CHALLENGES FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF MOTHER TEACHER EDUCATORS IN INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

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ABSTRACT

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have brought new possibilities to the education sector, but at the same time, they have placed more demands on teachers. They now have to learn how to cope with computers in their classrooms, how to compete with students in accessing the vast body of information chiefly via internet and how to use the hardware and software to enhance the teaching/learning process. Therefore the teachers have to spend more time for their Professional Development in order to reach the benefits of ICT to the learners. Ability of teachers in the uses of ICT for education entails sharing of knowledge among teacher educators, intra and Inter-institutional collaboration, and support from principals and administrators. These factors must be in place for the mother teacher educators, accepting their problems and stress they face in order to bring change in the classroom they handle through ICT. Mother teacher educators require ongoing support and opportunities to experiment with new skills and strategies over time. A professional development programme should therefore include more time and special provisions for developing leadership skills, such as decision-making, team building, communicating, and problem solving for mother teachers considering stress factors. Mothers Teachers Professional Development in ICT therefore face number of challenges. This paper discusses various critical components and challenges for professional development of mother teacher educators in ICT.

Introduction

Educators play very vital role in moulding tomorrow's citizen, the teachers should possess training in using the most modern technologies in the field of education. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have been touted as potentially dominant tools for educational change and reform. When used properly, different ICTs help expand access to education, reinforce the relevance of education to the increasingly digital workplace, and elevate educational quality, helping make teaching and learning in to an active process connected to real life. Knowledge on use of ICT in education and skill should come from teachers' training itself. Therefore it is necessary to provide opportunity for teacher educators for using ICT. The competency of women teacher educators in using ICT in education is very vital. Although the teaching profession has a higher proportion of women than men, ICT fluent teachers are more likely to be male. Research shows that women teachers' attitudes towards ICT are influential and that teachers can play an integral role and influence girls for ICT use. In the present situation, since the males are dominating in the ICT, girls lack strong women ICT fluent teacher educators. Girls are also affected by teachers' expectations reinforcing negative self-perceptions. Therefore there is a need for encouraging and more women teacher educators in the ICT usage. The main obstacles found for the women educators to come front in ICT usage are many especially mother teacher educators are concerned. These obstacles also reflect in their professional development.

Changing role of teacher educators after ICT integration

It is essential that the teacher educators to learn new roles and ways of teaching that translate into a long-term developmental process requiring teachers to focus on changing their own practice. They need to explore the vital concern of how to carve out time, opportunity, and other resources and need to realize the vision of education reform through ICT. Integration of ICTs into the educational system is a complex, multifaceted process that involves not just technology, curriculum, pedagogy, institutional readiness but also teacher's gender and competencies. The teacher's competitiveness includes 1) Skills with particular applications 2) Integration into existing curricula 3) Curricular changes related to the use of IT and instructional design 4) Changes in teacher role 5) Supporting educational theories. Ideally, these should be addressed in teachers training. ICTs are swiftly evolving technologies, however, and so ICT fluent teachers need to continuously upgrade their skills and keep abreast of the latest developments and best practices. Unfortunately, most teacher professional

development in ICTs gives more concentration on teaching the tools not on using the tools to teach. Barrier to ICT adoption can be alleviated only if teachers have a keen understanding and appreciation of their changing role. The mother teacher educators are having maximum challenges to go with this changing situation resulting waning in the professional competitiveness. The problems encountered by the mother educators in the ICT for professional development are hard- and software, time factor, lack of teacher training, quick technological shifts, no own classroom experience.

