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Exploring Promotion-Linked Training Impact on the Professional Development of Educational Managers in Punjab

Abstract

This study aimed to explore the effectiveness of in-service professional development training provided by the Quaid-e Azam Academy for Educational Development (QAED) to 53 educational managers in Punjab, Pakistan. A qualitative feedback design was utilized to gather participants' perspectives on the most and least valuable training content, relevance to professional needs, suggested modifications, effective methodologies, and overall impressions. Data were collected through an open-ended post-training questionnaire and analyzed thematically. Findings revealed the training was well-aligned to develop financial, managerial, and IT skills but needed more practical application. Being peer-learning enabled with expansion of hands-on simulation task as budgeting and audit was suggested. The class timelines and redistributing sessions were suggested to be reduced. Activity based methods were focused on like group discussions, presentations, and hands on practice considered effective by most of the participants.

Keywords: Promotion-linked Training, Professional Development, Educational Managers, Punjab

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Contents

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Abstract

This study aimed to explore the effectiveness of in-service professional development training provided by the Quaid-e Azam Academy for Educational Development (QAED) to 53 educational managers in Punjab, Pakistan. A qualitative feedback design was utilized to gather participants' perspectives on the most and least valuable training content, relevance to professional needs, suggested modifications, effective methodologies, and overall impressions. Data were collected through an open-ended post-training questionnaire and analyzed thematically. Findings revealed the training was well-aligned to develop financial, managerial, and IT skills but needed more practical application. Being peer-learning enabled with expansion of hands-on simulation task as budgeting and audit was suggested. The class timelines and redistributing sessions were suggested to be reduced. Activity based methods were focused on like group discussions, presentations, and hands on practice considered effective by most of the participants.

Keywords: Promotion-linked Training, Professional Development, Educational Managers, Punjab

Introduction

Educational managers consist of the principals, head teachers and administrators of the educational institutions who are important stakeholders of the education system who significantly impact the national education goals achievement in Pakistan (Bhatti et al., 2015; Day et al., 2020). The professional development of educational managers is significant for their knowledge enhancement, bridging the gaps and providing relevant twenty-first-century skills to complete their tasks effectively (Bhatti et al., 2015). This current research explores the effectiveness of an in-service professional development training program conducted by the Quaid-e-Azam Academy for Educational Development (QAED) for educational managers across the province of Punjab.

The focus of professional linked training is to develop educational leaders professionally for higher posts or positions. Moreover, it aims at developing competencies with the knowledge to perform in a new role (Abbas et al., 2021).

Different organizations often offer such on-the-job training, workshops, seminars, coaching, and mentoring sessions. These learning opportunities are helpful in the professional development of educational leaders to equip them with the latest knowledge, skills, and competencies to face challenges in a better way. Furthermore, this leadership training improves communication, problem-solving, and other different soft skills needed for a successful career in the 21st century (Abbas et al., 2023).

Educational managers face several challenges in their performance, resource management, technology, support from the stakeholders, and motivation. This type of promotion-linked training addresses such challenges experienced by educational leaders. Educational leaders are supposed to develop high performance to achieve the institutional goals after having such training. As change agents, they do provide their best in the institutions afterwards (Abbas et al., 2023).

Positive school culture is affected by effective school leadership which also improves student outcomes to enhance the classroom instructions (Day et al., 2020). The previous research also indicates the effectiveness of dynamic leadership for setting high expectations, monitoring, resourcefulness, teachers' collaboration, and students' academic achievement (Sebastian et al., 2017). On the other hand, traditional training programs often fail to develop such leadership capabilities effectively. Having an analysis of professional training gaps and methodologies may provide quality teaching-learning opportunities (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Evaluating such professional training programs can help identify what design and delivery mechanisms work effectively given infrastructural realities and participant needs. However, despite increased policy attention, rigorous empirical research on the outcomes and experiences of educational leadership training programs remains limited globally and is almost non-existent within the Pakistani setting (Lumby et al., 2009).

Review of Relevant Literature

Research evidence has established that the quality of school leadership directly affects learning processes and outcomes by shaping teachers' classroom conditions and instructional practices (Louis, 2004). Hallinger's (2011) model of instructional leadership identifies three key sets of practices for heads and senior administrators that contribute towards school improvement: defining and communicating shared mission and goals; monitoring and providing feedback on curriculum and instruction; and promoting a positive learning climate and teacher professionalization. Aligned with these theoretical models, empirical studies also demonstrate that leadership behaviours focused on conveying high expectations for performance, coordinating staff development opportunities, recognizing good teaching, and engaging the parent community lead to a rise in student achievement (Sebastian et al., 2017).

