

Continuing Professional Development: Inevitable for Academic Excellence

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ABSTRACT

Teacher's work is undergoing rapid change: political, educational and social changes, and this means that teachers need more and better Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes in order to keep up with the changes and remain relevant in the teaching profession. The quality of teachers is of great importance, as changing needs place greater pressures on teachers such as having to deal with the challenge of large classes and learners of different characteristics. This raises the need for teachers to be supported more than ever before, hence the need to step up the CPD of teachers, which is an often neglected aspect in most of the developing countries like India.

Keywords: Continuing professional development, academic excellence

"A teacher can never truly teach unless he is still learning himself. A lamp can never light another lamp unless it continues to burn its own flame."

— R. Tagore

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) are the learning activities, through which professionals develop their abilities and ensure they remain effective, efficient, increasingly capable to deliver job at sustained and acceptable levels. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is a broad term which applies to all teaching professionals irrespective of their age or seniority. It *"...is a process by which individuals take control of their own learning and development, by engaging in an on-going process of reflection and action. This process is empowering and exciting and can stimulate people to achieve their aspirations and move towards their dreams."* (Megginson & Whitaker, 2004). CPD comprises a diverse range of practices enabling individuals to develop their skills, share their experiences and bring up-to-date their knowledge of innovations in their field. This may happen through attending seminars or conferences, teacher exchange programmes, in-service training events,

etc. CPD also entails providing or creating space and scope for individual evaluation of approaches, experiences and interactions. This may be in the form of reflective diary entries, teacher forums and blogs, mentoring programmes etc.

Contemporary views of CPD

CPD is often equated with talks, workshops and courses that teachers attend. While such activities have a role to play in teacher development, much work has been carried out internationally in recent years to extend established views of what CPD involves. A number of important reviews have been carried out (e.g. Broad and Evans, 2006; Orr *et al.*, 2013; Timperley *et al.*, 2008) through which key characteristics of effective CPD have been identified. Borg (2015) suggested that CPD can achieve positive and sustained impacts on teachers, learners and organisations when:

- ❑ it is seen by teachers to be relevant to their needs and those of their students
- ❑ teachers are centrally involved in decisions about the content and process of CPD
- ❑ collaboration and the sharing of expertise among teachers is fostered
- ❑ CPD is a collective enterprise supported by schools and educational systems more broadly
- ❑ expert internal and/or external support for teachers is available
- ❑ CPD is situated in schools/colleges and classrooms
- ❑ CPD is recognised as an integral part of teachers' work
- ❑ inquiry and reflection are valued as central professional learning processes
- ❑ teachers are engaged in the examination and review of their beliefs
- ❑ student learning provides the motivation for professional learning
- ❑ CPD is seen as an ongoing process rather than a periodic event
- ❑ there is strategic leadership within institution.

Approaches to CPD which embody these characteristics are described variously as being developmental, socio-constructivist or inquiry-based. They share a concern for participatory, social, inquiry-driven and evidence-based professional learning which is set in context, and where teachers are the key decision-makers, although appropriate expert support and leadership are also key contributors to effective CPD.

What does this mean in practice? It suggests an approach to CPD which addresses the needs of teachers, students and organisations, gives teachers choice and ownership, enables them to learn with and from each another, grounds that learning in what happens in the classroom, and also provides appropriate guidance and support. A number of CPD options are available which reflect these characteristics, such as:

- ❑ various forms of self-study such as teacher research, action research, and exploratory practice, through which teachers systematically investigate teaching and learning in their classrooms

- ❑ lesson study, which involves repeated cycles of collaborative lesson planning, teaching and reflection
- ❑ reading groups, where teachers meet regularly to discuss something they have read and which is relevant to their teaching
- ❑ reflection groups, where teachers meet to share experiences of teaching and to examine evidence from their lessons (such as video recordings of teaching or examples of student work)
- ❑ peer observation, where teachers work in pairs, visit one another's lessons and afterwards discuss these (in a constructive manner and without formal evaluation)
- ❑ professional learning communities, through which groups of teachers meet regularly to examine critical issues in their schools and classrooms
- ❑ curriculum study groups, where teachers collaborate to examine in detail and further their own understandings of a particular area of the curriculum they teach
- ❑ collaborative materials writing, where teachers work together to design units of material for particular groups of learners
- ❑ mentoring schemes, through which appropriately-skilled more experienced teachers support the development of those with less experience and expertise
- ❑ personal learning networks, where professional development is pursued through interactions via social media.

