

HELPING HANDS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND TRAININGS FOR TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

By

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Abstract

This research paper deals with some of the serious concerns in education system like democratizing good education, quality teaching, changing roles of the teachers- what teachers should know and be able to do, how to attend different learning needs of students and how to promote a climate of mutual respect in a multi-cultural environment. It also focus on different characteristics of professional development programs and training such as : great emphasis on providing concrete, realistic and challenging goals ; including those activities that take support from both technical and conceptual aspects of instructions and getting support and guide from colleagues and other fellows etc. It also includes the policy initiatives related to professional development in India like National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (2009/2010) and Chattopadhyaya Committee Report (1983-85). Some researches related to impact and importance of professional development programs and training for teachers around the globe are also considered. Urgency of professional development programs and training for constructivist pedagogy, improving teachers' performance, developing quality knowledge, skills, and values among them, sustaining an effective learning environment and effective responding to the needs and interests of diverse students are also highlighted. Some recommendations related to the requirement of effective professional development programs were suggested at the end.

Education is the basic necessity to any society and teachers cause desirable and anticipated revolution in the society silently. The National Policy on Education of India (1986/1992) has given very clear directives on this issue, "The status of the teachers reflect the socio-cultural ethos of a society; it is said that no people can rise above the level of its teachers". The role of teacher also involves the character building of the taught apart from designing and implementation of the curriculum. Good teachers are

essential for the effective functioning of education systems and for improving the quality of learning processes. Teachers guide learners in the process of understanding the enormous amount of accumulated knowledge available today, using it constructively and communicating it effectively. These are serious responsibilities which can only be fulfilled by dedicated professionals who have received specialized training. The key personnel in the institutions who play an important role to bring about this transformation are teachers. As stated by NCTE (1998) in Quality Concerns in Secondary Teacher Education, “The teacher is the most important element in any educational program. It is the teacher who is mainly responsible for implementation of the educational process at any stage.” This shows that it is imperative to invest in the preparation of teachers, so that the future of a nation could be secured. The importance of competent teachers to the nation’s school system can in no way be overemphasized. The National Curriculum Framework 2005 places demands and expectations on the teacher, which need to be addressed by both initial and continuing teacher education.

Serious Concerns in Education System

A key challenge for the Indian education system is to “democratize good education”. To achieve this, the quality of education for all students must improve, which in turn requires improvements in the quality of teaching. An educational institution performs a significant function of providing learning experiences to lead their students from the darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge. Today’s major concern of the education sector is for the dearth of quality teachers. The advent of ICT has made a greater spur in the flow of educational information while the new generation of youth is its stakeholders, ready with a power of grasping the less known. There arises the need for the teaching community to equally hone their skill to sew the knowledge gap between the laboratory innovations and to prepare the human resources for future needs. But examining the weakness of knowledge linkage, one hardly hesitates to pose a question- are the teachers prepared to meet the challenge of knowledge transfer at high degree of professionalism and speed?

It is widely recognized that the availability of well trained teachers are vital to the school improvement efforts. Teaching as a profession and the profile of teachers has been continuously changing in India over time and in response to changing demands. The status of the teachers is one of the basic underlying premises to attract and retain persons of ability to the profession. Low social status of teachers coupled with low self-esteem and lack of understanding of the diversity of the student population more specifically belonging to the marginalized sector are the major challenges faced by the government schools. In the Indian context, barring a few private institutions, the roles of the teacher has been restricted to the classroom and mainly to the conventional teaching of ‘chalk and talk’. The large area of newer teaching methodologies, assessment methods and facilitating the development of students remain untapped. It is not that

Indian teachers do not have the ability to understand or apply, but mainly because these types of educational processes are either not understood or simply ignored by the system that is already in place.

