CPD OF UNIVERSITY TEACHERS IN PAKISTAN: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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Abstract

This study was conducted to explore the concept of continuous professional development (CPD) for University teachers in Pakistan, and the obstacles faced in the same. It is a qualitative study based on existing literature, CPD practices of HEC and some public/private institutions. Primary data has been gathered from informal interviews of teachers of two universities, one in public and the other in private sector. Through a self-devised questionnaire, the respondents were asked about three forms of CPD, i.e. direct learning, professional development (PD) within institution and professional learning outside the institution. The respondents expressed their opinion about challenges faced, in these domains. These challenges pertained to resource constraints, policy loopholes, lack of systematic organisational efforts, social impediments, non-conducive environment etc. Mentioned prospects highlighted need of enhanced role by HEC & universities' administration, values-based professional development of teachers, innovative approach to find solutions, organisational impetus and effective use of teachers' feedback. It was further added that role of private sector towards this end should be invited, and institution-to-institution links should be strengthened for the attainment of goal.

Keywords: Continuous Professional Development (CPD), Organisational, Education, Loopholes

Study Background

Professional development (PD) of teachers holds prime significance in the teaching-learning process. This aspect of teachers' effectiveness always overlaps with institutional improvement, and thus ultimately causes change through education. Rising interest in the concept has multiplied owing to rapid change in education in general and higher education in particular. Due to changing dynamics of education related facets including nature for knowledge and delivery techniques and rising social complexity, the need of professional development is undeniable. Consequently, many challenges have emerged. As the situation evolves, teachers are required to enhance their competence through refining their conceptual base and methodology.[1] These

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domains are encompassed by the concept of PD. Thus, necessitating enrichment of subject-matter related knowledge of the teachers and improvement of their content skills through PD.[2]

Many studies have explicitly established relationship between PD and various practices linked with the teachers, including direct teaching in class-rooms that significantly impacts the students' performance. If the PD of the teachers is of higher quality, it will result into better teaching in class-room, which will ultimately have direct impact on students' achievements. The PD can be acquired through many traditional and novel ways. Reid's quadrants of teacher learning highlight planned-incidental, and formal-informal means.[3] Continuous professional development (CPD) of the teachers is a wide-ranging concept but has been largely misunderstood and is limited to formal courses, training workshops and in-service training in Pakistan. Subsequent discussion will explicitly show such misunderstood conception of CPD. On the contrary, CPD includes a wide range of activities carried out through varied media, not limited to any particular time-frame or location.

Professional development of teachers in Pakistan has been facing challenges of different nature. These challenges could be in the shape of some complexities, difficulties and barriers which affect the 'expected outcomes of teachers' growth'.[4] In the present study, the researchers have taken up the case of the challenges faced by the university teachers for their PD. Efforts have been made to take up the issue of teachers' PD with the objective to bring some qualitative improvements. Nigel (2012) found out that factors like lack of motivation, absence of facilities, lack of time for reflection, commitment of the individuals, vision and lack of opportunities to implement learning were a few barriers in the implementation of effective CPD program.[5] Antoinette (2012) believes that CPD of teachers faces many challenges, and major ones are availability of opportunities of CPD, financial implications, availability of time, workload of the teachers and the affordability of CPD activities.[6] These are serious constraints, and matters of concern in the successful implementation of CPD. These factors are intermingled with others in the workplace, which emphasize the crucial role of the employer in continuing professional development. In Pakistan, the extent of training being imparted to the university teachers needs to be explored and the challenges faced in the implementation of any programs of CPD for them require identification. The present study is an effort to find out the impediments being faced by the university teachers in Pakistan, in their acquisition of PD and explain prospects for improvement in this regard.

Research Objectives

The following research objectives have been pursued in this study:

- To discuss components/nature of CPD and its types.
- To discuss status of CPD in Pakistan, by analysing methodologies and contents of the existing CPD programs.
- To discuss the problems faced by university teachers in their pursuit of CPD.
- To explore prospects of CPD for university teachers in Pakistan.