It is important to stress that these options supplement and enhance, not eradicate, conventional approaches to CPD such as courses and workshops; there is in fact evidence that workshops that alternate with opportunities to experiment in the classroom can be effective in promoting change in teaching (Orr *et al.*, 2013) and many action research schemes and reflective programmes adopt such a model. The key issue in these cases, though, is that the workshop is one part of a broader extended CPD strategy rather than the sole one-shot vehicle for professional learning. A second point to stress here is that there are no templates for CPD that guarantee universal success – contextual variability means that

what works in one context may be less effective in another. Thus, while we can talk in global terms about ways of enhancing CPD, the implementation of any CPD strategy will always to a certain extent need to be localised. In other words, just because a decision is made to promote CPD through action research or lesson study, this does not mean that effective professional learning will follow. CPD options need to be chosen and implemented with careful attention both to teachers' prior experience, knowledge and beliefs and to the characteristics of the educational systems in which teachers work. Overall, though, many practical options are now available for making CPD a social, ongoing, in context and inquiry-driven process which can contribute effectively to the growth of teachers, students and organizations at large.

Scope of CPD

Conventional approaches to CPD have tended to address a limited range of themes relevant to teaching and learning, often in relation to practical methodological issues (e.g. teaching reading, using technology, classroom management). Practical know-how of this kind is clearly a fundamental teacher attribute. However, we know that developing as an effective teacher involves much more than methodological skill and the scope of CPD has grown to reflect a more contemporary multi-faceted notion of professional practice. Thus, in addition to practical classroom skills, CPD can address, to give just a few examples, subject matter knowledge, knowledge of learners and learning, materials design, assessment literacy, affective issues such as teachers' beliefs, motivation and confidence, and qualities for self-directed learning such as collaboration, networking, reflection and inquiry. When decisions are being made, then, about the focus of CPD, it is important to think broadly about the range of issues that might be addressed. And irrespective of the issues that CPD focuses on, of course, it is important, as discussed above, that teachers engage with these issues in a manner that involves reflection, inquiry, the sharing of expertise, and a concern for student outcomes.

Current perspectives on CPD have also moved away from the idea that teachers can be easily characterised using labels (such as 'developing' or 'proficient') which define their level of competence

in a unitary manner. Because teacher knowledge is multi-faceted, the same teacher will have varying levels of competence in relation to different areas of professional practice; for example, a teacher may have a deep theoretical and practical understanding of teaching speaking, but have no awareness of assessment for learning and how to implement it. Another teacher may have excellent formal knowledge of language systems but low confidence in their target language oral proficiency. These variations suggest that a productive approach to CPD will support teachers in identifying (ideally with reference to classroom practice and student learning) those specific areas of professional practice where development is required and work with teachers to identify and implement appropriate strategies for supporting such development.

Guskey (2002) suggests that research points to most CPD as being ineffective in bringing about the desired fundamental change in teachers' beliefs, attitudes and practice. He points out that what primarily motivates teachers to learn is a desire to improve the learning outcome of their students. Adding that they are also very pragmatic, seeking specific, concrete and practical ideas. Programmes that do not take this into account are doomed to failure. He suggests that the underlying model that is often used with teachers' CPD is flawed: based on the ideas of Lewin (1935) it presupposes that in order to change teaching practice we must firstly address teachers' beliefs and attitudes in order to obtain their commitment and enthusiasm to subsequently implement new programmes. Guskey proposes an alternative model based upon the premise that one has to firstly demonstrate the practical and concrete benefits of innovation, and the positive impact on students' learning outcomes: 'The crucial point is that it is not the professional development per se, but the experience of successful implementation that changes teachers' attitudes and beliefs. They believe it works because they have seen it work, and that experience shapes their attitudes and beliefs' (Guskey, 2002).

