

## Enhancing Teaching Professional Skills of College Teachers

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### ABSTRACT

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) refers to beliefs and practices of teaching. Teacher learning occurred in many forms of teaching practices. The study probed four facets of continuing professional development. They were: internal, external, research and collaborative. CPD consisted of two dimensions-beliefs and practices. Beliefs refer to preferences of values which were necessary for professional development. Practices were behavioral activities teachers adopted during their job career. Teachers used institutional facilities for professional development (external orientation). They had also inner urge to improve themselves for professional courses (internal orientation). Though research orientation and collaborative orientation emerged as potential factors of continuous professional development (CPD), teachers did not prioritize it to their professional courses. This showed lack of research activities for quality teaching. In every instance teacher's value beliefs about their professional learning outstripped their practices. Teachers by and large, were stronger in their beliefs and practices on internal orientation to learning. They had also moderate levels of beliefs and practices on external sources of knowledge and information. It was also true in case of research orientation, indicating some skepticism about its relevance and usefulness for teaching practice.

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To ensure quality teaching in university colleges continuing professional development of college teachers is a growing demand of higher learning centers. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is possible when universities erect learning platforms for their teachers across level and allow them to use teaching time properly and pay attention to the classroom performance. Quality teaching in the professional courses has been a central issue of 12th plan of UGC (2012-2017). If college teachers are committed to enriching their skills by utilizing the allocated time and resources in their respective institutions, many quality issues in higher education can be addressed. This would help teachers improve classroom transaction.

Teaching in university colleges is not as esteemed as other professions like medicine, engineering or law. Very often, CPD is equated with in-service training (INSET) programme. Education administrators relate CPD to teachers' ability to teach the prescribed courses, manage their classrooms and ensure good performance of students in examinations. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) means participation in academic events. Teachers' initiative to update themselves for classroom teaching is quite rare. In India teachers' academic linkage to conferences and seminars, research journals, publications, etc., are poor both in quantity and quality. On the other side, educational administrators do not support any CPD programme beyond those mandated by the state. The current teacher professional development education policies and action programme designed by the UGC are based on a narrow view that covers new incumbents of teaching force within a certain time frame. It is mandatory to them for career advancement. Such a restricted view not only excludes informal and voluntary contributions to teacher

learning and teachers' desire to learn, but also assumes authorities to be the sole provider of CPD programme. Teachers too often seem not to think beyond in-service programmes, not to take responsibility for their own development and to rely on external agencies to plan and deliver inputs of CPD, irrelevant though it may turn out to be to their needs and interests. A few teachers show their willingness to go beyond the routine job and learn new skills. They relate CPD to career growth and believe in fulfillment of statutory requirements for personal growth. CPD includes taking on new roles and responsibilities in the university, teaching higher classes, being involved in class management, doing experiments in the classroom and trying out new techniques. They also see no need for additional training or learning for teachers, since on-the-job learning and official training programmes are enough for their professional growth. They probably do not see any link between teacher learning/development and student learning. They hold a view that teachers come to the profession fully prepared once for all and what remains for them to do is to keep teaching properly. There has been no record of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) measurement at the university level in India. Nor is any serious attempt to capture some standard practices of CPD at the university level. Nor is any serious attempt to capture some standard practices of CPD at the university level.

In university colleges CPD does not relate to performance management system (PMS). There exist no standard measures of performance appraisal. Secondly, it is hardly linked to classroom management programme. Studies substantiate the fact that classroom transaction at the college level requires professional skills followed by professional development

