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Teacher Training Management System: Case Study of DIET Lucknow

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Teachers and teacher educators are the key players in the process of making quality in education a reality. A teacher's effectiveness and quality learning outcomes are directly linked to each other. It's urgent to see Teacher Education in overall context of the education system to ensure right process paving way to quality in school education. Whereas professionally qualified teachers are in the system, they need high quality orientation in methodology to transact curriculum n the classroom. This can be most powerfully strengthened thru regular In-Service-Training (INST) programs, focusing on teacher's existing capacities. The Education for All Global Monitoring Report (2013/ 2014) states that an education system is only as good as its teachers. Developing teachers' capacity to enhance the quality of learning remains essential and evidence shows that education quality improves when teachers are supported and deteriorates if they are not (UNESCO, 2014a).

Meeting international goals (e.g. Millennium Development Goals (MDGs], Education for All (EFA], World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)) by 2015 and beyond requires substantial investment in teacher training institutions so that adequate pre-service and in service training can be delivered (UNESCO-UIS, 2006). Under TE, the teachers are prepared thru Pre-Service Trainings {PST}, improving capacities of existing teachers addressing their needs, and orienting them to new practices in the school class rooms. It's urgent to expose teachers to outcome-oriented transactional modalities in teachings for all stages of school education.

Though the PST is distributed amongst private partners catering to various professional teaching courses as per norms laid by NCTE, INST remains with government owned TTIs. DIETs are major influence in this arena, as they were conceived under National Policy of Education 1985/1992.The absence of Training Institute for secondary level gave bigger mandate to DIETs

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in INSTs. Whereas States have a subtle mechanism to create various modules to conduct specialized trainings, there is an absolute vacuum in creating a mechanism that captures the existing competence of the teacher as a PERSON, and banking upon those strengths to nurture the system. A teacher is not only an expert in teaching; s/he is a whole person coming with their own set of beliefs and socio-cultural influences. It's pertinent to understand them thru their academic achievements as well as exploring bit of their passionate selves to enhance their interest in the profession.

DIETs are supposed to do 20 days trainings for each teacher every year under SSA. Seeing the large number of teachers in the catchment area of any DIET, the cascading model becomes the only choice.
A DIET can only perform efficiently if this large number of teachers is well recorded.

THE SCENARIO: INST

Every district gets a target, so was Luck now, to train teachers under SSA/TE. We categorized various trainings into 03 broader categories:

1- Pedagogical and methodology based
2- Curricular based/ content based
3- Community based

These programs generally run throughout the year. Some months are heavy loaded. Initially the planning part was acutely ad hoc. There was no Calendar of Activities (CoA) to monitor programs, or rather running it on planned track. During the process of streamlining, we first concentrated on procedural part, detailing on every steps of logistics involved, from Faculty to office support staff and accounts wing to provide financial aids to follow guidelines for a particular training program.

Scene One: It's a general scenario to see almost same familiar faces in every training program. One teacher is Mater Resource Person (MRP) in Hindi, English, Social Science, and may be in SMC training too. It's possible to find a person with Science background having received training for creating Master Trainers (MTs) in Sanskrit or in Mathematics as well. It's possible that a Science Person can handle Sanskrit as subject. Problem is why not to choose someone who has done PG in Sanskrit, or to pick someone who is rather PG in Mathematics, than just being a PCM-Science Graduate.
Scene Two: To conducting a training program in cascade model, a TTI is supposed to create a pool of RPs at district level to percolate trainings at block level. DIET, having no background of teachers in detail, asks Blocks to send certain number of teachers for the training without specifying on basic requirements. DIET communicates, "Send 03 teachers each from the Block for so-and-so training…" On the day of first day of training, you get 03 or fewer teachers. Against a written communiqué, teachers are sent on verbal communication. If someone reports late, and the Faculty asks to explain, the most prompt is generally, "I was on way to School, got

a call to attend the training, and I am here…" If the Faculty scans training room, most faces are familiar, and they live near the town.

