



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS AND TEACHER EDUCATORS

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Abstract

Teaching and training of the teachers has an official apprenticeship period before beginning the career, but becomes a solitary endeavor once the job is procured. The changing role of teachers and teacher educators have been extensively studied and analyzed. The current focus is on the development of their professional competences, commitment and motivation for higher level performance. A major transformation is occurring due to development of new technology and its usage in teaching profession.

Professional development of teachers and teacher educators is a life long process. It includes formal as well as informal learning experiences. It is quite a novice concept and it is so revolutionary that it has been termed as new paradigm of education. It leads to the change in the society by developing holistic and civic minded people. There are certain peculiar characteristics of professional development of teachers and teacher educators. To augment efficacy of their professional development, some guidelines with humanistic approach need to be taken care of for the teachers and teacher educators. Key competences are also required to be imbibed in these communities for professional development to be effective. The professional development of teachers and teacher educators no doubt has come a long way but lot needs to be done at the grassroot level. Different agencies need to come up for producing professionally developed teachers and teacher educators for the progress of any nation

Keywords: Professional Development, Teacher Educators

Introduction

In this paper, I am opted to focus on the concept of professional development of teachers and teacher educators. Though other notions may automatically be referred to such as Human Resource Development, skill building courses, in-service training, lifelong learning etc. the term Professional Development lends itself best to the conception of the Teachers (first order teachers) and Teacher Educators (second order teachers) as educational professionals. According to the thesaurus of the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) database, *professional development* refers to "activities to enhance professional career growth." Fullan (1991) expanded the definition to include "the sum total of formal and informal learning experiences throughout one's career from preservice teacher education to retirement". Professional development includes formal experiences (such as attending workshops, professional meetings, mentoring etc) and informal experiences (such as reading, professional publications,, watching T.V. documentaries related to academic discipline etc) (Ganser, 2000).

Considering the meaning of professional development in the technological age, Grant has suggested a broader definition of professional development that includes the use of technology to foster teacher growth. Professional development is looked upon as a contribution to the development of professional skills by means of a variety of both formal and informal experiences. It has recently come to be viewed as a long term process covering different types of opportunities and experiences that are systematically planned to stimulate the development and evolution of teachers and teacher educators.

Teachers & Teacher Educators – Body & Soul of Education

The teacher is the one who facilitates learning, who imparts knowledge and who transforms a part of himself into the student. The transition from teacher to teacher



educator is not just a change in working conditions and acquiring new skills and new knowledge but also in the way of thinking about one's own teaching and a change, or at least an expansion of one's own identity as a teacher into a teacher educator. Teacher educator is hence responsible for the future teacher and the students of the future teacher.

Swennan et al (2010) quoted about four sub-identities of teacher educators – teacher educators as school teachers, as teachers in higher education, as researchers and as teachers of teachers. Hence professional development of a teacher educator holds equal rather more importance than a teacher as it leads to a huge change in the society.

Evolution Of The Term Professional Development - A New Concept

The perspective of professional development is new to field of education. For years, the only form of professional development available to teachers was “staff development” or “in service training”, usually comprising workshops or short term courses that would offer teachers new information on a particular aspect of development work. Only in the past few years has the profession of teachers been considered “a long term process” that includes regular opportunities and experiences planned systematically to promote growth and development in the profession. This shift has been so dramatic that many have referred to it as a “new image” of teacher learning , a “new model” of teacher education, a “revolution” in education and even a “new paradigm” of professional development(Cochran-Smith & Lytle,2001;Walling & Lewis,2000).

Why is professional development important for teachers & teacher educators?

In response to challenges faced by the educational institutions in the 21st century, the call for developing holistic and civic minded individuals who can contribute to the betterment is heard louder than before. Emphasis is placed on the shaping of citizens with the ability of praxis (reflection and interaction with the world in order to transform it). In this regard education

transformation is imperative. Thus being a teacher and teacher educator in this century is based on the assumption and knowledge, and students are being transformed at far greater speed to what we were formerly used to. Therefore these days, teachers and teacher educators have to make an extra effort to continue to learn in order to suitably foster students' right to learn. There is currently a considerable amount of research indicating that the quality of teachers and the way they teach or train teachers is the most important factor in explaining students' or teachers' output. They both are fundamental actors in guaranteeing the population's right to education and contributing towards better regional and educational policies.

In every nation, there's an emerging consensus that teachers and teacher educators have a significant impact on teacher training, student learning and school efficacy. They are the change agents providing the impetus for the emergence of educated communities. They both are the key players in evolution of education systems and in the implementation of the reforms of deteriorating educational standards. Their professions which are inspired by values of inclusiveness and need to nurture the potential of all learners has a strong influence on society and play vital roles in human potential and shaping future generations.

Although teachers and teacher educators play a crucial role in society, they can't act alone. Their own high quality educational needs are to be supported by the institution where they are employed, within the context of coherent National or Regional policies that are appropriately resourced. These policies must address initial teacher education and continuing professional development, but must also be set within the broader context of education policy in general. Those who train teachers have an impact on the quality of learning and therefore, they need to be supported as part of national and regional system.

