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# AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION: SELF DIRECTED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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## ABSTRACT

In helping teachers to meet the demands of the modern world, self-directed professional development is essential. The process in which knowledge is created and guided by oneself is self-directed professional growth. The learner assesses his/her deficiencies in this process and strengthens his/her instructional methods and delivery paces. One of the most well-recognized current theories of education is self-directed learning. In imparting a Self-directed professional development attitude among students, teachers play a significant role. The role of teachers has shifted from teaching speakers to teaching facilitators. This article aims to analyze self-directed professional development its main features, essential strategy, advantages, challenges, and its implementation in the Pakistani scenario. This paper introduces and explores a more profound sense of self-directed professional development

**Keywords:** Innovative approach, Self-directed professional development, Self-monitoring, Action research

## INTRODUCTION

In the modern world, the demands and the needs of the learners change, and the roles and duties of the teachers also change from traditional educators to modern ones. Modernity involves improvements in the delivery of instruction, lesson planning styles are changed and the teaching strategies are modernized as the needs and the demands of the society are changed. To meet these challenges, the role of educators or teachers varied and it is the responsibility of the teachers to train themselves to cope with these challenging situations and produce critical thinking and evaluative skills among the students to make their learning process effective (Jamieson & Tuckey,2017).

Self-directed professional development is an area in which the teachers or the educators assess themselves and highlight the areas in which they need improvements and guidance and train themselves to cope with these challenges. Roles, functions, and structures of the educational institutions are changed and changes are held gradually so the responsibilities and duties of the teachers are also changing side by side. This is the responsibility of the teachers to train their students to meet the demands of modern educational systems such as new assessment measures, rules, tests, etc (Djatkiko, 2011).

Authentic resources must be used by the teachers to make their teaching effective and polished with many improvements and changes as the needs of the students demanded. Various professional development courses and training programs are introduced by the educational institutions to train their teachers for making changes in their teaching to tackle the issues that are faced by them during their jobs and whole professional career. In the process of active participation and engagement in professional development teachers can improve their instructional strategies and lesson planning etc (Brancato, 2003).

Mostly, the professional development programs and the training sessions include costly activities, and the professional development training for only a single day gives no enough effects as it needs the follow-up sessions and the collaborative meetings to some extent. In a self-directed professional development, the teachers and the professionals assess their weak areas and highlight them and improve them with their own strategic pace. It opens the doors for the teachers or the educators to develop the teaching and learning abilities with an authentic resource at any place and at any time (Lopes & Cunha, 2017).

Self-directed professional development involves the teachers in the activities which enhance their professional abilities and making new strategies into practices. There is a control of teachers over their own experiences and tasks are given to them to explore new solutions to the problems (Morris, 2019).

Self-directed professional development is the process in which learning is originated and driven by oneself. In this process, the learner assesses his/ her weaknesses and improves his/ her instructional methods and delivery paces (Djatkiko,2011).

Self-directed professional development is the ongoing and continuous process in which the improvements in teaching and learning occur gradually by training the teachers professionally (Jamison,2017).

Gonzalez and Darling-Hammond, (1997) also reported that self-directed professional development includes the changes and adoption of these changes by both teachers and the students in the following ways: effective understanding, effective teaching, Pedagogical content, nurturing the learners, development of the sense of professionalism and knowledge of the language, community, and the different cultures.

In a self-directed professional development, the learner took the responsibility to make his/her learning better to change the perception towards new technologies and strategies (Shurr, Hirth, Jasper, McCollow & Heroux,2014)

#### **PURPOSES OF SELF- DIRECTED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

The main purpose of self-directed professional development is to help teachers and provide assistance to them in their daily teaching practices. Such as:

- Development and progress of experts are fostered.
- Cherishing the professional relationship with the students and their parents.
- Maintain good relationships and fostering positive impressions.
- Originating the rules and the reforms related to curriculum leads to effective teaching and learning.
- Possibility and confirmation of the application of theories and discussions on it.
- Meaningfully engaged in purposeful communication and debates (Lopes & Cunha, 2017).

#### **PRINCIPLES OF SELF- DIRECTED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Following principles are followed and presented by the American Federation of Teachers (2008) while focusing on professional development:

- Every single teacher is responsible for their jobs and careers.
- Professional development includes the individual and the collaborative assessment approach into practice.
- As the learning needs of every single teacher are changed so there must be essential tools are present to make changes in the strategies.
- Self-directed professional development motivates the teachers and the students to adopt changes and make sure to be authentically applied in their teachings and learning.
- To make the process of professional development successful, it is important to provide all the possible resources, strong commitment, time management, and support from the experts.
- Professional development should be used to extend the concepts and new knowledge.
- It provides a strong base for the pedagogy and teaching methods in the classrooms.

