



Spirituality and Professional Development

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Abstract

Human beings are in very essence spiritual beings. Spirituality pervades every aspect and dimension of person's life. It deals with the relational and transcendent dimensions of person's life and can be described in terms of inspiration, meaning and value. Professional development of teachers does not only to create new insights into pedagogy and their own practice but to create the ideals which will be followed by the generations. Therefore, nurturing and blossoming spiritual dimension of a teacher is essential for the professional development of a teacher.

The present paper addresses spirituality, a constitute of human nature and professional development of teacher. The purpose here is to draw up some linkages between spirituality and professional development of teachers.

Key Words: *Spirituality, professional development*

Introduction: Teachers as professionals now days face significant challenges. Empowering the teacher to face the challenges comes under the premises of professional development. Teaching is more, much more, than presenting information to students in classroom situation. Not unreasonably, teachers are expected to have knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach and the pedagogies which promote effective delivery. It puts demand to deliver high quality teaching i.e. teaching from the heart; teaching courageously, creatively, wisely and morally. It is important that what teachers teach resonates in the hearts and souls of students. Teachers can change lives forever. To

prepare teacher of such qualities and develop them fully from personal as well as professional it is essential to develop them as a good human being. The spiritual aspect of a person is considered to be a key feature of what makes us human. Therefore, nurturing and blossoming spiritual dimension of a teacher is essential for the professional development of a teacher.

Keeping in mind the discussions in forgone section this paper looks initially at the concept of professional development of teacher and spirituality as the eternal human yearning. In addition it establishes the linkages between the Spirituality and Professional Development of Teachers.

Professional Development

Professional development is a broad term, connoting several meanings. In simplest form it refers to skills and knowledge attained for both personal development and career advancement. Professional development of teachers envisages choosing, preparing and making success in the teaching profession. It involves activities that develop an individual's skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics as a teacher. It incorporates activities to enhance ability to work efficiently by increasing their own skills and knowledge. It means a comprehensive, sustained and intensive approach to improve quality of a teachers' effectiveness Professional development of teachers fosters collective responsibility of a society to develop noble and worthy citizen. International Dictionary of Adult and Continuing Education (1990) as quoted by Eswaran & Jayaraman, 2012) has defined Professional Development as "resulting in a person's being of greater use to the organizations for which he works through the acquisition of greater knowledge, skills and different attitudes."

Spirituality

The word, 'spirituality' in English language comes from the word 'spirit'. The Webster's dictionary defines the word 'spirit' as 'the animating or vital principle that gives life to the physical organism the breath of life in contrast to its material elements. This concept is referred to as 'Adhyatma' in Indian tradition and philosophy. Adhyatma is compound

of two words- Adhi and Atma. Adhi means near. So Adhyatma means process of bringing near to atma or near to natural self which is very pious and virtuous. Therefore Spirituality or Adhyatma is a process of becoming pious and virtuous. It pervades every aspect and dimensions of person's life. It deals with the relational and transcendent dimensions of person's life and can be described in terms of inspiration, meaning and value. Spirituality is a total process of converting biological unit into a human being which encompasses several aspects of humanity. Spirituality inspires us to be creative and responsible, to build mutually beneficial relationships, to cope with change and loss courageously and to invest in the good of all. It relates to or affects the human spirit or soul as opposed to material or physical things. Spirituality is the quality of one's sensitivity to the things of the spirit. Which cannot be directly perceived by our senses but whose effects can be deduced or inferred by our observations, like love, justice, peace, etc. spirituality is the premise that we regard the human being and/or the rest of creation as composed not only of matter, but of something immaterial, something invisible, something beyond our present knowledge. Sri Aurobindo (1995) has expanded spirituality as an awakening of the inner realities of our being, to a spirit, self and soul towards 'beginning of a spiritual realization and experience'. Light, warmth and love in the heart were achievements of such experiences, and these coloured all aspects of a person's life and contribution to society. Not accepting injustice to anyone in society, led to working towards alternating conditions to reduce human suffering.

Dana Zohar and Ian Marshall introduced a new dimension to human intellect- as a spiritual intelligence. They introduce spiritual intelligence declaring it as ultimate intelligence added to IQ and EQ and draw paths to be selected from these to grow and transform. According to them word spiritual comes from the latin word "spiritus" which means, that which gives life or vitality to a system. Zohar and Marshal (2000) view being spiritual as that "to be in touch with some larger, deeper, richer whole that puts our present limited situation into a new perspective". It is concerned with the human effort to find a purpose and a meaning in life experiences. Spirituality is a living experience; it is awareness of self, others, the transcendental dimension, the universe and connectedness among all these. This experience permeates to all activities. It also helps

find meaning to living and learning through the evolutionary process to experience wholeness'. Wiggleswarth (1995) states that Spiritual Intelligence is the ability to behave with compassion and wisdom while maintaining inner and outer peace regardless of the circumstances. The development of spiritual intelligence is the awakening of a deeper awareness of oneself as a non-material being, a source of many intangible talents, previously undiscovered character traits, undeveloped personal qualities and innate values. These invisible inner attributes of the self can never be taken away, and when consciously developed and used they become the ground within the self in which a stable sense of security is anchored. Spirituality mean that's there is a purpose to life. It empowers the person by letting them know where they've come from, who they are, why they are here.

