

LIFELONG LEARNING & CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION OF SCHOOL TEACHERS

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Abstract :

In the era of globalization, knowledge is at the core of all development efforts in advancing economic and social well-being of the people. The nations are now transiting to a knowledge society where the quality and relevance of education would play a crucial role in economic development. The developed and the developing countries now are looking in for quality assurance in education. To prepare the youth for lifelong learning, the schools need to prepare its teachers to focus on higher and lifelong education. The teacher has to be equipped with all the knowledge required for effective teaching. Only through professional development and lifelong learning teacher can fulfill their roles and responsibilities within the education system. The learning will help to deepen and broaden content knowledge and enable teachers to anticipate and prepare for change in the teaching-learning process.

Educational challenges place new complex demands on education. Therefore there is a need to change the ways in which we work and learn together. Supporting adult learning is positively linked to improved student achievement (DuFour, 2007; Guskey, 1999 ;).

This paper focusses on the new prospective and practices that can support adult development within the schools and offers a map which can be used to support adult learning in the school teacher community. It talks about teaming, engaging in collegial enquiry and how the higher education institutes can help in the continuous and lifelong learning of the school teachers.

Key words: *Adult Education, Teacher Development, Strategies for Adult learning*

INTRODUCTION

The impact of globalization on Education could be well understood by the Delors report (1996: 85-97) titled 'Learning The Treasure Within' which begins with an analysis of the trends and tensions which face us in the future and the challenges these pose for education. Most educators worldwide accept its broad vision of learning throughout life, based on the harmonious building of four pillars: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be. The intention of these pillars of education is to think about education in a more encompassing fashions that people can learn to deal with social, environmental, economical, political and equity issues on a global scale in a sensible way. Just how well it can be achieved depends on how committed people become to life-long and life-broad learning that focuses on global events and issues. The Report also reminds of those remarkable asset possessed by every nation - the store of knowledge. In the era of globalization where knowledge is at the core of all development efforts the developed and the developing countries now are looking in for quality assurance in education.

To prepare the youth for lifelong learning, the schools need to prepare its teachers to focus on higher and lifelong education. The teacher has to be equipped with all the knowledge required for effective teaching. Only through professional development and lifelong learning teacher can fulfill their roles and responsibilities within the education system. The learning will help to deepen and broaden content knowledge and enable teachers to anticipate and prepare for change in the teaching-learning process. Effective continuous professional development will help teachers to be well prepared with new competencies and attitudes to play their professional roles successfully in such a new era of transformation.. Therefore there is a need to change the ways in which we work and learn together.

Supporting adult learning is positively linked to improved student achievement (DuFour, 2007; Guskey, 1999 ;).

This paper focuses on the new prospective and practices that can support adult development within the schools and offers a map which can be used to support adult learning in the school teacher community. It talks about teaming, engaging in collegial enquiry and how the higher education institutes can help in the continuous and lifelong learning of the school teachers.

1. LIFE LONG LEARNING: MEANING AND IMPORTANCE

Lifelong learning is the continuous building of skills and knowledge throughout the life of an individual. It occurs through experiences encountered in the course of a lifetime. These experiences could be formal (training, counseling, tutoring, mentorship, apprenticeship, higher education, etc.) or informal (auto didacticism, life experience, etc.). Lifelong learning, also known as LLL, is the "lifelong, voluntary, and self-motivated" pursuit of knowledge for either personal or professional reasons. As such, it not only enhances social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development, but also competitiveness and employability. It shares mixed connotations with other educational concepts such as Adult Education, Training, Continuing Education, Permanent Education and other terms that relate to learning beyond the formal educational system. The ability to pass this knowledge and skills on from one person to another is very important, as it keeps the learning cycle in motion and makes it 'lifelong'.