- It is rooted in and originated from the research and expertise.
- It motivates the teachers and the learners to enhance their knowledge and accepts the changes and variations in the education processes.
- Self-directed professional development helps the teachers and the learners to make contradictions in their teaching and learning methods and helps to select the content which relates to the curriculum.
- Measurable improvements are achieved in the process of Self- directed professional development.
- It is used to generate a sense of understanding and creativity in the learners.
- It is designed by the teachers themselves with the help of professionals.

### **ROLE OF TEACHERS IN SELF- DIRECTED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

As time changes, the roles, duties, and responsibilities of the teachers also changed. Now a day, the teachers play the role of mentor, facilitator, and guide by using and implementing technological advancements in their teachings. The process of earning continues throughout life and the teachers need to learn and improve for the betterment of the students as well as for the whole nation while accepting the changes in the education systems and the teaching strategies (Jamison, 2017).

Teachers play a role as:

- To organize conferences for the students for making their teaching practices more efficient
- Participation in different conferences, modules, and seminars help the teachers to make them up to date for the changes and adoption of those changes in their teachings
- Teachers actively participate in the professional development programs to know about new trends, changing strategies, and methods, and the ways of dealing with different new classroom challenges and issues.
- Online self-directed professional programs are also adopted by the teachers for making improvements (Manno, Yang & Bangser, 2015).

Guskey (2002) explains teachers play a significant role in the process of their Self-directed learning. The method includes the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the process with the help of teachers.

#### ***Planning***

Planning includes that how teachers involve in the process of self-directed professional development and what are the main activities that they have to perform during this process. The planned content must have the following characteristics:

- The content must be planned according to the needs and the standards of the teachers.
- Content must be delivered to the teachers understandably and appropriately.
- Content must reflect the needs and standards of the state too.

#### ***Implementation***

implementation involves the way to deliver the content to the practitioners and the teachers and how they respond to it. It includes:

- More depth on how the teachers learn and what are their needs and the standards.
- Presentation of the content appropriately and understandably.
- Use of technology to support the learning process.
- Opportunities and facilities are provided to make the professional development program more effective and to make the teacher's participation possible.
- Activities are conducted based on the teacher's understanding.

- Evaluation: The evaluation process includes the extent to which the goals and objectives are achieved and the outcomes are determined. It includes:
  - It includes that the extent to which the teachers and the practitioners achieved at the end of the session, inputs and the outputs of the process, and the activities used during the process as well.
  - Activities are assessed to note the changes in the teacher's professional skills, attitude, and knowledge.
  - Changes occur in a variety of intervals of time and the changes can be measured by assessing the changes in the skills and knowledge and the practices of the teachers.

### CHARACTERISTICS FOR SELF- DIRECTED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

Self- directed professional development possesses some characteristics (Dede, 2006) as under:

- It focuses on the main goal.
- Enhances the chances for making the learners more self-directed.
- It manages and enhances teacher's roles and duties.
- It enhances critical thinking skills.
- Contribute to the active participation of the learners.
- Self-directed professional development is not always observable and measurable.
- It helps the teachers both directly and indirectly.
- This process is more flexible.
- Teachers and learners are conscious of their learning and changing improvements.
- It involves various changing factors as well.

### STRATEGIES FOR SELF- DIRECTED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

These are the significant strategies that are employed for self-directed professional development for teachers.



Fig.1: Strategies for self-directed professional development

#### *Self-Monitoring:*

Self-monitoring is the ability to evaluate one's behavior. It is a significant strategy of self-directed professional development which teachers adopted for his or her professional development. With the help of self-monitoring teachers come to know about their current knowledge skills and attitude. There are three main ways for self-monitoring video recording, an audio recording of their lesson, and a lesson report. With the help of self-monitoring, teacher analysis about his or her strengths and weakness. Self-observation or self-monitoring is a systematic way to evaluate and manage a person's behavior. It develops critical thinking among teachers and a got a better understanding of their instructional process (Zhu, Bonk & Doo, 2020).

***Journal Writing:***

It is a written record of the teacher's thoughts, observations, and experiences. Journal writing is an effective and efficient device for self-directed professionals for teachers. Journals are systematic and elaborative and worked as an aid to reflection on action. It is helping teachers to record significant events in their classrooms. It enhances the metacognition ability of teachers which improves their teaching methodology. Major benefits of utilizing journals are enhancing critical thinking, developing affective skills, discovering the meaning of teaching reflect on their professional roles (Hiemstra,2001).

