



Continuous Professional Development: A Source of Appropriate Learning Activities for Students

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Abstract

The purpose of this research study was to analyze the impact of professional development courses on teaching practices of the teachers. A quantitative approach was adopted to solve the query, a questionnaire having close-ended questions was developed to collect data. The population of the study was teachers' trainers and heads of the institutions. The purpose of including trainers was to understand what types of courses offered by the teachers training institutes while inclusion heads to know about the changes found in the personalities of the teachers after attending a course. The analysis of collected data reveals that training institutes are offering general courses instead of subject-oriented courses, and resultantly teachers are unable to have appropriate subject related activities during their classroom teaching. Therefore, it is recommended that subject-oriented professional development courses should be designed for the teachers who will ultimately help teachers in using more appropriate activities during their teaching.

Key Words: Continuous Professional Development; and Appropriate Learning Activities

Introduction

As the world is undergoing rapid changes, our social and professional lives are getting affected day by day. Each sector of life exposes new challenges and demands for the individuals. These changes have influenced the field of education, as well. Education is indeed important for individuals as it trains them to cope with challenges and to enjoy a better life. The new tendencies have changed the concepts of people regarding teaching and learning. In the present era, like other professionals, teachers also need to keep themselves updated with new concepts and methods that may help them in their professional development and grooming. A teacher cannot perform his/her tasks efficiently unless he/she is professionally groomed. That's why; teachers need to go through professional development programs on a regular basis (Button, 2012). Professional development refers to continuous improvements and keeping of professional skills, competencies, and experiences. Continuous Professional Development (CPD) means a commitment to humanize, uphold, and enlargement of subject knowledge and abilities that are required in associations. Professional development training programs are helpful for both employees and management. These programs help the employees to learn to perform their tasks efficiently. At the same time, these programs provide the management and high professional authorities with valuable tips to manage and deal with staff (Guskey, 2000).

The concept of CPD can generally smidgen its origins to the periods following World War-II when official forms recognized an essential for organized additional knowledge post prescribed requirement. Up until this opinion, it had mainly been expected that capable specialists would recognize and inductee their information improvement supplies on an unpremeditated or unpaid origin. Though, in a progressively controversial and scientifically proceeding occupational and specialized atmosphere, the essential became ostensible for an

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additional orderly and organized method to additional knowledge. Over the past two eras, this promise to CPD has banquet yonder those allied to official forms and is now comprised through all subdivisions. According to Gusthey (2000), the two terms Professional Development (PD) and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) refer to the learning of teachers during their service or because of their experience which they learn formally or informally in the course of time. He further says that teachers during their service time do not learn because they have a lack of knowledge about their subject or profession, basically learning becomes their need because the world is changing very rapidly and every day new things or ideas are introduced which becomes the need of the teachers if they do not learn then maybe they will not be able to teach students as per the need of the modern world of technology. Huberman (1998) argues that in the context of teachers' work, their learning cannot be separated from their social development. (Jita & Mokhele, 2014) Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is the mean by which professionals maintain, improve, and broaden their knowledge and skills and develop the personal qualities and competencies required in their working lives. It is a process of getting an individual's set objectives for development then charting his/her progress towards achieving them. It is about where one wants to be and how he/she plans to get there.

The concept of Professional Development (CPD) is not properly defined by the educationists and concerns because it is considered the formal training and on-job training too. But according to Murphy (2002), it is related to all learned behaviors which are helpful in classroom teaching. Professional development is the learning of an individual teacher maybe because of the experience which he/she learned during teaching or training. The experience and training could be direct or indirect but having a positive impact on the practices of the teachers teaching at different levels. In this process, teachers bring change in their point of view, renew or change their commitment towards teaching and learning process, if it is not happening then experience or training becomes useless. Training and experience also improve the critical thinking skills and emotional intelligence of good professionals, and it affects their whole lives. (Murphy, 2002) Teachers' discernments of what actions found CPD are regularly imperfect to presence at courses, conferences, and whole-school INSET days, frequently to encounter state necessities. Professional knowledge, or "on the work" learning is frequently understood by teachers as detached from CPD, and somewhat that is impartial done as a fragment of the job (Edmonds and Lee, 2002; Hustler *et al.*, 2003; Robinson and Sebba, 2004). However, the literature points to several facets of effective CPD, many of which are far removed from the commonly-held perceptions of CPD as one-off events.

