



---

## **Professional Development Of Teachers**

### **(Meaning, Concept and Importance of Professional Development of Teachers.)**

**Bhajan Lal**

**Assistant Professor of English**

**Dept. of Music and Dance**

**K.U.K.**

#### **Abstract**

The professional development of teachers is regarded as an individual and collective process that should be accomplished in the workplace of the teacher, i.e. the school. The most traditional form of professional development is the typical in service staff training that includes the use of workshops, short seminars and courses. Professional development is the process by which, alone and with others, teachers review, renew and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purposes of teaching ; and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills, planning and practice with children, young people and colleagues through each phase of their teaching lives. Within our context, we are in a position to refer to other notions: permanent training, continued training, in service, human resources development, life-long learning, re-cycling or skill-building courses. The concept development has a connotation related to evolution and continuity which, in our opinion, goes beyond the traditional overlapping of basic and continued teacher education. The professional development of teachers is a broad area which includes any activity or process intent on improving dexterity, attitudes, understanding or involvement in current or future roles. Professional development and change processes are intrinsically connected variables. Professional development sets out to promote change in teachers, so that they may grow as professionals and also as individuals. A large amount of research has focused on trying to understand how, exactly, these changes and developments are constructed as learning. In the study of change processes, emphasis is given to the prejudice and beliefs of teachers. Professional development of teachers is pretty important. A motivated and informed teacher with great inspiring skills is considered to be the most vital factor influencing. In my opinion effective professional development for teachers is continuous, comprehensive, and incessant. It must go on forever like a never –ending brook.



**Key words: Professional, Development, Teachers, Meaning, Concept, Importance.**

**Introduction:**

The professional development of teachers is regarded as an individual and collective process that should be accomplished in the workplace of the teacher, i.e. the school. But it's a sorry state that education reform initiatives of the last twenty years have not much improved the students' performance. The main reason is that the policy makers sit in AC rooms and make policies. Apart from it our political system is also culprit for it. Above all, too little attention has been paid to what actually goes on in the classroom. This paper focuses attention on the importance of teachers professional development in changing teachers' classroom behaviours in ways that lead to improvement in student performance. Dan Hull, president and CEO of CORD has the same opinion about teachers' professional Development. In the Preface of the research paper named Teacher Professional Development : It's Not an Event, It's a process by Sandra H Harwell, Vice President, professional Development of CORD, he writes :

“For the most part, improving schools is ultimately about improving student performance. Contrary to popular thought, student achievement is not tied directly to higher expectations, more accountability, high-stakes tests, more time on task, new curricula and materials, more computers, or sophisticated lab equipment. Improved student performance is the result of improved teaching skills focused on average students.”<sup>1</sup>

**Meaning of Teachers Professional Development:**

Now the question is what is teacher's professional development. How it can be measured, what are the phases or characteristics of this phenomena? According to Villages Reimers:

“The most traditional form of professional development is the typical “in service staff training” that includes the use of workshops, short seminars and courses. Another types of professional development forms are for example case based professional development, collegial development (Professional dialogues, peer supervising, etc.) observations of excellent



practice, increasing teacher participation in new roles, skills development model, reflective model: teacher as reflective practitioner, project-based models, portfolios, action research, teacher narratives, the cascade-model or training-of-trainers model, coaching-mentoring.”<sup>2</sup>

In other words we can say that professional development is the process by which, alone and with others, teachers review, renew and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purposes of teaching; and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills, planning and practice with children, young people and colleagues through each phase of their teaching lives. It is perceived as a long-term process, teachers are expected to learn over time. Moreover, a teacher is conceived of as a reflective practitioner, someone who enters the profession with a certain knowledge base and who will acquire new knowledge and experience based on prior knowledge.

