

# REVITALIZING PROFESSIONALISM IN TEACHERS

Biswajit Behera

*The hope of revitalizing school education is driven towards the professional and personal growth of the teacher. The professional preparation of teachers has been recognized to be crucial for the qualitative improvement of education (Kothari Commission, 1964-66). The emphasis in the teacher education programme should be on enabling the trainees to acquire the ability for self-learning and independent thinking. Teachers should have possession of professional knowledge and professional status. Teachers are expected to carry out their professional tasks in accordance with their judgment, without bias. Consistent with the objectives, content, pedagogy and assessment for different stages of the curriculum, the teachers must be oriented and should be constant learners. In this paper, three dimensions of learning are emphasised on the part of professional teachers 1) Cognitive Learning 2) Emotional Learning and 3) Situational Learning. It is understood that in order to strengthen professionalism, the teachers must be allowed for expertise to be shared with a wide range of teachers through conferences. The teacher must be resourceful and practitioner of teaching and learning. Thus, professional learning is practical in character.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The basic concern of education is to enable an individual to make sense of life and to live happily. This aim stands valid even today. Education, in its

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etymological meaning, drawing out the child's potentialities towards optimum level is of great importance. It defines the recognition of 3 R's-Rights, Responsibilities and Rules of the child to create a healthy community of life. Hence, it is needed to reaffirm our constitutional commitment to the concept of equality, liberty and fraternity to maintain social order. Education must be able to promote values that develop peace and humanness in a multi-cultural diversified society. Education must be seen as a liberating process. The process of Education must therefore free itself from the shackles of all kinds of exploitation and injustice, which prevents us from being part of the process. An important significance of this is that value education must be part of the education system; values and virtues must be integral to the whole process of education. That is, the whole of education has to be value education. Education must now be seen as fostering values, which constitute the well being of the individual on the one hand and the well being of humanity on the other.

Education aims at making students capable of becoming active, responsible, productive and caring members of society. This can be possible with the various practices of the community by imparting the relevant skills and ideas. Education system is a means of ensuring the future 'well being' of students. Education should promote in society as well as help the students develop a rational commitment to social values and ideals. The overall approach of education should help one to develop the capabilities of individual human beings.

Education is assumed to be a system of teaching and learning that is both formal and informal. The aim of such learning and teaching is to induct students into the way of life of the community. School education has either more or less bearings in the life of a student. Although much learning and teaching takes place at home and in actual living community, the school is a deliberate and external intervention in the life of a student. School facilitates the creation of vital links between students' experiences at home and in the community.

### **PARADIGM SHIFT IN EDUCATION**

NCERT within its curriculum framework-2005 has articulated the purposes of education in bringing capabilities of individual human beings. Certain qualities are suggested in order to make students humane. These are:

- Knowledge base
- Rational\critical attitude
- Learning to learn
- Sensitivity to others
- Work and ability to participate in economic processes

The NCF-2005 document suggested some ways of getting out of curriculum load on students. It seeks to develop and implement local-specific need based programmes. Its guiding principles are:

1. Connecting knowledge to life outside the school
2. Ensuring that learning is shifted away from the rote methods
3. Enriching the curriculum to provide all round development of students
4. Making examinations more flexible and integrated into class room life
5. Nurturing identity of the students within democratic purview

Hence, the approach of teaching needs to be open-ended. The learning process must be interactive and participatory. The participatory learning process will keep both the learner and the teacher alive to the real life society. The emphasis should be given on learning than teaching. The teachers should have participatory and interactive approach. Hence, teacher education and orientation must include a significant programme in order to enable teachers to efficiently and creatively handle the teaching-learning process. Therefore, the hope of revitalizing school education is driven towards the professional and personal growth of the teacher. The professional preparation of teachers has been recognized to be crucial for the qualitative improvement of education (Kothari Commission, 1964-66).

The design and practice of current teacher education programme needs to be reset. The teacher education programme needs a paradigm shift in training of teachers to adjust to the changing needs of an education system. The emphasis in this program should be on enabling the trainees to acquire the ability for self learning and independent thinking. The process of preparing such teachers would provide opportunities for:

- Reflection and articulation of new ideas
- Developing the ability for self-analysis, self-evaluation, flexibility, creativity and innovation
- Developing professional skills in pedagogy, evaluation and reflective inquiry (NCF-2005)

## **A PROFESSIONAL TEACHER**

Teaching can be seen as a profession because the complex learning that is needed to cope with recent innovations, integrating it with the course of their daily work is very important. Some of the characteristics (Sant, 2004) of a professional teacher are:

- Willingness to learn, ability to stimulate and inspire
- Create an image in the minds of young learners
- Help students to develop core competencies like being well informed,

articulate and able to make presentations and being considerate and thoughtful to others and etc.