Spirituality and Professional Development of Teachers —Linkages

A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops. If a system possesses teacher of sterling and impeccable characteristics it is found to make rapid progress in all field. Whatever a great man does, the world follows and he/she comes under the premises of teacher. Whatever standards he/she sets, the world pursues. As Bhagwat Geeta describes

Yadyadacharyati sresthastattadevetaro janah

Sa yatpramanam kurute lokastadanuvartate. Ch.3/21

Teaching profession is the sacred duty to impart the right type of knowledge and make them as good human beings. Professional development of teachers does not only to create new insights into pedagogy and their own practice but to create the ideals which will be followed by the generations. Without sound value system of a teacher his/her all sort of professionalism is useless. The National Curriculum Framework for School Education (2000) mentions that *“every teacher has to be a teacher of values. Every activity, unit and interaction must be examined from the viewpoint of value identification, inculcation and reinforcement and then deciding appropriate strategy for a balanced and judicious implementation.”* Same has also been quoted by Prasad and Vijayalatha (2010)

the teacher is expected to function not only as a facilitator for acquisition of knowledge but also as inculcator of values and transformation of inner being. The teacher should be an embodiment of accepted values because children and adolescent students look at them as role-models to be followed in their life. Professional development of teachers is not only related with the development of teaching skills, being equipped with technologies and/or knowledge up gradation of the field. It is not just the formal and informal means of helping teachers to learn new skills but develop the sound value system in order to sustain the social system. According to Gnanadevan (2010) *the teacher should not be passive spectators to social changes taking places in the country. They should uphold values and should play a responsive and responsible role in promoting values among students.* Values and morality arises out of spiritual insight and, if society seriously addresses their responsibilities of fostering spiritual awareness, then children are more likely to grow up to be morally responsible members of the country.

Teacher's professional development is a complex process, which requires cognitive, emotional and spiritual involvement of teachers individually and collectively. Spirituality will support teachers to encounter the challenges that come with putting role of nation builder into practices. The importance of understanding how teachers work together and share practices with learning purposes. In real sense, professional development means to grow as a good human being who encompasses the appropriate development of all aspect of personality- physical, social, emotional, intellectual, cultural, moral and spiritual. This is possible to follow the path of spirituality. In order to optimize your personal holistic, development-body, mind, and spirit-you must be fully **aware** of your self. The first and foremost, benefit of being Spiritual is to be aware and development of self. Self-awareness is the core competency of spiritual intelligence. The development of self automatically helps to develop great human beings with higher productivity, efficiency, concentration along with good health and behavior. It develops ethics, self-discipline and self-control. These are essential ingredients of any kind of development whether personal or professional. Spirituality transforms us and others, heal relationship, cope with grief and move beyond conditioned habits and irrelevant thought of the past. Spirituality support and help in all kind of professional's

growth. Human values and professional ethics are the practical practices of being spiritual. The ultimate goal of teaching profession is creation of a civic society based on human values, wherein relational bonds within and among social units and systems.

If Spiritual Quotient (SQ- a measure of spirituality level) development is given due importance, it can develop all the qualities of a teacher and ultimately good human being. All Professional, Personal and Social effectiveness will be added to overall positive and constructive development of teacher by the spirituality. As spirituality is an ultimate development. The *Gita* and other ancient Indian scriptures stated that man was not only a 'biological entity or a mere political, economic or social being', that there was in human beings a spiritual dimension, which has the potential of transcending the limitation of his temporal existence. A famous adage related to quality of teacher state "Putrayati Shisya" which means a good teacher consider his/her student as son. Now the question arises "Is it an easy task to consider student as his/her son without spiritual inclination?" Only spirituality has a power to a sense of interconnectedness with all living creatures. Now a day personal grudges among teachers in general and university teachers in particular are the greatest impediment in the overall harmony of the departments. This is jeopardizing the mental peace of all belonging to the system. It affects performance at work and relationships within the workplace. In such situation spirituality can act as a panacea. Spirituality is a thrilling quest to bring harmony in life of all existence. It synchronizes all the essence and excellence desirable for peaceful living. Spiritual practices improve coping skills and social support, foster feelings of optimism and hope, promote healthy behavior, reduce feelings of depression and anxiety, and encourage a sense of relaxation. Someone who is living a spiritual life does not hold deep grudges and resentments against others. It creates an ability to view interconnectedness and interdependency of all, and between all elements of the cosmos. It creates an awareness of the purpose and meaning of life. It's the way to find meaning, hope, comfort, and inner peace in inner as well as outer life. To a spiritual person entire world is like a family. All belong to him and he/she belongs to all. They firmly believe on the feeling of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbkam". That state of mind can be achieved to follow

the path of spirituality. It contributes to enrich the heartland of humanity. Those living a spiritual life connect with others in a helpful, meaningful way.

