

Guru Chethana - Teacher Professional Development A Government of Karnataka Initiative

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‘The status of the teacher reflects the socio-cultural ethos of the society; it is said that no people can rise above the level of its teachers’ - such exhortations are indeed expressions of the important role played by the teachers as transmitters, inspirers and promoters of the eternal quest for knowledge in human beings. All of us aspire for a good society that is humane, equitable and sustainable. It is assumed that school education provides the foundation for it. Education could bring such society through non-violent and sustained manner. India attempts education for every individual amending fundamental rights where it ensured Right of Free and Compulsory Education. As result of this, it is being attempted to ensure access for each child in terms of schooling as well in quality. The reservation of seats for vulnerable family children in private schools is part of the same. Through this, the education of every child became a mandate of the Government. Both the Central and State governments have been putting in their best efforts to ensure easy access of school for all children and promoting regular attendance through various government programmes. India has achieved a lot in terms of enrolment, and significantly accomplished attendance of students in primary schools. The issue that remains unaddressed is quality of education. Many reports such as ASER, NAS identified gaps in learning levels of students across the subjects. It has become serious issue in the school education these days and has been identified as a key concern in school education. The quality of education is considerably determined by teachers and their engagements in the classroom. Teacher professional abilities eventually contribute for quality delivery of education in the schools along with other requirement such as infrastructure, PTR (Pupil Teacher Ratio), school leadership, etc.

There are issues in teacher education programmers in India both in pre-service and in in-service. Both programmes broadly unable to prepare teachers for kind of students and context of the schools by having short team duration and focusing pedagogy of the subjects. It is evident that teachers need to

be prepared in relation to the needs and demands arising in the school context, to engage with questions of school knowledge, the learner and the learning process. Expectations of the school system and teachers change from time to time, in response to the broader social, economic and political changes taking place in the society. This pushes for revamping teacher education for enhancing professional abilities in the teacher community.

Following are the primary reasons in favour of re-designing teacher education:

1. Short duration pre-service programmes would only build basic perspectives with little connection to in-service teacher education, causing school teachers’ critical professional needs to remain unaddressed.
2. Aligning pre- and in-service teacher education has not been addressed adequately till date.
3. The interlinkage between theory and practice in both pre-service and in-service programme is weak.
4. The existing teachers need to be acquainted with paradigm shifts in the ever -changing education system. This requires enriching one’s knowledge and understanding of the basic concepts and aims of education, something which does not get adequately covered in the pre-service training and the gap remains unclosed due to insufficient time spent on in-service training.
5. Current in-service professional development programmes are often inadequate to provide an individual with much-needed pedagogic understanding or abilities and dispositions to become an effective teacher.
6. Processes in teacher education fail to make teacher become a reflective practitioner.
7. In-service programmes focus mostly on addressing issues of text books, hard spots in the subject rather than building conceptual and deeper understanding combining with constructive pedagogy among the teachers

8. In many cases, especially in in-service programmes, there is disconnect between programmes/training of the present year with previous and upcoming years. Programmes are being delivered in a piecemeal fashion.
9. The non-availability of adequately trained resource persons in the district and block levels to reach teachers at the expected quality is another disadvantage.
10. There is huge transmission loss by having multiple levels of cascading strategy
11. Programmes/modules are centrally designed and have to be delivered irrespective of teachers' needs and interests.

In this situation, continuing professional development of the teacher becomes paramount importance for effective transaction of the curriculum and to bridge these gaps. While there are thousands of children coming out through the existing process, there are lacks in resources which require rigour and focus to address this gap. This necessitates long-term vision and a framework that attempts to address the above-mentioned issues in the in-service programme by considering every possible influencing factor and deliver a meaningful experience to teachers.

The Department of Public Instruction, Government of Karnataka (GoK) has taken up the challenging task of overhauling the in-service teacher education program in the State under the name of Guru Chethana. The aim of the initiative is to address the concerns in the in-service teacher education programmes and to make teacher development efforts meaningful and relevant. The massive exercise of re-designing the approach, content as well as the delivery of the programme, along with the establishment of a teacher tracking and management system, is being implemented in collaboration with the Azim Premji Foundation.

