



Philosophy of Continuous Professional Development in India: The Higher Education Perspectives

* Dr. Intakhab Alam Khan

* King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah-KSA

ABSTRACT

Quality is the ultimate target of education. In the present competitive society, one has to justify one's qualifications. Education is truly considered as a 'profession' which basically requires ethics and efficiency. In the case of school education, government in India has been ensuring 'quality' through training for a very long time. In higher education as well, national policy on education-1986 focused on the training for the academic staff of the universities. As a result, academic staff colleges came into existence from 1987. The trainees as well as the institutions are required to know about the philosophy of professional development in order to carry out the activities in an appropriate manner. The present study is a modest attempt in that direction.

Keywords : Profession, philosophy, ethics, professional development, academic staff colleges

1. Introduction

Professional development is a complex process. It can't be considered as a mere training. It rather incorporates different modes of training: in-service training, orientation programs, refresher courses, conference presentation, research work, workshop attendance, academic interaction, peer learning and even self development. In schools, issues like researches or conference presentations may not be feasible, but in the case of higher institutions, research and innovation is an integral part of teaching/education. This is why, National policy on Education (NPE) -1986 recommended the establishment of the training institution which consequently led to the start of the UGC's academic staff colleges throughout India.

1.1. Need of Teacher development in the Indian Universities

Development is a dynamic concept. Society keeps on changing, so does educational system. Therefore, all those associated with the teaching-learning activities must also change in order to go along the changes within the educational system and the society. Khan (2011a) observes, 'Since education deals with the human development, there is always a chance of waste in the form of drop out or underachievement. In order to minimise the chance of waste, and do the work in

a more effective way so that the objectives can be achieved, the need of pre-service training is felt. Those who are not trained before their employment, they need in-service or on-going teacher development.' Teacher development applies to both the teacher groups: freshmen as well as 'on the job teachers'.

Despite the availability of resources and increased emphasis on the use of technology, many teachers, whether pre-service (Doering, Hughes, & Huffman, 2008); Willis & Sujo de Montes (2002) or experienced, currently feel ill prepared to use technological tools and resources for teaching of contents. The factors may be contributing to pre-service and experienced teachers' struggles with integrating technology without actually defining their vision for integration (Perry & Aregaldo, 2001). Such hurdles are mainly encountered when all the staff members are not ready to implement novel changes into the system. Teachers' learning opportunities, in turn, are predominantly skill-based when schools offer short-term technology skill workshops (McKenzie, 2001, Zhao, Pugh, & Sheldon, (2002) and SCDEs offer a single course in information tech-

nology (Moursund & Bielefeldt, 1999) and this implementation of short-term skill training is not increasing the effectiveness of technology-supported content area teaching, a goal in our nation (Riley, Holleman, & Roberts, 2000).

1.2. Types of development

Teacher development basically includes the enhancement of the individual teacher, his teaching and even the institution where the teacher is working. Teacher and his instructional development are mentioned below:

1.2.1. Individual development of the teachers

Faculty (staff) development programs focus on individual faculty members to develop them in the following dimensions: class management, evaluation of students, lesson planning, testing and all aspects of design and presentation etc. CPD has many advantages, and it must go on in order to avoid waste of resource. Training and professional development is always essential in this fast changing society. Thus, in order to be update, modern and sophisticated, one should attend in-service training or professional development programs.(Khan,2011b)

1.2.2. Instructional Development

Instructional development takes a different approach for improving the institution. These programs focus on the curriculum as a whole. In this approach, instructors become members of an evaluation team. They work on instructional design and identify how much the appropriate level of the teaching and learning is achieved, however teaching material is basis of the assessment.

