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The ongoing training: a remedial training by motivating the teachers

Training in the Ongoing Teacher Training program (OTTP) is an activity that strengthens a school by increasing the productivity of its human resources. Schools have various sorts of assets, including physical assets such as buildings, land, equipment, facilities and so on. Human resources, teachers, are the essential asset that determine the capabilities of a school. A school that has highly developed human resources can do more, achieve its aims more efficiently, and do so at a lower cost than a school with a poorly developed human resource.

Since the goal of the (OTTP) efforts is to improve student achievement, these efforts are well-aligned with the primary motivator of teachers - the power to help children learn. Mainly, the Ongoing Training program has meant encouraging teachers to enhance pedagogical skills and knowledge of subject matter through providing funding for conferences and workshops, and developing other training opportunities.

The questionnaires employed by the (OTTP) in different parts of Lebanon can be considered motivational since they give teachers the chance to set their own agenda at the beginning of a meeting, asking for their analysis of problems in the school or in children's learning, and respecting their answers. Many teachers respond with great energy when they are made aware of new perspectives in their own teaching abilities and provided with opportunities to express themselves honestly.

Basically, the challenges facing the national trainer consist of three parts: technical, cognition

and presentation. The technical part refers to the ability to structure and present information clearly to the teachers. The cognition part refers to the ability to think and formulate clear and relevant ideas. The presentation part refers to the ability to conduct and convey the training effectively to the participants.

Generally speaking, I am willing to argue that training for a sufficient number of teachers and learning methods is possible by any available means. It is a myth to believe that we, national trainers in the Ongoing Training program, can effectively train enough teachers. I, a national trainer, am basing this argument primarily on the problems faced by the Ongoing Training in Lebanon, but I believe that similar factors apply worldwide.

The numbers change everything in ways that we are only beginning to understand. Many tell us that any suggestion that some teachers be retrained to change what they do in classrooms must be called wishful thinking.

The results of teacher training vary widely. Some teacher programs turn out to be very effective, but this is a small number. As with much of education, the Ongoing Training program looks for success and tries to achieve it. But these good examples often depend on the existence of special situations, such as a very superior teacher involved in the training, not duplicable elsewhere.

One approach that has been tried many times is the 'trickle down' approach, with a variety of names. It recognizes that there is no way to reach



all teachers directly. The idea is that a few teachers can be trained, and they will train other teachers at their schools. This may proceed for many generations.

Although huge amounts are spent in this direction they never are enough to reach all teachers. One can wonder if they will ever be enough, given the numbers of teachers. It seems unlikely. So teacher education is a dilemma. The situation is much worse in the poorer areas of Lebanon.

However, the OTTP has positive consequences that go beyond making the school more effective. It also produces great benefits for teachers who make up the human resource. They become more valuable to the schools, but their value in the field of education rises too. Since their worth is greater, they may command higher earnings, and the learning they gain should provide them with better opportunities throughout their working lifetime. This is why school principals should be eager to accept training opportunities because they gain as much as does the school. If they are not eager, then further investigation is indicated, and the question needs to be asked, "Why would anyone not wish to take advantage of something that has such clear benefits?" The answer to this question frequently is that teachers do not consider the training offered to be personally rewarding. Perhaps they believe that the training will not be worthwhile or would develop them in ways that they will not like. Other explanations are possible too. Maybe they're simply not aware of the benefits.

Because different approaches to training guide the concepts put forth in the OTTP, a lack of acceptance for training poses serious problems. Learner - oriented training, for example, assumes that people who participate in training are active partners in the instructional process, not disengaged, or worse, opposed to training. It is an obligation of those responsible for training to cultivate cooperation on the part of participants not merely to accept training but to become actively involved in the process. Actively committed

teachers will not only put forth the effort needed to master material, but will work with the national trainer in defining and achieving learning goals. An important motivation for most teachers should be that they are the chief beneficiaries of training. The school naturally reaps a reward for good training, and this is the principal justification for it. But the teacher actually gains more than any other party in the process. National trainers find it possible to demonstrate that the cost-benefit ratio of training is heavily weighted in the teachers' favor.

Some factors affecting the motivation of teachers in the OTTP may be beyond the national trainer's control. For example, teachers who have been told they must attend will probably have a very different perspective than those who have actively chosen to participate. Indeed, creating a situation where teachers actively elect to participate in a training program could be seen as an important first step in ensuring that a strong motivation to succeed exists.

When teachers see that what they are acquiring makes sense and is important according to their values and perspective, their motivation shoots up. Like a cork rising through water, intrinsic motivation surfaces because the environment elicits it. Intrinsic motivation is an evocation, an energy called forth by circumstances that connect with what is culturally significant to the teacher.

Consequently, the national trainer is mainly concerned with creating environments that will elicit intrinsic motivation among the participants in the training programs. To begin with, the sequence of the material being presented is crucial. The national trainer takes into account the expectations and prior experiences of the participants and helps each teacher recognize the value of that training program for them. This involves recognizing at all stages, from design through presentation, that teachers are active learners. They should be involved in the learning process.



Finally, the national trainer needs to work hard to create a safe and supportive learning environment that frees teachers to experiment, question, and reflect on what they have seen and heard without fear of failure or embarrassment. A safe and supportive learning environment also means one that allows for different learning preferences. As adults, the teachers will have had many educational experiences before they reach the training program. They know what learning style worked for them in the past and, in most cases, remember only too vividly when they failed. In a relatively brief training program, the national trainer can encourage the needed type of active learning. The national trainer should recognize that teachers have preferred learning styles that are very deeply rooted and cannot be changed overnight. While the national trainer can encourage change during a short training program, it is also wise to structure it in ways that accommodate a wide range of preferred learning styles. For example, some people prefer to jump straight into a discussion and work through what they think by exchanging ideas with others. The national trainer also encounters teachers who prefer to sit back and observe what is happening. He/she should not necessarily assume that they are not engaged. Sometimes that will be the case, but with others it is simply a preference for a different learning style. Working in teams can often provide a context in which both preferences can be accommodated.

The main objective of an OTTP is developing the professional competence of the teachers that involves them in investigating the ways in which their students are disposed to learn and the purposes for which they are learning. Thus, it involves teachers in exploring their own

dispositions on the one hand and more external factors in their working environments on the other. Moreover, it involves them in examining and developing their 'experiential knowledge'- their opinions and beliefs about learning experience of language classrooms, and extending their 'received knowledge' – for example, their knowledge of theories of language, of the psychology of language learning, and of opinions, beliefs and practices which are different from their own.

In conclusion, challenging what is being presented in a training session of a national trainer as the better way of doing things will probably seem safer when the challenge is not attributable to any individual. Those challenges will happen anyway either inside or outside the session. It is much better that they happen in a framework where they can be discussed openly. It may seem that life for the national trainer would be easier if he/she simply avoided these potential challenges. But in the final judgment training is only successful if those who participate in a program decide to adopt the ideas that were presented, or the skills that were learned, and

adapt them to the particular circumstances of their own teaching. This is more likely to happen if their doubts and uncertainties about the proposed change have been addressed during the training program. One clear finding points in a hopeful direction : helping young people to learn is the central goal of both those who enter the teaching profession and those who are working to reform public education. Therefore, new directions in participatory school improvement, comprehensive and meaningful staff development, and supportive teacher training provided by the OTTP hold great promise for improving teachers' professional motivation and consequently lead to better school results ■

