

# LIFELONG LEARNING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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## ABSTRACT

*The present article is about the importance of lifelong learning for professional development. Lifelong learning has its own identity in national and international societies. Basically, Lifelong Learning is all about acquiring abilities, skills, knowledge and understanding from the early childhood stage to the post retirement stage. Lifelong learning is very much related to the professional development. The paper deals with the following objectives. 1. To study the status of lifelong learning skills/Programmes for professional development. 2. To develop the relationship between lifelong learning and professional growth in education. In addition to it, the paper talks about the various professional development models and relationship between lifelong learning and professional development. In other words, how lifelong learning enhances professional development.*

**Keywords:** *Lifelong Learning. Professional Development*

## INTRODUCTION

The lifelong learning is a phenomenon which is a very recent and has been continuously discussed. Though multifaceted and interconnected, it has emerged from the term of vocational education and adult education. It has manifested in the national and International societies with its own identity. Though flexible in nature it has a different meaning for different people covering all stages and ages of life. Aspin and Chapman (2007) looked at the needs of modern democratic societies and noted three main needs:

1. For economic progress and development
2. For personal development and fulfillment
3. For social inclusiveness and democratic understanding and participation

Since, it is important to mention some of the meanings of the various terms associated with professional development, as they have come to mean few things to those associated with education. Watkins and Drury (1994) suggest that there are four groups of strategies for the development of professionals over the next decade:

- Developing the new mind set

- Learning to promote and market one's skills, networking and cultivating relationships.
- Developing self insight and taking personal charge
- Developing a range of training institutions

Though National policy on Education (NPE) -1986 recommends the establishment of the training institution which consequently led to the start of the UGC's academic staff colleges throughout India. Lifelong learning is about acquiring and updating all kinds of abilities, interests, knowledge and qualifications from the pre-school years to post retirement which promotes the development of knowledge and competences that will enable adaptation to the knowledge-based society and also valuing all forms of learning. Learning can no longer be dichotomized into a place and time to acquire knowledge (school) and a place and time to apply knowledge (the workplace). Today's students are flooded with more information than they can handle, and tomorrow's workers will need to know far more than any individual can retain. Lifelong learning is an essential challenge for inventing the future of our societies; it is a necessity rather than a possibility or a luxury to be considered. Lifelong learning is more than adult education and/or training — it is a mindset and a habit for people to acquire.

Since the early 1990's influential international organizations have published reports on the subject. They include reports from the OECD (organization for economic co-operation and development), European commission, and the G8 group of government (from the eight largest economies) as well as from UNESCO. Lifelong learning is a continuously supportive process which stimulate and empowers individuals, to acquire all knowledge, values, skills and understanding they will require throughout their lifetime and to apply them with confidence, creatively and enjoyment all roles, circumstances and environments. According to the first global conference on lifelong learning, co sponsored by American Council on Education considers the philosophy underlying the definition.

- Continuous-lifelong learning never stops
- Supportive-we don't do it alone
- Stimulating and empowering
- Knowledge, values, skills and understanding
- Lifetime-it happens from our first breathe to our last.
- Applied-lifelong learning is not just for knowledge sake.
- Confidence, creativity and enjoyment

Lifelong learning may be broadly defined as learning that is pursued throughout life: learning that is flexible, diverse and available at different times and in different places. Lifelong learning crosses sectors, promoting learning beyond traditional schooling and throughout adult life (i.e. post-compulsory education). This definition is based on Delors' (1996) four 'pillars' of education for the future.

- **Learning to know** - mastering learning tools rather than acquisition of structured knowledge.

- **Learning to do** – equipping people for the types of work needed now and in the future including innovation and adaptation of learning to future work environments.
- **Learning to live together** – peacefully resolving conflict, discovering other people and their cultures, fostering community capability, individual competence and capacity, economic resilience, and social inclusion.
- **Learning to be** – education contributing to a person’s complete development: mind and body, intelligence, sensitivity, aesthetic appreciation and spirituality.

Thus, from the perspective of the pragmatic needs of modern learning societies, a triadic notion of lifelong learning has developed. Lifelong learning thus includes vocational/economic aspects, liberal personal development aspects, political and social democratic inclusiveness aspects. In other words, lifelong learning includes vocational education, liberal education and political education.

