PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

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Abstract

The quality of education is a direct consequence and outcome of the quality of teachers and teacher education system and this consequently depends upon the professional development opportunities to the teachers. The task of bringing qualitative change in institutional efficacy of the teacher education system in itself is a huge and challenging one. The developments and changes over the last two decades require a fresh look at the professional development of teachers. Professional development of teachers is based on the theory that "teachers are made, not born" in contrary to the assumption, "teachers are born, not made". Since teaching is considered an art and a science, the teacher has to acquire not only knowledge, but also skills that are called "tricks of the trade". The overall discussion in this paper makes an attempt at providing an understanding of professional development of teachers in terms of quality education issues in the context of higher education. This paper is based on secondary data obtained from the various research studies, documents and reports. It is felt that the findings of this paper will help the institutions, and policy makers to take up necessary action and to move ahead for making the higher education better.

Key Words: *Higher Education, Teacher Education System Continuous Professional Development*

INTRODUCTION

According to Rabindranath Tagore, "A teacher can never truly teach unless he is still learning himself. A lamp can never light another lamp unless it continues to burn its own flame". In the age of explosion of knowledge at an unprecedented speed, even those who had the advantage of acquiring the most sophisticated education will become outdated in a very short span of time. If they have to remain up to date and relevant and face the challenge of other modes of acquiring knowledge, the need for their re-education, re-learning and de-learning is essential.

"As per the Dictionary of education-C.V. Good (1973), Teacher Education is defined as "all formal and informal activities and experiences that help to qualify a person to assume the responsibility as a member of the educational profession or to discharge his responsibility most effectively. The Educational Commission (1964-1966) said, "A sound programme of professional education of teachers is essential for the qualitative improvement of education. Investment in teacher education can yield very rich dividends because the financial resources required are small when measured against the resulting improvement in the education of millions."

Teachers serve education, which is an effective instrument of man making. The teachers learn this art through pre-service and in-service teacher education programme. A weak programme of teacher education cannot serve this purpose. Unlike in the past when the teacher was entrusted with transferring the contents of curriculum to a passive audience of students, today new experiments are being tried out in the classroom that includes project based learning, development of thinking skills, and discovery learning approaches.

Higher Education in India

During the last decade, in higher education sector in India there has been a steep growth. However, despite impressive growth, India's higher education gross enrolment ratio (GER) is at 19.4 per cent is currently well below the global average of 27 per cent. (Ernst and Young, 2012). The government of India plans to increase GER in higher education to 30 per cent by 2020 (FYP, GOI, PC, 2012).

According to a recent UGC report (2013) , the number of higher educational institutions has increased from about 30 universities and 750 colleges in 1950-51 to about 700 universities and university- level institutions and 35,324 colleges (as of 2012-13).

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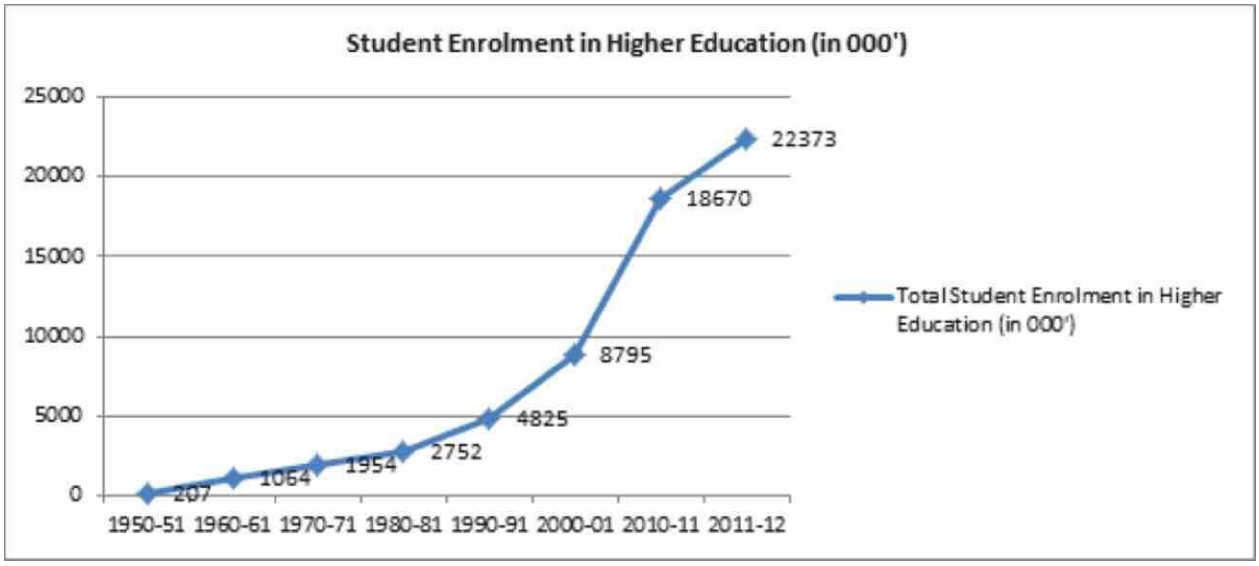
Table: Growth of Colleges and Universities in India during 1950-51 to 2012-2013

