TRENDS IN THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL TEACHERS

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Abstract

School teachers play the pivotal role in establishing students' interest in learning every day. Teachers are the direct implementers of the school curriculum in the classroom. These teachers inspire the students to think critically and creatively. School teachers really shape the society so that school could aid not just by its role in developing the society but sustainable development in particular. Teachers are also active learners. They learn from their students most especially in the changing society as well as the changing behaviors of the students. Teachers are themselves learning throughout their teaching career. Good teachers are always in search of the activities that help them in their professional development. Teachers seek for new innovations and updates in their area of expertise because the knowledge with which they graduated to become a teacher before has become insufficient now. Teacher education refers to both pre-service and in-service programmers' which adopt both formal and/or non-formal approaches. It is a continuing process which focuses on teacher career development.

Keywords: *Curriculum, critically and creatively, professional development, in-service.*

Introduction

School teachers play the pivotal role in establishing students' interest in learning every day. Teachers are the direct implementers of the school curriculum in the classroom. Teachers engage students in different learning experiences to develop students' understanding about the nature and concept of science. By means of varied pedagogical approaches of teachers, students have the opportunity to be exposed to the real world of school exploration. New technological advances are also available for teachers to have an easy access of those materials needed in the

prescribed learning competencies. The use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) into education can motivate teachers to gain necessary knowledge and skills in using ICT in their instruction (Cavas, Cavas, Karaoglan, & Kisla, 2009). Teachers nowadays are more open to relevant changes in the educational system specifically in the delivery of instruction in science. School teachers adapt to changes in the approach of making students learn better in terms of contents in science. The active involvement of students and a focus on lifelong learning for both students and teachers can motivate against quality of schooling (Peng et al., 2014). Through this, school teachers become more resourceful in planning, designing and finding appropriate learning resources suitable for the needs and interests of the students. In other words, motivating students to learn is the reflection of the presence of teachers inside a school classroom. These teachers inspire the students to think critically and creatively. School teachers really shape the society so that school could aid not just by its role in developing the society but sustainable development in particular.

Professional Development Program for Teachers

Teachers are also active learners. They learn from their students most especially in the changing society as well as the changing behaviors of the students. Teachers are themselves learning throughout their teaching career. Good teachers are always in search of the activities that help them in their professional development. Teachers seek for new innovations and updates in their area of expertise because the knowledge with which they graduated to become a teacher before has become insufficient now. They need to keep them updated (Ansari & Malik, 2013). Teacher effectiveness is an important theme in professional development programs due to teachers' inevitable role in students' learning (Sahin & Adiguzel, 2014). That is the reason why the basic qualification of teachers, related to their views on their role, responsibilities, training and qualifications, rights and professional development, working conditions, values, and philosophy, etc. is mainly connected to their professional development (Liakopoulou, 2011). Due to diversity of learners in the 21st century, teachers must equip with the diversified set of skills too. Teachers need to have broad and wide horizons to cope up with tremendous changes in the field of science and technology in schools. (Ansari & Malik, 2013).

Such skills may be the focus of a professional development program in the form of education and training to keep the teachers abreast with the advancement and growth of scientific skills towards competence of teachers to impart these skills to the students. Professional development programs must be continuous and not just by presenting the new ideas in the field of science but also the importance of follow up is necessary to evaluate new learned skills. Teachers may attend In- Service Teachers Training Programs and Continuous

professional Development programs. They may realize that it is an essential component of their professional career (Ansari & Malik, 2013). The need to empower the teachers by exposing them in such programs and not to compromise their personal concerns is indispensable so that they will have a high degree of showing commitment and passion to teaching.

This an act mandating and strengthening the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) program for all regulated profession including professional teachers. This program refers to a set of learning activities to be provided by organizations or agencies accredited by the CPD council which equip the professionals with advanced knowledge, skills, and values in specialized or an inter disciplinary multidisciplinary field of study, self-directed research and/or lifelong learning. Some examples of such programs include: seminars, workshops, technical features, subject matter meetings, non-degree training lectures and scientific meetings, and modules. Apparently, Professional Teachers are required to present earned 45 credit CPD units before the renewal of Professional Identification Cards. They shall complete the required units every three years.

