

Study of the Attitudes of Elementary School Teacher's towards Professional Development

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Abstract

The present study aims to study the attitudes of Elementary school teacher's towards professional development. This was studied with respect to different demographic variables like gender. Experience (less experienced like from 1 to 5 years and more experienced having 5+ years) and educational qualification (Graduate and Post Graduate). Sample included 50 randomly selected Elementary School teachers from Kurukshetra District. For obtaining the data on attitude towards professional development, a self- developed scale, Professional Development Survey Instrument was used. The findings of the study suggest that there lies no significant difference in the attitude of Elementary School Teachers on the basis of gender, experience and educational Qualification.

A Person's working pattern as well as his living style i.e. appearance, writing, acting and working determines whether she/he is a professional or an amateur. The only successful people in any field, including living itself, are those who have a professional viewpoint and are professionals. Professional development in a broad sense refers to the development of a person in his or her professional role. Human behaviors are regulated by their real self and social self. Conflict between these selves has an adverse effect upon a person's working pattern as well as living style. Work done is the self-portrait of the person who did it. Unfortunately the society does not consider the importance of professionalism. Differentiation is not viewed as seriously as it should be viewed. So people tend to consider amateur work as normal. People accept less than good results i.e. products and services. The field of education also is not an exception.

More specifically, Teacher development is the professional growth teacher achieves as a result of gaining increased experience & examining his or her teaching systematically. Professional development includes formal experiences (such as attending workshop, and professional meeting, mentoring etc.) & informal experiences (such as reading professional publication, watching television documentaries related to an academic discipline etc.). The

demands on teachers expand as the changes are implemented. For many teachers these demands create pressure and tension. There are:

Many demands on teachers, improving subject matter knowledge and pedagogical skills; understanding cultural and psychological factors that affect student learning; and assuming greater and in some cases, new responsibilities for curriculum, assessment, outreach, governance, and interagency collaboration. For the professional teacher, the current initiatives concerning reform present new demands (Abdal-Haqa, 1996) .

Professional teachers are considered the mainstay of a school and their experience and expertise bring value to the school community. The current demands that relate to the paradigm shift in instructional methodologies present new pressures for the veteran teacher. The teacher's response to the current reform movement may not be obvious, but rather subtle changes in attitude, viewpoint, and involvement in the total school community. The periods of transition within the teaching career may result in withdrawal or burnout. These are changing times in education systems around the world. With the start of the new millennium , many societies are engaging in serious and promising educational reforms. One of the key elements in most of these reforms is the Professional development of teachers; societies are finally acknowledging that teachers are not only one of the variables that need to be changed in order to improve their education systems, but they are also the most significant change agents in these reforms. This double role of teachers in educational reforms-being both subjects and objects of change-makes the field of teacher professional development a growing and challenging area, and one that has received major attention during the past few years.

The current reform movement emphasizes a shift in instructional methodologies that result in an increased amount of professional development activities. The instruction is neither linear nor textbook in approach. Professional teacher received instruction that did not address that student – centered, problem-based classroom and attention to state, mandated assessment tests. The paradigm shift to student centered problem based classroom requires veteran teachers to alter their classroom methodologies. A shift to student centered teaching where greater emphasis is placed on thinking, analysis, problem solving, and the integration and application of knowledge.

This new emphasis has been welcomed by teachers and educators in general as it represents a much needed appreciation of teachers work and also promotes the concept of teaching as a profession. Unfortunately others have taken this new emphasis to be a sign that teachers are not providing adequate teaching standards. Guskey and Huberman (1995) reflect on this paradox and also report that their work with teachers worldwide offers little evidence to support this belief. The vast majority of teachers and school administrators we have encountered are dedicated professionals who work hard under demanding conditions (Guskey and Huberman, 1995). It is for these hard working teachers and educators that professional development opportunities are needed, not only because they promote the recognition of their work as professionals, but also because- as is the case for all professionals in any field – new opportunities for growth exploration, learning and development are always welcome. In order to contribute to the knowledge base of educators, policy-makers, teachers-educators and administrators who are engaged in the process of teacher education and development and who are committed to planning, implementing and assessing sensible educational reforms, this book presents a review of the recent international literature on models, factors and case studies of teacher professional development.

