

Professional Development of Teachers: Focus of NEP and Training for New Roles

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ABSTRACT

Teachers play a very important role in the teaching learning space. There is a prerequisite for teachers to be updated with the newest methods, technology, and education trend that the current classroom requires. Professional development of involves an unceasing engagement that the teachers need to be involved to make them ever ready and ever equipped to handle teaching learning and students in the most effective way. There are different types of professional development programmes and approaches. There are many common and ongoing professional development programmes like seminar, workshop, orientation program, faculty development program etc. This paper reflects the different types of professional development programmes, the significance and listing the elements of effective professional development. Further, the main objective of this paper is to delve on the focus of NEP 2020 on professional development of teachers along with identifying the ways in which teachers are trained in the new roles expected of them.

Keywords: Teachers, Professional Development, NEP 2020, New Roles

INTRODUCTION

Teachers play a very important role in the teaching learning space. However, their influence is beyond the teaching learning space. Teacher preparation before teaching plays a major role in teacher readiness and the contribution that they pour in their future career. Thus, the teacher must be at the centre of the fundamental reforms in the education system (National Education Policy [NEP], 2020). With explosion of knowledge around the students and the use of even more enhanced curriculum, along with the raised curiosity of the students, the teachers cannot depend on only the training that they received prior to their teaching career. Over time the overall experience of the teacher becomes dated like the traditional methods of teaching. With this, there is a prerequisite for teachers to be updated with the newest methods, technology, and education trend that the current classroom requires. This will help teachers with not only updating their knowledge and skills, but also helps improve their teaching quality. Teacher quality is a function of several factors: teachers' status, remuneration, conditions of work and their academic and professional education (National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education [NCFTE], 2009). Thus, professional development of teachers becomes mandatory to augment teachers with the right gear as the profession demand. The NEP 2020 stated that this policy must help re-establish teachers, at all levels, as the most respected and essential members of our society, because they truly shape our next generation of citizens (NEP, 2020).

Professional Development of Teachers

Professional development of teachers improves teaching practice improves pupils' learning outcomes (Gov.UK. Department of Education, 2016). It involves an unceasing engagement that the teachers need to be involved to make them ever ready and ever equipped to handle students and their teaching learning and in the most effective way. Further, with professional development of teachers, it will help them face and solve challenges in their classrooms and careers. It also helps teachers to deliver quality education to their students. Hence, the professional development of teachers is a lifelong process which begins with the initial preparation that teachers

receive and continues until retirement (AbdulRab, 2023). Teacher professional development involves a continuous process of reflection, learning and action to further teacher's knowledge and skills, leading to enhanced teaching practices that positively impact on students' learning (Cambridge International Education, 2021). The teacher education system through its initial and continuing professional development programmes is expected to ensure an adequate supply of professionally competent teachers to run the nation's schools (NCFTE, 2009). These programmes are required as teachers are expected to contribute in multiple parts from planning of the curriculum to its transaction and assessment of students learning outcomes.

The professional development of teachers is also interchangeably understood and termed as Continuous Professional Development (CPD) or as In-Service Training (INSET). In India, the CPD or the INSET training of already employed teachers at various capacities and levels are offered by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) at the national level, the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) at the state level, the District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) at the district level, and in many other teacher education institutions ranging from Universities Department of Education to other Institutes of National Importance. Training and exposure of the teachers in different programmes is also happening periodically in their own institutions known as School-Based Continuous Professional Development for teachers. Elsewhere, professional development of teachers takes place with the initiatives of other non-governmental agencies.

Types of professional development of teachers

There are different types of professional development programmes. The different types range from self-enhancement programmes to attending formal programmes of various time duration, capacities and levels, such as school-based programmes or programmes organised by nongovernment and government agencies. The NEP 2020 stated that continuous opportunities for teachers will be given for self-improvement. Also, the teachers will be given ample opportunities to learn the latest innovations and advances that exists in their professions (NEP, 2020). Further, professional development programmes include programmes that are subject and content specific to generic nature professional development programmes such as training for digital skills or use of artificial intelligence (AI). They also include programmes that caters to different levels of teaching, such as training for teachers teaching and catering at the different level of school structure. The policy specified that there is an initiation in the longer term, State Governments shall prepare cadres of professionally qualified educators through stage-specific professional training. Also, teacher professional development programmes range according the mode of conduct like the face-to-face mode, online mode, blended mode, and open and distance mode. In addition, the professional development programme will also be offered in multiple means, such as local, regional, state, national, and international, also it is inclusive of the online teacher development modules (NEP, 2020). Also, teachers can engage in professional development activities at the micro that is individual or macro level by collaborating with teachers across a range of contexts (Cambridge International Education, 2021) as given in Figure 1. The NEP 2020 had identified and specified the other types of professional development programmes to be propagated for teachers. These include programmes like training in competency-based learning, in the latest pedagogies, in related pedagogies, such as experiential learning, arts-integrated, sports-integrated, and storytelling-based approaches, and in assessment related training which is inclusive of formative and adaptive assessment of learning outcomes. There are many common and ongoing professional development programmes for enhancing the professional development of teachers such as participating in seminar, workshop, orientation program, faculty development program etc.

