

THE ROLE OF IN-SERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES IN PREPARING TEACHERS TO HANDLE CLASSROOM RELATED PROBLEMS

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ABSTRACT

The present study finds its genesis in understanding the emerging role of teacher in present society. Since the teachers work in school environments devoid of adequate infrastructural facilities, instructional support, autonomy and their training needs are not adequately addressed by pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes (Batra, 2005), there is a need to examine the problems of beginning teachers in the relation to school context and teacher preparation. Against the backdrop of the emerging role of the teachers and the problems of beginning teachers, the present study attempts to find out their perceptions about in-service teacher education programmes in enabling them to handle their classroom related problems. Semi-structured interview schedule was used for data collection. In-depth interviews were conducted with beginning teachers to understand their perceptions about the relevance of in-service teacher education programmes in their classroom context. The findings reveal that in-service teacher education programmes do not enable adequately beginning teachers to handle their classroom related problems. The paper concludes with educational implications for in-service teacher education programmes.

Keywords : Beginning Teachers, In-service Teacher Education Programmes, training needs

INTRODUCTION

The Education Commission (1964-66) has rightly mentioned, “Of all the different factors that influence the quality of education and its contribution to national development, the quality, competence and character of teachers are undoubtedly the most significant”. It is felt that the reputation of an institution and its influence on the life of the community is invariably determined by the kind of teachers working in it. The teacher is considered as the backbone in

an educational system. National Curriculum Framework (2005) states, “In-service education can play a significant role in the professional growth of teachers and function as an agent for change in school-related practices. It helps teachers gain confidence by engaging with their practices and reaffirming their experiences. It provides opportunities to engage with other teachers professionally and to update knowledge.” (p.111)

According to NCF, 2005, “Teacher education must become more sensitive to the emerging demands from the school system. For this it must prepare the teacher for the roles of being an encouraging, supportive and humane facilitator in teaching-learning situations to enable learners (students) to discover their talents, realise their physical and intellectual potentialities to the fullest, and to develop character and desirable social and human values to function as responsible citizens; and active member of a group of persons who makes a conscious effort for curricular renewal so that it is relevant to changing societal needs and the personal needs of learners” (p.107)

STATEMENT OF THE STUDY

It is from the perspective reflected above that the need to conduct present study emerged. The study is aimed to find out how in-service teacher education programmes are enabling beginning teachers to handle their classroom related problems.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Beginning Teacher

“The beginning teacher is taken to be one who has completed all pre-service training requirements (including student-teaching), has been granted a provisional certificate, is in the employment of a school; has generally the same type and degree of responsibility assigned to more experienced teachers and is in his or her first year of service to the profession.” (The International Encyclopedia of Teaching and Teacher Education (Ed.) Dunkin, 1987). This implies that a beginning teacher is one who joins teaching profession and is in the initial year of teaching.

Classroom Related Problems

In the context of the present study, classroom related problems has been operationally conceptualized as the problems which are related to classroom, they may emerge in a classroom or outside the classroom which impact upon the classroom performance of teacher.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The following objective served to structure and guide the present study.

To study beginning teachers' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of in-service teacher education programmes in enabling them to tackle their classroom related problems.

SAMPLING

Purposive sampling was done. The data were collected from thirty Beginning Teachers (25 teachers from Government Schools and 5 teachers from Public Schools).

TOOLS FOR DATA COLLECTION

Semi-Structured interview schedule has been prepared to understand their perceptions about in-service teacher education programme. The interview schedule deals with their perceptions regarding in-service teacher education programmes. The questions are related to type of the programme, delivery mode, topics covered, feedback, relevance of the topics and reference material in their classroom contexts.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

➤ Beginning Teachers' Perceptions about In-Service Teacher Education Programmes

The interviews were conducted with beginning teachers to understand their perceptions regarding the effectiveness of in-service teacher education programmes in enabling them to handle their classroom related problems. Content analysis of the interviews has been presented below. The first question was related to the in-service teacher education programmes that the respondents had attended so far. It was found that most of the government school teachers (22) had attended the seminar (of five days) organized by State Council of Educational Research and Training whereas public school teachers had attended workshops and seminars organized by their schools

and other institutions / publishers (British Council of Language / McGraw Hill / Ratna Sagar / Bal Bharti Public School). Remaining teachers happened to be Sanskrit teachers (3) for whom in-service teacher education programme was not organized by State Council of Educational Research and Training.

