

Analyzing Professional Development Practices for Teachers in Public Universities of Pakistan

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Abstract Professional development for teachers is an essential element of plans to improve the quality of education. Professional development in a broader sense refers to the development of a person in his or her professional role. More specifically, professional development of teachers refers to the achievement of enhanced learning experience in research and teaching with synchronized system so that he/she could deliver effectual knowledge to his /her students in particular and to the society as a whole. Exploring this imperative aspect of teaching human resource in universities, current study analyzes the initiatives taken by public universities of Pakistan for professional development of their teachers. The aim of this explanatory study is to investigate the issues and challenges regarding professional development mechanisms of public universities of Pakistan. It elaborates their performance development procedures and strategies and unearths the influential factors and challenges which are faced by these university teachers regarding performance development systems. The sample of the said study comprised of randomly selected teaching staff of five major Public Universities of Pakistan. Along with detail questionnaires, in depth interviews had been conducted with teaching staff of the sample universities in order to achieve the deeper insights of the challenges and issues regarding teachers' professional development. The study reveals that foreign scholarships to university teachers, research grants and training programs are various effectual measures taken by Higher Education Commission of Pakistan for Public universities. However, comprehensive monitoring system, quality assurance and impact measurement of the said measures are lacking elements which create dissatisfaction among teachers in public universities of Pakistan. Also, lack of training for improved teaching in semester system, communication gap among seniors and junior faculty, decreased guidance for modernized research conduction, overburdened teaching load are some of the hindering factors in professional development of teachers which are been revealed by the current research.

Keywords: Professional Development, Higher Education, Training Mechanisms

Introduction

Professional development of teachers is critical for the gradual improvement of educational standards. A qualified teacher would always deliver quality knowledge which in turns would improve the quality of education in an educational institute. It can be declared that the only real source of sustainable competitive advantage in today's knowledge intensive world is the ability to learn faster than the competition. Professional development of teachers is pivotal for the achievement of overall institutional goals. Innovations exude through the remarkable performance of teachers but the point of concern is that not much significance is being given to their professional development at the university level.

Teaching is a profession which elucidate the brains of students and the path which leads them to different other professions. The teachers' knowledge and the transference of that knowledge carry critical significance. As the world has gone to swiftly changing mode, the traditional teaching practices and professional development activities are not adequate to match up the speed. In this context the key importance should be given to the career-long professional development of teachers.

Professional development is actually based on giving access to the teachers to most up-to-date and finest teaching tools. This gives an upright support to the teachers who want grow professionally –bringing out the exceptional talent which they have and refine their skills. All teachers want to update their knowledge and follow best teaching practices.

It is important for higher education teachers to stay updated but stand-alone workshops have got low chances to bring a big change in teaching practice. However, addition of embedded and on-going

professional development, raising the communities where professional learning could be possible through the interaction amongst colleagues, upholding of administrative staff and coaches, could increase the chances of dramatic improvement (Joyce and Showers, 2002).

In the mid 70s the in charge of professional development at York University Richard Garner, coined the idea of continuing professional development. It entails the idea that the individuals should continually seek improvement in their knowledge and professional skills, beyond the initial training they get to carry out the jobs. It means that in-service training should be provided to the teachers and under the umbrella of university they would be responsible for their lifelong career development (Sandra Gray, 2005).

A decade or two ago, building a favorable combination of circumstances for professional development was a tough job to do, but the arrival of web tools and online learning made this transformation facile. By utilizing the technology the institution can improve the dormant skills of teacher by making them connect with teacher mentors, coaches, experts and colleagues over time and space. This could integrate the professional development of teachers into their day-to-day experiences. Through using online collaboration tools like discussion boards, blogs and virtual coaching teaching qualities could be improved which brings the student achievement as well. It is the requirement of time to provide professional development opportunities to the teachers so that they could prepare their students to compete globally and adorn the name of institute with stars.

Researches being conducted till date put emphasis on both in-house and external professional development of teachers. Both play the significant role in enhancing teacher capital and extolling organizational capacity. As a teachers' knowledge and abilities are impetus for student learning. University should focus on building the capabilities of teachers-particularly their knowledge, intellectual development and their expertise because 21st century demands of higher education have dramatically shifted from transfer of knowledge to creation practical knowledge.

Current climate of reform demands, that teachers should adopt the teaching methodologies and practices that have never been contemplated before. Success depends on the ease with which they learn new teaching skills and discard the outmoded practices. Higher Education Institutions need to provide opportunities for teachers to work collaboratively in practical sessions with researchers. A learner-centered foundation is required in order to get the long-term results through professional development.