2.1. EXISTING POLICIES

India right from Independence has been stressing on lifelong learning. The educational policies and policy documents also stress the adult education or lifelong learning. The *Education Commission (1964-66)* reports that *education does not end with schooling but is a lifelong process; Lifelong Education is considered as the cherished goal of the educational process by the National Policy on Education in India - 1986* (modified in 1992). The critical development issue is the continuous up gradation of skills so as to produce manpower resources of the kind and the number required by the society. These policies were translated into practice and a number of Lifelong Learning programs were implemented by governmental, non-governmental organizations and universities in the country. During the last three decades, the bulk of the programs continued to focus on adult literacy and continuing education mainly due to the massive number of non-literates (300.14.million) and

neo literates(110millions) as estimated by the National Literacy Mission (NLM-Literacy Facts At A Glance ,2007) .With the formulation the Eleventh Five year Plan (2007-2012), the Government of India put forward the idea of expanding the scope of the Continuing Education Program by developing it as Lifelong Education and Awareness Program (LEAP). The global discourse on Lifelong Learning and the socio economic changes taking place within and outside the country influenced these programs. The role and importance of Lifelong Learning in India have increased in recent times due to several socio economic factors. The adult learning scenario is fast changing in India due to a technology driven knowledge based competitive economy. The growth of Indian economy at an average rate of 9.2% per annum during 2006-07 (*Economic Survey 2006-07*), tremendous expansion of Information Communication Technology and the rapid globalization have all been instrumental in bringing about changes in the job skills so that the workforce keeps on learning and updating their skills to be globally competitive. The country's economic performance depends critically on access to and the adoption of new technology and improving the skills of the labor force. Since 92.4% of India's workforce is in the unorganized sectors (*National Sample Survey, 61st Round, 2004-05*), they need regular upgrading of skills to compete in the globalize economy. Equipping the labor force with relevant skills implies the need for creating a variety of learning and training opportunities. This theory suits the secondary school teachers as well.

In the school concept quality of education is arising because of differential quality and standards of teaching and to have high standards in all schools. The delivery of quality education is possible only through quality teachers. The teacher has to be equipped with all the knowledge required for effective teaching. Only through professional development or the continuous learning, teacher can fulfill their roles and responsibilities within the education system. In the context of teacher development if continuous development of teachers does not take place it is as good as no education.

1.2. CONTINUOUS LEARNING OF SCHOOL TEACHERS: MEANING AND IMPORTANCE:

The continuous learning of teachers can also be referred to as the Professional Development (PD) or the Continuous Development. PD generally refers to the ongoing learning opportunities available to teachers, and other education personnel, through their

schools and districts. Effective PD is seen as increasingly vital to school success and teacher satisfaction. With schools today facing an array of complex challenges—from working with an increasingly diverse population of students, to integrating new technology in the classroom, to meeting rigorous academic standards and goals—observers have stressed the need for teachers, to be able to enhance and build on their instructional knowledge (National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, 1996).

PD refers to the education a teacher receives after the teacher has had the teacher education and entered the teaching profession. It is the lifelong learning for the teacher. It includes all the programs, educational, social, or others, in which the teacher takes a vital part; all the extra education which the teacher receives at different institutions by way of refresher and other professional courses, and all the travel and visits which he undertakes. All these expand his experience and vision.

The Commission on teacher Education in USA (1996) explained PD clearly as: “The continued education of teachers’ means much more than making up defects in preparation. It means continuous growth in the capacity to teach. It means broadened understanding of human development and human living. And now, more than any period at school history, it means growth in one’s capacity to work with others.” PD has been identified as an integrated part of educational reforms (Gusky, 2000; Hawley and Valli, 1999; Lewis, Parsad, Carey, Barfai, Farris and Smerdon, 1999) and has been included in documents like educational excellence for All Children Act of 1999 (U.S Department of Education 1999) and No child Left Behind (Bush 2001). Lewis et al., (1999) wrote “The inclusion of a national goal for teacher Professional Development represents an increased focus on professional development as an important vehicle for school reforms and education excellence” (p-21). Various educational reforms papers and documents claim that professional development is the key to (1) raising student achievement, (2) implementing high academic standards, (3) transforming schools, (4) improving instruction and (5) creating authentic professional learning communities. (Guskey, 1995; Libermann 1995; Sparks and Hirsh, 2000).