- Foster learning skills and proper attitude in order to enable students to become responsible citizens in a democratic society
- Self-regulation among teacher and adhering to certain norms of behaviour and ethics
- Should have the ability to recognize and manage change

## TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM

When the reform of schooling is considered, it is widely predicted that teachers should become more functionaries. The suggestions of the national curriculum framework emphasized on teacher's autonomy, integrity and professionalism from time to time. The content of the curriculum and standards of attainment for all students in schools were resented by many teachers. Now, NCF-2005 document reiterated very differently from that of the past. It would make teachers responsible for improving the standards for the students, including special children. Therefore, greater status and higher salaries to teacher are provided than they had received in the past. The highly prescriptive national curriculum has brought paradigm shift in the classroom, which will have profound implications for teachers as individuals and for the profession as a whole. It is meant that teachers have to embracing professionalism. It demands teachers to promote high expectations, to expect accountability, to take responsibility for improving their skills and subject knowledge, to seek to base decisions as evidence of what works in schools, to work in collaboration with others, to anticipate change and to promote innovation. Thus, they will need more systematic opportunities for their professional development.

Teaching is not 'some kind of painting-by-numbers activity' rather a new approach to teachers' professionalism, moving away from a traditional concern and towards issues relating to class room practice and new pedagogy. It does not mean trying to define the way teachers should teach instead to equip teachers with the knowledge that would allow them to make practical decisions on how to teach. Ultimately a more 'outcome-based model of professionalism' is needed. It evokes nurturing of a new professionalism for teachers. The teachers are required to adapt to the changes in their environment along with maintaining key features of their established practice. It should be understood as a shift from stereotyped practice to learning centred practice. This kind of accommodation involves a critical interaction with the challenging task of innovation. Hence, professionalism means:

- Increased opportunity and responsibility to decide over issues of teaching and curriculum
- Commitment to working with colleagues in collaborative cultures of

shared expertise.

- Struggle for continuous learning
- Self-directed search
- Commitment to active care

The research suggested that while many teachers have been obliged to adopt new practices, this in itself would not necessarily change their values. It has challenged some teachers to explore their professional repertoire in order to find ways in which they can mediate the new requirements or incorporate them into their existing practices (Pollard et.al, 1994).

Like other professionals, teachers should have possession of professional knowledge and professional status (Figure 1). Teachers are expected to carry out their professional tasks in accordance with their judgment, without bias. Professionalism requires not only appropriate training and experience but also the professional attitude, which gives priority to the interests of those, served and is constantly concerned to increase effectiveness through professional development.



**Figure 1: Marching Towards Professionalism.**

Along with professional knowledge, professional status impinges on the professionalism of teachers. It includes the development of qualifications, the improvement of conditions of work, clear provision for promotion to higher ranks, the obtaining of security of tenure, salary and pension schemes, increased influence and importance as a professional group, the growing trust of stakeholders particularly parents, increasing unity among teacher's groups and overall the creation of a more favourable image for teachers.

## A CRISIS OF TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM

It is viewed that teacher freedom in the curriculum domain is a key source of his professionalism. It is also argued that the status of the teaching profession would not be raised until the teachers were given more responsibility and made to face up to it. The ideals of teacher freedom in the curriculum are being endangered by the influence of examinations. The examination syllabus largely determines the lines on which individual subjects are taught. The institutions are becoming increasingly the objects of external pressures which come through means of external examinations, entry requirements of next higher level of education and the new technological environment in which the institutions have to function.

There is a reality that in such a sociological context, there is real danger that autonomy of the institution and the freedom of the teacher could become increasingly meaningless. Further, there is accelerating trend towards competitive examinations at all levels of educational system, which are the root causes of the increasing threat to the ideal of the teacher freedom in the curriculum.

The society's need for more and better educated citizens, the expectations of parents and the pupils to respond to this need and the consequent demand for specific evidence of educational achievement are the general trends. These can be described as the 'rise of meritocracy', which also posed the principal danger to the ideals of teacher freedom now. The main responsibility of individual teachers and schools lie in the development of curriculum.

Teachers need not be influenced to the same extent by the requirements of authority. The teachers should have greater freedom to do his work. The system should emphasize that the teachers are remaining free from the pressures of authority and also external examinations. This will lead them to advance along the lines they themselves feel to be right.

## NEW PROFESSIONALISM

Several suggestions given in the national curriculum pose challenges towards new professionalism as given below and in Figure 2.