With the growing challenge of 21st century higher education system is also undergoing the changes all over the world. Changes in the higher education institutions becomes more rapid with the start of new millennium as many governments and educational organizations taking serious action and implementing plans for educational reforms. Today when higher education has taken transition from traditional norms of 20th century to updated trends of education in 21st century, countries desire their higher education institutions to be the grooming nursery for leaders, intellectuals and human capital of tomorrow. The strategic vision has to be shifted upon assurance that teacher fully understand the importance and the required skills according to the demand of the 21st century and also guide his students the usage of these skills, achieving better understanding of subject matter and developed problem solving skills and enhancing their ability to develop and implement different teaching strategies.

The same is implemented by Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan in Pakistani public and private universities. Undoubtedly teachers are the most important agents in these reforms. As being subject and object of change teacher professional development has attain major attention during the past few years in Pakistan. Professional development of higher education teachers became the primary concern of Higher Education commission of Pakistan in last decades. Commission has initiated various strategic measures for teachers in higher education institutions of Pakistan. Major measures include foreign scholarships, inclusion research facilities in institutions, National Academy of Higher education which is the updated institute for teachers training, research grants and many more. Undoubtedly, said initiatives have played their imperative role in professional development of teachers in universities of Pakistan. However, skill utilization by these initiatives and effectiveness with potential challenges and issues are still to be explored. The unelaborated

areas which are been considered in current research includes professional development activities that have significant utilization by teachers, positive effects on teacher's professional development focusing on their knowledge, and acquired skills and commitment of teacher. This paper focuses on issues, challenges and satisfaction impact of those initiatives by Higher Education of Pakistan which have been taken regarding professional development of teachers in Higher Institutions of Pakistan. Major objectives of current study are

- To analyze and understand the performance development initiatives for teachers by public universities of Pakistan.
- To identify, what are the challenges and issues that are faced by public universities of Pakistan for effective staff performance development and what efforts can be made to improve it?

Literature Review

All the developed countries with extremely high progress ratio in educational field conform to the fact that professional development of teacher is the key requirement of an improved and efficient education system. Today, same concern is of prime importance in developing countries as well. This literature review concisely includes the literature giving insights of effective professional development of higher education teachers, its methods, influencing factors, impact on the performance of an individual and on organizational progress as a whole.

Professional Development is an unbroken chain of activities which involves training being offered to the employees, systematic exercise of newly learned activities and proffering the feedback, yielding the time limits and providing the support by giving follow up. Successful professional development programs offer the similar learning activities to the teachers which they would apply in the classroom and foster the learning environment for their students. Universities have a growing interest to develop as learning organizations and provide a platform for the teachers to share their experiences and expertise in more systematic manner (OCED, 2005).

The definition acknowledges that the professional development in university is a continuous process which provides an opportunity for the teachers to explore, learn and adopt new teaching methodologies. An individual's knowledge, attitude and skills get updated through learning according to the changing demands of the profession which plays a part in overall organizational development.

Fullan (1991) emphasized the point that Professional Development is a sum total of all the informal and formal learning experiences of an individual from the day he started his career as a teacher till his retirement. He further elaborated that professional development is process to explore and develop the understanding of advancements in the pedagogy. Teachers should be supported in effective manner in order to cope with advance technologies, modern teaching practices and updated research skills so that they not only flourish learning environment by their acquired teaching skills but also create innovative knowledge by research and theory development. Melnick and Adams (1975) emphasized that opportunities to grow as a professional should be provided to the teachers through out their career. They should be offered different activities like continuing the education, training courses, workshops, knowledge management systems, scholarships for higher studies as well as the collaboration with colleagues and expert coaches and mentors for enhancing research association.