Key:
Number of teachers involved
Context
Example PD activity

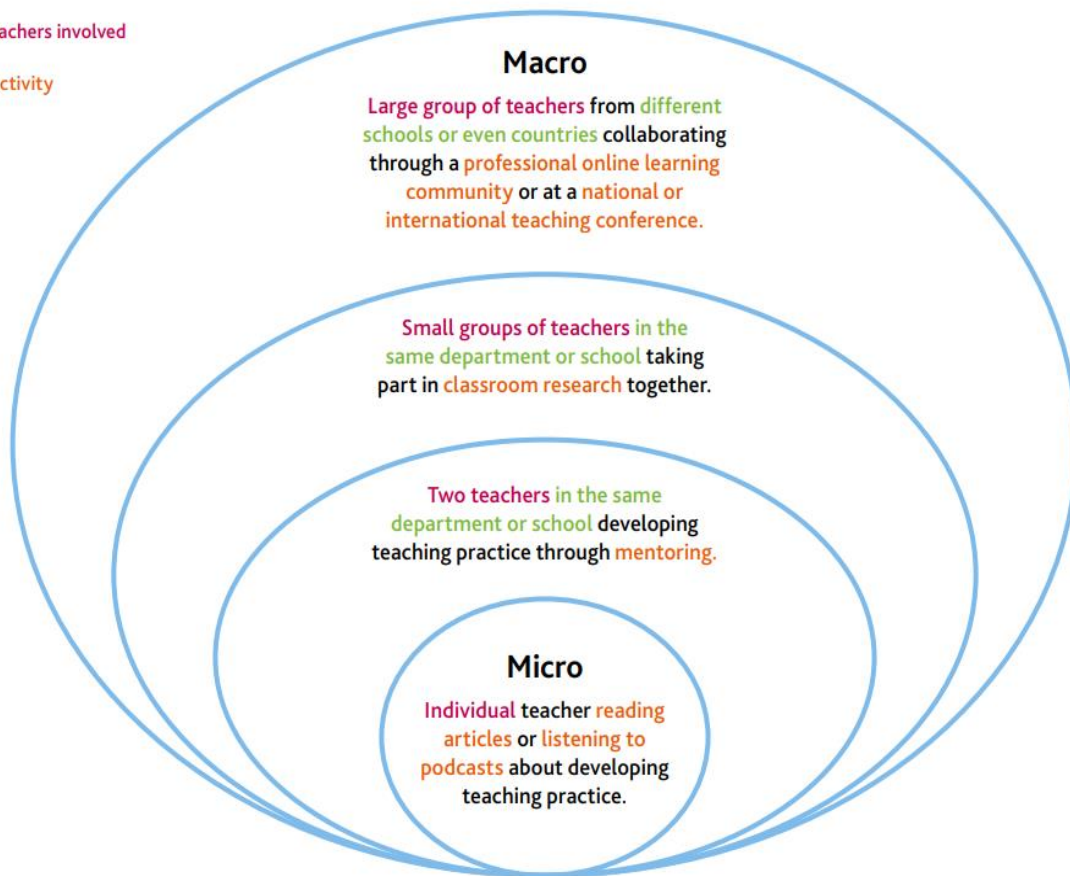


Figure 1: Micro to macro scale engagement with PD activities

Source: Cambridge International Education, 2021

Some of the recent area in the professional development of teachers are:

- **Active Learning:** In professional development models, teachers often participate in the same style of learning they are designing for their students, using real examples of curriculum, student work, and instruction (Darling-Hammond et. al., 2017). This provides teachers with opportunities to get hands-on experience designing and practicing new teaching strategies (Darling-Hammond et. al., 2017).
- **Teachers' Adoption of 21st Century Skills:** AbdulRab (2023) suggested the development of the 21st century skills improve teacher instructional quality and, in turn, leads to effective 21st century learners. These 21st century skills include information technology literacy, information literacy, media literacy, digital collaboration skills, etc.
- **Collaboration Skills:** With the popularity of collaborative learning amongst students in today's classroom, teachers need to be trained to facilitate collaboration in their classroom. In this way the students build teamwork to clear concepts and doubt, create their own knowledge and looks up to the teacher as a supporter. Collaborative learning replaces the teacher's traditional role of the teacher by that of a facilitator (Chu et al., 2012). Thus, the teacher needs to be train to modify their roles in the classroom.
- **ICT related Programmes:** The NCFTE 2009 mentioned that there is a growing demand of inclusion of ICT in schools. Thus, ICT can be imaginatively drawn upon for professional development and academic support of the pre-service and in-service teachers (NCFTE, 2009).
- **Professional Learning Communities (PLC):** The philosophy of a PLC is people working together to enhance their effectiveness as professionals for the students' benefit through continuous inquiry and improvement cycles (Awasthi, 2022). A professional learning community/network brings practitioners together, enabling the sharing of ideas and experiences (Cambridge International Education, 2021).

- **Research:** The classroom would be a backward one if its problems are not tackled immediately and solutions are not immediately found. For this, teachers need to have research skills. The most effective research for solving classroom problem is action research. Training of teachers in action research can help them conduct research into their own practice with the aim of finding out how they might overcome a specific issue or problem associated with their practice (Cambridge International Education, 2021).

Elements of Effective Professional Development

Darling-Hammond et. al. (2017) recommended the elements of effective professional development. Darling-Hammond et. al. (2017) claimed that each of these elements was part of the professional development addressed in at least 30 of the 35 studies and some were featured in all 35 studies that have been reviewed. These elements are as follows:

- Is content focused
- Incorporates active learning utilizing adult learning theory
- Supports collaboration, typically in job-embedded contexts
- Uses models and modelling of effective practice
- Provides coaching and expert support
- Offers opportunities for feedback and reflection
- Is of sustained duration

Significance of professional development of teachers

With the recommendation of the policy of education and the need of the students, professional development of teachers is even more required especially to cater students with the 21st century skills. The significance of the professional development of teacher as different studies reported are as follows:

- By enhancing teachers' practice through effective professional development opportunities, learner achievement will also improve (Cordingley et al., 2015 as cited in Cambridge International Education, 2021). Whether students are high, low, or average achievers, they will learn more if their teachers regularly engage in high-quality professional development (Mizell, 2019).
- It increased teacher motivation (Coe, 1998 as cited in Cambridge International Education, 2021). Professional development is the only means for teachers to gain such knowledge (Mizell, 2019). It developed their teaching skills, responsibility towards profession, passion for the job, self-confidence & self-esteem, quality of teaching, update knowledge, and bring promotional benefits (Banik & Saha, 2023).
- Brings benefit to schools and school sector (Cambridge International Education, 2021). The entire school is more focused and effective (Mizell, 2019).

Theories on Professional Development of Teachers

Bekkouch (2024) focussed on the literature of different theories to establish the importance of teacher professional development. The first focus is on *knowledge from one's own action and beliefs* as supported by Stroll (1999 as cited in Bekkouch, 2024) who stated that individuals' beliefs, as well as their knowledge, have a significant impact on their perceptions and behaviours on modifying and developing their teaching. This allows instructors to learn from their own experience (Bekkouch, 2024). The second focus is on *learning by actively reflecting* where reflective practice involves integrating theory and practice through ongoing conversation between thinking and doing in order to develop greater proficiency (Schon, 1987, as cited in Bekkouch, 2024) by teachers as they undergo reflective thoughts about their profession. The third one is the *theory's role* where Brookfield (1995, as cited in Bekkouch, 2024) emphasizes the importance of the fourth lens, that is, theoretical knowledge which is essential for teachers' growth because research and literature allow assess to practice, confirm it, or provide in-depth knowledge about the best ways to improve it. The fourth focus is on *constructive feedback and observation-based learning* where observation is a process through which teachers can understand

and interpret what they observe, drawing on their own knowledge and experience to provide essential feedback for their growth (Drummond, 2016; Gerber, 2017, as cited in Bekkouch, 2024). The fifth focus is *building knowledge through action research/ teachers' inquiry* where while independent inquiry can be useful, it is most beneficial when teachers collaborate in structured settings (Hubbard & Power, 1993; Reid, 2004, as cited in Bekkouch, 2024). The sixth focus is on *collaboration as a means of learning* where it is argued that professional learning is best achieved through collaborative efforts with other educators, involving reflection, inquiry, partnership, and engagement in the development of professional communities (Fullan, 1993; Hargreaves, 1998, as cited in Bekkouch, 2024). And the seventh focus is *on learning through technology* where Prestige (2010, as cited in Bekkouch, 2024) found that the incorporation of technology and tools, such as blogs, online forums, and social networks, as teaching aids can promote learning and the acquisition of knowledge in today's society.