2. The background to Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

Globalization and competitive educational environment is the prime factor that lead to increasing the quality of educators. Teachers are supposed to be more aware of their roles and duties. Sophisticated electronic tools offers many novel working styles. Professionals are bound to realize the benefit of professional enhancement in a given condition. CPD is not a new idea. It is a tool of a teacher to adapt to the changes in current work environment. This has been brought about by reasons such as:

2. 1. Quality assurance

This normally requires that adequately trained staff perform all significant roles within an organization, and that the training is kept up to date on a regular basis.

2.2. Change

The lessons learned at university or college, have a decreasing lifespan. In the more hi-tech industries, this can now be reduced to months rather than years. It is also unusual for anyone, particularly a professional, to keep the same role for more than a limited period. New skills have to be acquired in order to allow for personal career development.

2.3. Professional standards/benchmarking

The professional institutions have the role of maintaining the standards of competence within their membership. These standards can be communicated efficiently to the membership through the use of CPD.

3. Philosophy of teaching and teacher development

Education is the dynamic side of philosophy. Both philosophy and Education are the two sides of same coin. Every individual is has a specific kind of philosophy, and follows in his life. The debate if the teachers are born or made leads to the point where it may be discussed if professional development programs are beneficial or not. Even if a teacher bears solid intelligence and inborn teacher aptitude he may not be able to choose a well defined method or a strategy because he is not aware of any such theories.

3.1. Philosophy and the teacher

Philosophy of teaching demonstrates that the teacher has certain ethical values and has been reflective in his/her style and quality of teaching. Pedagogically speaking, a teacher is not a teacher alone, he is basically a philosopher. The teacher should know the needs of children and the demands of society and then plan his methods of teaching. He must keep in mind that his own beliefs, ideology and principles of behaviour have a powerful impact on the development of children.

3.2. Philosophy and the Curriculum

By means of curriculum, desired behavioural changes are sought to be achieved to attain the goal of life determined by a particular philosophy. Thus, philosophy determines the aims of education so also it determines the curriculum. In other words, the philosophy of a country at a particular time determines the curriculum in which such subjects, activities and experiences are included which are supposed to meet the emerging demands of the society at that time.

3.3. Philosophy and the Methods of Teaching

Philosophy is also closely related to the methods of teaching. It is Philosophy that controls the teacher to change his methods of teaching accordingly. Method of teaching is conditioned by a philosophy of the individual and educational planning. In a way, philosophy is a way of thinking and a way of working. These two factors determine the nature, style and actual operation of methods of teaching. It was found that professional development leads to effective instruction. (Desimone et al, 2002)

3.4. Philosophy and the textbooks

To achieve the aims of life and education, text books are of great importance and value. As curriculum is powerfully influenced by the Philosophy of times, so the text books are affected by the prevailing philosophy of the day. Since text books contain matter which reflects the ideology, ideals and values of society, the government should keep an eye on the production of desirable books for children.

All the above points such as curriculum, teacher, teaching, discipline and assessment are the areas in which the trainee enhances himself through professional development activities: a workshop, conference, training session, orientation program, refresher course, panel discussion or online learning through professional sites.

3.6. Dimensions of CPD

There are many dimensions of professional development. The following are a few of them:

3.6. 1. Faculty (teaching staff) development

This dimension includes the following questions: To what extent is faculty ready to work effectively? How much academic interaction among peers is there around the topic of personal development? If they frequently work in groups as units, instructional development will be very successful. If they regularly participate in institutional management for effectiveness, they will appreciate in programs related to institutional development including the teacher, teaching, curriculum, management and community development. Dhawan, R. (2000) investigated the impact of programmes of ASCs on students and teachers.

3.6. 2. Management development

'Management' is the means of achieving the target(s) of an organization/institution. There are many activities in which both the teaching faculty, management and the higher administration is involved together to realize the targets of the institution. Therefore, the continuous development of the managerial staff is equally important as the development of the academic faculty.

