

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of Teachers for a Learning Society.

*Dr Saroj Pandey**

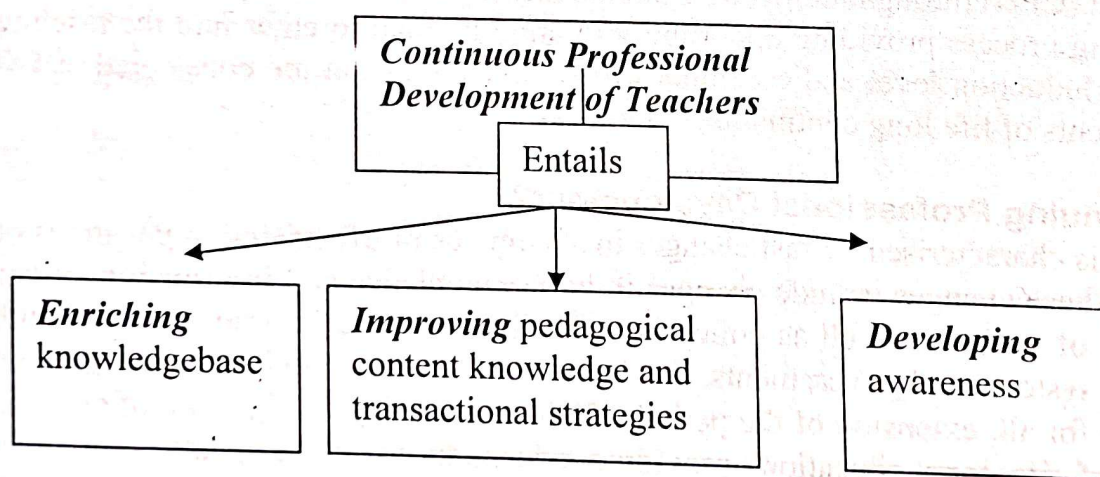
The changing vision of teaching and learning that underline the current educational reforms in India and other countries expects teachers to help students develop rich understanding of content, think critically, construct their knowledge and solve problems, synthesize information and express themselves proficiently. Quality has become the key word reiterated world wide, and the need to raise the standard of education a priority of all governments. However, if these efforts are to succeed, it is imperative that teachers are professionally well equipped with the content and pedagogical knowledge to meet the challenges arising out of these reforms and implement the policies in their classrooms. The importance of this role of teachers has been recognised and powerfully expressed by the International Commission on Education for the Twenty – First Century (1996), and World Education Report (1998) published by UNESCO. Teacher Education, in this context, has been considered as a dynamic and life long process, and as a long continuum. Four key stages of a teacher's professional development have been identified and universally accepted, including, the initial training, induction training (the first year of teaching), early professional development (in the second and third years of teaching), and continuous professional development (CPD) throughout life. The initial teacher education is seen as the first step of career long process providing opportunity to an individual to enter into the teaching profession. Induction level and continuous in-service education are considered as two crucial elements of life long continuum.

Why Continuing Professional Development?

The past era is characterised by fast changes in all spheres of life having implications on education. These changes include changes in both, knowledge and information system and structure of society as well as policy issues and often place contradictory demands on education systems and governments. For instance on the one hand there are demands for education for all, extension of the period of initial schooling, recognition of growing importance of life long education, providing education to children and youth that

* Reader, Department of Teacher Education, NCERT, New Delhi

prepares them for life instead of providing skills for specific job, thrust on environmental issues, sustainable development, tolerance and mutual understanding; and on the other hand there are growing inequalities, deepening social differences, growing intolerance and breakdown in social cohesion and drop out in schools etc. As a result, teachers are constantly called upon to face the challenges of not only added work in content areas in their curriculum, but also a number of problems related to the socio-emotional adjustments of learners. Teachers are required to continuously update and upgrade their knowledge, skills and competencies throughout their life to avoid professional obsolescence. Besides, education is seen as an instrument for wider socio-economic reforms and therefore considered as a means to an end, rather than, an end in itself. Due to the high instrumental value of education all governments around the world try to implement their political agenda in the form of educational policies through the education system. Teachers are seen as the chief agents who implement these policies inside classroom. The Education Commission (1964-66) of India very clearly specified this role of teachers as "no system can rise above the level of its teachers". Teachers like any other professionals need to update their skills and knowledge base at regular intervals to keep informed of the changes in the field of education and expectations from them to transform those changes into reality. Grundy and Robinson (2004) identify three interconnected purposes of CPD: extension, growth and renewal. Extension is through introducing new knowledge or skills to a teacher's repertoire, growth is by the development of greater levels of expertise and renewal is achieved through transformation and change of knowledge and practice.



