

Goel C. (2019). Improving professional practices of in-service teachers in Delhi. *International Online Journal of Education and Teaching (IOJET)*, 6(3). 432-441.

<http://iojet.org/index.php/IOJET/article/view/672>

Received: 10.03.2019
Received in revised form: 20.06.2019
Accepted: 30.06.2019

IMPROVING PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES OF IN-SERVICE TEACHERS IN DELHI

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Abstract

Innovations are changing everything from school culture to student assessment. Changing educational needs of the student and advancement in technology has widened the area of responsibilities of teachers. Pre-service and in-service teachers training became crucial in this aspect. However, studies in field of teacher education point towards various lacunas in pre-service as well as in-service teacher education. In a bid to robust education system in national Capital, the Government of Delhi, began reforming school education in Delhi in 2015 by designing and successfully implementing large scale programs. Placement of Teacher Development Coordinator (TDC) in each school is one of such initiative introduced by Delhi Government through SCERT in July, 2017 as part of the flagship programme of Mentor Teachers. The vision of this programme is to create a collaborative network of teacher-educators for professional development of all teachers teaching in DoE (Directorate of Education) schools for creating 'An education system where everyone learns together'. This programme was started with a view to strengthen the culture of sharing teachers' best teaching practice in the school system, and to identify and work on the specific needs of teachers in particular school to further strengthen the learning of all students. This paper presents a comprehensive understanding of Teacher Development Programme- an innovative project stated by Delhi Government.

Keywords: Professional Practices, In-service Teachers, Teacher Development Coordinator, Innovative Project.

1. Introduction

If you have a burning desire to change the world for the better, consider making educational innovation. There has been intensity of interest in revolutionizing education, starting from online learning; peer learning platforms; adaptive games to learning channels. Innovations are changing everything from school culture to student assessment. These days standard rhetoric teaching-learning methods (if not practice) in education systems around the world are considered to be Inquiry-oriented, child-centered and interactive. The host of these innovative approaches to education are new information and communication technologies which promise a huge impact on educational access and quality. Innovations are exploring a huge range of possible improvement in education to shape the world for the foreseeable future. Latest researches in brain science enforce teachers to adapt and refine their methods for better professional developments.

Hence, in this face of rapid technological developments there have been increasing pressure on schools to prepare students who are adaptable to change and empowered to change their environments, who are creative and innovative, and able to apply knowledge to solve problems with confidence. As a result, the role of teachers has become more complex. In addition to classroom teaching, teachers are required to take up more demanding role of a knowledge broker



and a mediator in order to provide guidance, support, and assistance to pupils at all levels of their learning.

The challenge is then for the teacher education institutions (TEIs) to prepare teachers who are competent enough to use information and communication technologies (ICT) to learn, unlearn and re-learn new ideas and practices. Pre-service and in-service teachers training became crucial in this aspect. Training as a lifelong process of the professional development of teachers became necessary to equip them with the necessary subject knowledge, professional skills and attitudes for effective teaching.

But on the other hand one could easily argue that the teacher training systems is the most conservative, the least innovative, and most difficult to change system. Their staff members (teacher-educators) often have little practical experience in the levels of schooling for which they train their trainees; their curricula often lag behind the curriculum changes mandated for the nation's classrooms.

Studies in the field of teacher education points towards various lacunas in pre-service as well as in-service teacher education. Kamath (2011) mentioned that though the syllabus and the textbooks based on National Curriculum Framework; 2005 are already in the school system and they are being followed by the existing teachers still there is a need to bring changes in pre-service the teacher education system keeping NCF; 2005 in mind. In a study conducted by Yadav in 2012 for assessing the in-service training (INSET) packages used by different states, in terms of quality and relevance to the school curriculum, especially NCF-2005, it was found that constructivist approach to teaching as advocated in NCF-2005 was not addressed in the training packages. Sen Sharma & Sharma (2009) also found in-service training to be less effective in enabling teachers for constructivist teaching-learning.

Yadav (2012) examined the status of implementation of pre-service teacher education curriculum at elementary stage in various States and union territories in India and reported that the integration of theory and practice, and use of ICT in teaching learning process were not reflected clearly in teacher training courses. Jena (2015) found that in-service teacher education lacks in updated curriculum; lack of orientation/ training on new teaching methods and no importance on application of ICT in learning.