Current Trends in School Teachers

Teacher education refers to both pre-service and in-service programmers' which adopt both formal and/or non-formal approaches. It is a continuing process which focuses on teacher career development. An amalgamation of teaching skills, pedagogical theory and professional skills would serve to create the right knowledge, attitude and skills in teachers, t hus promoting holistic development. Keeping in view the above changing paradigms of teaching, the teacher education has under gone a change in various areas making the Teacher Education and Professional Development important in various areas like:

1. Teaching and learning methodology

There has been a visual change in the modern teaching and learning methodology. There is shift from book and teacher centered teaching to learner centered teaching. Where the diverse needs of the learners are analyzed and then a suitable teaching method is adopted. Task based, activity based, ICT oriented are some of the teaching methods of the modern age. The use of computer and electronic devices has become very common in today's educational system, where in e-classes are increasing day by day and the modern teacher needs to learn this new way of teaching.

2. ICT based teaching

ICT increases the flexibility of delivery of education so that learners can access knowledge anytime and from anywhere. It can influence the way students are taught and how they learn as now the processes are learner driven and not by teachers. This in turn would better

prepare the learners for lifelong learning as well as to improve the quality of learning. In concert with geographical flexibility, technology-facilitated educational programs also remove many of the temporal constraints that face learners with special needs (Moore & Kearsley, 1996). Students are starting to appreciate the capability to undertake education anywhere, anytime and anyplace.

3. Use of smart boards in the class, Use of E-podium

All in one, integrated solution - Built in computer, Microphone, Speaker, Audio/video output and input channels. Integrated Control System through Network - Can control max 900 e-Podiums as well as the devices in the lecture rooms. Writable screen that enables presenter to deliver a lecture or presentation while writing or drawing on to the screen (Quality soft ware for writable screen makes the difference among others) Dual Monitor - While delivering a presentation, the monitor can be used for the next presentation. The product can be configured according to the size of room, requirements of audio output power, and size of the screen.

4. The Trend of Mobile Wireless Technologies in Higher Education

A number of different mobile wireless devices are being used in higher education. These include web-enabled wireless phones (e.g., smart phones), web-enabled wireless handheld computers (e.g., palmtop, and tablet computers), wireless laptop computers, and Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs). Benefits: increasing speed in teaching and learning; allowing teachers to keep up the new educational subjects for future education.

5. Language and literacy development

The development of effective language and literacy is crucial to living and learning. Language is used to communicate with people, to share and express feelings, to give and obtain information and understand ideas and develop thoughts. The teachers must be educated about the importance of language and literacy development in order to keep the learners motivated and minimize the dropout rate and maximize the learning efficiency. The teacher needs to adopt various techniques to do the same.

6. Making interactive, task/activity based lessons

The role of task-based activities is to provide learners with opportunities to use the target language contextually, and to explore the target language through situational activities. In this way, the language lab can serve as an invaluable tool in the language learning and teaching process, for it provides opportunities for learning that cannot be duplicated in the classroom.

7. Curriculum development

Curriculum takes content (from external standards and local goals) and shapes it into a plan for how to conduct effective teaching and learning. It is thus more than a list of topics and lists of key facts and skills (the "input"). It is a map of how to achieve the "outputs" of desired student performance, in which appropriate learning activities and assessments are suggested to make it more likely that students achieve the desired results (Wiggins and Mc Tighe, 2006: 6).

8. Maintaining balance between theory and practical

A persistent issue that has plagued teacher education is the disconnect between theory and practice. The theory-practice gap was identified as a serious concern by all Alliance members (Cho, 2008; Gambhir et al., 2008;). Some argue that more credit hours should be spent on ensuring mastery of content knowledge and less in pedagogy, while others assert that the teacher candidates will recognize the value of education studies later in their teaching careers. There are also calls to make the practicum more effective and make more diverse and meaningful learning opportunities available to trainees**.** The discontinuity between coursework and practice is also evident to teaching candidates as there is a disparity between the theoretical works they are taught and their observations of teaching practices**.** Grossman (2008) calls for a stronger connection between research on teaching and research on teacher education. Clearly research on teaching could and should inform the content of teacher education – what gets taught, how and for what purposes.

9. Evaluation and assessment process

Another issue of concern in teacher education is the evaluation and assessment process. As a teacher one needs to adopt proper and fair evaluation and assessment process to test the learningcapabilities of the learner and teach accordingly.