Emerging Paradigm of Learning and CPD

The concept of intelligence and learning itself is undergoing major transformation. Human nature is considered to be multidimensional and learning a lifelong process.

The teacher, in this context is considered as facilitator of opportunities whereby interaction and intelligence transfer from one type to another type may be facilitated which will help in achievement of a higher level of intelligence or meta thinking. Therefore, there is need of encouraging critical pedagogy, which emphasises developing students' ability to learn persistently and on how to learn systematically creatively and critically.

The concept of learning has also undergone change from the traditional behaviourist perspective to constructivist perspective. The emerging epistemology considers that learning does not involve discovering reality but constructing the reality. Knowledge and cognition are constructed and effects are to be felt, learning is no more passive absorption of knowledge and ideas, but the construction of ideas developed on the basis of one's personal experiences. (Mayer, 1992: Hendry, 1996, 1996). Therefore learning is not mere absorption of knowledge and learner is no longer controlled respondent to stimuli as in the behaviourist approach (Jonassen, 1999: Perkins, 1991a) but is considered as 'already a scientist' (Solomon, 1994. P. 16) who actively constructs learning while trying to make sense of the world through his own experiences, goals, curiosities and beliefs. Knowledge according to constructivist epistemology cannot be transferred intact from one individual to another and therefore, learning and teaching cannot be synonymous: we can teach, even well, without having students learn. What can be the better example of it than the present school system in the country where inspite of all inputs the learning outcomes of students both at the cognitive and psycho-emotional levels are quite unsatisfactory.

A basic premise of constructivism is that individuals live in their own world of personal and subjective experiences and built new knowledge on the basis of their previous experiences, rather than new knowledge being imposed from outside. The role of teacher therefore has undergone a major transformation from the imparter of knowledge to facilitator of conditions that will help learner in the process of knowledge construction. The instruction in constructivist approach centers on the experiences of learner. Meaningful understanding occurs when students develop effective ways to resolve problems; therefore, instructional contents cannot be specified. The constructivist teacher, therefore, cannot be effective by just following the teaching method that relies heavily on breaking content into smaller components of observable and achievable objectives, which are measurable immediately after the instruction. Instead the constructivist teacher assumes that every learner has a unique perspective, so the notion of the 'average' learner is rejected (Bednar et. Al, 1992). It provides a major shift from all learners learning the same things' to 'different learners learning different things'. Pre specified content and objectives are not congruent with the constructivist view; instead the objects emerge and are realized through learner's search

for authentic tasks via critical thinking, reflection, and problem solving approach. Therefore the teacher must confront students with information and experiences that challenge their misconceptions and offer opportunities for this reflective process and augment their metacognitive capabilities. In such a situation learners are more likely to view the problem with a greater sense of ownership. According to Grey (2001), authentic learning occurs when instruction is designed to facilitate, stimulate, and recreate real life complexities and occurrences. Learning in a constructivist perspective is therefore understood as a self-regulatory process of resolving inner cognitive conflicts that often become apparent through concrete experience, collaborative discourses and reflection. Richardson (1999) states that student-directed learning and curricula have become the focal points for constructivist based educational practices. The entire focus of National Curriculum Framework (2005) is based on the constructivist theory of learning whereby the role of teacher is visualised as facilitator of opportunities and conditions that would ensure students' learning than the traditional role of teacher as the imparter of knowledge and information. Now instead of merely passing on information to students the teachers are expected to

- Present problems of emerging relevance to students;
- Structure learning around the experiences of learners;
- Give importance to students' points of view;
- Adapt curriculum to address students' suppositions.

Professional development of teachers according to this approach is considered 'as a process of generating personal theories of action. Schon (1987) considered teachers as reflective practioners who do not simply implement theories but construct them from their practice through an active dialogue with the materials, which constitute their field of action.

ICT in Education and CPD

Another major development of the present century is the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) not only in all spheres of life, but, also in the field of education. Teachers today are expected to be efficient in the use of multiple modes of ICT in their teaching. Therefore they themselves be comfortable in the use of ICT and utilise this mode for their own professional development also.

