

Teaching Excellence and Innovative Practices: A Case Study of National Awardee Teachers of India

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ABSTRACT

AIM: The study intended to identify the contributions of the National awardee teachers to the teaching learning process through their teaching excellence and innovative practices which can act as exemplary model for the entire teaching community.

METHOD: Attempts has been made to carry out a qualitative study where two selected cases are based on exemplary model. The researcher selected the National Awardee teachers who are given recognition by the Ministry of Human Resource and Development (MHRD) and are nationally accepted as the best or outstanding teacher in his area of work. The sampling was purposive with the sample size as two.

TOOLS: Non-standardized tools – questionnaire and interview; developed by the researcher were used for the study. Findings of the study reveal that whatever maybe the innovative practice it is very important how that practice is implemented to groom and nurture the talent and potential of the learners.

FINDINGF: The National awardee teachers emphasized that there should be use of critical pedagogy with the aim being holistic development of the learners. Along with constant reflection and self-evaluation by teachers, their social activeness also plays an important role in their professional development.

Keywords : Teaching excellence, innovative practices, National Awardee Teachers

INTRODUCTION

“The principle goal of education in the schools should be creating men and women who are capable of doing new things, not simply repeating what other generations have done; men and women who are creative, inventive and discoverers, who can be critical and verify, and not accept, everything they are offered.” (Jean Piaget, 1967). Education is the most important tool, evolved by man, for one’s progress. It is, therefore, no wonder that all dynamic and progressive nations demand an educational system that will take leadership in piloting and managing a future that ensures a better life to all. In the context of developing countries, education will eventually have a great role in the process of sustainable development. Hence, the progress of any society depends mainly on the utilization of the potential of its individuals and the best educational ideas in all disciplines of knowledge. Evidence shows that there has been an enormous advancement of knowledge in every field. In the history of civilization, both knowledge and education have always been predominant factors of progress. Presently, India’s educational purpose is the one that envisages creating a good and valued society, an enlightened life for all its members and using all the intellectual and natural resources to that purpose. Education is considered to be the most vital and powerful instrument in achieving rapid development, technological progress and creating a social order founded on values of freedom, socio-economic justice and with equal opportunities for all in all fields.

The objectives of the NCFTE(2009) focus on reflective practices, self learning opportunities for teachers as well as students, to be the central aim of teacher education. Teaching excellence is an academic process that elevates the students to a level where they learn deeply and remarkably because of certain teacher attributes like expert in subject matter, expert in pedagogy, excellent communicator, student centered mentor and is a systematic and

continual assessor. As per the MHRD guidelines the considerations for the teaching excellence of the national awardee teachers which are also considered for the present study are teachers' reputation in vidyalaya and community, teachers' academic efficiency and desire for improvement, teachers' genuine interest in and love for children, teachers' involvement in social life and community.

Innovation is the process of developing an idea into a creative action. In order to develop innovations we need to have a new environment that encourages innovativeness amongst the teachers and the teacher educators. At the elementary level, the District Primary Education Program (DPEP) had encouraged several innovative approaches. As per Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyaan (RMSA) "Innovations could help improve institutional reform, scale up deserving alternative approaches piloted by non-governmental organizations, and encourage creative ways of enhancing capacities of educational functionaries. This in turn will contribute to the overall improvement in the quality of secondary education throughout the country. This component could also support activities which help link other Centrally Sponsored Schemes in secondary education with RMSA."

The ultimate aim of the education system is to bring about quality in education such that the education system becomes more and more effective, and renders a positive impact on all the learners. Innovative teaching strategies simply implies knowing or identifying and applying a more facilitative (or learning ensured) approach in teaching a concept, topic or theme. The strategy itself may not necessarily be new but its use for that particular topic, concept or theme may be novel. In other words, it is using a combination of various teaching strategies that are appropriate for the learners in order to ensure more effective teaching. The search for innovative teaching strategies is natural of the fact that different situations, teaching topics, learner's cognitive readiness, concepts being taught, skills intended to be developed in learners- demand for different teaching approaches to be used. Therefore, a teacher who is not aware of a variety of such strategies can neither attempt to use them in the first place nor use them adequately. Thus for any good teacher or teacher educator it is essential to incorporate the use of innovative and creative teaching practices.

