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# It pays for teachers to learn again

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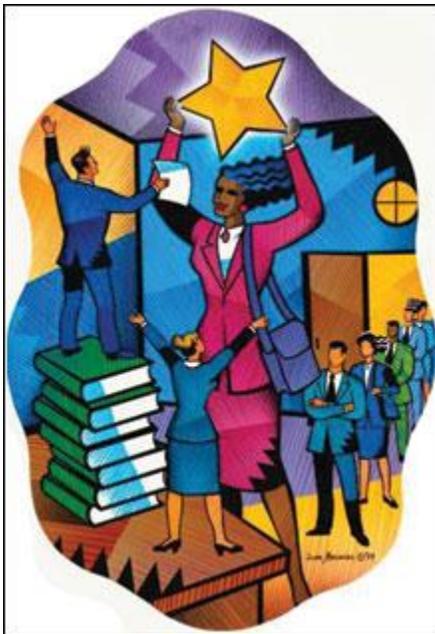
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## It pays for teachers to learn again

By Asghari Ummulbanin



Teachers can benefit from attending professional development programmes which will help students as well, writes ‘,Asghari Ummulbanin

IN general practices, it is noticed that there is the greater improvement in teachers’ performance if they refresh themselves by attending different professional development programmes. They start rethinking their role by ‘looking back’ (Retrospect) and ‘planning for the future’ (Prospects). Professional development programmes are not only about change in teachers “Knowledge and Practices”. But it is also about improving teacher’s sense of professionalism and confidence in them as teachers. This impact of professional development programmes on teachers is important because their self confidence has a major influence on their commitment to teaching, approach towards continuous professional learning, and eagerness to accept responsibility for student learning.

A junior elementary teacher from the interior shared her experience of attending one such programme. “The impact of professional development programmes on my personality was totally different from previous experiences of attending refresher courses. Before the programme, I was quite disorganised. If we are organised in all aspects of life particularly in teaching, which happens to be our major mission, we can become effective teachers.”

The common perception is that rigidity always provides loss in all aspects of life and a person should be flexible in order to achieve more. In this regard, one secondary school teacher said: “Before the programme I was very rigid and thought that whatever I was doing did not need to change. But the programme gave me the realisation to admit my mistakes after awareness of the truth. I now advise others to teach through activities as it has more lasting effects than the lecture method.”

One of the teachers was a supervisor in primary education and has all the relevant professional qualifications. About her nature of impact through professional development programme she said: "I learnt many new ideas for effective teaching, for example: group working, brainstorming, and presenting views and activity-based learning." She believes that the programme supported her in developing personally. "It developed my professional skills and boosted my level of confidence. Before the programme, when I was teaching, I focused more on rote-learning and I was concerned with only 'myself' as I wanted to complete my syllabus. I wanted that all of my students should pass the exams and I wasn't concerned whether they were learning or not. But now I realise that if the teacher wants success in his/her teaching, his/her target should be the student and not her/himself."

One of the impacts on professionals is change in attitude. One teacher disclosed: "I felt a positive change in my attitude and my better half has also told me that I have become more polite and more organised. As a professional, I learnt that students should be our focus and I should apply the teaching approach in such a way in which the students take interest and are willing to learn more. Through the programme, I became so confident that initially I could not speak in front of principal and senior teachers, but now I can not only talk but can also clarify and argue my points if required."

A headmaster in a primary school said: "I was quite excited when I got the news that I had been selected in professional development programme because I wanted the time to polish my professional skills and learn more. I am satisfied that my selection was in my best interest as I gained a lot of confidence from the programme. The evidence of my confidence is that when I returned in my context after completion of the programme, I confidently deal with officials without any hesitation."

"The important aspect that changed my life through professional development programme is the 'critical reflection' before and after teaching," shares another teacher. "I exercised this in my other aspects of life other than teaching as well and I found them very useful. Before the programme my thinking was that I am the teacher, so I am the master of all! I know all the things and the students know nothing because they are blank. But when I used the new strategies by involving students then I realised that they also have their own experiences that are helpful in learning and as a teacher I should value their views."

One of the teachers believed that professional development programme is an inimitable one that gives exposure to the new learning world and develops confidence in such a way that after completing it, teachers influence the professional world through their experiences. He compares the programme as a ray of light in the darkness. "When I practiced [my learning] with students, I really felt speechless when I saw their responses," shared one teacher. "For a few minutes I was forced to ask myself if they were the students whom I had been teaching for many years. Then my inner voice told me that my students have not changed, but my way of teaching has changed. And as I am going to provide opportunities to them, they would produce excellent results."

After noticing all these impacts, this writer felt that there was a noticeable improvement in teachers' performance after attending different professional development programmes. Furthermore such programmes also improve the quality of teaching. Because if the person's

beliefs and thinking are changed than it is easier for them to bring change in their professional practices as well.