

TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT - ROLE OF A SCHOOL LEADER

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2023-24



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National Centre for School Leadership
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Dear School Leaders, we all know that change is dynamic. Hence, it's the need of the hour to adopt and implement certain methods for a healthy and growth-oriented learning for us and the teaching fraternity at large. The main objective is to exchange ideas for promoting innovations in pedagogy which directly leads to teachers' professional development. One of the key ingredients for the successful growth of a school is teacher empowerment which yields constructive and expected results.

Here an effort is made to enlighten the role of School Heads in developing and building the capacities of the teachers working with them. We all know that a School Head is not just an administrator but an academic leader and a role model for his/her teachers and students.

This article includes teacher professional development and the roles of School Heads. It includes directions and techniques to be followed by the School Heads towards teacher professional development and in turn all round development of the students.

NOW, LET'S NAVIGATE ON THIS.

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Teacher Professional Development
3. Focus of Teacher Professional Development and the Role of School Leaders
4. How School Leaders can Support for Effective Teacher Professional Development
5. Strategies on How School Leaders can Better Support Teachers
6. Conclusion

I. Introduction:

To make teaching effective, we should share our ideas and learn from each other. Teacher empowerment is crucial for a school's success. School leaders need to create a positive environment and offer meaningful training programs to help teachers reach their full potential.

The long-term success of any educational institution is a proof of effective teacher professional development. One must implement these strategies to bring out the best in staff. School leaders are expected to cultivate a favourable environment to the teachers' professional development such as providing purposeful staff

development programs, one-on-one staff coaching where teachers can strive to achieve their full potential.

It is widely regarded that professional development of the School Leader paves way to effective teaching and learning which in turn fosters the learning of their students and success of schools. Pursuing professional development ensures in developing their professional capacity and those of school personnel which will also promote students' academic success and well-being.

School Leaders are expected to be effective instructional leaders, have the ability to engage in practices for development, possess knowledge on “technical core” of schooling etc. to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The skills that the School Leaders gain includes managerial skills, development of school's vision, passion in monitoring for effective teaching and learning, motivation of teachers, management of school resources and creation of an inclusive learning environment.

I would like to put forth a few points that aid in professional development of teachers. You, as a school leader play a pivotal role in providing a platform for their growth by implementing various strategies for professional development of teachers thus bringing out the best in them.

2. Teacher professional development

What do you mean by Teacher Professional Development?

"Professional development is defined as activities that develop an individual's skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics as a teacher." This definition recognizes that development can be provided in many ways, ranging from the formal to the informal. It is also defined as a "structured professional learning that results in changes in teacher practices and improvements in student learning outcomes".

Teacher professional development involves a continuous process of reflection, learning and action to further a teacher's knowledge and skills, leading to enhanced teaching practices that positively impact on students' learning.

It is generally regarded as a function of school leaders who can influence the culture and organizational structure of the school. A school leader plays a critical role in the area of teacher professional development, and it reflects upon the success of the school. Professional development of teachers is a crucial factor in successful schools. Yet many schools undermine the importance of empowering their teachers continuously.

3. Focus of Teacher Professional Development and the Role of School Leaders:

i. Pedagogical Leadership:

As the pedagogical leader in a school, one is responsible in creating a school culture that allows teachers to achieve excellence in their professional development journey.

School Leaders to lead, guide and support the teaching and learning processes in the school by focusing on classroom specific requirements for transacting the curriculum, so that both teachers and students perform at their optimal best. School Heads need to create a school culture that supports teachers in their professional journey. This means guiding and supporting them to ensure joyful learning for everyone.

ii. Teacher Empowerment:

Teachers should have opportunities to grow in their careers and have a say in how they teach. School leaders have to play a big role in providing leadership opportunities and support their autonomy in the classroom.

Career growth opportunities and academic leadership positions should be made available at all levels for teachers across the schools. Teachers should have more autonomy when it comes to choosing aspects of pedagogy in classroom teaching. If teacher professional development is to be prioritized, pedagogical leadership in teaching and learning process must be given importance.

iii. Conducting Staff Meetings:

For teacher professional development, one major area to focus on is staff meetings which must include curriculum planning and communication of key developments within the institution. While conducting meetings, teachers often face time constraints and might be unable to get the most out of them. But by adopting certain strategies such as better planning and coordination can be made these meetings more effective.

Though teaching is highly rewarding, yet it's a stressful profession. More often than not, teachers end up feeling unappreciated despite their efforts to educate the younger generation. Teachers need recognition for the value they add to the society and appreciation for their professional achievements. School Leaders must acknowledge the efforts of their teachers and boost their morale consistently to cultivate a positive work culture for continuous professional development.