Characteristics Of Professional Development Of Teachers And Teachers Educators



Professional development of teachers and teacher educators can have a variety of dimensions (Scribner, 1999). Some of the characteristics are as mentioned below:

- ✓ It is based on constructivism i.e. teachers and teacher educators are treated as active learners (Lieberman, 1994; McLaughlin & Zarrow, 2001).
- ✓ Teacher is conceived as a reflective practitioner as professional development aids him in building new pedagogical theories and practices (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995, Schifter, Russell & Bastable, 1999).
- ✓ Professional development is a process that takes place within a particular context.
- ✓ It is a process of culture building and is intimately linked to school reform (Guskey, 1995; Loucks-Horsley, 1998)
- ✓ It is perceived as a long term process considering the fact that the teachers and teacher educators learn over time.
- ✓ It is a collaborative process involving meaningful interactions among teachers, administration, parents and other community members (Grace, 1999).

By adopting the perspective of life long learning, most countries are obliged to provide better support for their teachers and teacher educators during their professional development.

A Journey Of Professional Development For Teachers And Teacher Educators

(a) Stages:

Teachers traverse different stages of their development at different times in their career. For professional development opportunities and systems to be effective these stages need to be taken into consideration as their needs and dispositions may vary from one stage to another. Huberman (1989) identified the following stages:

1. Career entry (1-3 years in profession): a time of both survival and recovery.
2. Stabilization (4-6 years in profession): making commitment and achieve a sense of instructional mastery.

3. Divergent period (7-18 years): period of experimentation and activism for some or self-doubt and reassessment for others.
4. Second divergent period (19-30 years): self assessment and relaxation time.
5. Disengagement (41-50 years): time of reflection and serenity of experiences.

The above stages indicate that professional development of teachers and teacher educators should be focused according to different stages of their careers and professional experiences. They should be regarded as the people who are prepared to embark upon efficient life long learning or rather "adaptive experts".

(b) Approaches:

Cochran – Smith & Lytle (1999) have distinguished teaching knowledge and established differences among the following:

- **Knowledge-for-practice:** This approach assumes that University based researches generate formal knowledge and practice has a lot to do with application of formal knowledge to practical situations.
- **Knowledge-in-practice:** This approach assumes that teaching is a spontaneous and contextualized activity. This type of knowledge is acquired through experience and deliberation.
- **Knowledge-of-practice:** This approach assumes that knowledge is constructed collectively within local communities, made up of teachers who are involved in the development of schools, training or collaborative research.

Grossman (1990) has stressed more on pedagogical content knowledge, techniques, class management, curriculum planning processes, teaching subject knowledge, legal aspects of education etc.

(c) Steps:

Mevarech (1995) proposed the following steps the teachers cover between completion of a professional development course and the time when the newly learned information is incorporated into their classroom practice:

- a. Survival
- b. Exploration and bridging



- c. Adaptation
- d. Conceptual change
- e. Invention and experimentation

The steps mentioned above indicate the hierarchy of changes the teachers and teacher educators undergo after an effective professional development.

Principles of Professional Development

The following principles for designing and implementing professional development programme should provide an impetus for developing policies which will enhance the quality and efficiency of teachers and teacher educators:

- Multi disciplinary approach
- Stimulate and support site based initiatives
- Offer intellectual, social and emotional engagement with ideas, materials and colleagues
- Acquiring instructional expertise
- Contributing to professional growth of colleagues
- Provide sufficient time and follow up
- Be grounded in knowledge about teaching
- Prepare competence in basic skills of teaching
- Model constructivist teaching
- Demonstrate respect for teachers and teacher educators as professionals and adult learners
- Be accessible and inclusive
- Expanding instructional flexibility
- Exercising leadership and participation in decision making
- Development of National education system
- Development of survival skills in the profession
- Creating conditions for effective professional development
- Safeguarding the coherence of education system
- Setting competence criteria for selection of teachers and teacher educators
- Regularly assessing the quality of professional development

Professional development plays such an important role that even the teaching methods of teachers and teacher educators

get changed. If carried on properly, it inculcates strong positive and strong professional growth of teachers and teacher educators. Reforms that have been centered on these two communities have been extremely successful even in transforming national education system.

Key Competences for Making Professional Development Work

Many people like professors, assistant professors, post graduate teachers, trained graduate teachers, elementary trained teachers, nursery trained teachers, private tutors etc. share responsibility for teaching students and educating teachers, but it cannot be taken for granted that they share the same levels of commitment towards their profession. Teachers and teacher educators are required to deploy specific competences in the quality and professional values and other areas as well. They require competence in:

- Professionalism
- Reflecting upon how they teach
- Self confidence
- Thorough understanding of subject
- Leadership
- Educational studies
- Knowledge of human growth and development
- Knowledge about dynamic and versatile human nature
- Knowledge about their teaching methodology
- Pedagogy of teaching and educating teachers
- Skill to use need based teaching learning strategies
- New skills of teaching and learning
- Modeling good teaching practice to student teachers
- General didactics
- Research in teaching learning
- Knowledge of usage of technology in the profession

Hence, teachers and teacher educators can augment their standards of professional development through certain key competences so that they can be producers of knowledge about education, teaching and



learning and thus can become efficient teachers or educators of teachers.