Based on the insights from last decade, keeping the national documents such as National Curriculum Framework 2005 and National Curriculum Framework for Teachers Education 2009 in mind, such a teacher becomes a reflective practitioner, capable of questioning the curriculum, syllabus and text books, enhance the school curriculum by incorporating community knowledge and establish interlinkage between theory and practice, the state has envisioned a professional development plan for in-service teachers.

The key principles adopted in the programme are discussed below.

1. The plan should be long-term and lead a journey of teachers in professional development. In-service teacher education is a continuous process which should be coherent - not sporadic one-off sessions which do not hold together; a long term plan of teacher development allows individual teachers to develop holistically
2. It must offer a combination of learning modes - expert-driven, peer-learning and self-learning and create decentralised self-sustained leaning spaces to foster self-leaning and peer learning, which are crucial.
3. It must respond to issues teachers face in their schools, relevant to all classes and subjects. This comprehensiveness in curriculum will have long-term engagement of teachers which will build continued and connected learning opportunities.
4. It must offer options for teachers to choose so that they can access what is relevant to them through multiple platforms, for example, workshops, seminars, study groups, etc.
5. Materials used for teacher development should be comprehensive in scope by including education perspective, subject perspective, subject content and pedagogy
6. All the engagement should be guided by a consistent set of educational ideas for example, role of a school in Indian society, how children learn, nature and pedagogy of each subject, why physical, psychological, social, ethical development of the child is important and reflect in all forms of teacher education programmes.

The senior functionaries of education department were committed to addressing the gaps in the teacher education. The beauty of the programme was the involvement of officers from the Additional Chief Secretary for Primary and Secondary Education Department to the teachers of each school. This effort was sustained for two years to implement the first year programme. In order to have a long term plan and allow teachers to choose the modules as per their need and interest for their professional development, the path was laid out for five years.

The programme was designed in four phases from conceiving to execution - a. curriculum

development, b. modules development, c. resource person development, d. programme launch.

a. Curriculum Development

The curriculum has been developed collaboratively by identified teachers, teacher educators and subject experts from across Karnataka and some members from the Azim Premji Foundation. This group went through a careful process of preparation by considering the needs of teachers as well as the expectations from teachers which had been articulated in national documents. The curriculum framework for teachers' development was evolved as a first step to plan the long-term approach in this regard – enabling a strong and continuous professional development program for the teachers. The curriculum describes the context of teachers' development, principles, approaches, themes, practicality, classroom applications, teacher engagement modes and assessments. Considerable effort has gone into visualising the multiple and diverse needs of teachers to develop the courses and modules. This is a comprehensive curriculum which includes issues around child development (for example, how children learn language, the social context of learning), understanding key concepts in school subjects and methods of teaching. It suggests around 250 themes for teachers' development, and proposes different modes of teacher engagement, modular orientation on each theme. A modules/concept/theme can be taken up from 1-5 days as per interest and requirement.

b. Module Development

The modules were developed by adopting the principles of curriculum. A group of identified state resource persons from the education department and Azim Premji Foundation under the guidance of mentors developed the modules through a rigorous process lasting for about five months. These modules are graded so that they respond to different levels of teachers' understanding. In the long-term, the plan is to have 200-250 modules available for teachers to choose from. These modules, comprising education perspective, subject perspective, key concepts, pedagogy and assessment, are integrated with one another and not looked at in isolation. There were 28 modules spread across Science, Mathematics, Social Science, Education Perspective in both Kannada, Hindi offered to teachers in the year 2017-18. The rest will be spread across subsequent years. Each of

the modules was piloted, reviewed and fine-tuned with the involvement of the review committee.