Years	Colleges of General Education	Colleges of Professional Education	Universities/Deemed Universities/Institutes of National Importance
1950-51	370	208	27
1960-61	967	852	45
1970-71	2285	992	82
1980-81	3421	3542**	110
1990-91	4862	886	184
2000-01	7929	2223	254
2001-02	8737	2409	272
2002-03	9166	2610	304
2003-04	9427	2751	304
2004-05	10377	3201	343
2005-06	11698	5284	350
2006-07	11458	8357	371
2007-08	13381	9718	406
2008-09	15852	12030	440
2012-13		35,324	700

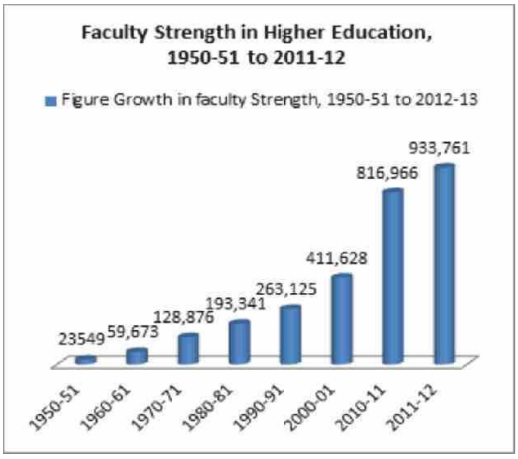
**** includes institutions for Post-Metric Courses**

Source: Selected Educational Statistics-2005-06; Statistics of Higher & Technical Education-2008-09; Higher education at a Glance, UGC, 2013

The total enrolment in higher education has increased from 0.21 million in 1950-51 to about 22 million in 2011-12, while the GER has increased from 0.40 per cent in 1950-51 to 19.4 per cent in 2012-13 (MHRD, CII & Deloitte, 2013)



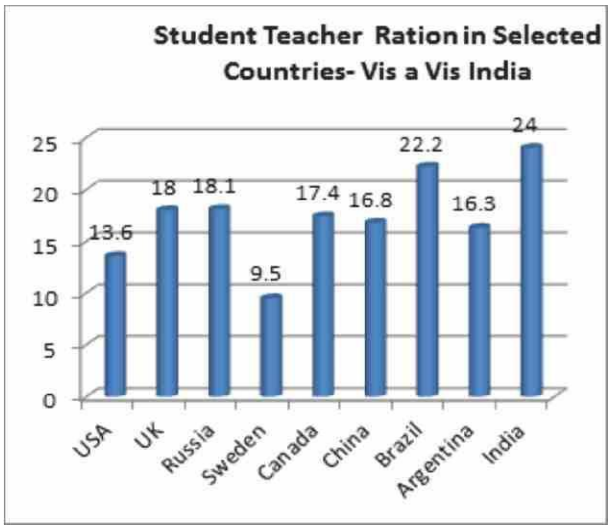
While the student enrolments have gone up more than 100 times between 1950-51 and 2011-12, the number of teachers has gone up less than 40 times, which implies the student-teacher ratios have declined by about 2.5 times over this period (MHRD,CII & Deloitte, 2013). In comparison to other countries, India's standing is quite poor with regard to student–teacher ratio, which is 1:24, while USA and China have corresponding levels of 1:13.6 and 1:16.8 respectively. The number of teachers in higher education has not kept pace with the growth in student enrolments and this aspect needs considerable and determined attention to guarantee the sustainability of the higher education system.