❖ **Topics covered, delivery mode, course material, feedback in the in-service teacher education programme**

It was found that the seminars organized by State Council of Educational Research and Training focused on continuous and comprehensive evaluation – formative assessment and summative assessment, scholastic and co-scholastic assessment of students, designing question papers (unit tests, worksheets) and preparation of lesson plans. The other topics covered were related to section 24 of The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 and substance abuse. All of them said that the topics were pre-decided and they were not oriented regarding the implementation of continuous and comprehensive evaluation in overcrowded classrooms.

They said that the topics covered were based on theoretical information rather than practical aspects. It was not discussed as how to cater to the individual needs of students in overcrowded classrooms. They found that these programmes were unrelated to their classroom related problems. There was no discussion / orientation on ground realities and the real classroom situations in which they had to implement continuous and comprehensive evaluation. Some of them said that the seminar enabled them to understand tools and techniques, rubrics of continuous and comprehensive evaluation (to maximum extent) and pedagogy (to some extent). As stated by Punjabi teacher, *'the seminar enabled me to understand how to teach Punjabi poetry how to develop writing skills in children, pattern of continuous and comprehensive evaluation'* (1612/IBT/SBV1).

Similarly, one science teacher said, *'I got the opportunity to attend the seminar just after five days of joining my job. It enabled me to refresh my knowledge regarding subject matter, understand continuous and comprehensive evaluation and discuss my problems with other teachers'* (0503/IBT/SVCo-ed1).

Almost all the teachers stated that lecture oriented approach was predominant in most of

the sessions. The groups were formed just to assign them the task to prepare question papers / worksheets / lesson plans. As perceived by the teachers, all of them (22) felt that these programmes did not provide any specific help to handle their classroom related problems. Almost half, i.e. fifty percent of the teachers (in most cases, Hindi, Maths and Social Science teachers) clearly said that these seminars were held for the sake of organizing them and they did not provide any specific support in updating their subject matter knowledge or pedagogical practices.

It was interesting to note that all of them (22) accepted that these seminars were helpful in discussing their classroom related problems with the teachers from other schools. They reflected on their problems and found it helpful to release their stress. They felt a sense of satisfaction that most of the teachers (experienced teachers) were also facing more or less similar classroom related problems. They all felt that the reference material provided to them was helpful as it contained information regarding various activities which could be undertaken while implementing continuous and comprehensive evaluation. Some of the teachers planned their activities, rubrics and used worksheets according to the guidelines / suggestive activities provided in the handbooks. Almost all of them said that the feedback proforma was given for the sake of getting feedback from the participants. They felt that the proforma included columns which catered to superficial information just for record purpose.

Most of the teachers felt that these programmes should orient them towards their classroom related problems such as truancy, high class-size, lack of interest in studies and administrative tasks. Some of them felt that more activities should be included in these programmes. Science teachers felt that innovative experiments and activities should form an important component of the in-service teacher education programmes. Moreover, they suggested the need of providing training to lab attendants.

It emerged that the public school teachers were satisfied with the in-service teacher education programmes they had attended so far. They felt that these activities and workshops provided support in pedagogical practices, computer-assisting learning, linking education with life skills, sustaining students' interest in their subjects, conducting practicals in class IX and X, designing multiple choice questions and designing various activities.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

In-service Teacher Education Programmes

- Induction programme / orientation programmes need to be organized for newly recruited teachers. The beginning teachers need to be oriented regarding organizational literacy, school context, school rules and regulations and their queries / problems. These programmes would assist new teachers in creating successful learning and teaching environments and help new teachers build familiarity in gaining increasing knowledge about the school system, which could reduce reality shock. Workshops, specifically designed to assist, support and educate novice teachers on how to manage the teaching load, need to be organised.
- These programmes need to be designed on the perceived needs of the teachers. Top-down approach and cascade model should not be followed.
- The agency of teachers has to be given significance. The proposed course content needs to be displayed on the edudel website and topics for seminars need to be decided on the basis of consensus of teachers who are prime stakeholders in the education system.
- These programmes have to be organized in such a way that they serve as a site for collaborative reflection to discuss the classroom issues faced by teachers.
- In-depth feedback from teachers would ensure the success of these programmes and help in future planning of these programmes. Thus, in-depth and regular feedback from teachers has to be obtained.
- The role and significance of alumni associations needs to be re-defined. It is imperative that these associations should serve as active forums for collaborative reflection among beginning teachers and their seniors. They may provide a viable platform for beginning teachers to express their concerns, dilemmas, issues pertaining to classrooms and share their classroom/school experiences with other practitioners engaged in the discourse of school education and / or teacher education.

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