

Professional Development of Teachers in Higher Education

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Abstract

In today's high tech world the spine of a developed society is its education system. The efficacy and strength of an educational system in turn lies upon its teachers. Effective teaching comprises of inculcating problem solving strategies, moral values and ability to make social adjustments in the tender minds of young generation. Thus teaching becomes a fulfilling journey that gives an amazing chance to shape the future of a society. It becomes quite necessary for a teacher to cultivate the habit of self-assessment, improve interactions; develop reflective strategies etc. to steer students towards healthy reflexive skills. The paper explores the various objectives, policies and implementation of policies made for the professional development of teachers in higher education departments. Since teacher education and professional development are the synonyms of each other it is better to pay attention to this field if we really want to make our education system efficient. This paper throws light on the efforts government has made by drafting policies for teacher education in India and what loopholes have been left in their implementation. There are also some suggestions to cover the loopholes left in the implementation of existing policies for professional development of teachers in India.

Keywords: DIET (District Institute of Education and Training), IASE (Institute of Advanced Studies in Education), CTE (College of Teacher Education)

1. Introduction

Professional development is the development of a person in his/her professional role. It includes the provision of constant learning and developing opportunities to extend and broaden the scope of professional capabilities of employees in relation to their role and responsibilities. Capabilities here refer to the combination of attributes, qualities, skills, knowledge and understanding of ethical principles that underpin the professional practices of employees which enable a person to perform to high standards in a given context and role.

“A teacher is a positive asset and precious national resource, which needs to be cherished, nurtured and developed with dynamism.”

Today we live in an ever changing world where information and knowledge are a momentous force. Any improvement in Education System must start with improvement of the Teachers already in the classroom; this topic is one of real urgency. Teachers themselves need to be lifelong learners first, so that they can meet the expectations of students. For this purpose, reforms in education system from time to time can force teachers to keep pace with change and to review and renew their own knowledge, skills and vision of good teaching, ([Beaty,1998]). In this process, the role of teachers needs to be the subject and object of reforms.

Professional development of teachers is a lifelong process which begins with the initial preparation that a teacher receives and continues till retirement. Teaching experience itself leads to professional growth if a teacher examines his or her teaching systematically, [Glatthorn,1995]. Formal experiences such as attending workshops, professional meetings, mentoring etc. and informal experiences such as reading professional publications, watching television documentaries related to an academic discipline, etc. can provide teachers the parameters of assessment, [Ganser, 2000].

Rabindranath Tagore observes that “A teacher cannot teach students unless he continues to learn”.

In the present day context, teachers play multiple roles which include not only teaching, research and consultancy for students but also extension work, development of instructional material and management of institutions. It is thus necessary for teachers to update their efficiency periodically. For the development of country, it becomes imperative to have an education system which comprises of both competitive students and competent teachers, ([Anderson, 1998]). In this world of corporate development, it is urgent to maintain the dignity of teaching as profession and provide more incentives for qualified and committed teachers.

Objectives of Professional Development of teachers:

- To enrich, elevate and empower teachers to be able to access professional and personal growth of avenues.
- To empower the teachers serving in the higher education segment.
- To meet the 21st century knowledge explosion which is taking place at a furious speed?
- To prepare competent, committed and professionally well qualified teachers who can meet the demands of the systems.

- To face the challenges of education system including higher education
- To cater to the ever changing demands of the social system.
- To add more to their knowledge base and to acquire new skills.
- To build self-confidence and subject knowledge.
- To develop positive attitude, self-confidence and proactive qualities.
- To build on the collective knowledge and experiences of employees and provide them with opportunities to acquire, practices and adopt new knowledge, thereby enhancing individual, group and organizational learning and capabilities.
- To equip teachers with the necessary skills to identify some of the challenges in their classrooms and also to find suitable solutions.
- To ensure better learning outcomes and offer opportunities for teachers to interact with teacher educator.

2. Impact of Professional Development on Teacher's Accountability

In any field professional development is the exercise to strengthen the foundation stones in a regular manner. Since our social development is in the hands of teachers it becomes imperative to pay attention to their improvement. Professional development aids teachers in building new pedagogical theories and practices.

Teachers will be able to reinvent themselves and evolve as reflective professionals.

They will design new policies, programs and professional skills becoming the change catalysts.