Neuron (2007) came up with a different point of view that the Professional development actually unfolds the new horizons of progression. It stirs up an urge to think out of the box, supports new learning styles, contributes to the growth of intellectuals and regards an unusual skill set. Professional Development in this regard simply a smaller part of holistic philosophy behind career progression of a teacher. This philosophy describes a new dimension to the professional development, as it emphasizes that professional development involves the activities which are different, the new learning experiences are being offered. It compels the person to appreciate and learn unusual teaching practices which foster mutual learning with student extreme interest. All this brings a satisfaction as people feel more attracted towards the novelty. It

also adds up their intellectual skills which enable the teacher to perform in appreciable manner. Hoban (2002) elaborated a few distinct types of professional development for teachers using different tools and methodologies:

- **Workshops:** offered to keep the teachers updated about new initiatives related to their subject or general teaching practices.
- **Coaching & mentoring:** is being followed as the integral part of the educational setup.
- **Educational Courses:** offered by the university at weekends or in the evening by making adjustments in the working schedule for professional development of teachers
- **Seminars:** being conducted by the subject matter experts, the topics could range from the general to more specific type. It is normally a daytime activity followed by the discussion session.
- **Research:** subject related or interest based individual or group research could be done by the teachers to grow professionally and in order to propose new solution paradigms for emerging issues in their respective discipline.
- **Online Training:** programs being offered to the teacher can be completed as per their own interest and convenience. Lectures and course materials could be accessed online. Course related issues could be shared on the discussion boards by the trainees.
- **Higher Education:** opportunity being offered by the university to increase the qualification of teachers.
- **Collaborative Networks:** of teachers could be made in order to exchange learning experiences & expertise.
- **Educational Conferences:** a meeting for exchange of information and expert knowledge arranged by the University for the Professional Development of teachers.

The fundamental aim of professional development of higher education teachers is improving and updating the skills and knowledge of the teachers in order to deliver their best in teaching and to meet the challenges of time (Diaz Maggiori, 2004; Jones, 2001). Ali (2007) asserts that professional development of teachers is continuous process which involves acquiring, disseminating and executing knowledge in order to spread it in new generations. He further forces that effectual learning by students depends upon how seriously the knowledge and ideas are perceived and taught. Boyer (1987) put it in plain words saying that "all faculty members throughout their careers, should themselves, remain students. As scholars they must continue to learn and be seriously and continuously engaged in expanding intellectual world". Memon (2007) further emphasized that professional development of university teachers should not be seen as induction or orientation of teachers but significant area of professional development is in the form of continuous teacher career development through enhancing their discipline knowledge and pedagogy in order to facilitate student learning. Hoban (2002) highlights reflection, collaboration and sharing as three key aims of teacher professional development. Similarly, Nicholls (2002) defines three main areas of professional development as a) professional knowledge base, b) competence in professional action, c) development of reflection.

Major question which arises here is about the pathway or method through which this professional development could take place. However, there is no single approach which can guarantee effective staff development; different universities use various blends of approaches according to their resources and demands. Memon (2007) summarizes two types of approaches (listed below) which are being used for teacher professional development in universities.

(i) Initial Professional Development Approaches

- Orientation
- Induction
- Auditing
- Team Teaching

(ii) Continuing Professional Development Approaches

- Mentoring
- Appraisal by Self and Others
- Action Research
- Self Reflection/Evaluation
- Peer Coaching/Peer Reviews
- Clinical Supervision/Peer Consultancy
- Group Work/Team Learning
- Observing Good Practices
- Participation in Seminars/Conferences/Workshops
- Students Feedback
- On-line Distance Education
- Research and Scholarship Activities

Source: (Memon, 2007)

Skerritt (1992) forced that for teacher's continuous professional development, action research is most progressive way of teacher learning in universities. She defines action research as "research by higher education teachers themselves into their own teaching practice and into student learning". She further asserted that action research can benefit the teachers in their critical attitude, research in teaching, accountability and self evaluation. Miller and Pine (1990) supported the same point by emphasizing that action research is staff development process which enhances professional enquiry, improves education, increase awareness about learning environment and teacher development (cited in Skerritt, 1992). Nicholls (2001) calls attention to performance appraisals for professional development, he asserts that performance appraisal by students, head of department, peers or self, all plays important role for professional development. Because these appraisals are the ways of coming across weaknesses and strengths, by this data teacher evaluate his performance and reputation among his staff and students. Vonk (1995) highlighted mentoring as most long lasting relationship between senior and junior teacher for the guidance of junior teacher throughout his teaching profession. He further underscored that teachers during their first year of university, often find teaching as a hectic job, because 'they are confused by multitude of their experiences and not able to structure their experience'. At this time mentor can play important role in structuring their experiences, to facilitate them in teaching techniques, and to develop alternatives. Mentoring benefits teacher in high teacher morale, greater commitment and greater sense of empowerment, when teacher has a mentor to discuss problems and for guidance throughout the teaching career (Ashton, 1993; Fletcher, 2000). Similarly, peer coaching is supported by Smyth (1985) and Skerritt (1992), they stressed that it is collaborative process of collaborative discussion, observation and constructive feedback. Moses (1985) asserted on 'development at a distance' for teacher professional growth. He pointed up new service to staff, of loaning the books, articles, papers etc in the areas specified by them. This system of staff post fulfils the instant need of teachers of acquiring information and knowledge but is not sufficient for complete learning and generation of new knowledge as Skerritt (1992) asserted that learning by distance is not sufficient because "*generating the academics own theories, insights and understanding and facilitating their designing strategies which are appropriate for their particular purpose can be better achieved through on-campus discussions in seminars and workshops*". Gibbs (1981) supports the idea of mutual discussion in seminars and workshops. He put emphasis that workshops/seminars can be advantageous because through them everyone is actively and creatively involved in presenting the solutions, if the workshop leader or coordinator is skilled in conducting workshops otherwise discussion can be chaotic and ineffective.