Tasks of teacher educators in ICT era

Creating professional development opportunities that teacher educators need in order to help all trainees achieve the ambitious learner goals of reform, which require the support and ideas of everyone. Teacher educators are expected to understand emerging standards through ICT and to change their roles and practice accordingly. Teacher educators who were prepared for their profession prior ICT introduction have to prepare for these new practices and roles. In working toward change, teacher educators need to be continually supported with professional development. Teaching is a complex task, and substantial time will be required for mother teachers to test out new ideas, assess their effects, adjust their strategies and approaches, and assess again in an effort to reach all teacher trainees to make ICT learning meaningful. A fundamental lesson learned in the past decade through ICT efforts is that far more time is required for professional development and cooperative work than is now available. In fact, time has emerged as the key issue in every analysis of change in educational institutes in the last decade (Fullan & Miles, 1992). Teacher educators have to find out more time to work with colleagues, to critically examine the new standards being proposed, and to revise curriculum. They need opportunities to develop, master, and reflect on new approaches to working (Corcoran, 1995). McDiarmid (1995) pointed out the connection between new expectations for teacher and the element of time. The changes teacher educators must make to meet the goals of reform entail much more than learning new techniques. They go to the core of what it means to teach. Because these changes are so momentous, most teacher educators require considerable time to achieve them. The ICT practice should become part of daily work life of teacher educators. Using technology is one example, Fine (1994) notes, "Technologies can support and broaden professional learning communities and help teachers make better use of their time. Through a range of technologies, e.g., the Internet and video-and audio-conferencing, teachers can access both instructional resources and collegial networks". Some formats enable teachers to participate when it is convenient for them. Electronic mail and bulletin boards enable

teachers to share information and solve problems with colleagues at any time. In addition, videoconferencing enables teachers to connect to different sites without spending time and money on travel. Community support is essential for creating the professional development opportunities teacher educators require to help all of their trainees to reach higher levels of learning.

Some general hurdles in professional development of teacher educators

Professional development rewards educators with personal and professional growth, greater job security, and career advancement. (Ferraro, 2000; Peyton, 1997; Abdal-Haqq, 1996 and Corcoran, 1995). Teachers, administrators, and other college system employees need time to work in study group, conduct action research participate in seminars, coach one another, plan lessons together, and meet for other purposes. Implementing a professional development plan is often hampered by others' perceptions of teacher' work. Although ICT reform has changed expectations for teachers, how the public and policymakers perceive teachers' work has not changed. They think teacher educators are working only when they are with trainees. As a result, there is little support for providing the time and resources teacher educators require for changing their practice. Watts and Castle (1993) explain that "the traditional view of teachers' work is governed by the idea that time with students is of singular value, that teachers are primarily deliverers of content, that curricular planning and decision making rest at higher levels of authority, and that professional development is unrelated to improving instruction". This limited view of teaching does not allow opportunities for teacher educators to participate in curriculum development, learn and share successful methods of reaching teacher trainees, discuss comprehensive and efficient ways to implement standards, and continue their own learning which highly demanding after the entry of ICT. Teacher education must respond to the changing needs of trainees and teacher educators in the ICT age. Teacher educators' professional development in the context of education reform must address the additional challenges of implementing educational standards, working with diverse populations, and changing forms of teacher trainees assessment after the entry of ICT in education. Therefore a change in perception on profession of teacher educators' only would make administrators and policy makers to understand hardship of teacher educators in general and particularly mother teacher educators facing to co-op with the changing situation.

Barriers in professional development of mother teacher educators

1) Household responsibilities

Mother teacher educators' household and family characteristics do play a major role in their professional life. They are family background, educational profile of their household members, occupational status of their family members, role of different members in decision-making, household responsibilities, balance between their family life and professional life. These have important ramifications on how mother educators will function as a professional. Therefore an understanding division of labor in the house is of mother teacher educators household conditions is important for policymakers and program planners who are working to improve mother teacher educators' professional capacity.

Studies have documented that women educators bear heavy work burden as compared to men. Normally, they work is confined to household chores. If they choose to work outside the home, they must be prepared to assume the 'double' responsibility of home and their work. It is more or less understood that women will do the household chores of cooking, cleaning, providing care to young children and elderly people, fetching water and firewood, etc. As in most households worldwide in both developed and developing countries, reproduction is not regarded as work and household work is not considered productive. Men normally remain away from such household chores.

