



An Investigation of the Factors Preventing Teachers to Attend Professional Development

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Abstract: *Continual improvement in knowledge and skills is important in every profession, and teaching is no exception. A Mix-method approach was used. Semi-structured interviews of 12 of the 120 (35%) secondary school English teachers were conducted who amongst a large sample of 343 surveyed teachers reported their participation in professional development activities as nil. Findings revealed that family responsibilities acted as a major preventive force in the way of teachers' accessing formal and organized TPD. Other potentially significant barriers that inhibited teachers from attending TPD involve time issues, lack of support from the school head/administration, huge financial cost, less relevancy to teachers' area of teaching or inability to meet the prerequisites of the TPD activity. It is concluded that teachers' learning capacities can be enhanced, and ultimately, classroom practices could be improved if barriers restricting teachers to participate in the activities of professional growth are removed.*

Key Words: Teacher Professional Development, TPD, Barriers to Professional Development

Introduction

This article draws upon empirical research conducted in the province of Punjab followed in the period of implementation of the most recent change to the secondary school National Curriculum for English, termed as CC2006 (Butt, 2016). CC2006, for which the stage was formally set in August 2004, is seen as a significant reform event impacting the educational landscape of Pakistan. Due to its scale and scope, the CC2006 is regarded as the biggest reform challenge so far in the history of Pakistan (Barber, 2013).

Preparing teachers to successfully implement CC2006 was another big challenge that the provincial education authorities faced. To ensure the successful implementation of CC2006 in Punjab, the Directorate of Staff Development (DSD) Lahore was given the chore of preparing teachers by offering them appropriate professional development programs. However, the results of empirical research upon which this research paper is drawn and which focused on exploring teachers' perceptions of CC2006 and professional

development opportunities available to them to successfully implement CC2006 indicates that 35% of the teachers couldn't participate in any of teachers professional development (TPD) activities. This paper thus focuses on identifying the determinants that prevented teachers from availing professional development opportunities available to them, enabling them to enact the new curriculum successfully and meaningfully.

Literature Review

Understanding Teacher Professional Development

Continual improvement in knowledge and skills is important in every profession, and teaching is no exception (Shulman & Sparks, 1992 cited in Garet et al., 2001a). Teachers need a wide range of professional development opportunities in order to improve their knowledge and skills (Gaible and Burns, 2005b).

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In the literature, professional development has interchangeably been cited with other terms and concepts such as; teacher development ([Darling-Hammond, 1994b](#)); induction courses in-service education and training ([Gaible and Burns, 2005b](#); [Mizell, 2010](#); [OECD, 2010](#)); teachers' career development and career-long learning ([Sheehan, 2013](#)). Although all the aforementioned professional activities tend to prepare teachers for performing their role effectively, they vary in their objectives since they are often based on different conceptualizations and orientations of teacher learning (Cardenas, 2007 in Lujan et al., 2009). Unlike in-service training, which may be a limited activity, professional development involves a wide array of tasks and activities both inside and outside the school (Galloway, 2000 in [Goodall et al., 2005](#)). Professional development is explicitly different from initial education too, as it takes place "when teachers, after their initial education, get involved in updating programs that keep them in touch with new development in their area. These programs combine information with analysis, comparison, reflection and implications of what is learned" ([Luján et al., 2009](#), p. 173). Differentiating teacher training from TPD, Maley (1986) considers TPD as a continuous process that relates to the needs of the individuals, is managed by colleagues and focuses on bottom-up learning. Perhaps the most distinct feature that differentiates TPD from training is that decision making should remain in the hands of the teachers (in [Luján et al., 2009](#)). One commonality these elucidations of TPD carries with is that these largely rest upon the idea of deepening teachers' knowledge, broadening their expertise, refining their skills ([Komba and Nkumbi, 2008](#); [OECD, 2009](#)) and thus provide a