It is clear that the focus has now been shifted from teaching to learning and from all learners learning the same thing to different learners learning different things at same time. In this context, the role of teacher is also undergoing change and teachers now have supporting role-facilitating the learning of students, listening to them and their

needs and providing strategies, tools, skills and resources to make learning possible. Teacher is expected to facilitate conditions, which will help students to develop the ability to learn persistently, systematically, critically and creatively. The emerging concept of teaching conceives it as a process to initiate, facilitate and sustain students' self-learning and self-actualisation. Today's teacher needs to be flexible to ever changing environment, including, society, technology and the world in which we live in. Therefore, teachers themselves have to be life long learner and should be engaged in experimentation, continuous discovery, and self-actualisation. It is within this context the professional development of teachers occurs. There are four stages of a teacher's professional development: initial; induction (the first year of teaching); early professional development (EPD)(within five years of joining teaching profession); and Continuous Professional Development (CPD). Tomlinso (1999) and knight (2002) stressing on the need of continuing professional development of teachers, maintained that 'continuing professional development is needed because initial teacher education can not contain all the propositional knowledge that is needed and certainly not the procedural 'how to' knowledge which grows in practice.' Shulman's (1987) list of seven types of teaching knowledge has been widely cited. These include content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, curriculum knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of educational context, and knowledge of educational ends, purposes and values and their philosophical and historical backgrounds. However, over the years doubts have been raised about the meaning and scope of these areas (e.g. Day, 1999; Mc Cullouch, Helsbhy, & knight, 2000) and these areas have been considered to be dealing mainly with the propositional areas. Shulman's list provides very little scope for professional development in non-cognitive areas which form essential component of any teaching learning process, especially 'emotional intelligence' (Goleman 1998) has been recognised as very crucial area influencing the whole education system and teachers are expected to be well equipped with the content and pedagogical skills to handle it with care.

Professional development CPD, therefore, is a priority of both education system and teachers alike. For a learning society teachers need to be life long learners and continuously update and upgrade their content knowledge and pedagogical skill. CPD should become the integral part of teachers' academic career. Therefore there is need for retooling, remodeling, reimagining and revitalising CPD for teacher incorporating the principles of adult learning i.e. andragogy instead of existing programmes based on the principles of pedagogy. Adult learners need to be self directed, they display readiness to learn when they have a perceived need; and they desire immediate application of new skills and knowledge (Knowles, 1980). Any professional development programme can be effective only when it is embedded in the reality of

schools and teachers work and is designed with teacher input. Therefore instead of existing professional development programmes carried out in the form of in-service training of teachers which is one shot affair, CPD needs to be on going process through self initiated learning including, workshops, orientation or training programmes visits to other institutions, study circles, discussion forums, extension lectures, contribution in journals, university-school partnerships (Darling-Hammond, 1997), teacher networks collaborative (Little, 1993; Renyi, 1996) etc. What these strategies have in common is the opportunities for teachers to take ownership of professional development process to be knowledge creators as opposed to mere receivers of information.

The traditional face-to-face models of in-service education of teachers' professional developments have their own limitations and teachers need to utilise various non conventional modes of learning if they are really interested in their own learning and keeping themselves abreast with the developments taking place around the world. Distance learning technology in this context is important as it has established its relevance and efficiency across the globe and considered as having immense potentials for CPD. By infusing various technologies in teacher training process teachers' professional development can truly be made a career long process. Besides technology extends training into and beyond the classroom, no longer bound by fixed schedules or physical space for instruction required (anytime, anywhere learning). On going pedagogical support and teacher networking are the key ingredients of effective in-service training facilitated by technology.

Use of ICT for professional development of teachers provides the flexibility necessary for successful delivery of education. It can help in improving the quality of training by providing access to lots more and better educational resources, multimedia simulation of good teaching practices, asynchronous and individualised learning opportunities. Online technologies provide a powerful new tool to enhance and extend teacher quality programs, making available content-rich and classroom-connected resources in ways that bridge time and distance. E-learning is emerging as a powerful mode of CPD for teachers to learn new knowledge and skill using computer network technologies due to various reasons such as:

- Easy access to large volume of diverse learning resources.
- Flexibility, convenience, choice and simplicity.
- It provides opportunity to teachers for any time and anywhere learning.
- Choice of learning style.
- Opportunity of interaction with tutors, peers, and groups in real time (synchronous) and over a period (asynchronous).