Nature of CPD

Training aspects are instrumental in shaping the personality of a teacher. Through training conducted in different modes, at different time frames and space, a teacher can become an effective educator. This training of the teachers is a continuous process. It requires to be focused, purposeful and planned. Such training is called Continuous Professional Development. CPD is a multi-pronged process which is not limited to formal training or courses. In Pakistan's context, CPD includes in-service formal training, workshops and teachers' informal and sometime formal interaction with his surroundings, including interaction with other institutes.

CPD is considered to be, 'an on-going process which leads to enhanced work satisfaction, extended work-relevant competencies, attainment of professional goals, and positive development'.[7] Activities taking place in this domain are envisioned to result into long-term and significant changes in the practices of a teacher which might not be possible through any single event of PD, e.g. a seminar or a workshop.[8]

Types/Forms of CPD

CPD has often been restricted to formal training and coaching, however many theorists have highlighted that this is a limited and formal interpretation of the concept. Day (1999), while covering more aspects of the notion of CPD, asserted it to be covering learning experiences which occur naturally.

Professional development consists of all natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or institute, which contribute, through these, to the quality of education in the classroom.[9]

The definition given by Day includes planned and conscious activities in this domain which are supposed to bring benefit to the individual or institution in a direct or indirect manner. So CPD is a concept which does not stick to a set of formal activities, rather it liberates teacher's professional learning from the bounds of time and space, bringing such activities into its fold that teachers engage in to develop professionally.[10] However CPD also occurs even when a teacher engages in conversation with his colleagues, some executives, or with parents. CPD is also viewed as a combination of multiple forms of dialogues,

conversations and interactions.[11] Various models[12] have been presented to cover professional training of teachers, and Lieberman's (1996) model is a significant one.

Lieberman, in his classification model of CPD, divided it into three spheres.[13] First one is CPD through formal means, i.e. professional courses[14], workshops[15], seminars[16] etc. Second type of CPD is attained through coaching, mentoring, peer learning and action research.[17] As stated by him, third type is through external linkages established through contact with learning communities and interactions made with other institutes. Learning for teachers occurring in class-room is termed as possibly the fourth dimension or form of his professional training.[18] Generally, researchers have agreed on forms and types of teachers' CPD. Various contexts to view PD of teachers have been evolved, starting from immediate surrounding (i.e. class-room) to self-directed study, courses, workshops, mentoring, coaching, collaborative learning, action research, personal reflection, observation, networking, and mediated learning.[19] Workshops, seminars, conferences, and short courses are also considered as the most common forms of CPD for teachers.[20]

Current Structure of CPD in Pakistan

Seen in this backdrop, the Pakistan scenario is not very encouraging, as teachers have only been formally trained up-till secondary and higher secondary school levels[21]. These trained teachers are mostly employed in government sector schools where professional training is a prerequisite. A lot of issues like paucity of resource allocation for education, academic background of teachers, prevalent mind-set and quality issues of training are a great hindrance towards achievement of the desired standards of teacher training. On the other hand, in Pakistan, no professional training is prerequisite so far for getting a teaching job in institutions of higher education. It is not expected from such newly appointed university teachers to possess highly graded pedagogical skills, right from the beginning of their career. It is natural that problems are being faced by the new entrants into the career, but such arising impediments could be resolved if they were equipped with professional training. This professional training would be beneficial if it is relevant, of good quality, and provided timely. In our national context, CPD is mainly limited to some formal means of PD, and this is evident from policies and designed programs of HEC and universities/Higher Education Institutes (HEIs). Some of these are:

- **Establishment of DSD**. Directorate of Staff Development (DSD) in Punjab started CPD for school teachers, in 2007, in 12 Districts of the province. The program aimed at and limited to conducting short courses for teachers at junior level.