Characteristics of Effective Teacher Professional Development

Successful TPD has no fixed recipe; one form of TPD can be effective for some teachers but may not offer similar results for others ([Murray, 2010](#)). TPD is less likely to be effective when it is based on a top-down or one size fits- all approach ([Bredeson, 2002](#); [Borko, 2004](#); Fullan, 2008). However, TPD, which provides relevant, practical and applicable experiences matched to teachers' diverse learning needs, can be highly effective (Teacher and Development Agency, 2008 in [Bredeson, 2002](#); [Rahman, 2014](#); [Bredeson, 2002](#);

limited and traditional interpretation of TPD. They overlook the need to ensure continuity of professional development for teachers ([Guskey, 2002](#); [Gaible and Burns, 2005b](#)). [Day \(1999b\)](#) rather offers a rationally acceptable interpretation of professional development:

"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 school, which constitute, through these, to the quality of education in the classroom. It is the process by which, alone and with others, teachers review, renew and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purposes of teaching; and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence essential to good professional thinking, planning and practice with children, young people and colleagues throughout each phase of their teaching lives" (p. 221).

Realizing the crucial role of TPD, many education systems in the world have embedded it in the educational policy and planning processes ([Ingvarson et al., 2005](#)). As a result, in many European countries, TPD is considered a professional duty, although, in some countries (Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain), it is optional. In Luxembourg and Spain, however, it is explicitly allied with promotions and salary bonus ([OECD, 2010](#)). Like many developing countries, Pakistan gives due importance to quality TPD and has developed professional standards (2009) for teachers aimed to improve the quality of education ([Dayoub and Bashiruddin, 2012](#)).

[Borko, 2004](#); [Timperley et al., 2007](#); [Mizell, 2010](#); [Stannard and Matharu, 2014](#)).

For TPD to be effective, it should be carefully planned to provide on-going activities over time with regular feedback and tailored follow-up support ([Fullan and Stiegelbauer, 1991](#); Ball, 1996; [Van Driel et al., 2000](#); [Anderson, 2001](#); [Gaible and Burns, 2005b](#); [Ingvarson et al., 2005](#); Huberman & Miles, 1984 cited in [OECD, 2005](#); Aly, 2007 in [Jamil, 2009](#); [Gibson and Brooks, 2012](#)). TPD design should demonstrate respect for teachers as professionals and as adult learners while providing them with various opportunities to engage with ideas, materials and colleagues. Thus, through peer interaction and other activities embedded

into classroom practices, the idea of schools as a learning organization is encouraged. Effective TPD promotes the constructivist approaches to teaching and learning by giving teachers the opportunities to question and debate over the new ideas (Loucks-Horsley et al., 1987 in [Griffin, 1982](#); [Fullan and Stiegelbauer, 1991](#); [Haqq, 1995](#)). It is asserted that TPD that includes the core elements of teaching (curriculum content, students' assessment and instruction) and foster changes in teachers' cognition more often have a significant, positive impact on teachers' classroom practice and student achievement ([Richardson, 1996](#) in [Fishman et al., 2003](#); [Gaible and Burns, 2005b](#)). Top-down, ready-made TPD activities make no impact on teaching and learning and fail because of their more focus on system needs rather teachers' needs. (Draper, 2012). Whereas, a key feature that makes TPD effective is purposeful involvement of and effective communication and interaction between key players including, ministry/department responsible for teacher education, universities, schools, the community and the teachers themselves ([Komba and Nkumbi, 2008](#)).

Teachers' Resistance to TPD: The Underlying Motives

Research indicates that teachers who resist change are more likely to show resistance towards TPD activities ([Fullan and Stiegelbauer, 1991](#); [Richards, 2002](#)). Kimonen and Nevalainen (1996) believe that teachers oppose the changes when the initiators of curriculum change expect teachers to engage in active learning processes to implement change without providing the necessary resources, time, & support ([Fullan and Stiegelbauer, 1991](#)). In addition, since participants in TPD programs bring different beliefs and motivations; thus one-size-fits-all TPD is unlikely to be effective ([Putnam and Borko, 2000](#); [Guskey, 2002](#); [Hustler et al., 2003](#); Smylie & Hart, 1999 in OECD, 2010). [Sparks \(2002\)](#) points out teachers' dissatisfaction with the conventional format of TPD as it required them to sit inertly and listen to the experts. In Pakistan, most professional development providers follow conventional format by offering either one-off workshops or a number of isolated workshops ([Halai, 2001](#)) which decrease teachers' interest and motivation in attending TPD ([Darling-Hammond et al., 2009](#)).

