

## **Continuing Education**

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## **Objectives**

- To develop an understanding of the concept of continuing education
- To be aware of the types of continuing education programmes
- To develop skills in using the models of continuing education programmes.

## **Introduction**

Continuing education has become increasingly important as all countries seek to deal with rapid and fundamental changes in the world's economic, social, cultural, political and civic environments. Continuing education in respect of teacher education may mean a process of life-long education – a continuing commitment to ensure the currency of the skills, knowledge and attitudes of teachers. The current policy in Sri Lanka is that teachers are only recruited to the service once they have completed a period of pre-service training. The teacher after receiving the initial professional training and education enters the school system, but this does not mean that their professional education has ended. The initial training cannot equip the teacher with all the skills and knowledge that they will need throughout their career because the roles of the teacher and that of the teacher educator are continually changing. Continuing Education programmes provide the additional knowledge and skills required in an ever-changing profession. Continuing teacher education courses also act as a bridge linking teachers and teacher educators to the changes taking place in the education system in general.

### **6.1 What is Continuing Education?**

Continuing education in its broadest sense can be defined as all education intended for adult learners, especially for those beyond undergraduate, and college level. It is more commonly defined as instructional programs designed to keep participants up to date in the particular area of knowledge and skills in which they are employed or interested. In this context, continuing education generally refers to instructional courses designed especially for part-time adult learners.

The term 'life-long learning' commonly is used in conjunction with the term 'continuing education'. Life-long education – which is a comparatively new term – applies to both formal and informal learning (including life experiences) while continuing education refers to structured learning experiences, including certified and non-certified full-time or short-term, further or higher education and vocational

recurrent professional training. Continuing education has gained particular prominence in recent years as short highly-focused professional development programs run by universities and technical colleges. The concept of continuing education and that of 'adult education' have also been closely related since the 1960s and 1970s, as is evident through the incorporation of 'continuing' into the title of many professional associations of adult education (for example, The American Association for Adult Continuing Education and National Institute of Adult Continuing Education).

From the 1970s there has been an increasing demand for continuing education due to the widespread belief that initial training could not any longer equip adults with all life's personal and professional requirements. As Paliwal (1985, p.69) cites from the publication *UNESCO: International Perspectives of Teacher Education* (1976, page 116) "As long as education is needed and knowledge about education and children continue to increase, the teacher has always something new to learn. Learning to teach is a life-long pursuit and of teacher's education is a continuing education otherwise is no more than certification"

Thus continuing teacher education may refer to all types of professional training that teachers undertake beyond the point of initial teacher education to move forward in terms of career related knowledge, skills, attitudes and in total competencies to become successful in the teaching career. Now the question arises in the use of synonymous terms to apply to education of teachers beyond their initial training. The concepts incorporated in terms as professional development, in-service education and training, in-service education are used to mean the same.

#### **6.1.1 Why should teachers undergo training?**

The question arises whether teachers should continue to learn throughout their career. In the modern day teachers need to do so because on going training is accepted as necessary whatever the profession is. It is seen that others employed in the business and banking sectors undergo training at various stages in their career.

Why is learning necessary throughout the career?

- To develop academic and professional competencies
- To develop ability to face challenges of change
- To improve job performance
- To develop positive attitudes in terms of one's own profession
- To motivate the teachers

- To improve quality
- To develop a sense of accountability
- To enhance the prospects of career development.

The present day climate of rapid changes, and demands from the society for higher standards in education, and a situation of competitive environments with private institutions engaging in education, the state needs to aspire for higher quality in education. The situation should be such that the public can place a trust in the schools and the teachers. Therefore teachers may opt for further education and training.

#### **6.1.2 Who should undertake responsibility of training?**

Several important questions need clarification. One of them is to identify the agencies for training and the other is to ask what activities need to be undertaken for professional development programmes. In programmes for teacher development a decision is necessary as to who should develop the standards, and who should be entrusted to identify the training needs of teachers. Which authority should be responsible for drawing up programmes to meet the needs and who should be responsible in implementing them. What are the agencies that should be responsible for providing the academic and administrative support? These are some issues that need clarification regarding continuing teacher education.

There are several stakeholders in continuing teacher education in Sri Lanka.

Ministry of Education and Higher Education,  
National Institute of Education,  
National Colleges of Education,  
Provincial Education Authorities,  
Zonal Education Authorities,  
Teacher Centres,  
Teacher Colleges,  
Schools,  
Universities,  
Teachers.

There are some advantages of having several stakeholders. Some are at national level while others work in the periphery. The disadvantage is that there may be repetition of training, resulting in wastage of scarce resources.

### 6.1.3 Functions of Continuing Teacher Education

Current functions of teacher education may be identified in the following manner.

- Professional development of teachers
- Identifications of educational needs at various levels in the education system
- Develop programmes that can fulfill the education needs of teachers
- Implementation of programmes
- Appointment of teacher educators for programme implementation
- Appointment of managers for manage the teacher centers
- Training of the managers of teacher centers
- Training of teacher educators
- Providing both physical and human resources for implementation of programmes
- Supervision of teacher centers
- Ensure quality of the programmes
- Produce standards and criteria for ensuring quality
- Undertake research for improvement of continuing teacher education
- Evaluation of Continuing Teacher Education programmes

By two Acts of Parliament – National Institute of Education Act No 28 of 1985 and Colleges of Education Act No. 30 of 1986 are entrusted with the tasks of some of the functions that are brought out in the previous discussion.