As per the 12th Five Year Plan the higher education sector is plagued by a shortage of well-trained faculty, poor infrastructure and outdated and irrelevant curricula. The use of technology in higher education remains limited and standards of research and teaching at Indian universities are far below international standards.

A study on Human Resource and Skill Requirements in the Education and Skill Development Services Sector by the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC, 2008) assessed the demand for changes expected in technology, the content delivery, the e-enabled learning, etc., and it was expected that about 31,71,000 teachers would be incrementally required in higher education between 2008 and 2022 to ensure a student-teacher ratio of 20:1, which would pose a complex challenge for the country. So it is a well- known fact that a major challenge to quality education relating to higher education is a shortage of well-trained faculty, teachers and training in India till 2011 across the key segments of education and skill development sector.

In this study, the teacher- student ratio for higher education was found much above i.e., 26:1 against the recommended norm of 15:1. An estimation was also made factoring the



Source: Annual Status of Higher Education in States and UTs, 2013

In India, among the challenges relating to higher education are low quality of teaching and learning, shortages of faculty and lack of proper training in teaching for faculty (British Council, 2014) as discussed below under two points:

I). **Issues relating to teaching and learning** :One of the greatest challenges facing higher education in India is shortage of faculty and also no proper training in teaching for faculty. Other issues relating to teaching and learning which compound the problems include (British Council, 2014)

- Outdated, rigid curricula and the absence of employer engagement in course content and skills development. Very few opportunities of interdisciplinary learning
- Pedagogies and assessment are focused on input and rote learning, students

have little opportunity to develop a wider

- ❖ range of transversal skills, including critical thinking, analytical reasoning, problem solving and collaborative working
- ❖ High student teacher ratio due to lack of teaching staff and pressure to enroll students
- ❖ Separation of teaching and research; lack of early stage research experience
- ❖ An ineffective quality assurance system and a complete lack of accountability by institutions to the state and central government, students and other stakeholders

II) **Shortages of faculty**:

As clearly mentioned in 12th Five Year Plan, due to rapid expansion, number of quality teachers in higher education is grossly inadequate. A doubling of faculty from the current 8 lakh to 16 lakh is envisaged during the Twelfth Plan. The large increase in capacity at the postgraduate and doctoral levels to enable this would require all institutions, whether Central, State or private to work in collaboration. There is a common perception that higher education is a poorly paid profession in India. However, a recent survey of academic salaries across 28 countries shows that median academic salaries in India (on a purchasing power parity basis) are amongst the highest in the world. It is important, therefore, to correct the misperceptions about teaching careers in India in order to attract talent. It was also found that a large portion of those teaching in higher education institutions are currently casual or part-time academic staff and this is likely to continue. It has been recognized that to

improve their performance, improvements in their hiring practices and working conditions, and engaging them in faculty development programmes, including using online technologies for faculty development are needed.

Implementing Academic Reforms: As per the 12th Five Year plan one of the academic reform measures for implementation in Indian higher education institution is choice based credit system. The choice based credits system (CBCS) is expected to enhance quality of education and facilitate transferability of students from one university to another at the national and international level. To provide quality education, there is need to implement the academic reforms with better understanding of challenging role a teacher would play under CBCS and hence there is need to go in for professional development of teachers specifically in the context of higher education.

Professional Development of the Teachers: What the Research Studies Say?

Thus from the discussions in the previous section it can be concluded that an important area of concern in India is to assure that quality teaching is available to all students so that there is greater equity education.

Johnson (2007) revealed, "Quantity of professional development is strongly linked with standards-based teaching practices in the classroom. The amount of professional development and use of standards-based teaching practices effects sustainable professional development on investigative teaching practices and investigative classroom culture. A statistically significant relationship was identified indicating that as hours of professional development experiences increased, standards-based teaching practices increased, resulting in higher levels of investigative classroom culture. He also found out that teacher with 40–79 hours of professional development reported only minimal use of standards-based teaching practices as compared to the teachers who attended 80 hours of professional development programme." The finding of this study discovered that beside the attendance of the professional development as required attendance

teachers' positive attitudes towards professional development makes big difference in their daily teaching and learning to keep them lively.

Holly and Mcloughlin (1989) state, "If we view teachers are professionals, we also consider them capable of creating their own agendas for professional development." It indicates that every teacher have his/her own capacity of conducting the professional development.

