



Continuous Professional Development for English Teachers in Undergraduate Colleges

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Abstract

The global language English is the major medium of instruction in undergraduate colleges in many parts of India and a 'lingua franca' in many industries like medical, software and hardware, marketing and many major employment hubs. The English language teachers have a pressure and also pleasure of training up the students not only in the regular curriculum but also in soft skills and personality development. In the present context of engineering colleges outnumbering other non-technical colleges, the undergraduate technical student population outnumbered the non-technical. English teachers who have received education in the humanities stream need to teach the students with latest technological skills. On the other side teachers in regular degree colleges need to prepare the students for higher studies or employment generation. Creative writing is another task on the shoulders of the English teachers since language skills of the pupils form a strong base for creative writing. Hence the teachers in English have a pivotal role in molding the students for future life. As long as a teacher teaches, a teacher learns. More than the professional performance standards listed by authorities it is the individual interest and attention which enables one's CPD. Complacency is the major rival of teachers to opt for CPD. This paper explores the probable practical ways of attaining continuous professional development of English teachers in undergraduate colleges.

Key words: English teacher's role, Continuous professional development, complacency, probable ways for professional development.

Introduction

"Continuing or Continuous professional development is a multifaceted life long experience which can take place inside or outside the workplace and which often moves beyond the professional and into the realm of a teacher's personal life too".....opines David Hayes Canadian feature writer, author and editor. Whatever the industry be, or the level of experience be, there is an increased tendency towards professional development. The rapid growth in technological advancements results in changing lifestyles and careers, so there is a pressure on working professionals at all stages to develop their expertise incessantly. A software or hardware

professional has to update his knowledge by undergoing training in new courses. The better s/he is the better paid s/he is. A healthcare or medical professional has to be at par with the latest drugs, apparatus and discoveries and inventions in his or her subject. This is the same in many industries including fashion technology or even food or jewelry industries. When it comes to teaching fraternity it is even more necessarily acquired as A TEACHER IS A PERPETUAL LEARNER. A teacher learns while teaching which her/his experiences teach and also explores new areas of learning to become a better teacher eventually. If a teaching professional's level of expertise is not



increasing it is definitely due to lack of CPD or continuous professional development. Private organisations emphasize more on CPD as it keeps their organisations ahead of others in the highly competitive world. For public or government institutions there are even ministries sponsored training courses to enhance one's skills.

The definition of professional development articulated by Christopher Day is, "professional development consists of 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, which contribute, through these, to the quality of education in the classroom. It is the process by which, alone and with others, teacher's review renew and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purpose of teaching and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence essential to good professional thinking, planning and practice with children, young people and colleagues throughout each phase of their teaching lives."

Analysis

The CPD certification Service helps in formalizing knowledge into a structured form of learning through seminars, workshops, and conferences, training courses and on line e-learning courses and podcasts etc., Broadly speaking CPD can be divided into two types though there is also another third type of CPD. One is Active CPD or structured CPD and the other one Passive CPD which includes reflective CPD and self-directed learning. Motivation, mentoring, peer coaching, teacher training conferences, case studies etc., form effective CPD. ICT

or information and communication technology in its multiple forms has become an essential part for e-learning. Teacher training videos and multimedia training videos are also available online. Social media is also another widely popular way of improving proficiency.

Teachers are always considered as the lifeblood of an effective institution. Teacher research also forms as a catalyst for student proficiency. Regarding CPD for English teaching community the pressure is more, since non English subjects like soft skills are also considered under the purview of English department. The head of the Hyderabad ELTAI organization opines that this is a privilege given to English teachers and a pleasure to go ahead with. Even a frown and or a smile also fall under the purview of non-verbal communication skills. British Council, Relo or other organisations aim at CPD of English teachers with effective training sessions periodically. Teachers are offered not only the institutions' sponsored CPD programmes but also encouraged to propose projects of their own interest and development. ELTAI and SIG or special group of ELTAI and IATEFL and other organisations aimed at and are continuously persevering for the improvement of the quality of English education throughout the nation by providing services with a minimum amount of money and conducting workshops and publishing journals periodically on a no loss no profit basis.

