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A Study on Perception of Student Teachers on Professional Development

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Abstract

This study investigated student teachers' perceptions of their professional development. This is descriptive research and a survey method was used. The sample consisted of 80 student teachers studying for B. Ed in teacher education institutions. A stratified simple random sampling technique was used to select the sample. A researcher-constructed student teacher professional development scale was used to analyze student teacher attitudes toward professional development. Specific objectives were formulated: 1. To investigate the perception of teacher students towards professional development. 2. To find out if there is any significant difference between male and female student teachers in their perception of professional development. 3. To find out if there is any significant difference between arts and science stream student teachers in their perception of professional development. The data obtained from the survey was analyzed using percentage analysis and “t” test. The findings of the study were: 1. Most of the student teachers, which is 80% of them, were found to have a highly favorable perception of professional development and only 20% of the student teachers had a less favorable perception of professional development. 2. No significant difference was found between male and female student teachers regarding their perception of professional development. 3. No significant

difference was found between urban and rural student teachers regarding their perception of professional development.

Keywords: perception, student teachers, professional development, arts and science stream

Introduction

Teacher professional development does not happen but is an ongoing process, a common statement written in most teacher professional development documents. There is no doubt that teaching is a profession and has certain professional responsibilities. Sometimes these commitments are written into a code of conduct or are often just conventions. The teaching profession has changed a lot. In India, NCF-2005 brought about radical changes in the teaching and learning process. This also affected the role of teachers. Many such policy changes have affected the role of teachers.

The professional development of teachers does not only involve giving them an opportunity to learn a new concept or adopt a new teaching methodology, but also focuses on developing their competencies to deal with the changing scenario of the learning process and adopt the best for the benefit of teachers and students. Professional development brings about changes in a teacher's approach, attitude, understanding and practice to increase the level of learning.

In India, teacher training programs are generally categorized as preparatory and other. In a broader sense, in-service teacher education programs are considered professional development

programs for teachers. Many policy documents emphasized this dimension of in-service teacher training. The role of continuing teacher education was emphasized by the Secondary Education Commission (1952-53) under the leadership of Dr. A. Lakshmana Swami Mudaliar who advocated:

However excellent a teacher preparation program may be, it does not by itself produce an excellent teacher. It can only engender the knowledge skills and attitudes that enable the teacher to begin his task with a reasonable degree of confidence and with a minimum amount of experience. Greater efficiency comes from critically analyzed experiences and individual and group efforts to improve. The teacher training institution should accept its responsibility to assist in this phase of in-service teacher education. Among the activities that the school should provide or cooperate on are: (1) refresher courses, (2) short intensive courses in professional subjects, (3) practical training in the workshop, (4) seminars and professional conferences. He should also enable his staff, where possible, to serve as consultants to a school or group of schools undertaking some improvement programme.

Recommendations of Various Committees and Commissions on Professional Development

The Education Commission (1964-66) also recommended that "school complexes" be established with a nodal school responsible for the continuous professional development of all teachers working in the schools. These recommendations result in State Educational Institutes (SIEs) in various states.

The National Policy on Education (NPE 1986/92) categorically mentions that "teacher education is a continuous process and its pre-service and in-service components are inseparable". In 1987, a mass orientation program of five million teachers was launched each year under the name "Program of Mass Orientation of School Teachers" (PMOST). It was subsequently replaced by another crash course under the name "Special Orientation Program for Elementary School Teachers" (SOPT). Both these programs were short-term measures and were only able to create awareness among teachers.

After clarifying the role of in-service teacher education as a professional development activity, The Acharya Ramamurthi Review Committee (1990) explicitly advocated that "further and refresher courses should be related to the specific needs of teachers. Continuing education should take due account of the future growth needs of teachers; assessment and follow-up should be part of the system."

The National Curriculum for Teacher Education (NCFTE)-2009 proposed many initiatives to strengthen in-service teacher education as a means of professional development. Chapter 4 of the NCFTE deals in detail with the continuing professional development and support of continuing education for teachers.

SSA's revised implementation framework (2011) recommended strengthening the BRC, Urban Resource Center (URC) and CRC to provide academic support to teachers. The BRC/URC and CRC are the most important units for providing training and on-site support to schools and teachers. Given the importance of these structures, SSA will strengthen faculty and

infrastructure support for BRC/URC and CRC. States must focus on improved selection criteria for BRC/URC and CRC coordinators and faculty. Selection criteria should take into account experience, qualifications and capacity for training and research. States must provide facilities for continuous upskilling of BRC/URC and CRC coordinators and teachers. Functional linkages between BRC/URC and CRC and DIETs and resource groups at the district level should be strengthened. The norms governing support under SSA for BRC/URC and CRC have been specified in the framework.