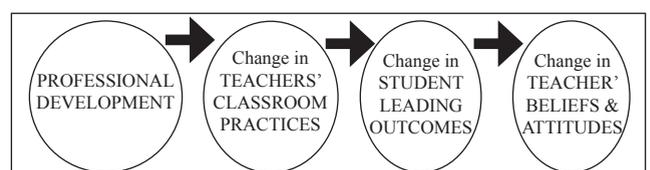


Fig. 1: A model of teacher change

Boyle *et al.* (2004) also suggest that whereas traditional CPD approaches, such as attending a course, a conference, etc, may spark the interest of teachers, they are largely insufficient to lead to sustainable change to what teachers teach and how they teach. They note that for a lot of teachers, 'professional development appears to be still characterized by fragmented 'one-shot' workshops at which they listen passively to 'experts' and learn about topics not essential to teaching'. They suggest that CPD that favours peer learning is far more likely to be successful: 'In comparison to the traditional 'one-hit' workshops, these types of activities are usually longer in duration, allow teachers the opportunity to practise and reflect upon their teaching and are embedded in ongoing teaching activities' (Boyle *et al.*, 2004). The findings from their longitudinal study suggest that the most common longer-term CPD activities for teachers involved the observation of colleagues (peers) and the sharing of practice, and that these activities led to one or more aspects of teaching practice being modified.

There are a range of CPD activities in which academics engage as part of their everyday practice; these include (Becher, 1996):

- ❑ courses and conferences (e.g. planning, development, writing, participating)
- ❑ professional interactions (e.g. informal mentoring, with colleagues and students, including pastoral meetings and supervision)
- ❑ networking (e.g. engaging with professional bodies, disciplinary groupings)
- ❑ consulting experts (e.g. extending their own learning, reading, attending workshops & seminars)
- ❑ learning by doing (e.g. reflecting, evaluating, taking part in committees and working groups to tackle issues arising)
- ❑ learning by teaching (e.g. presenting, facilitating, co-teaching, marking, second-marking, peer observation)
- ❑ personal research (e.g. publishing, bidding for grants and managing projects)

The CPD programme seeks to support the development of knowledge, skills and capabilities in academic practice, recognising that an effective

academic is one who reflects on and examines their own practice and recognises the importance of continued learning (Boyer, 1990). The CPD programmes should currently focus on three elements with the overall aim of enhancing the student learning experiences:

- ❑ The development of teaching, learning and research practices, aspiring to *Academic Excellence*;
- ❑ The development of understanding and practice with respect to *Technology Enhanced Learning* to ensure pedagogically sound usage;
- ❑ The development of understanding and capabilities around the idea of a *Global University* in order to extend staff and student experience.

CPD & Academic Excellence

'An education system is only as good as its teachers' (UNESCO, 2014) and enhancing teacher quality at all stages of a teacher's career is thus a key factor in improving the quality of learning that students receive. This paper focuses on professional learning for practising teachers – what is widely known as continuing professional development (CPD) – and discusses contemporary ideas about what it is and how to make it effective.

A widely cited definition of CPD is offered by Day: '...all natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school and which contribute through these to the quality of education in the classroom. It is the process by which, alone and with others, teachers ... acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence essential to good professional thinking, planning and practice' (Day, 1999).