Professional Development in School Teachers

Continued Professional Development is necessary in every profession; its vitality is felt more particularly in the teaching profession. This helps you update the knowledge and keeps the teacher on roll. But, the big question that comes before is how can we achieve this? There is no one particular method that ensures the professional development. However, there are some ways which would be helpful in achieving this. Let us consider some of the ways:

1. Involving Experts

There is a lot to be learnt through taking advantage of all the experienced and expert practitioners in the field of ELT, by attending sessions they may give at conferences, talks that are available in the irvicinity. Reading readily- available articles and books written

by 'experts' and participating in online events or blogs with invited professional s is an alternative if 'experts' are not available physically.

2. Workshops

Similar to the above, but not necessarily with known ELT professionals. Often teachers get a lot more out of smaller, more intimate workshops where there is the opportunity to discuss and debate ideas and opinions and take away ideas for classroom activities and to reflect on.

3. Online Groups/Communities

These may include an interactive virtual conference such as the annual IATEFL online conferences sponsored by the British Council, or the blogs on the Teaching English website, or other forums and discussion boards set up to encourage participation around ELT topics by teachers from all over the world.

4. Informal Talk

Joining other teachers in the staffroom discussing their next lesson or the materials they are using is one of the easiest and most effective ways of developing, especially if you borrow the ideas and try them out in your own classes.

5. Self Study/ Individual Preparation

Another easy way to learn that can include internet materials and journals as well as actual books, which can be expensive and difficult to obtain in some parts of the world. We can read anywhere in any short piece of snatched free time.

6. Programmed Research

You may be lucky enough to have a head of department or principal who wants research results which shed light on what is going on in his or her institution, and is prepared to provide time for teachers to provide the evidence. This is one interpretation of programmed action research, though there are lots of others, and teachers cannot help but learn from the experience and the results.

7. Individual Research

Similar to the above, but teacher- directed and not 'imposed'. Often very small scale, nevertheless so much can be learnt from studying your students or yourself in the classroom, and there is a huge range of aspects of teaching which you can put under an action research microscope.

8. Giving Sessions

This can range from a small in-school meeting where teaching ideas are shared right through to a session at a large international conference. All conference speakers started small and all teachers have something to say. This is a particularly effective way to develop due to

the planning and research which takes place before the session as well as the discussion and feedback which it provokes.

9. Writing

Similar to the above, writing ranges from short articles right through to books. Keeping a diary and reflecting on your teaching is a good way to start and there are plenty of models out there to learn from, while the preparation and research necessary teaches you as much as the writing and rewriting itself.

10. Formal Education

This is often the first thing people think of when they think about professional development. But it is often the most prohibitive due to time and expense, and often courses do not provide exactly what is needed. If you are lucky enough to be able to follow a course, however, make the most of the time you have laid aside for thinking and learning, because doing a course is a great way to develop.

11. Membership in Professional Bodies

This can provide opportunities and facilitation of many of there as above, and although subscriptions can appear expensive, there is often so much offered by a professional body that it justifies the expense. Prepare to be active though, as so often you will get more out of it the more you put in yourself.

12. Other Ways

Apart from this t it is identified that there are other ways helpful in achieving professional development which include: engaging in new professional activities, doing things for the first time, peer observation, trying out different methods/approaches in class (sort of like action research), reflective and exploratory practice, though not programmed or formally monitored, being trained up as a teacher trainer, completing an online course to bean e-tutor, participating in projects in a group with fellow professionals, forming a local group: to discuss issues and take turns to lead sessions.

Conclusion

There are a various trainings for professional development programs could be given to teachers to address some issues concerning teaching-learning process and students' achievement. Other variables could also be done to have a wide scope of findings with regards to the important role of science teachers towards appreciation of students and to apply whatever they learned as part of their life in the changing society. As you see there are plenty of ways to keep up your continuous professional development. This is the age of technology. Everyone and everything seems to have something to do with computers and communications. Our future

generation is already showing signs of becoming totally computer and technology dependent. It is a fact that over the years, education has become increasingly complex, with more and more information communicated to the student. In this environment it is important for students to have an interesting, interactive and experimental mode of instruction that will make learning enjoyable and easy.ICT based education is definitely the direction towards which the whole world is progressing. However, ICTs should be used currently in conjunction with well planned classroom teaching.

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