At the macro level, views of “what teachers should know and be able to do” continue to be country-specific but are increasingly shaped by world trends. Progress towards universal enrollment has brought into the classroom a much more diverse student population, with different backgrounds and aspirations and for whom the homogeneous elite education of yesterday has not worked. These trends mean that teachers must have a stronger mastery of the disciplines they teach; that they must be able to model the higher-order thinking processes, ability to work in multi-disciplinary teams, leadership and communication skills needed in a complex world flooded with information. At the school level, multiple challenges have arisen. In the more reform-minded countries, teachers are increasingly held accountable for student outcomes and not just for delivering the curriculum. Schools are also expected to compensate for societal evils by promoting a climate of tolerance and inclusion and by easing the school-to-work transition. This paradoxically is evolving at a time when the monopoly of the school as a locus of knowledge acquisition is being eroded by more appealing ways of learning. In the poorest countries, the shortage of minimally competent teachers is a serious obstacle to ensuring that students understand what they are taught and are capable of applying it in real life. In between, the trend towards greater local autonomy and the need for more flexible solutions also have had wide implications in terms of competencies required. Teachers are now expected to know how to attend to the different learning needs of students, to promote a climate of mutual respect in a multicultural environment and to create for their students exciting, age and context relevant learning experiences.

Nature of Professional Development Programs/Trainings

Leithwood (1992) remarked in his study that Professional development trainings are very crucial in teacher’s career as Professional development courses and programs develop the survival skills of teachers. It also aids to develop competency in basic skills of teaching, expanding instructional flexibility and in increasing instructional expertise. It contributes towards professional growth and increase participation in decision making. Nature of professional development trainings determines the effectiveness of these trainings. Factors that determines the effectiveness of these programs include content of training program, duration of training, time span daily spent, collective participation, collaboration, active learning, teachers interest, motivation elements, use of modern technologies and practical implications. Desimon et.al. (2002) and Baker and Smith (1999) identified some characteristics of professional development as being the most effective in sustaining change in teachers. These are: great emphasis on providing concrete, realistic and challenging goals ; include those

activities that take support from both technical and conceptual aspects of instructions and get support and guide from colleagues and other fellows.

Policy Initiatives Related to Professional Development

In the contemporary socio-economic context of India learners on the one hand have a wide range of demands and expectations from teachers. On the other the teacher's professional success and capacity to serve the system and its policy goals also depend on his awareness of challenges that India and its society are facing in terms of gender disparity, cultural diversity, inequity and inequality. The two aspects together reinforce the need for a state-of-the-art continuing professional development for teachers in India. In addition, the National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education that was published in 2009/2010 has emphasized the importance of in-service programs that could sustain continuing professional development.

The Chattopadhyaya Committee Report (1983-85) emphasized the significance and need for a decentralized system for the professional preparation of teachers. This policy was put in place proactively by the Central Government in the 8th Plan with the establishment of District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs), Institutes of Advanced Studies in Education (IASEs) and Colleges of Teacher Education (CTEs) through the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Restructuring and Re-Organization of Teacher Education.

There is an increasing need to link school knowledge with community knowledge. This increases the relevance of education and the quality of learning also promotes the inclusion of locally relevant content in the curriculum and pedagogy. The National Commission on Teachers (1983-85) observed: "To recruit teachers more scientifically, the desirable competencies of teachers should be listed on the basis of practical and applied research".

Some Researches on Professional Development

Broko and Putnam (1955) provide evidence to support the fact that professional development programs plays an essential role in teacher's career and it changes teacher's methodologies. Changed attitudes and behaviors and new skills and strategies are the result of most in-service programs. In their study and review of educational systems in selected developing countries, Dalin et.al. (1992), Farrell (1989), and Fuller (1989) found that local in-service training programs, particularly those that focused on pedagogical skills were key determinants of teacher mastery and student achievement. The research literature strongly indicates that ongoing relevant staff development activities are necessary if a teaching force is to be effective (Lockheed and Verspoor 1991). This research suggests that adequate time and resources need to be set aside for teacher development, that staff members need to have a say in the content of activities,

that skills learned should be practiced over time with follow-up sessions implemented where necessary, and that staff members should be encouraged to share ideas and work together. According to Govinda and Varghese (1993), "Teacher qualification and training coupled with a high morale and positive perception of the academic ability of the learners constitute a powerful set of factors determining the learning levels of the children". It is obvious from many researches that when teachers spend plenty of the time on their professional work or in attending the professional programs professional competencies are developed which bring positive change in their professional attitude and skills. In view of this, many countries, including India, spend a large proportion of their education budgets on teachers' salaries and their professional development. Professional development of teachers with the use of technology needs to be perceived as a general programme for professional orientation. Although new technologies like GyanDarshan, Teleconferencing etc. are being used to train teachers through distance mode, a need for instructional/pedagogic design to be utilized in these technologies, is felt (Menon& Dash, 2000). Desimon et.al. (2002) concluded that professional development programs have positive impact on teachers for enhancing their working capabilities and teaching practices. Gibbs and Coffey (2004), reported that professional development training courses and programs bring positive changes for increasing the knowledge and skills of university teachers.