### 1. Marketization of Education:

With unexpected advancements in information and communication technology, a stage of competition has reached. Efforts to provide quality education and create excellence are crucial tasks on the part of teachers. Hence, curriculum should be relevant, need based and skill oriented. It should be modified in consultation with industry.

2. Changes in terms and conditions of teachers' status (contractual, performance related pay)
3. Loss of experienced teachers and growth of part-time teachers
4. Increased work load for continuous and comprehensive evaluation
5. In service education provision:  
For the sake of continuous learning and to keep abreast with new issues and concerns of education, the teachers undergo in-service education and training.
6. Professional development and new learning paradigm:  
The paradigm shift in teaching-learning from product-oriented to process oriented learning system needs to be responded in a flexible and creative manner.



**Figure 2: Diagrammatic Structure of New Professionalism.**

### WHAT PROFESSIONALS HAVE TO LEARN?

Consistent with the objectives, content, pedagogy and assessment for different stages of the curriculum, the teachers must be oriented and should be constant learners. Three dimensions of learning are necessary on the part of professional teachers (Figure 3). These are:

#### 1) Cognitive Learning

The change on content, pedagogy and assessment methods demands learning as the part of teachers. A professional judgment in the selection of content is to be carried out for the inclusion in the curriculum. Teacher's autonomy to

determine the goals of teaching and learning should not be limited. Teacher's learning should pertain to the following areas:

- Access to courses
- Resources to support new learning
- Quality care in preparing learning material
- Continuing changes in some subjects
- Too much had to be learned and done in too short a time
- In-service learning provision

## **2) Emotional Learning**

Thought and action-cognition and affect-are intertwined. Consequently, effectiveness at work relates to cognitive strength-to levels of understanding, but it is also related to affective factors, especially to motivational factors. Sternberg (1997) in his discussion of intelligence testing claims that IQ is a measure of cognitive ability, which has no more than a +0.2 correlation with work success. On similar lines, Cooper and Sawaf (1997) argued that emotional mastery and sensitivity are more important in work and life generally than is the intelligence that is measured by IQ tests. The emotions are especially significant in people-working occupations. Evans (1998) has developed Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation to argue that extrinsic factors such as pay and working conditions can produce or reduce dissatisfaction, but that it is only intrinsic factors, such as enjoyment, satisfaction, and belief in the value of the work that can produce feelings of fulfilment.

One conclusion is that the best professional learning would consolidate intrinsic motivation, which suggests that teachers should have some scope to choose what to learn, when and how. Yet, there must be some concern about the quality of learning and its contribution to teachers' overall morale when the main drivers are extrinsic. Emotions influence the teachers in the work context. With roots in the humanistic psychology pioneered by Maslow (1998) and Rogers (1983) one theme is that feelings are influential in actions and that they can be changed. The social psychologist Seligman (1998) has reached similar conclusion which claims that helplessness and optimism, both emotional states may be learned. When people work together, inter-personal skills are called for and emotional intelligence is valuable and may be developed in the daily schedule of working together. A lot then depends on the quality of team leadership and of working relationships.

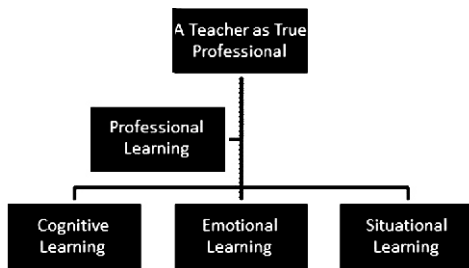
## **3) Situational Learning**

The context in which teachers are working is also a part of a system. The system has following emergent characteristics:

- Teachers have responsibility to implement new ideas



- Job tasks are challenging
- Work\ task is assigned in areas of personal interest
- Recognition and credits are given for good work
- Free time is available to explore new ideas
- Salary and promotion are based on performance
- Needs are matched to opportunities
- Innovation is enthusiastically received
- Environment has a progressive atmosphere
- Performance reviews identify strengths and weaknesses and direction for improvement



**Figure 3: Three Dimensions of Professional Learning.**

Professional learning constitutes learning in cognitive, affective and situational dimensions. So, a teacher to become true professional must have wisdom in the above three aspects of learning.

## CONCLUSIONS

Professionalism is a crucial aspect of the work of teachers. Teacher professionalism is understood as the experience of teachers and schooling. Reflection is very important and can be most powerful when it involves sharing. It understands peers whose inquiries support his refinement and consolidation. So, professional learning is a continuous process and not an event. Therefore, most professional learning is informal. Hence, in order to strengthen professionalism, the teachers must be allowed for expertise to be shared with a wide range of teachers through conferences. The teacher must be resourceful and practitioner of teaching and learning. Thus, professional learning is practical in character.

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