When viewed from a practical point of view teachers with their burden of work load and question paper setting and invigilation, spot valuation and other regular duties related to teaching find it extremely difficult to attend to structured form of professional



development since they need to travel sometimes on duty or sometimes forgo their casual leaves. The pressure of the stake holders like management and parents of the students in especially undergraduate colleges is multifold since the outgoing batches mostly aim at employment generation or higher studies sometimes abroad too. Hence devoting time and energies to CPD will be very difficult to manage with the other proposed primary duties of a teacher. The domestic duties of any person even men sometimes when a teacher needs to attend to family issues hinders the professional development of any teacher. In such situations it is inhuman to prioritize CPD. In such situations self-directed learning and reflective CPD is better compared to the structured CPD. Self-motivation, self-analysis and time bound goal setting are advisable in such situations. However, highly passionate people can easily acquire the skills by making the optimum use of technology and reading relevant publications and contributing to the publications by churning their best minds and putting them in black and white. There are no fixed standards or approaches but the outcome is definitely manifest in teaching. Professionals become increasingly capable and adaptable to any kind or level of teaching ambience. Teachers can create virtual classrooms using facebook or skype or other latest internet facilities and also teach through mobiles using the best cutting edge technologies.

Complacency is the worst enemy of any teacher to go ahead with the structured development. If a teacher feels satisfied with the amount of knowledge he or she has gained it is strictly advisable for the teacher to attend a session outside his or her place and become aware of the other

teachers' experiences and levels of expertise. Attending conferences outside their state or even countries if one can afford to go to or if the institution is willing to pay offers an excellent platform to rejuvenate their minds and hearts. Meeting people from different places and having informal discussions with them off the sessions also helps one to realize the innovative pedagogies of other teachers and gives an exposure to other cultures. It is not just one learns new ways of expression or new idioms or new pedagogies but also new concepts and new ideas and new cultures. A teacher of Srilanka can come into contact with a teacher of Burma and Indian teachers of English may also know the problems and the levels of teaching of our neighboring countries who also teach English as a foreign language. The teachers from northeastern states of India and the southernmost tip of India can sit and discuss what their problems are while teaching English. An interesting point to note is that the pronunciation of all these communities usually has the influence of their native tongue. Hence these structured CPDs or active learning sessions form a common platform for all. This is not only effective but also a rapid way of improving one's proficiency. "SpardayaVardhateVidya" as the Sanskrit quotation tells us, 'Education grows with Competition'; the competition among not only students but also the peer groups of teachers. This is another by product of structured or direct or active CPD.

Teacher trainers, staff engaged in project design and implementation should also be given CPD for a sustainable quality product outcome. Multilingual approaches are have to emphasized in Indian CPD where linguistic diversity prevails.



The benefits of continuous professional development of other industries is either individual or organizational; but in the teaching communities especially undergraduate college teachers the benefits are manifold. Promotion of emotional intelligence and making students both prepared for life skills and employment skills is an unassigned ethical duty of teachers in colleges. As the facts go, a very less percentage of engineers in India only 27% are 'employment ready' and other 83% of engineering graduates are not employment ready according to Aspiring Minds an employee assessment survey provider.

Sometimes it is also sceptical whether the knowledge obtained can be applied in situations where the teacher has to be confined to the curriculum based tests etc., Since CPD is a continuous process, the practical application of the proficiency acquired may be at a slower pace in rural or semiurban situations but surely is going to be implemented in future. Soft skills being implemented as a part of main curriculum serves as the best illustration to this situation.

Conclusion

Creativity can be spurred and encouraged but cannot be thrust forcibly. If the teacher is well equipped new web links related to creative writing and make students a part of it, it enables them to aspire for competitions related to fiction writing or poetry writing. A Poem a Day sends through mails everyday one poem sometimes even unpublished poems at the amazement of the readers. The enhancement of skills and knowledge through CPD can critically be important in retaining a competitive edge when moving globally, that is both globally and locally since English is a global language.

Finally, CPD enriches teachers' professional lives which in turn, contribute to student learning and overall improvement in the quality of education. CPD is a journey not an end in itself, a lifelong process to be continued professionally and passionately.

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