- Virtual learning methods especially e-mails, discussions groups and learning communities provide environment where teachers learn from each other without compromising their individual freedom.
- Exposes teachers to pedagogical practices, which they are expected to teach their own students.
- Teachers begin to learn skills and develop new knowledge on-line through interaction with instructors, mentors, peers, subject experts and collectively construct their own knowledge and skills.

But using technology for CPD should not be considered a panacea, it is hard to implement and the success rate in developing countries is low. Even in developed countries like USA online teachers' professional development programmes report more than 30% dropout rate due to decline in participants' motivation or availability of time. In addition developing countries also face problems of low bandwidth, telecommunication costs, and limited computer access etc. Besides, before technology can be used as the media for CPD, teachers need face-to-face professional development in the use of these technologies. These problems may be overcome with suitable combination of offline training modalities such as CD-ROMs, store and forward e-mail for sharing documents, video, diskettes, and other printed materials to support technology.

There is also growing consensus in the literature regarding the elements of effective professional development for teachers which incorporates principles of adult learning: Adult learners need to be self-directed; they display readiness to learn when they have a perceived need; and they desire immediate application of new skills and knowledge (Knowles, 1980). Therefore any professional development programme can be effective only when it is based on the felt needs of the target group and gives ownership to teachers for their own learning.

Effective professional development is embedded in the reality of schools and teachers work. It is designed with teachers input. It fosters critical reflection and meaningful collaboration. It is internally coherent and rigorous, and it is sustained over the long term (Little, 1993; Renyi, 1996; Sparks & Hirsch, 1997). Promising professional development is aligned with effective teaching and learning: "Principles that describe effective teaching for students in classrooms should not differ for adults in general and teachers in particular" (Rueda, 1998).

To sum up CPD for learning society calls for change in traditional training approach which is predominantly dominated by lecture method. Lecture method needs to be replaced by self initiated and institutionally organised efforts such as self learning, participation in seminar, and symposia, group discussions and other participatory methods, study groups, contribution in literary journals, and undertaking action researches etc as part of CPD. Focussed study groups, teacher collaborative long term partnerships and similar modes of professional development activities offer teachers a means of locating new ideas in relation to their individual and institutional context. Effective CPD should focus not only on the content but also on active learning which includes opportunity for teachers to engage in meaningful analysis of teaching and learning. This can be ensured by providing opportunities to participants in the teacher training programmes to observe, practice, and involve in discussions to clarify their doubts. Therefore CPD for a learning society challenges the notion of 'one size fits all' mode of existing in-service teacher education programmes which introduces largely standardised contents to teachers having varying teaching experiences, expertise, and socio-cultural contexts. CPD for learning society places classroom practice in the larger context of the local socio-cultural realities, thereby, contextualising teaching. It develops the ability among teachers to place learners' experiences in the forefront of classroom practices. It also prepares teachers to employ the techniques and perspectives of inquiry. Teacher from this perspective has to be life long learner utilising all possible channels of communication and information to update and upgrade his/her knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge to facilitate learning among the learners.

References

- Day, Christopher (1999). *Developing teachers: The challenges of life long learning*. London: Flamer press.
- Darling- Hammond, L.(1997). *The right to learn: A blueprint for creating schools that work*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass
- Knowles, M. (1980). *The modern practice of adult education*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Cambridge Adult Education.
- Knight. P.T.(2002). *Being a teacher in higher education*. Bukingham: Society for Research in Higher Education and Open University Press.
- Little, J.W.(1993). Teachers' professional development in a climate of education reform. *Education Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 15,129-151.

- Ministry of Human Resource Development. (1986) *National Policy on Education*, New Delhi: GOI
- Pandey. S.(1998). Teachers for the twenty first century: redefining professionalism for global perspective. *University News*, 36(6), 15-19.
- Renyi, J.(1996). Teacher take charge of their learning: Transforming professional development for student success. New York. National Foundation for the Improvement of Education.
- Rueda, R.(1998). Standards for professional development: A sociocultural perspective (Research Brief No.2). Santa Cruz, CA: University of California, Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence.
- Sparks, D., & Hirsch, S.(1997). A new vision for staff development. Alexandria, VA, and Oxford, OH. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and National Staff Development Council.
- Shulman, M.(1987). Knowledge and teaching foundations of the new reforms. *Harvard Education Review*, 57 (1), 1-22.
- Tomlinso.P. (1999). Conscious reflection and implicit learning in teacher preparation. Part-I. *Oxford Review of Education*, 25(3), 405-420.