

In-Service Teacher Education Programmes

Issues and Challenges

HIMANSHI PIPLANI* AND SHRUTI CHOPRA**

ABSTRACT

Teacher professional development is an integral part of educational reforms as highlighted in various educational policies and commission reports including National Policy of Education (1986) and Kothari commission (1964–66). This paper presents a study of in-service teacher education programmes and the perceptions of 30 teachers from government schools and private schools. The data, collected through responses elucidated in interviews, were qualitatively analysed using a framework designed by the researchers. The findings highlight the factors that contribute or hinder the implementation of the in-service teacher education programmes and the need for moving beyond the traditional model of in-service teacher training. Further, the study draws upon suggestions for re-designing in-service programmes.

Keywords: *In-service teacher education programmes, government school teachers, private school teachers*

Introduction

Eduard Lindeman, an American educator and a philosopher, viewed education as life-long learning. It does not culminate at a particular age. According to Kothari Commission (1964–66), a teacher, unlike an ordinary worker, acts as a facilitator, collaborator, and, significantly, a ‘co-learner,’ rather than information regurgitator. Therefore, a teacher should continue making efforts in this direction for the whole life. Also, keeping pace with the fast changing times and

* Primary School teacher, Bharat National Public School, EA-39 Inderpuri, New Delhi-110012. (e-mail: Himanshiplani@gmail.com), 9968739427

** Assistant Professor, Department of Elementary Education, Lady Shri Ram College, Delhi University. H-5/1 Malviya Nagar, New Delhi-110017. (e-mail: srhythm7@gmail.com), 9999184633

exponential growth in knowledge, it is necessary for the teachers to continuously upgrade themselves. This continual education is also important in order to enable teachers to handle the new material with ease and effectiveness. Rabindra Nath Tagore has rightly stated, “A lamp can never light another lamp unless it continues to burn its flame.” Thus, teacher education programmes need to prepare teachers not only to teach but how to keep pace with the changing times and changing curriculum in order to enrich their classrooms. In-service programmes were developed with the same objective of keeping teachers abreast with new innovations and concepts of education.

Rationale of the Study

Though the professional preparation of teachers has been recognised as crucially important, the ground reality remains a matter of great concern. The Kothari Commission (1964–1966) emphasised the need for teacher education to be brought into mainstream academic life, but teacher education institutes continue to exist as insular organisations. The commission strongly recommended that — i) large scale programmes should be organised by universities and teacher organisations at all levels to enable every teacher to receive 2–3 months of in-service education in every five years of service, ii) continuing in-service education should be based on research inputs, iii) training institutions should work on 12 months basis and organise in-service programmes, such as refresher courses, seminars, workshops and summer institutes. The Report of the National Commission on Teachers (1985) highlighted the absence of clear-cut policies and priorities for in-service education and lack of systematic identification of needs. The Commission mooted the idea of teachers’ centres that could function as a meeting place for teachers located in a school.

Further, the landmark National Policy on Education (1986) expressed its serious concerns over the diminishing status of teachers which adversely affected the quality of education and many of the ills of the education system were ascribed to it. It linked in-service teacher education as a continuum with pre-service education. A Centrally Sponsored Scheme of restructuring and strengthening of teacher education was evolved and implemented. The *Acharya Ramamurti* Review Committee (1990) explicitly stated that, “In-service and refresher courses should be related to the specific needs of the teachers. In-service education should take

due care of the future needs of teacher growth; evaluation and follow up should be part of the scheme.” National Curriculum Framework (2005) further suggested that in-service education programmes should be organised according to the actual needs of the teachers and must be situated within the context of the classroom experiences of teachers. National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (2009) suggested that a teacher needs to be prepared in relation to the needs and demands arising in the school context, to engage with questions of school knowledge, the learner and the learning process.