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The Ministry of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India in June 2012 came up with guidelines for the

implementation of restructuring and reorganization of the Centrally Sponsored Teacher Education Programme. The guidelines suggested that:

In-service teacher training programs would work to develop Master Resource Persons (especially for block level training) as well as work directly with teachers to continuously improve understanding and improve planning and implementation of all parts. curriculum. DIETs are also expected to organize specially designed courses for Head Masters, Education Department officials up to block level, VEC members, SMCs, Community Leaders, Heads of PRIs, BRC / CRC Coordinators.

Key Features for Successful Professional Development

Successful professional development must place the needs of teachers and students at the center of the process and address a range of factors, both at the individual and contextual levels. The following are the key features for successful professional development.

Growth mind-set: Professional development must be positioned not as an intervention that seeks to "fix" teacher weaknesses in knowledge and practices, but as a developmental approach that values teachers' existing knowledge and skills and uses them as a foundation. for further learning. Professional learning will be most effective when it adopts a "broaden and build" approach to development that focuses on teachers' strengths rather than weaknesses⁵⁰. Successful professional development that aspires to long-term positive change must build on teachers' previous experiences and make useful connections between what teachers already know and new ideas.

Bottom-up/top-down synergy: Teachers are the interface between top-down policy demands and the bottom-up needs of their students. As this interface, they need to be involved in making decisions about the content and process of their professional development and need professional support and guidance to explicitly build their professional development around their role and professional needs. A top-down approach that limits teachers' choices about areas of development often has minimal impact on what happens to teachers' behavior in the classroom. Research shows that teachers who have limited choice are typically less satisfied with their professional development than teachers who have some choice, and a didactic model in which facilitators simply tell teachers what to do has limited impact.

Reflection and critical engagement: Reflection and critical engagement with the ideas and experiences that teachers encounter during and beyond specific professional development experiences should be the foundation of professional development. Mastery of a skill is acquired only partly through deliberate and focused practice; in order to develop, mastery must be supported by feedback and reflection⁵⁵. So programs need to offer opportunities for reflection and learning from experience through critical engagement with other teachers' own views and beliefs, theories of learning and practice, and through opportunities to challenge them in a non-threatening way. Time needs to be systematically incorporated into professional development opportunities so that teachers can reflect on their professional development in individual and social contexts with peers, tutors and mentors.

Collaboration and Mentoring: Learning is a social endeavor, so development programs that include peer collaboration and professional mentoring as essential components of

professional learning offer the greatest benefit to teachers' professional growth. Professionals with relevant knowledge need to support teachers with collaborative initiatives within and across schools as they undergo professional development, such as reading groups, reflection groups, professional learning communities and the development of collaborative materials. Instructional gains from programs are most pronounced where teachers work as a team and engage in professional learning in collaboration with peers and/or mentors.

Theory and practice: Vocational programs should develop theoretical and practical knowledge in an integrated way. Teachers should experience theory in a way that is related to practice. For example, teachers should consider the implications of theory (e.g., second language acquisition theory) for practice and should evaluate theories in light of their own and others' practices. Theory/practice integration could be introduced by supporting teachers to conduct classroom research either individually or collaboratively in teams. If professional development is not integrated into the practical context of teachers, it will most likely not change classroom habits and practice.

Integrating Instruction, Curriculum, and Assessment: Successful professional development programs need to adopt a long-term, sustainable, and systematic approach that moves away from the “one-time, one-day” model and ensures coordination between curriculum and teacher preparation. and educational system evaluation procedures. Programs must consider a long-term program of support and engagement, including mutual support and alignment of different program components. The scalability of long-term programs that integrate instruction, curriculum, and assessment is another critical component to consider.

Observable, Realistic and Effective Outcomes: Programs must provide a clear picture of learning progress during the development program, including a baseline of starting points and next steps. Programs that are consistent with a development framework can support observable and measurable progress toward a goal. Not all professional development has the same impact, and results could be most effective if programs are built around the types of activities that have the greatest impact, such as qualification programs and individual and collaborative research.

The quality of teaching is the most important factor that contributes to changes in student learning. In many contexts, there is a great need for initial teacher education to increase available teacher resources, as well as further professional development for teachers in increasingly challenging teaching roles.

Need and Importance of the Study

A teacher is the most important part of a student's life. He/She is the mediator and care giver who has the power to make a difference. Teachers not only motivate, inspire and encourage their students; they also have a responsibility to positively influence their lives. Improving the quality of teaching through the professional development of teachers is an important aspect in the field of education worldwide.

The development of pedagogical practices requires that teachers also constantly develop their teaching practices. Getting a teaching degree cannot mean the end of learning for a teacher. Learning must be ongoing and maintained throughout their career. It is important that their knowledge, experience and skills are relevant and up-to-date. Professional development can

include various methods: conferences and seminars, training workshops, webinars, training courses, research studies, cooperation with peers. Regardless of the method, the goal is the same and to help teachers improve their skills so they can teach better. Therefore, there is a need to conduct research in this area. A review of the related literature revealed that there are fewer attempts to study the professional development of student teachers in Shimoga. So this investigation is a modest undertaking in that regard.