## OBJECTIVES

1. To study the status of lifelong learning skills/Programmes for professional development.
2. To develop the relationship between lifelong learning and professional growth in education.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND ITS CONCEPT

While, Professional development consists of all natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be a part of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school and which contribute through these to the quality of education in the classroom. It is the process by which, alone and with others, teachers review, renew and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purposes 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 through each phase of their teaching lives. The demands of professional development require a wide cognitive perspective. In the context of professional development, the term ‘learning’ like ‘education’ carries formative value laden implications. This is also true of the concept of lifelong learning. Thus, in modern educational discourse, the terms education, training and learning, though they can be distinguished in various ways in different contexts, blur into each other more often than has traditionally been the case. The learning and training involved in the professional development are processes which are seen to be valuable and educative processes and lead to an increased worthwhile knowledge and understanding. The professional Association of Research Networks (PARN) defines continuing ‘Professional Development’ as:

*Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is the means by which members of professional associations maintain, improve and broaden their knowledge and skills and develop professional qualities required in their professional lives (PARN 2000).*

The concept of professional development itself brings together two concepts, profession and development. In some contexts, this growth to a more advanced state would not require training or learning but only maturations. In the professional development, most deliberate process of learning is implied. We actively bring about the advances and the fulfillment of potential through successive stages to higher or more complex level of skill and understanding.

## **PARTNERSHIP OF PROFESSIONAL BODIES AND TEACHERS**

Professional preparation and professional development of teachers is a continuous process. It begins with the selection of an aspirant teacher and includes his initial preparation induction into the profession and his continuous development throughout his teaching carrier. The formulation of policy and design of teacher preparation and continuing professional development should optimally take into account the whole spectrum of teacher learning. Within the federal structure of the country, while broad policy and legal framework on teacher education is provided by the Central Government, implementation of various programmes and schemes are undertaken largely by state governments. Within the broad objective of improving the learning achievements of school children, the twin strategy is to (a) prepare teachers for the school system (pre-service training); and (b) improve capacity of existing school teachers (in-service training). For pre-service training, the National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE), a statutory body of the Central Government, is responsible for planned and coordinated development of teacher education in the country. The NCTE lays down norms and standards for various teacher education courses, minimum qualifications for teacher educators, course and content and duration and minimum qualification for entry of student-teachers for the various courses. It also grants recognition to institutions (government, government-aided and self-financing) interested in undertaking such courses and has in-built mechanism to regulate and monitor their standards and quality. The government and government-aided teacher education institutions are financially supported by the respective State Governments. Further, under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme on Teacher Education, the Central Government also supports over 650 institutions, including the DIETs, CTEs and the IASEs. For in-service training, the country has a large network of government-owned teacher training institutions (TTIs), which provide in-service training to the school teachers. The spread of these TTIs is both vertical and horizontal. At the National Level, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), along with its six Regional Institutes of Education (REIs) prepares a host of modules for various teacher training courses and also undertakes specific programmes for training of teachers and teacher educators. Institutional support is also provided by the National University on Education al Planning and

Administration (NUEPA). Both NCERT and NUEPA are national level autonomous bodies. At the state level, the State Councils of Educational Research and Training (SCERTs), prepares modules for teacher training and conducts specialized courses for teacher educators and school teachers. The Colleges of Teacher Education (CTEs) and Institutes for Advanced Learning in Education (IASEs) provide in-service training to secondary and senior secondary school teachers and teacher educators. At the district level, in-service training is provided by the District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs). The Block Resource Centres (BRCs) and Cluster Resource Centres (CRCs) form the lowest rung of institutions in the vertical hierarchy for providing in-service training to school teachers. Apart from these, in-service training is also imparted with active role of the civil society, unaided schools and other establishments. For in-service training, financial support is largely provided by the Central Government under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), which is the main vehicle for implementation of the RTE Act. Under the SSA, 20 days in-service training is provided to school teachers, 60 days refresher course for untrained teachers and 30 days orientation for freshly trained recruits. Central assistance for in-service training is also provided to District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs), Colleges of Teacher Education (CTEs) and Institutes of Advanced Studies In Education (IASEs) under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme on Teacher Education. State Governments also financially support in-service programmes. Several NGOs, including multi-lateral organizations, support various interventions, including in-service training activities.

## **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LIFELONG LEARNING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Lifelong learning emphasizes planned, purposeful, systematic and worthwhile learning across the life span which has been embedded in educational discourse and strongly connects with the notion of continuous professional development. Professional development is one aspect of lifelong learning, and that practitioners have to understand the need to continually learn, whether this be formally or informally. The strength and quality of any profession largely depends on how it manages the three stages of preparation, induction and ongoing development of its members. In an ideal scenario, adequate preparation is ensured through profession-specific education with judicious balance between theory and practical components, supplemented by field exposure, apprenticeship and on-the-job training. It is followed by systematic and gradual induction supported by mentoring, internship, shadowing, team work, etc, preparing new entrants to be independent, autonomous professionals. For their ongoing development there are many continuous professional development (CPD) avenues and mechanisms: regular need based, updating events, short and long term courses, professional associations and networks, stronger links between research and practice through dissemination networks, personal studies and research, regular experimenting and sharing through journals, publications, workshops or conferences.

