new knowledge and developing skills among them (Kennedy, 2005). A study revealed that workshops and seminars are the dominant professional development routes for teacher educators in Tanzania (Filipatali&Chilumika, 2013). Although, the seminars and workshops tend to have relatively large content to be covered and little time for participants to reflect. These affect the effectiveness of these initiatives and the subsequent application of the knowledge gained (Bhalalusesa et al., 2011). Furthermore, only a few teacher educators are interested in attending such kind of activities (Deka, 2014).

Job satisfaction predicts actual career development and is an important factor in the professional development of teacher educators. There is a significant positive relationship between professional development and job satisfaction of teacher educators working in the government as well as private sectors. It means teacher educators who have a higher sense of job satisfaction are professionally more developed whereas teacher

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educators with a lower sense of job satisfaction are professionally less developed irrespective of their type of institution. If the teacher educator contends with his/her job, he/she may continue in a better way to the educational system and vice versa (Bloger, 2008; Bosley, 2004; Chen et al., 2004; Kaur, 2019).

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of teacher educators is the collective responsibility of both the individual and the institutions in which they work (Earley, 2004).

However, it was argued that the professional development of teacher educators is the individual responsibility rather than the institutional responsibility (Karagiorgi& Nicolaidou, 2013).

Regarding Continuing Professional Development (CPD) teacher educators' initiatives are not up to the mark both in quantity and quality in India. Quite a less number of teacher educators hardly take the initiative in organizing CPD activities. They believe that the state should take responsibility for their CPD and that they cannot do anything on their own (Bolitho, 2013). Furthermore, many teacher educators were found facing several challenges regarding availability and access to CPD opportunities. Not getting paid leaves to engage in CPD, no availability of relevant CPD opportunities in nearby places, time constraints in terms of extra workload, and conflict between work schedule and CPD activities were found as major factors that hamper the CPD participation of teacher educators. Above all, psychological factors are considered as the most striking challenge as many teacher educators (51.33%) believe that CPD activities should be practiced only during working hours (Tyagi, 2021). Further, a considerable number of teacher educators were found to be facing financial constraints to practice CPD (Davi, 2013).

There is a wide variety of professional development activities that varies from different teacher educators. Learning though interaction, learning by experimenting, reflecting on work experiences and learning without interaction are the different types of professional development activities that are frequently used by the teacher educators (Boei et al., 2015).

A study was conducted in Shanghai (China) to examine the opportunities and the challenges faced by teacher educators regarding professional development revealed that the Chinese Central Government and Chinese People have placed more emphasis on education and teacher education. The Chinese Teacher Education is growing as a diverse system, with a stronger focus on professionalism. The teacher educators have received adequate physical support and the human resources such as student teachers, school teachers, expert teacher educators, mentors, etc. have a significant influence on their professional development. Furter, the study has identified that the teacher educators face several challenges like workload, minimal time for professional development, and inadequate as well as irregular funding (Qiu, 2015).

A study was conducted to assess the practices and challenges of teacher educators' professional development through a Lesson Study in Oromia Colleges of Teacher Education. The study depicted the limited practices of Lesson study with inadequate knowledge, skills, and experiences in the studied Colleges of Teacher Education. It was found from the study that lesson study had been challenged by teacher educators' traditional teaching practices and attitudes; teacher educators' perceptions of their own classroom practices; knowledge and skill gaps on the parts of both teacher educators and administrators; inadequate time for collaborative planning; implementation and discussions; limited effort to scale-up the existing practices and lack of commitment, encouragement, support; and role modelling in the Colleges of Teacher Education (Yadeta, 2018).

3. Objectives
- To study the professional development of teacher educators in the Kamrup district.
- To identify the challenges of the professional development of teacher educators in the Kamrup district.
- To suggest measures for optimum professional development of teacher educators in the Kamrup district.

4. Delimitation of the Study

The present study had the following delimitations-

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i. The study was delimited to Teacher Educators in B.Ed. programmes in Kamrup Metropolitan and Kamrup Rural districts of Assam.

ii. The study was delimited to Colleges of Teacher Education (CTEs) under the affiliation and jurisdiction of Gauhati University.

5. Research Methodology

As the researchers wanted to gather specific information about the Professional development of teacher educators and their challenges by collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, they used the Descriptive research method. It is the best method as well as an appropriate choice when one wants to focus on the who, what, where, why, and how.

6. Population of the Study

In the present study, the population consist of all the Teacher Educators of B.Ed. programmes offered by the Colleges of Teacher Education in Kamrup Metropolitan and Kamrup Rural of Assam affiliated to Gauhati University. The whole population of the present study is presented in the Table 1.

