Professional Development of Teachers through e-Resources Tools

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ABSTRACT

Information and communication technology has become the part and parcel of teaching profession. The education system has moved its journey from physical to virtual class. In today's rapidly increasing globalised world, it is imperative to make learning and education a holistic experience beyond classroom academics is a need of the hour. To equip oneself one must have several resources and tools. The teachers being a right channel of imparting education to the scholars and learners needs to imbibe the professional development. The present paper elaborates the ways and means through which the teachers can avail the professional development. The paper highlights the e-resources and its usage for professional development of the teachers.

Keywords: *Professional Development, e-Resources.*

Introduction :

Societies in the 21st Century expect all children to be prepared to think critically, solve problems and be creative. The achievement of this expectation rests, first and foremost, upon the development of a highly qualified and committed teaching force (Darling-Hammond, 1995). In other words, the knowledge, skills, abilities, and commitments of teachers prepared today will shape and inform what is possible for the future generation of students. Teacher development has been conceptualized in different ways, and reviewing those conceptions is beyond the scope of this work. Bell and Gilbert (1996) focused teacher's development as a process in which social, personal, and professional development is occurring, and one in which development in one aspect cannot proceed unless the other aspects develop too. Social development refers to working with, and relating to, other teachers and students to reconstruct the socially agreed knowledge about being a teacher of a given discipline. By personal development is meant attending to feelings about the change process, about being a teacher and about education of the teacher's discipline, and reconstructing one's own knowledge about being a teacher of that discipline or subject area. Professional development deals with changing concepts and beliefs about education in that discipline and changing

classroom activities. These three aspects are interactive and interdependent.

The American Association of State Colleges and Universities Task Force on Professional Development for Teachers Report lists three premises of Professional development ("To Create a Profession: Supporting Teachers as Professionals" AASCU Report 2001).

1. The teacher is the single most important factor in student learning.

2. Student learning will increasingly be the measure or determinant of teacher effectiveness, meaning, teachers would be evaluated in terms of their capacity to promote student learning, regardless, of student background and preparation.

3. The quality of a teacher is affected by his knowledge of content and by his knowledge of how to teach. It is at the intersection of knowledge of content and knowledge of strategies that much of staff development efforts should be focused.

Role of ICT in Professional Development of Teacher :

Higher education in the 21st century will find it difficult to survive without creating space for diversity within the curriculum as well as student &faculty bodies. The role of faculty will change from being an information provider to becoming a mentor, facilitator and co-learner. There was a time when the world was big and also slows in changing. Today the world is small and quick in wearing a new garb. The boundaries & the barriers among the nations have vanished. The whole world shrunk into a small village. The process of globalization has brought people close to one another & as such, the challenges in life have multiplied. A student is no longer a citizen of his own land. He is a world citizen. So he has to be taught trained & developed from larger perspective of globalization. Information & Communication technology (ICT) an interdisciplinary domain focuses on providing student with the tools to transform their learning and to enrich their learning environment. The knowledge, skills, behaviours identified for this domain enable student to develop thinking & learning skills that produce, creative & innovative insights; develop more productive ways of working and solving problems individually and collaboratively; create information products that demonstrate their understanding of concepts, issues relationship & processes; express themselves in contemporary and socially relevant ways; communicate locally and globally to solve problems; share knowledge and understand the implications of the use of ICT and their social and ethical responsibilities as uses of ICT.

Educational system all round the world are under increasing pressure to use

ICTs to reach students the knowledge & skills they need in the 21st century. The UNESCO (1998) The World Education Report on "Teachers &Teaching in Changing World" describes the radical implication that information & communication technologies have for conventional teaching & learning. It predicts the transformation of teaching learning process & the way teachers & learners gain access to knowledge& information. It states,

To effectively harness the power of the new information & communication technologies (ICTS) to improve learning, the following essential condition must be met.

- Student & teachers must have sufficient access to digital technologies & the internet in their classrooms, school & teacher education Institutions.

- High quality, meaningful & culturally responsive digital content must be available for teachers & learners.

- Teachers must have the knowledge & skills to use the new digital tools & resources to help students to achieve high academic standards.

Professional Development through e-resources: A Emerging Approach :

The widespread availability of computers and internet access opens up a new means for providing professional development: online workshops and professional exchanges. The online professional development can provide "anytime, anyplace" flexibility that results in new professional development opportunities being available; incorporate many of the principles of effective professional development; enable new collegial relationships and professional learning communities; provide access to resources, colleagues, and experts that may not be available otherwise; spread professional development activities over time and integrate them directly with classroom practice; give teachers a chance to experience for themselves new ways of learning, which can inform their decisions about the use of technology with their students; increase access to personalized learning experiences; potentially reduce the costs of professional development programs; and can be blended with face-to-face meetings, study groups, coaching, and other professional development activities to enhance comprehensive professional development programs.

