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## EMPOWERMENT OF THE TEACHERS AND THEIR ACADEMIC PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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### Abstract

Teacher empowerment in education has drawn considerable attention over the past decade. This means decentralization of all the aspects related to educational management and administration at the lowest levels because teachers are the ones in the classroom, closest to the students. Short and Greer identified six dimensions of empowerment: decision-making, teacher impact, teacher's status, autonomy, self-efficacy and opportunities for professional development. Professional growth refers to develop professionally, to learn continuously and to expand one's own skills through the work life of the school by the teacher. This leads to developing knowledge, skills, and competencies required in a profession so as to meet the contemporary and future demands of that particular profession. Empowerment of Teachers necessitates collaboration between management and teachers to solve problems, make decisions, create innovative solutions, and decide on the mission and vision of the school. This research paper to be discussed “**Empowerment of teachers and their Academic professional development**”.

**Keywords:** Teacher Empowerment, Professional Development, Immoral Practices, Skill of Creativity, Innovative Methods, Quality Concern.

### Introduction

#### Statement of the Problem

“It is supreme art of the Teacher to awaken in joy in creative expression and knowledge”.

-Albert Einstein

Teacher empowerment in education has drawn considerable attention over the past decade. Empowerment means different things to different people. Empowerment means bringing the responsibility for decision making to the lowest possible level, which specifies that the administrator does not make all the decisions. Leadership, where teacher empowerment exists, looks quite different from traditional bureaucratic, hierarchical conceptions that slot individuals into different, limited functions and that place them in subordinate relationships to one another. Empowerment creates ownership for those responsible for carrying out decisions by involving them directly in the decision-making process. Therefore, empowerment can be defined as a form of decentralization that places decision making and accountability at the lowest level; thus, teachers are involved in decisions about instruction, curriculum because they are the ones in the classroom, closest to the students. Teacher empowerment can bring the job efficacy, competency, professional skills, etc for the professional development.

Professional development is a process of developing one's knowledge, skills, and competencies required in a profession so as to meet the contemporary and future demands of that particular profession. Empowerment has been defined as a process whereby school participants develop the competence to take charge of their own growth, resolve their own problems, and fulfill their needs to effectively participate in the workplace. According to Teacher Empowerment defined teacher empowerment as 'investing teachers with the right to participate in the determination of school goals and policies and to exercise professional judgment about what and how to teach.' According to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), professional development refers to "activities to enhance professional career growth." Such activities may include individual development, continuing education, and in-service education, as well as curriculum writing, peer collaboration, study groups, and peer coaching or mentoring. Teacher empowerment can bring the various empowerments in professional development of teachers by developing the professional efficacy, accountability, professional ethics and making the teachers as a resourceful. Also, it creates the cooperative, adjustable environment, sportive mind, interest, etc in the teachers and its main advantage is professional development of teachers.

#### The present context

In the present status the teacher empowerment and professional development is in dilemma because a common mistake is not adequately addressing the role changes of teachers and administrators. Liberty of thought, innovation of teachers in an institution is curtailed due to rigid patterns of curricular structure and existing frame of routine work and the lack of preparation for the realities of change. Professional competencies-i.e., the ability to perform the activities within an occupation or function to the standards expected in employment is not fully experienced due to inappropriate placement, under-placement of the teachers, lack of opportunities and



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appropriate learning environment. The socio-economic status of teachers from primary to tertiary level is looked down upon as the salary, service conditions and emoluments have been widely despised because of the fact that their designation and the nature, structure of salary are below the dignified level- even less than sweepers and wages earners in any corporation / public establishment. Status and social recognition go hand in hand. The ignominious status of teachers has left them, de-recognized en masse in the eyes of the public and also partly by the immoral and unethical acts committed by the teachers themselves. The process of selection to colleges of education and the duration of training, the obsolete content, and outdated methodology of training; such professionals are responsible for not earning due recognition for teachers in the society at present.

The most important criteria that are professional ethics (principal of code of conduct followed by the professional members) are not adhered to by most of the members of the teaching community. No incentives and reinforcement are accorded to the teachers: in reality most of them are not getting their genuine dues as per the provision of the service conditions; as a result, a large number of the teachers take shelters under the law for retrieval service conditions. Unwarranted political interference- involuntary, unethical and unusual transfers put the teachers into embarrassment, which in turn affects the quality of dispensation and discharge of their normal duties.

Teacher leaders assume a wide range of roles to support school and student success. Whether these roles are assigned formally or shared informally, they build the entire school's capacity to improve. Because teachers can lead in a variety of ways, many teachers can serve as leaders among their peers. Teaching skills would include providing training and practice in the different techniques, approaches and strategies that would help the 3 teachers to plan and impart instruction, provide appropriate reinforcement and conduct effective assessment. It includes effective classroom management skills, preparation and use of instructional materials and communication skills.