Because teacher professional development is changing so rapidly and so frequently all around the world, we are aware that even the ‘most recent’ literature may already present models or experiences that are no longer being implemented in a particular country. Therefore, the purpose of presenting specific examples of models in particular countries is to illustrate options that have been developed to promote teachers professional development rather than to describe how the process is being realized at this particular time in a specific country in the world.

Systemic reform addresses changes in instructional methodologies affecting professional development. These methodologies encourage teacher to provide classroom instruction that is active, student centered, problem-based and inclusive. The professional development activates can be challenging if the participants view them as relevant and timely. If the professional development activities are viewed by the teachers as irrelevant and time consuming, the impact can create or affect the teacher's attitudes toward this initiative. Relevant information concerning this topic might support the educational community in minimizing negative reflections and

burnout of veteran teachers. Information concerning the manner and delivery of professional development might encourage the effectiveness of these programs.

Professional development: Life Long Learning

The concept of Professional development may be new to us, but it is an important aspect that should be, in one way or another, involved in all our lives. Professional development is about being aware of the decisions that we make, the way think about, and the way we handle different situations. The concept behind professional development is the idea that we have untapped potential, and to not settle with what we have if we want more out of life. Professional development is a process of continually progressing and refining your character and qualities as a parent, a teacher, a secretary, a doctor, a lawyer as whatever or whoever we are. It is all about lifelong learning and growing as an individual.

The power of positive thinking

Positive thinking and professional development go hand-in-hand. If we think we can be better than we can. If we don't like our job or are ready for a change, and we tell our self there is no hope, we will be continually unhappy. However, who we start looking at things in a positive light, we will be able to put more energy and effort into everything we do because we know that we are working towards an end goal.

Setting Goals

Professional development is all about setting goals. Setting obtainable or realistic goals is imperative to attaining what we need or want goals must be measureable and they must have a timetable for them to be accomplished. Timetable gives us focus and a sense of urgency in everything we do when it is related to our goal.

The researcher has chosen this topic because professional development is applicable to every individual regarding of what you do for a living, or other socio-economic factors. Thinking

positively and setting realistic goals keep you motivated to continuously better yourself and the world around you.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the attitudes of Elementary school teacher's towards professional development.
- To study the difference between male and female elementary school teachers attitudes towards professional development.
- To study the difference between less experienced (1-5 years) and more experienced (5+ years) teacher's attitude towards professional development.
- To study the difference in the attitudes of teacher's having graduation degree and post graduation degree towards professional development.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

- There exists no significant difference between male and female elementary school teacher's attitude towards professional development.
- There exists no significant difference between less experienced (1-5 years) and more experienced(5+ years) teacher's attitude towards professional development
- There exist no significant difference between the attitudes of teacher's having graduation degree and post graduation degree towards professional development.

Variables:

Three independent variables viz. (Gender, Experience, degree level) and one dependent variable i.e. professional development were taken.

Methodology: It includes the following headings:

- Method of study
- Sample of study
- Locale of the study

Method of study:

Descriptive Survey method was used in the present study for the collection of data.

Locale of the study:

The present study was done in Kurukshetra district of Haryana only.

Sample:

Random sampling technique was used in the present study to select sample from the population. The study was based on a sample of 50 elementary school teachers.

Tool Used:

In order to achieve the objectives of the study the investigators used a self-developed scale '**Professional Development Survey Instrument**' and standardized by the researchers themselves for the present study to collect data. The present Professional Development Scale Instrument is a seven items paper and pencil instrument consisting of statements regarding attitudes of Elementary school teachers towards Professional development. Some sample questions are as follows "I have a positive attitude toward professional development activities", "Professional development is necessary to maintaining frictional skills.", These is no enough time for all Professional development activities". Those utilizing the survey instrument, indicate the agreement level with each statement by using a four point likert type scale. The possible ranges of responses are: 1= strongly Agree, 2= Agree, 3= Disagree, and 4= strongly Disagree. Subject whole profile indicates higher scores are considered to have a more positive attitude towards Professional development while those subjects whose profile consists of low scores are considered to have a less positive or more negative perception towards Professional development.