CPD is useful for teachers and teachers to do understand the worth of professional grooming and further growth for their success. They strongly feel that they need effective and up to date training sessions, but these training should be conducted when they are not engaged in official tasks like classroom teaching and other activities. In schools, teachers are assigned multiple tasks other than taking classes, and they cannot take full advantage of learning opportunities. This is observed that CPD courses are held for school teachers, but their implementations are not assessed. The main purpose of professional development programs should be to improve teachers' competence, and for this, teachers mustn't be overburdened, rather they should be kept relaxed so to learn to improve their skills. CPD aims to inculcate some important skills and expertise among teachers if intended outcomes are not observed; it loses its worth. Therefore, effective professional development evaluation is a must, so the standard of education could be improved. Harland and Kinder (1997) and Muijs *et al.* (2004) expressed that CDP helps teachers to improve their skills. Moreover, it plays an important role in the reputation of a school. Teachers get the opportunity to learn new pedagogical expertise to present concepts in new ways. They teach more efficiently, which results in good learning among students. Good academic achievements of students are the sign of a good reputation for institutions they are affiliated with. That's why a trainer needs to be very careful and must ensure that he/she has delivered the main purpose of the CPD courses offered to teachers. This is how the main purpose of training and development can be achieved. Muijs *et al.* hold the view that teachers' performance, students' learning, and academic achievements of an institution are interconnected. Teachers put their efforts to teach, groom, and prepare students for exams. In other words, teachers are the mentors who train and guide them for excellence. Behind their achievements, there are always the silent efforts of their teachers. Good teaching results in outstanding academic results while slight negligence on teachers' part may have a bad impact on their success. CPD can play a significant role in many ways for educators, learners, and schools. But for this, each of them must have acceptance for their roles. Teachers must know the worth of CPD,

students must have confidence in their teachers, and administrations should consider the best time for training programs before they arrange. Smith (2002) emphasized that evaluation is important in CPD as it is the mark of success of any training endeavour. Evaluation is the assessment that is meant to identify if the objectives of any training programs have been achieved or not. The results of the evaluation assist trainers/ educational development experts and professionals to know the weaknesses of any training program. In addition to this, they get new stuff for further training. This is how CPD can grow further and further that indeed results in quality enhancement of education. Knight (2002) wrote that evaluation should be done both quantitatively and qualitatively for better outcomes. Teachers must assess what they have learned from a PD program and must draw conclusions. This self-assessment of teachers can play a dynamic role in the improvement of their skills, weaknesses, and strengths of that course. Edmonds and Lee (2002) expressed that along with teachers' evaluation, it is equally important to evaluate students' learning. As teachers' efforts and academic achievements of students are interconnected, both should be evaluated to ascertain the métièrs and flaws of PD programs so the quality of training could be improved. Therefore, both teachers and students should remain the prime focus of PD experts and trainers. McAteer et al. (2005) embrace the opinion that it is problematic to assess the efficiency of any PD program because some teachers are not eager to shift their practices so for them, PD courses are of no usage. These teachers cannot be boosted through training because of their reluctance to embrace change. Therefore, it is obvious from McAteer et al. (2005) that teachers' willingness to learn from PD programs is the most important. Unless they participate with good spirit and positive attitude, they cannot take full advantage of training. CPD should be aimed to boost teachers to understand their value. Therefore, the first and foremost aim of any PD course should be to induce among teaching faculty of a school its usefulness. McAteer et al. (2005) emphasized that teachers must know what CPD is and how it can benefit them to have a close and strong relationship with their students. They further brought to light that CPD doesn't bring any change in students in terms of their learning. As teachers are not interested in changing their teaching styles, learning remains a slow process. They also mentioned that teachers feel bad when they are evaluated and asked to change their pedagogical styles. That is a big hindrance to the quality improvement of teaching. Sometimes, biased attitudes of management and administrations against teachers become a barrier to positive change. Edmonds and Lee (2002) viewed that it is not important to evaluate students; rather, it is teachers' evaluation that matters more. If teaching is well-organized and effective, this will result in good academic achievements. Commenting on CPD, Cordingley et al. (2005) expressed that the first step to PD is to persuade teachers to know its importance in their professional careers. A person cannot learn anything unless he knows it's worth or unless he has a desire to learn that. Indeed, CPD is very effective and useful for all professionals to take on, but they need to be fully convinced that they cannot excel in their professional lives unless they work on their professional development and grooming. So, teachers must be fully aware of the worth of PD for themselves.