PD is the key to keeping teachers abreast of current issues in education, helping them to implement innovations, refine their practices and broaden themselves both as educators and individuals (Darling-Hammond 1990). New type of expertise are required of teachers in order for them to keep abreast of the emerging knowledge base and be prepared to use it to continually refine their conceptual and craft skill. (Guskey & Hiberman, 1997). This requires a

great deal of learning on the part of the teachers and will be difficult to make without the support and guidance (Ball and Cohen, 1999; Borko, Putman, 1995).

It is essential to find effective ways to support the adults who teach children, especially given the complexity of leadership, teaching, learning in our world (Ackerman & Mackenzie, 2007; Donoldson, 2008; Kagan & Lahey, 2009). Adults learn in their own way. The strategies for their differential learning are elaborated. There have been efforts to explore alternative professional development constructs and activities. Professional development efforts were embedded in the schools and classrooms and included study groups, professional learning communities, mentoring, action research, collaboration, leadership efforts, and reflection on day-to-day teaching and learning, teaming and collegial inquiry. When professional development addressed teachers' needs through authentic pathways, teachers were more likely to alter their teaching behaviors (Angelides & Gibbs, 2006; Boudah, Blair, & Mitchell 2003; Kent, 2002).

1.3. THEORIES OF ADULT LEARNING

The adult know and learn differently. The three ways of knowing – the instrumental, socializing, and self-authoring ways of knowing are very common in adulthood. The self-transforming way of knowing, is more prevalent in today's society, given the complex challenges of living learning, teaching and leading. Awareness of these ways of knowing helps to understand adults' development, so that they can be supported. Hargreaves advocates, we need more practices for supporting adult learning. He also says that student will be able to learn and develop unless teachers are learning and developing. Similarly Michael Fullan (2005, 2007) advocates dramatic shifts in how we conceptualize the professional development, envisioning very different contexts for the work of both teachers and students. According to Fullan, we must ensure that we foster the highest standards of adult learning. The developmental theory helps us to understand that we need to differentiate, the different needs of adults with whom we work. So it is necessary to modify the teaching differently. Constructive-developmental theory helps to understand ourselves and others and articulates adult development and how to support the adults in learning. The constructive-developmental view of adult growth and development derives from 40 years of research. The strategies for adult learning elaborated in this paper are based on this theory.

1.4. ESSENTIAL FEATURES FOR ADULT LEARNING

While building teams that support learning, many conditions need to be considered.

- Inviting adults into the process of co-inquiring by focusing on question posing instead of question answering,
- For teams to collaborate effectively provide resources.
- Providing adults with relevant data to analyse.
- Providing teachers with tools for accessing useable data and protocols for analyzing and discussing

The next step is to focus on how to structure team meetings in ways that support learning by establishing ground rules that help to create a safe and productive space for learning. If these rules are followed effective learning will take place.

There are different ways by which teachers learn. Teaming, engaging in collegial enquiry are ways by which teachers can be developed. Support can be given by the higher education institutes for the continuous and lifelong learning of the school teachers.

2. TEAMING:

Teaming is very common in the teacher circle. Teaming is a practice that is “vital to success” and “makes a big difference in supporting adult learning. The intention of the author is to say how teaming can be employed as a developmental practice that supports the growth and learning of teachers with diverse ways of knowing.

3.1. EFFECTIVE TEAMING

Teaming is crucial to securing opportunities for critical reflection and to building schools and districts as learning centers. Teaming may focus on team teaching, pairing veteran and new teachers, forming school leadership teams, examining student work and/or teacher practice, or working collaboratively on reforms or improvement issues. Researchers argue that teaming builds individuals, school and system wide capacity for learning and improvement since it builds human capacity (Dufour, 2007; Hannay, Wideman & Seller, 2006; McAdamis, 2007). In fact, today teaming designed to improve student achievement, mis at the center of professional learning (Dufour, 2007; McAdamis, 2007).

