



NEED OF IN-SERVICE TRAININGS FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

The government of our country has been working hard enough to launch various schemes to make education possible for each and every child of the country. No doubt the schemes have been implemented with heart and soul and fruitful results have been achieved. But when it comes to the learning outcomes of the children our schools generally fail to meet the set standards. A teacher is the linchpin of the education system of any country. Studies suggest that the quality of teachers have to be enhanced through trainings if quality of education provided in the schools has to be raised. The present paper hence tries to find out the reasons behind the need of in-service trainings for the elementary school teachers. Through extensive literature survey the paper concludes that there are several reasons primarily the poor pre-service trainings and the new role expectations of teachers and the right of teachers to have professional development that show that teachers are in a dire need of good in-service trainings.

KEYWORDS : Pre-service trainings, evaluation, new roles, professional growth

Introduction:

Today almost every nation has very well understood the fact that the best way to develop and prosper is to produce the best manpower in terms of knowledge, skills and attitude. A good education system is the key to this which will not only make the present generation wiser and more competent but will also help the country to be ready with a workforce to handle the challenges and problems in the years to come. Out of the four goals of SSA -Universal Enrollment, Universal Access, Universal Retention and Quality of education, India has successfully achieved the first three goals but much has to be done for the successful accomplishment of the last but the most important goal. Several researches have stated that government and private schools have been successful in bringing children to the schools (reasons may be growing awareness about education or the mid-day meal scheme) to a large extent. But at the same time questions have been put up on the quality of education that such schools are providing to the children.

The Education Commission (1964-66) have pointed out that, "Of all the different factors which influence the quality of education and its contribution to national development, the quality, competence and character of teachers are undoubtedly the most significant." Good books, high-quality infrastructure and sound policies are some of the necessary elements of a school but all these would not give results which a learned and dedicated teacher can give. Hence the role of a teacher cannot be ignored.

Why to raise the quality of education that schools provide? The answer is 'In-Service Training of teachers'. Extensive literature study on the training needs of teachers have led to five major reasons that calls for the establishment of good in-service training program, both for government and private elementary school teachers.

1. New demands on teaching profession

Why training is necessary for teachers? Isn't what they have learnt as students enough to become teachers? For instance, to know the definition of pollution, causes of it and the ways to reduce it to teach in a science class or the concept of addition of two numbers, three numbers and statement problems on it, is sufficient to transfer knowledge to students. Moreover textbooks are available which have the content and thus one needs to just explain those concepts to the students. But today teaching is not just limited to theoretical concepts. It's lot more. Teachers are expected to sensitize students on the issue of pollution and help students think of new innovative ways to tackle the problem.

The world and the society are changing at a rapid pace and due to the advancement in the field of science and technology; there is an explosion of knowledge which lay new demands and expectations on the teaching profession. The good thing is that the technology itself is a solution and it helps to successfully accomplish demands

put up, however this requires continuous and updated training of teachers on the use of technology.

2. Inefficient and poor quality Pre-service trainings

Pre-service training is the program (Diploma in education for primary teachers and Bachelors of Education for the rest) which prepares teachers for the school system. Several researches done on the effectiveness of such training programs have reported that the curriculum, structure and execution of pre-service training programs are not at all appropriate for shaping competent future teachers. It is quite sorry to say that the teachers get only a handful of practical experience from the pre-service trainings and thus the teacher certification received by them is just for the sake of name. Also the different styles in which teaching skills are learned and practiced during pre-service trainings are quite different as they are used in actual classroom settings (Bhargava, 2009). Therefore, it becomes quite necessary that teachers also receive trainings after they join the profession in order to remove their teaching hurdles.

3. Low learning outcomes of students

Reading and writing are the two basic skills required by the elementary school children. Reading helps one to acquire new knowledge and writing helps one to express oneself on paper. But researches state that children do not achieve the expected levels of attainment despite of readily available textbooks and efforts put up by the teachers. This puts the education system to think on strategies which can raise the basic the learning outcomes of the children; out of which the most crucial one is to train elementary school teachers so that they can help children learn to read and write in a better way.