Providing teachers with high-quality TPD with limited funding is a significant challenge ([Garet et al., 2001a](#)). Literature on TPD presents many such examples in which teachers showed interest and enthusiasm towards participating in developmental activities but were constrained by financial resources ([Hustler et al., 2003](#); [Timperley et al., 2007](#); [Komba and Nkumbi, 2008](#)). Many education systems around the world are struggling to provide comprehensive TPD on a limited budget. In the Czech Republic, for example, the budget for TPD is part of the lump sum for whole school improvement, and no separate budget is allocated for teacher development. Similarly, teachers in Hungary (47%), Mexico (49%) and Poland (51%) cited cost as a barrier to attending TPD. In contrast, some education systems address the cost related issues by bearing some of the costs or allocating a fixed amount for TPD in the annual salary of the teaching staff. In Estonia, 3% of teachers' salary is expected to be used for TPD. However, the local education officers keep the authority to designate additional funds for the TPD when needed (OECD, 2010).

Access to appropriate TPD opportunities may also be an issue. Portuguese teachers were expected to deal with significant curriculum change with few training opportunities available to them to fulfil the system's expectations ([Flores, 2005](#)). Many countries, including England, Wales and Northern Ireland, France; Greece; Israel; Italy; Japan, Korea, Switzerland and some states in Australia, have mandatory induction programmes for newly appointed teachers (OECD, 2005). However, providing equal access to TPD activities to both novice and experienced teachers is a critical responsibility of local district or school management.

Countries with devolved systems of education generally transfer all education-related authorities and responsibilities to local management (District/Town), while TPD related matters remain centralized ([Little, 1989](#)). Thus, it is argued that due to their geographical location, teachers working in remote areas may not be able to access and benefit from TPD. To enhance the effectiveness of TPD, administrative support at provincial and local levels is needed ([Sparks, 2002](#); [Harwell, 2003](#); [Bantwini, 2009](#); OECD, 2010; [Mathers et al., 2012](#)).

Time can be a barrier both to attending TPD events and to implementing change in the

classroom ([Mathers et al., 2012](#)). The school administrators often indicate the issue of teachers' being away from school for participating in TPD activities; however, teachers on the other side, find it difficult to take out time from their classroom practices in order to attend the TPD events ([Goodall et al., 2005](#); [Gibson and Brooks, 2012](#)). There are many examples that illustrate lack of time as a barrier that reduced teachers' participation in TPD ([Goodall et al., 2005](#); OECD, 2010; [Gibson and Brooks, 2012](#)). In a survey, more than 70% of Cyprus school teachers cited a lack of time as an issue, with more than 50% of teachers reporting lack of support and time as the main barriers to attending TPD (OECD, 2010). Similarly, [Hustler et al. \(2003\)](#), through their study of teachers' perceptions of continuous professional development, found that younger teachers were less likely to be inhibited by time to attend TPD than the older teachers, particularly those in the age group of 35-44.

Providing teachers with sufficient time is crucial to enable them to grasp and use new pedagogies in order to improve students' outcomes ([Timperley et al., 2007](#)). Many countries, in order to contend with the time issue, allocate particular time for the development of teachers. Schools in Italy have addressed this problem by altering school timetables, postponing classes for few days to conduct intensive teacher training, and all teachers are entitled to five days of training per school year in their employment contract. Similarly, in the United Kingdom, teachers have five days per year devoted to non-

Methodology

As mentioned in the beginning section that this paper is drawn from empirical research. A total of 342 secondary school English teachers were surveyed through a five-point Likert scale. The responses in the questionnaire were coded, ranging from one (Strongly Disagree) to five (Strongly Agree). The survey results showed that only 65% of surveyed teachers positively mentioned that to implement curriculum change in 2006, they attended professional development activities. Thus, the rest, 35%, indicated their participation in TPD as nil.

As this paper is focused on finding the answer to the question "what factors hindered secondary school English teachers from participating in

teaching activities, including professional training (OECD, 2010).