Many other studies conducted time to time also reflected various other shortcoming in pre-service and in-service teacher training including- small time period provided for teacher's training (Chand; 2015), pre-service teacher training curriculum does not allocate enough room for the practical aspects (Kannakaran & Bhatta; 2013), pre-service teacher education programs are insufficient to provide the required quality education (Seferoğlu ;2004), methods of teaching lacks innovation and inadequate time duration of in-service teacher education (Richard; 2016), size of enrollment in in-service teacher education is often too large to allow for any meaningful instruction (Imogie;1992) etc.

Even after these lacunas, regular training and structured support for teachers cannot be undermined. It is believed that teachers usually require an environment of mutual trust, learning and support for their development, where every teacher seeks to pursue excellence for themselves and for their students. In a bid to robust education system in national Capital, the Government of Delhi, began reforming school education in 2015 by designing and successfully implementing large scale programs. Placement of Teacher Development Coordinator (TDC) in each school is one of such initiatives introduced by Delhi Government through SCERT in July, 2017 as part of the

flagship programme of Mentor Teacher. The vision of this programme is to create a collaborative network of teacher-educators for professional development of all teachers teaching in DoE (Directorate of Education) schools for creating 'An education system where everyone learns together'.

1.1. Teacher Development Coordinator (TDC) Programme

Keeping in view the challenges faced by teachers in present day school environment, a need was felt to create a community of professionals possessing special mindsets and skills to work together to identify shared challenges that they are facing and to share and create solutions to these challenges. Teacher Development coordinator (TDC) is an in-school support staff who facilitate the sharing of classroom practices and co-create a holistic academic vision of school to provide the best possible education for all students by unleashing the collective passion, knowledge and creativity. It is an on-going practice through whom all teachers of the school can tangibly improve their classroom practice and children's learning.

This program was started with a view to create a platform for peer learning among teachers to explore new ideas and processes of learning. It is believed that the solution from outside school is of less value for the contextual issues of school. So in order to strengthen the culture of sharing teachers' best teaching practice in the school system, and to identify and work on the specific needs of teachers in particular school, Teacher development coordinators (TDCs) are placed in all 1,047 schools of Directorate of education with the prime responsibilities of –a) Facilitating teachers to share learning and experience of classroom practice, b) providing developmental; focused feedback following classroom observations, and c) to focus on improving teaching across the school. The main role of a TDC is of supporting teachers in creating 'school as a learning organization' by developing a consistent and cohesive academic environment in school where everyone can learn. For carrying out such responsibilities effectively TDCs are required to attend capacity development sessions designed for them by SCERT, once in every three months. Beside these one-on-one sessions, faculty meetings, classroom observations, ninety minutes meeting once in every month are also planned.

1.2. Vision of the programme

The vision of the program is to create 'An education system where everyone learns' with priorities to-

- Improve students' foundational skills (Literacy and Numeracy levels) as well as the overall student learning outcome.
- Improving teachers' classroom practice to be more engaging and support learning with understanding
- Teacher's collective and individual capacity and career development

(Source - TDC handbook; 2017)

1.3. Selection of TDCs

For such an initiative, teachers were encouraged to apply for the role of TDC to their respective Head of School (HoS). All the HoS were asked to identify and select a dynamic, creative and active teacher for the role of TDC of school with the consultation and support from mentor teachers (MT) who were oriented beforehand to support HoS in the selection process.



Once a TDC is selected, the principal/vice-principal of schools have been told to reduce the number of classes he/she takes. This is done in order to give TDCs sufficient time to observe the classroom of other teachers, interact with them during their free periods and plan the activities for improved teaching-learning practice. The number of classes taken by TDCs in schools is reduced to not more than 24 periods per week.

TDCs have to facilitate in-school teacher training activities as well as meetings to share learning and experience of classroom practice. Daily half-hour slot is made available to teachers for academic discussion through academic enrichment sessions.

Further, to enhance the world view of TDCs apart from regular thematic trainings, Delhi Government has also organized national and international level exposure to all TDCs. In the current academic year, 300 TDCs have been planned to visit NIE, Singapore for academic enhancement programmer.