Effective staff meetings are crucial for professional development. School leaders should plan and coordinate these meetings well to make them productive. School Leaders have to boost teacher morale by acknowledging their efforts consistently during the staff meeting. For effective implementation of teaching methods, communication between the school leader and individual teachers may go a long way in ensuring that each meeting is effective and lead to meaningful takeaway. Each teacher meeting is different and can be convened most effectively only by implementing the right strategy.

iv. Emotional Development of the Teachers

Besides professional growth, pay attention to teachers' emotional well-being. School Heads can act as confidantes by extending emotional support and balance teachers stressful situations when overloaded with responsibilities.

Teachers sometimes feel burdened under the weight of responsibilities. This may cause a social-emotional deficit and hamper their mental well-being. In such cases, school heads can act as their confidantes and help teachers to restore mental and emotional balance. They can set up a friendly meeting with teachers to know how they feel and listen to their questions and concerns.

v. The Role of School Leadership Teaching Learning Process

School leaders influence student achievement by setting goals, maintaining a positive learning environment, and supporting effective teaching practices. Such as lead by example, encourage teachers to explore new teaching methods, and build a trusting relationship with them etc. School Leaders, are expected to create a favourable learning environment. They can create a climate that fosters excellence in teaching and learning. A School head as a leader and manager of a school plays a vital role in fulfilling the school vision by specific approach in achieving the target.

School heads can influence school performance by setting learning goals, guiding student learning, checking students' work, monitoring students' discipline, classroom supervision and improving teaching skills. Teaching and learning is enhanced when there is collaboration among teachers, supportive disciplinary climate and a controlled student behaviour. School heads must establish a monitoring system that allows them to identify effective practices in curriculum transaction, classroom teaching learning process, assessment and evaluation, which impacts student achievement.

As the saying goes, 'Practice what you preach', so, you must be an exemplary by being a continuous learner. Encourage teachers to explore new avenues with regards to teaching methods for an impactful learning by students. It's your duty to provide the right resources and balance the responsibilities of all teachers for a holistic professional development. Above all, the rapport between you and the teachers should build confidence, trust and the freedom to discuss their innovative methods for success of students.

4. How School Leaders Can Support for Effective Teacher Professional Development?

i. Be Part of the Planning Process:

Quality professional development is not one-size-fits-all. It should be identified through observations, feedback, and collaborative work with teachers. For building professional skills, prerequisites have to be identified through classroom observations, instructional rounds, feedback from teachers, students etc.

ii. Practice Dispositions for Display by Teachers:

Most importantly, School Leaders should accept that learning is a continuous process despite their roles. As learners, they can ask questions, try new strategies, and stay positive. The following are the indicators:

- Demonstrate genuine enthusiasm and optimism.
- Foster a positive climate for learning.
- Act on the premise that all children can learn.
- Provide positive, authentic feedback.
- Focus on possibilities rather than obstacles.
- Respond to challenges.
- Treat all forms of diversity as learning opportunities.

iii. Focus on Student Learning:

Professional development should empower teachers to impact student learning. It encourages student-centered learning and interactive learning for the development of social-emotional skills. Certain Student-centered learning examples:

- Make teaching learning process interactive.
- Assess student understanding in real-time and personalize instruction.
- Empower students with choice and control.
- Encourage collaborative learning among students are
- Teach social-emotional learning skills.

iv. Remove Non-core Responsibilities Wherever Possible:

Teachers often have additional duties, and are being burdened for many reasons. Let us lighten teachers' additional load, so that they can focus on their core academic activities. Ease the burden on teachers by minimizing non-core duties.

v. Listen to the Teachers:

Teachers have a difficult job, and it's essential they feel comfortable in being transparent while talking to their administrators. They should feel confident in approaching the principal to discuss on the issues faced in the classroom, problems with students, or anything else that affects their school day. Develop active listening skills, communicate effectively and create an environment where teachers feel comfortable sharing concerns and ideas.

vi. Provide the Best Resources Possible:

Teachers often struggle to manage their classrooms with minimal resources. Sometimes teachers use their own money to ensure their class is adequately supplied with resources. If possible, give your teachers the tools and resources they need to successfully educate their students. Technology has become an integral resource for teachers, as well as an avenue for collaborative learning, which allows teachers to learn from others and improve their craft. Give teachers the tools and resources they need for successful teaching, including technology and collaborative learning opportunities.

vii. Recognize your Teachers:

As with most humans, teachers thrive on recognition and a positive school environment. When someone has done an impressive job, celebrate it! The recognition may be public or it may be a quiet comment or note to the teacher, letting them know they've been seen and appreciated. Let us celebrate teachers'

achievements, whether publicly or through a simple note. Recognition goes a long way in building confidence and happiness among teachers. Simply saying thank you can go a long way to help teachers feel confident and happier.