***Analyzing Critical Incidents:***

We can interpret critical incidents as a challenge in a specific situation rather than a routine occurrence. It is a report of an event that occurs over a certain period. Occur in real-life situations and the purpose is to stimulate thinking about real-life situations. In the teaching process, it refers to an event that occurs during a lesson. Teachers analyze the incident critically ask themselves what was happened and why it happened. It interprets events and gives value judgment about them (Griffin,2003).

***Teaching Portfolios:***

A portfolio plays as an effective tool for reflection. A teaching portfolio is a pool of information about a teacher's practice in their classroom. It provides an accurate picture of teachers' accomplishments. Teaching portfolios play important role in the development of three major areas, it develops self-awareness among teachers. Helpful for better management of their emotions and building relationships. It shows how resourceful full, effective, and creative teachers are (De Rijdt, Tiquet, Dochy & Devolder, 2006).

***Action research:***

Action research is also called teacher conducted classroom research. Teachers deliberately or unconsciously are involved to solve their day to day to today classroom problems. It plays an important role in their professional development. The findings of this research are not generalizable because it is specifically designed for the solution of specific classroom problem. Process of action research starts from diagnosing of problem, collection of data, strategic plan, implementation and reviewing of the plan. It improves the teaching-learning environment, promotes teachers' self-growth, and enhances teaching abilities. Steps in conduction of action research are Exploring, Recognizing the problem, planning to solve the problem, Collecting Data relating to the problem, determine the hypotheses, analysis of the data, and reporting the findings (Richards & Farrell,2005).

**SIGNIFICANCE OF SELF- DIRECTED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:**

Hewitt-Taylor (2001) Self presented the importance of self-directed professional development as:

- It empowers the teachers to know about new concepts.
- It helps them to highlight and improve their mistakes.
- Teachers gain high-quality instructional material and resources from the experts.
- It helps the teachers to adopt the strategies and the ways to handle and deal with the socially and emotionally disturbed behaviors of the students with new and modified techniques.
- Self-directed professional development helps the teachers to coordinate with other teachers and took initiative for their learning and development in respect of their career and job.

**SELF-DIRECTED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN:**

Gerstein, (2013) has explained a self-directed professional plan in these stages.



Fig.2: Self-directed professional learning Plan

### *Vision the ideal*

The first step is this model that every teacher has their philosophy of education. Set mission and vision of an ideal classroom and determine student optimal achievement. The teacher develops their vision of the classroom which they want to achieve and established a mission for the maximum achievement of their student. The teacher will decide what elements teacher is required for their ideal classroom.

### *Identify the gaps*

The second step is the identification of where we are and where we want to go. Recognize gaps between what is the current situation and the ideal situation. This means identifying the gap between the current situation and the ideal situation. First of all, enlist the desired learning outcome, learning environment you want to achieve, and identify the hurdles that are prevailing in a way of achieving the desired situation. Identify the resources that are available to attain this desired outcome.

### *Identify activities*

This is the third step of the self-directed professional development cycle. Bridging the gap with the help of a self-directed professional development process. After getting understanding where we are and where we want to go with the help of self-directed professional activities like journal writing, action research portfolio we will achieve our targets.

### *Action plan*

This is the fourth step of the self-directed professional development cycle. Development and implementation of an action plan have been done in this stage. In this step, the teacher will implement his or her action plan in their classroom.

### *Accountability*

This is the last step of the self-directed professional development process. Teacher engage themselves in the self-evaluation process. Teachers analyze what they are doing accurately and what they cannot perform according to the desired standard and reason behind them.

## **ONLINE SOURCES OF SELF-DIRECTED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:**

Thakur (2013) presented these major online sources of self-directed professional development such as.

### *Email*

Email is a source in which teachers and other people connected and share their projects and ideas worldwide. E-mail offers a variety of learning experiences for teachers in all subject areas. Teachers communicate with people from different cultures and can contribute to the global community through email. The distribution of information to other community members about lectures, conferences conducted, and new updates is made simple with the aid of listserv

facilities. Groups on Google: Teachers will collaborate and create Google groups to share resources at the institutional level.

### ***Book-Raps***

A Book Rap is an electronic mail-based book debate. A Book Rap is a moderated debate in which individuals or groups refer to a provocative question or remark about a book they have all read. Teachers are in charge of suggesting and coordinating raps. Teachers are encouraged to participate and schedules are advertised. Book rap can be performed about educational topics in the press, on film, or YouTube.