value (Singh, 2015). Professional development value is a preferential importance and belief a teacher has in his cognitive domain. Development of professional skills is possible when a teacher exercises institutional mechanisms with a strong professional value. Potential universities in India are capable of creating values and evolving mechanisms of CPD for their teachers. Classroom teaching can be classified into two categories: subject-specific (content knowledge) and pedagogy-specific (teaching process). Teachers give priority to content-specific knowledge instead of pedagogy-based learning. They have specific mental models of teaching based on a presumption that success breeds success in future. Knowledge grows and simultaneously it becomes obsolete as reality changes. The focus of learning is not what is to be learnt but how is to be learnt. Research-intensive universities are increasingly challenged by the globalization of research, international competition on innovation and the impact of international ranking mostly based on scientific performance. They have consistently placed research at the very core of their activities. They have hired high-level lecturers and offered a wide range of scholarship activities and lab research opportunities, thereby minimizing the teaching process. Research-intensive institutions have difficulty raising the profile of teaching compared to research: they argue that research is typically encapsulated in laboratories for the purpose of knowledge creation and transfer, which ultimately benefit the reputation of the institution. The purpose of the teaching delivered is scarcely an issue and remains on the margin of academic thoughts. New pressures are challenging these universities, forcing them to take a closer look at the concept of quality teaching and to contemplate institutional support to step up the quality of the faculty and curricula. Some research-intensive institutions consolidated their strengths by rebalancing their approach to teaching.

Professional basic skills development in any profession has traditionally been considered as a one-time affair in one's career (i.e. pre-service education); though changing professional needs necessitate in-service/on-the-job professional development the activities of which include either a full-time certificate or diploma or accumulation of credit hours of professional development training or even professional socialization and dialogue in seminars, roundtables and conferences. In many cases these include a series of unrelated events to meet certain professional requirements of the time, and may not have a life-time professional development/learning schema. Professional development, on the other hand, needs to be seen as related to professional practice and culture of continuous learning within a learning organization.

**Dimension of CPD.** Going along the line CPD needs to be operationally defined. At least three broad dimensions of CPD can be discerned. They are: input, process and output. At the organizational level there are certain mechanisms of skill and knowledge improvement designed by the guardian institutions (e.g., UGC, etc.). Universities provide infrastructure, resources and opportunities at various intervals, making a support system of development programme. These inputs are expected to be exercised by the stakeholders at the regular intervals. Additionally, individual investment in terms of resources, time, etc. is also considered input of CPD. Within the organizational set-up these inputs make CPD more effective. Planning to maintain skills and knowledge through

time management is considered process variable. Output dimension refers to change in learning that leads to knowledge which in turn, has a significant effect on classroom management and research activities. In many cases universities do not evaluate the impact of CPD on deep knowledge building while surface learning becomes more prominence in acquisition of academic skills. Professional development programme generates didactics of the learning process reflecting capabilities-driven curriculum design for learners. In other words, how teaching creates the conditions for students to be confronted with the ways learning may vary and change in different learning situations. A number of frameworks have been developed specifically to help understand the stages of teachers' professional development throughout the course of a career.

**Measuring CPD.** A few researchers have measured CPD participation in terms of inputs. The most common input schemes have specified a certain number of hours of CPD per year, or a certain number of hours over a longer time period. Some professional bodies limit what can count as CPD to activities such as attending events organized by the professional body, or training offered by accredited agencies. Others allow individual professionals to count informal activities such as reading journals or other forms of private study. One way to develop input-based measurement schemes involves converting hours into points, with some activities counting for more points than others (for example, giving a paper at a conference would count for more than merely attending). Agreed to the point-based measurement UGC has laid down the career growth scheme to the rank of professorship. Input-based measurement of CPD seems inadequate. These schemes do not directly indicate whether any change in behavior on the job or impact on the organization has taken place. Measuring only by inputs appears to be based on the idea that whatever is done under the defined scheme is useful for achieving the purposes of CPD. This presumes that all CPD activities allowed under input scheme will be of sufficient quality to lead to professional development and that the individuals attending will be sufficiently attentive and receptive to reap the benefits. It only provides an easily quantifiable record of participation in CPD that can justify sanctions where necessary.