Mohan and Perras (2011) surveyed on the significance of teachers' perception on how rational their professional development experiences were for teacher learning and programme implementation in the school level. The study was conducted among 112 male teachers and 88 female teachers or educators around the city of Hyderabad. The educators were selected randomly between the ages of 25 to 55 years with the teaching experiences ranging from 5 to 25 years. The subject elective was not considered in the sample and sampling techniques used in the study was simple random sampling.

It was found that opportunities for teachers to plan for implementation and provision of professional development technical support were significant for promoting effective curriculum in the school. The study also revealed that classroom management skills were needed by the teachers to implement curriculum effectively. So, the study found that teachers are positive towards the professional development activities involving the experiences and suggestive nature of the administrators for effective curriculum implementation.

Keinreich (2004) highlighted the effectiveness of geographic alliances as vehicles for professional development in geographic education. This study explored the impact of participation in a summer institute on teacher beliefs and practices in geographic education. It was conducted on 128 participants in an Ohio Alliance Summer Geographic Institute (ASGI).It was found that

entire participants' perception were positive towards professional development. There was no significant difference among the perception of the participants towards the professional development and rather proposed such study is needed for teachers to keep themselves abreast professionally.

Kwok - wai (2004) revealed the motives, conceptions and concerns of in-service teachers in the process of professional development in the school. The study was conducted on 246 in-service teacher education students consisting of various levels enrolled in the Two-year Part-time Postgraduate Diploma of Education (PGDE) and the Three-year Mixed Mode Bachelor of Education (MMBEd) Programme in tertiary institute of Hong Kong. It was found that the teachers under study demonstrated a higher proportion of concern for pupils than concern with self, suggesting they had progressed to a higher stage of professional development indicating positive perception of teachers towards the constructivist conceptions about teaching and learning process.

Ansie and Marike (2007) conducted a study to determine the teachers' motivation towards the continuous professional development on the principles underlying continuous professional development (CPD), since teachers are likely to be more willing to attend workshops if they are worth the time spent and the sacrifices made.

The study was conducted on group of 95 persons, consisting of foundation phase,

intermediate phase and senior phase teachers attending the workshop using questionnaire focused on the various CPD principles applied in the workshop. It was found that the teachers who attended workshop were fully aware of the use of the suggested teaching methods and positive attitudes towards continuous professional development. In general, there is no significant difference found irrespective of their teaching position, qualifications, gender, or age they had experienced the CPD workshop positively.

lbasheer et al (2008) examined the perceptions of teachers towards the effectiveness professional development for university professors, principals and teachers in the teacher education programme at the Hashemite University in Jordan. The study was conducted on 120 teachers and educationists of Jordan. It was found that entire participants were favorable towards the effectiveness of professional development and its impact.

Komba and Nkumbi (2008) scrutinized the perceptions of educationist towards the Professional Development of teachers in the school. The study was conducted on 186 samples consisting head teachers, primary school teachers, ward education coordinators, district education officers, school inspectors, and members of the school committee in six school districts of Tanzania, Africa. The outcome of study based on the nature, importance, organization, motivation, adequacy of and support for Teacher Professional Development, were gathered using questionnaires, interviews and observation checklist. It was found that majority respondents professed the importance of Teacher Professional Development for improving the potentials of teachers professionally, academically and technically. However, most respondents thought it was inadequately supported and motivated. At all levels (national, district, ward and school levels), teachers' professional development was poorly coordinated and rarely budgeted. The findings indicate a conception and practice of teachers professional development which combines both the raising of teacher academic qualifications and professional growth.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

Education is a lifelong process and no formal training in an institution can fully prepare a person for professional service. The continuous learning is imperative as teachers

knowledge lags behind due to continuous expansion of knowledge in the field of teacher education on a regular basis. Therefore, it is needless to mention about its importance and

need in the education system but the success or failure of the programme will depend on how well it has been executed and if timely study is not carried out on such programme, which has a huge financial implication, a huge amount of resources like financial as well as human resources will go in waste without any significant impact to the education system. Therefore, in order to make such programme a success, teachers must be the central focus of continuous professional development because it is upon them that the pressure and support for change must be applied.

There has been steady growth in the faculty strength in higher education; however, it has not been found matching the growth in student enrolment numbers. The teachers remain a central figure in our education system and unless the system ensures adequate number and quality of teachers no significant improvement can be brought .The enormity of the challenge of providing equal opportunities for quality higher education to ever-growing number of students is opportunity for correcting and making up for constraints in terms of their quality and quantity.

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