
UNIT 12 PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

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12.1 INTRODUCTION

Professional activities involve scholarly work, discussion and some constructive work. Professional activities are planned, interactional, purposeful and are governed by the needs of the school, students and society. They characterise profession and provide it with an identity. They are planned and carried out by members of the profession. The quality of teachers determines the nature and significance of professional activities. They usually emerge from experience and interaction with members constituting the profession. Although education is seen as a profession, some people consider that it has not reached the full status of a profession. Teaching as a profession is equated with medicine and law, for it has a long history and established tradition. Professional activities aim at excellence, to set higher standards in interaction and ethics. In this unit, we will discuss professional activities in the context of a secondary school.

12.2 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- define professional activity;
- define action research;
- solve teaching-learning problems systematically through action research;
- explain systematically the details of organisation of seminar, workshops, and symposia;
- describe the scope of participation in seminars, workshops, and symposia;
- discuss the use of a resource centre; and
- organise visits to a resource centre.

12.3 NEED FOR PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Professional activities of teachers are very important for they build the personality of individuals in a formal setting. They add to the teacher's strength. They provide him with competencies

which are essential for the performance of roles in different situations. They are planned activities with clear objectives and implemented in a systematic manner. These activities could comprise teaching, reading, discussing, doing research, giving lectures, organising seminars and workshops, writing articles, reviews, and papers for professional journals (refereed journals), editing papers, journals, and books, providing counselling, guiding the choice of students, preparing instructional materials, preparing new instruments, apparatus, improvising apparatus or instruments etc.

Teachers are mostly dependent on government or formal institutions such as NCERT, NIEPA, etc. for their training and development. Teachers need to explore the possibilities of self-development through continuous upgrading of their competence, knowledge and skill using local resources or working with non-governmental agencies. Teachers need to realize that self awareness and continuous efforts to develop on one's own is going to pay more premium to them in future. The self reliance developed by the teacher provides him the confidence to take up more challenging tasks and look clearly at the goals of development.

Professional activities give a focus and enhance the value of work due to organisation, precision, accuracy and debate with constructive criticism. Although all educational setting and related problems must equally concern professional teachers, the formal setting gets more importance than others. Education being a socialising activity, it has to take into consideration the context of educational setting, the wider society and the objectives of the institutions. The influences of family, media (T.V., radio, press, print, video, films, audio cassettes, etc.) and peers (co-learners) are significantly affecting students' learning activities. Teachers need to capitalise on these resources while designing and providing inputs to children in schools.

Teachers could mobilise local resources for their training in some useful art or craft. They could work in their leisure time with an artisan to acquire additional skill such as repairing radio, T.V., electrical gadgets, etc. The teacher could work with cable operators at local level for educo-entertainment. School teachers may develop audio, video cassettes for providing additional educational experiences, exercises and activities. Teachers could develop a professional association or forum. They could meet frequently to discuss their problems and develop strategies for development. They could start a newsletter to keep themselves and others informed of the latest developments in the field of education and significant developments in the world.

Teachers could use locally available toys, puppets, and handicrafts for educational purpose. It need not be cost intensive. Low cost or no cost teaching aids could facilitate teaching.

Teachers need to be aware of the various sources of audio-visual media in the local areas (at state and national level). They may develop relations with voluntary bodies working for teachers development. Science centres funded by voluntary bodies and industries provide opportunities for teachers to participate in professional activities.

Check Your Progress

Notes: a) Write your answers in the space given below.
b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

1. List the criteria to designate an activity as professional.

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2. List activities which you consider to be professional activities.

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12.4 ACTION RESEARCH TO DEAL WITH TEACHING AND RELATED PROBLEMS

You have studied in section 12.3, about the need for professional activities. While organising professional activities, a teacher has to face many problems. The problem could consist of organising teaching, ensuring students' attention, evaluation, maintaining discipline in the classroom, lack of resources, equipment materials, chemicals etc. The problems also could be students coming late to classroom, students not paying fees on time, lack of support material, lack of furniture, lack of equipment, and apparatus, lack of chemicals and non-availability of teaching aid of a required standard, textbook, work book, journals, and writing materials etc.

These problems are solved by the everyday teacher on a day-to-day basis with an eye for practicality. However, the teacher is faced with many problems simultaneously which makes the work ineffective. A teacher would not be able to derive satisfaction because problems are many and resources in terms of time, finance and support material are often inadequate.

A teacher by applying his/her mind and effort solves many problems. Sometimes, a teacher takes another teacher's help to work out a solution for the problem. He may involve parents or community in finding a solution to certain problem. Many teachers in recent times are well qualified and often take up teaching with zeal.

A resourceful teacher could solve difficult problems of teaching and of school with a small term, small scale research programme. Such action oriented problem-solving is known as **Action Research**.