Need and Significance of the Study

MHRD gives recognition in the form of National Award to the excellent teachers who have applied creativity in their teaching and related area in the form of innovations which evolve as the best practices later. Henceforth to conduct a case study on such National Awardee teachers would be crucial for all the teachers as well as teacher educators in order to make them aware and conscious of the various teaching practices. The methodologies used by awardee teachers could be adopted by other teachers to become valuable and successful productive teachers of the country. Keeping in view the undertaken study aimed at analyzing the work carried out and achievements accomplished by such teachers who have received National level recognition and have given remarkable input to the teaching learning process.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

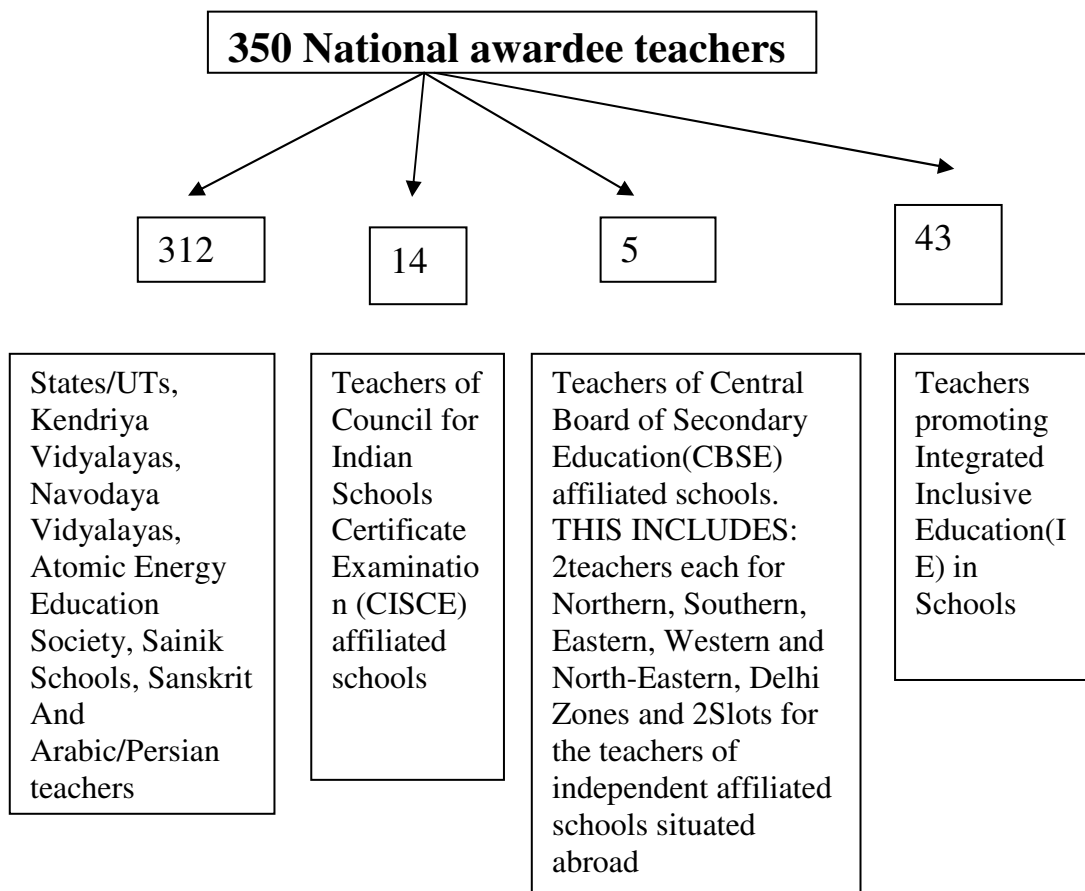


Fig 1.1 Categorization of awards

On the basis of the qualitative and quantitative performance of the teachers every year 350 National awards for innovative teachers are conferred by the MHRD as per the above given breakup shown in figure 1.1. In the above shown figure it is evident that there is categorization of the awards. So the researchers downloaded the list of National awardees from the MHRD website and selected the 3rd category of 14 National awards given to the CBSE school teachers. Out of these the secondary school teachers were identified. Thereafter one secondary school teacher (principal) was selected from the Delhi region and one that from the Northern region. This selection made was completely purposive sampling. The two cases for the study were identified.