Why Professional Development Programs and Trainings for Teachers?

The behaviorist approaches of the 60s reflected a mechanical, narrow view of learning and of the linkage between teacher actions and student performance. These have been superseded by constructivist theory, which sees learning no longer as a pre-fixed set of facts and data to be passively absorbed and memorized by rote, but as constructed by the learner, starting from his own experience and using active methods, reflective practice and enquiry. Constructivist pedagogy is particularly popular worldwide in circles interested in progressing from universalization to democratization of education. The pragmatists go further and link these findings to reform, stressing that deeply rooted knowledge of content and context, disciplinary enquiry and teacher empowerment in a democratic school community play a key role in shaping teaching and teacher education, and in improving schools.

Given the speed of societal change and knowledge accumulation, policy-makers and practitioners have come to realize that there is no way even a good initial education program can equip a teacher with all the knowledge, skills, and values he will need during his career. Especially so, considering that teachers have different needs as their career advances - from survival to instructional skills at basic, mature and expert levels. This has led to a shift away from a fragmented vision of discrete "pre" and "in" service training to one of teacher development as a continuum along "the 3Is," namely teacher "initial education," "induction" (structured support at entry into the profession), and "in-

service continuous professional development." This continuum is characterized by interactions between theory, practice and research; interaction between inductees and experienced mentors; feedback from in-service to initial education programs. It is widely acknowledged that teachers have a pivotal role in the development of an inclusive education system. Availability of qualified, trained and highly motivated teachers is an important factor in ensuring meaningful access to education. Professional development and professional attitude is very essential for every employee.

Professional development is very important for every professional member to develop in their profession. They must struggle to improve their performance quality. A professional development program gives chances for the growth of individual's career through workshop, seminar, research, travel and through working with other person and colleagues those who are more experienced. Different professional development courses are offered for the teachers all over the world. If training programs enhance the quality of teaching, then they can serve more enthusiastically the growing population. Teacher's professional development is the essential aspect of these reforms. Societies agreed that only through teacher's professional development, they can have positive change in their societies. It is only possible through if we generate trained and fully equipped teacher who sustain the existing education system and bring positive change for the improvement of this educational system.

In India, there are many in-service and pre-service teachers training institutes, but unfortunately these institutes are not functioning effectively. There is dire need to pay full attention to acquire knowledge through textbooks, lectures, seminars, workshops, conferences and also to acquire expertise in the relevant field. Professional development gives great care towards the skills; knowledge and attitude. Professional development not only updates the knowledge and skills of the teachers but also increase the productivity and potential of the teachers as well as students' achievements. It is argued that high proficiency in the teaching subject, good linguistic ability, efficiency in communication skills and love for children are some of the desirable qualities of a good teacher (Arora, 2002). Effective teachers have different styles and personalities and are considered effective for varying reasons. In many communities, teachers are considered effective if many of their students attain some of the following: sound academic achievement; an enjoyment of learning; and skills to continue to learn, solve problems and functionally operate in and contribute to their societies. Effective teachers give students appropriate attention when needs arise. Whatever other worthwhile results are achieved because of teachers' work, teacher effectiveness is usually expressed in terms of students' academic achievement, something that is more easily measured than some other valued outcomes of good education. The measurable gains in student progress are some of the strongest indicators of improvement in educational quality. Improving the learning environment will help raise student achievement. Teachers who are able to

develop sound academic achievement with their students tend to share these characteristics such as to know their subject matter; use pedagogy appropriate for the content; use an appropriate language of instruction, have mastery of that language; create and sustain an effective learning environment; find out about and respond to the needs and interests of their students and communities, reflect on their teaching and children's responses and make changes to the learning environment as necessary; have a strong sense of ethics; are committed to teaching; and care about their students. To polish these characteristics teacher need professional development programs and training.

