Chapter 5

In-service Education Ladder for Teachers for the New Millennium

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IN-SERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION

It is now widely accepted by teacher educators worldwide that the education of teachers should be a lifelong process, rather than being limited to the relatively short period of initial teacher education before a teacher embarks upon his or her professional life. As many (e.g., Lake, 1982) have pointed out a long time ago, the period of initial teacher education, no matter how long or how comprehensive, will not be sufficient for the 40 years of the teacher's professional practice which may follow. In this rapidly changing society, if a teacher is to remain up-to-date in the education field, to improve his or her classroom practice and professional competence and to extend his or her contributions outside the classroom to schools and the professional community, he or she must engage in a lifelong process of professional development through in-service education (or In-service Education for Teachers) (Pang, 1985). Teacher development has also now been acknowledged as an increasingly important focus for the process of school reform and educational excellence (Sprinthall, Reiman, & Thies-Sprinthall, 1996). Hence, in-service education nowadays is considered to be one of three important distinct phases of teacher education, representing different types of development as highlighted by a “Triple-i” model. The three “i”的s (or the 3 phases) are initial teacher education, induction of beginning teachers, and in-service teacher education.

The importance of in-service education for teachers is significantly recognized in Hong Kong. Provision of suitable in-service education for teachers is one of the main recommendations of the Board of Education (1997) in its report on the Review of 9-year Compulsory Education in Hong Kong for improving
school education. The Education Commission (1997) has also emphasized the adequate provision of in-service opportunities for teachers in its recommendations for achieving quality education in Hong Kong schools in its Report No. 7 on Quality School Education, as well as in its most recent educational reform consultation documents (Education Commission, 1999, 2000). The Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications (ACTEQ), in its review conducted in February 1998 on teacher education for in-service teachers in Hong Kong also stressed the importance of teachers to pursue a career-long process of professional development, not simply to keep up-to-date with the current needs of students and the society, but also in pursuit of improvements in professional competence. This ACTEQ report has also recommended the provision of four different types of in-service courses for teachers, while underscoring the importance of developing an "in-service professional development plan" as a clear framework for depicting the range of professional development courses along a teacher's career path (ACTEQ, 1998).

Given the numerous new initiatives introduced by the Education Department and the Education and Manpower Bureau in the recent years – for example, school-based management, leadership education, school-based curriculum tailoring, the use of IT, quality assurance inspections, and language benchmarks - and the major educational reform conducted by the Education Commission in progress - emphasizing on development of enjoyment of learning, effectiveness of communication skills, commitment, creativity, and lifelong learning through creating spaces for schools and teachers by changing the education structure, and aspiring for excellence through changes and innovations in curriculum, teaching and learning, and assessment (Education Commission, 1999, 2000) - in-service education for teachers to support those developments and changes has become particularly important and urgent in Hong Kong.

To support the systematic planning and provision of induction and in-service education for teachers, the author, based on some of his earlier research as well as a pilot study on the views of teacher educators at The Hong Kong Institute of Education conducted in 1999, had earlier proposed a model for an "In-service Education Ladder" (Pang, 1999a). This model conceptualizes the professional education needs of serving teachers into four major categories: namely, induction; updating and retraining; extension; and conversion. Specifically, following "induction" needs during the first one or two years of
teaching, all teachers possess different ongoing "updating and retraining" and "extension" needs at different stages of their professional career; as they are promoted or as they take up new responsibilities, teachers will have additional "conversion" needs as well.

This chapter reports on the author's further work on the establishment of the "In-service Education Ladder" for the new millennium, including fine-tuning the ladder's components basing on a further pilot study on the perceived needs of teachers at different stages and on an analysis of the implications of the anticipated changes and challenges in the new millennium on the in-service education needs of teachers. Reference is made to the current educational reform initiated by the Education Commission in Hong Kong as a case in the Asia-Pacific region, and its implications on the components of the ladder.