They intend to bridge the gap between "What should be" and "What is not".

They will ensure good academic performances of the students under their care.

Ignacio Estrad has said that "If a child can't learn the way we teach, may be we should teach the way they learn."

Today's learners are self-acquainted and not ready to accept blindly whatever is presented to them. Students are inquisitive and critical in their thinking. They expect absolute freedom and pleasure in learning process. So modern day teachers need to support their teaching by strong and visionary ideas to deal with students like facilitator rather than a dictator.

Professional Development and accountability go hand in hand with each other. As the policies are formulated for improving the skills and knowledge of teachers but at the same time it is expected that teacher accountability would get enhanced.

When a teacher becomes an active participant in the national policies and programmes organized by government for his/her development, it ultimately gives rise to sense of responsibility towards the system..

Teaching style must go hand in hand with the learning style of students by understanding their psychology/behavior. A well trained teacher can kindle the natural curiosity of a student by his latest knowledge and skills.

As the teachers get opportunities to share their experiences, put forward their views and observations, it would strengthen their faith in the system they are serving to which in turn makes them more accountable to the students.

3. Impact of Professional Development of Teachers on Students

After their family members, students rely on their teachers for their overall development. School is the first interaction place of students where they come in contact with a miniature world comprising of fellow students and teachers. They start building up their skills as well as understanding other people. The guidance of a teacher plays a very important role at this stage as teachers become their main communication link. It is the teacher who can lead them to the path of creativity along with developing a positive attitude among them.

A well trained teacher can better understand the multiple demands of today's students.

- He/She can set examples before students to follow.
- He/She can motivate students to come up with their views and ideas without any hesitation.
- He/She can better make the parents conversant with their child's abilities.
- He/She can very well recognize the talents of students and show them ways to nurture their qualities.

4. Existing policies for Professional development of teachers in India

After independence, the first step in this direction was setting up of the University Education Commission (1948) regarding pre-service and in-service education of teachers. Subsequently, the Secondary Education Commission (1953) appointed to examine the conditions of school education made specific suggestions about the preparation of teachers. The Review Committee on Education (1960) made major recommendations about post-graduate students in education research, education of administrator and qualification of teacher educators. The Education Commission (1964-1966) submitted a comprehensive report which serves as a basis for establishment of uniform

national structure of education covering all stages and aspects of education. It emphasized the necessity of professional preparation of teachers for qualitative improvement of education.

Later the professional preparation of teachers has been recognized crucially by Kothari Commission (1964-1966), (see [Kothari, 1966]). The commission recommended the introduction of integrated course of general and professional education in university with greater scope for self-study and discussion and comprehensive program of internship. Based on recommendations of the commission, the National Policy on Education (NPE, 1968) was formulated. National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) was set up in 1974 by a resolution of Govt. of India. The working of National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT) was also reviewed. The National Commission on Teachers (1983) studied in depth the problems of teacher education and the status of teachers in society. National Policy of Education (NPE, 1986) opened new vistas in teacher education. As a consequence DIETs, CTEs, IASESs were established across the country. The need for professional development of college teachers was pointed out by the National Policy on Education in 1986. The University Grant Commission (UGC, 1987) proposed to establish Academic Staff College (ASC) throughout the country.

“Education has continued to evolve, diversify and extend its coverage since the dawn of history. Every country develops its system of education to express and promote its unique socio-cultural identity and also to meet the challenges of time” these are the words of the National Policy on Education (NPE, 1986), (see [National Policy of Education, 1986]). The Yashpal Committee Report (1993) on Learning without Burden recommended that the emphasis in these programmes should be on enabling the trainees to acquire the ability for self-learning and independent thinking. In 1998, National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) established by Govt. of India for the maintenance of standards and improvement of quality of teacher education in the country, emphasized that every five years, the progress be reviewed. The National Curriculum Framework (NCF, 2005) presents a fresh vision and new discourse on key contemporary education issues.

During last decade, National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE) took up a joined hands with the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) to foster quality assurance and sustenance and with Distance Education Council (DEC) to ensure integrated development of in-service teacher education under Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode. In XIth five year plan (2002), one more dimension has been added, i.e. training in Information Technology and E-content development. In 2006, an updated and upgraded version of new National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE) has been given due consideration. The UGC has extended scope of training to administrative staff of all categories in colleges and university including UGC staff in XIth plan (2007), (see [MHRD, 2007] and [UGC 2007]). At present in India the UGC has several schemes for upgrading the professional competence of teachers like National Fellowship, research associates, major and minor research projects for teachers.