The developments in teacher education suggest that several attempts have been made in the recent past to enhance the responsiveness of the programmes in relation to expectations regarding them. The attempts made have not led to a significant impact on the field. According to Derin Atay (2008), current in-service education and training programmes are often found to be unsatisfactory due to the fact that they don't provide the teachers with opportunities to be actively involved in their development and to reflect on their teaching experiences. Therefore, it is important to study and document the perceptions of teachers about in-service education programmes and find out the gaps (if any) that exist in the in-service programmes and enhance the quality as per the needs and requirements of teachers. Hence, this study, examined the perceptions of teachers in order to have an overall understanding about in-service teacher education.

Although there is a growing literature on the positive outcomes associated with teachers engaged in in-service education, not much information is provided about the issues and challenges associated with these programmes. Thus, the present study aims to discuss the perceptions of teachers about in-service teacher education programmes. The following research questions were addressed in this study—

1. What are the perceptions of teachers about in-service teacher education programmes?
2. Are there any differences in the in-service education programmes run in a government and a private setup?

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to investigate the teachers' perceptions on the nature of in-service teacher education programmes.

A qualitative approach was considered suitable for this study because it allowed the researchers to accord the participants an opportunity to define their own perceptions and concerns, and gather data through face-to-face interviews. The data pool consisted of 30 teachers from various schools of National Capital Territory of Delhi (15 government school teachers and 15 private school teachers).

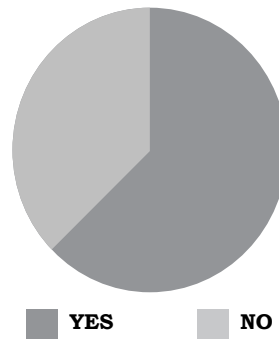
The interview schedule comprised questions related to purpose, duration, design and content, pedagogical approaches and follow up. The data collected was analysed under the above mentioned categories.

Results and Analysis

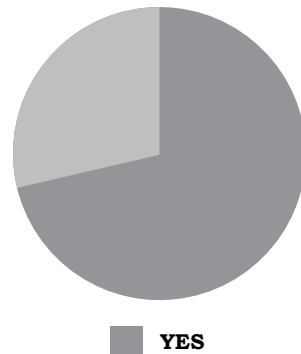
Role of in-service education programmes

About 62.5 percent of the government school teachers mentioned that in-service programmes are important. A teacher from government school mentioned, "These programmes are very important as we get exposed to new developments and innovations." On the other hand, 37.5 per cent of the government school teachers interviewed felt that the in-service education programmes conducted are of no importance as they are the same repetition of what they have already done in the previously attended teaching programmes.

Government School Teacher



About 73.33 per cent of the private school teachers interviewed mentioned that they feel in-service teacher education programmes are important as it helps them to be familiar with the changing times and changing curriculum in the field of education. A teacher from a private school mentioned that, "The teacher education programmes helped me a lot. It helped me to teach abstract concepts in a more practical manner. One of the workshops that I attended was about how to make science learning an interesting process."



Organising In-Service Teacher Education Programmes

From the data collected, it is seen that State Councils of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) and District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) are the nodal agencies conducting in-service programmes in MCD and NDMC schools. *Kendriya vidyalayas* have in-service teacher education programmes majorly conducted by *kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan*. The *sangathan* also takes techno-academic support from DIET and SCERT.

On the other hand, various organising agencies have been involved in organising teacher training programmes in private schools, such as IAPT, British Council, etc. These agencies have taken up a variety of issues, such as innovative teaching learning of various mathematical concepts, subject related issues and so on.

The data revealed that in-service programmes conducted in government schools seem to be generic in nature while the sessions held in private schools, organised by multiple organisations, were specialised, focussing on various aspects of teaching ranging from personality development to enhancement of content knowledge to strategies for assessment.

Duration

Traditionally, teachers' professional development consisted of short-term or one-shot in-service programmes conducted by outside 'experts'. These programmes have been highly popular as they provide teachers with a break in routine, a chance to meet new colleagues and discuss their professional problems, and exposure to stimulating new ideas.