Conversely, measuring CPD by outputs has serious drawbacks. The effects of CPD on these outputs are difficult to isolate from other factors. Another factor holding output-based CPD measures back has been the difficulty of precisely defining the intended outputs of CPD. There are differing opinions on what CPD measurement is intended to indicate. This is bound up with differing views on the purpose of CPD and, indeed, the very notion of what CPD is. Output-based CPD measurement refers to the extent to which and how well professionals are maintaining, developing and broadening both competence and personal qualities. CPD output may have to be judged on the degree to which it is systematic or planned, and it may involve a range of beneficiaries of those outputs: beneficiaries who are likely to be interested in different outputs, or a different balance or pattern of outputs, than the individual professionals themselves. Output-based CPD measurement is a relatively new phenomenon. The technology of output-based measurement is not well developed, particularly in relation to baseline of expected practice or organizational performance. Professional bodies that

incorporate output at some or even just one of the phases of the CPD cycle, and implement a combination approach to CPD measurement, are certainly moving towards an output-based system without necessarily abolishing input measurement at the action phase of the CPD cycle. Increase in knowledge or change in practice are commonly associated with the term output within the context of CPD. It constitutes only one of the four stages of the CPD cycle and is difficult to assess. Professional bodies consider outputs at every stage of the CPD cycle. a. Action (learning/implementation), b. Planning (how can I learn?), c. Reflection (what do I need to know/be able to do?), d. Evaluation (what I have learned? how is it benefiting my practice?)

Few organizations actually measure CPD by outputs; those that do usually only require evidence of output. The quality of this output is rarely measured in a systematic manner. Most professional bodies ask only for a record of activities. Very few require objective evidences of learning or change in behavior. Professional bodies have a notion of standard output, but do not have a structured or defined set of criteria or scale for determining this standard. There exists diversity in (a) the robustness and accuracy of CPD measurement system and (b) the ability to identify what it has been labeled-Professional Development Value (PDV) for an individual. What came out of the literature review was the centrality of the Kolb cycle of experiential learning or some adaptation of it to CPD schemes. Simply employing the cycle (planning, action, learning, reflection—or an elaboration of the cycle such as by adding application of learning) indicates a move towards output-based CPD, even if no measurement takes place. The scale on the proposed model of CPD measurement will act as a gauge of how well the particular measurement technique can accurately detect the real PDV for an individual. However, output-based measurements can itself potentially lead to PDV. By following the measurement system, certain professional habits such as reflection and planning can be developed.

How does a teacher make his career planning in tune with the organizational demands? It is prototype of performance management system (PMS) where key results areas (KRA) are decided by the performers and not by the organization. While planning CPD a few dimensions of performance need to be viewed. They are: output, input, time frame, target, quality and cost. Action refers to a set of activities within time frame by the performers. It is completed in view of logistics available to them. There may be various activities to attain different targets which have already been defined. At the initial stage of career growth a teacher in the university system makes a plan of attending refresher course and orientation programme in addition to publications and other research activities. This is a mandatory exercise to be performed by the teachers. Simultaneously, some voluntary and compulsory mechanisms are adopted by the teachers to maintain the career growth. Since performance appraisal system still operates in the university colleges, no forward planning is recommended for career growth. PMS, on the other side, is a continuous programme. It requires continuous monitoring either by the agency or person himself at various levels. Performance appraisal does not provide feedback while PMS has an in-built system of feedback. When activities are completed, results are likely to come out in terms of change in behavior and practice. Any change may have an impact on the organization.

Improvement in teaching skills helps a teacher transact classroom proceedings and reduce a gap between demand and supply.