1.4.Present Status of TDCs in School

The TDC program has successfully reached out to all 13 districts in the state of Delhi, covering 1029 schools. The District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) is the academic lead of the TDC program. All the Nine Government DIETs' (District Institute of Education Research and Training) of Delhi play a central role in the operation and facilitation of the programme with 24 facilitators including DIETs' Principals, DIET's lecturers and BRPs. Alongside DIET staff - 200 Mentor Teachers (MTs) also provide regular school level support to the TDCs, along with 9 Program Managers from STIR (one in each DIET). As per the requirements of the programme - various avenues and platforms of engagement are created time to time aiming at professional development of teachers. 30 minutes' sessions on a daily basis, along with one-on-one sessions, monthly meetings, etc. are held in school on a regular basis.

1.5.Academic Resource Team

To support TDCs in school, an Academic Resource Team (ART) has been developed in each school consisting of a diverse group of a secondary teacher (10 % of total teachers with minimum 5 teachers) having intrinsic motivation to implement classroom strategies based on the theme and to be the role model for other school teachers. TDC identify and lead the Academic Resource Team in her/his school with the support of Mentor Teacher (MT), Head of School (HOS) and District Officials. All ART members work with TDC and build a culture of academic discussions within the schools. They attend monthly ART meeting with TDC and Implement Classroom Strategies based on the current theme discussed in these meetings. ART members support TDCs in effective facilitation of 30 minutes sessions (Subject wise discussions, classwise discussions, student's specific discussions) and creating a weekly/monthly plan.

1.6.Roles and Responsibilities of different stakeholders in TDC programme

TDC programme includes a number of stakeholders at various levels including teachers, ART members, Mentor Teachers, Head of the School, DIET facilitator, etc. Figure-1 shows the roles and responsibilities of these stakeholders in TDC programme.

