

Constraints to Professional Development of Teachers

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Abstract

The quality of teachers and teacher education depends upon the professional development opportunities provided to them. These opportunities are needed to keep the teachers updated and technologically advanced. Professional development refers to all those formal, informal activities, learning experiences which reforms the teachers and help them to enhance their professional growth. It is also known as educational development, faculty development, teacher development and academic development. Like every field in education also there are continuous changes, to maintain the existence with the changing environment it is necessary for the teachers to go for continuous professional updating. There are various professional development activities for the teachers but there are some constraints also which check the teachers to avail the professional development activities. These constraints may be named as shortage of time, lack of motivation and confidence, lack of awareness to latest professional development opportunities, lack of interest in teaching profession etc. This paper highlights some barriers to professional development of teachers and the measures also that can be taken to deal with those constraints.

Key words: Professional development, Constraints, Faculty development, Teaching profession, MOOCs.

Quality of education depends on various factors. Among these factors teacher is the prominent one who is said to be directly responsible for the quality of education which is being imparted to students. The quality of teachers and teacher education depends upon the professional development opportunities provided to them. These opportunities are needed to keep the teachers updated and technologically advanced.

Professional Development

Professional development is an organized effort to change teachers with the expected results of improving their teaching practices or student learning. It is an evaluative process which gives a chance to a teacher to evaluate him or herself and refers to all those formal, informal activities, learning experiences which reforms the teachers and help them to enhance their professional growth. It is also known as educational development, faculty development, teacher development and academic development. It encompasses all initiatives related to developing, improving, enhancing and sustaining the quality of teaching.

Thus, it can be concluded as a process in which professionals engage with a formal and informal framework. The process is rooted in critical self-analysis of professional practices and steps taken to improve current practices are called professional development activities.

Why professional development is needed?

As it known that change is the law of nature, educational field is also not an exception. Expansion of knowledge in every field of education is taking place rapidly. Everyday there are new things, new methods, new gadgets and new technology. To maintain their existence with the changing environment it is necessary for the teachers to go for continuous professional updating. Many commissions and committees on education have recommended several reforms. Kothari Education Commission (1964-66) has rightly acknowledged that of all the different factors which influence the quality of education and its contribution to national development, the quality, the competence and character of teachers are undoubtedly the most significant. Nothing is more important than securing a sufficient supply of high quality recruits to the teaching profession, proving them with best possible professional preparation and creating satisfactory conditions of work in which they can be fully effective.

Recent National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE-2009), National Curriculum Framework (NCF-2005) and Right to Education Act-2009 together provided a boon in preparing teacher professionals. NCFTE-2009 has emphasized on continuous professional development. Professional development programs are significant because these programs enhance a teachers' professional growth, develop a new insight into pedagogy and help them to explore deeper knowledge of the content of their subjects. These programs improve the competency of the teachers, keep them updated, and prepare them to meet the different challenges faced by the teachers in their day to day teaching-learning process.

Professional Development Activities

Here are the names of some professional development activities which can be avail by the teachers. These are as following—

Conferences and Seminars

Workshops

Training courses (software, hardware)

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)

Refresher courses

Peer collaboration

Discussions with peers (online, offline)

Publications (books, research papers, articles etc.)

Self study

Learning resource centers

Use of library (online, offline)

Constraints to professional development of teachers

Professional development opportunities are needed for the professional growth of the teachers it is beneficial for both teachers as well as students. Although lots of efforts are being done for the enhancement of professional development still there are several constraints to professional development of teachers. These are as follows—

Shortage of time

Although teachers of higher education have more time as compared to a school teacher, still the teachers of higher education frequently complain for shortage of time due to excess workload including teaching, non-teaching and other functioning of the institution. Therefore, they may not be interested in sparing extra time for their own professional development such as group discussion among peers, taking part in some courses as refresher course, workshop, summer courses and skill based training etc.

It is suggested that teachers should be motivated to take out time for professional development and moreover, these activities may be formed as a part of their daily working schedule.