The World Bank in its report has commented that “a high quality and well motivated teaching staff and a supportive professional culture are essential in building excellence” [World Bank, 1994]. Also UNESCO has endorsed the importance of teaching staff and its professional development in higher education by passing a recommendation on the topic at its General Conference in Paris in November 1997.

5. Some suggestions for the growth and Professional development of teachers

- **Framework of Policies:** The university must identify goals and priorities and develop and implement a range of strategies and programs to enhance and build the capacity, skills and professionalism of employees to enable them to contribute effectively to higher education.
- **Use of ICT in trainings:** Training courses must use ICT extensively. Teachers must shake hand with technology. The affecting factors of technology in teacher education and empowerment of teachers are the most important in technology planning, technical support and community building. Until and unless teachers are in tune with technical advancement in the concerned field they may not be in a position to discharge current information to the student community.
- **Self-motivated learning:** Teachers must be involved in self-motivated learning. The necessary skills and attitudes for learning, especially literacy and numeric skills; the confidence to learn, including a sense of engagement with the education and training system; and willingness and motivation to learn.
- **Participation in Workshops, Seminars and Conferences:** From being a person who just imparts bookish knowledge, teachers should actively involve in all educational meetings, workshops, conferences etc. Such participation provides the opportunities to the practising teachers to gain exposure to new ideas. Presenting a paper/talk in a conference involves a lot of research and organization of ideas. The teachers are empowered after attending conferences and they can in turn induce their colleagues to follow new teaching practices.
- **Academic freedom:** Teachers need to be given academic freedom to try and experiment different methods/approaches according to the needs of content and classroom.
- **Induction programmes:** Academic Staff College for higher education run by universities must be

designed in a way so that teachers get maximum benefit from it. All new teachers are required to participate in university induction programmes like orientation courses or refresher courses conducted by Academic Staff College considering it as training for their profession.

- **Study Leave and Education Support:** Study leave may be used to undertake activities like weekly lectures, residential programmes, practical training of subject and application of concerned subject in industries or daily life. The procedure to apply study leave should be simple. Concerned heads/Principals must be authorized to permit the teacher on the basis of his/her achievements. An employee undertaking an approved study leave may be eligible for education support in the form of paid study leave.
- **Allocation of Funds to meet Professional Development:** A minimum of 2% to 5% of salaries budget should be allocated to professional development of teachers. Professional development programmes like seminars, workshops, job exchange, study visits etc. are important components for development of teacher and in the long run development of an institution. Thus to upgrade institutions for 21st century such plans and budgets for growth of teachers must be encouraged.
- **National Teacher's Association:** Every teacher must enroll in the National Teacher's Association as a member. This is a basic requirement to professional development. It gives good support to its members by informing them about conferences, workshops, study programmes, teacher exchange programmes. Through these associations a teacher gets the opportunity to connect with other teachers.
- **Continuing Professional Development Programme (CPD):** The teacher must extend his interaction beyond the institution and meet professionals from different organizations, share experiences, practices, construct new paradigms and prepare for effective classroom interaction. Such programmes will keep the teachers actively involved in monitoring their own development in the work place. These programmes impart teachers with a decision making power to make informed choices, equipping them with skills to impart appropriate knowledge and manage their classroom and understand their role in a broader community.

6. Conclusion

The government of India has a target of 21% GER (Gross Enrolment Ratio) by the end of XIIth five years plan, i.e. 2017. Teachers stand at the interface of the transmission of knowledge, skills and values to students. They will only be able to fulfil their responsibility if they are both well prepared for the profession and able to improve their contribution to it through career-long learning. Professional development of teachers is an on going process of reforms at all levels of teaching i.e. primary, secondary and higher education. Successful implementation of professional development has a significant positive effect on students' performance and learning. For reducing stagnation especially in higher education, all teachers need to refresh themselves and improve their skills by attending or participating in professional development opportunities designed to invigorate learning. One should not rest on past laurels. Since there is always scope for growth, this leads to self-development.

Finally in the words of Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, "Teachers should be role models".

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