As Professional development includes formal experiences and informal expositions, this perspective is, in a way, new to teaching. For years the only form of professional development available to teachers was the staff development or in service training, usually consisting of workshops or short term courses that would offer teachers new information on a particular aspect of their work. This was the only type of training teachers would receive and was usually unrelated to the teachers work. Only in past few years has the professional development of teachers been considered a long term process that includes regular opportunities and experiences planned systematically to promote growth and development in the profession. This shift has been so dramatic that many have referred to it as a new image of teacher learning a new model of teacher education, a revolution in education and even a new paradigm of professional development.

There has recently been a significant increase in the level of interest and support that teachers throughout the world are receiving in their professional development. Evidence of this include the following:

1. The extensive literature which is available; including documents, essays and research reports on models and practices of professional development.
2. International and national donor agencies have acknowledged the importance of teachers' professional development and have commissioned studies with the purpose of learning how to support such efforts more effectively.
3. Most educational reforms currently being designed and/or implemented include a component of teacher professional development as one of the key elements in the change process.
4. Many national and international organizations have supported the implementation of the initiatives which aim to improve the professional skills and knowledge of teachers.

## **OVERVIEW OF MODELS OF PROFESSIONAL GROWTH**

Teachers have a major role to play in the education system. It has been long realized and emphasized that the teachers must toe the professional line and advance towards professionalism in their career. Professional development occurs when a teacher is dipped in the philosophy of teacher education, its reforms, its management and its goals. Professionalism is constructive and assembly of synergetic process. It brightens up with experience and knowledge. It may be diverse but has to be converged. Professional training may enhance the learning levels of a teacher and will give an insight in to the problems of effective teaching but to compliment and coordinate, the teachers will need to self equip the techniques and skills which will be applicable

in different situations. The lifelong learning establishes that linkage. Teachers need a wide variety of ongoing opportunities to improve their skills. TPD (also known as “in service” or “teacher education”) is the instruction provided to teachers to promote their development in a certain area (e.g., technology, reading instruction, subject mastery, etc.). There are number of models for professional development. The range of models of professional development is far more diverse than standard technology-training workshops. TPD models can be placed in three broad categories, each with its own strengths and weaknesses.

1. Standardized TPD programs Focus on rapid dissemination of specific skills and content, often via a “cascade” or “train-the-trainer” approach
2. School-centered TPD Focus on longer-term change processes, usually via locally facilitated activities that build on-site communities of practice
3. Individual or self-directed TPD Focus on individualized, self-guided TPD with little formal structure or support.

All of these TPD models can be used in very lowresource environments. All can be supported by ICT—whether this involves using radio or television to broadcast lessons, providing on-site videotaping of teachers and classrooms, or expanding a local community of practice through e-mail and the Internet. Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1989) also suggest five models that are useful for accomplishing the goals of staff development:

- 1. Individually Guided Development:** The teacher designs his or her learning activities. An assumption of this model is that individuals are motivated by being able to select their own learning goals and means for accomplishing those goals. A belief that underlies this model is that self-directed development empowers teachers to address their own problems and by so doing, creates a sense of professionalism.
- 2. Observation and Assessment:** Instructional practices are improved if a colleague or other person observes a teacher's classroom and provides feedback. Having someone else in the classroom to view instruction and provide feedback or reflection also is a powerful way to impact classroom behavior. Observers also learn as they view their colleagues in action.
- 3. Involvement in a Development or Improvement Process:** Systemic school-improvement processes typically involve assessing current practices and determining a problem whose solution will improve student outcomes. The solution might include developing curricula, designing programs, or changing classroom practice. New skills or knowledge may be required and can be attained through reading, discussion, observation, training, and experimentation. Consequently, involvement in the improvement process can result in many new skills, attitudes, and behaviors.

**4. Training:** A training design includes an expert presenter who selects the objectives, learning activities, and outcomes. Usually the outcomes involve awareness, knowledge, or skill development, but changes in attitude transfer of training, and "executive control" need to be addressed as well. The improvement of teachers' thinking should be a critical outcome of any training program. The most effective training programs include exploration of theory, demonstrations of practice, supervised trial of new skills with feedback on performance, and coaching within the workplace.

**5. Inquiry:** Teachers formulate questions about their own practice and pursue answers to those questions. Inquiry involves the identification of a problem, data collection (from the research literature and classroom data), data analysis, and changes in practice followed by the collection of additional data. The inquiry can be done individually or in small groups. This model is built on the belief that the mark of a professional teacher is the ability to take "reflective action."

## CONCLUSION

The up gradation of professionalism in teachers for remedial, management and leadership will define new parameters of quality education in the country.

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