This definition highlights several important elements of CPD: it is multifaceted (addressing behaviours, knowledge, emotions, and thinking); it may occur naturally (i.e. through workplace experience) or through planned activities (most discussions of CPD focus on the latter); and its benefits extend from individuals to groups and institutions, and ultimately to the quality of education in the classroom. This point about the benefits of CPD is particularly important in current debates and it is increasingly stressed that CPD should not only

address teachers' individual growth and fulfillment. The development goals of institutions also need to be addressed through CPD, as do, of course, student outcomes. In fact some commentators have argued that improving student outcomes is the primary purpose of CPD and that students' needs (rather than teachers') should be the starting point in decisions about the kinds of CPD that are pursued. CPD is thus a critical element in successful educational systems, enhancing teacher quality, organisational effectiveness and student outcomes (Earley and Porritt, 2014).

Continuing professional development is important because it ensures one continues to be competent in one's profession. It is an ongoing process and continues throughout a professional's career. The ultimate outcome of well planned continuing professional development is that it safeguards the public, the employer, the professional and the professional's career, and helps in marching towards academic excellence. Well crafted and delivered continuing professional development is important because it delivers benefits to the individual, their profession and the public at large.

1. CPD ensures your capabilities keep pace with the current standards of others in the same field.
2. CPD ensures that you maintain and enhance the knowledge and skills you need to deliver a professional service to your customers, clients and the community.
3. CPD ensures that you and your knowledge stay relevant and up to date. You are more aware of the changing trends and directions in your profession. The pace of change is probably faster than it's ever been – and this is a feature of the new normal that we live and work in. If you stand still you will get left behind, as the currency of your knowledge and skills becomes out-dated.
4. CPD helps you continue to make a meaningful contribution to your team. You become more effective in the workplace. This assists you to advance in your career and move into new positions where you can lead, manage, influence, coach and mentor others.
5. CPD helps you to stay interested and interesting. Experience is a great teacher, but

it does mean that we tend to do what we have done before. Focused CPD opens you up to new possibilities, new knowledge and new skill areas.

6. CPD can deliver a deeper understanding of what it means to be a professional, along with a greater appreciation of the implications and impacts of your work.
7. CPD helps advance the body of knowledge and technology within your profession
8. CPD can lead to increased public confidence in individual professionals and their profession as a whole
9. Depending on the profession – CPD contributes to improved protection and quality of life, the environment, sustainability, property and the economy. This particularly applies to high risk areas, or specialised practice areas which often prove impractical to monitor on a case by case basis.

The importance of continuing professional development should not be underestimated – it is a career-long obligation for practicing professionals. Sometimes it is mandated by professional organisations or required by codes of conduct or codes of ethics. But at its core it is a personal responsibility of professionals to keep their knowledge and skills current so that they can deliver the high quality of service that safeguards the public and meets the expectations of customers and the requirements of their profession. But continuing professional development should be engaging and fun too. Sometimes it's difficult to find a relevant course that fits in with your other obligations. Sometimes, as you walk out of a course or seminar it's hard to assess what you have actually learned. Have you absorbed the necessary skills and will you be able to apply them correctly in your work?

Teachers are an important resource in the teaching and learning process and their training and utilization therefore requires critical consideration. This is due to changing demands on the new roles of teachers in the 21st Century. Traditional approaches to CPD such as formal courses or one-off seminar are criticized for their shortcomings of being unable to get teachers prepared for the new role of knowledge facilitator rather than knowledge transmitter. An

awareness of less formal and traditional forms of CPD is slowly growing, with calls for teachers to become more creative in their approaches to their own professional development, and move away from more traditional transmission-based methods (Muijs *et al.*, 2004). Understanding how teachers perceive CPD and what factors affect their participation in CPD is an extremely important segment for it provides institutions with accurate information to use in making effective decisions regarding CPD programs. Professional development, academic excellence, career progression and impact of CPD are all areas that are intertwined in experiences of academics, yet, as Gunn and Fisk (2013) and others have observed, the connections between them are often insufficiently explored in education policy, frameworks and research. Likewise, frameworks which model and guide the evaluation of CPD should also be mindful of career progression and the ways in which the impact of CPD articulates with academic excellence.

