'Satiating Hunger with Water': Perceived Features of Professional Development for Teachers in Rural Pakistan

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Abstract
Aimed at understanding what makes Professional Development (PD) effective and valued for teachers, this research examines the perceptions of key stakeholders in rural Pakistan. A qualitative case study approach was used to draw on the experiences of the key stakeholders including providers of PD, officials of education department, school principals and teachers. Focus group interviews were used as the major research tool to generate data. The research findings revealed that stakeholders value a PD program that is relevant to teachers' immediate needs, focuses on both content and pedagogy, involves active learning experiences, extends over a long period and includes follow-up support. It is found that the majority of the PD programs on offer for teachers lacked most of these features. Based on these findings, the research argues that the existing PD programs offered for teachers in rural Pakistan are externally driven and less informed by the views, needs and experiences of stakeholders. The research also highlights that context is a significant influential factor in determining features of PD for a particular region.
Keywords: Context of professional development, effective professional development, features of professional development, rural Pakistan.

«Утоление голода водой»: Особенности профессионального развития учителей в сельских районах Пакистана

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Аннотация
Данная работа направлена на осмысление того, какие программы профессионального развития учителей являются наиболее эффективными. Исследованы представления об этом ра-

ботников образования в сельских районах Пакистана. Качественный подход, реализованный в форме кейс-стади, был использован для изучения опыта ключевых стейкхолдеров, включая провайдеров профессионального развития, сотрудников отдела образования, директоров школ и учителей. Метод фокус-групп применялся в качестве основного инструмента сбора данных. Результаты показали, что в большей степени ценятся такие программы профессионального развития, которые отвечают запросам учителей, уделяют внимание содержанию и педагогическим методам, предлагают активное обучение, рассчитаны на длительный срок и предусматривают последующую поддержку. Установлено, что в основном программы профессионального развития не отвечают этим требованиям, разработаны с учетом лишь внешних факторов и недостаточно учитывают мнения, потребности и опыт учителей из сельских районов Пакистана. В статье подчеркивается, что контекст должен стать определяющим фактором при разработке программ профессионального развития учителей конкретного региона.

Ключевые слова: контекст профессионального развития, эффективное профессиональное развитие, сельские регионы Пакистана.

Introduction

Students of today require complex analytical, critical thinking and problem-solving skills to effectively contribute to the changing demands of the constantly shifting trends in modern society (Darling-Hammond, 2004). Meeting the demands of students becomes further challenging because today's students are greater in number and more varied in their social, emotional and learning backgrounds (Lohman, 2000). This complex setting brings challenging roles for teachers which they were not expected to perform before (Assunção Flores, 2005). Teachers are generally prepared to be effective in such complex setting through pre-service training. However, a one-off pre-service training may not prepare them for their whole career given the constantly changing demands of modern schooling. It has been argued that to be successful, teachers should continually develop and adapt to changing conditions and needs (Shulman, 1986). Therefore, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is acknowledged as an effective strategy to connect teachers to an emerging knowledge base (Nicolaidis & Mattheoudakis, 2008; Ramatlapana, 2009; Saiti & Saitis, 2006).

Recognizing the importance of CPD, many Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) have intervened in Pakistan including in rural areas and have been providing teachers with PD opportunities aimed to shift their conventional practices to more innovative and child-centered pedagogies. These CPD opportunities, however, have failed to significantly impact the practices of teachers (Nawab, 2017). Earlier studies conducted in Pakistan have revealed that the in-service trained teachers found little practical values in their training due to the difference between classroom practices and the theories as presented in their training (Mohammed, 2006; Westbrook et al., 2009).

The commentary of the Dakar Framework for Action (World Education Forum, 2000, p. 20) states that teachers should "be able to participate, locally and nationally, in decisions affecting their professional lives and teaching environments". Academics in Pakistan have also highlighted the importance of involving teachers as well as a variety of stakeholders in the design of PD (Mohammed & Harlech-Jones, 2008). These authors have suggested allowing all partners to define their unique conditions and situations. It has been argued that such consultation with stakeholders may be laborious and time-consuming but the consequences of ignoring it will be more severe (Mohammed, 2006).

