

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SELF-REFLECTION AS PART OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING: A HOLISTIC VIEW

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Abstract

21st century has brought immense change and need in developing holistic view of education. There is a paradigm shift in innovations, competitive field, psychological development in employees/teachers/students' attitudes and 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 caters all the demands of students and of the institutions. Only this field has wide variety of activities so as to form overall development of the person. But on the other side, our teachers who are expected to be goal-oriented, active and researcher, there is still need and scope for development for them. Many of the educators do not want to develop themselves professionally and eventually there is a dearth of holistic development of the students as well as of teachers. 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. The current paper will focus on the need and scope for teachers' continuous professional development (CPD).

Key Terms:

CPD (continuous professional development), holistic, paradigm shift, goal-oriented, researchive, self-reflection, training, education

Teaching has always been an inspiring field where the process of knowledge taking and sharing happens at its peak. Only this sector has power to transform the generation and brings

change. Since ages our gurus have practiced the art of teaching and learning as a part of one's holistic development and the scholars have been greatly benefitted by the process. Their teaching was not as a part of art or vocation but rather more psychological in nature. In today's time there is a need for such 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 not come upto satisfactory level. It is here the need for teacher's training required to make the 'man-making' (Swami Vivekananda) process.

In the 21st century, 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 boost the morale of 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 selves.

Gujarat is a booming state in India. It is widely canvassed into education, industry and technology. Here much scope has been harnessed into education, but because many parts of the state are covered under agricultural area, teachers in schools and colleges are 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 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. There have to be certain CPD plans to accomplish.

HOLISTIC EDUCATION

The term '*holistic*' defines a philosophy that characterized by the belief that parts of something are intimately interconnected and explicable only by reference to the whole (Apple dictionary). It is worth to mention here that there is not a single thing that develops an ideology but the continuous process of something which makes whole of something. It is thus noteworthy to claim that there is professional development and a continuous stream of incessant training makes the education/workplace to be unique. Ron Miller, founder of the journal Holistic Education Review, has rightly said that

'Holistic education is a philosophy of education based on the premise that each person finds identity, meaning, and purpose in life through connections to the community, to the

natural world, and to humanitarian values such as compassion and peace. Holistic education aims to call forth from people an intrinsic reverence for life and a passionate love of learning'.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Witnessing the paradigm shift currently in the field of education in terms of change in the curriculum, students' need, infrastructure, employability, national tests, technology 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 or mentor teacher, teacher-researcher or materials writer
 - 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 or management authorities also should take certain 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, WizIQ, Futurelearn and many others. They even provide certificates 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 to be researchive and active in academics.
5. Interacting with colleagues and sharing and taking good knowledge is again the way.
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

“Evaluating and assessing learning is the professional behavior I would most like to develop at this stage in my career. I would like to attend some seminars or engage in an online course where I could learn more about developing tests appropriate to groups of learners, making them truly meaningful measures of student progress.”

_ NeenazIchaporria

“Using inclusive practices is the professional behavior I’d most like to develop at this stage of my career. I’d like some input on adapting my pre-course needs analysis so that I can find out more detailed information about the different abilities of my students”

_ TapsiChhabra

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

SELF-REFLECTION / SELF-ASSESSMENT

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 education context. One has to be ethically able to perceive the things neutrally, adding essence of pure value and receive the response. 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 teachers do ever think after the classroom teaching whether how well did it go? What went wrong? What improvement I need to make? What sort of change I need to do to make classroom teaching more interactive? How should I encourage students more deeply? The answer to this 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. We can say shortly, reflection starts with collaborating, reading signs/expressions, communicating and getting responses. A teacher should look at all the problems as challenges.

As a part of professional development, some of the common reflective questions to be asked to oneself, who want to develop oneself professionally, 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 to your teaching what have you already 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 material, you would be using, for the classroom, would you like to do since every year brings new chapter to learning?
- What do you learn from the teaching or learning of your colleagues? And how you implement 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 short-term goals that is imbibing technological skills, refresher course, faculty development program (FDP) etc. For example, pre-service training program like B.Ed is an instance 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 longer goals. It does not only focus 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 as a part of training but as a life-long process, from beginning to end (retirement). In teacher development, there are mainly two initiatives that are responsible; top-to-bottom and bottom-up. Top-to-bottom initiative focuses on the activities offered from management/school/college authority while bottom-up anchors upon learning-centric dimension i.e. taking responsibility on one's own development without thinking the formality of academic curriculum completion. Some of the examples of teacher development perspectives, from the English language point of view:

- Understanding how the process of second language development 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. The best way to sense teacher development is to have self-observation and critical reflection. This is the best tool to assess one's own strengths and weaknesses and giving feedback to one's own presentations. Many cannot tackle this task well but this is the ultimate holistic way towards self-learning and self-reflection.

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 in many of the private (national and international) schools and colleges nowadays.

The possible pragmatic solution of the above mentioned problem could be if school/college provide 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,

- **Institutional development:** The aim for this is to make any institute more popular/reowned in its own field by giving good result, better approach of management (i.e. top-to-bottom approach), encouraging students as well as teachers 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 focus area of career development is to have professional advancement to the teacher, who are in tenure, to higher positions i.e. senior lecturer, assistant to associate professor etc. by providing with necessary knowledge and skills. Though it should not be made compulsory as sometime (infact many times) some senior coordinator do not work well by gaining the senior post. For such school/college teacher 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 for 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. mental, emotional, intellectual and physical. It is undoubtedly to say that the enhancement in the learning of students ultimately makes the institution reputed.

A VIGNETTE FROM A TEACHER

The following is a vignette from a teacher in Pakistan. How he reflected about his professional level and what changes he planned as a part of professional development activity. In his own words,

I got my degree with a major in English from one of the best private universities in our city. But this didn't make my teaching career easy. When I started teaching, I felt so limited with the way I handled my class. I could not even identify what teaching methods I was using. I was dependent on the teacher's manual to the students' textbook and limited to teaching suggestions from some of my colleagues. I felt I wasn't really doing any justice in my teaching and I realized I needed to learn more. Having to face more than sixty students in a classroom every day forced me to read whatever I could, to experiment, and to consult others with more experience.

I was fortunate to have been sent to participate in several training seminars and workshops at local, regional and national levels. My participation in these courses and workshops enhanced my skills and better equipped me as an English Language teacher and helped me make a quick adjustment to my baptism of fire“ in the teaching profession. I was very lucky to be asked to join a team working on planning a syllabus for secondary level. I learned so much in the process. Researching and collaborating with members of the group was very enriching. From my more experienced colleagues I have learned the importance of considering students' interests and proficiency level in preparing lessons and the need to use feedback from students to make necessary adjustments in my teaching.

I know my 5-year teaching experience is not enough. I believe I still need to deepen my content knowledge and learn new methods of teaching, devote more time to working with colleagues, to examine new standards being proposed, and to seek innovative ways to improve student achievement, promote quality teaching and motivate students. I am currently completing a diploma course in applied linguistics which is providing many opportunities to develop, master and reflect on new approaches to working with students.

Ali Anudin (His confession)

LITERATURE REVIEW

As a part of such reflective study, there are, fortunately, some research work has been done in India. Mainly 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.

According to the research and survey done in this field, Gujarat state has unfortunately not witnessed any such initiatives done in the field. 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, 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, determined for one's CPD and be 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 completing academic degrees 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 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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