12.4.1 Definition of Action Research

Stephen M. Corey (1953) first used the term Action Research. Action research is a systematic attempt to solve immediate problems of teachers and classrooms. It represents the implementation of Dewey's idea of harnessing classroom teachers' capacities in the solution of their particular problems.

Those problems may be specific to an institution or general which could initiate a joint action. For example, teachers could take up small projects relevant for teaching methods, curriculum, grouping of children, assessment and examinations, psychological or sociological problems related to teaching, in-service training of teachers, etc.

Zuber and Ortum (1992) have defined action research as the "**Critical collaborative** inquiry by **reflective** practitioners being accountable and making results of their inquiry public, **self evaluating** their practice and engaged in **participative** problem solving and continuous professional development". This definition clearly describes the role of a teacher as an action researcher involved in solving immediate problem. Action research calls for better preparation, clear definition of the problem and systematic appraisal of the situation for possible solutions.

Advantages of Action Research

Action research has certain advantages:

1. Discussions connected with the planning stages of action research are generally very helpful in providing teachers with insight into the nature of educational problems. A teacher will be able to relate the research problem with the relevant professional literature. The general familiarity with the immediate problem helps a teacher in developing greater understanding of the problems in a classroom and greater competence in deriving solutions, both from published literature and from more adequate investigations of their own. Teachers learn to avoid unnecessary problems and focus their attention on important problems.
2. Action research is completely empirical and local in nature, and therefore provides realistic and feasible solutions.
3. Action research is not rigorous and thus its contribution to the development of education as a science is likely to be secondary. Under optimum conditions, it could provide supportive data. For instance, it can contribute facts to be integrated into theory and it can help in the testing of a theory. It can help in verification and clarification of a theory, and it may eventually help integrate previously existing theories. It is seldom generalized for lack of similarity with existing structure, and limitations of the method itself.

12.4.2 Examples of Action Research

Many teachers do not have the time, resources, inclination to undertake action research. However, certain teachers have shown interest in doing action research. For example, the Teacher Education Department, NCERT, New Delhi invites teachers every year to present findings of their investigations for discussion at the national forum. The CASTME (Commonwealth Award for Science Technology and Mathematics Educators) award given every year by the Commonwealth to innovative teachers is another example of this kind of research. The Indian Science Congress has created a forum for school education in science, where teachers can present innovative ideas, experiments and discuss problems with a view to arriving at solutions to problems and find ways for development.

Action research needs a clear and specific teaching or related problem. Once a problem is identified, probable strategies need to be thought of to solve it. A research design suitable for situational problem must be identified. A teacher needs to collect empirical data systematically and process it scientifically in order to arrive at certain tentative conclusions. These findings or conclusions help to provide a remedy to the problem or improve contact. For example, computer education is to be introduced in a school. For this purpose a teacher needs to prepare or train himself/herself for teaching the courses, list competencies to be attained by the target group and design a course or borrow one already available and implement it considering the needs of students.

A teacher may develop certain instructional material (exercises) for teaching a difficult concept or construct and evaluate its effectiveness in the classroom through a well designed study. A school may not have the required apparatus for an experiment. It needs to think of borrowing apparatus from a neighbouring school or design or improvised apparatus or modify the experiment in order to suit the conditions of the school without foregoing the essential principles of the discipline.

Check Your Progress

Notes: a) Write your answers in the space given below.

b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

3. Give a problem you are faced with in your school.

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4. Examine whether the problem could be solved through action research.

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12.5 ORGANISATION OF ACTIVITIES SUCH AS SEMINARS, WORKSHOPS AND SYMPOSIA

You have learnt, in the preceding section, about action research which is an important professional activity. In addition to this, teachers are also expected to conduct certain other professional activities such as seminars, workshops, and symposia. What are these activities? In the following sections, we will discuss these activities and the processes involved.

12.5.1 Organisation of Seminar

Seminars could be organized to discuss current issues, and problems or share ideas. A teacher in secondary or higher secondary school could organize seminars. A seminar is a small group discussion in a formal setting with a clear agenda. A speaker presents a theme or a set of papers and it is discussed by all those who participate. The chairman/chairperson of the seminar guides, directs, coordinates and organises the discussion in a systematic way in order to optimize time, resources and get more benefits. In a seminar, teachers could discuss the

problems of admission, of staff, of development, evaluation, a new idea or relevant innovations etc.

Activity 1

1. List any three themes for a seminar which can be organised at school level.

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A secondary or higher secondary teacher needs to be resourceful in organising a seminar. He/she may contribute a paper or an idea, constructively criticise or review a conventional approach. He/she has to enlist cooperation of the principal and supervisor in school. He/she needs to take the help or support of colleagues to organise the seminar.

