

LANGUAGE IN INDIA

Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow

Volume 10 : 9 September 2010

ISSN 1930-2940

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Continuous Professional Development - An Issue in Tertiary Education in Bangladesh

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Abstract

Development of any kind is the process of becoming the best. Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is rather a requirement for all the employees of an organization. It aims at bringing benefit to the individual as well as to the organization, and to the profession as a whole.

The two parties involved in CPD are the individual and the organization. The former makes a commitment to develop herself and the latter actively supports it. This support from the organization is a must in CPD.

Bangladesh is in its infancy as far as awareness of CPD is concerned. In the education sector, the country is yet to be adequately aware of, initiate and grow up with CPD. The private universities in Bangladesh seem to have started addressing the idea of CPD seriously in the recent days. This paper aims at finding out the CPD scenario in private universities in Bangladesh both at the individual level and at the organizational level, through a questionnaire that was sent to teachers of different private universities. Finally, recommendations are made on what should and can be done by the faculty members as well as by the organizations, to ensure and boost up CPD process.

1. Introduction

Professional development means deepening insight into (one's own) professional practice and seeking further to understand that practice. Teaching involves complex professional expertise which itself needs to be better understood and more clearly presented to the public. A successful Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programme would yield a more motivated and enthusiastic teaching force. Undergoing CDP programmes means that the individual is responsible for her life-long career development under the umbrella of the institution. All kinds of CPD programmes are meant to support and develop the skills of teachers. CPD plays a vital role to stimulate the intellectual interest of a highly motivated teacher.

This paper tries to define what continuous professional development is. It views the individual and the institution as the two parties involved in CPD. Then it reviews the literature of CPD to give an elaborate idea about CPD. It looks around the private universities to find out what is going on there regarding CPD empirically through a questionnaire. Next it discusses the findings on the basis of the theoretical knowledge of CPD. This paper finally makes a few recommendations regarding what should be done to ensure CPD in the private universities in Bangladesh.

2. Towards Defining Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

The realization of the necessity to change and grow up that comes from within an individual teacher and her commitment to move forward is called teacher development. On the other hand, continuous professional development refers to the commitment of both the individual and the institution. While teacher development is a voluntary activity on the part of a teacher, CPD is a requirement for all the employees of an organization. The goals of CPD can be achieved only with the active support of the institution. It is something beyond the basic training a person receives initially, to be eligible for a job. It is the outcome of a teacher's ongoing commitment to maintain her professional expertise. To feel the necessity to change, to initiate and to cope with changes, professional development is a must. Stenhouse (quoted in Della Fish) holds the view:

The process of developing the art of the artist is always associated with change of ideas and practice. An artist becomes stereotyped or derelict when he ceases to develop — content as well as about performance — the execution of ideas. ... Thus the process of developing one's art as a teacher — or the art of teaching, which develops through individual artists — is a dialectic of idea and practice, not to be separated from change. (26)

In this age of globalization, the profession of teaching sets the contractual context for professional review and development. CPD activity must be based on an assessment of individual needs. Teachers must have an annual review of their development needs and the institution must take the responsibility to promote CPD. Practice, reflection, theory and action, these are the essential parts of professional development. At the individual level, to complete the

CPD process, the individual teacher has to reflect first on her experience and then draw theoretical conclusions. After that the theoretical conclusions can be used to improve and influence future actions. According to “Professional Review and Development”:

Professional review and development is the process whereby the development and training needs of all staff are identified and agreed in relation to their current practice, the requirements of the school or authority development plan, the wider and longer-term needs of the education service, and national priorities. The process also includes making suitable arrangements to meet professional development needs, so far as possible, within available resources.

CPD programmes help recognizing good performance and help the teachers to realize that they are valued and appreciated. To make the idea of CPD meaningful the teachers who undertake CPD programmes must be able to relate their learning (from CPD programmes) to their personal experience and practice. Learning is a process through which experience is transformed into knowledge and in turn, knowledge creates a foundation and opportunity for learning.

Professional review and development is one of a wide range of quality assurance strategies used in schools. As such, it is central to raising achievement and improving the effectiveness of teaching and learning. It offers a systematic approach to training and development, which leads to enhanced job satisfaction and better leadership and management of the teaching process. Successful professional review and development brings about practical improvements in the classroom and directly benefits pupils by raising the quality of their learning experience. It is, therefore, a crucial part of the quality improvement process which benefits the whole of the education service. (“Professional Review and Development”).