Sims et al. (2022) developing a new theory of effective PD based on combinations of causally active components targeted at developing teachers' insights, goals, techniques, and practice. Sims et al. (2022) test two important implications of the theory using a systematic review and meta-analysis of 104 randomized controlled trials, finding qualified support for their framework and argued that it presents an important step forward in being able to offer actionable advice to those responsible for improving teacher PD.

Focus of NEP 2020 on Professional Development of Teachers

The NEP 2020 must do everything to empower teachers and help them to do their job as effectively as possible (NEP, 2020). Thus, NEP 2020 focus on the mentioned points across the document to support continuous professional development of teachers.

- Teachers are recognised as the heart of the learning process. Through the process of encouraging and rigorous engagement with students and their learning, the teachers grow personally and professionally with the gathered experience and practice.
- Creating facilities to create opportunities for the continuous professional development of teachers. Facilities play an important role in creating learning opportunities for teachers. Facilities such as digital platforms, institutional training centres, professional networks, etc. can be made available and encourage teachers to be involved in and to learn from.
- Teachers will be trained, encouraged, and supported with continuous professional development. Beyond the opportunities that the teachers can grasp, they will be encouraged to attend the required programme regularly. The support for professional development of teachers can include sponsored training, expanded networking, free mentorship, skill specific workshop, digital certification through organized platform, etc.
- For updated competency, each teacher will be expected to participate in at least 50 hours of CPD every year. The regular, consistent and active training that the teachers will receive will benefit the teachers as well as the stakeholder in the classroom.
- CPD opportunities will be driven by their own interests. With the existing and will-be existing myriads of professional development opportunities, the teachers will have ample choice to attend and engage in trainings as per their need and choice.
- CPD opportunities will cover the latest pedagogies. Efforts will be made for teachers to be exposed to and are equipped with the most recent and most effective pedagogies for the different discipline that they are teaching.
- The well awaited National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST) will inform the design of pre-service teacher education programme, professional development efforts, etc. Having a standard to look up to and to perform accordingly is a big encouragement for teachers. The standard will be a guidance and a benchmark for the teachers to fulfil their performance and career growth.
- Existing challenge of isolation of teachers, students, and schools, faced in the current education system will be overcome by focusing on a sense of community built through joint professional development programmes. Joint professional development programme refers to collaborative work amongst educators, professionals, or agency members. In this approach to continuous learning there is a lateral sharing of knowledge than relying on the top-down methods.

- Initiatives have also been taken towards providing faculty with professional development opportunities to address the issue of developing motivated, energized, and capable faculty. This is of utmost importance as well-motivated and energised teacher can perform better. It was found that there is a strong positive correlation was observed between job performance and student achievement (Shahzadi et al., 2025) which indicate that enhancing teacher motivation may lead to better classroom outcomes and student success.
- Professional development activities as a parameter for proper performance assessment shall be developed by each HEI and clearly enunciated in the Institutional Development Plan. Keeping in place and in check the precise parameters will help the teachers in monitoring their progress.
- In-service continuous professional development for college and university teachers will continue through the existing institutional arrangements and ongoing initiatives. Teachers who are in need of updating their knowledge will be able to do so in the required time and space.
- The Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (DIKSHA) platform may also be utilized for Teacher's Professional Development through e-content. Since the DIKSHA portal is available, teachers can make full and engage with the learning materials that fits the needs of prescribed school curriculum. This will keep the teachers updated and in line with the requirement of students of today.
- One of the key long-term thrust areas for financing to cultivate an education system is teacher education and continuing professional development. When teachers are given the opportunities for CPD they will benefit in engagement, career progression and productivity.

Training for New Roles

Some of the identified new roles as mentioned in the NEP 2020 can be brought successfully through continuous professional development of the teachers. As the policy recommended that teachers must be at the centre of the fundamental reforms in the education system (NEP, 2020). The teachers are expected to develop a caring and inclusive culture for effective learning and the benefit of all stakeholders for positive learning environment. To create that kind of a learning environment, it is anticipated that the teacher plays the different effective roles. These are discussed below:

Leader: The teachers that are identified with the growing leadership traits such as having unwavering integrity, clear communication, empathy, resilience, adaptability etc. will be great leaders in the classroom and beyond. Better chances for exposure and training needs to be in-place. The policy states that outstanding teachers with demonstrated leadership and management skills would be trained over time to take on academic leadership positions (NEP, 2020) in various institutions. The policy also stated that excellent faculty with high academic and service credentials as well as demonstrated leadership and management skills will be identified early and trained through a ladder of leadership positions (NEP, 2020). The teacher leadership processes that emerged through provincial teacher-leader program contributed to the advancement of the participants' professional careers (Riveros et.al., 2013). Pevzner (2021) in a study reported that there is a need for systematic and purposeful training of teachers for leadership both at the university and in the system of professional development.

