

Department of Education, Patna University

- **Course No:-C.C.6**
- **Unit -1 (Approaches to Teacher Development)**

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APPROCHES TO TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

OBJECTIVE: - After going through this topic, students will be able to understand the concept and approaches to teacher development

- **Content :-**
 - **Introduction**
 - **Approaches to teacher development**
 1. **Self-directed development**
 2. **Cooperative development**

Introduction

Development means change and growth. Teacher development is the process of becoming 'the best kind of teacher that I personally can be' (Underhill 1986 p1). To the extent that teachers are regularly asking themselves 'How can I become a better teacher?' 'How can I enjoy my teaching more?' 'How can I feel that I am helping learning?' they are thinking about ways of developing. They are acknowledging that it is possible to change the way they teach and perhaps also the preconceptions that they have about teaching and learning.

Teacher development, as we understand it, draws on the teacher's own inner resource for change. It is centred on personal awareness of the possibilities for change, and of what influences the change process. It builds on the past, because recognizing how past experiences have or have not been developmental helps identify opportunities for change in the present and future. It also draws on the present, in encouraging a fuller awareness of the kind of teacher you are now and of other people's responses to you. It is a self-reflective process, because it is through questioning old habits that alternative ways of being and doing are able to emerge. Through the activity below, and those which follow later, we aim to help you experience this process.

Approaches to Teacher Development

The idea of teacher development is malleable because it takes many forms, has different meanings in different contexts, operates from a variety of implicit and explicit beliefs and value bases, and is manifested in different forms of action. This section attempts to give review of various approaches to teacher development in order to get behind this apparent diversity, of the concept, to look for an underlying common core on which practical models for teacher development may be built.

Staff development can be conducted at individual and institutional level. At individual level, one may use it to refine own skills and knowledge. McGrath (1986) describes it a lifelong autonomous process of learning and growth by which teachers adopt changes and enhance their awareness, knowledge and skills. In this context staff is regarded as self-reflective and self-critical individuals

with diverse views and approaches who can be depended upon for professionalism as well as their ability for self-development. Thus it is commonly presumed that staff development adopted on self-reflective and self-critical bases is likely to achieve its goals and leaving teachers with enthusiasm and motivation to enhance their knowledge and skills. However, there is a possibility that teachers' priorities for professional development might be in conflict with the institution's goals and targets. At institutional level staff development may be associated with the management. Hargreaves and Michael (1992) highlight that teachers are to be trained and developed, rather than to be viewed as people who can and should develop themselves.

Institutional level teacher development plans are practical in the sense that they focus on understandable and usable methods for classroom situations, benefit large number of group and help achieve institutional targets more effectively in a measurable system. However, Hargreaves and Michael (1992) are of the opinion that at institutional or group level, teachers might be given little discretion over the degree or pace of adoption of the skills and this betrays disrespect for teachers' professionalism and the quality of their classroom judgement. This sort of approach may also create a psychological impression among teachers of being 'cured or reformed' by the management. Another drawback of this approach is that teachers feel that resources are being distributed disproportionately to the outside experts hired by the management. At institutional level, while planning professional development programme, the management might ignore teachers' individual professional needs and could be more concerned with the institutional achievements.

Considering this possible authoritarian aspect of institutional and/or individual development plans, educationalists usually tend to incorporate the needs of both management and teachers for best possible results. Below is given overview of few significant approaches to teacher development that have gained popularity among schools and educationalists

1. Self-directed development

A. Self-development through classroom

This approach may be viewed as an extended form of co-operative approach. Wang & Seth (1997) conducted an experimental research study in China to turn classroom observation into an effective tool for teacher development. This approach gives teachers a chance to choose themselves whom they would like to invite to their class, which aspects of teaching should be observed and what is

going to be discussed in the feedback discussion (Wang & Seth 1997). The approach has four aims:

1. To help teachers understand that they have a responsibility for their own development.
2. To help teachers have a clearer understanding of their own classroom experiences.
3. To introduce teachers to a more developmental approach to teacher training.
4. To help teachers build a more supportive and trusting relationship with their colleagues, and to realise the mutual benefits they would accrue from this.

The process of self-development is carried through interaction between the teachers and the observer. The interaction goes through the stages of understanding, reflecting, focusing, disclosing and planning (Edge 1992).

Understanding is the most important stage. The observer tries to stay with the teacher's framework of classroom experience, understands what the teacher says and makes the teacher feel being listened to. Sometimes the teacher might not accept everything the observer says and can justify as well as insist on his/her own view. At the disclosing stage the observer has to remain within certain limits, and to offer the teacher a perspective rather than a prescription. A typical procedure of the whole process consists of a pre-classroom observation followed by the actual classroom observation process. A post-observation discussion is conducted to discuss issues and concerns as agreed in the pre-observation session with a post-classroom observation questionnaire.

This approach has certain advantages such as its effectiveness to teach self-development and its capacity to offer a relaxed and informal environment. This approach also provides relevant feedback from the observer. Furthermore, the approach is a means of collaborative learning for teachers to learn from each other. However, sometimes the observer could be a marionette in the hands of the teacher who acts according to the teacher's wishes. It also takes a lot of time and the procedure may continue without achieving any developmental goals. It also requires a cyclic consistency and regularity which might not be possible due to busy academic routine and calendar.