The components of continuous professional development can be in-service trainings, workshops, conferences, seminars, research and publications, etc. In-service trainings can be of short term and long term. These are meant for the betterment of the performance of teachers and help to grow confidence in teachers. Workshops can create opportunities for teachers to have practical knowledge about teaching. Research makes a teacher look deep inside her profession. If the institution facilitates research, that will encourage teachers a lot.

Research grant is all the more necessary to encourage real great works of research. There must be a facility to publish the findings of a research. If there is publication facility in the institution, it will lead to critical reflection on the theories of teaching which ultimately will lead to classroom practice. An elaborate plan for professional development can help teachers tremendously to transform their potentials into performance.

The maintenance of a CPD portfolio is a good practice for all teachers, regardless of their experience or aspirations. It can offer a systematic method for recording professional analysis and development throughout a teacher's career. The contents of a CPD portfolio will vary but might include: personal details; qualifications; employment history; job descriptions of current and previous posts; CPD profile; an analysis of professional experiences; self-evaluation of professional competence; reflective commentaries on CPD activities undertaken; information relating to preparation for national standards; personal development plan; certificates; and a CV. (c.f. "Professional Review and Development" 9).

3. Guidelines for Professional Development

Professional development is a continuous process of individual as well as collective improvement of practice. The suggestive guidelines for CPD can be:

- i. The prime purpose of professional development should be to deepen and broaden the knowledge of content.
- ii. Professional development should provide a strong foundation in the pedagogy of particular disciplines. Teachers must know how to get students understand the content. They must know the most useful ways of representing the ideas of specific disciplines and the most powerful illustrations and analogies to represent a concept. The teacher must understand the kinds of questions that help to reveal and develop understanding.
- iii. Effective professional development should be rooted in and reflect the best available research. The teachers as well as institutions must acknowledge the importance of research. Practice should be examined and change considered on the basis of sound research.
- iv. The content of professional development should be aligned with the standards and curriculum teachers use. Unless teachers can see how professional development content and suggested strategies can be used to achieve the standards, they are likely to ignore the strategies as irrelevant.
- v. Professional development should contribute to measurable improvement in student achievement.
- vi. Professional development should provide sufficient time, support, and resources to enable teachers to master new content and pedagogy and to integrate these into their practice. Professional development does not take place in an isolated moment in time. It is not an event; it is a process. Expertise grows over time as teachers reflect on and use ideas and strategies in the classroom.
- vii. Professional development has to be complemented by professional development of para-professionals and other staff.
- viii. CPD must be designed in a way to make teachers capable of making complex decisions, identify and solve problems and to connect theory, practice and students outcome.
- ix. CPD should contain an element of broadening and deepening of subject knowledge. A comparison of varied methods of teaching can be drawn.

(c.f. “Principles for Professional Development” 4-10)

4. Why is CPD necessary?

The teachers of tomorrow will be drawn from the students of today. So, to get good instructors for the future generation we must educate the students properly. And to do that we need good teachers and CPD ensures good teaching staff. CPD can revitalize skills throughout teaching careers. Change is a norm in this world and rapid changes have taken place in the approaches to teaching and learning. The curriculum has changed extensively too. Development in information and communication technology demands that a teacher’s competence and knowledge be reviewed frequently and helped to be developed.

Professional development will be complete if a system is established to evaluate the outcomes of CPD programmes. As these programmes are not an end in themselves, it has to be ensured that the CPD programmes are effective in improving teaching and learning. The individual as well as the organization must consider how far identified professional needs have been met. In this regard an accurate and comprehensive record of development activities should be maintained. The outcome or impact of CPD programmes on professional practice has to be recorded too.

The following things need to be ensured for continuous professional development:

- i. Professional recognition.
- ii. Clear and credible support from the institution.
- iii. Opportunities to share expertise.
- iv. Rewards for best practices.
- v. Realistic view of how much change a teacher can handle.

5. CPD in private Universities in Bangladesh

Practically speaking, CPD is applicable to all professions. But the idea of CPD is in its infancy in Bangladesh. High quality professional development is essential to the nation's continuous effort to ensure high standard education to its students. With this vision, the government approved the idea of private universities.

To meet the need of the ever growing population of Bangladesh and their aspiration for higher studies, as many as 53 private universities were approved for operating in the country. But the private universities have to reassure the ground on which they will be allowed to keep operating as the standard of education in private universities has been questioned frequently. Seven private universities have been forced to stop operating recently.

Ensuring CPD programmes can help the private universities go a long way, as the public now realize that the teacher’s quality is the bedrock on which rests their aspiration for high quality education and reform of the society in a broader sense. If teachers want to help students to have true education, their own learning must be first rate.