Mentor and Guides: Faculty will have the capacity and training to be able to approach students not just as teachers, but also as mentors and guides (NEP, 2020, p. 39). Since teachers are anticipated to act as mentors and guides at various capacities, professional development on mentoring becomes mandatory. In teaching profession, mentoring is a process in which a more experienced senior teacher supports the novice teachers by providing required guidance, counselling, ideas and information on carrying out the professional responsibilities successfully (Pandey & Sharma, 2022). Mentoring acted as a way of professional development for mentors (Kalipci, 2018). In one study, about 70% of the mentors claimed that they had benefited professionally from mentoring (Lopez-Real & Kwan, 2005). Thus, teachers that received training on mentoring benefits them as mentors.

Researcher: A teacher that is also giving time to research will have the best opportunity to systematically investigate their own classroom practices. The teacher that solves classroom problems of either discipline,

motivation or engagement is an effective and a practical teacher. In line with this requirement, the policy envisioned the establishment of a National Research Foundation (NRF) to fund outstanding peer-reviewed research and to actively seed research in universities and colleges. Since research is one of the prime areas which the policy focused upon, teachers will be actively engaged in research and research related activities especially in higher education. Hence, the teachers as faculties of the educational institutes will also have to be active researchers to guide students research work as well as work in their own research as proposed to be supported by the NRF. Professional development for teachers on building research skill and research capacity is offered in universities and other agencies across the country.

Creator: To encourage students to be innovators, entrepreneurs, creative learners, it is also expected that the teachers will also be creators of ideas and learning experience for their students. One of the newest trends in education is learning through the online mode. It required knowledge, skill, perseverance, and creativity for teachers to create content to be used in this mode. Thus, the policy recommended that teachers will undergo rigorous training in learner-centric pedagogy and on how to become high-quality online content creators themselves using online teaching platforms and tools (NEP, 2020). To make the online learning an effective one the e-content must be of very reliable quality. SWAYAM platform offers programme for takers including teachers for e-content development to understand the meaning and standards of e-content, learning objects, designing and development of digital resources for teaching and learning (Malliga, 2023). Thus, teachers play a very important role as creators of e-content for the benefit of their students.

Facilitator: There will be emphasis on the teacher's role in facilitating active student engagement with the content and with each other (NEP, 2020). Just how engaged students are during instruction depends, in part, on the supportive quality of the classroom conditions in which their learning takes place and one crucial ingredient within the supportive quality of the class-room is the teacher's motivating style (Reeve, 2006). The teacher can motivate farther more by facilitating and giving the students the right support. Since, students' engagement through hands-on experience and through discussion is far more effective for concept understanding especially in higher grades, the teachers is expected to play the role of a facilitator. Further, a facilitator needs to display a different set of skills than a teacher (Brownstein, 2001). Therefore, the teacher needs to be trained through specific professional development programmes.

Role Model: The policy states that efforts will be made to recruit more high-quality teachers and leaders from Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) in order to bring in excellent role models for all students (NEP, 2020). It is understood that from prior to teacher recruitment that teachers are expected to be role models of the students that they are teaching in their classroom. As a role model is a character that influence in the right way and in turn is looked up to and imitated. A role model is a person who inspires and encourages us to strive for greatness, live to our fullest potential and see the best in ourselves (Govindharajan, 2017). Role modelling is a powerful teaching tool for passing on the knowledge, skills, and values (Cruess et. al., 2008). Career theory proposes the importance of role models as helping to guide individual development (Gibson, 2004). Teachers can enhance their ability to be better role models through some professional development courses. The better the influence the better is the influence on the students.

CONCLUSION

Professional development continues to be very important for teachers for years to come as there is constant development in education. It is also important because teachers also need to be learners. The success of professional development programmes will depend on everyone who are involved directly or indirectly, from teachers to school leaders to professional development providers. The professional development providers need to be aware of the much-needed programmes that teachers can benefit from. In spite of the various challenges, yet, professional development of teachers, is still very important for career progression and classroom teaching. Thus, teacher professional development must move way forward.

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