There are many factors that must be considered in order to create an effective online professional development program, such as defining the professional development needs addressed, planning the connections with other professional

development activities, developing local expertise to create and facilitate online workshops, providing incentives to participants, and making sure adequate technology access and support is available. Along with its potential benefits, online teacher professional development has many potential barriers to its implementation and effective use. It includes: knowledge about online technologies and programs; support from administrators; access to technologies; time, financial support, and parental support; teachers' beliefs and practices and availability of material.

Professional Development with e-resources :

ICT has brought us various innovative e-learning tools and resources. Technology usage in classroom motivates students and teachers to facilitate instruction. Integration of technology in education is practiced when it is used as an extension of human capabilities. Technology usage in classroom is a systematic approach to the academic processes. The tools which allow teachers to participate in online professional development, include Web 2.0 tools such as:

Twitter - Twitter is a website, owned and operated by Twitter Inc., which offers a social networking and micro blogging service, enabling its users to send and read other users' messages called tweets. Tweets are text-based posts of up to 140 characters displayed on the user's profile page. It helps in developing collaborative networks between teachers in different schools to test professional development strategies and techniques.

Web Blogs - A blog is a user-generated website where entries are made in journal style and displayed in a reverse chronological order. The term "blog" is a mingling of the words web and log. Blogs provide comments or news on a particular subject, some function as more personal online diaries. The modern blog evolved from the online diary, where people would keep a running account of their personal lives. Most such writers called themselves diarists or joul11alisls. Blogs can be hosted by dedicated blog hosting services or they can be I1In using blog software, such as Word Press, Movable Type, Blogger or Live Journal, or on regular web hosting services, such as Dream Host. Many blogs provide commentary or news on a particular subject: others function as more personal online diaries. A typical blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs, web pages, and other media related to its topic. The ability for readers to leave comments in an interactive format is an important part of many blogs. Most blogs are primarily textual, although some focus on art (art log), photographs (photo blog), sketch blog, videos blog, music (MP3 blog), audio (pod

casting) etc. and have become wider network of social media.

Wlkis - It allows teachers to participate in continuing education staff development opportunities offered by certified trainers within or outside the school district, along with classroom applications for Wikis. Wikis are websites which can be edited by anyone the owner allows. In this case, teachers allow their students to edit class Wikis. Wikis are more versatile than a class blog, because blogs are typically one way communication and Wikis are updated by teachers and students. Wikis are a free teaching and learning technology tool for teachers to use in education settings. Wikis have become very popular in education since 2006. There are currently over 100,000 registered education Wikis. Education Wikis come with an upgraded membership, worth $50 annually, for teachers. The upgraded membership also eliminates advertisements and allows the ability to restrict public viewing. To support the demand for Wikis in education, Wiki spaces (the developer) is now offering 250,000 education Wikis with the upgraded membership to teachers. Registration is free and all services are free. Services include the ability to upload documents, pictures, videos, and more by teachers and students.

Podcasts - A podcast is a series of digital media files (either audio or video) that are released episodically and often downloaded through web syndication. The word usurped webcast in common vernacular, due to rising popularity of the iPod and the innovation of web feeds. The mode of delivery differentiates podcasting from other means of accessing media files over the internet, such as direct download, or streamed webcasting. A list of all the audio or video files currently associated with a given series is maintained centrally on the distributor's server as a web feed, and the listener or viewer employs special client application software known as a pod catcher that can access this web feed, check it for updates, and download any new files in the series. This process can be automated so that new files are downloaded automatically. Files are stored locally on the user's computer or other / device ready for offline use, giving simple and convenient access to episodic content. podcast provides video and audio continuing education materials to teachers participating in staff development activities and courses.

Skype - Skype is a software application that allows users to make voice calls over the Internet. Calls to other users within the Skype service are free, while calls to both traditional landline telephones and mobile phones can be made for a fee using a debit-based user account system. Skype has also become popular for its additional features which include instant messaging, file

transfer, and video conferencing. It provides teachers with opportunities to talk to other teachers and facilitators to share and reflect on staff development activities using the Internet.

Moodle - Moodle (abbreviation for Modular Object-Orier.ted Dynamic Learning Environment) is a free and open-source e-learning software platform, also known as a Course Management System, Learning Management System, or Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). Moodle was originally developed by Martin Dougiamas to help educators create online courses with a focus on interaction and collaborative construction of content, and is in continual evolution. It provides a virtual learning environment that allows facilitators and certified trainers to develop and conduct staff development for teachers.

Flat Classroom - Collaborative projects using Web 2.0 tools to foster communication, collaboration, and creation between teachers around the world.