A group of teachers could also organise a seminar. The resources required for organising a seminar are finance, facilities to sit and discuss (a seminar room with adequate furniture and lighting facilities), facilities to present (over head projector, black or glass board green in colours, chalks, slides, projector, etc.) The general themes to be discussed, dates and time need to be communicated to participants giving adequate time for preparation (programme schedule or a letter (note) indicating the date, time, theme (topic) presentation. For example, the time given for preparation could be one or two months. It applies to the host institution and the participants. All the papers received for presentation need to be classified and made available at the requisite time in the format required to facilitate clear presentation. A few teachers could act as recorders of discussion and present and overview to arrive at a few conclusions by the group on certain issues or problems.

Activity 2

1. Given an opportunity to you, how would you organise a seminar?

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2. Describe the steps you would take to organise a seminar.

Step 1
Step 2
Step 3
Step 4

A report of the proceedings of the seminar needs to be prepared and distributed to all the participants of different institutions for their observations and to further channelise the thoughts through certain experiments, activities or teaching. It could be published by the host institution as an instructional and educational activity.

12.5.2 Organisation of Workshops

A workshop is generally organised by an institution or professional association in order to develop certain instructional materials, book, resource material, supportive material, work book etc. Workshops can be organised to develop certain skills in teachers. For example, teachers could be provided certain knowledge about computer language for which they could develop some simple computer software. Teachers could be trained in certain new laboratory skills, develop a question bank, analyse questions in set different examinations and suggest

reforms. A workshop could mean hard and concentrated work on the part of experienced teachers to create certain educational materials. For example, teachers could develop instructional material in a regional or local language for National Open School or in-service training material for District Institute of Education and Training. The inexperienced teachers could be oriented to institutional ethos, problems and perspectives through institutional visit, interviews, discussion and practising skill of human relations. Generally, a workshop comprises a small, selected group of teachers or experts drawn from actual working situations or related experts who theorise on the activities (For example, teacher educators).

Activity 3

1. Write any five relevant activities which could be included in a workshop.

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12.5.3 Organisation of Symposia

Symposia on different aspects of teaching behaviour and teachers functions at secondary and higher secondary levels of education could be organised by a group of teachers in a resourceful institution to focus on important issues that are relevant for the professional growth of secondary and higher secondary teachers. Symposia need more preparation and organisation. The messages, issues, problems to be discussed need to be systematically outlined for worthwhile discussions and for arriving at some meaningful conclusions. Symposia comprise experts in a field or they could be drawn from different fields focussing on the theme. The presentation could be in the form of a research paper, a theme paper, a review, or a model to visualise professional problems and issues in a given context.

Symposia are organised to discuss significant issues of contemporary nature in a short time, to bring into focus the main thoughts and provide direction for the debate in a forum or society.

12.6 DEVELOPMENT OF RESOURCE CENTRE

Development of a learning resource centre at each modal place facilitates learning of large number of pupils one and at the same time. A resource centre may have a coordinator and a few resource persons (teachers) to help, assist and guide students. The centre could also mobilise teachers for some social action to solve local problems, for example, to organise a literary or literacy campaign in a district, to provide rational explanation (scientific information) to certain issues under debate in the area. The District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) could be effectively used for providing in-service training to teachers (primary level) on a continuing basis, for developing instructional materials, developing teaching aids, improvising apparatus. Examples of innovative centres in science are the Vikram Sarabhai Science Centre, Ahmedabad and Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education (HBCSE) attached with Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Bombay. The latter organises in-service training for science teachers. It also has field based programmes in rural areas of Maharashtra state. Such centres could be created in a nodal place in the country in order to achieve national objectives.

A resource centre could be used to provide some counselling services for educational, psychological and personal problems of students. MARG Counselling Centre, Health Centre, M.S. University of Baroda, Vadodara are providing such clinical services. Guidance and counselling centres are functioning at important places organised by a group of counsellors. Examples of this Guidance and Counselling Centre, are IGNOU Regional Centres situated across the country. More and more teachers, inclined to take up such activities, need to be mobilized for providing non-formal educational resources. Some resources such as finance, building, furniture, personnel need to be made available on a part time basis.

Activity 4

1. Visit a Learning Resource Centre and identify a few growth opportunities.

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A resource centre must be equipped with a good library and/or laboratory for teachers and some motivated and intelligent students to involve in innovative activities, to do experiments, discuss, verify data, design new experiment and disseminate ideas to schools for better informed discussion and participation in developmental process.

A resource centre could invite few experts such as scientists, engineers, senior managers, social scientists, teacher educators etc. to visit and interact with teachers for exchange of ideas which are beneficial to teachers and/or students. Some scientists, engineers or teacher educators could be associated with the resource centre for providing advice and to act as leaders to motivate teachers to involve in creative activities and discussion.

Study Centres of IGNOU or Regional Centre, IGNOU or an established teacher education institution with requisite facilities could be one of the venues for a resource centre to provide organised knowledge in a non-formal way and at a convenient time of the participants.