- **NEP-2009 and CPD**. National Education Policy-2009 envisioned CPD to be carried out mainly through refresher courses, among other things.
- **Role of HEC**
  1. Though Higher Education Commission organizes an annual three-week Master Trainer Faculty Professional Development Program (MT-FPDP), yet adequacy of this program is questionable.
  2. FPDP is run under Learning Innovation Division of the HEC. Though it has wide-ranging defined objectives, yet it focuses on single delivery mode, i.e. workshops/seminars.
  3. Terms of Reference[22] issued by HEC for CPD programs only cover seminars and workshops.
- **IDEAS**. Institute of Development and Economic Alternatives issued a fact-file[23] about the Punjab DSD model of CPD and proposed an alternative. This revised CPD plan, extended the program to teachers at other levels also (DSD model was restricted to Primary School level only) and enhanced the CPD duration, yet more domains or opportunities of CPD were not explored.
- **PEC Guidelines for CPD**. These guidelines were issued by Pakistan Engineering Council in 2009[24], to set by-laws for all professional development activities to be arranged by professional engineering bodies. The guidelines meant to improve professionals' knowledge, skill and personal qualities, but their definition of CPD encompasses courses, training workshops etc. only.
- **Institutional CPD Policies**
  1. COMSATS aims to prepare knowledgeable, professionally competent and morally sound faculty. To this end, FDA (Faculty Development Academy) has been established, since 2011, which focuses on conduct of workshops, seminars etc. for their faculty. So, their focus remains on PD of faculty through means like workshops and seminars.
  2. Other institutes like Bahria University, Air University, and Riphah University etc. have mainly focused on workshops, seminars, courses as CPD means.

Investigation into CPD Challenges in Pakistan

The purpose of present study is to examine the prospects and challenges faced by the CPD of University teachers in Pakistan, and the focus remained on three plains of the PD, being offered formally or informally. The content and conduct of the training programmes, the learning and utilisation of knowledge and skills gained through these programmes, and the problems faced by the

University teachers in pursuing such programmes were other main points of this study.

Methodology

It is a qualitative study based on existing literature, CPD practices of HEC/some public/private institutions, and primary data gathered from informal interviews of teachers of two universities, one in public and the other in private sector. Through a self-devised questionnaire, the respondents were asked about three forms of CPD. The study was based on Lieberman's classification model of CPD. This model divided CPD into three spheres: through direct learning, CPD in professional environment and PD attained through external linkages established through social contacts with learning communities. So, this theory of Lieberman formed the theoretical basis of this study regarding university teachers.

Discussion and Study Findings

Direct Learning of University Teachers

The respondents were inquired about the efficacy of institution-based and external workshops, educational conferences, internal and external seminars. While responding towards the statements concerning the direct learning, the responses showed that most of the teachers agreed that enough opportunities to attend workshops, seminars etc. were not available for their PD. However increasing trend of attending educational conferences has been found.

University Teachers' Learning in Institution

The respondents were also inquired about various aspects of their informal learning in the professional environment, i.e. within the bounds of their institution. This PD is attained through peer coaching, mentoring, evaluation and action research. Responses of the university teachers regarding informal CPD in their institution show the barriers faced by them in the shape of poor institutional CPD policies, lack of focussed approach by the administration, lack of resources, absence of available time and lacking departmental environment. Although, the respondents were appreciative of the positive response from their colleagues in extending professional help, yet they felt that they also needed to keep their professional knowledge updated.

University Teachers' Out-of-Institution Learning

In the third category of CPD, the respondents were asked about the availability of the opportunities and challenges being faced in the area of 'out-of-institute learning' – learning in the social and professional environment. In this regard, lack of sociability and cordial contacts with professionals of the same field in other institutions was indicated. Other emerging trends in this

domain of CPD are non-availability of sufficient time, domestic concerns and unwelcoming attitude of other institutions.