viii. Improve Collaboration:

Teachers tend to be more effective when they can collaborate with others and share instructional resources, as one would do in a professional learning community. Encourage them to talk to each other and work collectively on projects and lesson plans. Encourage collaboration among teachers to share instructional resources, fostering a positive school environment and enhancing the quality of education.

ix. Support the Decisions of the Teachers:

One of the most difficult situations for a teacher is when the school head's support is lacking in dealing with parent concerns. Although teachers need to be on the "right side of the conflict," support from the school head is very meaningful. If the teacher's actions or decisions are reasonable, the school head should support the teachers in dealing with parent concerns. Support reasonable actions and decisions, presenting a united front in conflicts with parents.

x. Encourage Growth of Your Teachers:

School heads who genuinely invest in the growth of staff will not only ensure teacher retention, but also build trust within the school. Invest in the growth of your staff. Provide on-going feedback, mentorship, and opportunities for teachers to develop leadership skills.

xi. Develop Trust:

Trust is earned over a long period of time. Build trust over time by being consistent, involving teachers in a collaborative environment, and fostering positive relationships. Supportive school heads should avoid micromanaging, but use learning opportunities to coach teachers in a respectful environment.

xii. Make Teacher Evaluation a Meaningful Act:

Teacher evaluations can be a stressful process for both teachers and administrators. Ensure teacher evaluations are fair, concise, and focused on growth. Create a respectful and positive environment to help teachers thrive.

The goal of evaluation is to help teachers improve their effectiveness. Creating a trusting, positive environment must be intentional on the part of the school head. By doing so teachers will thrive to create and deliver better learning opportunities for all students.

xiii. Team Teaching:

Team teaching is also called collaborative teaching or co teaching strategy. It is used for different subjects especially for middle graders with the help of different teaching methods. To provide supportive environment, there are teams of two or four teachers working collaboratively to prepare lesson plans. Team teaching allows different practices to manifest in the classroom.

In a nutshell, I would like to reiterate that 'a child is the father of a man'. Everyone must shoulder the responsibility of building healthy relationships for a favourable environment, facilitate collaboration among the teachers and encourage them in all aspects for professional development. By creating opportunities to teachers, they can exhibit leadership skills and thus contribute for the growth and development of school as a whole.

5. Strategies on how School Leaders can Better Support Teachers:

i. Prioritize in building relationships with your teaching staff:

Strengthen bonds between school leaders and teachers. Foster an inclusive environment where everyone's voice is heard, valued and welcomed. Strong relationship between School leader and Teacher is paramount to running a successful school, so don't miss out on the opportunity to nourish it.

Teachers should always feel comfortable approaching you with concerns or questions. They need to feel confident that you trust them as professionals, so do your best to show them respect and encourage open communication. It's your job to create a work environment that welcomes honest feedback to improve the culture and climate in your school.

ii. Be goal-oriented, be Organized, and be Transparent with your Teachers:

There are few things more frustrating to teachers for being hit with unexpected changes to the schedules, deadlines, especially the things to be done in short notice. Avoid unexpected changes, when it is imminent, make sure, the teachers know what's happening and be transparent about schedules and deadlines.

iii. Facilitate Peer Collaboration:

Another essential approach for promoting teachers' growth and development is to foster a culture of collaboration among them. By giving teachers the chance to share their concepts, original solutions and best practices with one another, principals

may promote peer collaboration. Encourage a culture of collaboration among teachers by giving them opportunities to share ideas and best practices.

iv. Foster a Positive School Climate:

The culture of a school has a big impact on how happy and productive its staff instructors are in general. It is crucial for the principal of the school to nurture an environment that values and supports every employee. This can be accomplished by creating a positive school culture by acknowledging accomplishments, encouraging self-care, and treating every member of the school community with respect and kindness.

v. Provide Chances for Teacher Leadership and Development:

School heads can effectively promote teachers' growth and development by giving them the tools they need to assume leadership roles within the school and educational administration. School heads have to assist teachers in gaining useful leadership skills and broadening their professional identities by giving them opportunity to chair committees, mentor fresh colleagues, or take part in district-wide initiatives.

Empower teachers to take on leadership roles within the school. Support them in gaining useful leadership skills and broaden their professional identities.

vi. Share best practices

Teachers learn from other teachers. A school principal must motivate their teachers and give them time to grow. They must allow them time to figure out what works best for them. Motivate teachers to share their tips and tricks with each other. Encourage educators to mentor each other with tech tips, organizational hacks and ways to make the learning process joyful.