It is clear from the literature that teachers' attitudes to TPD or their choice of attending TPD is influenced by several personal, structural and cultural factors and need to be dealt with properly. TPD activities are more likely to foster change among teachers if they are involved in agenda-setting and determining the focus of the program (Ball, 1996). [Rizvi and Elliott \(2007\)](#) have proposed a:

'Hybrid' support structure, which has elements of professional guidance (follow-up of the training sessions, feedback to teachers about their work, group discussions, collective administrative work, cooperative work techniques, teachers are learning from one another in a planned manner), an emotional touch (encouraging teachers for trying,..... praising teachers' efforts, promoting teachers' work), proper structures and school administration (provision of teaching resources,....., time for teacher learning, safe and clean working conditions) and an inspiring leader as the head of the school (pp, 14-15).

Thus, teachers' willingness to attend TPD may be managed through providing incentives such as salary increases or promotion. Specific campaigns, policy formation and inviting teachers to become involved in decision making can also be helpful to enhance teachers' participation in TPD activities (OECD, 2010) since this empowers teachers to their practices ([Murray, 2010](#)), and they take greater responsibility for the learning of their students ([Timperley, 2015](#)). *professional development opportunities (to implement curriculum change 2006)*", therefore one to one semi-structured interviews of 12 of the 120 (35%) secondary school English teachers were conducted who due to some certain factors could not participate in professional development activities. The interview sample included five male and seven female secondary school teachers.

Findings

The analysis shows an interesting combination of different personal, professional, cultural and environmental determinants identified by teachers, as restricting them from availing TPD opportunities. The barrier most cited by the teachers was family responsibilities that prevented them from attending professional development.

This reveals that family responsibilities prevail as a significant factor in Asia and, more specifically in Pakistani society, where social restrictions and family responsibilities of teachers prevent them from participating in sustained opportunities of learning and growth. The following excerpts from teachers' interviews confirm this:

Actually, the problem is that I feel highly occupied by professional and personal obligations. I run a private coaching centre and have other non-teaching duties assigned by the authorities, thus getting no exemption from school duties and finding time from personal obligations prevented me from attending the training of my interest (Teacher 5, male)

I am keen to participate in a variety of TPD activities, but..... the problem is that I am highly occupied by professional and personal obligations (Teacher 7, female).

Besides the family responsibilities, some typical norms and behaviours prevailing in Pakistani rural community acted as a preventive force in the way of teachers accessing formal and organized TPD. The following remarks of a teacher illustrates how as being a female, teacher 2 could not access the opportunities for her personal and professional development.

In teaching and learning, one should always look for better and the best. I have a thirst for knowledge, but my personal circumstances dwindle to my quest for further learning. In our local context, many factors act as barriers. A typical attitude towards female teachers is there. We do not have complete freedom to go and avail the opportunities of personal and professional development (Teacher 4, female).

However, it is also interesting to note that teacher 3 (female) in the same rural school had accessed and participated in a number of TPD activities organized both at the National and international level.

I am lucky enough in that regard as I got the opportunity to participate in different trainings (Asian Institute of Technology-AIT, Bangkok; Teaching Excellence Achievement training, USA & DSD Lahore training workshop) immensely helped me to grow and progress as a teacher (Teacher 3, female).

Lack of support from the school head/administration appeared as another potentially significant factor restricting teachers

to participate in the activities of professional growth. In the present research, many teachers mentioned the less support available from the head of school/administration. Interestingly, secondary English male teachers were more likely to cite this factor than female teachers.

I always consider myself a learner. My goal is to improve my teaching, but I have very little support and motivation from my principal, enabling me to achieve my goal (Teacher 10, male).

Our system itself works as a barrier. Usually, the professional training programs are held during term time, and the school administration does not want to send the teachers on professional training, as it is thought that teachers' absence during peak teaching time will affect students' results (Teacher 3, male).