### ***EPALS***

ePALS maintains a huge global database of teachers who want to start an ePALS email exchange project with other teachers. Teachers will collaborate on projects with other educators. They can also work on new ideas with the help of other teachers.

### ***Blogs***

Blogs are the regularly updated web page that provides information to the viewers. A web page that contains short chronologically organized details. A blog may be a diary, journal, what's a new post, or a collection of links to other websites. Edublogs is one of the few free blogging platforms devoted solely to educators. In terms of education, the accessibility and ease of use of blogging tools make it a viable classroom activity and a way for teachers to interact with one another.

The blog can be used to share materials, news, downloads, links, and more, to facilitate online discussions and collaboration, to create a class publication that teachers can easily publish to and you can easily edit, to get your peers blogging so they can share their work and thoughts, to share your lesson plans, to integrate videos, podcasts, and other media, and to create blogs for clubs, student organizations, and more. Group blogs, also known as collaborative blogs, publish articles written by several people. Teachers with similar interests will form groups and use a shared blog to work toward a common goal.

### ***Facebook and Linked in***

Facebook is the most popular social networking site in the world This is where you can share your suggestions, opinions, accomplishments, and publications. news of the day, etc. It is also used to disseminate new emerging technologies, helpful blogs, and opportunities, among other things. Linked In is a social networking site that links professionals. This is useful for putting together professionals from different fields.

### ***Ning***

Ning is an online forum that allows individuals and organizations to build their social networks. Ning allows consumers to build a community website with a personalized look and feel, as well as features including images, videos, forums, and blogs. The service also includes support for "Like," as well as integration with Facebook, Twitter, Google, and Yahoo.

### ***Social bookmarking***

Social bookmarking sites allow users to store, classify, share and search for links to online content. Users can store, categorize, share, and check for links to online content using social bookmarking sites. Similar to bookmarks or favorites in a browser, users keep a personal list of online connections. It is possible that this is a private folder, or that the user has chosen to make their list public. Delicious, FURL, and Stumble Upon are three examples of well-known social bookmarking apps.

- A person may create an account for each location, tag resources, and share the URL with the community. The work can be modified and updated from any internet-connected device since it is web-based. Teachers can use any internet-connected device to access the services as well.
- A group of teachers may build a joint account and share the username and password, allowing them to tag and share resources.

- Library workers should keep track of tags that are particularly useful for students.
- Many bookmarking platforms provide RSS updates, allowing teachers who use a news aggregator to instantly receive new postings.

Stumble Upon assists the instructor in locating current news, amazing images, useful studies, and timely subjects for debate, paper presentations, and information enhancement. Teachers may subscribe to Channels that feature original content from well-known websites, brands, and individuals. They can also subscribe to Harvard, MIT, and Stanford's channels to stay up to date on lectures, conferences, faculty study, and publication.

### *Wiki*

A wiki is a form of a website that allows users to easily add, delete, modify, and alter any of the available content, often without having to register. A wiki enables users to edit pages from inside a browser window, using a condensed markup language and making changes to pages in real-time. The most well-known example of a public wiki is Wikipedia. Many wikis are private, with access limited to registered users. They can be found on intranets or behind firewalls. A wiki will "pull" teachers together to create and update a document on a wiki page, strengthening the group's community and allowing teachers with overlapping or similar ideas to see and collaborate on each other's work. It also provides immediate and fair access to the most current edition of the manual to all teachers.

### *Web quest*

A Web quest is an inquiry-based practice that is structured to maximize learners' time, concentrate on using knowledge rather than searching for it, and promote their reasoning at the stages of study, synthesis, and assessment. The following methods could be used with a web quest. The most basic of all online activities is a Topic Hotlist. It's made to save you hours of fruitless looking. Create a Hotlist by collecting relevant URLs for your subject and posting them on a web page. This collaborative work on a particular subject saves time for teachers while still providing them with a wealth of knowledge.

### *Multimedia Scrapbook and Treasure Hunt*

Photographs, charts, stories, statistics, quotes, sound clips, videos, and virtual reality tours are just a few of the media and content forms that Multimedia Scrapbook links to. Teachers collect and paste media scraps that they believe are significant or interesting into a presentation format. A newsletter, collage, PowerPoint presentation, bulletin board, webpage, or Hyper Studio stack may all be used. Teachers are led to valuable knowledge about a subject through a Treasure Hunt. Locate web pages that contain information that is critical to comprehending a topic.