Scene Three: TTIs get target in numeric, and the monitoring of the same is done on qualitative parameters. The target is quantitative in terms of teachers to be trained and the allocation is based on the number of the target.

The above-mentioned scenarios have universal similarity in TTIs all over India. The level of objectivity, or a well thought of mechanism is not set to address INST. DIETs have no control over this process, and so are Block people. Not that block doesn't have any data on teachers, but the data they have is static and is not suitable for the purpose of identifying "Right person for the Right Job." If an Institute doesn't have the data of its own direct clientele, it's possible that the job performed might not be done in outcome-oriented ways.

The third scenario indicates the lack of concerns on harmonizing quality and quantity going parallel. It also displays the absenteeism of any well thought of mechanism to deal with massive number of teachers, and the value of trainings. Training is like any other routine regular activity in DIET. It is not inbuilt in institutional arrangements. Unfortunately, building strong human resources is not only necessary but urgent in school education system, especially in State like UP, where huge teachers' vacancies, substantial number of single teacher schools still exist. TTIs have least preparedness to meet out challenges like infrastructure limitations, and planned pedagogical interventions. Various Achievement surveys indicate towards low level of academic accomplishment amongst children. In this light, INST becomes one area where a systemic planning and calculated approach too not only meet the targets, but also reaching out the quality deficit is highly required. In INST process, content, and learning outcomes are necessary components, leading to more reflective and experiential teaching in the classrooms. When such important component in TE is dealt in more routinized fashion, there is huge possibility of not reaching near the expected outcomes.

The Trigger

Our team was more sceptical about INST processes, and generally used to make fun in groups. Worst was that everyone in the sector is aware of this ad hoc syndrome. It was important to bring about seriousness, and outcome oriented passion amongst Faculty. Let me quote here, that generally the quality of Faculty is above average, and the sensitivity towards educational issues are beyond any doubts. The core group on Trainings was always discussing serious concerns. We used to communicate our concerns on INST to SCERT as well. Data bank on teachers, their detailed profiling was the only way out for shifting control button in DIET, form the Blocks.

The exposure trip to Karnataka in 2007 came as a spotlight to see issue more clearly with a hint of solution. We visited SCERT, Karnataka, and for field level interventions, we travelled to Mysore. Observing training actually didn't have anything stimulating, but when the team settled

in Block office, and we were offered various records to flip flop, just to enhance our learning. I got the best record. It was a documentation register horizontally spread with information related to all teachers who were trained till date. The size of the register was a proof of expanded entries on every single teacher. I was much impressed with the finesse the information was preserved. The year was perhaps December 2006.

I drew my attention to multiplicity of efforts each year TTIs, and their subsidiary wings do. It does never lead to better management based on statistical analysis. The above beautiful maintained document can't help the planning of the next year, as it's not humanly possibly to filter from a huge data manually.

Team worked on collection of data based on training performance of DIET, Lucknow in the year 2006-2007 to start with a calculated move. To reach somewhere, we did same massive compiling job on trainings received by every individual teacher in a critical year. Whereas one teacher is supposed to get 20 days training under SSA, here the final picture says that the range of days against teachers varies 03 days to 28 days. It exposed the shallowness of the INSTs, despite the fact that our team is academically sound and believes in quality performance, both individually and as a team.

We explained this to the then Director of SCERT.

Two things were immediately finalized:

1- Use of technology
2- Enrolling all stakeholders in the project.

PRE-PROJECT ON TEACHER TRAINING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (TMS)

Working on manually collected Data in 2006-2007, the team should develop a format, capturing more information on every single teacher at Elementary level, to create a dynamic database that reflects strength of a teacher as a person and as a professional both.