Lack of motivation

Another barrier to avail professional development opportunity is that there is lack of motivation among teachers. Often they are just compelled to attend required/mandatory refresher courses and orientation courses to maintain the API scores and for promotion only. They are not being motivated by the management or their colleague and besides this they are not internally motivated.

They should be making aware of the benefits of professional development opportunities for themselves and its future effect on the performance of the students. Management of the institute should praise the teachers who make some extra effort regarding professional development opportunities. These teachers can be presented as role model for other teachers also.

Lack of confidence

Our country is progressing in the field of ICT, still the teachers who are in the job for a longer time they are reluctant to use new technologies, new methods in their teaching and in the classroom. They may lack confidence to learn new things or to compete with youngsters. Sometime they are interested in maintaining the situation as it is and oppose for making any changes.

In this regard it is suggested that teachers' phobia for ICT should be cured. ICT facilities and equipment should be arranged in institute for the teachers and they should be encouraged to make use of that. They can also be given some training to operate these equipment.

Need of physical and economic resources

In our country there are several types of institutions as government, government-aided, autonomous and self-financed. These institutions more or less dependent on the financial aid from the government, but in the case of self-financed institutes they have to manage funds by their own efforts. It is difficult for them to arrange different professional development activities as seminar, conference, workshop, summer course etc. because these activities require a lot of arrangements as hiring venues, accommodation, organizing food, bringing speakers, trainers and calling teachers from various institutions. All these arrangements need money as well as man power. Besides this, another constraint to professional development is that teachers are conscious who will cover their classes when they are out of the institutes for attending professional development activities.

To avoid this barrier proper budget allocation should be done for all the institutes including self-financed institutes also so they can also manage the arrangement of these activities.

Lack of awareness to latest professional development opportunities

Like other fields in the field of professional development there are new professional development opportunities are emerging. Teachers may not be aware of latest activities of professional development. Now there are MOOCs (massive open online courses), e-content, webinar, podcasts, blogs, educational websites. These activities are there to help teachers to enhance their professional growth and they can access these activities without being absent from their institutes. These activities can easily be cope with their regular working schedule. These may be helpful only if they are used properly. Lack of awareness about them and most importantly knowledge of their functioning is also important.

Information about new activities and opportunities are available on the internet, teachers should make some efforts by themselves and the management of the institute also can collect this information for their staff.

Lack of interest in teaching profession

Sometime it is seen that the people without proper intention and interest come in the profession of teaching and become teacher by destiny. They just remain in the profession to earn their livelihood and not to embrace their job wholeheartedly. This may be one of the reasons for not achieving any professional development activities for their professional growth. Moreover, teaching profession is considered to be less labour intensive job and a teacher does not get the much respect from the society also. This type of thinking also discourages the teachers to take step forward to polish their professional career.

It is suggested that only those people should come in this profession who have interest in teaching. A teacher who loves his/her profession will make some efforts for professional development wholeheartedly.

Lack of knowledge of ICT

Today is the era of ICT; it has become the need of the hour. The teachers who have the knowledge of technology and make use of it in their day to day teaching –learning process, they are considered more advanced and updated. ICT enhances the knowledge. Now most of the professional development opportunities are available on the internet. With the help of ICT a teacher can be easily connected with others and can take part in several activities running there. The problem is that there are several teachers who are in service earlier than the alleged era of ICT and they don't have the knowledge of it. This drawback is also a barrier in the way of availing different professional development opportunities running online. They may also lack of having quick access to different information about professional development.

As said earlier knowledge of ICT is very important for the teachers to be up to date. Teachers themselves can opt any technology based course, computer course or they can take the help of their colleagues or others who may guide them.

Thus, it can be concluded that professional development opportunities are very significant for teachers to keep them knowledgeable and advanced. Although some barriers are there in availing these opportunities but these hurdles can be tackled through proper handling of the situation and the joint efforts of the teachers, management and the government.

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