

TEACHER EMPOWERMENT TOWARD PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND EFFECTIVENESS-CONCEPT, NEED AND IMPORTANCE

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Abstract

Generally Teaching is delivered by a teacher to enhance the amount of learning of a learner. To make learning more meaningful, understandable and fruitful to a learner, effectiveness of teaching delivered by a teacher is very essential condition. This concept of teaching-learning process is not exceptional one in case of development in teacher training institutions. Empowered teachers are given the encouragement and support necessary to take risks and engage in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) while collaborating with their colleagues and this process is essential to success in education. Being an empowered teacher means having enough resources and freedom to provide every student with the education that they deserve. The present paper deals in lime light the relationship among teacher empowerment, professional development and effectiveness.

Keywords: *Teacher Empowerment, Professional Development and Teacher Effectiveness*

Introduction

The term teacher empowerment is used in multiple and sometimes even conflicting ways, probably because of its popularity in educational discourse (Prawat, 1991). We will outline some of the definitions of empowerment before giving our own ideas about the concept. Sometimes empowerment is linked with notions on teacher efficacy (Edwards & Newtons, 1995; Imants et al., 1993; O'Connor & Korr, 1996; Quaglia et al., 1991). Empowered teachers believe that they can affect student learning and can exercise control over important events which may lead to student learning. Knowledge and skills of teachers are necessary conditions for their professional routines, but they do not guarantee success because the relationship between knowledge and actual performance is mediated by self-efficacy. A view is held by Goodmam” Empowered teachers carefully consider the content of what is taught to children is able to creatively use materials , personal talents and innovative resources in planning and implementing learning activities. In particular, these individuals are committed to providing thoughtful and challenges educational experiences for children, thereby encouraging their pupils to become empowered themselves”.

Prawat (1991) tries to summarize the literature on empowerment. He states that two dimensions can be discerned on which notions of empowerment can be traced. First, definitions of empowerment refer either to the personal context of teachers or on the context of the work place of teachers, or on the context of the work place of teachers, the classroom or the school. Second, notions of empowerment can relate either to the epistemological or to the political agenda. Most of the definitions outlined above can fairly easily be placed on the dimensions of Prawat.

Concept of Teacher Empowerment

Many educational professionals, including the adaptive team, place heavy emphasis on the importance of being an empowered teacher. However, the concept of empowerment can seem abstract and its meaning in relation to education is sometimes unclear. Defining exactly what is meant by statements such as ‘adaptive learning technology empowers teachers’ is vital to maximising their impact on the field and illustrating how teachers can become empowered. As such, this post aims to clarify exactly what it means to be an empowered teacher. Dictionary definitions of empowerment generally distinguish between empowerment as “to give power or authority to, especially by legal means” and empowerment as “to enable or permit”. This distinction presents the first problem in defining empowerment in relation to education because it is not immediately clear whether one or both of these definitions relates to being an empowered teacher. Additionally, each definition is somewhat abstract and difficult to link to educational practice. Although the first definition given above emphasises power, being empowered is not

the same as being powerful. Power is often defined as “the ability or right to control people or things”, implying that people with power have the authority to influence the actions of others.

While empowered people can have power and powerful people can be empowered, it is possible to be empowered without being powerful and vice versa. In education, creating a hierarchy in which some teachers have power while others are powerless opposes the empowerment process because empowered teachers must be free to exercise their own professional judgment without being restricted by others. A further problem with the conceptualisation of empowerment as “to give power or authority to” is the implication that empowered people are in control. As illustrated above, empowered people do not necessarily have control over others and such a situation would inhibit empowerment in education. It is also important to consider factors such as variability, innovation, and creativity, all of which are central to empowerment even though they can rarely be controlled. Teachers can’t control everything, and expecting them to do so would prevent them from becoming empowered.

Need and Importance

Teachers’ empowerment is very important and necessary. Frances Bolin defined it as “investing teachers with the right to participate in the determination of school goals and policies and to exercise professional judgment about what and how to teach”. In this view, being an empowered teacher means having access to information and materials and being free to use these resources in a way that meets student needs and targets. Empowered teachers are given the encouragement and support necessary to take risks and engage in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) while collaborating with their colleagues and this process is essential to success in education. Being an empowered teacher means having enough resources and freedom to provide every student with the education that they deserve. Teachers who have not yet experienced empowerment are unable to fully personalise their teaching to the needs of each student and, as mentioned in my recent post about how adaptive learning technology is depersonalising education, students are turning to expensive personalised tuition sessions in search of the full attention of an educator who can provide them with personalised content and feedback. The importance of empowerment is also illustrated by its role in increasing teacher motivation, improving problem-solving skills, and teaching students to become empowered, all of which are vital to improving learning outcomes for every student.

Personal/epistemological: What knowledge and value claims should I accept as valid? This type of empowerment is especially stressed in the literature on teacher reflection, where teachers are not considered consumers of educational products but active participants in the construction of education.

1. Personal/ Political: What do I personally have to offer to the ongoing conversation in education? This type of empowerment is derived from the literature on unequal power relations and oppressed groups in educational settings.
2. School/ epistemological: What should I focus on in the teaching/ learning environment? In this view teachers construct their own environment by making use of theories about teaching and learning.
3. School/ political: what resources and support do I need, as a professional, to be successful in my work? This view on empowerment stresses the need for greater control and autonomy in the work place. A lack of autonomy supposedly reduces teachers.

Empowerment as means to Achieve Educational Effectiveness

In this paper, I will focus on the teachers as a professional in a school setting and as a part of a school team.

