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Guru Chethana - A Unique Initiative of Government of Karnataka in Teacher Professional Development

Abstract

All of us aspire for a good society that is just, equitable, humane, and sustainable. It is assumed that school education provides the foundation for it. It is believed that Education could bring such a society through non-violent and sustained manner. Both central and state govt. have put their best efforts to ensure easy access of school for all the children and have successfully promoted regular attendance through various govt. programmes. India did achieve quite a lot in terms of enrolment, and attendance of students in primary schools. Many popular large scale reports such as ASER, NAS have identified gaps in learning levels of students across the subjects. Among all the factors like infrastructure, PTR (Pupil Teacher Ratio), socio-economic condition of the parents, the culture of the larger community which impact education, the quality of the teacher has a major impact on the quality of education in school. The quality of education is considerably determined by the quality of the teachers and their engagements in the classroom. Teachers professional abilities eventually contribute to the quality education in schools.

There has been a lot of attempts in teacher education. But, most of it has not been effective in addressing the needs of the teachers. The issues in teacher development programs are known - lack of perspective, dealing only the techniques without any conceptual understanding, centrally designed programs with top down approach completely neglecting the context and needs of the teachers, One-time program by untrained and sub-optimum facilitators. The subject dealt are the same old topics without any rethinking and innovations. The life styles, the livelihood, the technological intrusions all have changed the basic structure of the society. but the training that is provided to the teachers have remained unchanged all these years.

Expectations of the school system change from time to time, corresponding to the broader social, economic and political changes taking place in the society. It necessitates revamping teacher education for enhancing professional abilities among the teacher community to meet the desired aims of education and the present need of the larger community.

The teachers have consistently expressed dissatisfaction and disappointment regarding the training that is provided. The complain by the teachers across the state would be very similar, like , the subject was a repetition, the resource person not being resourceful, sessions being boring, topics selected without any rationale or theoretical base. Touching

upon only few techniques and avoiding conceptual clarity. Short duration pre-service programs which does not provide the needed perspectives and with no connections to in-service teacher education fails in developing critical professional needs of the school teachers. The interlinkage between theory and practice in both pre-service and in-service program is very weak. Current in-service professional development programs are often inadequately designed to provide an individual with the much needed pedagogic understanding or abilities and dispositions to become an effective teacher. In-service program mostly focuses on addressing issues of text books, hard spots in the subject rather than building conceptual and deeper understanding among the teachers and does not provide enough space for developing teachers as reflective Practitioners. Non availability of adequately trained resource persons in the district and block levels to reach teachers at the expected quality is a major constrain. Huge transmission loss by having multiple levels of cascading strategy and centrally designed programs/modules without taking in to consideration teachers' needs and interest have been the main problem in the teacher education program at present.

Continuing professional development of the teacher becomes paramount for effective transaction of the curriculum and to bridge these gaps. The rigor, focus and importance required to address this gap in the in-service and pre-service is missing completely. This necessitates a long term vision and framework that attempts to address the above issues.

Based on the insights from last decade, keeping the national documents such as National Curriculum Framework 2005 and National

Curriculum Framework for Teachers Education 2009 in mind, the state has envisioned a professional development plan for in-service teachers. The trust of this program is to help the teacher become a reflective practitioner, capable to questioning the curriculum, syllabus and establishing interlinkage between theory and practice. In this situation, Department of Public Instruction, Government of Karnataka (GoK) has taken up the challenging task of overhauling the in-service teacher education program in the State in the name of GURU CHETHANA.

A lot of thoughts went in to the designing of the program. The plan should be of long-term, helping teachers in their journey of professional development. In-service Teacher Education is a continuous process which should be coherent-not sporadic one-off sessions which don't hold together; a long term plan of teacher development allows individual teachers to develop holistically. It must offer a combination of learning modes- expert-driven, decentralized self-sustained learning spaces to foster self-learning and peer learning is crucial. It must respond to issues, teachers face in their schools, relevant to all classes and subjects; the comprehensiveness in curriculum will have long term engagement of teachers which builds continued and connected learning opportunities. It must offer options for teachers to choose so that they can access what is relevant to them through multiple forms, e.g., workshops, seminars, study groups, individual assignments. Materials used for teacher development should be comprehensive in its scope by including education perspective, subject perspective, and pedagogy. All the engagement should be guided by a consistent set of educational ideas (role of a school in Indian society, how children learn,

nature and pedagogy of each subject, why physical, psychological, social, ethical development of the child is important) and reflect in all forms of teacher education programs.