Statistical Techniques Used:

Mean, S.D. and t- test were used to analyze the data.

Analysis and Interpretations:

Keeping in view the objectives of the study, data have been analyzed to arrive at results. The results and discussions are accordingly organized and under the following sections:

- I. Results Related to Teachers attitudes towards professional Development (in percentages)

- II. Results with respect to male and female elementary school teacher's attitude towards professional development
- Results with respect to less experience (1-5 years) and more experienced (+5years) school teacher's attitude towards professional development.
 - Results with respect to Degree level of elementary school teacher's attitude towards professional development.

I. Results Related to Teacher Attitudes Towards Professional Development (IN Percentages):

Table no. 1

Valid	Response	% age	M	S.D
50	SA – 23	46	1.56	0.497
	A- 27	54		
	SD- 0	0		
	D- 0	0		
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Total	50	100		

In item No. 1 : “*I have positive attitude towards Professional development activities*”, 23 subjects or 46% responder as "Strongly agree" 27 subjects or 54% responded "Agree", 0 subjects or 0% responded as strangely disagree and "Disagree" respectively as a response for question No.1.

Table no. 2

Valid	Response	% age	M	S.D

50	SA – 28	56	1.44	0.497
	A- 22	44		
	SD- 0	0		
	D- 0	0		
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Total	50	100		

In item No. 2. "Professional development activities is necessary to maintain instructional skills", 28 subjects or 56% responded as "Strongly Agree", 22 subjects or 44% responded as "Agree" and 0 subjects or 0% responded as "Strongly Disagree" and Disagree" respectively.

Table no. 3

Valid	Response	% age	M	S.D
50	SA – 1	2	2.6	0.56
	A- 19	38		
	SD- 29	58		
	D- 1	2		
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Total	50	100		

In Item No. 3: "My School has encouraged me to participate in Professional Development Programmes in and outside of m% District", "Subject" or 2% responded as Strongly as "Agree", 29 Subjects or 58% responded as "Strongly Disagree", 1 subject or 2% responded as "Disagree"

Table no.4

Valid	Response	% age	M	S.D
50	SA – 0	0	3.12	0.930
	A- 19	38		
	SD- 6	12		
	D- 25	50		
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Total	50	100		

In item No. 4: “There is not enough time for all Professional development activities”, No Subject or 0% responded as "Strongly Agree", a subjects or 38% responded as "Agree", 6 subjects or 12% responded as strongly Disagree", 25 Subjects or 50% responded as "Disagree".

Table no. 5

Valid	Response	% age	M	S.D
50	SA – 14	28	1.76	0.512
	A- 34	68		
	SD- 2	4		
	D- 0	0		
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Total	50	100		

In item No. 5 : "Professional development activities have encouraged me to provide the student in my classes with Problem based instruction", 14 Subjects or 28% responded as "Strongly Agree", 34 subjects or 68% responded as "Agree", 2 subjects or 4% responded as "Strongly Disagree", o Subjects or 0% responded as Disagree".

Table no. 6

Valid	Response	% age	M	S.D
50	SA – 25	50	1.6	0.6
	A- 20	40		
	SD- 5	10		
	D- 0	0		
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Total	50	100		

In item No. 6 : "*Professional development activities have made me feel forced to change my instruction to a classroom, which is active and student Centered*", In this 25 subjects or 50% responded as "Strongly Agree", 20 Subjects or 40% responded as "Agree", 5 subjects or 10% responded as strongly Disagree O subjects or 0% responded or "Disagree.

Table no.7

Valid	Response	% age	M	S.D
50	SA – 0	0	2.74	0.482
	A- 14	28		
	SD- 35	70		
	D- 1	0		
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Total	50	100		

In item No. 7:- "*The new Information concerning instruction is very different from what I was taught in my undergraduate Course work*", No Subjects or 0% responded as "Strongly

Agree", 14 Subjects or 28% responded as "Agree", 35 subjects or 70% responded as Strongly Disagree, 1 Subject of 2% responded as "Disagree".