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An educational institution's most important asset is its teaching force. As such the most important investment a university can make is to ensure that teachers continue to learn. As good professional development does not happen overnight, the institution has to have an elaborate plan for CPD. Mcphee, A.D. Humes, W.M. observe:

The movement in present days towards a market-oriented, client-driven system of education has resulted in a scrutiny of not only the structures which are in place to provide education services but also the ways in which those who provide the education services are themselves trained. (167)

The private universities should recognize that there is a problem with standards in private universities and in education in Bangladesh in general. To save the situation it is necessary to control the quality and standard of teacher education. The question, how much we have developed professionally as teachers, has become a vital one in the present Bangladesh situation. There is much in Bangladesh that needs to be worked upon regarding teachers' professional development. This paper may be regarded as a beginning of the systematic approach to the idea of CPD in private universities in Bangladesh.

6. Methodology

With a view to finding the scenario of Continuous Professional Development in Bangladesh, especially in private universities, a questionnaire having twenty five questions (in three groups entitled: About Yourself, About You and CPD, and About Your Institution and CPD) was sent to teachers of different private universities in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The universities were selected randomly and the respondents were requested to volunteer. Fifty teachers of different departments of twelve private universities (Appendix-1) showed their interest. Finally forty-five teachers responded with completed questionnaires. The respondents' rate is 90% and on an average 3.75 teachers from each university responded. The teachers were given one week to respond and the whole survey required 3 weeks.

Around 51% of the teachers belong to the age group of 26 to 30. 47% of the teachers are female and 53% are male. Among them 75% teachers' educational qualification is Masters and 7% of them have PhD degree. 42% of the participants are in teaching profession for less than 3 years and 33% of them are teaching for less than 6 years. 60% teachers are working in their present working places for less than 3 years, while 29% teachers are working for less than 6 years. It clearly shows that the participants in the survey represent a segment of university teachers, among whom the idea of CPD needs to be addressed seriously for their own development as well as the development of the institutions, resulting in quality education among the students.

7. Result and discussion

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The survey result shows that 53% teachers received professional trainings, while 47% teachers received no training before or after joining the profession. Among the teachers who have received professional trainings, 64% were self-motivated to undergo the trainings, while 36% were inspired or nominated by the university. It cannot be denied that the universities must play a vital role in providing professional trainings to all their teachers. The private universities in Bangladesh are not playing their proper role in this regard.

Among the participants only 47% teachers claimed to have publications whereas, 53% said that they do not have any publications. Publications are extremely necessary for progress in an academic career. Research based publications are a must to move forward in teaching profession. So, the teachers must be conscious about it.

The teachers were asked whether they think that CPD is necessary in the education sector or not. About 67% teachers said that they strongly agree with the idea.

The participants were requested to rank the common CPD components such as workshop, seminar, professional training, conference, research and publication, prioritizing them. The authors used weight average method to find out the result. Professional training was ranked as number one, whereas, research and publication was ranked as second, workshop as third, conference as fourth and seminar was ranked as fifth important component of professional development.

The teachers were asked whether they think that imposing a teacher development plan by the university can help CPD or not. 35% of the participants strongly agreed with it. 55% of them said that they believe in the idea of teacher development plan but they do not expect the university to impose it on them.

Of the participating teachers, about 53% said that they are familiar with the idea of CPD and the remaining 47% said that they do not have any idea about CPD. About 62% of the participants said that they are not involved in any CPD programme in their institutions. In reality every teacher is involved in some sorts of CPD programme in their own ways. It seems that they are developing themselves without being aware of it. Unconscious development efforts may not tend to be far reaching. So, if they get involved in CPD being properly aware of it, their efforts will yield more result.

Among the participants, only 28% said that they strongly believe that an association with a local professional network for teachers can help them grow up professionally, whereas the highest 33% teachers showed neutral attitude.

About 69% teachers said that the universities where they work facilitate CPD programmes and the remaining 31% said that the institutions do not facilitate much CPD programmes. This revelation is very undesirable and harmful to the individual as well as to the institution. All the

universities must have some sort of CPD programmes; otherwise they will be destroying themselves at the same time will cause harm to the career of a teacher. Students of this sort of university will be denied quality education as well.

A further question regarding the kinds of CPD offered by the institutions showed that most of the private universities offer workshops (53%) as a part of CPD programs. They also arrange seminars (49%) frequently, whereas, conferences (35%), trainings (18%) and research and publications (9%) are comparatively given less importance. It implies that the universities should concentrate more on providing training to their teachers.

The highest 42% teachers neither showed their satisfaction nor dissatisfaction with the CPD programmes provided by the universities. Only 11% teachers are highly satisfied with it and the same number of teachers is highly dissatisfied with the CPD programmes provided by the universities. It implies that the universities should give more emphasis on providing CPD programmes.