6. Conclusion:

The role of the school leader is primarily meant to guide and lead the teachers in the right direction. By implementing the above guidelines, the teachers will be able to carry out their duties satisfactorily, overcome challenges and face problems with a positive outlook which may arise in the course of their service and adapt new strategies for professional and personal growth as an individual.

School leaders, your role is to guide and lead teachers in the right direction. By following these guidelines, teachers can carry out their duties, overcome challenges, and grow both professionally and personally. It's a win-win for everyone!

**TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT - ROLE OF A
SCHOOL LEADER
SELF ASSESSMENT**

Instructions:

1. The following are the Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs).
2. Among the given four alternatives only one is correct.
3. Choose the correct one.

1. What is the primary focus of teacher professional development?

- a. Administrative tasks
- b. Student well-being
- c. Continuous learning and reflection
- d. Non-academic responsibilities

2. What is the role of pedagogical leadership in creating a positive school culture?

- a. Minimizing teacher autonomy
- b. Fostering a culture of continuous learning
- c. Ignoring professional development opportunities
- d. Excluding teachers from decision-making processes

3. How can school leaders support emotional development in teachers?

- a. Increasing workload
- b. Providing leadership opportunities
- c. Ignoring teachers' well-being
- d. Acting as confidantes and offering support

4. Why are effective staff meetings crucial for professional development?

- a. They create additional workload for teachers
- b. They boost teacher morale and productivity
- c. They focus solely on non-academic topics
- d. They exclude teachers from decision-making processes

5. What is the role of school leadership in the teaching-learning process?

- a. Minimizing the influence on student achievement
- b. Discouraging exploration of new teaching methods
- c. Setting goals, maintaining a positive environment, and supporting effective teaching practices
- d. Ignoring the relationship with teachers

6. How can school leaders provide the best resources for teachers?

- a. Withholding technology and collaborative learning opportunities
- b. Minimizing collaboration among teachers
- c. Offering mentorship and opportunities for professional development
- d. Focusing solely on non-core responsibilities

7. What is the importance of trust-building in the relationship between school leaders and teachers?

- a. It hinders effective communication
- b. It fosters a positive and collaborative environment
- c. It leads to increased workload for teachers
- d. It discourages teacher autonomy

8. What should school leaders prioritize to create a positive school climate?

- a. Ignoring accomplishments and self-care
- b. Fostering a culture of competition among teachers
- c. Acknowledging accomplishments and encouraging self-care
- d. Treating every member with disrespect and unkindness

9. How can school leaders better support teachers in terms of professional development?

- a. Minimizing opportunities for collaboration among teachers
- b. Ignoring teacher achievements
- c. Encouraging teacher leadership and providing mentorship
- d. Increasing non-core responsibilities for teachers

10. What is the role of school leaders in guiding and leading teachers?

- a. Discouraging professional growth
- b. Overcoming challenges for teachers
- c. Minimizing collaboration among teachers
- d. Fostering a positive and collaborative environment

Key: 1.c 2.b 3.d 4.b 5.c 6.c 7.b 8.c 9.c 10.d

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QUESTIONNAIRE

Instructions:

1. The following are the Statements given.
2. Among the given four alternatives choose any one and tick in the box given.
3. No answer is either correct or wrong.
4. This indicates your attitude as a School Leader towards Teacher Professional Development.
5. The more number of Never/Seldom indicates your leadership is not towards the teacher professional development

S. No	STATEMENT	RESPONSE			
		Never	Seldom	Quite Often	Very Often
1	I make sure that the professional development activities of teachers are in accordance with the teaching goals of the school.				
2	I ensure that teachers work according to the school's educational goals.				
3	I observe instruction in classrooms.				
4	I give suggestions to the teachers as to how they can improve their teaching.				
5	When a teacher has problems in his/her classroom, I take the initiative to discuss matters.				
6	When a teacher brings up a classroom problem, we solve the problem together.				
7	The main part of my job is to ensure that the teaching skills of the staff are always improving.				

S. No	STATEMENT	RESPONSE			
		Never	Seldom	Quite Often	Very Often
8	I present new ideas to the teachers/parents in a convincing way.				
9	An important part of my job is to create an orderly atmosphere in the school.				
10	In our school, we work on goals and/or a school development plan.				
11	I define goals to be accomplished by the staff of the school.				
12	I stimulate a task-oriented atmosphere in the school.				
13	Giving teachers too much freedom to choose their own instructional techniques can lead to poor teaching.				
14	I take the classes of the teachers who are unexpectedly absent.				
15	I ensure that there is clarity and responsibility while implementing the curriculum.				