

Training the untrained In-service Teachers — A personal account

Shanon Dias*

I got a chance to attend Diploma in Elementary Education (D.El.Ed) programme 2017–19 designed for in-service untrained teachers working in primary and upper primary schools in different States of the country. This helped me hone my skills as a teacher.

The programme was developed by the Academic Department, National School of Open Learning (NIOS), on the initiative of the Ministry of Education, erstwhile Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India, keeping in view the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005, Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009 and National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE) 2010. The programme aimed to develop necessary skills, competencies, attitudes and understanding in teachers through topics, such as 'Elementary Education in India — A Sociocultural Perspective' and 'Pedagogic Processes in Elementary Schools' to make the teaching-learning process more effective.

This course emphasised the point that both classroom learning and co-curricular activities work together to give young children a strong base on which their academic development and career depend.

The main aim of this course was to ensure that students get the best education by providing teachers with instructional and material support. This ensured that the process of education continued for those of us, who wanted to make a career in the field of education.

Needless to say, getting a diploma and completing regular work hours can be grueling. But in this case, the pros outweighed the cons. While it may have remained a somewhat cumbersome task, it was a learning experience for many. This is true as this gave the teachers, especially, female teachers, a chance to return to thinking of education as not only a prerequisite for employment but as a valuable contributor to the self-esteem and holistic development of children.

* *High School Teacher, Manovikas School, Mudgaon, Goa.*

While the course, conducted for in-service teachers, involved attending regular classes after working hours and submission of assignments, it served to provide valuable insights into classroom management and teaching methods.

The first subject was 'Elementary Education in India — A Sociocultural Perspective'. It dealt with introducing education in India as much as a social construct as political or economic one. Education in India has always been as much about interpersonal relationships as it has been about achievement. This is, especially, true when it comes to learning a language. In this course, we learned that education is not merely passing information but rather a web that links the students and teachers over time. One of the most important factors is that how much the teachers are themselves willing to learn and grow alongside the students.

Focus was not about how many facts a teacher can coerce a student to absorb but rather how effective the process of teaching appears to be. Another interesting subject taught was 'Pedagogic Processes in Elementary Schools'. This subject involved coming up with an effective lesson plan to teach an excerpt from *Robinson Crusoe* for Class IV. There were no specific instructions as regards to the kind of teaching aids we were to provide. The teaching aid that we developed for this subject was a small paper wheel, on which simple words were written. A child

could swirl the wheel and use the words given in the wheel to form phrases or sentences.

The course urged the in-service teachers to reconsider the methods currently being used in the teaching-learning process.

The course emphasised that the ways through which a child learns is subject to constant changes. Hence, keeping up with the current teaching-learning methods or trends is important to ensure that teaching does not become stagnant. This is, particularly, with reference to teaching English to a child as a second language.

Rather than expecting a child to match an adult's level of knowledge or performance, emphasis was laid on teaching verbal communication skills to children along with the written script. These days, teaching should involve more number of activities than routine. The course emphasised that when teaching a new topic to a child, it makes sense to use new methods of learning whenever possible. Emphasis was laid on teaching a child English through use and communication rather than simply forcing them to memorise phrases.

The course stressed on making effective lesson plans. It encouraged the in-service teachers to use creative skills, such as directing students to put up short plays during assemblies, show students that language and literature are important in education and entertainment, and the two can always go hand-in-hand. Two such

examples are discussed here. An assembly involved the portrayal of the poem *Television* by Roald Dahl as a monologue. Another example is the five-minute play of Nissim Ezekiel's *Irani Restaurant Instruction*.

One major point that the course aimed at was preparing a class for the activity of learning by actually making the in-service teachers engage in some sort of physical activity outside the classroom beforehand. This helped reduce boredom and increase productivity.

This impressed on me that today's young learners need forms of stimulation that do not conform to memorisation and instruction, and make learning a living experience.

The course also provided teachers from different schools a chance to interact with each other. This interaction brought out the fact all teachers had certain hobbies or talents, apart from just academic knowledge.

The course was a learning experience in both theoretical and practical sense. It emphasised that while rote learning may be the norm, it certainly does not encourage deep knowledge and good learning habits for learners in higher education.

Returning to education, now, meant having to learn the right ways to connect to the younger generation of learners.

While the first year of the course mostly involved general subjects like classroom management and lesson plan, the second year involved more

subject-based learning, humanities or sciences.

It was emphasised that the teaching-learning process in social science should help the child acquire knowledge and skills in an interactive environment. It was also an opportunity for teachers and students to learn together. There will always be a necessity to shift from the mere passing on of information to active involvement in group activity, debate and discussions. This keeps both learners and teachers alive to social realities.

The course suggested the following to help make teaching-learning process in social science participatory.

- Teachers should assume the role of coach or guide while giving group work to students.
- Classroom resources are best put to use when shared and are used to teach students to cooperate with each other.
- Teachers should construct circumstances for students to express their opinions and understand each others' points of view.

The course also highlighted that school linked community. Schools depend on communities for resources as much as communities depend on schools to provide capable individuals. The in-service teachers were encouraged to plan and participate in community outreach programmes, such as tree plantation

or anti-littering awareness drives that encouraged young learners to value education and apply the same in real world.

CONCLUSION

The course was designed, especially, for working teachers and to deal primarily with teaching at the elementary level. The target group consisted of teachers from different backgrounds and from schools with varying access to learning resources.

As far as experience on an individual level goes, the D.El.Ed

course and subsequent group project work gave teachers a chance to, particularly, enhance their mental faculties and encourage each other to use and perhaps even design newer ways of teaching. Group discussion among in-service teachers remain as important as among students in a classroom. The course provided working professionals with a step ahead in their academic career, something that working mothers, who are teachers rarely get a chance to do, and gave everyone a chance to go back to education in a way that was both enlightening and productive.

REFERENCES

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