Teaming creates opportunities for group and individual reflections, reduces isolation, engenders innovation, builds capacity, and establishes knowledge-based management systems (Barth, 1996, 2006; Wagner et al., 2006; York-Barr, Sommers, Ghore, & Montie, 2006). It creates a context in which adults can engage in dialogue. Teaming enables us to share expertise and support each other's learning. Teaming does the following:

- Supports adult learning and perspective broadening
- Build collegial relationship
- Improve instruction and school wide decision making
- Decreases isolation
- Helps adults adjust to changes
- Helps adults to manage adaptive challenges
- Builds professional learning communities
- Develops and enhances skills for reflection and dialogue.

2.2. SUCCESSFUL TEAMING: KEY ELEMENTS

According to Richard Dufour (1992, 2002, 2007) and others (Johnson et. al., 2007; York-Barr, et al., 2006), the success of teaming as a practice depends on the following:

1. Allocating time, support and parameters to focus on a specific task (eg. For teachers focus is on student learning)
2. Clarifying the purpose and product of collaboration
3. Inviting team members to discuss how they will work together:
 - a. Developing procedures for how the team will operate
 - b. Defining consensus
 - c. Developing an assessment for team effectiveness
 - d. Discussing how team members will resolve conflicts.
4. Establishing "SMART goals: Strategic and specific, Measurable, Attainable, Result oriented, and Time bound" which enable teams to identify and pursue specific measurable performance goals
5. Giving and learning from feedback that is relevant to practice
6. Securing time for celebrating improvement by conveying that a difference is being made

Effective teaming that supports adult learning is not without challenges. Among the more common challenges are securing time for school teachers and administrators to work together. In addition human resistance to working in teams is a common phenomenon. But by using the key elements successfully these challenges can overcome.

3. COLLEGIAL INQUIRY

Collegial inquiry is a kind of collaborative reflective practice. Reflective practice is thought to improve teaching, build leadership, and enhance student achievement. Collegial inquiry can help us to become more aware of the assumptions that inform and guide our thinking, behaviors and approaches to problem solving and to alter those assumptions, freeing us to engage fully in learning and grow.

4.1. GOALS OF COLLEGIAL INQUIRY

Engaging in collegial inquiry is a learning tool for individuals and organizations. School leaders identify collegial inquiry as a mechanism that supports personal and professional learning and growth. When teachers or any adult engage in collegial inquiry, they have the opportunity to become aware of their own and others' thinking and assumptions. This, in turn helps us to understand the behavior and growth. The goals are as follows:

- Who should engage in collegial inquiry
- How to build cultures of collegial inquiry
- How examining assumption can support personal and professional learning

Collegial inquiry need to become a part of the fabric of the school culture, if the school is a true learning center. Examining and modifying our assumptions promotes growth and learning. As Brookfield (1995) explains; "Without the critical reflection, we run the continual risk of making poor decisions and bad judgment. We take action on the basis of assumptions that are unexamined and we believe unquestioningly that others are reading into our actions and meanings that we intend" (pp.3-4).

3.2. COLLABORATIVE CULTURE

Learning opportunities for teachers to engage in collegial inquiry, such as providing peer-review feedback; by engaging in action research; by engaging in collaborative goal setting(Marzano,2007); and by analyzing student work.

- These opportunities center on collegial conversations about the practice of teaching and learning.
- Focus on building adults' capacities to share ownership in decision making and to influence instructional improvement.
- Most of these advocate reflecting and contemplating questions as one way to support learning.
- Oriented towards increasing teacher learning.

So, engaging in shared collegial inquiry is important for all adults, regardless of position, in our schools and school systems. Engaging in collaborative inquiry is a developmental practice and process. This helps us to create greater awareness of our beliefs convictions and values. Engaging in collegial inquiry creates a space for growth.