### **Concept of Professional Development of Teachers.**

Now we will discuss the concept of the professional development of teachers. Within our context, we are in a position to refer to other notions: permanent training, continued training, in service, human resources development, life-long learning, recycling or skill-building courses. However, we are of the opinion that the term professional development 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, in our opinion, goes beyond the traditional overlapping of basic and continued teacher education. Rudduk 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.”<sup>3</sup>

We will now go on to present some of the more recent definitions of the professional development of teachers’ concept. According to Fullen:



“The professional development of teachers is a broad area which includes any activity or process intent on improving dexterity, attitudes, understanding or involvement in current or future roles.”<sup>4</sup>

We can also say that work opportunities encourage creative and reflective skills in the teachers, thus, enabling them to improve their practices. In the words of Oldroyd & Hall :

“It implies the improvement of control skills of actual working conditions, a progression of professional status within the teaching career.”<sup>5</sup>

As may be observed, both the most recent as well as the most ancient definitions interpret professional teaching development as a process, which can be either individual or collective, but which should be contextualized in the teacher’s workplace and contributes to the development of the aforementioned professional competencies by means of a variety of formal and informal experiences.

The development of the teaching profession concept has changed over the last decade, as a result of an evolution in the understanding of how the teaching to learn processes are produced. The professional development of teachers has the following characteristics:

1. It is based on constructivism and not on transmissive models, whereby the teacher is regarded as someone who learns actively while being involved in specific teaching tasks through evaluation, observation and reflection;
2. Professional teacher development is directly related to school reform processes, where the latter is viewed as a process that tends to re-construct school culture and in which teachers are involved as professional ;
3. Professional development is conceived as a collaborative process, even though it is assumed that there may be room for isolated work and reflection.

In other words we can say that it is a process which takes place in specific context, Unlike traditional training practices, the most effective experiences for professional teacher development are those based on the school and which are connected to the daily activities carried out by teachers. Sparks & Loucks-Horsley also agree with the same process. They say :



“It is defined as the entire process that improves knowledge, dexterity or teacher attitudes”.<sup>6</sup>

While the end result of all education reform should be student improvement, every reform initiative, if it is to succeed, must begin with recognition of the importance of teachers in raising student performance. In the words of Joyce and Showers:

“Student achievement is the product of formal study by educators”.<sup>7</sup>

India is a large country. In ancient times it was believed that 70% of the total population of India resided in the villages. But a lot of change has taken place. These days the so called villages have all the facilities as the city folk have with all the amenities. India is a diverse country. There is diversity in unity. A teacher, when enters the classroom, has to take uncountable things in his mind such as individual differences, dialects of the students, environment, etc.

As long as this is the case, education reform in this country will continue to be largely ineffective. We can not expect students to change what they do if we are content for teachers to continue doing what they have always done. So how can we get teachers to change what they do? The answer is high-quality teacher professional development. When teachers are given the opportunity, via high-quality professional development, to learn new strategies for teaching to rigorous standards, they report changing their teaching in the classroom. Berliner has a very strong plea when he says:

“I feel that very little attention has been given to the development of the evolutionary aspects of the teaching to learn process, from the basic training stage up to insertion and continued training.”<sup>8</sup>

### **Professional Development and Changes Required in Teachers.**

As already mentioned, professional development and change processes are intrinsically connected variables. Professional development sets out to promote change in teachers, so that they may grow as professionals and also as individuals. A large amount of research has focused on trying to understand how, exactly, these changes and developments are constructed as learning. In the study of change processes, emphasis is given to the prejudice and beliefs of teachers.



In the words of Gess-Newsome :

“Even though knowledge beliefs are often rather confused in some pieces of research, such phenomena should be differentiated. Knowledge is often described as being based on proof, as dynamic, without emotional influences, internally structured and which develops with age and experience... Beliefs have affective and valorizing functions, acting as a fitter of information that influences how knowledge is used, stored and recovered. However, some conduct types are foreseen.”<sup>9</sup>

Thus professional development sets out to bring about change in the beliefs and knowledge of teachers. By the same taken, the change of teaching practices in the classroom and, consequently, probable improvement in the results of student learning.