According to Harland and Kinder (1997), there are nine possible outcomes of teachers Continuous Professional Development (CPD) which are as under:

- Material and resources, i.e. activities, worksheets, new teaching styles, etc.
- Learn about new policies or schemes, or in other words, they learn about factual information.
- CPD provides awareness to teachers about new ideas and values.
- Teachers try to adopt those values and attitudes which the objectives of the CPD.
- CPD has different impacts on the teachers' personality sometimes negative (lack of confidence) and sometimes positive (boost the confidence of the teachers)
- It also develops enthusiasm and determination in the teachers.
- It improves teachers' pedagogical skills and brings flexibility in the personality of the teachers.
- Teachers start supporting each other because CPD provides the opportunity to sit together and work in collaboration.
- CPD has deep effects on the practices of the teachers. The main purpose of CPD is to train teachers in such a way that they become useful in the classroom; the activities arranged by them should be useful for the students. Harland and Kinder (1997) further write that CPD has varied impact on different teachers depending on their commitments ultimately it effects on the profile of the teachers and indicate different

outcomes from the teachers' classroom teaching. Number outcomes may vary from one to many means' outcomes could be broader than expected. Certain outcomes of the CPD have a significant effect.

It is an admitted fact that certain outcomes are out of reach; therefore, it is the need of the time the policymakers have to take certain steps to make continuous professional development effective by motivating teachers to take part willingly or they have to create an attraction for the teachers so that they feel that they should be the part of this process without being forced by anyone. Sometimes it has been observed that the outcomes of the CPD are short-term or having no long term effects on the teaching styles or attitude of the teachers, means after attending sometimes they do not implement of the learned ideas or innovative strategies and declare it is not suitable for the region or culture. However, extrinsic motivation can also help with self-concept and participation in future CPD, but for the effects to last, this needs to be backed up by knowledge and skills. While Harland and Kinder suggest that these outcomes are separate, they acknowledge that certain outcomes may have knock-on effects on other outcomes. For example, the supply of provisions and resources may have knock-on effects on motivation. Affective outcomes may impact on the take-up of new knowledge and skills, and soon.

Statement of the Problem

Pakistan is a country where education has taken the shape of the industry; private educational institutions are increasing like mushrooms as investors consider the schools their business and try to save money by stopping different essential activities especially the professional development activities of their teachers. They consider professional development is the teachers' duty. Therefore they do not send their teachers to attend such programs that impact professional growth and ultimately affecting students learning, as teachers' knowledge is not updated, and they are using obsolete teaching approaches.

Research Question

The following research question guided this research study:

Do Professional Development Courses (CPD) improve teachers' abilities to plan or design appropriate learning activities for their students?

Research Objective

The main objective of this research study was to find out the impact of continuous professional development on the competencies of teachers in planning and designing appropriate learning activities.

Research Methodology

The quantitative research approach was adopted in this research study because it helps the researchers to get the point of view of the respondents it does not put the words of the researchers in the mouth of the respondents. The strategy of research adopted in this study surveyed/visits to the selected public and private secondary schools following a stratified random sampling procedure.

The population of the study was the professional development experts who were providing teachers training to teachers. As Karachi is a mega and cosmopolitan city of Sindh, therefore it is considered that it represents Pakistan in general and Sindh in particular. For the present study, 20 professional development experts'/teachers' trainers and 60 head-teachers from 02 towns of Karachi were included in this research study. The sample of the study was obtained by using stratified and random criterion sampling. 10-20% sample using the technique of random sampling was implied to draw the sample from the secondary school teachers of selected schools from the selected towns of Karachi. A questionnaire was also designed to get the opinion of the professional development experts/ teachers trainers consisting of close-ended.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Percentage of Trainers Belonging to Public and Private Training Institutions

Numbers of teachers' training institutions are working in Karachi including public and private, therefore trainers

were selected by using a snowball sampling technique, the detail of selected trainers is as under:

Table 1.

| S. No. | Category | No of Trainers | %Age |
|--------|---|----------------|------|
| 1. | Privately Managed Teachers' Training Institutions | 13 | 65% |
| 2. | Training Institutes Managed by Government | 07 | 35% |
| Total | | | 100% |

Teaching Experience of the Trainers

Experience plays a vital role in almost all fields of life; therefore, in the present research study, it was given due consideration. The detail professional development experts' experience is as under:

Table 2.

| S. No. | Experience | No of Respondents | %Age |
|--------|----------------|-------------------|------|
| 1. | 1 to 3 years | 05 | 25% |
| 2. | 4 to 6 years | 03 | 15% |
| 3. | 7 to 9 years | 04 | 20% |
| 4. | 10 to 12 years | 06 | 30% |
| 5. | 13 to 15 years | 02 | 10% |
| Total | | 20 | 100% |

The data was collected from the teacher trainers having at least one-year experience, and the purpose was to get his opinion based on the experience.