Mouths are open to criticize the teachers, but there is no word of appreciation on their good work. In our system, teachers have very few open chances to improve their professional skills. This is very discouraging. This attitude of the school authorities needs to be changed (Teacher 12, female)

The above statement indicates the lack of administrative support but also draws attention to the time issues faced by the teachers. Many teachers were unable to attend professional development activity because the TPD schedule was either conflicted with their classroom teaching or some other official tasks and duties. The following remarks endorse it:

Due to my squeezed classroom practices, I find either little or no time to attend TPD (Teacher 4, female).

I wonder whenever I make myself ready to attend any professional training program; I am got engaged in some other official duties (Teacher 1, male).

Another teacher mentioned the time issue in the following words:

Last year, I missed a training workshop due to my duty in the polling process of the National election. I regret because this training was relevant to the subject I teach (Teacher 6, male).

On the contrary, many teachers could not attend TPD because it was not relevant to their area of teaching. They lack the prerequisites of the TPD program. The analysis of the interviews

indicates that both male and female teacher groups were equally inhibited by this factor.

We were offered a professional development workshop in the summers this year. I did not attend it as I felt it was irrelevant to my teaching as this particular training targeted the Science teacher only (Teacher 11, female).

The Directorate of Staff Development (DSD) Lahore organized a training workshop for secondary school teachers. Nevertheless, I could not fulfil the eligibility criteria as this training targeted newly inducted teacher (Teacher 2, male).

Financial cost appeared as another inhabitant for teachers to attend TPD. The teacher showed

Discussion

The present research unveils various factors inhibiting teachers from attending professional development. Teachers' decisions about participating in TPD activities were heavily influenced by their social and family responsibilities. This is in line with other studies such as [Bottery \(2006\)](#) and [Hargreaves \(1997\)](#) that affirmed that teachers' personal and professional lives are strongly influenced by constraints of the larger society. Dayoub and Bashiruddin (2012) and OECD (2010) indicated family responsibilities as a prevailing factor in Asian and European countries where family responsibilities acted as a barrier to teachers' professional development.

Analysis of the teachers' interviews shows that the financial cost involved in attending professional development could also be an inhabitant for teachers. This finding is supported by the findings of earlier studies (cf. Timperley *et al.*, 2007; [Komba and Nkumbi, 2008](#); OECD, 2010) that showed that teachers may feel inclined to participate in TPD but may feel constrained by financial resources. Teachers in this study also reported that they could not avail of the TPD activities as these were held during term time and conflicted with their work schedule. This confirms the finding of earlier studies such as by [Gibson and Brooks \(2012\)](#); [Dayoub and Bashiruddin \(2012\)](#); OECD (2010); [Goodall *et al.* \(2005\)](#) and [Sparks \(2002\)](#) and [Hustler *et al.* \(2003\)](#) that identified time as a barrier that reduces teachers' participation in TPD. Squeezed classroom practices prevent teachers from attending TPD.

their inclination to enhance their professional learning but mentioned the financial cost as a barrier to attend TPD. This is evident from the following statements:

Financial barriers are involved in it.....which do not allow me to develop as a teacher (Teacher 8, female).

The training offered to me was organized in Lahore (the city other than the respondent's home city). I refused to attend, as I was afraid by the thought that it may cost me too much to manage travel, accommodation and food there (Teacher 9, female).

Like other similar studies, teachers in this study also mentioned the lack of support from the school head/administration restricting them to participate in the activities of professional growth (Tschannen-Moran and Gareis, 2004 in [Pantića, 2015](#)). In addition, TPD's less relevance to teachers' area of teaching is another factor mentioned by the teachers inhibiting them from attending the TPD opportunities available.

Conclusion

This research unveiled an interesting combination of different personal, professional, cultural and environmental determinants (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998) restricting teachers from availing professional development opportunities. The research allowed us to infer that most teachers were inclined to attend to and participate in the activities of professional learning and growth, but the factors such as family responsibilities, the financial cost of TPD, conflicted time/schedule of TPD, lack of support from the head of school, prerequisites/criteria of TPD programs restricted teachers to do so. It is also included that teacher's responsiveness to and participation in professional development activities could only be maximized if serious steps are taken to overcome the inhabitants identified in this research. Teachers' learning capacities can be enhanced, and ultimately classroom practices could be improved if barriers restricting teachers to participate in the activities of professional growth are removed.

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