Whatever, the method or approach of professional development maybe adopted it should be supported

by upper management. Because teachers will be ready to adopt change and improvement plans, only when, their efforts of making suggestions and improvements will be realized and appreciated by the upper management. Lucas (1989) accentuated that academic chairs are need to be trained in professional development of their faculty members because they are in better position of inducing ways of improvement of teaching in their subordinate teachers. The main purpose of teacher's professional development is to equip him with latest and updated teaching methods, improving his discipline knowledge, improving academic capacity through research and inquiry, enhancing intellectual and professional perspectives and all these aims of teacher development can be achieved by continuous professional education of teachers in order to provide students effective learning environment (Memon, 2007).

Research Methodology

The research is supported by survey strategy which was conducted to identify the issues of professional development for teachers in higher education of Pakistan. Five public sector universities were taken as study sample. In-depth interviews and questionnaires were used as key sources of collecting the primary data. The sampling method used in this research was Stratified sampling. Three strata were selected as Dean, chairman/HOD and faculty. The sample size determined by the researchers was 150 with 1.29 margins of error and 99% confidence level, belonging to all three strata explained above. In order to increase reliability of current research, in depth interviews have also been conducted from 65 teachers of the sample universities belonging to all three strata.

Findings and Discussion

Questionnaire results and respondents views from in depth interviews have shown that professional development of teachers is missing element in their performance management system. As 65% teachers have disagreed with the statement "My training needs are discussed in performance review meeting". Participants mentioned about communication problem with head regarding training or developmental needs. They insisted that teachers are just following traditional teaching style which they have observed at pre-service education stage and this has to be changed now because of changed nature of academic environment like semester system in universities. Major issue raised by the participants was teacher selection method in public universities. Respondents emphasized that teachers are recruited on their qualification and experience. There is no formal training about semester system before sending the teachers in classes, because of that their performance is affected, as there is no guidance in any form for semester system teaching. Research reveals that there is intense deficiency of specific programs and procedures for professional development of teachers regarding classroom teaching, modern teaching methodologies and class management in semester system.

Interview Results (with administrative staff) have shown that the main issue for absence of any comprehensive training is the budget constraint. Department Chairman and faculty deans emphasized that if department heads and deans want to conduct some in house training program they need specific budget for this, which is often seems to be a large problem in public sector universities. Secondly, department heads showed their concern about low motivation of teachers due to unattractive rewards. Teachers, because of their socio-economic conditions are more inclined to serve their time, efforts or energies towards meeting their earning goals rather than on their professional development.

In addition to in house training efforts of universities, the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan has also established an institute named as National Academy of Higher Education which offers different training programs for university teachers in Pakistan. National Academy of Higher Education (NAHE) works under Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC), whose purpose is to introduce new training programs for professional development of university teachers in Pakistan. NAHE offers training programs range from one

day to three months. Focus of these courses is to 'make teachers reflective practitioners, and capable to integrate new research methodologies into instruction, and assuming new roles of instructional leadership, as it is necessary response to rapidly changing environment' (Awan, 2009). These programs are offered to all universities of Pakistan (private or public) in order to have vast learning and professional development of teachers from sector universities of Pakistan.