### 6.2 Types of Continuing Education Programmes

Because continuing education programmes are specifically developed in response to the life-long learning needs of individuals, the type of continuing education programmes depends, to a great extent, on the particular needs of the intending participants. With respect to teacher education, those needs generally fall into one of four categories: competencies; teacher competence; teacher performance; and teacher effectiveness. *Competencies* are the individual elements of skill, knowledge or professional values a teacher possesses or can acquire and that are relevant to the practice of teaching; for example, good communication skills are necessary competencies for effective teaching. *Teacher competence* refers to the overall capacity of the teacher to perform their work efficiently and effectively and to promote learning among their students, and the extent to which they achieve those objectives. It is usually expressed as a matter of degree; for example, a highly competent teacher or a teacher of average competence. Teachers grow in

competence with training and experience. Minimum competence is the lowest level of competence at which a teacher can practice the profession without having a negative influence on the development of their students. *Teacher performance* refers to the quality of what the teacher actually does on the job, rather than what he/she has the capacity to do. It may differ in different situations – particular teachers performing well in certain circumstances or environments but not in others. The quality of the teacher's performance largely depends on the competence of the teacher and also on the context in which the teacher works. *Teacher effectiveness* refers to the effect that the teacher's performance has on the pupils. It too depends in part on the context, the content being taught, and the nature of the pupils themselves.

In a diagnostic study of education and training in Sri Lanka (An Asian Development Bank Sponsored Project 1989), several strategies for future improvement emerged, including one involving continuing teacher education. Particular emphasis was placed on the possible use of correspondence for continuing education, particularly:

- Enrichment of the content of the subjects included in the curriculum;
- Innovations in education technology;
- Research in psychology and other social sciences that would have implications for improving the job efficiency of teachers; and
- Appreciation of and acquaintance with children's' and juvenile books.

The report also recommended refresher courses, which can be conducted during vacations, or evenings or week ends, as well as suggesting that Teachers' Colleges be used as resource centers for imparting short –term refresher courses to trained teacher and to act as centers for continuing education courses. It is interesting to note that in the former U.S.S.R and in Sweden there is a provision for compulsory attendance at courses held for teachers with 5 years of experience and are conducted for 5-6 weeks and five study days every year. In some countries the Teachers Centers are also used to meet the individual needs of teachers. Needs may be classified as system needs and teacher's personal needs. Needs are also related to the purpose of development such as school based development, mentoring, and team building.

### 6.3 Models of Development

The methods of delivery of continuing education can include traditional types of classroom lectures or the distance mode of delivery. Due to various reasons, but particularly the work and family commitments of students, the distance mode generally is used more often than traditional classroom lectures. This can include independent study, video-taped/ CD-ROM material, broadcast programmes, and on-line /Internet delivery. In addition conference type group study and video-conferencing is used in several countries, particularly where distances are great (such as in Australia). In such instances use of seminars and workshops supplement and facilitate learning. Use of mass media is another way of supporting the delivery of continuing education programmes. For a particular continuing education programme a combination of the different types may be available.

Another concept with which you are familiar is distance learning though it was omitted from our earlier discussion. Distance learning is a process through which knowledge and skills are acquired through distributed information and instruction rather than classroom-based learning. Increasingly, technology (such as computers and videoconferencing) are used for distance learning. Frequently, distance learning results in a separation of time between the learners and learning resources; that is, the learner must wait to receive information and feedback rather than receive it immediately as in a classroom. Correspondence study (involving the use of print material) and interactive audio/video are common ways of delivering distance education.

The distance learning provider should have clear concise written statements of intended learning outcomes. The learning objectives and outcomes guide the selection of instructional strategies and the methods used. The learning outcomes form the basis for the mode of assessment evaluation and timely feedback to the learner on his progress. The learning experiences are designed to facilitate the progress of the learner and provide interaction between learner and the learning resources.

Models of professional development may be separated on the basis of location as school-based and off-site training.

The off-site model may be of one day or longer award-bearing courses, workshops that provide training on specific issues. There are some advantages in this model such as:

- Enables contact with people from other institutions

- Helps teachers to exchange experiences and new ideas from others
- At the same time there can be disadvantages too such as:
- Considers the needs of a general nature
- Attempts to cater to volunteers rather than for the ones who need training
- Limits impact on practice since there is little follow up
- Disrupts school work by taking teachers away from school

In the school-based programmes, it is provided within the school, and targeted at a group or entire staff of the school to meet the needs of the selected ones.

The advantages may be listed as follows:

- Enables learning opportunities within the school and on the job
- Reflection of classroom practice
- Action research
- Programmes are aligned with needs and the culture of the clients

The disadvantages may be stated as follows:

- There will be isolation without contact with outsiders
- They may not be courses but development focusing school
- Apart from this model the school-focused model does not distract as the location is not the school. This is provided outside school and targeted at a group or entire staff to meet the group needs.

## **Summary**

In this reading Continuing Education was discussed under several topics, such as its definition, concepts, types of programmes, and models of development. It was shown that Continuing Teacher Education has become a necessity today and is carried out to serve several needs in the teacher education sector.



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