Works proposed:

1- Identifying a tech-engineer, or a person working in the field of ICT to understand new language of TMS;
2- Preparing a format to collect details (Biographical/academic/professional, and as an Individual to understand his/her personality type, as a whole person) on Teachers from Primary and Upper Primary in the entire district to understand teachers in totality;
3- Analyzing and sharing the data collected on INST in 2006-2007, to develop an understanding on the gravity of problems, and being more perspective in approach;
4- Consulting with partners/stakeholders regularly to seek support. It involves Faculty and Block level functionaries. Planning this orientation to zero in the hard spots in organizing a training program, and on feedback mechanism. To call teachers to represent in the team facilitating us to their viewpoints at the same time;
5- Holding workshops for orientation on process detailing, and acquiring their views to make a product that suits to all administratively and also serving the purpose to deliver INST meaningfully;

6- Getting details on various training programs taken place at Block/NPRC levels;
7- Showcasing the concept and work progress on digital training mechanism;
8- List of stakeholders at every level of conducting any training program;

Focus Points

1- To make INST more focused and meaningful, and a responsible activity;
2- Policy planning and better scheduling of trainings;
3- To avoid repetitive work on all functionaries involved in the process;
4- Making data available to analyze and use them as base for further planning;
5- To work on the idea of "who needs what". It's well known fact that one size doesn't fit all. "Free size" is very generic, and it doesn't work in academics. Here teachers come from diverse socio-economic background, and their notions on educational accomplishments also vary. Their sensitivity, creativity, and imaginative quotients are not captured thru any mechanism. Though as a matter of fact, it plays a vital role in an individual's life and performance. The attempt is to make it more utility oriented for the teachers.
6- To meet challenges of logistics pre/post and during a training program. For example, sometime participants sent to a training program are not in consistent with the objective of the program.
7- Ensuring attendance of the teacher-participants during trainings;
8- Taking into cognizance the academic achievements, area of interest, passion, expertize etc. to treat Teacher a whole person, rather than a professional only, to bank upon his/her strengths.
9- Reporting more handy, and a regular process, leading to mid-reviews of the progress;
10- Organically connected with overall schemes of trainings, giving INST a holistic format;
11- Re-aligning stakeholders to perform INST as core job with excellence;
12- Devising it as an instrument to formulate Academic Development Plan of the District;
13- Creating strong school engagement thru efficiency;
14- Paradigm change in training methodology;
15- Bringing control of data and process to the main agency responsible for providing academic support in the district;

Requirements for Process Improvement

1- Creating a centralized data bank at DIET level, by data acquisition and digitalization;
2- Building an all new process of scheduling training of teachers from primary and upper primary levels;
3- Strengthening framework for feedback reports; and
4- Handling the complexity and automation of process.

Project Period

There was not much idea of the work coming ahead. The most basic data available was of the numbers of the teachers. As part of this same project, a data on training programs attended by the teachers under SSA and Teacher-Education was collected in 2007-2008.

According to a close estimation, two years were bracketed as design and testing period. The application is to be started in 2010-2011.

Challenges

1- No dedicated funds for this venture;
2- It's difficult to budget strictly, as none of us have any idea of the challenges. The data is massive, and it is addressing a more variable data;
3- No phase was planned initially, so we got stuck with in consecutive year during up-gradation, because of nouns in names and school names. This led to allotting UID to each teacher to facilitate adding up of trainings one has underwent into any critical year;
4- There was zero finance;
5- There was no example of dealing with technology in such big way into teacher-education;
6- To exactly zero in as to what we want as client;
7- Making the vendor educational term friendly;
8- Collection of data;
9- Making of software, and it's real application to get the expected outcomes;

Strengths

1- A motivated team;
2- Conceptualization of the whole idea turning it into reality;
3- Willingness of all stakeholders from DIET Faculty to Block level functionaries;
4- A team ready to provide us technological solutions, converting ideas into digital reality;
5- Data of previous years;
6- A comprehensive futuristic plan and approach with open-mindedness;

FUTURISTIC APPROACH

This software is very futuristic. It has scope and space of improvements. Initially it was a desktop version, converted into web version in 2012. Block log in was also created, with a complete orientation of Block level functionaries. In the initial year, we didn't go for UID, later on the need was felt and this component was well integrated in the software.

The proposed plan is to integrate financial expenditures on trainings, as per allocation.

In technology, the best feature is to incorporate add on when and where needed. This software designed as a complete training solution to empower teachers through INST, duly focusing on their strengths and needs.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declared no conflict of interests.

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