### **Importance of Professional Development of Teachers.**

Professional development of teachers is pretty important. Students can be taught in a better way with adequate innovations. A motivated and informed teacher with great inspiring skills is considered to be the most vital factor influencing students achievement, so we need to draw everyone’s attention to how we equip and support our teachers. This, as we all know very well, results in creating great students who will eventually shape up a better future for everyone. It is always ideal to allow teacher candidates to apply skills required for effective teaching and learning, so most education schools put a special emphasis on subject matter mastery as well as opportunities to observe real practices in a school candidate environment. When a teacher is mentored by an experienced teacher, he or she is able to put some of the things they have learned into practice under the supervision. This provides an excellent learning and practising environment for a teacher candidate provided that they receive feedback from their mentor upon their teaching practice. They are also able to witness best practices and learn what to do or what to do through case studies they have experienced during their observation in a real classroom.

When one graduates from the education school or college, may consider himself ready until he steps into the classroom full of students with a lot of expectations. Life



for new teachers with little supervision and support could be difficult. To prevent such things, schools should be able to ensure that they receive mentoring and coaching from experienced teachers so that they learn from best practices. It is crucial that educational institutions, ministries of education and other authorities help new teachers analyse their own learning and teaching practices through a number of ways. These can be provided to them firstly through induction programmer which enable the effective development of new teachers. Secondly, an ongoing professional development programme is run throughout the academic year rather than one-shot workshops or seminars designated at the beginning of the school year.

### **Conclusion:**

At a time when more and more emphasis is being placed on measuring student performance and, as a result, on “teaching to the test”, it is critical that we don’t lose sight of what really makes a difference in student performance the classroom teacher. We must find ways to prepare teachers to use the best tools and techniques and methods in their teaching. We should also equip those teachers with knowledge and skills that will enable them to provide the students with best out of them.

In pursuing that goal we should seek ways to implement and support professional development programs that not only empower teachers to succeed in the present but enable them to grow over time. This is especially true with respect to technology, which has become an essential tool in teaching and learning and will continue to play a significant role in education far into future. Let’s quote the words of Joyce & Showers who say:

“ Professional development should be designed around research – documented practices that enable educators to develop the skills necessary to implement what they are learning.” 10

It will be interesting to follow the progress made in the future in the area of improving the teaching and learning environment. In my opinion effective professional development for teachers is continuous, comprehensive and incessant. It must go on for ever like a never- ending brook.



**Works cited:**

1. Harwell, H.Sandra, Teacher Professional Development : It's Not an Event, It's a Process, the Preface by Dan Hull.
2. Villegas- Reimers, Eleonora. 2003. Teacher Professional Development : An International Riview of the Literature. Paris : UNESCO, International Institute for Educational Planning.
3. Rudduck, J. (1991). Innovation and Change. Milton Keynes : Open University. P. 129.
4. Fullen, M. (1990).Staff Development Innovation and Institutional Development. In B. Joyce (ed.), School Culture Through Staff Development. Virginia : ASCD, p.3.
5. Oldroyd, D.& Hall, V. (1991). Managing Staff Development. London : Paul Chapman, p.3.
6. Sparks, D & Loucks-Horsley, S. (1990). Models of staff Development. In W.R. Houston (ed.), Handbook of Research on Teacher on Teacher Education. New York : McMillan Pub.,pp.234-251.
7. Joyce, B., & Showers, B. (2002). Student Achievement Through Staff Development. Alexandria, Virginia : Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, p.3.
8. Beerliner, D.C. (2000). A Personal Response to Those Who Bash Teacher Education. Journal of Teacher Education, p.370.
9. Gess- Newsome, J. (2003). Secondary Teachers Knowledge and Beliefs about Subject Matter and Their Impact on Instructions. In J. Gess- Newsome (ed.), Examining Pedagogical Content Knowledge. The Construct and its Implication for Science Education. New York : Kluwer Academic Publisher, p.55.
10. Joyce, B., & Showers, B. (2002). Student Achievement Through Staff Development. Alexandria, Virginia : Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.