

## A Review of Teachers' Professional Development Initiatives and Associated Issues and Challenges in Higher Education Institutes of Pakistan

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**Abstract:** Professional development of teachers is a necessary part of any country's improvements of the educational system. Collaborative and interactive teaching can be compared with a tree where traditional, orthodox ideas are abandoned (like old leaves falling down) while innovative and provocative concepts are acknowledged, accepted, and implemented in the classroom. Teachers' professional competency and personal development are the most important parts of the educational continuum. Accordingly, most universities in developed countries have established their own professional development wings to enhance the pedagogical and interactive skills of their faculty. The present study is descriptive in nature and attempts to provide a theoretical background of the importance of professional development, and the need for professional development for university teachers in Pakistan. Moreover, it has found a strong connection between enhancing the quality of education with the professional growth and development of teachers through various ways and means.

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### 1. Introduction

Teachers are of prime importance for the survival, growth, and progress of any nation. They are the primary foundation of any country's educational pyramid. Nations that have competent, responsible teachers gain sublimity and consolidation quite rapidly. Researchers and educationists agree that teachers have an extraordinary influence on students through their pedagogy. As a result, teachers have always been treated with great respect and reverence in almost all the religions, historical traditions, ancient civilizations, and philosophical perspectives. The role of the teacher has changed rapidly from an authoritative and dominant figure to a facilitator and mentor. With the rapid evolution of educational goals, content selection, and learning outcomes, the role of the teacher has also changed along with pedagogical styles. According to Khalil Jibran (2001) and Rasheed et al (2010), a good teacher is not the one who teaches but the one who inspires. Educational trends and classroom scenarios have changed quite rapidly over the last couple of decades. The teacher of any subject must get acquainted with many other skills, including

computer technology, innovative instructional strategies, classroom management, digital teaching and learning, using smart-boards, discussion forums, and webinars, etc. Teachers' professional growth is very necessary for students' academic growth. Students benefit from their pedagogy if it aligns with their interests, needs, and existing academic challenges.

As a result, many countries have developed sound and effective mechanisms for teachers' pre-service and in-service professional growth. However, the Pakistani educational system has been unsteady for several decades. Policy makers and administrators have catered to political interests over students' needs. In the 1980s-90s, governments recruited inefficient and incompetent teachers in schools, colleges, and universities to promote their own interests. Despite receiving voluminous amounts of funding from many donor agencies, no proper attention was given to teacher training or teacher education. The result was an education system that has been in a precarious position for many years. However, since the inception of the Higher Education System (HEC), there has been a sudden

transformation in university education, academic enhancement, and professional development of teachers. There is still a very long way to go to meet today's educational and global challenges. Teachers inevitably need respect, dignity, professional growth, research aptitude, and other qualities to build national integrity at the school, college, and university levels. The present study focuses on the importance of an improvement in professional development for teachers at universities in Pakistan. At the university level, students pass through the transitional stage of growth and personality. Teachers must grasp the knowledge and experience of personality traits, learning styles, teaching strategies, learning strategies, interests, and cognitive abilities of their students. Moreover, they should equip themselves with innovative pedagogical strategies and instructions to prepare their students for the ever-increasing challenges of the professional world.

## 2. Definition and Importance of Professional Development

Various authors have described "professional development" in different ways. According to Memon (2007) and Siddiqui et al (2011) it is a vibrant and continuous process that improves and enhances teachers' knowledge, pedagogical skills, and experience. Similarly, Mirza (2007) described it as something that is achieved through increased experience and examination of one's own teaching on a continuous basis. In the same way, Ali (2007) explained that professional development is a continuous process of acquiring, disseminating, and executing knowledge to build more capable students and improve society in general. A Web definition is also much closer to previous definitions, where professional development includes techniques to enhance and improve teachers' subject knowledge and departmental and classroom management skills.

Professional development is a growing phenomenon and gaining momentum globally. It is important for teachers as well as academic institutions, leaders, and students. Other university stakeholders are also influenced positively by well-developed faculty members. The following points highlight the importance of professional development:

- Daigle, Stephen, Jarmon, and Carolyn (1997) claim professional development helps increase, improve, and maintain human capital and intellectual capacity of teachers.
- Hitchcock, Maurice, Stritter, and Frank (1992) maintain that as this new concept

gains worldwide acceptance, it helps improve teaching skills and teacher effectiveness.