As Snoek *et al* have pointed out:

“When the general consensus is that teachers are the most important in-school factor influencing the quality of their pupils’ learning, it seems appropriate to assume that teacher educators are an important factor influencing the quality of the learning of student teachers. The issue of the quality of the teacher educator becomes an issue of paramount importance.”

Role of Technology in Professional Development of Teachers and Teacher Educators

21st century being computer age, new technology is playing an important role in almost all professions. The purpose of this section is to explore new technology as a factor in developing, designing and implementing professional development opportunities. Whatever revolution has been caused by ICT (Information and Communication Technology), professional development schools and teacher preparation institutes are lagging behind in the content and skills to be developed in teachers and teacher educators. They are inadequately prepared to use computers and other forms of technology in the classrooms. Institutions are introducing computers into the classrooms but are not offering any training for how to use them effectively (Breuleux *et al*, 1998). But this scenario is becoming less common, with societies’ expectations of integrating technology into the classrooms forcing teachers and teacher educators to seek training in use of technology. For example, Microsoft Corporation launched an Academic Professional Development Center program to enable teachers, school administrators etc. to be trained and become Microsoft Certified Trainers.

With technology rapidly changing, teachers, administrators, educators and school communities need to focus on the following (Bybee & Loucks-Horsley, 2000):

- Learning about and developing skills related to technology and deepening their content knowledge

- Creating opportunities to learn how to teach technology
- Acquiring tools that will allow them to continue their own learning
- Being provided with long term process-oriented opportunities to use technology effectively

During effective professional development, teachers and teacher educators should be provided not only with the knowledge of how to use the tools but also how to integrate technology in their profession in a thoughtful manner.

Agencies’ Involvement in Professional Development of Teachers and Teacher Educators

Different agencies and factors extending help to teachers and teacher educators for their professional development may include:

- International and national donor agencies
- Professional development schools
- Universities
- Seminars
- Workshops
- Orientation programmes
- Government / educational authorities
- Employers of teacher educators
- Teacher educators
- Employers of teachers
- Teachers
- Professional Associations of teachers and teacher educators
- External quality agencies
- Unions of teachers and teacher educators
- In service training programmes
- On line professional development sites

All these agencies with the best of their efforts for professional development of teachers and teacher educators can lead to the development of the institute, city and finally to the nation.

Suggestions & Recommendations for Effective Professional Development of Teachers and Teacher Educators

The teachers and teacher educators who are well trained through professional development and who are adequately remunerated are better equipped to provide a decent education and be active promoters



of the values of citizenship, peace and intercultural dialogue.

Therefore, some suggestions for effective professional development for teachers and teacher educators have been enumerated below:

- 1) Governments are urged to continue investing in viable national policies and programmes for teacher training, recruitment and incentives so that teachers remain and develop within the profession.
- 2) Professional development partners to support governments, particularly in developing countries, in their determination to invest in well trained teachers and teacher educators.
- 3) There should be development of differentiated training programmes based on school situations for teachers undergoing pre service training.
- 4) Research for evaluation of professional development programmes should be held from time to time.
- 5) Training of preservice teachers should be held for a longer duration.
- 6) The teacher educators should not only stay focused on the methods during training of teachers but must also on the developmental needs of the student teachers.
- 7) In a professional developmental course meant for teachers and teacher educators, the main stress should be on reflective practices.
- 8) Teachers and teacher educators should be supported in order to continue their professional development throughout their careers. They and their employers must recognize the importance of acquiring new knowledge and professional skills.
- 9) There should be opportunities for mobility of teachers and teacher educators between different levels of education.
- 10) The institutions providing teacher education should organize their work collaboratively in partnership with schools, local work environments, work

based training providers and other stakeholders.

- 11) A regular follow-up mechanism for ongoing professional development practice is required .
- 12) Custom programmes should be tailor made to address goals and issues related to the profession.
- 13) Teacher educators need to act in such ways that other stakeholders , including policy makers and education authorities , recognize their professionalism (Swannen,van der Klink,2009).
- 14) Professional development program should be structured as a coherent continuum.
- 15) Providing adequate opportunities for teachers and teacher educators to have maximum induction and orientation for professional development.

The professional development of teachers and teacher educators should be supported and be an object of study and research.

Conclusion

To conclude I would like everybody reading this article, to pay an attention towards teaching profession to be considered as knowledge profession. This knowledge has to be transformed into relevant learning for students. Teachers and Teacher Educators have always been required to display conviction towards the need to broaden, further and improve their personal and professional skills. Zabalza (2000) has stated that now "the pleasurable experience of learning something new each day has been converted into an unavoidable survival principle". This paper is a reflection of the concern regarding teachers and teacher educators to keep them learning throughout their careers. National Policy of Education (1986) states that "*the status of the teachers reflects the socio- cultural ethos of society and no people can rise above the level of its teachers*"

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