



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE TEACHER

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ABSTRACT

These are changing times in education systems around the world. With the start of the new millennium, many societies are engaging in serious and promising educational reforms. One of the key elements in most of these reforms is the professional development of the teachers. Today, the society acknowledges that the teachers are not only one of the 'variables' that need to be changed in order to improve the education systems, but they are also the most significant change agents in these reforms. The professional development of teachers is regarded as an individual and collective process that should be accomplished in the workplace of the teacher. Furthermore, it is looked upon as a contribution to the development of the teacher's professional skills, by means of a variety of both formal and informal experiences. For the last decade, the concept of professional development has changed as a result of increasing understanding of how the teaching and learning processes are created. But recently it has 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 the teacher.

The present paper focuses on the importance of professional development of teachers. It also suggests three goals namely Personal Goals, Organizational Goals, and Lesson Improvement Goals, which will improve them personally and professionally.

Key Words: *Professional development, Professional skills, Three goals to improve*

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of Independent India, once said, 'The destiny of a nation is shaped in her classrooms.' True to this statement, the teachers and the taught are the inheritors of tomorrow. The teachers must show greater signs of trust, commitment and motivation and provide the learners such guidance and inspiration as may be required and prepare them to face the future with enthusiasm and confidence. Even the amount of time that he has to spend for preparation must also increase keeping in view with



the recent innovative techniques like teaching through Audio-visual aids, teaching through Internet, teaching phonetics through music, teaching through games, etc. In other words, he, being a teacher in the 21st century, has to put an extra effort to continue to learn and develop himself professionally.

Good teachers form the foundation of good educational institutions and improving teachers' skills and knowledge is one of the most important investments of time and money.1

The term 'professional development' means a comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach of improving teachers' effectiveness in raising student achievement. It lends itself best to the conception of the teacher as an educational professional. On the other hand, the concept 'development' has a connotation related to evolution and continuity which goes beyond the traditional overlapping of basic and continued teacher education.

The professional development of teachers is regarded as an individual and collective process that should be accomplished in the workplace of the teacher. Furthermore, it is looked upon as a contribution to the development of the teacher's professional skills, by means of a variety of both formal and informal experiences. For the last decade, the concept of professional development has changed as a result of increasing understanding of how the teaching and learning processes are created. But recently it has 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 the teacher. Rudduck referred to the professional development of the teacher as

The teacher's ability to maintain the curiosity of the class; to identify significant interests in the teaching and learning processes; to value and seek dialogue with experienced colleagues as a source of support in the analysis of situations.2

The professional development of a teacher should be conceived in close connection with a search for professional identity by how he defines himself and others. Whether one is a teacher who started his teaching career or has one year left for retirement, goal setting will help him in improving professionally and also in disseminating meaningful, better, and creative instruction to the students. The present paper focuses on the importance of professional development of teachers. It also suggests three goals namely Personal Goals, Organizational Goals, and Lesson Improvement Goals, which will improve them personally and professionally.

The Importance of Professional Development: Professional development is a continuous improvement process lasting from the time an individual decides to enter teaching profession



until retirement. It encompasses the processes that the teacher engages into initially prepare himself, continuously update, and review and reflect on his own performance. Just as knowledge and skill requirements are changing with the advent of globalization and the explosive growth of technology, the teacher must also develop professionally and continually acquire new knowledge and skills. If he wants to prepare the students for their successful future, he must be prepared for the future himself.

Professional development provides the teacher continuous, on-the-job and support needed to improve his teaching skills. It plays “an important role in changing teachers’ teaching methods, and that these changes have a positive impact on students’ learning.”³ Through formal experiences such as attending workshops and professional meetings, mentoring, etc., and informal experiences such as reading professional publications, watching programmes related to an academic discipline, he can use current research, best practices, creativity and knowledge while teaching and become successful. These successful professional-development experiences will have a noticeable impact on the teachers’ work both in and out of the classroom. They will have an impact on teachers’ beliefs and behaviour. Other benefits a teacher reaps from continuing education and professional development are learning all about the latest trends in education and discipline, and receiving instruction on how to implement new practices and procedures in a classroom. Though, he can read about practices and procedures in a book or on a web site, but he may need help when it comes to how those things can actually put it into action.

Thus, the professional development of teachers is a key factor to improve themselves and also in imparting a better education to the learners and also bringing a change in the society. Successful professional-development will have a significant positive effect on students’ performance and learning. If the teacher’s goal is to increase students learning and to improve their performance, he must consider his professional development as a key factor.