c. Resource Person Development

In order to execute the programme on a mass scale and to address the issue of non-availability of trained resource persons in the districts, four master resource persons for each module from each district were selected through process of written and oral tests. A total of 112 master resource persons were identified in each district. Each MRP undergoes a 10 day training programme in perspective, content and pedagogy with five days on module content and five days of additional input so that MRPs are capable of engaging five days with teachers. The programme involved developing education perspective (understanding society, education, children and teaching), deeper understanding beyond the module content and proposing illustrative pedagogy of the sessions where there were spaces for demonstration by each MRP. In the process, around 3500 MRPs were trained in a month by having multiple batches.

d. Programme Launch

The programme was launched by Chief Minister of Karnataka on the eve of teacher day, September 5, 2017. Teachers gave their choices on the 28 modules available for the years 2017-18 by logging in Teacher Training Management System (TTMS). The system was available in desktop and mobile where mostly teachers used the mobile app to manage their choices and tracking of workshop schedule. The whole process of teachers' choices, batch formation, inviting teachers, scheduling trainings and feedback from teachers done through TTMS. The processes of the state level was managed by DSERT and implementation was done by respective DIET (District Institute of Education and Training). Around 2000 batches of a 28-module training conducted in a three to four month period spread across 34 districts. In the process, 75000 teachers were trained.

It reduced the cascade mode as trained MRPs directly facilitate trainings for teachers in the district. It was also important to ensure the quality of logistics such as basic facilities – functional toilets, safe drinking water, quality food, venues with sufficient light and air, uninterrupted power supply etc. This was assured by the DIETs in the respective districts, contributing significantly to enhancing the quality of the modules.

It was first time in India that teachers were allowed to choose the modules as per their interests and needs on a scale like this. It was only possible through a sustained effort and interest of Government to maintain the rigour across the year, an exclusive monthly meeting was conducted by Additional Chief Secretary of the Primary and Secondary Education Department which played a leading role from inception to execution. Ownership of DSERT maintained the tempo across the year and across the activities. The core team formed at state level was helpful in planning, monitoring and reviewing the processes and bringing rigour by following the time line and enhancing quality at all levels. The teachers appreciated the concept of choice-based teacher development and preparation of MRP, something that came out in a dipstick study conducted post-execution. At the same time, they valued role of TTMS in smooth implementation of programme and tracking of teacher development for long term. Guru Chethana was spoken about by the Chief Minister and the Education minister as a programme in the state government budget and on many other forums. This gave it greater validity.

The communication strategy of programme contributed lot in reaching people. As part of communication strategy, a microsite was developed where teachers could access all the information about the programme and the modules. The teachers could also download modules well in advance and come prepared to the training sessions. A huge launch programme at the state level, followed by multiple seminars at state and district levels on teachers' professional development, created interest among the teachers about Guru Chethana as a programme. Through all this process, 1.4 lakh teachers enrolled and expressed their choices in four priorities through TTMS. Looking at the numbers, it was evident that teachers expected quality literature and quality

processes which convinced the stakeholders and enhanced the interest in professional development.

However, because there were challenges, it was cautiously attempted to ensure the quality from curriculum development to execution of the programme. Though clear communication on the quality of the arrangements such as venue, food etc., there was feedback from teachers which drew attention to further improvement. Sustaining interest and patience among the State Resource Persons for two years in the module development and MRPs development processes was difficult and led to fluctuations within the group. Another challenge was to develop a shared understanding of the concept of programme across the levels of stakeholders and maintain same momentum across the levels of government system. As the scale was huge, it was tough to deliver the respective printed modules to the respective districts which resulted in delays.

It was also challenging in the beginning to convince people involved on the paradigm shift in the nature of materials and processes as they naturally carried the baggage of many decades. Initially, it was tough to make them open up, but interesting to note that 90 SRPs and state officials are now ambassadors of new pattern in the teacher education.

Guru Chethana was a unique experience in the teacher education domain for Karnataka and other states are keen to understand the Karnataka experience. The concept of long-term, continuous and connected engagement with choice-based teacher development along with quality and meaningful delivery in teachers' professional development needs to be spread across the country. What is most desirable is that all teachers should be reflective practitioners and contribute towards creating the society articulated in the Indian Constitution.

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