Collegial inquiry is an effective way to support adult learning and development. It accomplishes the following:

- Supports adult development
- Enhances shared team work
- Builds interpersonal relationships
- Helps adults to manage change
- Strengthens professional learning communities
- Develops skills for reflection and dialogues.

Thus collegial inquiry becomes a holding environment and helps adult learning.

4. UNIVERSITY SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

College or University Schools of Education were urged to develop professional curricula for teacher preparation, provide more pre-service teacher contact with the K-12 schools during their training, and develop a capstone fieldwork experience embedded in the schools (Carnegie Corporation, 2003). Colleges and universities collaborate with K-12 public schools in professional development school (PDS) partnerships to improve teacher training, provide professional development for pre- service, in-service teachers, improve student achievement, and promote action research. By these programs there are lot of advantages for pre-service teachers and for students in classrooms. Professional development activities for in-service teachers, supplied as part of PDS programming, have been connected to increases in student achievement (Fischetti & Larson, 2002; Frey, 2002; Glaeser, Karge, Smith, & Weatherill, 2002; Marchant, 2002).

Pre-service teachers in PDS placements have supervised clinical experiences with strong in-service teacher mentors (Mantle-Bromley, 2002). Pre-service teachers gain an understanding of teaching and learning, and build skills that could guide them toward active participation in their schools throughout their careers (Guadarrama, Ramsey, & Nath, 2002). If in-service teachers continue sharing their students and their classrooms with pre-service teachers, in the PDS it would be fitting to acknowledge their needs and continue to support their personal professional growth. Partnerships between colleges/universities and public school districts can provide the ideal conduit for meeting the needs of all parties while utilizing the strengths and expertise that exist on both campuses. The teacher education institutions need outlets in which pre-service teachers can have structured teaching experiences, and the K-12 schools need access to continuing sources of professional development. Professional Development Schools (PDS) can provide the environment to meet the needs of all learners.

As teaching is a profession, the professional preparation teacher educators are necessary. Professions are characterised by a sufficiently long period of training. Initiatives for continuing professional development include the University School Resource Network. There are few organisations which are working on these lines such as 'a multidisciplinary project involving multilevel institutions envisages forging academic connectivity between higher education and elementary education systems, with networks Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi University, Institute of Home Economics, Gargi College, DIET, Motibagh, Mirambika, Ankur and participating schools), Vidyankura a district level project in Karnataka, housed in National Institute of Advanced Studies, collaborative inservice and foundation programs by organisations like Eklavya, Digantar and Vidya Bhavan Society, Rishi Valley, Banasthali and Sri Aurobindo Education Centres, along with many others'.

At the post graduate level, too, there is an attempt

Teacher Learning Community in a teacher education institution provides the necessary space which could be commonly used for both pre-service and in-service teachers. Teacher education institutes that organize both programmes needs to coordinate with the aim to impact select schools in a concerted manner. For instance, regular teachers of the internship/practice teaching schools (where pre-service students are placed), could participate in the in-service programmes, re-oriented to address the immediate classroom context and learner diversity.

5. CONCLUSION

There is thus a plethora of opportunities and avenues for the continued professional development of teachers. There are varying degrees of success in terms of motivating adults to learn and develop themselves. Micro-stories of success often seem to 'fail' when up scaled. In the context of the school though there are many ways in which the adults or the teachers can learn, this paper has focused mainly on the three ways by which the adults can learn. Finally what we need are the teachers who are lifelong learners and show the path to the students and in their achievement. Traditionally, pre-service teacher education aims to equip prospective teachers with the necessary competence to deliver knowledge and skills for students to meet the manpower/social needs of stakeholders in economic and social developments. But with the new paradigm shift, the aims of new pre-service teacher education are to develop prospective teachers as life-long learning teachers who would creatively contribute to students' life-long learning and development as a competent citizen of the society and world.

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