

TEACHERS' TRAINING AS A SCAFFOLDING TOOL FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN ELT

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ABSTRACT

Modern century has brought paramount change and need in developing holistic view of education. There is a formative redesigning in innovations, competitive field, psychological development in employees/teachers/students' attitudes, approaches and eventually catering need for personal as well as professional development. In every field, there is a need for development holistically.

Education is a field which regales all the demands of students, teachers and of the institutions. Only this field has wide variety of activities so as to form overall development of the person. But on the otherside, our teachers who are expected to be goal-oriented, active and researcher are less motivated and goal-oriented. Many of the educators do not want to develop themselves professionally and eventually there is a dearth of holistic development of the teachers as well as of students. Professional development and self-reflection are the tools which give ways for the further initiatives leading towards competitive environment and hence quality education. There is a need for such training and education. ELT field is ever developing field with every nuances of it. It has given scopes for many researchers to be professionally developed. The current paper will focus on the need and scope for teachers' continuous professional development (CPD).

Key Terms: CPD (continuous professional development), holistic, paramount change, goal-oriented, researchive, self-reflection, training, education

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"The great aim of education is not knowledge but action".

_ Herbert Spencer

Teaching and learning are considered as two paramount tools for the development of any field. Infact it is the root for any development and thus has dearth for more knowledge in it. The best of all knowledge are stored in book forms which are

available in different libraries of various schools or colleges. There was time, earlier, during *Ashramas system*, when there was incessant training given to students based on one's physical, psychological, mental, emotional and spiritual development. Even the gurus/preachers/trainers were expected to be highly talented and scholar.

In today's time there is a need for such training and values to inculcate. There are many teachers who believe that they just need to be a teacher and no need to be a special trainer or develop or learn new things. Now the question is, are our teachers developed enough to bring change in the current academic field? Are they charged enough to motivate and influence the psychology of the students? Are they willing to change their own-selves? Are they keeping themselves involved into various development related programs? The answer would come to a very meager level. It is here the need for teacher's training required to make the 'man-making' (Swami Vivekananda) process. W. J. Yeats has rightly said,

'Education is not the filling of a bucket. But the lighting of a fire.'

In this age of information, it has become necessary for the teachers to be continuously developed by learning new courses, being skillful, researchive, updating one's knowledge, changing teaching/learning strategy, goal-oriented, being a part of different associations, contributing new scales to their existing knowledge and taking initiative for the new learning that will bring change as holistically into their overall personality. With the rapid advancement in technology and in the entire competitive field, it has even become more necessary to train the students with more pedagogic training, innovative presentations, seminars, workshops, using authentic materials, making more interactive classrooms etc. Teacher should here determine not only the development of the students but their own. Albert Einstein has said that,

'Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow. The important thing is to not stop _____.'

One should, here, be asked to give the answer of the blank given. Each answer would represent one's mentality, strength or weakness.

India, though a developing country, has not yet that well developed plan for teachers' development. It is tried to incorporate the best possible topic for students' overall development in the course curriculum but less has been incorporated for the teachers' development point of view. In the fields like Law, Medical science, I.T. Engineering there are new updates which take place every time and the practitioners in the fields have to be updated with the latest innovations while in academic field where equal way of development is expected, we find teachers to be not enough trained, motivated and developed. The reasons are lack of motivation from the management where they work, social background, financial condition, unwillingness from their ownself for too much of dependency to live in a comfort zone etc. In the colleges especially, where more rigorous training required from the college teachers, there is a dearth of good motivated teachers and hence the crowd, passed out, are not worthy enough compared to the students of other country or states. Here the significance and need for college teachers' continuous professional development (CPD) requires a lot.

In order to make the foundation strong there should be some initiatives taken. India is though a developing country but still it does not have that well planned CPD initiatives. Even the classrooms, in most of the states, are not well equipped enough in terms of language lab, material resources and the so with the teachers' development. Continuous professional development (CPD) should be made compulsory for the teachers.

INNOVATIONS IN ELT

There are lots of innovations taking place in English Language Teaching field. There is twist in the attitude and approach towards teaching and learning of English nowadays. The traditional way of teaching has been forgotten and the new techniques have been taken place which are rather more dynamic and influential. Even innovative practices were not sufficient for the holistic development of learners hence we have incorporated technology into the classroom of English Language Teaching. There are now bountiful ways of adopting new methods for the language practices and the so with teachers' own mental framework. Here there is a question on teachers' own development as how he/she would be initiating the process of development in the best possible way.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Witnessing the paradigm shift currently in the field of education (in ELT) in terms of change in the curriculum, students' needs, infrastructure, employability, national tests, technology, vocation etc. it becomes essential that a teacher/trainer become more active, goal-oriented and reflective as well. In this regard teachers should be able to upgrade their skills and approach towards looking at the things differently in education. Teachers are expected to take part in activities like,

- Engaging in self-reflection and evaluation
- Developing specialized knowledge and skills about many aspects of teaching
- Expanding their knowledge base about research, theory, and issues in teaching
- Taking on new roles and responsibilities, such as supervisor, mentor, teacher trainer, teacher-researcher, materials writer etc
- Developing collaborative relationships with other teachers

(Jack C. Richards, 2005)

It is needless to say even government bodies like NCTE, NCERT, NCFTE, AICTE, UGC etc. are offering various teacher training programs so as to develop the current level of college/school teachers. Though the attitude towards it by college/school teachers are still pessimistic. Even school/college or management authorities also should take certain initiative (top-bottom initiative) to motivate teachers and provide professional development related activity. In the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) there are multiple avenues available to develop language teacher professionally. Some of the ways are

1. Many academic bodies/websites offer free online courses: NovoEd, Coursera, Open2Study, EdX, WizIQ, Futurelearn (part of MOOCs) and many others. They even provide certificates of completion of different renowned universities as well.