- Miller and Anthony (1997) and Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (1996) emphasize the importance of preparing faculty to meet the internal and external challenges of the 21st century. This aim can be achieved through professional development. The major challenge that the teachers face is expanding and updating knowledge and information.
- According to Moeini (2003), faculty development is an investment in improving the human and intellectual capital of teachers and the return of this investment the success of the entire institution.
- Moeini (2003) and Aslam (2011) further elaborated that through professional development, teachers become capable of upholding their academic careers, become prepared to work effectively as individuals, and gain understanding of their role and how to perform that role with a great sense of responsibility.
- Memon (2007) and Aslam (2011a) indicated that professional development is necessary because teachers contribute to building the next generation and equip university students with the required knowledge and skills to develop their careers as well as help develop national economy.
- Memon (2007) and Aslam (2011b) reports that university teachers also shape the cognitive thinking, emotional, and moral development of students that will help them to play multiple roles in their lives as citizens, parents, and community members. Teachers also bring about societal changes. Therefore, high quality teachers are necessary for personal, professional, and academic development of students.

As Ali (2007) suggested, teachers must pursue professional development that will not only improve their subject knowledge but also enhance their ability to meet day-to-day challenges.

## 3. Professional Development Programs

According to Mirza (2007), the first initiative for professional development in the form of in-service training was conducted by UGC in the '90s. The three-month course was planned and implemented to train and develop teachers of tertiary academic institutes. Unfortunately, this first attempt was not carried out further for multiple reasons. The World Bank Report (2002) identified lack of facilities

and resources available to higher education as major challenges in carrying out professional development activities. This is also one of the major differences between developing and developed nations. Similarly Mirza, (2007) highlighted other problems, such as Pakistani teachers' lack of motivation to attend professional development activities because they are unaware of their importance. The responsibility falls on all stakeholders, and the activities do not produce the desired outcomes. In view of this, the Higher Education Commission (HEC) increased funding by 4,000 times just to maintain the improved quality of education in Pakistan (Mirza, 2007). Quantity of education has been catered through growth in amenities, whereas quality of education has been focused through imparting continuous professional development activities. NAHE, Learning Innovation, and many other projects have been initiated by HEC to address faculty development needs.

Similarly, according to Sajjad (2007), the Higher Education Commission has launched several programs to improve quality of education in universities, including the three-month Faculty Development Program (FDP) in 2004. Seven groups completed their training successfully. Another program, the Staff Development Program (SDP), was launched for a three-week period and run at various centers established by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) (Sajjad, 2007). Since then many other short and long term programs have been launched by the HEC on a continuous basis, including workshops, conferences, seminars, research grants, and foreign and national scholarships to teachers. However, according to Ali (2007), the situation of professional development of faculty members in universities of Pakistan is still unsatisfactory. Many teachers do not possess basic fundamental knowledge. He further elaborated that only a few post-doctorate and doctorate degree holders serve in universities. Moreover, supervisors discourage professional development activities. No specific professional development activities are undertaken and no proper opportunities are made available for teachers to enhance and improve their skills and abilities. There is an immense need to improve negative perceptions of administrators as well as teachers regarding the importance of professional development.

According to Sajjad (2007), Pakistan needs a large number of highly qualified and skilled teachers. However, Pakistan is facing many challenges in developing and training teachers, especially at the higher education level. The Higher Education Commission of Pakistan has taken useful steps to provide training and development at tertiary level. It has started a staff development program in

2004 named NAHE (National Academy of Higher Education) (Sajjad, 2007). The first program was three months long. The main objective of this program was to develop competent and skilled teachers for Pakistan's higher education system. Seven groups have successfully completed the program. After that, another three-week program called the Staff Development Program (SDP) was run by various authorities set up by Higher Education Commission namely the Dow University of Health Sciences and Medicine Karachi and University Of Karachi in 2005 (Sajjad, 2007). But such activities are not enough to meet the required goals. There is an acute need for many effective and high quality professional development programs that should be linked with improvement of professional learning, professional knowledge, and professional status for teachers (Memon, 2007). Mirza (2007) explained that there are a variety of professional development activities such as short courses, extended, or long-term courses that may take place once a week on Sunday or may cover a longer span of about two years. Trainees might also be provided with certificates and degrees after successful completion of these courses. Some academic institutions also offer various incentives for completing formal courses, such as promotions, earning of certificates and degrees, and recognition to qualified teachers (Mirza, 2007). According to Memon (2007) some professional development approaches that are used to develop and train faculty members are as follows:

1. Orientation
2. Induction
3. Apprenticeship
4. Auditing
5. Team teaching
6. Pedagogical skill development program for new teachers

These were old techniques that had been previously used to train faculty members. A few contemporary techniques are also used, such as:

1. Mentoring
2. Appraisal by self and others
3. Action research and publication
4. Evaluation
5. Peer coaching / peer reviews
6. Peer consultancy
7. Group work / team learning professional consultancy
8. Observing good practices
9. Participation in conferences / seminar / workshops
10. Students' feedback
11. Participation in academic / curriculum development / reviews

12. Organizational development / reviews
13. On-line / distance education program
14. Research and scholarship activities
15. Re-conceptualization of scholarship activities Memon (2007).