Table 1: Table showing the list of Colleges of Teacher Education along with the Population

Sl. No.	Name of the Colleges of Teacher Education	District	Population	
			Male	**Female**
1	Abhiruchi Institute of Physical Education	Kamrup Metropolitan	8	3
2	Asom SikshakPrasikshan Mahavidyalaya	Kamrup Metropolitan	4	11
3	College of Education, Christian Basti	Kamrup Metropolitan	4	16
4	Dakshin Guwahati B.Ed. College	Kamrup Metropolitan	7	11
5	DR. Anita Baruah Sarma College of Education	Kamrup Metropolitan	2	6
6	Govt. Banikanta College of Teacher Education	Kamrup Metropolitan	1	9
7	Lakshmibai National Institute of Physical Education	Kamrup Metropolitan	10	2
8	National Institute for Teacher Education	Kamrup Metropolitan	6	19
9	Province College	Kamrup Metropolitan	3	3
10	West Guwahati College of Education	Kamrup Metropolitan	5	9
11	BaihataChariali B.Ed. College	Kamrup Rural	4	12
12	College of Education, Boko	Kamrup Rural	5	11

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Sl. No.	Name of the Colleges of Teacher Education	District	Population	
			Male	**Female**
13	KRD College of Education	Kamrup Rural	1	14
14	Pragjyotish B.Ed. College Pacharia	Kamrup Rural	5	8
15	Rangia Teacher Training College	Kamrup Rural	9	7
16	Teachers Training College, Mirza	Kamrup Rural	8	8
	Total		82	149
	Grand Total	231		

Source: Data Collected from the official website of NCTE and the respective official websites of the Colleges of Teacher Education on 12th April 2023

7. Sample of the Study

Out of 231 teacher educators, 60 teacher educators were selected as sample for the present study by using simple random sampling technique.

8. Tools of the Study

For collecting the required data, the researchers used a questionnaire which was self-constructed. The questionnaire has total 30 questions- 19 closed-ended questions and 11 open-ended questions. The total number of questions along with the type of questions measuring the objectives of the present study is shown in the Table 2.

Table 2: The number of questions along with the type of questions measuring the objectives.

Sl. No.	Objectives	Type of questions		Total Number of Questions
		Closed-ended	**Open-ended**	
1	To study the professional development of teacher educators in the Kamrup district.	18	4	22
2	To identify the challenges of the professional development of teacher educators in the Kamrup district.	1	6	7
3	To suggest measures for optimum professional development of teacher educators in the Kamrup district.	0	1	1
Total		19	11	30

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9.   Data Collection

The required data were collected by the researchers through Google Form.

10.   Data Analysis

After collecting the data, the researchers analyzed the data by using appropriate statistical techniques.

11.   Findings of the Study

1.   84% of teacher educators are interested to attend the professional development activities/courses/programs and the remaining 16% of teacher educators are not interested to attend professional development activities/courses/programs as they are already satisfied with their present position.

2.   90% of teacher educators responded that professional development activities/courses/programs are necessary to attend and the remaining 10% of teacher educators find it unnecessary to attend as they are not helpful for their current job functions.

3.   87% of teacher educators responded that they do not utilize the knowledge and skills gained during professional development activities/courses/programs in real-life situations as the content followed in professional development activities/courses/programs is not relevant to their current job functions.

4.   Only 13% of teacher educators responded that the content followed in professional development activities/courses/programs is relevant to their current job tasks. They also mentioned the contents like knowledge of the subject area; understanding how teachers learn; planning, managing, and moderating teacher learning; developing learning resources for student teachers; are followed in these activities. In regard to this, they also suggested that the organizers should take up the contents like understanding the teaching context; planning, managing, and moderating teacher learning; demonstrating effective teaching behaviour; monitoring student teachers' potential and performance; how to conduct research activities; how to adopt inclusive practices.

5.   47% of teacher educators responded that necessary tools for professional development activities/courses/programs are sufficiently provided and the remaining 53% mentioned that they are not sufficiently provided with necessary tools.

6.   All the teacher educators responded that the required time is not available for professional development activities/courses/programs.

7.   Only 9% of teacher educators have attended 3 or 4 professional development activities/courses/programs this year; 91% of teacher educators have attended 1 or 2 and no teacher educators were found who have not attended any professional development activities/courses/programs this year.

8. 100% of teacher educators try to update their subject area by attending seminars, conferences, refresher courses, and workshops.

9.   All the teacher educators have attended seminars and conferences for their professional development this year. 28% of teacher educators have attended workshops for their professional development and no one has attended refresher course this year.

10.   Only 7% of teacher educators responded that teacher educators are responsible for their professional development; 15% of teacher educators responded that the Head of the Department is responsible for their professional development; 31% of teacher educators responded that the Head of the institution/the principal is responsible for their professional development and 47% of teacher educators responded that the Government is responsible for their professional development.

11.   Only 27% of teacher educators keep track of activities of national or international teacher educators' associations.

12.   100% teacher educators responded that mental health and well-being training should be provided as a professional development activity/course/program.

13.   100% teacher educators responded that mental health and well-being training was not organized as a professional development activity/course/program in this year.

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14.   Only 6% of teacher educators have organized a professional development activity/course/program only in the form of seminar. No teacher educators have organized workshop, conference, panel discussion.