The tools developed by the researchers were non-standardized as they were not meant for all the population but for the specific case. The tools developed by the researcher were based on the research objectives and the research questions. The questionnaire prepared was based on the guidelines as well as Performa given by the MHRD for the National awardee teachers. Number of items in the Questionnaire was 31 and the number of items in the Interview questions was 41.

OBJECTIVES

The study was based on the following objectives:

1. To study the innovative abilities of the National awardee teachers.
2. To identify the teaching approaches of the National awardee teachers.
3. To identify the genuine interests of National awardee teachers in the holistic development of children.

4. To analyse the involvement and contribution of the National awardee teachers to social life in community
5. To analyse the perception of the national awardee teacher about his/her reputation and status in their school and community.
6. To explore the future academic plans of the National awardee teachers.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were proposed to achieve the objectives of the study:

1. What type of innovations have been carried out and practiced by the national awardee teacher?
2. What type of reputation did the National awardee teacher have throughout the tenure of the career?
3. What approaches of teaching have been followed by the National awardee teacher?
4. To what extent the national awardee teacher is genuinely interested and is working towards the holistic development of the learners?
5. How the national awardee teacher was socially active?
6. What are the future academic plans of the National awardee teacher and how they strive to improve their performance?

RESULT & DISCUSSION

Question -1 What type of innovations have been carried out and practiced by the national awardee teacher?

As per the national awardee teachers teaching should be activity oriented and examples should be related to real life experiences. It should involve lot of interaction with the learners. This kind of teaching methodology would keep the learner motivated and inspired. Lessons must be prepared with a learner friendly style and in the simplest mode and must be related to real life. It should be ensured that skills get developed through the lessons. The method of rote learning must be avoided. A teacher's alertness, interest taken, will keep his/her class also alert & motivated. The national awardee teachers have introduced various innovative practices such as concept based teaching learning classes, connecting education with real life by skill based activities and project, making a very friendly environment in which students love to come to the school, while developing curriculum, teaching learning process should be made more easy which could be grasped by the students, promoting collaborative teaching, Organizing Special Assembly so as to provide same platform to students and parents, so the students can show their talents in front of their parents and parents may also give feedback about the school so that further improvement may be brought. Also the Students of the class were categorised on the basis of their talents such as SUE (Students with Unique excellence, SUM (Students with Unique Moderate Intelligence), SUTs (Students with unique Talent). No student was named as a weak student. Since today's generation is the e-generation so the awardee teachers have also developed programs such as EUMIND which are web-based innovative learning programs where students are given ample amount of opportunity to learn as per their needs. It is a platform to bring about their creations into actions.

Question 2 What type of reputation did the National awardee teacher have throughout the tenure of their career?

The National awardee teachers have very good interpersonal relationship with all their colleagues, administrative staff, students, their parents and also with the community. It shows that they have a good reputation in the society. That is why they are able to maintain good relations with everyone. It is also indicative of their good communication skills which are essential for good interpersonal relationships. The National Awardee teachers feel that the teacher-taught relations have changed over the due course of time and have declined significantly. Coaching Centres have influenced teacher taught relations adversely. It clearly reflects that student teacher relationship has shown a change over a period of time.

Question-3 What approaches of teaching have been followed by the National awardee teachers?