The meaning of spirituality is the meaning of life. To be faced with good and evil, and evolve for good into a positive energy source willing to do good in such a corrupt and manipulated world. Practice that is spirituality sensitive is an experience and opportunity to develop further the inner potential to its fullest for self and those working with. This then bridges the gap between self and professional self to support the journey, to dwell in the wholeness of being human and organize life's activities to grow and foster growth. This ultimate reality is hidden within the heart of every human being and is the ultimate goal of all spiritual endeavor and self discipline (Taimni, 1975). For this, Buddha's words were "there is a Buddha in all of us". It is by now an established fact that one's own integration, steadfastness in values and spiritual sensibility effect choices and decisions made for all aspects of life and activities there in. Spirituality develops a constructive, practical and comprehensive character. Therefore, development of a teacher as a spiritual person is must for the professional development of teacher. Keeping in view the importance of this aspect of human essence every field of knowledge has acknowledged the importance of spirituality. Psychologist Viktor Frankl later added the concept of self-transcendence as a spiritual need of human being to Maslow's Hierarchy of needs. Cloninger also later incorporated self-transcendence as a spiritual dimension of personality in the Temperament and Character Inventory. Gibson (2011) conducted a study to find the role of spirituality in principal leadership and its influence on teachers and teaching and reported that *their spirituality contributed to their ability to work through student behavior dilemmas by taking a more measured, less reactive, holistic, and long term view of the child's needs, and the capacity of the school*. Spiritual perspective of teachers also assist with action associated with providing professional development, building harmonious climate, expressing positive communication, articulating high expectations, and managing resources and people. Spirituality to be internalized and integral to whom we are, permeating our thinking, feelings, motivations and general well-being. Spirituality has the practical usefulness with arrange of professional tasks and its contribution to personal

resilience. Spirituality in teacher contributes towards the climate and culture of the school through its emphasis on quality relationships, caring values and a hope for the future. This affected the teachers' morale, sense of commitment and desire to become a good human being. Spirituality empowers teacher to be more creative, more honest, stronger, more resilient, and more compassionate human beings. Spirituality provides intrinsic motivation to work because spiritual person do not expect result of deeds. She/he only enjoy his/her work. This way he/she utilizes his/her energy competency at the fullest. It contributes to classroom atmosphere full of energy and enthusiasm which feed student interest and excitement in learning the subject matter. Enthusiastic teachers may also lead to students becoming more self-determined in their own learning process. Teachers that exhibit enthusiasm can lead to students who are more likely to be engaged, interested, energetic, and curious about learning the subject matter.

In professional development programs there must be ways to improve spiritual intelligence components because of following reasons.

- To build relationships and interpersonal understanding. Effective learning environments that foster student achievement depend on the kind of relationship between the teachers and taught. Useful teacher-to-student interactions are crucial in linking academic success with personal achievement. Spiritual teachers are particularly good at creating beneficial relations with their students.
- To find and use the deepest inner resources from which comes the capacity to care and the power to tolerate and adapt.
- To develop a clear and stable sense of identity as an individual in the context of shifting workplace relationships.
- To be able to discern the real meaning of events and circumstances, and be able to make work meaningful.
- To identify and align personal values with a clear sense of purpose.

- To live those values without compromise and thereby demonstrate integrity by example.
- To understand where and how each of the above is sabotaged by the ego, which means being able to understand and influence true cause.
- To act as a catalysts of change and seekers of wholeness. Managing change and removing the roadblocks.
- Teachers are asked to teach in increasingly multicultural classrooms; to place greater emphasis on integrating students with special learning needs in their classroom. Spirituality develops hospitality. They welcome alien and different thoughts and ideas. Teachers model empathy and a love of diversity and pluralism. They want us to see the commonalities that tie us to others and to respect difference as well.
- Students who receive positive influence from teacher show stronger self-confidence and greater personal and academic success.

Conclusion:

To conclude being a good person, in the end, is what matters. Spirituality is associated with connectedness and a desire to have an authentic moral-values, attitudes and professional actions. Spirituality has a strong link to a range of human virtues, including forgiveness, kindness, compassion, altruism, openness, passion and generosity. Spirituality shapes our relationship with ourselves, with other people. Spirituality is an integral part of our human development because the need for meaning and to be part of a larger whole is inherently human. It is expected from teachers to be expert in their disciplines, to build and maintain trusting, loving relationships, to create a safe environment for students where real learning is promoted, and to recognize and cater for the needs of every individual student. It is also require from teacher's side to coax the best out of every student and to guide each one for personal growth and social responsibility. The primary aim and end-product of good teaching involves the penetration of the spirit of the person and not just the mind. How teacher see him /her

selves and the way of dealing with the ebb and flow of daily living are part and parcel of the way of conducting classrooms. Human beings are in very essence spiritual beings. Their dreams, hope, imagine, remember, create, grieve and do so much more that bespeaks the spiritual nature of humanity. Spirituality level affects our way of connectedness with all, the way we look at life, and how as teachers we live our lives inside and outside the classroom. Spirituality keeps teachers alive and enthusiastic within the profession. It will keep teachers enthusiastic and fresh in practice, even after many years.

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