The core group of senior functionaries of education department were committed to address the gaps in the teacher education. The involvement of officers from Additional Chief Secretary for Primary and Secondary Education to School Teachers ensured the ownership of entire department at all levels. . It was sustained effort for two years. The program was designed in four phases from conceiving to execution - a. curriculum development, b. modules development, c. resource person development, d. program roll out. Each phase was a consolidated effort by all the people involved.

a. Curriculum Development

The curriculum has been developed collaboratively by identified teachers, teacher educators and subject experts from across the State including members from Azim Premji Foundation. The curriculum describes the context of teachers' development, principles, approaches, themes, practicality, classroom applications, teacher engagement modes and assessments; Considerable effort has gone into visualizing the multiple and diverse needs of teachers to develop the courses and modules. This is a comprehensive curriculum which includes issues around child development (e.g. how children learn language; the social context of learning); understanding key concepts in school subjects and methods of teaching. It suggests around 250 themes for teacher development, proposes different modes of teacher engagement, modular orientation on each theme (a module/concept/theme can be taken up from 1 to 5 days as per their interest and requirement). This group has gone through a careful

process of preparation by considering needs of teachers and expectations from teachers articulated in national documents. The curriculum framework for teachers' development was evolved as a first step to plan the long-term approach in this regard – enabling a strong and continuous professional development program for the teachers.

b. Module Development The modules were developed by adopting the principles of curriculum. Group of identified 90 state resource persons from education department and Azim Premji Foundation under the guidance of mentors developed the modules through a rigorous process. Each group of 10 to 12 members worked for 5 months continuously. The working included reading, discussing, presenting, reviewing, critiquing improving, piloting ...till it was accepted and passed by the quality group. These modules are graded so that they cater to different levels of teachers' understanding and needs. In the long-term, the plan is to have around 250 modules available for teachers to choose. Education perspective, subject perspective, key concepts, pedagogy and assessment, are integrated with one another and not looked at in isolation. Initially there are 28 modules spread across Kannada, Hindi, Science, Mathematics, Social Science, Education Perspective offered to teachers in the year 2017-18. In the coming years more modules will be developed covering the curriculum. Each of the modules was piloted, reviewed and fine-tuned by State Resource Persons and the Review Committee Members.

c. Resource Person Development

In order to execute the program at mass scale and to address the issue of non-availability of trained resources in the districts, four master resource persons for each module from each district were selected through the process

of written and oral tests. Total 112 Master Resource Persons(MRPs) were identified in each district. Each MRP has undergone 10 days program where 5 days on module content and 5 days of additional input so that MRPs are capable to engage 5 days with teachers. It prepared MRPs in perspective, content and pedagogy. The program involved in developing education perspective (understanding society, education, children and teaching), deeper understanding beyond the module's content and proposing illustrative pedagogy of the sessions. The training had the components of demonstration and actual facilitation. In the process, around 3500 MRPs were trained

d. Roll out of the Program The program was launched by Chief Minister of Karnataka on the eve of Teacher's Day, September 5, 2017. Teachers gave their choices on the 28 modules available for the years 2017-18 by logging in Teacher Training Management System (TTMS). The system was available both in desktop and mobile where mostly teachers used the mobile app to manage their choices and tracking of workshop schedule. Whole process of teachers' choices, batch formation, inviting teachers, scheduling trainings and feedback from teachers was done through TTMS. The processes at the state level was managed by DSERT and implementation was done by respective DIET (District Institute of Education and Training). Around 2000 batches of training was conducted in 4 month time spread across 34 districts covering 28 modules. In the process, 75000 teachers were trained. It reduced the cascade mode as trained MRPs directly facilitated trainings for teachers in the district. It was also important to ensure the quality of logistics such as basic facilities—functional toilets, safe drinking water, quality food, venue with sufficient light and air, uninterrupted

power supply, etc. It was ensured by respective DIET in the district which contributed significantly to enhance the quality of the modules. A director was placed to oversee the training in each location. A review committee visited the venues and set right all the shortcomings both academic and logistics, in the training program,.