According to the National Awardee teachers the learners of all kinds have a tremendous energy; so the teachers have to be equally tactful and efficient to handle them. This may be possible if a teacher understands them thoroughly and update their skills. The awardee teachers have always preferred their own teaching-learning process based on interactive and discussion methodologies. The concepts are explained in a very easy and simple

language that, a learner could understand easily. They have emphasized on activity oriented teaching methodology and these activities were related to real life experiences of learners therefore, learners have always showed keen interest in teaching learning process. It is observable that these teachers have always strived to be effective teachers by understanding the problems of each and every learner by constantly upgrading their skills and abilities to help the learners achieve the best out of the teaching learning process. Also the Evaluation strategies used by these teachers were based on self- evaluation and reflection where they realised as to what extent they were able to achieve the objectives of making the learners understand and develop interest in the content. It is their belief that the foremost thing in teaching is that the teacher must explain the students as to why the chapter is taught to them, why they need to know that particular concept, what is its use. Thereafter the teacher must allow ample opportunities for student-teacher as well as student-student interaction so that all the learners are engaged in the classroom .It is the learners who play a key role in the classroom and they only carry forward the discussion ie the student-centric teaching strategies were adopted. The teacher acts as a facilitator and guide to direct them on the right path.

Question 4 To what extent the national awardee teachers are genuinely interested and working towards the holistic development of the learners?

The genuine interest of the National awardee teachers is observable by the way these teachers have managed and tackled the different kinds of learners in the classrooms, the kind of teaching strategies they have adopted to deal with the disruptive learners, the kind of evaluation strategies that they have evolved over these years in order to help the learners gain the maximum. As mentioned earlier interactive, real life experience based as well as activity oriented teaching strategies have been adopted. A teacher has to manage all kinds of learners which is possible only when the teachers delivers his best both inside as well as outside the classroom; inside the classroom by delivering the maximum knowledge to students and outside the classroom by constantly supporting and guiding them .The teacher's role is to produce useful citizens not merely machines. From the very beginning it is the role of the teachers to make the students understand the path of truth and there is no short cut to hard work. The awardee teachers have helped the inclusive children which indicates their teaching excellence ie their genuine interest in making the learners learn, by motivating such learners thereby decreasing the dropout rate.

The awardee teachers are genuinely concerned for the holistic development of their learners. This is identified by the views they have given about the usefulness by implementation of RTE, effectiveness of CCE to bring about quality education and suggestions for improvement in relation to the real scenario, managing adolescent behaviour ; role of inclusive education in social development of learners.

Question 5 How were the national awardee teachers socially active?

The national awardee teachers were found to be quite socially active as well. They have been involved in organising various social projects at mass level like -Each one Teach one to raise the literacy levels; my earth my duty and cleanliness rally to increase and promote awareness about environment. It clearly shows about his keen interests and desires to work towards the upliftment of the students towards the betterment of the society and to create better as well as socially active citizens of this country.

Question 6 What are the future academic plans of these National awardee teachers and how do they strive to improve their performance?

Training and workshops are the tools through which one can keep himself updated. These workshops provide an individual with the opportunities to interact with their professional counter parts. One learns from them and one also learns from their mistakes. A teacher also learns from learners. Internet; nowadays, gives ample opportunity to learn. Recognition at National level has made these teachers more responsible and at the same time more conscious towards their duties and responsibilities. This has inspired them to do more for the students as well as the society. One of them has undertaken various projects like UDAAN project for helping girls get entry to premiere institutions, organizing girl camps in remote areas, after the National Award was conferred to him.

CONCLUSION

Genuine interest of the teachers is essential for an effective teaching learning process which motivates the learners all throughout. The innovative practices can be as simple as managing to create an interactive classroom, activity based learning to as complex as coming up with international projects such as EUMIND as an opportunity for the learners to grow. Whatever maybe the practice it is very important how that practice is implemented to groom and nurture the talent and potential of the learners. The kind of teaching strategies like collaborative teaching, real life based teaching, activity based and interactive teaching, creating dynamic classroom environment are a few of the workable teaching strategies as suggested by the national awardee teachers. Constant reflection upon their teaching practices and self- evaluation is important for the teachers to improve upon their teaching strategies. The better the relation with the learners; the more the students will be

comfortable in learning with the teacher. Also all teachers must have knowledge and their specific view about the new schemes and programs like the RTE, CCE , inclusive schooling so that they can give a genuine feedback to the policy makers as to what was intended and what actually happened. The teachers must always try to rise as high as possible in their career since their professional development is directly linked with the extent of output such excelling teachers can give to the teaching learning process.

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