### *Arrange webinars*

A webinar is an interactive seminar that takes place over the internet. Webinar participants use an email-based password to access the webinar site. You can view the PowerPoint slides, ask questions, and make comments via chat once you've logged in. Webinars are a creative way to offer a range of professional development opportunities to the entire faculty and staff. Teachers can interact with presenters online, take part in online survey questions, address particular circumstances, and even join a discussion group to continue the conversation with the presenter and other webinar participants. There are a variety of tools available, such as WiZiQ, Zoho Meeting, Yugma, and Mikogo, that allow you to plan your conferences and webinars at your leisure.

### *Study groups*

A study group is a group of teachers who meet regularly to discuss a specific aspect of their teaching. The number of people who take part can be anywhere from three to fifteen. Each instructor takes a turn as the facilitator of a conference, which is organized and has an agenda to fulfill. The sessions, on the other hand, are casual and collegial, with everyone taking part in the discussion. These gatherings are not workshops; no one teacher is the "expert and the aim is to learn about a particular aspect of their teaching together.

Strategies and methods the group reads documents related to the topic that will be addressed at the next meeting in between meetings. Teachers will create and lead study groups using a variety of platforms and discussion forums. The subject of discussion must be something that the teachers are interested in. You try to elicit debate by posing



two or three questions to keep the conversation going. The dialogue should be succinct and straightforward. The topic can be studied further to find solutions to education-related issues. It can be distributed to both members of your groups and outsiders. Via PowerPoint presentations, video clips, YouTube or teacher tube, pictures, and other means, you can promote and brainstorm discussion around a single subject. Another way to communicate with peers and achieve personal professional growth goals is to join an international professional association. Receiving monthly emails, becoming a part of interest groups that concentrate on teaching subjects and concerns that affect you, and having the ability to share and learn from other like-minded individuals are all advantages of being a member of an international organization.

### **IMPLEMENTATION SELF-DIRECTED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN PAKISTAN:**

Self-directed professional development possesses three steps; what is a topic, when to start, and when to end. Self-directed professional development is implemented in Pakistan in training programs (professional training programs for teachers), Workshops, Seminars, Conferences, Activities, Teaching portfolios, B.Ed. /M.Ed. Degree, Action research.

#### ***Training programs (professional training programs for teachers)***

Training programs are organized and conducted by the school administration for the professional training and the self-directed professional development of the teachers. These programs provide a variety of services to help the teachers for making changes in their teaching strategies and teaching styles and update their knowledge according to the standards of the competing world.

#### ***Workshops***

Workshops are the most important source of information for the development of the teachers which brings new advancements in the teaching strategies and techniques. Workshops are conducted by professionals and who shared their experiences with the teachers.

#### ***Seminars***

Seminars are conducted to get the most up-to-date information based on authentic and reliable sources of information on the respective fields.

#### ***Conferences***

Conferences are the source of sharing information and experience collaboratively. Conferences connect individuals worldwide on the same platform.

#### ***Activities***

Different activities are conducted and organized for the teachers which train them to make changes by actively participating and adopting them in their teaching practices.

#### ***Teaching portfolios***

Portfolios are the source of information that encountered the changes and the pace of these changes in the professional career of the teachers.

#### ***B.Ed./M.Ed. Degree***

B. Ed and M. Ed degrees are necessary for the professional development of the teachers. These degrees help to provide the necessary experience to the teachers before entering this field.

#### ***Action research***

Action research is used to get information about the progress and the demands of the students. Teachers can conduct action research to know about the standards of the modern world and to know about the level where they are and to where they must have to reach (Corley, 2003).

## CONCLUSION

Self-directed professional development programs are the lightning stone for the teachers for their professional development to know about the need for improvements and the updated knowledge. Teachers use these development programs for their career development and job satisfaction. Teachers get support for their lifelong and continuous effective learning. These programs are also implemented in Pakistan for making changes in the traditional educational strategies and making advancements and applying updated knowledge and delivering it to the students. There is no recipe for professional development that works for everyone; Techniques that you use today may not meet your needs a year from now. But what is paramount is that you discover the many options you have for directing your own learning about teaching. Find something that motivates you to pursue professional development is self-directed professional development for teachers.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE

Suggestions and the future needs for the betterment in the education system and the professional development of the teachers are as under

1. The development of a clear professional vision is necessary for the improvements in the educational setups and the professional growth of the teachers.
2. Priorities must be given to education at all and a sufficient budget must be allocated for the training sessions of the teachers.
3. Self- directed professional awareness must be developed among the teachers.
4. Recruitment of talented and credible teachers is necessary and recruitment of the teachers must involve strict and rigid measures.
5. Complete professional support must be given to the teachers and Highly caliber teachers must be appointed and training programs must be organized gradually and regularly.

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