Methodology

This is descriptive research and a survey design was used in the study. The population of the study consisted of pre-service teachers in Shimoga city. The sample of the study was a total of 100 pre-service teachers studying at the college of B. Ed. A stratified simple random sampling technique was used to select the sample. A researcher-constructed student teacher professional development scale was used to analyze student teacher attitudes toward professional development. Data that was collected and analyzed using percentage analysis and “t” test statistical techniques. Formulated hypotheses were tested at the significance level of 0.05 and 0.01.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to find out how student teachers perceive professional development. The intention of study is to find out the significant difference between male and female student teachers in their perception of professional development. The study would also

find out if there is any significant difference between teachers from urban and rural areas in their perception of professional development.

Research Hypotheses of the Study

The following are the hypothesis of the study.

1. There is no significant difference in perception towards Professional Development of male and female student teachers.
2. There is no significant difference between the student teachers belonging to urban and rural areas in their perception towards Professional Development.

Analysis and Interpretations of the Results

The analysis of data interpretation and discussion of the results are presented below:

Objective 1: To study the perception of student teachers towards Professional Development.

Analysis related to objective 1 is presented in table 1.

Table 1

The Percentage of Student Teachers with respect to Favorable and Unfavorable Perception towards Professional Development

Secondary			
Attitude towards Creative Teaching			
School	Highly Favorable	Less favorable	Total
Teachers	Attitude	Attitude	

Frequency	80	20	100
Percentage	20	20	100

Table 1 reveals that a majority of student teachers that is 80% of them having highly favourable perception towards Professional Development. It is also seen that only 20% of the student teachers having less favourable perception on Professional Development.

Ho 1: There is no significant difference in Perception of male and female student teachers on Professional Development.

‘t’ test was calculated to test the hypothesis 1. The results are presented in table 2.

Table 2

Summary Table of ‘t’ Test of Perception of Male and Female Student Teachers on Professional Development

Gender	N	Mean	SD	‘t’ value	df	Level of Significance
Male	10	69.57	6.82	1.51	98	NS
Female	90	70.77	6.98			

NS-Not Significant

Table 2 shows that the obtained ‘t’ value of 1.51 is less than the tabled ‘t’ value of 1.67 at 0.05 level of significance for degrees of freedom 98. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference between male and female student teachers with respect to their

perception on Professional Development is accepted and it is concluded that there is no significant difference between male and female student teachers with respect to their perception on Professional Development.

Ho 2: There is no significant difference in perception of Urban and Rural student teachers on Professional Development

't' test was calculated to test the hypothesis 2. The results are presented in table 3.

Table 3

Summary table of 't' Test of Perception of Urban and Rural Student on Professional Development

Locality	N	Mean	SD	't' value	df	Level of Significance
Urban	60	69.85	8.13	0.079	98	NS
Rural	40	69.81	5.41			

NS-Not Significant

Table 3 shows that the obtained 't' value of 0.079 is less than the tabled 't' value of 1.67 at 0.05 level of significance for degrees of freedom 98. Therefore the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference between rural and urban student teachers in their Perception on professional Development is accepted and it is concluded that there is no significant difference between Urban and Rural student teachers in their perception on professional development.

Findings of the Study

1. A majority of student teachers that is 80% of them are found to possess highly favorable perception on Professional Development and only 20% of the student teachers are found to possess less favorable perception on Professional Development.
2. No significant difference was found between male and female student teachers with respect to their perception on Professional Development.
3. No significant difference was found between urban and rural student teachers with respect to their perception on Professional Development.

Educational Implications of the Study

The following educational implications can be drawn from the study's findings:

1. Policymakers should adopt standards for professional development to guide the design, evaluation, and funding of professional education provided to educators. These standards can reflect the features of effective professional learning.
2. The teacher training institution should accept its responsibility to assist in this phase of in-service teacher education. 2. School teachers should have the responsibility of assisting teachers at the service level in education. Activities that the educational institution must have or collaborate with include: (1) new courses, (2) short courses on specific topics, (3) educational sharing ideas in seminars, (4) seminars and workshops. If possible, it should also allow its employees to work as consultants for the school or school group, allowing it to make some improvements.

3. Education professionals, policymakers, and administrators should evaluate and redesign the use of time and school schedules to increase opportunities for professional learning and collaboration, including participation in professional learning communities, peer coaching and classroom observation, and collaborative planning.
4. Government, NCERT, CTE and DIET and schools could regularly conduct needs assessments using data from staff surveys to identify areas of vocational training most needed and demanded by educators. Data from these sources can help to ensure that professional learning is not disconnected from practice and supports the areas of knowledge and skills that educators want to develop. Higher authorities should identify and develop specialist teachers as mentors to support learning in their particular area(s) of expertise for other educators.

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