2. Bodies like RELO, AITEFL, Cambridge English Teacher etc. offers free E-Teacher Scholarship for the English Language teachers.

3. Being a part of different National/International Associations also helps language professional to be in contact with the latest knowledge, issues, innovations and other development.

4. Publication is one of the CPD ways that shows teacher as researchive and active in academics.

5. Interacting with colleagues, sharing and taking good knowledge are again some of the CPD ways.

6. Participating and presenting in seminars, conferences, workshops etc. play a good role in forming good base for professional development.

There is a good link for professional development related activity and for the one who want to update their language and technological skills.

www.edvista.com/claire/relo/resources.html

REVIEWS AND COMMENTS OF ELT PRACTITIONERS ON THEIR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

"I'd like to work further on knowing the subject. While I am fairly confident with the language now, it is the subject content of teaching that I want to look into. I have been reading up on a fairly wide range of ELT books but I would also like to attend seminars and ELT conferences to expand my perspective."

_Saloni Zimba

In my opinion the ability to plan lessons forms the foundation of a successful teaching career. I would like to harness and apply the experience I've gained in that respect by assuming a leadership role, which would include mentoring teachers who are just starting out. Not only will this help them, but it will also allow me to reflect on and fine-tune my own lesson planning skills.

_ Yasir Husain

Source: www.britishcouncil.in/teach/continuing-professional-development

NEED FOR SELF-ASSESSMENT

We may call whether self-assessment or reflection both aim for questioning to one's own way of working or attitude. In order to develop a holistic view of education one must be as reflective as possible. The jinx of self-reflection is never ever been so positive enough in educational context. Generally, we teachers never reflect on one's psychology and activities. This is a question to ask to all the teachers that how many of us do ever think after the classroom teaching whether how well did it go? What

went wrong? What improvement one needs to make? What sort of changes one needs to do to make classroom teaching more interactive? How should one encourage students more deeply? The answer to these questions come to a mediocre level.

As mentioned above, the process of self-reflection or self-assessment starts with asking a question to oneself, then acting upon it, evaluating oneself, learning from the weaknesses, applying those learning tactics and then again asking question to oneself as what I, as a teacher, did learn out of the whole process of self-assessment. Some of the stages of reflections are: write descriptive, factual writing, descriptive reflective, dialogue reflection, critical reflection etc. as a part of system of evaluation. One should not forget here that a teacher should look at all the problems of classroom as challenges.

As a part of professional development, some of the common reflective questions to be asked to oneself, those are

- What are your plans for your professional development in the next few years?
- What kinds of self-development activities have you found most useful?
- What sort of collaboration is there at your institutions?
- How have you been able to apply knowledge to your teaching which you learned in your Masters? If yes, then how much and if no then how you can bridge the gap?
- What are some of the classroom realities that a university degree may not adequately prepare a teacher for?
- What do you think teachers can learn working on group projects?
- How you can change the technique of your teaching every year?
- What change in the materials you would be making for the classroom as every year brings new chapter to learning?
- What do you learn from the teaching or learning of your colleagues? And how you implement the same in your teaching? etc.

TEACHER TRAINING AND TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

A teacher can develop two kinds of development related initiative: teacher training and teacher development.

TEACHER TRAINING:

‘Training’ pertains to the current state of working that is activities directly focused on a teacher’s current responsibilities. It does aim for learning/gaining short-term goals like imbibing technological skills, refresher course, faculty development program (FDP) etc. For example, pre-service training program like B.Ed is an illustration of teacher training program. In this, a teacher can learn some skills, ability for teaching, classroom management and some power to demonstrate principles and practices. It would be good if a school/college teacher is taught the strategies of supervision, monitoring, getting feedback from students as well as teacher colleagues etc. Some of the examples of a training program:

- Learning how to use effective strategies to open a lesson
 - Adapting the textbook to match the class
 - Learning how to use group activities in a lesson
 - Using effective questioning techniques
 - Using classroom aids and resources (e.g. audio/video, podcasts etc.)
 - Techniques for giving learners feedback on performance
- (Jack C. Richards, 2005)

TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

Teacher development, compared to teacher training, aims for larger goals. It does not only focuses on developing techniques for teaching and assessment but seeks to facilitate teachers' holistic growth which is more wide and broad. Teacher development is thus not seen just as a part of training but as a life-long process, from beginning to end (even after post-retirement period). In teacher development, there are mainly two initiatives that are responsible; top-bottom and bottom-up. Top-bottom initiative focuses on the activities offered by management/school/college authority to teachers/trainers while bottom-up anchors upon learning-centric dimension i.e. taking responsibility on one's own development without thinking of the formality of academic curriculum completion. Some of the specimens of teacher development perspectives, from the English Language Teaching point of view:

- Understanding how the process of second language development/acquisition occurs
 - Understanding how our roles change according to the kind of learners we are teaching
 - Understanding the kinds of decision making that occur during lessons
 - Reviewing our own theories and principles of language teaching
 - Developing an understanding of different styles of teaching
 - Determining learners' perceptions of classroom activities
- (Jack C. Richards, 2005)

Teacher development closely examines the process of reflective analysis of teaching practices, beliefs and values towards teaching and education, peer reflection and suggestions, students' feedback and improving upon that and assessing one's role as a teacher.

A HOLISTIC INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Professional development activity could also be seen from institution's need-based way. Many times, however, teachers' teaching, their behaviour, knowledge and skills become outdated or may be they do not fulfill the need of the institution. Here, a teacher should not necessarily compare his/her formal training with the need of the institutions as it may differ. Sometimes, an institution does not require the qualifications of teachers but skills which is the case, nowadays, in many of the private (national and international) schools and colleges.

The possible pragmatic solution of the above mentioned problem could be if school/college provides training for acquiring knowledge and skills. Many times such need-based training is also known as *staff development* or *in-service training* (as referred many times in ELT field). Some of the steps could be taken are,

- **Institutional development:** The aim for this is to make any institute more popular/renowned in its own field by giving good result. This is possible with better approach of management (i.e. top-bottom approach), encouraging teachers as well as students, motivating them to attend value-added workshops/seminars/conferences and providing better learning outcomes. Many good organizations consider it on a high-priority and eventually attain the objectives set by the management.
- **Career Development:** The focal area of career development is on professional advancement of the teachers, who are in tenure, to higher positions i.e. senior lecturer to assistant or assistant to associate professor etc. by providing necessary training for knowledge and skills. Though it should not be made compulsory as sometimes (or many times) some senior coordinator do not work well by gaining the senior post. For such school/college teachers there should be professional evaluation from all the angle and then should be given consideration; whether promoted or demoted. But otherwise, advancement in one's career gives job satisfaction which ultimately leads to betterment of the institutions.
- **Enhanced Levels of Student Learning:** The ethical goal for any academic organization should be to give quality education and make the generation strong and motivated enough. The focus should not be just on the academic achievement but holistically overall i.e. physical, mental, emotional and intellectual. It is undoubtedly to say that the enhancement in the learning of students ultimately makes the institution reputed.

A VIGNETTE FROM A TEACHER

As a part of CPD process every teacher passes through a change. As we mentioned earlier that there are multiple ways for developing oneself professionally a teacher can adopt any technique or activity to bring change in a mundane teaching practices. The following is a vignette from a teacher in Pakistan. She wanted to learn and observe the teaching and assessment tactics adopted by some teachers. Here, she discusses the process of designing her own checklists. Again it should be considered as a part of professional development activity. In her own words,

For me, a classroom observation checklist must not contain too many items. This is a lesson I learned from a few observations I conducted. Sometime back, in order to appear very professional and show off my newly acquired knowledge, I developed wonderfully detailed checklists divided and subdivided

into many topics. The checklists looked very well done and highly useful, but in practice that was not the case. I ended up with too much to look for in too little time. So now, when I design checklists I restrict myself to looking at one or two aspects of my teaching and I do not devise too many questions, nor do I have too many categories. If you keep your checklist concise and stick to the most important points, your observation will be “good”.

Aamna Khalid (Her confession)

LITERATURE REVIEW

As a part of such reflective study, there are, fortunately, some research workshave been done in India. Here, to give an example, two books are referred which are the compilations of works done on Continuous Professional Development (CPD), in ELT field. The books are:

1. *Continuing Professional Development: Lessons from India*, Edited by Rob Bolitho and AmolPadwad, published by British Council, India, 2012.
2. *Continuing Professional Development: An Annotated Bibliography*, by AmolPadwad and Krishna Dixit, published by British Council, India, 2011.

This paper has a framework for teachers' professional development which is general in nature. For the studies in India, on CPD, there are some names/writers/scholars, given in the above mentioned books, who have thought, observed, reserved time, surveyed, researched and contributed something in the society for the future teachers to be more goal-oriented, dynamic, determined for one's CPD and be a reflective practitioner.

CONCLUSION:

Thus, a study on teachers' professional development will give us an overview about the current level, attitude and approach towards taking academic initiatives and providing a thought for the need for the development to happen. The time has come to show our worth not just by achieving academic degrees or completing course curriculum but also by inculcating skills which are more essential for the quality education and giving holistic view towards the same. We need to change our approach by taking into consideration some of the following key thoughts,

1. To see teaching as a vocation
2. A propensity for reflective thinking
3. The need for on-going teacher professional development
4. The importance of school support, and
5. Taking initiative for life-long development

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