Pedagogical theory includes the philosophical, sociological and psychological considerations that would enable the teachers to have a sound basis for practicing the teaching skills in the classroom. The theory is stage specific and is based on the needs and requirements that are characteristic of that stage. Professional skills include the techniques, strategies and approaches that would help teachers to grow in the profession and also work towards the growth of the profession. It includes soft skills, counseling skills, interpersonal skills, computer skills, information retrieving and management skills and above all lifelong learning skills.

An amalgamation of teaching skills, pedagogical theory and professional skills would serve to create the right knowledge, attitude and skills in teachers, thus promoting holistic development.

### Nature of Teacher Education

- 1) Teacher education is a continuous process and its pre-service and in-service components are complimentary to each other. According to the International Encyclopedia of Teaching and Teacher education (1987), —Teacher education can be considered in three phases: Pre-service, Induction and In-service. The three phases are considered as parts of a continuous process.
- 2) Teacher education is based on the theory that —Teachers are made, not born|| in contrary to the assumption, —Teachers are born, not made. Since teaching is considered an art and a science, the teacher has to acquire not only knowledge, but also skills that are called —tricks of the trade.
- 3) Teacher education is broad and comprehensive. Besides preservice and in-service programmes for teachers, it is meant to be involved in various community programmes and extension activities, viz adult education and non-formal education programmes, literacy and development activities of the society.
- 4) It is ever-evolving and dynamic. In order to prepare teachers who are competent to face the challenges of the dynamic society, Teacher education has to keep abreast of recent developments and trends.
- 5) The crux of the entire process of teacher education lies in its curriculum, design, structure, organization and transaction modes, as well as the extent of its appropriateness.
- 6) As in other professional education programmes the teacher education curriculum has a knowledge base which is sensitive to the needs of field applications and comprises meaningful, conceptual blending of theoretical understanding available in several cognate disciplines. However, the knowledge base in teacher education does not comprise only an admixture of concepts and principles from other disciplines, but a distinct gestalt ‘emerging from the conceptual blending ‘, making it sufficiently specified.
- 7) Teacher education has become differentiated into stage-specific programmes. This suggests that the knowledge base is adequately specialized and diversified across stages, which should be utilized for developing effective processes of preparing entrant teachers for the functions which a teacher is expected to perform at each stage. 8) It is a system that involves an interdependence of its Inputs, Processes and Outputs.



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So, what are some of the leadership options available to teachers? The following 10 roles are a sampling of the many ways teachers can contribute to their schools' success.

### 1. Resource Provider

Teachers help their colleagues by sharing instructional resources. These might include websites, instructional materials, readings, or other resources to use with students. They might also share such professional resources as articles, books, lesson or unit plans, and assessment tools.

### 2. Instructional Specialist

An instructional specialist helps colleagues implement effective teaching strategies. This help might include ideas for differentiating instruction or planning lessons in partnership with fellow teachers. Instructional specialists might study research-based classroom strategies explore which instructional methodologies are appropriate for the school; and share findings with colleagues. When his fellow science teachers share their frustration with students' poorly written lab reports, Jamal suggests that they invite several English teachers to recommend strategies for writing instruction. With two English teachers serving as instructional specialists, the science teachers examine a number of labs reports together and identify strengths and weaknesses. The English teachers share strategies they use in their classes to improve students' writing.

### 3. Curriculum Specialist

Understanding content standards, how various components of the curriculum link together, and how to use the curriculum in planning instruction and assessment is essential to ensuring consistent curriculum implementation throughout a school. Curriculum specialists lead teachers to agree on standards, follow the adopted curriculum, use common pacing charts, and develop shared assessments. Tracy, the world studies team leader, works with the five language arts and five social studies teachers in her school. Using standards in English and social studies as their guides, the team members agree to increase the consistency in their classroom curriculums and administer common assessments. Tracy suggests that the team develop a common understanding of the standards and agrees to facilitate the development and analysis of common quarterly assessments.

### 4. Classroom Supporter

Classroom supporters work inside classrooms to help teachers implement new ideas, often by demonstrating a lesson, co-teaching, or observing and giving feedback. It is found that consultation with peers enhanced teachers' self-efficacy (teachers' belief in their own abilities and capacity to successfully solve teaching and learning problems) as they reflected on practice and grew together, and it also encouraged a bias for action (improvement through collaboration) on the part of teachers. They ask the principal for two half-days of professional release time, one for learning more about the strategy and planning a lesson together, and the other for coteaching the lesson to Marcia's students and discussing it afterward.

### 5. Learning Facilitator

Facilitating professional learning opportunities among staff members is another role for teacher leaders. When teachers learn with and from one another, they can focus on what most directly improves student learning. Their professional learning becomes more relevant, focused on teachers' classroom work, and aligned to fill gaps in student learning. Such communities of learning can break the norms of isolation present in many schools. Frank facilitates the school's professional development committee and serves as the committee's language arts representative. Together, teachers plan the year's professional development program using a back mapping model. This model begins with identifying student learning needs, teachers' current level of knowledge and skills in the target areas, and types of learning opportunities that different groups of teachers need. The committee can then develop and implement a professional development plan on the basis of their findings.