As mentioned by three teachers in their interviews, there is a separate training centre in their schools which allows them to choose the workshops and programmes they wish to attend in accordance with their interest. One of the teachers mentioned that, "We have teachers' training centre which keeps organising various programmes throughout the year. We can register for them according to our interest and feasibility". The teacher programmes are held quite frequently in the school premises by various agencies, such as CBSE, and most of them last for a period of 2–3 days.

On the other hand, teachers teaching in government schools mentioned that the teachers are sent to various places purely on the choice of the school principals. A teacher from a government

school mentioned that, “We are forced by our school principals to attend a particular seminar or workshop. We are never asked about our interests.” *Kendriya vidyalaya* teachers are bound to attend the 21-days teacher programmes organised by *Kendriya vidyalaya sangathan* during school vacations. At times, they are taken to various out-station places for these programmes. A teacher from *Kendriya vidyalaya* mentioned that, “Few years back, we were taken to Dehradun to visit a school of slow learners in order to know about inclusive education”.

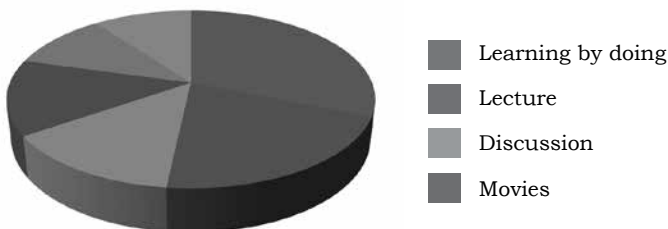
Design and Content

The data reveals that various themes have been chosen for designing of these teacher education programmes. The themes under which these education programmes were organised were quite relevant to the contemporary issues of education, such as computer-aided learning, teaching learning material, theatre as a pedagogic tool, learning disabilities, classroom management and CCE implementation. One of the teachers from a private school mentioned that, “The content of the programmes were related to challenges faced by teachers during teaching learning process, how to make methods and approaches more effective, teenager problems, counseling, etc.” These programmes are necessary to keep teachers abreast with the day-to-day educational innovations. Moreover, *sarva shiksha abhiyan* also advocates the integration of content cum methodology approach. It further adds that different inputs like material development, demonstrations, activity-based approaches, multimedia, continuous and comprehensive evaluation and joyful approaches needs to be integrated. There is a need to demonstrate before the teachers about how this integration takes place.

Pedagogical Approaches

From the data, it is seen that learning by doing is the predominant

Methodology Adopted

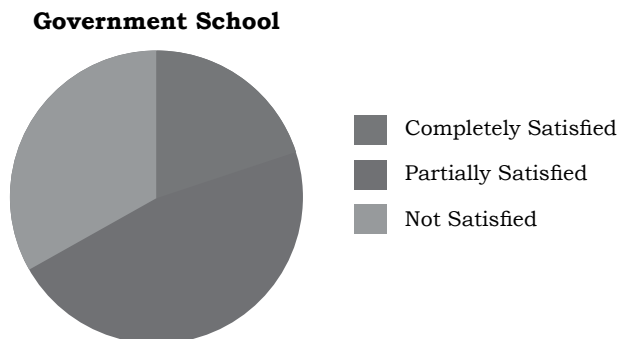


pedagogical strategy used in teacher education programmes. Highlighting the need for hands-on teaching-learning approaches, Derin Atay (2008) states that current in-service education programmes are often found to be unsatisfactory due to the fact that they don't provide the teachers with opportunities to be actively involved in their development and to reflect on their teaching experiences. Though, 60 per cent of the teachers interviewed mentioned that the methodology used was learning by doing, yet they feel that there is no active involvement in the process. One of the teachers from a private school mentioned that, "In a workshop related to teaching of grammar in primary classes, we were told to transact the content in the workshop using various methodologies. Despite of all this, there was not much involvement of teachers as we were not able to ask our queries or share experiences".