The responses of the university teachers clearly indicated *the challenges* faced by them in acquisition of the CPD. In the light of collected data through informal interaction and reviewed literature on the subject, following challenges have been found for university teachers in Pakistan:

CPD – Challenges in Pakistan HEIs

In Pakistan, generally government policies to recruit teachers and pre-service teachers' training programs, being non-directional and out-of-context, have remained less than perfect, and this fact has enhanced the critical significance of teachers' professional development. Professional training for university teachers is predominantly ad hoc and non-systematic. There is no concerted effort towards organizing one for the teachers at this level. Neither focus nor resources for providing foundational professional training to newly inducted university teachers exist. The result is that new entrants have to face a sharp learning curve when they enter the profession.

Evidence suggests that teachers lack in proficiency in their own subject knowledge which they are required to teach.[25] Moreover they are also not well conversant with the teaching methodology and class-room practices, which could be mastered through some training sessions.

On the other hand, lack of standardization of training remains a concern. This variable quality and lack of standardization of in-service teacher training across institutions of higher learning have taken place due to absence of some wider policy guidelines. Resource persons to conduct such sessions of professional development vary a great deal in terms of qualifications and skill, resulting into uneven quality across the universities. It was found in literature review that there is dissatisfaction with the actual number of contact hours between trainers and teachers.

A study on practices and challenges of CPD framework highlighted that poor infrastructure and lack of appropriate facilities were the major impediments in effective implementation of CPD framework.[26] One of the main criticisms of the existing CPD practices for university teachers is variability in the quality of infrastructure/support that teachers receive.

The study also found that university managements are not providing enough opportunities for teachers' professional development. Moreover, institutes lack conducive environment to provide chances of grooming and learning to newly inducted faculty. The universities did not have even the resource allocations to implement what their teachers learnt in professional development courses. Moreover, they could not plan many educational trips for

professional development of their faculty. Lack of resources and realization of the need could be the causes.

The efficacy of the sessions of professional development of teachers cannot be denied. University teachers admitted in the study that their teaching methodology improved, after they gained professional training, and attended professional courses. US Department of Education Report quoted nine studies which revealed that teachers who were given PD for an average of 49 hours could enhance their students' score by 21 percentile.[27]

University environment is not very supportive of professional development. Newly inducted teachers do not have enough time to discuss concepts and teaching ideas with their colleagues. The teachers ought to learn a lot from their peers. But work environment is not helpful. The university teachers did not feel their colleagues were a good intellectual company to help them tackle professional issues, although enough opportunities to have professional discussions were available for new entrants.

CPD through action research is very effective for teachers' professional development because it is practical and occurs continuously.[28] But, universities do not encourage action research nor provide guidelines for this, denying the fact that with the help of action research, university teachers are able to evaluate their teaching practices and bring desired changes.

Though teachers at university level are aware that a lot of professional knowledge can be gathered from other people outside their institution, yet, on one hand they feel that domestic concerns are too many and they can hardly find time to attend to any educational networking, and secondly, other institutions are not always very welcoming for intellectual collaboration.

In addition to the challenges given in preceding paragraphs, university teachers also face certain other challenges in connection with their professional development. The issue of attendance of teachers in programs of CPD sometimes becomes significant. High absentee rate decreases effectiveness of such programs and disturbs the continuation also. Lesser awareness about the conduct of these CPD related activities also keeps the participation rate low. Personal commitments, long distances, severe weather conditions, inappropriate venue selections, misconceptions, are a few hurdles created by local-level administration.[29]

Prospects/Recommendations

Based on the above discussion, and considering the findings, following prospects exist that may be considered by the concerned bodies to assuage the challenges in implementation of CPD for university teachers.

- More CPD activities for teachers should be planned, to include:

1. Attending professional conferences, workshops. training courses, seminars, inside and outside the institutional boundaries
2. Taking active part in various professional committees and technical committees of relevant professional associations
3. Availing opportunities to attend distance and non-formal professionally relevant courses and qualification
4. Conducting research in relevant areas and getting it published which would enhance technical authorship of papers.

- Teachers may be provided with ample opportunities to learn and re-learn the professional competencies and update the knowledge base like many developed countries with efficient CPD systems.[30] The need for such practices of professional development for teachers is manifold in Pakistan.