The main Purpose of the present study was to find out the attitude of elementary school teachers towards Professional development. The scale of Teacher's attitude towards professional development was classified in to three factors i.e. Gender (Male and Female) Experience (1-5 years & +5years)Degree level (Graduate and post graduate) To find out the significant difference between the types of gender , experience and Degree level the statistical technique t-test was used. The results of the same have been discussed in the following tables:

II *t-value of attitude towards Professional Development of Elementary School Teachers on the basis of gender*

Table 8

Groups	N	M	S.D	S.Ed	t-ratio
Male	14	15.07	1.94		
Female	36	14.75	1.38	0.49	0.66 (NS)

NS – Not Significant

The t- ratio calculated in Table 8 was found to be 0.66 and the needed values to be significant at .01 level is 2.704 and at .05 level is 2.021. So, the calculated t- ratio value is a smaller than the table value at .05 level of significance. Therefore, it is not significant at .05 level of significance. Hence, hypotheses No. 1 i.e. There is no significant difference between male and female elementary school teacher's attitudes towards professional development is accepted.

Again, the mean scores of the male teachers (15.07), which is slightly greater than the mean score of female teachers (14.75) so, it can be interpreted that both the male and female teachers have similar attitude towards professional development. It might be due to the reason that both male and female teacher's are now a day's more aware about the importance of professional development and its practices.

III. t-value with respect to Less Experienced (1-5 Yrs.) and More Experienced (+ 5yrs.) Elementary School Teacher's Attitude towards Professional Development

TABLE 9

Experience	N	M	S.D	S.Ed	t-ratio
1-5 yrs.	33	14.85	1.618	.472	0.058 (NS)
+ 5yrs.	17	14.83	1.507		

NS – Not Significant

Table No. 9 shows that the calculated t-ratio value was 0.058, which is smaller than the table value at .01 level i.e., 2.707 and .05 level i.e. 2.021 level of significance. Therefore it is not significant at 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the hypotheses no. 2 i.e., There is no significant difference between less experienced (1-5 Yrs.) and more experienced (+5 yrs.) elementary school teacher's attitude towards professional development is accepted. It indicates that there is no significant difference between less experienced (1-5 yrs) and more experienced (+5 yrs.) elementary school teacher's attitude towards professional development.

Again, the mean scores of the less experienced teachers (14.85), which is slightly greater than the mean score of more experience teachers (14.83) so, it can be interpreted that both less and more experienced teachers have similar attitude towards professional development.

IV. t-value with respect to Degree-Level of Elementary School Teacher's Attitude towards Professional Development

Table 10

Degree Level	N	M	S.D	S.Ed	t-ratio
Graduate	19	15.00	1.46	0.439	0.228 (NS)
Post Graduate	31	14.90	1.5317		

NS – Not Significant

In Table no. 10, the calculated t- value was 0.228, which is less than the table value i.e., 2.021 at .05 level and 2.704 at .01 level of significance. Therefore it is insignificant at .05 level of significance. Hence the hypotheses no. 3 i.e. there is no significant difference between graduate and Post graduate teacher's attitude toward professional development is accepted.

Again, the mean scores of the Graduate elementary school teachers (15.00), which is slightly greater than the mean score of Post-graduate elementary school teachers (14.90). So, it can be interpreted that both graduate and post-graduate elementary school teachers have similar attitude towards professional development.

Educational Implications:

The present study has implication for teachers and principals. Since the present study is conducted on the attitudes of the elementary teacher's towards professional development the study has some implications for teachers:

- Ensure that Teachers Receive Regular Feedback on student learning progress. If the use of new practices is to be sustained and changes are to endure, the individuals involved need to receive regular feedback on the effects of their efforts.
- It is necessary to organize some awareness programmes to inculcate positive attitude and bring about more awareness among the teachers towards professional development activities.
- If a new program or innovative methods is to be implemented well it must become a natural part of teacher's repertoire of teaching skill. It is only the professional development courses or activities which enhance the teacher's confidence & will power to do something innovative.
- Especially for the programme continuation and expansion, teachers must come to use the new practices almost out of habit. So, it is clear that, to be successful professional development must be seen as a process, not an event.

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