15.   28% of teacher educators prepare portfolio to assess their development in the profession.

16.   87% of teacher education try to update their subject area by using the internet.

17.   Only 16% of teacher educators participated in paid professional development activities.

18.   No teacher educators visited another teacher educator's classroom to observe and discuss his/her teaching practices and skills.

19.   During the professional development activities/courses/programs, the teacher educators are allowed to ask questions to fulfil their academic thrust and are allowed to provide feedback about the professional development activities/courses/programs as responded by all the teacher educators.

20.   In professional development activities/courses/programs, the skills such as teamworking skills, effective organizational skills, effective communication skills, and increasing the motivation level are developed in teacher educators.

21.   In their institution, the teacher educators have professional development opportunities such as induction programs, expert lectures, online interactions, and discussions, enhancing teaching instructions using ICT, and participation in the webinar.

22.   All the teacher educators have faced challenges regarding their professional development of teacher educators.

23.   The infrastructural challenges of the professional development of teacher educators are the library of their institution does not subscribe to adequate e-journals, inadequate computer facilities, they do not have access to institutional internet facilities, lack of required material, limited seat for professional development activities, lack of comfortable working environment, poor quality of training institutions.

24.   The instructional challenges of the professional development of teacher educators are poor delivery of professional development activities/courses/programs, lack of skill development, no relevant content offered, lack of ICT skills, lack of academic instruction, and no proper attention and monitoring from the trainer's side.

25.   The institutional challenges of the professional development of teacher educators are the institution does not provide spare time to study at the library, the institution does not grant leave to attend professional development activities/courses/programs, the institution is reluctant in terms of arranging professional development activities/courses/programs, management of the institution detain salary if they take leave for attending professional development activities/courses/programs, the institution library does not have sufficient materials- books, journals, magazines, newspaper and adequate ICT facilities which can be helpful in developing their profession.

26.   The financial challenges of the professional development of teacher educators are no travelling allowance to attend professional development activities/courses/programs; expensive participation fees; lack of incentives for attending professional development activities/courses/programs; the institution does not reimburse the registration fee of the professional development activities/courses/programs.

27.   The psychological challenges of the professional development of teacher educators are unaware of any professional development activities/courses/programs; they do not need to upgrade themselves as they are already settled in the job; they find it useless because they do not help in salary increment; they sometimes do not want to engage in professional development activities/courses/programs as they are not related to promotion; specific time period should be allotted to professional development activities/courses/programs only within working hours; a few teacher educators feel that they are teaching very well without being engaged; their spare time is for family and not for professional development; lack of patience and an adaptable mindset; during the professional development activities/courses/programs, individual differences are neglected; a few teacher educators do not find professional development interesting.

28.   The other important challenges of professional development of teacher educators are heavy workload, the conflict between work schedule and professional development; do not get support from the Head of the Department and the principal; professional development programs rarely occur in nearby places.

29.   The teacher educators suggested some measures for optimum professional development of teacher educators in the Kamrup District of Assam. These are- More focus should be given to workshop organization

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along with the seminars, conferences, panel discussions, refresher courses, etc; the government should be more attentive towards organizing professional development activities of teacher educators; the government should order every institution to organize at least one professional development program every six months; the teacher educators should provide financial assistance for attending professional development activities/courses/programs; the professional development activities/courses/programs should be organized on holidays or weekends or during summer break or winter break; more focus should be given on ICT training as these are becoming an important part of the education system; the organizing body should increase the intake capacity for professional development activity/course/program.

12.   Conclusion

Teacher educators are the driving factors behind all of the developments going through the educational system. The quality of this segment dictates the quality of teachers, who in turn decide the quality of the students and the whole education system, further promoting to the overall development of the people and the country. As we got to know the professional development of teacher educators is very crucial for preparing prospective teachers. There is a growing consensus that teacher educators largely influence the quality of teachers, teacher education in particular, and the quality of education in general (Lunenburg et al., 2014). However, the Professional Development of teacher educators is understudied as compared to the professional development of teachers. But, the researchers include specific areas of interest regarding the professional development of teacher educators like what opportunities are there for the professional development of teacher educators, how teacher educators interact with each other for their professional development, what type of contents adopted and skills developed in the professional development activities/courses/programs, what type of professional development activities/courses/programs they attend and how frequently they attend. Along with that, the researcher tried to identify the challenges of the professional development of teacher educators. In order to improve all the basic elements of the professional development of teacher educators, it is very important to identify the challenges that teacher educators face and to uplift the present state of their professional development. Because once the present situation has been thoroughly researched and studied, recommendations and proposals can be made to educators, managers, and policymakers in order to improve the status of professional development by overcoming current issues and challenges.The present study will catch attention of the concerned authorities so that they can put more efforts on improving the professional development of teacher educators. In addition to this, the challenges can be overcome with proper planning for the improvement of teacher education and the whole education system in general. The present study will bring ray of hope for the professional development of teacher educators specifically in the Kamrup district of Assam which will impact on the teacher education system.

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