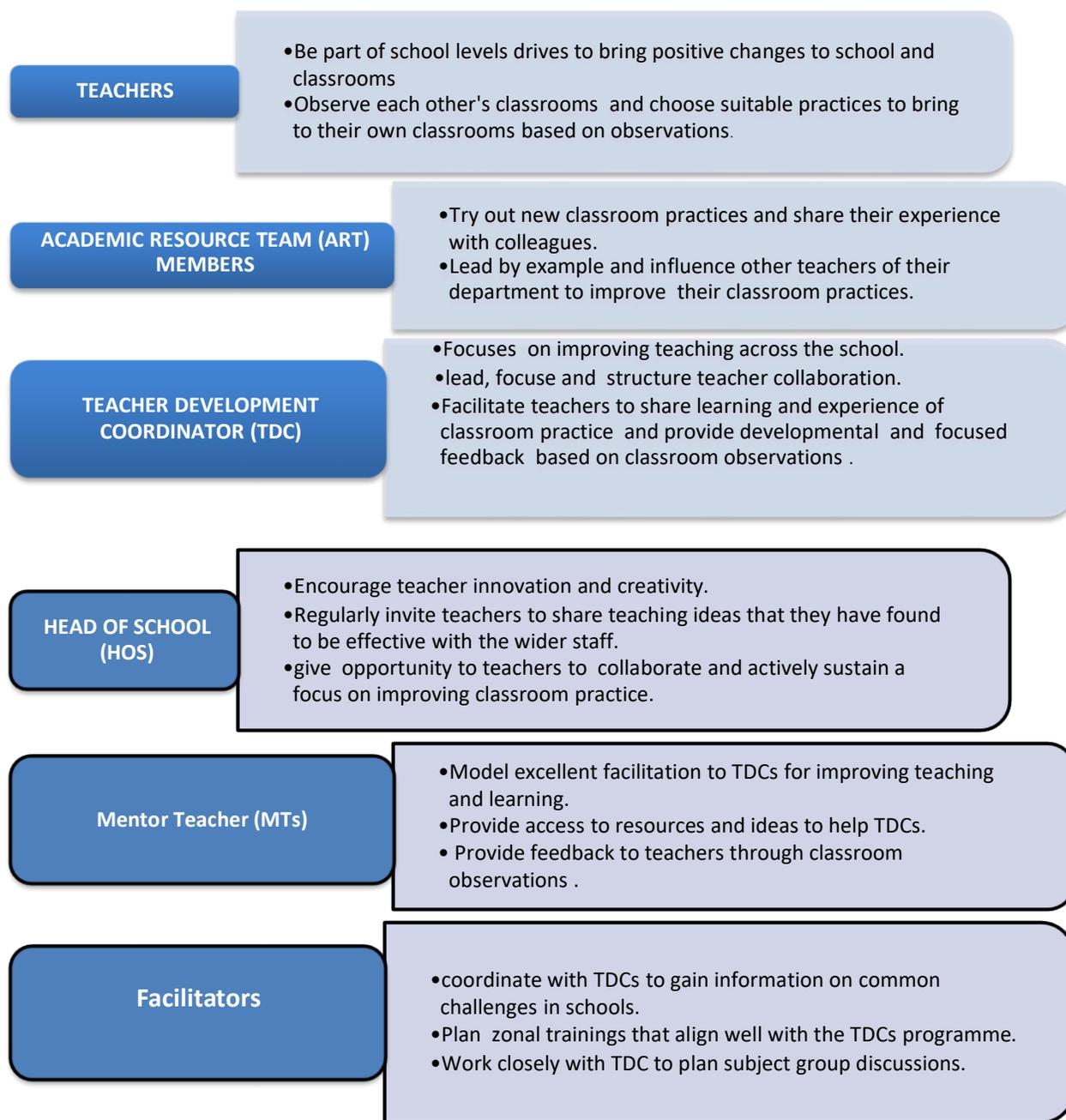


Figure 1. Roles and Responsibilities of different stakeholders in TDC programme Forums of Engagements of TDCs

TDCs have to facilitate various activities and meetings in school in order to create an environment of sharing and collaboration among teachers. Figure-2 represent forum of engagement of TDC in different activities of the school.