Previous studies suggested some features of professional learning practices and activities that led to change in teaching style (Singh and Prasad, 2016). Professional development value cannot easily be altered. Teachers place more evidences supporting their orientations than to evidences that contradict them. Teachers who had greater professional development needs (internal orientation) were reported to have a high sense of self- efficacy (Singh and Ghosh, 2014). Teachers also had moderate levels of beliefs and practices on external sources of knowledge. Contrary to it, they were found to have low level of practice in collaborative professional learning as well as research-orientated learning, possibly indicating some skepticism about its relevance and usefulness for teaching practice. Teaching and research are two separate phenomena. Again, classroom teaching can be classified into two categories: subject-specific (content knowledge) and pedagogy-specific (teaching process). Internal orientation to learning is a subject specific knowledge which is more relevant to the classroom teaching. On the other side, pedagogy-based knowledge requires improvement in teaching process. Teachers give priority to content- specific knowledge instead of pedagogy-based learning. They have specific mental models of teaching based on a presumption that success breeds success in future. Knowledge grows and simultaneously it becomes obsolete as reality changes. The focus of learning is not what is to be learnt but how is to be learnt. Continuing professional development means competing through knowledge and converting the knowledge into an asset to make an institution learning organization. Lack of collaborative orientation restricts the university to become a learning organization. Continuing professional development is more than an exercise of capacity building. This is important because many universities make a tall claim of capacity building of their teachers with the help of in-service knowledge improvement programme. At this point, it is relevant to ascertain a distinction between the process of organizational learning and the task of building a learning organization. People and groups do learn when they reflect on and question the underlying assumptions of the work practices. However, organizations need to develop the capabilities of scanning, disseminating and taking action as well as to become learning organizations in true sense. Building a learning organization is often seen as an exercise of developing a learning culture. When organizations develop capabilities, people learn efficient ways to acquire knowledge. Universities must also learn how to use it for building competitive strategy. There existed more restraining forces in the university system. Research indicated that teachers' beliefs about their own level of competence and their sense of self-efficacy affected their practice and students' satisfaction. When teachers have a high self-efficacy, they are more creative in their work. When teachers participated in various professional learning activities and spent more hours in the institutions, it had a greater impact on their performance. Teachers more or less use the institutional facilities for learning.

Values too are learnt and cultivated by professionals by deliberate application of mind. It is difficult to say that their research orientation to learning brings about qualitative change

in classroom teaching. "Teaching and research are seen as two separate activities. While teaching is perceived as institutional work, research is viewed as a personal agenda for moving forward in one's career. Not surprisingly, poor infrastructure and rigid administrative procedures cripple research orientation which is part of CPD. Keeping a record of hours spent on direct teaching becomes irrelevant in such a system. The practice of calculating teachers' daily work by counting the number of periods they stand beside the blackboard exposes the hollowness of the system and the concept of education. Colleges work like higher secondary schools". Teaching means periods taken by the teachers". In the West, curriculum and pedagogy both follow the teacher's own research interests. Researches in Indian universities in many cases carry cosmetic value. The UGC acting chairman remarked on the value of research "Teaching and research are two sides of the same coin and the modern society cannot exist without research society. Most of the research institutions had been overwhelmingly public institutions and they facilitate environment for both competitive and collaborative research and studies" (Ved Prakash, 2012, 2017). Even the team work (collaborative orientation) among university teachers was almost missing. Indian mindset is a paradoxical mixture of the modern and traditional where tradition and technology sleep in the same bed. Inconsistent and contradictory beliefs, values, norms and practices that not only the different sets of Indians hold, but the same Indians possess them without any discomfort or dissonance. The study contradicts the presumption that simple learning activities lead to change in belief, change in practice and then, change in student learning. Whether or not a teacher learns and then engages in a form of professional change is influenced by the Indian mindset. Indians are highly sensitive to their contexts. They organize their thoughts, feelings and actions in order to meet specific contextual demands. This holistic view enables Indian teachers to believe something else and practice something else. This is probably, one of the reasons to sustain the low quality of teaching in professional courses. Future research is needed to develop and execute CPD in the higher education system.

In university colleges CPD does not relate to performance management system (PMS). There exist no standard measures of performance appraisal. Secondly, it is hardly linked to classroom management programme. Studies substantiate the fact that classroom transaction at the college level requires professional skills followed by professional development value. Professional development value is a preferential importance and belief a teacher has in his cognitive domain.

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