At the context level: Teacher profiles, initial training of teachers, core goals/core curricula, assessment and evaluation system. Teachers profiles are descriptions of the characteristics ascribed to professionals in teaching, for example teachers in primary education

At the school level: Educational leadership and in-service training and forms of intervention and coaching

At the teacher level: procedures for the selection of educational materials and implementation of materials by grouping procedures and teacher behavior

Here are 15 of the many 21st-century professional development skills, or as we like to call it, “Modern skills” that today’s teachers should possess.

Professional Development

1. Adaptability: In this modern, digital age, teachers need to be flexible and be able to adapt to whatever is thrown their way. New technologies are developed every day that can change the way students learn, and the way teachers teach. Likewise, administrators are changing and updating expectations and learning standards. Being able to adapt is a skill that every modern teacher must have. If it's being able to adapt to the way students learn, the behaviour their classroom exhibits, or their lesson plans, it is a definitely a trait that is a must-have.

2. Confidence: Every teacher needs to have confidence, not only in themselves but in their students and their colleagues. A confident person inspires others to be confident, and a teacher's confidence can help influence others to be a better person.

3. Communication: Being able to communicate with not only your students but with parents and staff is an essential skill. Think about it: Almost all of a teacher's day is spent communicating with students and colleagues so it is crucial to be able to talk clear and concise in order to get your point across.

4. Team Player: Part of being a teacher is being able to work together as part of a team or a group. When you work together as a team, it provides students with a better chance to learn and have fun. Networking with other teachers (even virtually) and solving problems together will only lead to success. Doing so fosters a sense of community not only in your own classroom, but school-wide as well.

5. Continuous Learner: Teaching is a lifelong learning process. There is always something to learn when you are teacher. The world is always changing, along with the curriculum and educational technology, so it's up to you, the teacher, to keep up with it. A teacher who is always willing to go that extra mile to learn will always be an effective, successful teacher.

6. Imaginative

The most effective tool a teacher can use is their imagination. Teachers need to be creative and think of unique ways to keep their students engaged in learning, especially now that many states have implemented the Common Core Learning Standards into their curriculum. Many teachers are saying that these standards are taking all of the creativity and fun out of learning, so teachers are finding imaginative ways to make learning fun again.

7. Leadership: An effective teacher is a mentor and knows how to guide her students in the right direction. She leads by example and is a good role model. She encourages students and leads them to a place of success.

8. Organization: Modern teachers have the ability to organize and prepare for the unknown. They are always ready for anything that is thrown their way. Need to go home sick? No problem, they have a substitute folder all ready to go. Studies show that organized teachers lead more effective learning environments. So it is even more imperative to be organized if you want higher-achieving students.

9. Innovative: A modern teacher is willing to try new things, from new educational apps to teaching skills and electronic devices. Being innovative means not only trying new things, but questioning your students, making real-world connections and cultivating a creative mindset. It's getting your students to take risks and having students learn to collaborate.

10. Commitment: While being committed to your job is a traditional teaching skill, it is also a modern one. A modern teacher needs to always be engaged in their profession. The students need to see that their teacher is present and dedicated to being there for them.

11. Ability to Manage Online Reputation: This 21st-century, modern teaching skill is definitely a new one. In this digital age most, if not all, teachers are online, which means they have an "Online reputation." Modern teachers need to know how to manage their online reputation and which social networks are OK for them to be on. LinkedIn is a professional social network to connect with colleagues, but Snapchat or any other social networking site where students visit, is probably not a good idea.

12. Ability to Engage: Modern teachers know how to find engaging resources. In this digital age, it is essential to find materials and resources for students that will keep them interested. This means keeping up to date on new learning technologies and apps, and browsing the web and connecting to fellow teachers. Anyway that you can engage students and keep things interesting is a must.

13. Understanding of Technology: Technology is growing at a rapid pace. In the past five years alone we have seen huge advancements and we will continue to see it grow. While it may be hard to keep up with it, it is something that all modern teachers need to do. Not only do you just need to understand the latest in technology, but you must also know which digital tools is right for your students. It's a process that may take time but will be greatly influential in the success of your students.

14. Know When to Unplug: Modern teachers know when it's time to unplug from social media and just relax. They also understand that the teacher burnout rate is high, so it's even more critical for them to take the time to slow down and take a moment for themselves. They also know when it's time to tell their students to unplug and slow down. They give their students time each day for a brain break and let them kick their heels up and unwind.

15. Ability to Empower: Teachers inspire, that's just one of the qualities that come along with the title. Modern educators have the ability to empower students to think critically, be innovative, creative, adaptable, passionate, and flexible. They empower them to be able to solve problems, self-direct, self-reflect, and lead. They give them the tools both digital and knowledgeable to succeed, not only in school but in life.

Conclusion: One of the common obstacles to teacher effectiveness is constant organizational change. Far too often, schools change instructional methodologies/programs every few years. In order to be effective in their role, teachers must have the opportunity to master the instructional process, and this takes time. A school's assessment framework, data team process, and instructional routines all take time to embrace and internalize. Therefore, careful consideration should be brought to decisions regarding instructional materials and establishing processes. Schools can achieve higher levels of teacher effectiveness by empowering teachers through a shared and clear understanding of core instructional materials, leveraging several kinds of assessments to build profiles of student ability, informing instructional priorities through the use of data, leveraging research-based methodology for intervention, and embracing the process with consistency. A commitment to this kind of approach benefits teachers, students, administrators and the entire school community. When schools are looking to hire a teacher, there are a few basic requirements that they are looking for: A College degree, experience working with children, and, of course, patience. Teachers need a variety of professional development skills along with knowledge of their subject matter and experience in order to be an effective teacher. Likewise, as the rapid developments in technology infuse into our lives, they affect the way students learn and the way teachers teach. Modern teachers need to be competent in not only basic skills, but new skill sets.

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