Specification of Courses Offered

It was inquired from the participants that do they offer general courses or specific subject-based courses. Their responses are as under:

Table 3.

| S. No. | The course as per Subject Demand | Responses |
|--------|----------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. | General | 15 |
| 2. | Yes | 02 |
| 3. | No | 03 |

The data in the Table-3 reflects that out of 20, 15 participants who were 75% of the whole sample disclosed that they offer general professional development courses while only 02 participants said that they offer subject-based courses.

Upgradation of Professional Development Courses

As the world is changing every day; therefore, continuous up-gradation is the need for almost all fields of life. Therefore participants were asked that do they up-grade their professional development courses. The collected data related to this item is as under:

Table 4.

| S. No. | Options | Responses | %Age |
|--------|---------|-----------|------|
| 1. | Yes | 17 | 85% |
| 2. | Neutral | 03 | 15% |
| 3. | No | 00 | 0% |
| Total | | 100 | 100% |

85% of participants used the option 'Yes', which means they up-grade the offered courses very regularly while 15% chose the option 'Neutral' means that will not be up-grading their offered courses.

Frequency of Public and Private Schools Heads

In the sample, 60 secondary schools were randomly selected, including 15 each public and private secondary school from each town (Gulshan and Liaqatabad Town).

Work Experience of Secondary School Heads/Principals

The detail is as under:

Table 5.

| S. No. | Work Experience (Range) | No of Respondents | %Age |
|--------|-------------------------|-------------------|--------|
| 1. | 5 to 10 Years | 04 | 6% |
| 2. | 11 to 15 Years | 25 | 41.66% |
| 3. | 16 to 20 Years | 13 | 21.66% |
| 4. | 21 to 25 Years | 11 | 18.33% |
| 5. | 26 to 30 Years | 07 | 11.66% |
| Total | | 60 | 100% |

Table-5 reveals that most of the heads were well experienced 41.66% were having 11 to 15 years of experience.

CPD and Command on Subject

The heads were asked that after attending a course, do you think that teacher command on subject increases, the responses of the heads are shown below:

Table 6.

| S. No. | Options | No of Respondents | %Age |
|--------|-------------------|-------------------|--------|
| 1. | Strongly Agree | 07 | 11% |
| 2. | Agree | 12 | 20% |
| 3. | Neutral | 06 | 10% |
| 4. | Disagree | 04 | 6.6% |
| 5. | Strongly Disagree | 31 | 51.66% |
| Total | | 60 | 100% |

The tendency of responses reflects that the heads do not feel any kind of improvement in command on the subject of the teachers when they come back after attending professional development courses.

CPD Courses and Planning to Teach

Heads were asked, do you think that after attending a professional development course, teachers plan well? In this regard responses of heads are as under:

Table 7.

| S. No. | Options | No of Respondents | %Age |
|--------|-------------------|-------------------|------|
| 1. | Strongly Agree | 39 | 65% |
| 2. | Agree | 21 | 35% |
| 3. | Neutral | 00 | 0% |
| 4. | Disagree | 00 | 0% |
| 5. | Strongly Disagree | 00 | 0% |
| Total | | 60 | 100% |

The data in Table-7 indicates that the majority of participants (65+35) % agreed that after attending such courses, teachers plan better than others.

CPD Courses and Selection of Appropriate Activity for Teaching

The heads were asked that do teachers select a more appropriate activity for teaching than others? In this regard responses of heads are as under:

Table 8.

| S. No. | Options | No of Respondents | %Age |
|--------|-------------------|-------------------|------|
| 1. | Strongly Agree | 06 | 10% |
| 2. | Agree | 15 | 25% |
| 3. | Neutral | 33 | 55% |
| 4. | Disagree | 02 | 3.3% |
| 5. | Strongly Disagree | 04 | 6.6% |
| Total | | 60 | 100% |

The responses in Table-8 reveal that 55% of respondents selected the option 'Neutral' means they were having no opinion regarding attending continuous professional development courses and planning appropriate activity for teaching, while 3.3% and 6.6% selected the options 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' respectively.

Conclusion

Keeping in view the collected data following conclusions are drawn:

- More privately managed organizations are involved in arranging professional development courses for teachers.
- Most of the organizations are offering general courses rather than the specific subject-oriented course for subject specialists.
- 85% of the respondents claimed that they up-grade the content of the courses offered by them on a regular basis.
- Only 31% of the respondents showed a kind of agreement that professional development courses improve the teachers' command on the subject.
- Almost all respondents agreed that Continuous Professional Development courses improve teachers' teaching plan.
- While the majority remained silent when they were asked about teachers' use of appropriate activities in the classes, this response has a contradiction to the previous response related to improvement in planning.

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