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GRT MOVING AHEAD..... : A LOOK AT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS

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Abstract:-“A lamp can never light another lamp unless it continues to burn its own flame. A teacher can never truly teach unless he is still learning himself. The teacher who has come to the end of his subject, who has no living traffic with his knowledge, but merely repeats his lessons to his students, can only load their minds. He cannot quicken them” (Rabinder Nath Tagore). Learning for a teacher can never be terminal. He cannot afford to be outdated and anachronistic. So, to avoid being obsolete in profession, one should always move ahead i.e. grow and develop in profession. The present investigation was designed with an aim to know the perceptions of university and college teachers about their professional development. Findings of the study revealed that most of the teachers perceived professional development as moving step ahead in organizational hierarchy. In the last part of the paper measures/interventions have been discussed which ensure high quality professional development among teachers.

Keywords:certain profession , Professional Development , Moving Ahead , lifelong process.

INTRODUCTION

No one is perfect. If a person thinks that he/she is the best in a certain profession, this person is not capable of growing any further. A sense of being on the top can make an individual forget about constant changes that happen around. Every day brings some new methods, techniques, devices, innovations; the real professionals should be ready to learn something new every day in order to put it in practice. When people seek to improve their personal skills, they should learn more about useful methods. Learning is a lifelong process. It is truer for teachers.

The aim of teaching is simple: it is to make student learning possible...To teach is to make an assumption about what and how the student learns; therefore, to teach well implies learning about students' learning" (Ramsden, 1992). For that, only intellectual abilities are not sufficient but a teacher should have good communication skills, clarity of thought and expression, logical thinking, scientific attitude, habit of enquiry, ability to argue and reason, humor, presence of mind, mastery on anecdotes, ability to substantiate own view points through discussion and debate and judgmental abilities. Not only this, ability to sense and understand the

The task of the teacher has many dimensions. The preparation of such an important functionary must conceivably get the highest priority. His is a challenging profession and only those teachers can shoulder the heavy responsibilities of nation building, which are adequately prepared and have sound professional attitude. This adequacy of preparation, of course, signifies development of adequate skills, dedication to teaching and a determination for continuous growth and learning. Teachers are expected to use the best practices and strategies to meet challenge demands of their career. If the teachers are well trained and highly motivated, learning will be enhanced (Hussain, 2004). The world needs more teachers, better teachers and more committed teachers, and India is no exception. Teacher, the key factor in all educational development, needs to be professionally equipped with teaching competencies, commitment and determination to perform at their best.

First of all the teachers should have self awareness and clarity about what they want to achieve in their profession. Growth and development in a profession especially when it is teaching, cannot be equated with advancement from lower position to higher one i.e. promotion from assistant professor to professor in higher education or advancement from one administrative level to another in system.

For Rennekamp & Nall (1993), the professional development includes,

- Developing an area of expertise
- Becoming an independent contributor in problem solving
- Developing a professional identity
- Sharing knowledge and information with others
- Gaining membership in the professional community
- Increasing effectiveness and efficiency
- Expanding creativity and innovation
- Moving from independency to interdependency
- Expanding knowledge regarding relevant issues

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study was designed to investigate the perceptions of teachers for the professional growth and development as well as to suggest some measure to improve the faculty development programmes.

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey method was conducted to know the perceptions of teachers of university and colleges about the professional growth. The sample of the study included 30 college teachers and 35 university teachers who have teaching experience of 8-10 years. Data was collected by employing a questionnaire that consisted of 20 open ended questions.

FINDINGS

Perception about Professional Growth and development

Teachers were inquired about how they comprehend the term Professional Growth and development. More than half of the sampled teachers (56%) tried to give the meaning but were not exactly clear about it. A few teachers (25%) said that professional development for them is to acquire skills to grow in the profession. For remaining 19% teachers, professional development meant as keeping themselves abreast with the recent researches in their subject to update their knowledge and learning the new methods of teaching.

Aspirations for Professional Growth

When asked about their professional growth, 81% teachers reported that they wanted to achieve higher position from where they were at present; only 19% said that they wished to become better teachers.

Academic Engagement

When asked about to tell the names of some of the recent reference books in their subject or some reputed journal they consult or refer to their students, only 34% of them named one to two books and 17% reported the name of 2-3 journals, remaining teacher could not name any. Perceived importance of Seminars and Conferences

About the importance of seminars and conferences, 58% college and university teachers confessed that they participate in seminars etc for gaining points as per API of UGC. 42% mentioned the importance of such events in broadening their knowledge. Most of the teachers (63%) want to attend national/international seminars/conferences, and were not concerned about the themes of seminars/conferences. Only 12% teachers said that they attend the conferences/ seminars on the theme of their interest to enhance their subject knowledge so that they may develop professionally.

Achievements in Career

On asking about the achievements in their career till date, 45% mentioned it as their senior scales, promotions etc. 21% respondents considered it as their administrative position, 19% reported it to be their membership in some policy making bodies and only 5% teachers said they have not achieved anything.

None of them saw their achievement in the progress of their learners.

Perceptions about qualities of a teacher

About the qualities of a teacher, 76% believed that a teacher should have up to date knowledge, techno-savvy, mastery over the subject etc. only 24% were concerned about the psychological and personal needs of their learners.

Self Rating as a teacher

Surprisingly, when the respondents were asked to rate them as a teacher on 1-10 scale, 76% rated themselves above 7 (near to be excellent).

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The results of the survey depicted that teachers put all their efforts to reach at the highest place in their hierarchical structure of the organization. Only for a few teachers, their professional development served as a mean to become a better teacher. Most of the teacher did not have true perception for professional development. The prevailing concept about a teacher as principally a conveyor or purveyor of information, factual or otherwise, needs to be rethinking. To grow professionally, teacher should concentrate on becoming still better teacher rather than seeking promotion in designation. Therefore, development in teaching implies the enhancement in the abilities and skills of a teacher to channelize their students' energies, shape up their personal & social behavior and inculcate values, attitudes and skills in them in addition to convey knowledge. Most of the teachers thinks that they are doing the best in their profession, which indicates that they is less chances of growing any more. The results have very serious implications.

IMPLICATIONS

Professional development is about teachers learning, learning how to learn, and transforming their knowledge into practice for the benefit of their students' growth (Avalos, 2011). A person who has just entered in the profession may not have these abilities and qualities. But he/she has to acquire these in due course of time. But the question arises, how a teacher may imbibe these qualities? What is to be for the development of teachers in their profession?

For college and university teachers, the orientation programme should be made compulsory as soon as they join the job. During such programmes, emphasis should be given to orient the new teachers to understand the psychology and needs of the contemporary learners and techniques to deal with different categories of students. Along with this new teaching methodologies and evaluation techniques should be highlighted. The orientation programme should be made more comprehensive and exhaustive.

The administration must ensure that professional development of their teachers most appropriate of form of professional development is that which makes the best use of individual teacher's unique talents. The refreshers courses should emphasize on imbibing following qualities among the teachers along with broadening their mental horizon.

a blend of knowledge and kindness
Artistic Scientific attitude
Liking for his/her pupil and live with them
Mature well-rounded person
Emotional stability (self control)
Effective Communication skills
Counselling skills
Empathetic attitude
Reflective listening
Alertness and Attentiveness
Open mindedness
Interests in behavioral science

The planners of seminars, conferences and workshop should including program-based professional development, add activities to each professional development session to(Smith et al, 2003).

These are not easy tasks, and there is no simple way to achieve them. No outside agency alone can help the teacher to grow and develop. It is the teacher who himself has to gather all his resources and has to continuously work

on himself as well as on his learners to be a teacher in real sense.

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