Teacher quality and effectiveness are critical determinants of student learning outcomes and the overall quality of education. The Quaid-e-Azam Academy for Educational Development (Abbas, 2021) has been at the forefront of teacher professional development through its promotion-linked training programs in Pakistan's Punjab province.

Day et al. (2020) conclude that leadership development programs positively impact principals' self-awareness, skills, and job satisfaction. Similarly, teachers working under principals trained in leadership practices reported better school culture and instructional quality in the MET project. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) emphasize that effective training is ongoing, job-embedded, collaborative, and focuses on shared problem-solving for real-world school issues.

The training at QAED focuses on networking and collaboration to enable the educational leaders of BS 18 to BS19 level through exchanging their practices, ideas, and challenges with community practice experiences (Abbas et al., 2021a). With the help of promotion-linked training at QAED, capacity building is the focus of training for the school heads, leaders, and managers from BS 17 to BS 18. For quality education, continuous professional development training is much emphasized that is also mainly emphasized at QAED. This program also focuses on collaboration for resource utilization for innovative solutions (Abbas, 2021). Moreover, ICT competencies are also explored in this training program (Abbas, Hassan, et al., 2023).

In the QAED training program, career advancement needs are concentrated on educational managers. Professional development is provided as an incentive. Quality teaching and effectiveness of teaching are the important aspects that are needed in the overall educational outcomes. Most of the head teachers believe that QAED is playing its role in teachers' professional development through these promotion-linked trainings (Abbas et al., 2023).

In Pakistan's context, Jumani, & Malik's 2015 study of Punjab's training for educational managers found significant self-reported gains in IT, financial, team building, and communication skills. However, teachers did not report noticeable improvements in their school leadership. They posit this could be because the training was short-term without ongoing support. Building on their work, this study utilizes mixed methods for an in-depth examination.

There are more recent studies relevant to this topic. Research was conducted to explore the impact of promotion-linked training on their performance and motivation. Using a mixed-method approach, it was found that promotion-linked training significantly impacted educational leaders' job performance. It was also explored that such training enhanced administrators' knowledge and skills and improved institutional outcomes (Abbas et al., 2023). Similarly, a mixed method study was conducted to find the effect of in-service promotion-linked training of subject specialists of BS-17 to BS-18 regarding developing professional competencies in pedagogy in Punjab (Abbas et al., 2023). It is suggested by the previous studies of promotion-linked training to improve teachers' professional competencies. In such programs, subject-specific training is often provided to develop pedagogical practices in educational institutions. In a study in recent past, the competencies of educational managers were explored through in-service teacher training programs (Abbas et al., 2023). Studies have reported positive outcomes, including improved instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement. Positive results were reported in a study (Ismail & Jarrah, 2019), which examined the effects of a training program on subject specialist teachers' pedagogical knowledge and skills. More recent studies have been reported in this context as explore the mentoring effectiveness for primary school teachers through continuous professional development (Abbas et al., 2021), leaders perceptions about their success at university level (Abbas et al., 2022), Leadership levels, roles, process and results regarding praetor principle (Abbas et al., 2020), competencies development in educational managers at QAED (Abbas et al., 2022), CPD and quality education of primary school teachers (Abbas et al., 2021b), the impact of in-service training on financial management at secondary level (Abbas et al., 2022), leadership practices of head teachers (Jamil et al., 2024), challenges of instructional supervision faced by primary school head teachers (Arif et al., 2023) and head teachers' training needs for quality education at secondary level (Hussain et al., 2021).

While existing research provides valuable insights, further empirical investigation is needed to refine leadership training approaches. This study responds to this research gap by systematically evaluating changes in trained managers by surveying their perspectives and the teachers they lead. The multi-respondent data will offer robust evidence to guide professional development policies for administrators.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the aspects of the training content and delivery that were most and least valuable for enhancing the professional competencies of educational managers.
2. To analyze the effectiveness of the training methodology and durations in enabling the application of knowledge and skills gained.
3. To explore suggestions and recommendations from training participants to improve the design and delivery of future programs.

Research Questions

1. Which specific topics and sessions did participants find most and least valuable? Why?
2. To what extent did participants find the training content and methodology helpful for their practical knowledge and skills?
3. What practical suggestions and recommendations do participants have for designing and delivering future programs?