The teachers felt that the program was unique since they had the freedom to choose. And they were choosing with knowledge of all the modules which was freely available in the net. It was conveyed to the teachers to think in a long term basis and plan for their development across the next 5 years. They were informed that there will be nearly 250 modules from which they can choose. The scope of the subjects was very vast. It covered Perspective, content, pedagogy and practice. The training and engagement was interesting since there were combination of different learning modes. It covered three main learning modes—self learning, peer learning and expert facilitated. The processes of workshop was multi-folded. There was workshops, seminars, study groups, video and on line materials. With the earlier experiences of the dearth of good quality resource persons and the training getting diluted with cascade effect, here the core team ensured that the Master Resource Persons were chosen from each districts and so that the trainers were available in the districts whenever there is a need for training and resource persons. The most important thing was that the master resource persons trained by the state resource persons who developed the madules were available in each of the districts.

90 state resource persons developed the modules and trained 3808 Master Resource Persons. All 28 modules were piloted across 7

venues over 10 days; each module piloting was attended by 30 teachers who provided critical feedback that was incorporated and the modules re-worked. Through the Teacher Training Management System the data of 1.34 lakh was uploaded out of 1.65 lakh teachers as base information. Teachers gave their choices by registering in TTMS. TTMS managed the information sharing through SMS – invitation, choice confirmation, training schedule and invitation. All the modules were available in TTMS in advance for the teachers to give informed choices.

Regular monthly meeting set a rigor for the program with Additional chief secretary, commissioner, State Program Director SSA, directors from department and Foundation participating in the meetings and leading it. Having core team at state level for planning, reviewing and monitoring helped. Govt. announcement of financial support through the state budget made a huge difference. The development of State Resource Group was very crucial; the initial resistance came down when they saw the resourcefulness, quality and contribution. Ensuring that good quality Resource persons got selected in the first place was very important and in this process we had to redo the selection process to ensure selection of quality resource persons.

There were many challenges we faced in this journey of Guruchethana. At the Govt. level there were issues like the change in leadership and managing the priorities which change with leadership. The formalities, bureaucracy was also a challenge to get the approval at the right time for releasing of the budgets. There was high level commitment and ownership at the state level, but, this had not percolated till the district and block evenly. Hence different teams had to encounter difficulties at the block and district level. Getting quality

resource persons was a major problem. The resource persons selected had to be cancelled and re-done by developing criteria and a strict process and lot of scrutiny. Building the capacity of the selected trainers needed a lot sustained effort. Logistic issues had to be responded and solved in a fire fighting mode. Difficulty in ensuring quality logistics as per expectations as there is no such ready venue districts when rolling out, e.g., electricity, LCD projector, toilet, fans, sufficient space. Having better residential facility would have helped. Getting large number of teachers registered on the TTMS proved to be a huge challenge (e.g., mobile numbers not updated, high load on system, teachers not able to use IT system properly). The printed modules were not available to all teachers when the workshop was happening. The modules got printed towards the end of the process.

Ensuring the quality from curriculum development to execution of the program was a huge challenge. Sustaining interest and patience among the State Resource Persons for 2 years in the module development and MRPs development processes was difficult which led to a lot of fluctuations in multiple ways. Some good resource persons were discontinued, some resource persons with less interest stayed back which created some slack in the developed momentum. Another challenge was to develop the shared understanding on the concept of program across the levels of stakeholders and maintain same spirit across the levels of govt. system. It was also challenging in the beginning to convince people involved on the paradigm shift in the nature of materials and processes as they naturally carried baggage of many decades.

It was unique experience in the continuous Professional Teacher

Development domain of Karnataka. The team felt that a major mile stone in the area of providing good quality teacher education to large number of teachers in the stake has been achieved. The program had the strength to slowly involve all the state holders in a very positive manner. It created a positive vibration in the entire state. Other states are keen to understand the

Karnataka experience. The concept of long term engagement with continuity, connectedness, based on the choice of the teachers needs to be spread across the county. The team strongly feels that this will lead to teachers becoming more reflective and contribute towards a just, humane and equitable society as envisaged in the Constitution of India.