### 6. Mentor

Serving as a mentor for novice teachers is a common role for teacher leaders. Mentors serve as role models; acclimate new teachers to a new school; and advise new teachers about instruction, curriculum, procedure, practices, and politics. Being a mentor takes a great deal of time and expertise and makes a significant contribution to the development of a new professional. Ming is a successful teacher in her own 1st grade classroom, but she has not assumed a leadership role in the school. The principal asks her to mentor her new teammate, a brand-new teacher and a recent immigrant from the Philippines. Ming prepares by participating in the district's three-day training on mentoring. Her role as a mentor will not only include helping her teammate negotiate the district, school, and classroom, but will also include acclimating her colleague to the community. Ming feels proud as she watches her teammate develop into an accomplished teacher.



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## 7. School Leader

Being a school leader means serving on a committee, such as a school improvement team; acting as a grade-level or department chair; supporting school initiatives; or representing the school on community or district task forces or committees. A school leader shares the vision of the school, aligns his or her professional goals with those of the school and district, and shares responsibility for the success of the school as a whole.

## 8. Data Coach

Although teachers have access to a great deal of data, they do not often use that data to drive classroom instruction. Teacher leaders can lead conversations that engage their peers in analyzing and using this information to strengthen instruction. They then plan instruction on the basis of this data.

## 9. Catalyst for Change

Teacher leaders can also be catalysts for change, visionaries who are “never content with the status quo but rather always looking for a better way” Teachers who take on the catalyst role feel secure in their own work and have a strong commitment to continual improvement. They pose questions to generate analysis of student learning.

## 10. Learner

Among the most important roles teacher leaders assume is that of learner. Learners model continual improvement, demonstrate lifelong learning, and use what they learn to help all students achieve.

## Roles for All

Teachers exhibit leadership in multiple, sometimes overlapping, ways. Some leadership roles are formal with designated responsibilities. Other more informal roles emerge as teachers interact with their peers. The variety of roles ensures that teachers can find ways to lead that fit their talents and interests. Regardless of the roles they assume, teacher leaders shape the culture of their schools, improve student learning, and influence practice among their peers.

- Empowerment creates a sense of ownership in teachers' work environments and provides teachers with the opportunities to perform to their fullest capabilities
- A teacher to be empowered is the inspiration to grow as professionals.
- Empowerment inspires collaboration among educators.
- To make teachers as lifelong learners
- Give recognition to teaching as a reflective practice &
- teacher as the reflective practitioner
- To make teacher the first and foremost active agent in every aspect of the educational system
- To ensure natural development of teachers in their teaching efficacy
- To give concrete shape to code of ethic to make the teachers effective, resourceful, competent and role model for the students and contributing agent without burden to society.

## Measures to be taken for teachers' empowerment & professional development

- For empowerment of teachers to be successful, declared that four conditions must be in place; both teachers and administrators must:
  - know what roles both will play;
  - understand and theoretically accept the benefits of empowerment and shared decision- making;
  - recognize the existence of a discrepancy gap between what currently is and what could be; and finally, must
  - take the risk of commitment to change. Teachers believe that they are more empowered when the school in which they work provides them with opportunities to grow and develop professionally

The principals should avoid the tendency to focus on the “here & now” rather than on the future. Therefore, a clearly stated end result must be communicated so that all parties understand the vision and mission of the school

- **SELF LEARNING:** A teacher can never really teach unless he learns himself. “A lamp can never light unless it burns its own flames” (R.N. Tagore). A Teacher should keep learning always.
- **IN-SERVICE PROGRAMME AND REFRESHER COURSES:** A teacher requires refreshing and updates his knowledge by attending such courses.
- **SEMINARS, SYMPOSIUMS AND WORKSHOPS:** A teacher needs to participate in the above activities with significant contribution in terms of contributing papers, delivering talks and organizing and chairing the sessions.



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- **INNOVATION AND EXPERIMENTATION:** A teacher needs to innovate and experiment upon new methods, techniques and practices.
- **WRITING BOOKS, ARTICLES AND RESEARCH PAPERS:** A teacher should contribute originally in this endeavor for his professional growth.
- **FIELDTRIP, OUTING AND EXCHANGE PROGRAMME:** Professional growth occurs through gaining personal experience, contact and communication and knowledge gathered through the above means.

### Summing up

In the light of the above-cited logical reasons and illustrations, it can be strongly visualized that teacher empowerment and professional development is a must for every teacher in enabling teaching-learning context. Any individual who enters the teaching profession should know and understand the expectations, challenges and issues of the teaching profession in relation to the needs and demands of time and society. For this proper knowledge and understanding of the presented reasons in relation to teaching as a profession. The Teacher empowerment and professional development of teachers is highly essential through the organization of educational activities and programmes in teaching, training, research and extension perspectives.

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