Research Methodology

This study utilized a qualitative feedback design to explore participants' perspectives regarding the professional learning training they attended. As noted by Creswell & Creswell (2017), qualitative methods allow researchers to gather in-depth insights through open-ended data collection tools such as interviews or surveys.

The participants comprised 53 educational managers working in the education department of the Punjab province in Pakistan. Based on the metadata in the attachment, the respondents had an average of 15 years of experience and included subject specialists, headmasters, and other administrative roles. Of the 53 participants, 43 were male, and 10 were female. Open-ended online questionnaires were used for data collection after post-training sessions of the participants. This data was analyzed through thematic

analysis with qualitative coding as described by Maguire & Delahunt (2017). Descriptive statistical analysis was also conducted where applicable, for instance, to determine the most and least valuable topics as reported quantitatively by the respondents.

By gathering qualitative insights from the participants regarding their first-hand training experiences, the study intended to determine the relevance of the training curriculum and methodology to the professional needs of senior education leaders in Pakistan and gather their suggestions to enhance future iterations of the training program. The qualitative findings provide depth and context to supplement the quantitative participation and ratings data.

Findings and Results

Overview of Respondents

The data contains responses from 53 participants of a training program. Based on the metadata, the respondents were mainly senior staff (headmasters, subject specialists, etc.) working in the education department in Punjab, Pakistan. Their average work experience was approximately 15 years, and the gender ratio was 43 males to 10 females. The responses were collected over two months, from October to December 2023.

Most and Least Valuable Training Topics

When asked about the most valuable topic in training, the most common responses related to the PEEDA Act 2006, leave rules, service rules, audit, and budgeting & financial management. Nineteen respondents (36%) mentioned one of these topics as being most valuable to them. For example:

"PEEDA Act 2006. Leave rules promotion policy. I learned new things which were unknown to me." (Respondent #20)

"Service rules 1974, Peeda act, Leave rules, MS office 1122, syndicate report, audit, procurement." (Respondent #28)

In contrast, nine respondents (17%) considered syndicate work, book review, or research work as the least valuable topics covered in the training:

"Syndicate work It's true Madam Ghulam Fatima worked with participants diligently, but it needs proper time. I mean, some session would be allocated for syndicate preparation." (Respondent #12)

Some also mentioned that specific sessions like Effective Use of School Council, Ethics and Citizenship, or Stress Management did not add much value.

Alignment with Professional Needs

The majority (43 out of 53 or 81%) of respondents felt that the training content was aligned with their professional needs and job requirements related to school administration, financial planning, and management skills. For example:

"The material was sufficient, and it was according to the Time needs." (Respondent #36)

"As Administrator, the maximum content is aligned with job requirements." (Respondent #33)

Relevance to Teaching Practice

Similarly, most (40 out of 53 or 75%) respondents found the training content relevant to their day-to-day teaching practice within school premises in areas such as classroom management, use of technology, lesson planning, student assessment, etc. Quoting some responses:

"The topics taught to us were according to our classrooms needs, within school premises, fit for students learning, etc." (Respondent #38)

"Yes, it was according to our needs. We were able to make a calendar." (Respondent #48)

However, 15% (8 out of 53) participants felt that the relevance was low for teaching specifically.

Suggested Changes to Content

When asked what content they would want to be revised or modified in the training, the most common response (from 9 participants) was to increase the focus on information technology skills training, especially more hands-on practice. Some verbatim responses are as follows:

"MS Office sessions may be extended. Chat gpt and artificial intelligence should be included in the training content." (Respondent #28)

"Include ICT, artificial intelligence, budget allocation." (Respondent #9)

"Subjects taught at higher secondary level should be included." (Respondents #34 and #35)

Some participants (7) suggested removing or reducing syndicate work and book review activities to allow more time for other topics. Financial planning and audit-related content was requested to be expanded by 5 participants.

Effective and Ineffective Training Methodologies

Out of the various training methodologies employed, over 28 participants (53%) found activity-based learning with group discussions, presentations, and hands-on practice to be the most effective. In contrast, plain lectures with no engagement were considered ineffective by 15 participants. Some sample opinions:

"Activity-based and discussion based.....in this way content become more clear." (Respondent #35)

"Activity-based learning and practical work like in preparation of the budget." (Respondent #51)

"Lecture method. Participants become lazy." (Respondent #48)

"Lecture method without slides and involvement of participants." (Respondent #13)

Suggestions for Improving Training Methodology

The most common recommendation by 16 out of 53 respondents (30%) was to make the methodology more activity-oriented with increased hands-on practice for procurement, budgeting, audits, etc. Some even suggested extending the overall duration of the training to allow enough time for activities. Quoting verbatim:

"Practically audit, procurement, office management may be presented." (Respondent #28)

"More and more activities and practice sessions may improve the training methodology." (Respondent #22)

"Training should be three times before promotion, after one year of promotion, and after two years of promotion." (Respondent #16)

Effectiveness of Collaboration and Hands-on Opportunities

Most respondents found the training effectively enabled collaboration with peers from different districts to share experiences. Regarding opportunities for hands-on practice, while some sessions, like IT skills, budgeting activity, etc., provided a good experience, others felt improvements could be made in areas like drafting notifications, record keeping, financial processes, etc. This aligns with the above suggestions on methodology.