B. Self-awareness through groups in teacher development

Underhill (1991), who presented this approach, says that this approach aims at carrying out individual teacher development within a group of people who normally work together and has to do with the strong hold that group norms can exist over members of the group. Underhill believes that: This approach is likely to create an interpersonal, caring environment with a shared commitment to the

process of intentional development. This kind of personal or professional development is carried out by oneself. Other people play important role in creating a psychologically facilitative climate. Though this sort of approach also seems to encourage self-development, it unnecessarily depends on the group members. The question is whether it is really simple to create or find a group of people who will be caring and co-operative all the time to work in an ideal environment. This question, having no satisfactory answer, takes the approach far from practicality.

2. Cooperative Development

In Cooperative Development, two colleagues agree to work together for a certain period following specific rules for their communication. Their interaction is based on an existing foundation of trust and a shared commitment to create an open space in which one teacher's ideas can advance in search for a discovery. The two teachers assume roles, one of Speaker and the other of Understander. The Speaker explores a certain idea and tries to push her or his thinking beyond its current state to a higher level of clarity. She or he adopts a non-defensive style of speaking based on the knowledge that the other teacher will not be evaluative. Founded upon a strong collegial relationship, the non-judgmental interaction can nourish the quality of the Speaker's exploratory efforts. For the Speaker to proceed from exploration to discovery and then to a plan of action, the Understander, in his or her role, must facilitate progress along the lines of the Speaker's professional development goals. The Understander abandons his or her personal opinions, experiences, knowledge, and possible solutions. He or she neither agrees nor disagrees with what the Speaker says and fully respects the Speaker's choice of topic and the ways in which he or she chooses to explore it. The Understander empathizes with the Speaker by placing himself or herself in the Speaker's shoes, so to speak, and by observing the world through his or her eyes. The Understander offers authentic respect and empathy; that is, acceptance is not superficial, it is genuine. There are a number of skills that can strengthen the Understander's role in a Cooperative Development exchange. The following are examples (although these skills do not need be practised in any particular order).

A. Attending

Cooperative Development requires active, careful, and deep listening, in which the Understander's attention is completely focused on the Speaker rather than on his or her own thoughts or feelings. Attending is prerequisite to all the other skills, and its quality informs the quality of the entire exchange.

B. Reflecting

The Understander processes what the Speaker says and reflects it back to her or him. For example, the Understander might say in response to a statement by the Speaker, «If I am understanding you properly, what you are saying here is» or «Let's recap; the message I am getting is ...». The Speaker hears her or his own thoughts again, this time in the words of the Understander, and, if the reflected ideas correspond to the ideas that the Speaker intended to convey, the Speaker proceeds in the knowledge of being well understood. If, however, the reflected ideas are not accurate, the Speaker pauses, explains the inconsistency to the Understander, examines her or his own thoughts, and then offers a revision. In this process, ideas are sharpened and a clearer sense of direction is established. A third possibility is that the Speaker will recognise the accuracy of the Understander's reflection and in so doing will see the next step that takes his/her thinking forward.

C. Focusing

Once the Speaker has determined the general direction of his or her exploration, the Understander supports the exploratory process by inviting more specific focus. She or he might say, «From what I see, we have two issues here, A & B; would you like to focus on one of these? » The significance of concentrating on one point at a time lies in its power to generate deeper reflection, higher awareness, clearer goals, and more specific plans of action.

D. Thematizing

Demonstrating possible links between different ideas as they arise facilitates the Speaker's path to self-development. For example, the Understander may say, «You just mentioned A, and earlier you mentioned B. Are these two ideas at all related? » The Understander offers this possibility but it is always the Speaker's choice to consider it or not.

E. Challenging

The Understander may notice contradictions in the Speaker's statements and may point them out. Challenging the Speaker does not originate from the Understander's personal opinion about the Speaker's views but, rather, from an observation derived from actively listening. The Understander's role is limited to offering possibilities so she or he may ask, «Earlier you said how important A is, and now you are very positive about B. Can you tell me how those two fit together» Again, the Speaker chooses whether to consider this possibility and, if s/he does so, it is the Speaker, rather than the Understander, who needs to be satisfied.

F. Goal-setting

Cooperative Development is action-oriented activity that advocates teachers' self-motivated positive change. The role of the Understander is to question the Speaker in ways that are intended to evoke the Speaker's clarity or insight. An example of this type of question is, «Based on what you have said in this session, do you see a specific goal for yourself emerging here? » The Speaker then chooses to consider a goal or to defer such consideration until later in the exchange.

G. Trialling

When the Speaker has identified a specific goal, the Understander's role is to help him or her to identify the steps that need to be taken to realize that goal. The Understander may ask, «Now that you have identified a goal for yourself, would you like to consider the necessary steps to achieve it? » Although clarity and detail are key at this point, flexibility also is important so that the developed plan of action is realistic and manageable.

➤ Self-evaluation Question:-

Explain the approaches to teacher development.