TEACHER EMPOWERMENT: A STRATEGIES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

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Indians believe that the source of our greatest strength is the human resource & to tap this resource we need to educate it because "Education is the most power weapon which can be use to change the world"**.** For long Indian policy makers have been trying to set up an infrastructure & policies to increase literacy rate. For this purpose India is having one of the biggest and complex Higher Education System which comprises 322 universities & 15000 colleges, catering to over 9 million youth with an annual growth rate of 5%. However, quality of education is an area of concern in the Indian economy. Nearly 90-94% drop out (including those who never attended school) & 6% of Indians, who do cross the educational "Line of control"& are called educational youth, may not be very relevant in today's context for sake of employment generation and National GDP enhancement**.** Due to low quality of educational inputs (such as very poor teaching materials & facilities) & educational outputs(such as low cognitive achievement of students), India is forgoing economic growth **.** However, our Higher Education System is relatively inflexible & it emphasis only on the theoretical aspects rather than skill development, render our youth unemployable. As a result of this mismatch between wants of stakeholders & present education system, the education policy makers are feeling the pressure to shift their focus from quantitative expansion to quality**.** Therefore, education system has reached crossroads& the solution of poor quality in education is decontrolling which requires the policy makers to decentralize power to all levels in the education system & especially to the educators.

EMPOWERMENT OF TEACHERS:

Indian education system works in a vertical kind of organization system. Under this system the power is concentrated at the top with principals and administrators. Teachers are

given very specific syllabus, content curriculum to teach with very little scope for flexibility. Moreover, the teachers are pressured to fight a war between syllabus and time within which to teach it because of in India it is a struggle to have 200 teaching days out of 365, ironically India makes a calendar of holidays rather than working days & the conflict between syllabus & time has led teachers loosing freedom & the examination system is totally syllabus oriented. This kind of predictable education system requires students to use only 5% of their brain. Therefore, we need to bring education system in tune with the requirements of the stakeholders for this teachers' morale needs to be boosted & they need to be motivated to commit to the pursuit of excellence both in themselves and their students. So empowerment of teachers, as a strategy to increasing quality of education because of empowerment as the breaking down of traditional hierarchical structures, & giving the line personnel closest to a problem authority to the problem(Blanchard,1997).

"Empowerment" has frequently used in management circles since the 1980s & true empowerment means that employees can bend & break rules to do whatever is, necessary to take care of customer **(Tschohl, 1997**). **Troyer, (1997)** refers empowerment as "wisdom to know what to do, the will to do what needs to be done, & the wherewithal to do it." Since can play an important role in creating an environment in which students can begin to exercise democratic principles for this purpose teachers must feel empowered whereas teacher empowerment as " investing teachers with the right to participation in the determination of school goals & policies & to exercise professional judgement about how to teach (Bolin,1989). When teachers are empowerment, they use conceptual selectivity by controlling instruction in selecting the materials o be used, organizing the curriculum, & designing the instruction

The Role of Teachers: -

The contribution of teachers to student learning and outcomes is widely recognized. Teacher effectiveness has more impact on student learning than any other factor under the control of school systems including class size, school size and the quality of after school programmes. In spite of these realities, the education community has not focused sufficiently on improving teacher effectiveness, on the recruitment evaluation, development placement and retention of high effective teachers, instead of evaluating teachers' performance and treating them differently on that basis, teachers are treated uniformly and rewarded for longevity and degrees. Paper credentials that have little to no proven value trump how successfully teachers educate their students when it comes to compensation and tenure.

A Pathway to effective Teaching:-
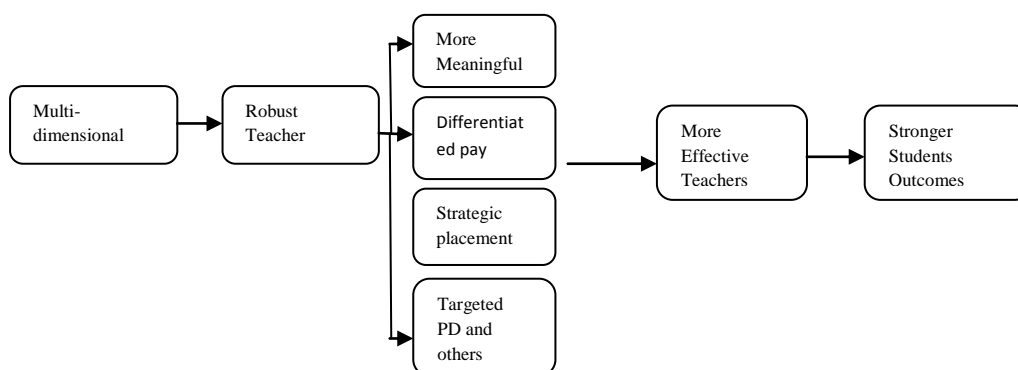
BOTTLENECKS TO EMPOWERING TEACHERS:

In India there are many bottlenecks to empowering teachers:-

(1) Large number of rules for every task.