A resource centre could be equipped with a screen to show instructional films. It could also be equipped with T.V. sets for receiving special programmes for teachers through satellite transmission. In this way, many teachers could get oriented to some extent, trained to view issues and problems with a clear perspective and update themselves to become global participants for more interaction and exchange of ideas for development. The local area networking is possible through a resource centre with the help of mobile telephone services, cellular telephones, pagers, voice and image (video) transmission to mobilise more teachers and students and network with other resource centres in a meaningful way for faster growth and development. These technological developments would involve more resources but would increase the communication process for better understanding. In order to develop these facilities, Central and State governments may need few years of planned and focussed selective action towards development. These ideas may be implemented in the Ninth and Tenth Five year plans in a phased manner for increased training and development.

Professional activities in schools and resource centres, help teachers to continuously renew their knowledge, to communicate better and organise for common development of teachers through training at a faster pace and develop more insight into development.

Check Your Progress

- Notes:** a) Write your answers in the space given below.
b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

5. How would you plan to utilise a Resource Centre?

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6. Prepare a list of benefits accrued to you after the visit to a Resource Centre.

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12.7 LET US SUM UP

This unit has focussed on professional activities that a teacher could meaningfully engage in order to solve teaching-learning problems systematically. A teacher would gain understanding of professional development activities such as helping in organising and participating in seminars, workshops, symposia. The idea of a Learning Resource Centre is explained for teachers to contribute, participate and grow with the institution to achieve professional excellence and give better quality of service to society at large.

12.8 UNIT-END ACTIVITIES

1. Select instructional problems and try to solve through action research.
2. Disseminate your experiences selectively through articles, reports in organised forums such as NCERT, Indian Science Congress Association, Commonwealth Meet of Science and Mathematics Teachers, etc.
3. Organise and participate in a seminar, a workshop, and a symposium and prepare a report of each of them.
4. Visit the nearby Learning Resource Centre and seek resources (information, guidance, and programmes) for growth.
5. Contribute to a Learning Resource Centre through participation, innovation, discussion and dissemination.

12.9 POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How can teachers enrich themselves professionally?
2. What are the institutions supporting professional enrichment?
3. What are the resources available to teacher for professional development?
4. List the professional activities in which you have participated in the previous year.

12.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Criteria to name an activity as a professional activity as follows:
 - a) The activity must contribute to teaching-learning.
 - b) The activity must contribute to the self development of the teacher.
 - c) The activity must enhance competence, learning skills, and improve the conditions of learning.
 - d) The activity must ensure more purposeful and continuous interaction of teacher for development.
 - e) It must be educational and contribute to development.
2. Suggested professional activities:
 - a) Teaching-learning process.
 - b) Enrolling or organising talks by experts, seminars, workshop or symposia.
 - c) Creating learning materials.
 - d) Designing instructional materials for teachers.
 - e) Developing educo-entertainment articles, games, puzzles, problems, stories, situations etc.
 - f) Editing school journal, newsletter, books.

- g) Contributing to journal, newsletter, books.
- h) Conducting surveys for research organisation, and
- i) Doing supervision of examinations, organising examinations and helping in bringing results within time.
3. Certain problems are listed. Tick [$\sqrt{\quad}$] the problems relevant to you and feel free to write any other problem not included in the list.
- a) Number of teachers is less than required.
- b) Number of students is more than fifty.
- c) Many students do not attend the class.
- d) Some students come to the class late regularly.
- e) There are no audio-visual aids available in school.
- f) There is no library in the school.
- g) Laboratory/experimental kit is not present.
- h) A teacher is required to do many activities in addition to teaching.
- i) Keeping school premises clean is a problem.
- j) There are no sports material available in school.
- k) Transport facility to school is not regular.
- l) Blackboard and other writing materials are not available.
4. Criteria for deciding the work as action research are as follows:
- a) The action research needs to focus on solving immediate problem in a limited time.
- b) The problem must have a solution.
- c) A person (teacher) with lesser training on systematic inquiry could locate, diagnose and find solution to the specified problem.
- d) Action research is empirical and local in nature.
- e) Action research is not rigorous and it contributes to facts to be integrated into theory. It can help in the testing of a theory.
5. Resource Centre is utilised for:
- i) reading additional material on the selected topic.
- ii) reference work.
- iii) discussing with people the question in your mind.
- iv) scanning the reading material and selecting the appropriate reading material.
6. A visit to the resource centre helped in the following ways (tick [$\sqrt{\quad}$] the relevant alternatives). I
- a) got acquainted with new reading material of my interest.
- b) developed interest in certain questions.
- c) could meet few learned people to discuss issues of concern.
- d) was able to acquire new skills.
- e) was able to organise thought to formulate a concept.
- f) developed concern for learning and systematic development.

12.11 SUGGESTED READINGS

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