Belay (2016) examined the contribution of teachers' Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to quality of education and its challenging factors related with teachers and pointed out, although teachers' engagement in CPD activities was found to be very poor, CPD has made significant contribution to the improvement in students' achievement, classroom practices and teachers' professional competence. Moreover, the study found significantly high impact of teachers' belief, commitment, competence, cooperativeness, sense of responsibility and motivation in their CPD practice.

Teacher's Continuing Professional Development (CPD): Indian Scenario

The strength and quality of any profession largely depends on how it manages the three stages of preparation, induction and ongoing development of its members. In an ideal scenario, adequate preparation is ensured through profession-specific education with judicious balance between theory and practical components, supplemented by field exposure, apprenticeship and on-the-job training. It is followed by systematic and gradual induction supported by mentoring, internship, shadowing, team work, etc., preparing new entrants to be independent, autonomous professionals. For their ongoing development there are many CPD avenues

and mechanisms: regular need based, up-dating events, short and long term courses, professional associations and networks, stronger links between research and practice through dissemination networks, personal studies and research, regular experimenting and sharing through journals, publications, workshops or conferences. Both the scope and the pressure to keep developing professionally are built into most professions. Medical and legal education in India is good examples of this combination of theoretical and practical learning backed up by on-the-job training and followed up with systematic induction and CPD.

However, in India, like many other places, teaching is not as prestigious or esteemed as other professions like medicine, engineering or law, and it often appears to be low on the list of career options for most young graduates. Some teachers seem to be low on interest and commitment towards their profession. Studies like Ramchandran *et al.* (2005) and Bennel & Akyeampong (2007) point to very low teacher motivation in India.

In terms of the three stages of preparation, induction and CPD, teaching in India scores poorly as a profession. Professional preparation consists of short pre-service teacher education courses with limited field exposure and practical relevance. There is no formalised system of induction and normally a teacher is required to handle responsibility independently and autonomously right from their first day in the profession. Ongoing professional development, i.e. CPD, can be seen in a very restricted, narrow sense and there are limited opportunities and support for the CPD of serving teachers.

The problems begin with perceptions about CPD. Different agencies and stakeholders seem to hold different or narrow views of CPD. It is very common to see CPD equated with in-service training (INSET) programmes, which are normally one-off, isolated, short-term and infrequent training events. Teachers, too, seem to perceive CPD in terms of formal INSET programmes designed and delivered by external agencies. Even the National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE), a key policy document of the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), uses INSET and CPD interchangeably (NCFTE, 2009: 63-74), though it

does set out a number of ways in which CPD can be addressed (NCFTE, 2009:67-70).

Education administrators and school managements relate CPD to teachers' ability to 'properly' teach prescribed courses, manage their classrooms and ensure good performance of students in examinations. The broader notion of CPD as a lifelong process of learning, both formally and informally, based on teachers' conscious initiative and voluntary efforts and supported by schools and authorities, the process by which ... teachers review, renew and extend their commitment as change agents ... and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills, planning and practice... through each phase of their teaching lives (Day, 1999) is largely missing in Indian teacher education.

Because of the restricted view of CPD as INSET, only official INSET programmes receive recognition and support, while other forms of CPD activities such as attending conferences, acquiring additional qualifications or forming learning communities are, by and large, not recognised. It must be observed here that in higher education in India a remarkable shift in CPD policy has taken place with the latest pay revision. The notion of CPD is broadened to include participation in academic events, undertaking research, publishing, attending faculty development programmes, etc, and mechanisms of quantifying these activities and relating them to career advancement have been introduced. Though there are several unresolved issues of implementation, quality assurance and practicality, this can serve as a good example of how a broad view of CPD can be incorporated into education policies and programmes.