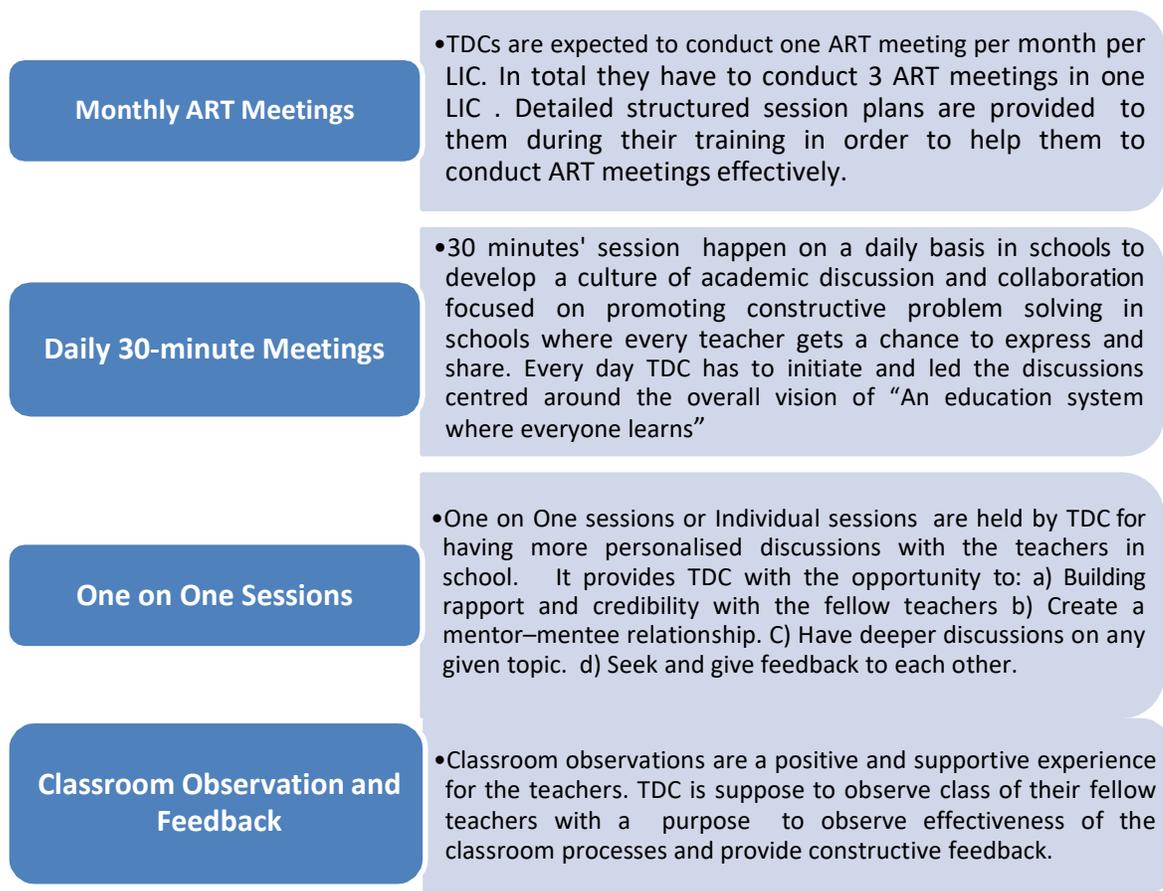


Figure2. Forums of Engagements of TDCs

1.7. Program Support Structure to TDCs

For performing their duties efficiently TDCs are supported by-

- Three co-learning sessions led by Facilitator Group with the support of Mentor Teachers are held in each LIC (Learning Improvement Cycle) to empower TDCs. So that in turn they can lead effective teacher professional development sessions in their respective schools and bring a shift in classroom practice through effective classroom observations and feedback.
- Two Support visits by Mentor Teacher per school per LIC (Learning Improvement Cycle) to observe network meetings and reflection meetings.
- Two support visit by Mentor Teacher per school per LIC (Learning Improvement Cycle) during various other forms of engagement like- 30min daily meetings, faculty meetings, etc.
- One meeting of Mentor teacher with DDEs and DIET officials per month as a district level representation to share learning based on data.

Beside these TDCs and ART members share their feedback on completion of each ART meeting in form of Google forms (3per LIC).

1.8. The Learning Improvement Cycle (LIC)

The Learning Improvement Cycle is a specially designed process to support actual change in classroom practice by providing teachers with opportunities to see progress, create something together and work towards a shared goal. It develops teacher professional mindsets and behaviors by including all the ingredients required to build motivation and support behavior change.

The Learning Improvement Cycle (LIC) comprised of three stages:

1. IDEATE- it includes identification of a problem and selecting/adapting/creating a new strategy (micro-innovation) to address an identified problem.
2. REFLECT AND UPDATE- it includes reflection on selected/adapted/created routine and improving it/selecting another to complement the routine being implemented.
3. SHARE AND EVALUATE- it includes evaluation of the change in the classroom and learning.

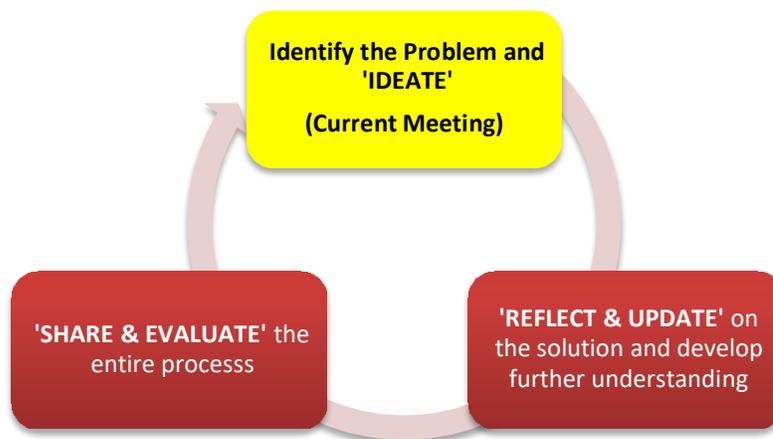


Figure 3. Learning Improvement Cycle (Source- TDC handbook, 2017)

1.9. Various Themes of Learning Improvement Cycle (LIC)

Each Learning Improvement Cycle (LIC) undertakes a particular theme or topic to improve the overall classroom practice. The program has already completed three Learning Improvement Cycles (LIC) and a pre- LIC cycle with different themes. Theme for LIC-4 has been decided and going to be implemented in December 2018- February 2019. Figure 4 shows themes and implementation period of various LICs.