4. Negation of Practice of Teacher Evaluation

Receiving continuous positive and negative feedback helps an individual to feel happy about what he is doing well and at the same time rectify the teaching mistakes being pointed out by the seniors. And yet, in most government schools, the concept of teacher evaluation remains unimportant. Researches support that in some schools, principals take the pains of evaluating their teachers but such principals are themselves not the masters in identifying the flaws of the teachers, hence, they end up evaluating the performances of all the teachers as satisfactory. This leads to a carefree attitude among the non-performing teachers and at the same time the good teachers get no motivation to continue their hard work. This is even more harmful for new entrants as they get no guidelines to remove errors in their teaching styles and thus continue in the similar way for the coming years.

In such conditions, in-service trainings can be a good platform wherein the teachers can have a thorough discussion on their strengths and weaknesses with the expert trainers. Now here it becomes quite imperative that the trainers before giving up

trainings to a group of teachers observe them for some days and list down the common and individual problem areas of those teachers and at the same time some good practices can be noted down. Even if such exercise is difficult to conduct, on the spot identification of problem areas can be done. For instance, teachers can be asked to do a certain activity and the completion of the activity would ascertain whether training in the particular area is needed or not. Some of such activities can be to explain a certain topic (for subject trainings) or to explain the same topic again but in a different manner (for communication skills trainings) or to apply their knowledge in creation of self-made exercises and activities for students based on a topic (for innovative teaching techniques trainings). Sharing of good practices can also help teachers to learn and modify themselves.

Hence this makes in-service trainings to be an important tool to act as a feedback mechanism of education system where in an attempt will be made to remove the weaknesses of the teachers and reinforce the strengths of teachers.

5. Changing perception of the roles and skills of a teacher

Teachers are believed to be the guiding lamp of students since ages. But the role they used to play in olden days has considerably changed. Teachers of today are perceived to play very diverse kinds of roles for which completely new set of skills are required by them. The first and foremost skill required by a teacher is to be an able communicator who can talk to the students with confidence. Children of elementary classes are generally good followers but they need good leaders whom they can follow. They search their leaders in their teachers. Hence teachers should possess qualities that children can admire and pursue. Also teachers should be so with whom the children feel free to solve not only their intellectual queries but also lesson their emotional or psychological stress. Hamre & Pianta (2001) have found that friendly attitude of elementary school teachers with their students cast positive impact on the overall personality of the child for the whole life. Further a child wants its teacher to be an angel who knows everything and thus a teacher plays the role of a knowledge resource for its students. Here this means that in the era of computers and internet, students have lot more sources from where they can get the required information than it used to be earlier. The wide range of exposure that children have got today through television and other multimedia options raises numerous questions in their minds. And for solution of such queries a child looks towards its teachers. More to it, teachers are also required to be facilitators and classroom managers who deal with a class which is a mix of students that come from varying social and economical backgrounds and have different abilities and capabilities. It is the teacher who is required to pull out that capability out of a child and make it the child's asset. Teachers have the immense responsibility of making the students not just learners of written facts but also thinkers of future generations.

Thus can we rely on students turned teachers who are themselves not thinkers for making the students in their hands to be great thinkers? No, we can't. Therefore, our teachers need support of continuous training to make them capable enough to teach and guide the 21st century learners.

6. Professional growth

Last but not the least is the overall personality development of the teachers. Dixon et al (2014) have found that teachers who spend more time in expanding and practicing their teaching styles through professional development programs are found to be more confident and effective in their classrooms. Every teacher of today is expected to perform her duty in a professional manner and for the achievement of such high standards; a teacher needs to have trainings that can help her become competent in all spheres of life. A confident teacher would surely deliver confident students.

Conclusion

Rabindranath Tagore has rightly said that a teacher can never truly teach unless he is still learning himself. A lamp can never light

another lamp unless it continues to burn its own flame. These golden words are quite enough to spell the significance of training of teachers. The above discussion clearly states that the issues like dynamic world, poor-quality pre-service trainings, low learning outcomes of students and new emerging roles of teachers should not be overlooked and it's high time that the government (and private) schools and other educational bodies accept the importance of In-service trainings of teachers and respond to the teachers' needs accordingly and appropriately. New roles of teachers that have emerged due to the knowledge explosion necessitate trainings to be given to teachers in a wide range of teaching approaches and styles. This can be successfully done with the help of the latest technologies such as the use of video conferencing, internet, PowerPoint presentations and distance learning programs. All efforts put into the education system, in terms of money and labour would be of no use unless knowledgeable, dynamic and professionally competent teachers are not produced.

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