Appropriateness of Course Duration and Sessions

The average rating for appropriateness of overall course duration was 7 out of 10, indicating most found the six-week timeline appropriate. However, 38% (20 out of 53)

participants preferred a shorter course duration given their senior roles and experience. Some suggested reducing the daily sessions or class duration.

Fifteen respondents found the number of sessions devoted to most topics sufficient or good, while five requested more sessions on IT skills training, grammar, and financial management.

Overall Impressions and Suggestions

The average rating provided by respondents for the overall quality of training was "Very Good," indicating a positive experience. Some key suggestions given to further improve were:

- Shorten daily schedule and overall duration.
- Make the content more activity-oriented.
- Improve relevance to field realities.
- Select resource persons with a better grasp of topics.

Conclusion

Based on the results overview, the following conclusions can be drawn about the professional development training program:

1. The training curriculum was well-aligned to build capacities of educational managers in areas like financial planning, administration, IT skills, etc., critical for their leadership roles. Topics like the PEEDA Act, Leave Rules, and budgeting were considered most valuable.

2. While the content relevance was rated positively, enhancing hands-on application for procurement, audits, and office processes could make it more practical. Plain lectures were found ineffective by many.

3. The training enabled good peer learning and collaboration, but opportunities for practical application need to be expanded through simulations, activities, and discussions.

4. The duration and sessions were appropriate but could be optimized for senior roles. Reducing some content to allow more IT and financial planning time would be beneficial.

5. The overall experience was positive, but the methodology needs to shift more towards practical application through activities, real-world examples, and resource persons with field expertise.

The participants found the training helpful in building management capacities; transforming the delivery to focus more on hands-on practice can enhance the application of knowledge and skills gained. Fine-tuning content and durations can also improve alignment with on-ground realities and the needs of experienced education managers.

Discussion

The findings from this training feedback survey provide valuable insights into the perceived effectiveness of the recent Professional Learning and Training (PLT) program attended by 53 education department staff in Punjab, Pakistan.

A key objective of the PLT was building leadership and management capacities of senior school staff. The data reveals that most respondents found the curriculum content well-aligned with their administrative and financial planning needs to be related to areas like the PEEDA Act, leave rules, service rules, budgeting, auditing, etc. As noted by Ling and Mackenzie (2015), the relevance of the subject matter to participants' context is a core feature of effective professional development.

Hence, aligning content to professional requirements seems to have supported positive outcomes from this training. However, about 15% of participants felt the training content had limited relevance to their daily teaching practices within classrooms. It indicates gaps in linking theory to practice, vital for impactful training (Glazer et al., 2009). The suggestions to incorporate technology integration and higher secondary teaching content reflect a need to tailor some modules to instructional needs alongside leadership skills.

An encouraging finding was that most participants considered activity-based methods involving group discussions, presentations, and hands-on simulations the most effective approaches used in the PLT. As Bandura (1977) noted, such mastery experiences build self-efficacy and the capability to apply learning. In contrast, traditional lectures were seen as ineffective, often leading to disengagement. It aligns with literature emphasizing active pedagogies for professional training (Ling & Mackenzie, 2015; Tondeur et al., 2016).

However, the data also reveals scope for improvement in providing more hands-on practice for financial and administrative tasks aligned to field realities. The recommendations to make the methodology more practical and activity-focused further validate this need. As suggested by Harris & Hofer (2011), situated professional development enables teachers to gain technology integration skills that translate to classroom practices. The same principle likely applies to the impact of leadership training.

While the 6-week duration was deemed appropriate by most, over a third of the experienced senior staff felt the course length should be shortened to suit their needs. It indicates that training timelines need to account for participants' existing skill levels. The suggestions to reduce class durations and redistribute sessions are also noteworthy for optimizing limited training time. Expanding sessions for IT skills and financial management could enhance outcomes, per participant feedback.

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