The lecture dominates the programmes and teachers lose their interest after a time period. A teacher from a government school mentioned, "In my teaching experience of 30 years, I have attended a number of such programmes. But, I have seen only few resource persons who are able to engage teachers equally. It always ends up being a one-way process". As advocated by NCF (2005), use of learning by doing methodology in teachers' training provides adequate scope for viewing theoretical understanding and its practical applications in a more integrated manner rather than as two separate, fragmented components.

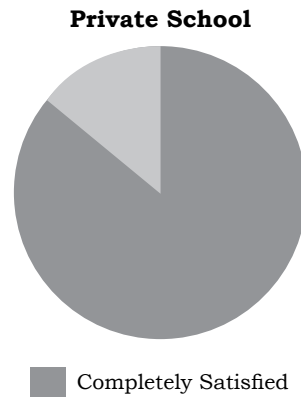
Teaching to Teach: The Role of Resource Person

Around 66.6 per cent of the government school teachers mentioned that they were content with the resource persons invited for conducting sessions. On the other hand, 20 per cent of the teachers said that they were not content. The main reason for this, which



the teachers stated, was that the resource person didn't have the school teaching experience and the resource person was not able to relate the content being transacted with the teachers' classroom experiences. Moreover, they commented on the content knowledge of the resource persons. Furthermore, 13.33 per cent of the teachers commented about the language used during the sessions as they weren't well equipped with English. One of the teachers mentioned that, "The resource person used words that we were unable to comprehend and gradually it led to losing of interest."

Around 80 per cent of the private school teachers said that the resource persons handled the training programmes quite effectively. One of the teachers mentioned that the resource person tried to clarify individual doubts and helped to resolve arguments among group members. On the other hand, 20 per cent of the teachers said that sometimes the resource person handled the subject in question really well, while some of them seemed as if they had just rote memorised a lecture and couldn't relate it with the school related experiences.



Follow Up

Follow up is the backbone of any programme as it provides insights about the implementation of various teacher education programmes in real classroom contexts. Ramatlapana Kim Agatha (2009) found that teachers' concerns included the lack of impact of current in-service training programmes on the education system, no regular follow-up activities to support the one-off workshops, insufficient skills acquired to sustain the implementation of the strategies solicited by the workshops.

The study revealed that no proper follow up programme was conducted by any of the organising agencies. All the teachers interviewed mentioned that there was no follow up conducted by the agencies after the programme. This is a sad situation as follow up should form an integral part of the teacher education programmes.

Revisiting In-Service Programmes

Around 93.33 per cent of the teachers suggested that training programmes should be related to the ground realities as they were not able to implement the strategies discussed during these programmes in real classroom settings. The major reason why they faced this problem was due to constraints of time, vast syllabus and other limitations. Further, the programmes should be need based. These programmes should be organised keeping in mind the ground realities. Secondly, the teacher education programmes should happen on a regular basis. They should be well planned and more systematic. Thirdly, the resource persons conducting the workshops should identify the needs of the participating teachers before planning the content and methodology. Further, time duration of these programmes should be comfortable as teachers' lose concentration after a certain time period.

Conclusion and Implications

The study revealed that in-service teacher education programmes need to be re-structured to align with the current and immediate need of the participants. In-service teacher education programmes should follow a bottom-up approach and should be in tune with the ground reality. Both-a person with fundamental knowledge about the issue being dealt along with a school practicing teacher should conduct the session such that content as well as practical implications are integrated keeping in mind the ground reality. The programmes should be organised keeping in mind the needs as only then the teachers will be able to relate and feel psychologically motivated to attend these programmes. Teachers' representative can form a part of the planning process. Provision of better infrastructural facilities should be made so as to have maximum learning. Further, duration of these programmes should not be more than four hours a day, as longer sessions lower teachers' concentration level. Moreover, rigorous follow up should be done by the training agencies. Only then will these teacher education programmes be effective as it will be only then that these agencies come face-to-face with actual classroom problems.

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