Personal Goals relating to Self and Relationships: It is important for every teacher to consider himself when things about goals. Improvement of self will lead to a healthier teacher, who is better equipped both emotionally and physically to handle the challenges that come up each day. Improving professional relationships falls into this category as well, considering the fact that the better the working environment, the more focused the teacher will be. The following are some of the personal goals where the teacher has to look at when they want develop professionally.

- Have a more professional appearance and attitude: A teacher must remember the fact that the professional development is a lifelong process which begins with the initial preparation that he receives and continue until retirement. Whenever he sees a new book on the teaching of English language skills, he must make it a point to read the book, if not



reviews on the book, and learn the new methodologies and techniques which are proposed. He should have the attitude of reading as much as possible and change his way of teaching in the classroom. He has to exhibit passion for teaching.

- Remember to have fun and enjoy teaching: Every teacher must make his teaching lively and interested. He has to play jokes which are relevant to the context. He may also include the day-to-day issues which are similar to the topic he is teaching.
- Stay positive even when things change: A teacher has to remember the fact that he cannot do exceedingly well in each and every class. Sometimes the atmosphere may not be congenial for him at some other times the learners may not have any interest due to some reasons. In such cases immediately he should not be disappointed but to stay positive and change the atmosphere according to his needs.
- Form a better working relationship with cooperating teacher: In most of the institutions one doesn't any cooperation among the teachers. The reasons may be many. But he must form a better working relationship with teachers forgetting his seniority and academic achievements. A teacher without exhibiting his proud nature, he has to cooperate with the other teacher. In other words, he has to build better relationships with the faculty members and others staff.
- Improve teacher-parent communication, with a focus on positive notes home.

Organization of Classroom and Materials

Staying organized in the classroom can be a challenge for even veteran teachers. If organization is a weak area, have a dialogue with the colleagues who are better organized and take tips on how they arrange things. The better organized the classroom and materials, the more efficient planning will be, resulting in better lessons. Some other organizational goals are

- Maintain a classroom management plan: Before you meet the students prepare yourself how to manage the class and teach meaningfully the content/subject. Remember the duration of the time and fulfill the requirements of the students according to the plan.
- Put things away after using them: A teacher has to change his teaching methodology or technique frequently. Keeping in the mind the recent developments he has to show creativity and adopt new teaching techniques. He has to keep on changing his material every year and renew his teaching.



- Plan ahead at least one week: Instead of preparing the teaching plan on the same day or just before one day of his actual class, it is better to prepare and plan at least one week earlier. He has to prepare the plan thoroughly with a desired outcome in mind. The plan which he prepares must not only be helpful to himself but also to his students.
- Keep up with grading: Every teacher has to get grading without asking the learners to mention their names. When the learners give their feedback, he has to identify where he is unable to do well, where the learners are encountering problems and upgrade his teaching. Constant evaluation makes him a professionally developed teacher.
- Keep a record of lessons/units: A teacher has to maintain a record of his lessons/units. This kind of record will help him in identifying whether he is completing the requirements of the learners within the stipulated time at all. If he is rather slow in doing the subject he may slowly revise his plan and organize it properly.

Improve Quality of Lesson Plans

Improving the quality of the teacher's lesson plans will not only produce a more well behaved classroom, but will result in greater student learning, and improved test scores. Making the effort to find areas to improve will be viewed positively and will help the teacher to feel better about his teaching ability. Here are some examples of Lesson Improvement Goals:

- Incorporate Literature into more lessons.
- Minimize wasted minutes – have extra stuff ready for downtime instead of the fall back of start your homework.
- Spend more time focusing on vocabulary and concept development.
- Introduce weekly learning journals.
- Implement two new strategies that you have learned.
- Incorporate more technology in the classroom.
- Prepare better substitute plans.

Conclusion:



In summary, our changing goals for learning, coupled with shifts in curriculum emphasis and a deeper understanding of teacher learning and student thinking, have led to new findings about the impact of teacher professional development and how best to sharpen teachers' skills and knowledge.

What matters most is what teachers learn. Professional development should improve teachers' knowledge of the subject matter that they are teaching, and it should enhance their understanding of student thinking in that subject matter. Aligning substantive training with the curriculum and teachers' actual work experiences also is vital. Becoming a more well-rounded teacher will be helpful as he continues to teach the next generation, and will hopefully improve his life as well.

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