The mother teacher educators remain engaged in household tasks outside the school hours. The number of hours however varies. Majority of the mother teacher educators spend between 5 to 8 hours everyday. Study has reported that in some places work burden of women (16 hours per day) is much higher than the global average (UNDP, 2004). Further household burden of mother teacher educators is much heavier than that of men. A much larger proportion of mother teacher educators remain engaged in household work for longer hours (5 hours and more) as compared to the male teacher educators.

In India, cooking is the primary responsibility of women or female members of the family. Normally, male members of the household do not usually help in preparing food, which is a time consuming act. Cooking food is mainly a woman's responsibility. Many mother teacher educators have not have any permanent arrangements to look after their children. That meant that they themselves had to take care of children while they are at work. In few cases, other family members or relatives provide childcare. In case of males their spouse looks after their young children. In the case of mother teacher educators, spouses were not of any help. A

very small proportion of the mother teacher educators may have childcare provided by their spouses. It is obvious that the division of work between male and female is typically traditional. Much of what roles and responsibilities male and female teacher educators perform at home are socially defined. Males are frequently engaged in activities that are carried out outside home, while female have responsibilities that are performed inside the house. Apparently, age-old practices do exist even today and there has not been much change in the traditionally defined roles and responsibilities for men and women.

Household roles and responsibilities of mother teacher educators: Cooking food, washing dishes, ironing clothes, cleaning house, fetching water, fuel wood, or fodder, caring young children, taking care of elderly people or sick family members, working on the farm or kitchen garden, shopping, tending animals, attending college, preparing for university and/or college.

Roles and responsibilities of male teacher educators: Marketing and buying food, visiting friends, relatives and others attending local meetings, working on the farm or kitchen garden, tending animals, private tutoring, attending college, preparing for university and/or college exam, doing social work

2) Working place environment

The work and working place environment of the mother teacher educators is to be to describe and analyze to find out whether the mother teacher educators are working in a college or in a community of their choice and their teaching assignment, whether mother teacher educators personal needs are taken into account while giving teaching or non-teaching assignments whether availability of physical and instructional resources are there in the college; whether on-site support and supervision is available to the mother teacher educators, their career advancement is to be analyzed. Many times mother educators' involvement in non-teaching assignments such as maintaining some accounts etc. can hamper the professional quality of mother teacher educators and males are less likely to be engaged in such non-teaching assignments. Mother teacher educators find it extremely difficult to make a balance between career schedules and the demands of household work and childcare. For these reasons, working women would expect some consideration of their personal needs by their supervisors while being assigned. In present, occasionally only the mother teacher educators needs were being considered. Mostly, principals are not cognizant of the mother teacher educators' needs

and difficulties, especially how their domestic obligations can affect their performance in work place.

Heavy teaching load, lack of time to prepare for teaching both at home and at college, negative attitudes of parents, lack of discipline on the part of students, extra responsibility, frequent classroom interruptions, uncooperative colleagues, lack of resources and materials, assignment outside of education, training and experience, lack of administrative support, large class size are often identified as barriers for hinder the mother teacher educators as effective and productive.

For mother teacher educators to be effective and productive, colleges must provide appropriate conditions. Small class sizes, supportive attitude of parents and community members, availability of instructional resources, appropriate physical atmosphere, collegial environment, adequate time for preparation, timely promotion, continuous opportunity to participate in professional development activities, orderly atmosphere in colleges, reasonable teaching load, and administrative support are believed to boost teacher effectiveness and productivity. It was emphasized over and over again that 'proper scheduling' and 'shorter college hours' would help female teachers to work with young children.

Measures required for professional development and career advancement in ICT for mother teacher educators

Introduce multiple measures to increase mother teacher educators' participation in training courses. Mother teacher educators' participation in the in-service training courses is very minimal. Often there is a tendency to blame mother teacher educators for their low or no participation in training courses. The factors that prevent mother teacher educators from participating in such courses are seldom explored. It is clear from the data that many barriers remain: location of training sites, lack of security in training centers, family pressure not to attend the training courses, household work, childcare etc. many times mother teacher educators female teachers are not nominated for training courses. Low participation of mother educators in training courses can be addressed in several ways. First, mobile and on-the-spot training courses can be designed where it is not feasible for mother teacher educators to attend training institutions located far away from their homes. Second, at times training centers can organize 'female only' training courses. Third, provision of childcare at training centers will

help mother teacher educators with young children. Fourth, training centers, should have women trainers Fifth, physical facilities will need to be developed at the training centers to meet special needs of mother teacher educators.