The further pilot study to be reported in this chapter aims to obtain the views of a small group of principals and their teachers on the in-service needs of teachers at different stages of teachers' career, through both a questionnaire survey and a focused group discussion. Four stages of professional development have been identified - namely, Survival, Adjustment and Refinement, Extended Development, and Specialization - and the study has also extended the understanding of the in-service needs of teachers from the previous studies conducted by the author by providing additional information on the different types in-service needs, across these four stages. All in all, the purpose of the work described in this chapter is to further develop an in-service ladder for the teaching profession in Hong Kong of which will provide a framework for systematically depicting the various types of in-service needs of teachers, across the different stages of a teacher's career. The work includes a pilot study which consists of a questionnaire survey and a focused group discussion with a small but representative group of principals and teachers to identify from these target groups the in-service education needs at different stages of teachers' development to enrich the understanding of in-service needs obtained from an earlier pilot study with teacher educators at The Hong Kong Institute of Education. Another part of the work involves an analysis of the new in-service needs of Hong Kong teachers in the new millennium, due to the key educational reforms currently taking place in Hong Kong. The focus of this work is on the "Induction" and "In-service" phases of the Triple-i model, for supporting teachers' professional development from the time when they enter the profession. After the in-service ladder is developed, considerations will then be given to its articulation with the first phase of
teacher education, namely, “initial teacher education” of the triple-I model as a next step.

The next section first discusses the in-service needs of teachers, introduces the concept of the in-service ladder, and gives an account of the previous work of the author in establishing an in-service ladder to provide the necessary background before the pilot study and analysis of contemporary needs are reported.

A unique feature of the pilot study reported in this chapter is the identification of the stages of teachers’ development, as well as mapping out the four types of in-service education needs against them, to provide a new, two-dimensional framework of the in-service ladder. Much research has been done in the last 20 years on the career development stages, phases, or cycles of teachers (Burden, 1990; Fessler & Christensen, 1992; Huberman, 1993). For example, the early work of Burden (1990) identified three stages over a teacher’s career, namely, the survival cycle (first year of teaching), the adjustment cycle (the second to fourth year of teaching), and the mature cycle (fifth year and beyond). The most thorough and widely accepted work was conducted by Fessler and Christensen (1992), who proposed a model which extensively drew from the germinal research of Fuller (1969) and which consisted of eight levels: pre-service, induction, competency building, enthusiastic and growing, career frustration, stable and stagnant career, wind-down, and career exit. In developing the in-service ladder, the current work of the author also examines the career stages of a small group of Hong Kong teachers, and contributes to enriching the knowledge base of career development stages.

IN-SERVICE EDUCATION NEEDS AND “LADDER”

In-service education has been shown to be very important for teachers in their professional development in many aspects. Morant (1981) has grouped teachers’ needs for in-service education into three major types. The first is “Updating and Retraining needs”: to keep up-to-date with and to further enhance professional knowledge and skills; and to be able to implement new curriculum and methods successfully. The second is “Extension needs”: to develop further professional competence in broadening the scope of work and contributions. The third is “Conversion needs”: to be able to take up duties at a higher rank or of a different nature effectively.
Given the great importance of in-service education, teacher education for teachers will never be complete and adequate if it is limited to initial teacher education, or if the provision for in-service education is insufficient to support all the above needs of teachers.

For developing in-service education comprehensively and systematically, there is now an increasing demand for developing an “in-service ladder” as a useful developmental framework. Such a ladder for teachers is functional in many ways: providing a framework clearly showing teachers’ major in-service needs at different stages of their career; facilitating policy-makers in setting up in-service education policies and allocating resources to support teachers in their continuing professional development; providing a useful framework for course providers to plan and offer courses; and providing a useful framework for schools and teachers to plan for professional development both at the school and at the individual levels.

A PROPOSED MODEL OF “IN-SERVICE LADDER” FOR TEACHERS

Research (e.g., Morant, 1981) has shown that, following entry to the profession and as a teacher works through his or her career, there will be different types of in-service needs at different stages for the point of entry, as follows: “induction” needs in the first one to two years (needs for support in adjusting to the profession and socializing into the new environment upon entry); “updating and retraining” needs (needs for keeping up-to-date with and further enhancing professional knowledge and skills; needs for developing new knowledge, skills and attitudes for implementing changes, innovations and reforms) as well as “extension” needs (needs for developing further professional competence in broadening the scope of work and contributions) thereafter and then ongoing; and “conversion” needs (needs for developing new knowledge, skills, and attitudes for taking up duties at a higher rank or of a different nature effectively) at the stage of receiving promotion or accepting new duties.

In brief, after the first one to two years of induction, teachers will have both updating and retraining, as well as extension, needs. When promoted or given new duties, teachers will have conversion needs. Based on this understanding, a preliminary in-service ladder may look like what is depicted in Figure 1.
Teaching Effectiveness and Teacher Development
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