Professional development is offered to bring changes on different areas like teacher's practices, attitudes and beliefs. Teacher development programs have very distinct role in teacher's careers but if teachers are not taking interest in these programs or the programs are ineffective, fruitful results will not be obtained. Majority of the programs did not achieve their aims and objectives as teachers do not take much interest in these programs to enhance their professional skills. They just attend these programs for the sake of certificates (Makrani, 2010).

Conclusion

The future teacher must be exposed to all the theoretical, practical and ethical dimensions of his practice. The content of the training must be based on an analysis of the job description and its delivery mode. The teacher should be engaged in a collective project that requires social and negotiating skills. Professional development efforts are no longer limited to teachers but increasingly targeted at whole-institutions, making it possible to combine generic with context-specific skills. Improvement strategies instead of being piecemeal are driven by clear, coherent plans, bridging broader strategic goals with locally perceived needs. Professional development is very essential for teachers as it inculcates curiosity, motivation, and new ways of thinking. It becomes most influential when it is adopted on continuous bases with well-planned trainings. It is recommended that proper planning must be done for professional development programs and trainings. Teachers must be motivated and encouraged to participate in the professional development programs and trainings. Incentives and rewards can be offered during trainings for good jobs. Proper framework may also be designed for monitoring of teachers performance after programs and training.

Some Recommendations

The notion of the teacher as a professional (besides the social status and esteem) needs a cohesive understanding of what is required to be a professional. For effective teachers, enabling conditions in the schools and in their career growth are needed. For teachers to build schools as learning organizations requires development of the person and of the system. Concepts of the learning organization and the professional learning

community have to be linked. The link between teacher training and what subsequently happens in schools and classrooms needs to be strengthened. Making clearer formulations of what teachers will do better or differently in classrooms with mechanisms to study the change, even if only on a sample basis are important. Examining the usefulness of the elements of training and maximizing utility is crucial. This with the realization that it is not prescriptions that are to be shared and can therefore be observed as such in the classroom, but the releasing of the teachers to reflect and develop their own way forward.

Teacher education has to be modeled along the needs and expectations of (future) students, keeping in mind the continued diversity among them which teachers will encounter; teacher preparation has to take more uncertainty in its stride. Teacher development therefore needs to instill capability and awareness to learn on one's own. The need for continuous learning emerges from the work of the teacher and structures are needed to build the curiosity and provide materials and mechanisms for the teacher to engage in his own development as a teacher. Increased clarity is needed regarding whether the primary intention of training activities is to bring about institutional development (e.g. changing practice in a whole school, which requires consideration of the critical number of individuals in an institution that need to be trained if real change is to occur) or personal development (e.g. promoting an individual teacher's career path). Both these are needed and a coherent policy recognizing this and a program with specific focus should be initiated.

Even though it is important to help teachers to become reflective professionals and be able to reason, a teacher needs to have a comprehensive set of ideas and skills to engage. A creative carpenter can only be successful if he or she knows the basic rudiments of carpentry. The same applies to a successful reflective teacher in terms of core pedagogical skills and underlying subject knowledge. There is no comprehensive teacher development program analyzing the development path for the teacher. Pre-service and in-service institutions and educators are not the same and are not even in a sustained dialogue. No responsibility or accountability system can be put in place as a teacher is always at the intersection of the two. A long term holistic and widely networked approach to reforms in educational policies and practices needs to develop. Across in-service and pre-service there needs to be a strong linkage; even the network within the institutions and entities dealing with these and their respective components needs to be made adequate.

The interaction with teachers cannot be based on a 'we know and you do not know' approach or the 'telling' approach, but rather by learning and discovering together, giving teachers and their knowledge respect so that they offer the same to their students as well. The teacher as trainee needs to become the subject of creating

knowledge rather than being the object of receiving information. Teacher trainees need to have the opportunity to learn on their own and not be limited by the interactions with teacher-educators. The entire programme of schooling has teacher development as a critical element, yet the efforts in this direction are strongly impeded by the way the system currently functions.

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