Micro-blogging - Micro-blogging is a form of multimedia blogging that allows users to send brief text updates (say, 140 characters or fewer) or macromedia such as photos or audio clips and publish them, either to be viewed by anyone or by a restricted group which can be chosen by the user. These messages can be submitted by a variety of means, including text messaging, instant messaging, email, MP3 or the web. The content of a micro-blog differs from a traditional blog as it is typically more topical, smaller in aggregate file size (e.g. text, audio or video) but is the same in that people utilize it for both business and individual reasons. Many micro-blogs provide this short commentary on a person-to-person level, or share news about a company's products and services.

Social Book Marking - Social book marking is a web-based service to share internet bookmarks. The social book marking sites are a popular way to store, classify, share and search links through the practice of folksonomies techniques on the internet. In a social book marking system, users store lists of internet resources that they find useful. These lists are accessible to the public or a specific network, and other people with similar interests can view the links by category, tags, or even randomly. Some allow for privacy on a per-bookmark basis.

Instant Messaging - An instant messaging application allows one to communicate with another person over a network in relative privacy. There are many options like Gtalk, Skype, Meetro, ICQ, Yahoo! Messenger, MSN Messenger, Waytosms.com, Ultoo.com, Fullonsms, 160by2.com and AOL for instant messaging. You can add associates to a Contact list or buddy list, by

entering their email address or messenger ID.

Readymade power-Point Presentations and Web Pages - Being teachers and teacher educators, we need to link our lessons with latest knowledge in our fields. But, do we have enough time to move for collecting material from various sources? Content from the web is doing wonders for us. Readymade power point slides save a lot of our precious time, hence, giving opportunity for action research and, of course, more time for our personal lives. These power point slides and special web pages are helpful in providing updated matter to the students and in a better understandable time saving form. Also, students can be encouraged to go for searching power - point presentations for the technology based lesson plans they need to transact and also for their future professional life. Just add 'ppt' to your searches and enjoy the difference. Most reliable site for this is slideshare.com, you just have to become a member of this site, which is free of cost, than you can download as many powerpoint presentation as you wish.

Text Chat - Internet Relay Chat (IRC) and other online chat technologies allow Users to join chat rooms and communicate with many people at once, publicly. User may join a pre-existing chat room or create a chat room about any topic. Whether you are in another person's chat room, or one you've created yourself: you are generally free to invite others online to join you. This facilitates both one-to-one communication and many-to-many interaction.

Readymade Programs / Softwares - Specially made software could be downloaded from Internet to work. These software work on the policy of self-learning. They guide and instruct the users in order to work in right direction and motivate to work for the concept of 'mastery learning'. Teachers and teacher educators need to guide the students in using such software as. Geo Gebra, a free and multi platform dynamic mathematics software for schools that joins geometry, algebra and calculus. http://www.geogebra.org), (Teach2000 is a vocabulary trainer that helps to memorize words in foreign languages, using multiple-choice questions and flashcards: http://teach2000 .memtrain.com/).

Ning - Ning is an online platform for people to create their own social network, launched in October 2005. Ning a teaching and learning collaboration transforming teacher professional development.

Internet Forums - Internet forums allows Users to post a "topic" for others to review. Other users can view the topic and post their own comments in a linear fashion, one after the other. Most forums are public, allowing anybody to sign up at any time. A few are

private, gated communities where new members must pay a small fee to join.

Search Engines - Just wish and write in the search option box, click ... In seconds, a list of the related websites would open, browse them one by one to find the relevant information suitable to you. It could be the required website, images, videos, news articles documents and so on. We have been using this option to find matter about the topics, ordinarily not available in books. The quality of teaching and learning could be refined using search engines. These searches, many a time, lead to multiple information sources for the information seeker. To find the proverbial needle in this haystack (or tiny fly in the web), search engines act as desired means. Some of the popular search engines are:

> www.google.com;
> www.yahoo.com;
> www.altavista.com;
> www.khoj.com.

Google Docs - collaboration with other teachers in the continuing education projects an assignments. Google Docs are web-based word processor, spreadsheet, presentation, and form applications provided free by Google. These applications allow teachers and student to create and/or edit documents online, while collaborating with others. Google Doc provides all the necessary document creating and handling services

typically provided in education desktop productivity software packages.

Conclusion:

Continuing education has taking on a whole new setting for teachers. Staff development is rapidly moving into the online world of participation in facilitated courses an collaborative networks. Teachers are using Web 2.0 tools to participate in continuing education when it is convenient for them, without the constraints of the rigid school day schedule. All teachers need to refresh themselves and improve their skills by attending or participating in professional development opportunities designed to invigorate learning Professional development represents a vital on-going activity that all teachers should address in order to remain current in their academic disciplines and up to date on education. Atrends that might affect their teaching methodologies, curriculum, and student-centered considerations such as dealing with learning disabilities. Professional development opportunities can be a one-day seminar or a semester night course at the local university). What is important is that all teachers refresh their credentials whether or not 'state certification and licensure requirements mandate such actions.

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