Recommendations

Information: Mother teacher educators should have timely access to information, knowledge and resources on various policies pertaining to teachers. This should be achieved by implementing responsive capacity building schemes.

Pre-service training: The teaching and ICT training methodology should include scope for self-critical analysis by all stakeholders; it should include reflective methods and cooperative learning; with the curriculum focusing on importance of ICT.

In-service training: The current In-service training modalities inn ICT use should be reviewed, updated and revised. The need for in-service training in ICT should be relevant to providing quality education in a friendly manner. In-service training should be needs based; be based on the pedagogical knowledge and skills that have been gained during the service.

*Strengthening of pedagogical content knowledge***:** There is a strong need to enhance the pedagogical content knowledge and skills of mother teacher educators in ICT.

Capacity-building schemes: Mother teacher educators should have access to both special recurrent and ICT upgrading courses. The programmes should be relevant, contextual and gender sensitive. The participation and representation of mother teacher educators should be ensured by the provision of ICT training opportunities at local level.

Training Modalities: To support and strengthen those currently teaching, the following training modalities in ICT other than the fixed in-service training should be considered to meet the various training needs of mother teacher educators such as mobile teacher training; distance education; self-learning modules.

Quality of Teaching: Quality of teaching and the school environment should be ensured through proper alignment of classroom teaching and the relevant policies; programmes; and delivery.

*Work environment***:** There should be support mechanisms and systems established to provide a congenial college and home environment such as; provision of local child care centre, flexible working hours, whenever possible, private rooms for mother teacher educators, physically safe

and emotionally secure environment, separate toilets, primary health facilities, library facilities (including basic ICT instructional materials).

Mother teachers in managerial positions: Priority should be given to the appointment of female teachers having ICT knowledge in managerial positions (e.g., Principal and resource person). ICT using capacity of female teachers should be enhanced through counselling and guidance, in-house mentoring, and management and leadership training to enable them to accept managerial roles. It is also necessary that mother teacher educators be given the opportunity to participate in decision-making at all level including the college Management Committees.

Mother teacher educators networking: To further the rights of mother teacher educators and for mutual information sharing, a forum for mother teacher educators is established.

Gender-awareness training: To generate a change in attitudes and behaviour of all stakeholders and communities in general, special gender training should be conducted through the media and other means of communication. Packages should be developed regarding gender sensitization, awareness-raising campaigns, interaction with communities etc.

Conclusion

Professional development rewards educators with personal and professional growth, greater job security and career advancement. ICT reformed education in the recent years. Therefore it is essential that the teachers to learn new roles and ways of teaching using ITC for their professional development. Mother teacher educators household and/or family characteristics do play a major role in their professional life, they bear heavy work burden as compared to men. Therefore changes are required in order to make the mother teacher educators professional development various means such as mother teacher centered professional development strategies; professional development opportunities should be equally accessible to mother teacher educators, for example, providing childcare facilities, transport and female trainers. Use innovative strategies to reach women, such as classroom-based training and distance education. Ensure that the content of teacher training is oriented to the specific experiences, create local networks of mother teacher educators who can meet on a regular basis to share experiences and provide support to each other. Conduct mother educators training sessions to increase their skills in the use of ICT across the curriculum; conduct professional development for mother teachers that combines ICT skills and gender equity issues; Seek funding for and conduct events or programs designed to increase awareness for mother teacher educators' ICT issues; provide resources and linkages to mother educators; provide more time to mother educators for

practicing the ICT. Mother teacher educators work in difficult circumstances. Therefore, a complete incentive package is in order. Such a package can include provision of childcare, hardship allowance, longer vacations, giving extra value for each additional lesson taught, the service done in the remote and rural area in promotion, honoring those who serve in remote areas and reasonable workload.

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