(2) Centralised decision- making authority.

(3) Detailed definition of the task to be performed in a job.

(4) Inadequacy of resources & if available bureaucratic control over these resources.

DIMENSIONS OF TEACHER EMPOWERMENT: There are six dimensions:-

DECISION-MAKING:- This dimension relates to the participation of teachers in critical decisions that directly affect their work. Teachers involved in decision making schools assume that the role of problem finder & problem solver **(Short, et.al., 1991).**

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH: Efforts to professionalize teachers (empowered) builds teacher commitment & improves instruction through increased teacher skills **(Firestone, 1993).**

STATUS: It refers to teacher perceptions that they have professional respect & admiration from colleagues.

SELF-EFFICACY: It refers to teachers' perception that they have the skills & ability to help students learn, are competent in building effective programs for students, & can effect changes in student learning.

AUTONOMY: It refers to teachers' beliefs that they can control certain aspects of their work life i.e. the hallmark of autonomy is the sense of freedom to make certain decisions.

IMPACT: It refers to teachers' perception that they have an effect & influence on school life.

   (Block, 1987), refers to the essence of empowerment as enacting the vision of quality enhancement. He outlines three dimensions of empowerment which we need to consider:

(1) VISION: Vision is when we take a stand for a preferred future something we want. The first step to choosing empowerment implies that we are solely responsible for success or failure our vision and goals.

(2) BALANCE OF AUTONOMY AND DEPENDENCE: We have to take risks, stand up for what we believe in & ultimately be held accountable for our actions. In an empowered organization it is the responsibility of the leader to achieve a balance of autonomy and dependence.

(3) COURAGE: The road of empowerment is a test of our integrity and commitment to the vision. It requires courage to at times break norms & rules & vice-versa.

EMPOWERMENT MODEL

PHASES OF TEACHER EMPOWERMENT: According to **Marry Hobbs (2009)** There are three phases of teacher empowerment model:-

   PHASE -1   INITIATING EMPOWERMENT   (YEARS, 0-3)

   Increasing confidence that accompanied students' success.

   PHASE-2   GROWTH OF EMPOWERMENT   (YEARS, 4-8)

   Maturing sense of autonomy through involvement on decision making and increasing self efficacy through student' success.

   PHASE-3   SUSTAINING OF EMPOWERMENT   (YEARS, 9+)

   Redefining self efficacy, appreciating lifelong learning.

STRATEGIES TO EMPOWERNING TEACHERS:

In present times Indian Administrators need to think in terms of policy structures which allow teachers the following freedom to improve quality in education system are-

(1) Reduce in number of rules.

(2) Allow independent judgement, especially as far as classroom & professional field is concerned.

(3) Participatory goal setting.

(4) Define job broadly as projects so as to allow flexibility in doing the job.

(5) Provide more freedom of access to resources and people

(6) Reduce number of approval steps.

(7) Delegate and decentralize power.

ADVANTAGES OF EMPOWERING TEACHERS:

(1) Empowered teachers contribute to the professional operations of the school.

(2) Teachers have more time to reflect on educational process.

(3) Empowered teachers have authority & autonomy with concomitant responsibility for competent performance.

(4) Accountability for students' outcomes & instruction depend on empowered teachers & not on the bureaucracy.

Hence, the concept of teacher empowerment is to motivate teachers to commit to pursuit of excellence in their profession. In India, though the concept & its merits are well understood yet the application is difficult. The major bottleneck to this concept is decentralization power. While Indian culture teaches people to cherish & desire power. As a Solution to this problem, for application purposes, we can divide power into power in terms of professionalism & Bureaucratic control. As teachers' empowerment policies have to focus on enhancing professionalism& ability, we need to decentralize only that aspect of power which deals with improving quality & enhancing professionalism. Thus, for quality enhancement India needs to formulate a long term vision. This vision assume that teachers as partners in the educational system.

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