There is no doubt, that these faculty development programs by NAHE are playing vital role in professional development and teaching skill enhancement of higher education teachers in Pakistan. But some signs of dissatisfaction among participants of have been observed in the current research. Firstly, these programs are decided by NAHE focusing on complete training package for teachers. But according to most of the research respondents, there is no prior discussion on training needs of teachers. They insisted that program should be discussed with each university and should be made according to needs of teachers of each level (senior or junior). Secondly, those participants who have attended these programs mentioned that these faculty development programs are having highly rigid training format. They expressed that program consists of various modules, and time given to each module was not that much sufficient in order to obtain a deep insight. Thirdly, as these training programs are attended only by those who are nominated by their universities, by this process these training programs are only enhancing individual skills and learning but not promoting collective learning as department faculty. Among research sample respondents 73% teachers elaborated the importance of collective learning. They emphasized that there is immense need of collective understanding of whole faculty so that new norms could be flourished. Participants emphasized that they become nearly unable to apply new learning in their faculty/department because other teachers who do not have such training oppose to accept the change that has been learnt by only one or two teachers among huge faculty.

Another initiative of Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan is of flourishing the research culture in universities of Pakistan. Previously, research in terms of articles, research papers and journals, was missing element in universities of Pakistan. Considering the high standard of research in high ranked universities all over the world, Pakistani universities are now putting their best efforts in encouraging research culture among their teachers. In order to implement the philosophy, HEC has formulated the policy for public sector universities that every promotion within teaching sector of universities will highly be depended on research publications of the person who is applying for the higher post. Also, annual performance report for performance review of each teacher must be written on the basis of quality of research work done by the teacher. In addition to this, HEC is also offering full funding for national and international conferences participation to any university teacher and allocating budget for the national institutions who are publishing their own journals.

As compare to past scenario, where the teachers were recruited and promoted on the basis of higher qualification and experience, this research culture is like an organizational change especially in public sector universities of Pakistan. Teachers have welcomed this culture for their professional and organizational development but our research in IUB shows that the major issue is of proper training and lack of research insights for the said change. Most of the (69%) participants expressed their desire to do high quality research work, but they mentioned that they have not been given proper training for this. They emphasized that support from senior colleagues and department heads regarding research skills development is highly unavailable.

Another, issue regarding research culture, raised by research sample participants is of busy teaching schedule in semester system. They stressed that there is stretched schedule in semester system consisting of regular classes, paper setting, paper marking, conducting presentations and checking assignments etc. Because of these extremely demanding activities of semester system, teachers do not have enough time to concentrate on their research work.

Almost all the interview participants (when asked about research or teaching emphasis in their university) mentioned that more emphasis in their university is on teaching not on research. They mentioned

that this is because of problems of proper time management and lack of training or guidance for enhancing research skills. However, 78% of teachers agree that there is immense pressure from higher authorities to setup high quality research culture. Also, it is interesting to note here that some participants mentioned their concern about emphasis on research. According to them teaching should be improved first. They emphasized that teachers in Pakistani universities context have to enhance teaching skills first and then should concentrate on research side because it is primary need of students.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Undoubtedly, strategic vision of Higher Education Commission of Pakistan along with Public universities administration has contributed a lot for professional development of teachers. Still continuous monitoring and quality assurance system is highly lacking which creates dissatisfaction among teachers. Current study results have shown that teachers are overburdened with teaching extreme responsibilities without any comprehensive teaching training which equip them for further career progression. Public universities of Pakistan need to focus on in house training mechanisms particularly in the field of teaching and research improvement area of teachers. These in house training not only would develop effective communication among senior and junior teachers but would also serve the purpose of organizational learning where collective teaching methods would be implemented by the teachers. Same is the case in research skill of the teachers where teachers have enormous interest to contribute the society by conducting different problem solving researches but the find nothing but unavailable guidance. Public Universities of Pakistan need to focus on research skill transfer first and then could demand action researches from their teachers. All the findings lead to the demand of merit criteria during the time of recruitment and selection and a good mix of training programs in research and teaching so that teachers could give maximum output. There is immense need of knowledge management mechanisms among Public Universities and Public and Private Universities of Pakistan. Research analysis shows that teachers are willing to collaborate with national and international universities as they complained about lack of international and national collaboration among universities. This phenomenon would prove a major milestone in enhancing professional development of teachers as they would share diverse knowledge. Moreover, in depth interview content analysis shows that a major factor of de motivation towards professional development is unavailable reward system for better performance. Incentives could be attached with all the professional development programs so that employees feel motivated about taking an active part in developmental activities. In addition to that, communication gap among senior and junior faculty members is proving to be a foremost barrier for effectual professional development of teachers. In this regard, universities need to foster mentoring culture where seniors should be encouraged to guide their juniors in research and teaching improvements so that collective progression and learning could take place in departments in particular and in universities as a whole.

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