3.6.3. Students development

An institution is recognized due to its products-students. If the students are not prepared according to the expected standard and market needs, the institution may not be able to achieve its ultimate targets. The simple logic behind the concept is clear enough that whatever the institution has (teachers, infrastructure, facilities and resources); it must be utilized for the future career of the target learners. It has been noted by Guskey (2002) if professional development made any difference.

4. Issues related to professional development

Many issues fall under the category of professional development issues. In this regard, Behera (2009) wrote about ideas and issues pertaining to the academic staff colleges in India.

The major aims of the professional development follow:

- To improve the feasibility and possibilities of success with the changes in the Education practices,
- design an outline for teacher development,
- plan a hierarchy to implement the policies related to the teacher development,
- equip the trainees with necessary tools to enhance teachers' skills,
- train the trainers(educators) to impart proper training.

Chalam (2003) studied the quality of the academic staff colleges and contributed significantly to the body of literature. Dass & Gogoi (2001) worked on the Orientation Programmes conducted by the ASCs. In this connection, Pawar & Mouli (2008) also conducted a study aiming to explore the impact of training on the university and college teachers. Khan (2010) felt that the following aspects to be fulfilled: teacher's attitude, philosophical change, technology oriented attitude, skill oriented teaching /learning, human resource development etc.

4.1. Teaching attitudes and the developmental process

Many studies support the hypothesis that teacher attitude leads to good teaching achievements. It is found that most teachers behave as information providers (Brown, 1982). According to Reay (1975) a reason for this attitude could be because of the little time allowed for preparation within the teacher's working day. Another explanation could be the teacher's personal style in interpreting curricula, content and pedagogy, Gallard and Gallagher (1994).

4.2. Teaching, development and Pedagogy

Pointing out some of the negative aspects allows defining actions to change the general picture. There is growing consensus that teachers seldom asked to reflect on their own teaching, could be no more than mere repetitions of book material. (Baird et al, 1991)

Teachers' styles, and mainly their attitudes, are strong context outcomes, rooted in experience and do not become automat-

ic routine conducts. In that sense, attitudes can be modified only by each individual, when that awareness becomes new, postures would be better to deal with the world.

Teachers should be actively involved in defining priorities about what are their real problems and able to select suitable solutions (Tobin, 1988, Hewson and Hewson, 1988). It is also important to analyze the outcomes of teachers' attitudes for pedagogical changes.

4.3. The Development Needs of Teachers

For teachers to develop the competencies necessary to implement student-centred learning, they will need a good understanding of the following aspects:

4.3.1. Types of Knowledge

Knowledge alone is not helpful but updating knowledge is more important in the context of continuous development. The present educational system focus on skill development so traditional learning is not required these days.

4.3.2. Innovative Learning Strategies

Whilst many teachers have heard the language of new teaching approaches such as student-centred learning, they do not have a deep understanding of the principles and assumptions underpinning the various strategies.

4.3.3. ICT Competency, technology and teaching

This aspect of teacher competency is not directly related to student-centred learning but a number of activities associated with this approach rely on ICT-based learning. Teachers need to continuously upgrade themselves and search for new and exciting material for their students and be able to develop similar search skills in their students. In the literature, educational technology is considered as a tool of change which

eventually enhance the professional knowledge and practice. Yet, the integration of technology into a classroom or school does not inherently nor naturally reform teaching or learning (Dede, 2001; Wiske, 2001)

4.3.4. Assessment and Evaluation

Understanding the nature and types of knowledge and the associated learning strategies that teachers need to develop also includes the appreciation of correspondingly appropriate assessment and evaluation strategies. It is important to ensure the feedback to students reflects the objectives of the learning experience.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Professional development is inevitable in order to survive in this fast and competitive society. The development must not be a victim of stagnation, therefore the development must be a continuous process. Teachers need to be highly interested in the entire process if they want to be efficient and effective in teaching. Technology has become an integral tool of the educational kit so the teachers need to be equipped with in order to utilize it properly eliminating the chance of waste. Continuous professional development of the teacher is as important as teaching itself.

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