Despite the diversity of individual teachers' CPD needs and interests, the only available avenue for thousands of teachers remains INSET training, the nature, structure and content of which often lack relevance for individual teachers as reported in the National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE 2009:6-7). Another worrying factor is that the state is seen as the sole provider of CPD and officially sanctioned programmes as the only channels of CPD. Teachers are led to believe that CPD is the state responsibility and that they are incapable of doing anything on their own. Teachers' voluntarism, initiative and efforts to

initiate and support their own CPD are quite rare. Teacher associations, conferences and seminars, research journals, publications, etc, which can be directly linked to teacher voluntarism and initiative, are poor both in quantity and quality. Educational administrators and school managements seem to be unwilling and unable (because of constraints of regulations and resources) to support any CPD undertaking beyond those mandated by the state. Thus, the CPD scenario in India seems to suffer from a dual handicap – there is little top-down support from state policies and programmes or from administrators and school management for CPD beyond INSET, while there are also few instances of bottom-up initiatives and efforts by teachers to take responsibility for their own CPD and to explore the full range of alternative options for CPD rather than simply being content with INSET designed and delivered by state agencies (Mohanraj, 2009).

The MHRD, Government of India, document on 'Restructuring and Reorganization of the Centrally Sponsored Scheme on Teacher Education: Guidelines for implementation (2012) has given clear policy directives for continuing professional development and capacity building of teacher educators across all levels of education. The document envisages faculty development to be a continuous process in order to upgrade the knowledge and skills of their faculty and ensure that the nation's children have access to quality teachers and quality education in its schools.

The professional development of Teacher Educators is generally viewed as the responsibility of teacher educators themselves. However, this responsibility can be allocated separately to universities and other regulatory authority according to Teacher Educators' roles and tasks, with different visions and practices. Issues of insufficient funding, incentives, or research opportunities for professional development, and lack of coordination between institutions are highlighted in the national reports. In some cases it is considered that there is a need to establish a new way of working with stakeholders in order to overcome the divide between higher education staff and teachers.

The role of Teacher Educators' professional associations, where they are present, is mentioned as key in taking forward CPD initiatives, networking and cooperation. Their activities may include, for example, courses, professional platforms,

conferences, meetings, research coordination, journal publications. Where local professional development plans exist, they tend to focus on performance rather than on Teacher Educators' competence development or CPD. If Teacher Education institutions or networks organise induction or professional development for Teacher Educators, quality needs to be ensured, involving more stakeholders and the ministry. Reforms promoting systematic quality enhancement, restructuring and cooperation between different kinds of Teacher Education institutions, therefore offer potential for boosting the quality of Teacher Educators and their professional development.

CONCLUSION

Teacher's work is undergoing rapid change: political, educational and social changes, and this means that teachers need more and better CPD in order to keep up with the changes and remain relevant in the teaching profession. The quality of teachers is of great importance, as changing needs place greater pressures on teachers such as having to deal with the challenge of large classes and learners of different characteristics. This raises the need for teachers to be supported more than ever before, hence the need to step up the CPD of teachers, which is an often neglected aspect in most of the developing countries.

Outcome based education is the focal point in the draft New Education Policy (2016) because the Indian academic system today is very rarely tested with its outcome. Examination marks are still considered the criteria for the performance of the learner, teacher and the institute. As a result, the faculties concentrating on formality fulfillment are rarely interested in their continuing professional development (Metri, 2016). The concept of CPD is not new. It is considered a responsibility, an ethical obligation and even a right of both individuals and institutions, based on their actual training needs. The approach and content is multi faceted, ranging from a focus on specific competencies, teaching and learning approaches, and managerial, social as well as interpersonal development aspects. The main rationale for CPD is maintaining professional competence in an environment of numerous challenges such as changing pattern and increasing knowledge day by day, new educational

technologies, increasing consumer's (student) knowledge and expectations, demand of greater public accountability and more importantly the internationalization of higher education with its high demands for quality assurance. The strongest motivational factor for CPD would be the will and desire to maintain professional quality and to minimize professional incompetence in particular personal and system failures. Ultimately, its aim is to institutionalize mechanisms for revalidation of teaching competencies, and enhancement in teacher's cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains in the future, and thus continually marching towards academic excellence.

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