- The absence of experiential training in universities places the burden of competency training on Higher Education Commission or University administration.

- Inclusion of values in CPD activities is also required for professional and moral grooming of the teachers. Social and professional values hold vital significance in the philosophical foundation of a teacher.

- The development of systematic CPD programs for university teachers in Pakistan can serve multiple needs at the same time. Innovative solutions are required to supplement the efforts of federal government in the face of federal government inactivity, and lack of vision and resources on the part of the bodies for control of higher education in Pakistan.

- Lectures and sessions of CPD are required to be arranged at frequent intervals for the universities' faculty, to up-date them with latest trends, and to enhance their professional competence.

- Through CPD, teachers can be equipped with use of ICT, latest trends in report writing and class-room teaching techniques, in addition to their subject competence and community networking skills.

- Integrated efforts by universities' administration, HEC and private sector can be used for skills building, and to develop networking opportunities, resources for the development and practice of CPD. The role and resources of the private sector can be tapped to the fullest to provide remedies.

- Knowledge sharing and collaborative efforts towards problem solving can enhance pro bono efforts. It should be the object of an institutional sponsor to provide structured on-the-job training program to fresh faculty members with a view to increasing their competence and ensuring their ability to provide quality education to their students.

- Informal Peer mentoring must be encouraged at departmental level for the benefit of the newly inducted faculty members. Sincere and mature efforts towards guidance provision regarding range of issues would build mutual trust and solve adjustment issues.

- As a general perception, professional demands in an institution or organization keep on changing and evolving. When such an institution arranges programs of CPD to provide its faculty members with an opportunity to adapt themselves and remain updated, it surely would create the image of a progressive and committed organization.

- Higher Education Commission and universities' R&D wings are elicited to take serious steps towards planning of extensive & effective CPD programs and serious implementation once planning has been done. In this regard adequate budget allocation is a must to arrange more effective and frequent training of faculty.

- To make the planned CPD activities effective regular and confidential feedback of the faculty about efficacy of such activities should be obtained which will enhance efficacy and decide about future programing of CPD.

- Monthly meetings of heads of departments/deans should be arranged to resolve any problems which might emerge while implementing CPD in the institutions. Such meetings conducted in cordial environment would resolve real issues arising in the implementation phase.

- Similar research may be replicated in other institutions of higher education. This would highlight more issues and problems so that the policy makers and universities management might take necessary measures to overcome the impediments, in order to make the implementation of CPD more effective.

Conclusion

A teacher plays a pivotal role in the process of teaching and learning. He is the one who implements plans, decides pace, sets direction and achieves goals of the educational programs. Without an active role performed by the teachers, students will not be able to achieve their goals. PD of the teacher enables him to perform these tasks effectively. This research was conducted with a view to bring present status and problems attached with university teachers' CPD. The same would be productive for the departmental heads and administrative authorities of the universities of Pakistan to train their faculty in a better way. The faculty is hired by the universities for imparting education, and playing their role in the progress of the organization and students' learning. So, for the success of the process of imparting education it is important for the teachers to continuously undergo through the process of PD.

Endnotes

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[12] Some of the CPD models are: Reid's Four Dimensions, Kennedy's Nine Models, Bell & Gilbert's Division, and Sparks & Horsley's Categories of CPD.

[13] Ann Lieberman, "Practices that support teacher development: Transforming conceptions of professional learning," *Innovating and Evaluating Science Education: NSF Evaluation Forums, 1992-1994,* 67-78.

[14] Courses are significant and organised form of teachers' professional development. Being important ones among the traditional forms of CPD, courses are taken at the start of service and during the service.

[15] Another traditional form of CPD, which is short in duration and restricted in scope.

[16] A seminar is an issue-oriented and focused activity, more interactive in its form. It aims at highlighting an issue.

[17] One to one relationship plays pivotal role in coaching or mentoring.

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