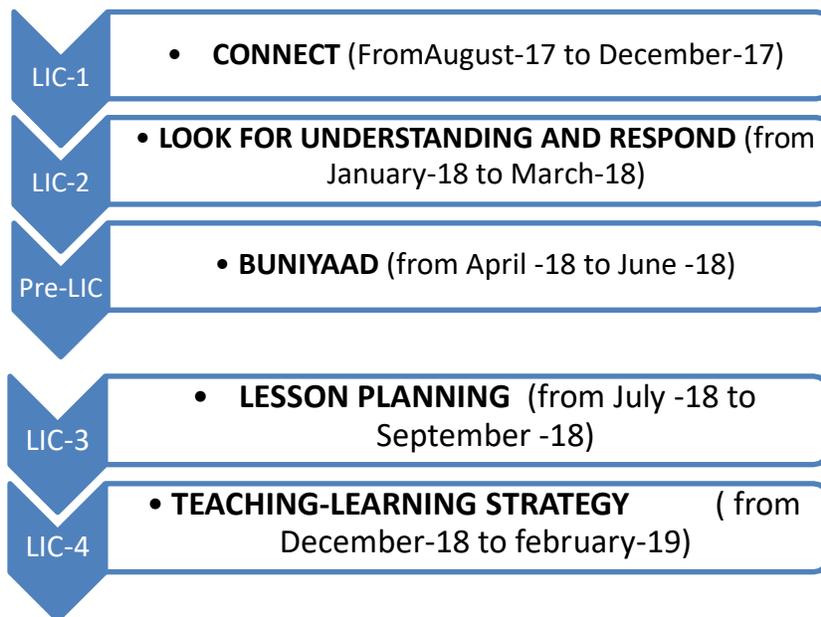


Figure 4. Themes and implementation period of various LICs.

LIC-1 Theme: Building a ‘Connect’ with students

The first step in building an Education system where everyone learns is by creating classrooms where children feel connected to the teachers and feel comfortable with them to express and share their thoughts without any fear. It can be done by making a conscious effort to make children feel valued and safe in the classroom with the aim to build an environment where -Children feel a strong personal connection with the teacher, talk to them frequently, trust them and receive more constructive guidance and praise. LIC -1 focused on building such an environment in the classroom where children feel seen, heard, encouraged and praised.

LIC-2 Theme: ‘Look for understanding and respond’

Considering January to March as the assessment time of the year, the second theme explores classroom strategies around 'Look for Understanding and respond' which focused on using assessments as a tool for identifying gaps between teaching and learning and respond to these gaps by modifying teaching strategies. This theme builds an understanding of 'WHY' of assessment and how to implement classroom strategies to gauge children's understanding among teachers.

Pre-LIC Theme : Buniyaad

The theme of this cycle was “Buniyaad” to align with the DOE efforts under “Mission Buniyaad”. The design of Pre-LIC primarily focused to strengthen the efforts of the department for improving the foundation skills of children in all government schools. The content of the theme focused on enriching the understanding of teachers on Language Acquisition and how a teacher through a combination of various methods, can facilitate the process of language acquisition.

LIC-3 Theme: Lesson planning

LIC-3 was based on 'Lesson Planning' which aimed at equipping teachers with the importance of lesson planning and exhibiting how effective lesson planning can help to deliver lessons more qualitatively. LIC-3 kept the teaching-learning process as the main focus of lesson planning during which teacher and students together construct the knowledge and learn through each other

experiences. Teachers were made to practice lesson planning continuously in fixing the format and taking feedback from colleges for development of same.

LIC-4 theme: Teaching-Learning Strategies

Teaching Learning Strategies plays an important role in activating prior knowledge of students. They are the fuel for effective and efficient classroom interaction to drive students on their journey of discovering a learning experience. The upcoming LIC-4 focuses on the realization of importance of Teaching Learning Strategies by teachers in facilitating the process of remembering things by students in ways that they can be easily understood. The main objective of this theme is to help teachers understand that drill cannot substitute for understanding. LIC-4 has planned to use 'Elaborative questioning' and 'Retrieval practice' as classroom strategies to improve classroom practices.

2. Conclusion

Since, the launch of programme in July 2017 to the successful completion of three LICs, one pre-LIC and starting of fourth LIC, this programme has achieved major milestones. Insight from TDC google form for LIC2, 3 and Pre-LIC shows that till now 5,967 ART Meetings have been held in DoE schools all over Delhi which are attended by 5,924 ART members with an average time of 80 minutes. The success of this programme is revealed from the sharings of TDCs in their google forms where 31 percent TDCs have shared that after this programme students have started coming regularly to schools and started asking questions in the state of doubt (shared by 61 percent TDCs). Teachers become more observant of student's need (35 percent TDCs) and themes of LICs were relevant to classroom and teachers were able to use the strategies suggested in the LIC handbook (60 percent TDCs). The Environment of schools has become more conducive to academic discourse. There are instances where some MTs have shared that teachers of different schools discuss academic issues even beyond school hours (Source – TDC Handbook LIC-4).

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