#### 4. Quality of Education

Quality of higher education means different things to various researchers. According to Westerheidjen (1999), it is difficult to define quality in higher education because there is a lack of theory on quality of higher education. Raouf (2008) has thrown light on the importance of continuous improvement of higher education quality. Researchers emphasized regular evaluation of a system's input, process, and output. Adams (1998) has given a comprehensive view of quality as an extent to which an institute can influence students' knowledge, attitudes, values, and behaviors or more comprehensively how knowledge has been acquired and effectively applied. Similarly Al-Azzah and Yahya (2010) maintain that the major goal of quality is to acquire "Customer Satisfaction." In the case of universities, their customers are students, so their goal is to achieve students' satisfaction. However, the definition given by ISO 2000 is that quality is a set of characteristics of the product that make it responsive to the needs expressed and compatible or able to meet them (ISO, 2000). Chapman and Adams (2002) and Siddique et al (2011) described the following characteristic of quality in academic institute as:

- Effective teaching methodologies and techniques designed to encourage independent and innovative thinking;
- Capable, motivated, well-trained faculty members;
- Appropriate, well-designed, and relevant curriculum;
- Effective learning materials including, but not limited to, textbooks;
- Well-maintained learning environment;
- A valid, reliable examination system;
- Strong influential leadership;
- Sufficient direct instructional time;
- Adequate financing; and
- Effective organizational structure and support.

Similarly, Oliver (2001) has also discussed various measures to achieve quality teaching and learning in higher education. The researcher said that quality can be achieved if students' needs are catered to properly, students' learning experience is good, and if good quality teachers are employed. The

researcher described many quality measures in higher education as:

- Students' satisfaction, motivation, and interest in studies;
- Students' results and grades;
- Students' level of achievement;
- Students' enrollment and drop outs;
- Faculty's knowledge of subject matter;
- Faculty use of various teaching aids and contemporary techniques for delivering lecture;
- Communication skills and teaching skills of faculty members;
- Teacher supporting and helping students in every way and teachers have knowledge of pedagogy.

Hence it is proved from the findings of various research projects that quality of education can be improved through various factors, and professional development is one such factor. Therefore universities must train and develop their teachers to enhance the quality of education delivered to students.

#### 5. Issues and Challenges Faced by the Teachers of Higher Education Institutions of Pakistan

According to Henard and Leprince-Ringuet (2000), today's higher education is crossing through novel landscape and facing exciting challenges such as increasing national and international competition, increasing number of diversified students, increased expectations of stakeholders, globalization, and revolution in information technology and changing teaching methodology. But the darker side of the picture is that the higher education system of developing and underdeveloped nations is working unsatisfactorily (Hoodbhoy, 1998). The higher education institutes of Pakistan are not performing well. Various problems in the teaching-learning process in higher education institutions were identified by several researchers. Siddiqui (2006) described that learning is mostly book oriented. Students rely on memorizing content provided to them in classes. Similarly, Hoodbhoy (1998); Khawaja (1994); Ahmed (1992); Sarwar and Aslam (2010) and Ali (2005) explained that teaching methods used in institutes are traditional and ineffective in imparting learning in students.

Ali (2007) reveals professional development of faculty members is highly disappointing. Participants don't have the required basic skills and knowledge to acquire training. Old teaching methodologies are in place because of the poor professional development process. Participants are

less motivated to acquire training and do not know the importance of training.

Similarly, Sajjad (2007) elaborated a few issues regarding professional development of faculty members including:

- Inadequate duration and daily timing of training courses;
- Unsuitable training program schedule;
- Ineffective and useless content of the course;
- Incompetent facilitators or trainers;
- Inadequate facilities provided to participants and resource person;
- Improper design of modules;
- Overlapped and deficient modules.

As far as challenges are concerned, the researcher elaborated three major challenges:

- Faculty development should be considered as an ongoing process and should not be restricted to junior faculty members;
- Strong culture of professional development should be created and participants should be rewarded and valued;
- Professional development should be synchronized well with professional development for teaching and research (Sajjad, 2007)

## 6. Conclusion

The implications obtained from the theoretical research discussed above reveal that the professional development of teachers is mandatory to promote healthy education at the university level. Administrators should formulate a roadmap for the professional enhancement and development of teachers, and establish rules and regulations to make sure that teachers follow this roadmap regularly and consistently. In order to implement professional enhancement roadmap, the higher education system should establish an easy and accessible system of professional growth. It should offer online teacher training courses, webinars, and discussion workshops, along with the existing professional development courses, so that the teachers may link up with national and international courses while performing their duties in their parent departments. Moreover, teachers should be awarded incentives, increments, promotions, and other benefits upon successful completion and implementation of professional courses relevant to their disciplines. New institutions like the NAHE should be established at the province and national level, and these institutions should have liaisons with the international institutions of professional growth. As a

result, teachers will get national and international exposure, and they can build up their students according to the global challenges. Last but not least, teacher forums should be established and made functional at the institutional, national, and international level so that they can share their experiences and learn new ones while interacting with the other teaching communities

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