The teachers were asked when they last participated in a CPD programme organized by their institutions. 24% teachers said that they never participated in any kind of CPD programmes. Whereas, 60% of them replied to have attended CPD programmes in between last 1 to 7 months. It shows that the universities should arrange for CPD programmes more frequently and the teachers should be more interested in participating in those programmes.

A further question regarding the kinds of CPD programmes they have attended in last one year revealed that the highest 56% attended workshops, 48% attended seminars and 36% attended conference. Only 9% teachers were involved in research and publication though it was ranked as second important CPD programme by them.

69% teachers said that the universities where they work facilitate research and the remaining 31% said that they do not have such facilities in their institutions. 51% teachers said that their universities do not provide research grant. Whereas, 49% said they are provided fund for research by their institutions. It must be mentioned that research must be patronized by the institutions; otherwise, great works of research will not be initiated.

56% teachers said that they have publication facility, whereas, 44% teachers said that the universities they serve have no publication facilities. Publications are a must in professional growth and the universities must provide the facility of publication through their own journals, which in the long run, will encourage research too.

Only 7% teachers said that they are highly satisfied with the research and publication facilities provided by the university, whereas the highest 47% teachers showed neutral attitude. This indicates that the universities should take more initiatives to encourage the teachers in research and publication.

Only 18% teachers said that they are highly satisfied with the library facilities provided by the university, whereas the highest 44% teachers showed neutral attitude. This reflects that the library facilities need to be improved in private universities, so that the teachers can use the resources.

8. Recommendations

CPD involves two parties, none of whom can escape their responsibility to ensure meaningful professional development. Both of the parties must play their proper roles. Examining the primary data and secondary sources, the authors recommend the following things to ensure CPD:

Things to be done by the individual teachers

1. The teachers must have the commitment and mentality to grow up professionally. No one can ensure their professional development unless they feel its necessity and initiate their own development process.
2. Through critical reflection on the present practices and their outcomes the teachers can decide their own goal of professional development. This will lead them to the continuous process of self development.
3. Teachers must participate in all the CPD programmes organized by the university. They should also make the institutions feel the necessity of certain CPD programmes and help organizing those programmes.
4. Teachers must get involved with the local as well as international networks for teachers which can create a platform for them to get involved in CPD.
5. The teachers should be more involved in research and publication. Research will help them to find out what should be the best practice and these theories can be used in classroom practice later on. Publications will help the teachers to let other people know the findings of a particular research.
6. Teachers can make a portfolio for their professional growth. They can have a development plan of their own whether or not enthused by the institution. They can make self evaluation based on those.

Things to be done by the institution

1. To ensure CPD throughout one's teaching career, a system of accountability and rewards should be established by the private universities.
2. Private universities must design elaborate programmes to ensure continuous development of teachers and they must have regular approved budget for it as an allocation of time and resources is needed to enable coherent CPD to take place.
3. Networks of local teachers should be established to encourage the growth of CPD to provide a source of expert advice and exchange of information. Private universities can

take the initiative of forming such networks of teachers (like Bangladesh English Language Teachers' Association) that can provide a platform for teachers to exchange views and to help them to be aware of what is going on around the world in the field of teaching and learning.

4. Every private university should have training facilities. As soon as a teacher joins the institution, she must undergo different sorts of trainings to be competent in teaching. The universities can have a prescribed curriculum for the training of the teachers.
5. Academy for each subject can be established in the universities. Short term or long term training programmes can be launched through those academies or institutes.

9. Conclusion

CPD can be seen as a long term investment in developing teachers' skills and professionalism. Entering into teaching means to take learning as a profession. CPD opens the doors to be constant learners. As the individuals continue to be teachers, their knowledge continues to grow. CPD helps them come out with prophetic power, because:

To copy a style is easy; to introduce a new one— a new way of seeing— is the work of those whose work provides the landmarks of history. (Langford quoted in *Della Fish* 29).

Teachers of an institution have to decide whether they want to develop or not, the extent of development they need and what can be done on their part. The organizations, at the same time must acknowledge the importance of CPD and must have a development plan for its employees.

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Appendix-1

The twelve private universities that responded to the questionnaire are:

1. Asian University of Bangladesh
 2. BRAC University
 3. Darul Ihsan University
 4. Eastern University
 5. East West University
 6. International Islamic University Chittagong
 7. Northern University of Bangladesh
 8. North South University
 9. Stamford University
 10. State University of Bangladesh
 11. United International University
 12. University of Asia Pacific
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