However, despite persistent calls, this requirement is yet to be addressed (Kanu, 2005). The current research was conducted to address that gap. It aimed to understand what makes PD effective and valued for key stakeholders, namely, providers of PD, officials of education department, school principals and teachers in rural Pakistan. Drawing on their experiences, the paper presents and discusses the features which the key stakeholders in

rural Pakistan associate with effective PD. Building on features which make PD effective and valued for the key stakeholders, guidelines have been developed to inform those charged with the design and delivery of high-quality professional learning in Pakistan in general and in rural Pakistan in particular. Following these guidelines, policy makers, planners, NGOs, teacher education institutes and teacher educators will provide teachers with more quality learning experiences ultimately enhancing academic achievements for students especially in rural areas.

Effective Professional Development

Generally, PD activities are classified into traditional versus reform types (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001). The traditional types usually take place outside the school. The reform types are usually grounded in the work context such as mentoring or reflective practice. Although the reform or innovative models of PD are receiving a growing recognition, some scholars argue that the effectiveness of a learning program is determined by its features; not type or process (Desimone, 2009). A traditional model such as an external workshop may contain features of reform models, the models grounded in the work context. As Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, and Gallagher (2007) state, "a workshop can be designed using reform-oriented principles and a coaching relationship can be traditional" (p. 928). Therefore, Desimone (2011) suggests focusing the common features of PD while assessing its quality. This scenario has led academics to propose, research and validate common features of PD.

Although it is difficult to determine what makes PD effective (Givvin & Santagata, 2011), some scholars report a consensus on at least five basic features of PD that are linked to enhanced teaching practices and student outcomes (Desimone, 2009, 2011). These features of PD have also been identified through a series of studies in relation to Eisenhower Professional Development Program that examined the effects of PD on improving classroom teaching practices (Birman, Desimone, Poter, & Garet, 2000; Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002; Garet et al., 2001). The five core features are listed below.

a) Content focus: the extent to which an activity concentrates on enhancing teachers' knowledge of the subject matter.

b) Active learning: the process of engaging teachers in activities which they will use with their students.

c) Long duration: greater numbers of contact hours stretching over a longer period.

Coherence: how the learning experiences are built on what teachers already know and how well aligned they are with the national and local standards for student learning.

d) Collective participation: allowing teachers from the same school, grade or department to participate in a PD program all together.

Although some academics demonstrate a consensus on five features of PD, for some other scholars, the characteristics identified are inconsistent and contradictory (Guskey, 2003a; Penuel et al., 2007). Guskey (2003a), for example, listed 21 characteristics of effective PD cited in various sources and concluded that there is little agreement regarding the criteria for effectiveness in PD. Guskey also notes that in PD research there are 'yes' and 'but' statements which make the existing knowledge doubtful for those practitioners who want simple answers about effective PD. Moreover, there is a lack of valid evidence to show a relationship between the identified features of PD and improvement in practices or students outcomes. Soine and Lumpe (2014) found "no evidence to suggest that there is a meaningful association between characteristics of professional development and teacher practice" (p. 322). Similarly, Opfer and Pedder (2011b) wonder why teachers do not improve their practices despite attending a PD having all the features of effectiveness

and why in some cases teachers learn attending PD that lack the identified features. These authors conclude that we are unable to predict learning based on the apparent characteristics of PD.

Many academics, therefore, challenge the existing evidences which demonstrate a research based knowledge on PD (Saunders, 2014). The lack of consistency in the features and the failure to replicate the existing models across contexts make the existing research doubtful (Kooy & Van Veen, 2012a). In this background, context has been identified as a determining factor because there are policies, traditions and school related conditions which vary from context to context and, thus, bring different implications for the learning needs of teachers (Szelei, Tinoca, & Pinho, 2019).

It suggests that the learning needs of teachers in developing countries need not necessarily be similar to the needs of teachers in the developed countries. Avalos (2011) believes that a teacher from Canada may not need to start from the same point at which a Namibian teacher starts her professional learning. For example, a focus on content will be more relevant for teachers in lower income areas who are unable to attract well-qualified teachers (Guskey, 2003b). Teachers in affluent communities may not benefit from the similar program. In addition, the needs of teachers in rural and remote areas are quite different and this brings different implications for PD of teachers in those settings. Hannaway, Govender, Marais, and Meier (2019) found that in rural areas of South Africa, schools are characterized by multi-grade setting. Teachers teaching in that setting require skills and competence to teach multi-grade classes. The same issue has been highlighted in rural Pakistan where two to three teachers teach five to six grades (Nawab & Baig, 2011). A PD containing all other seeming characteristics may not be effective for those teachers if it fails to include ideas and skills on multi-grade teaching.

Similarly, as Lu et al. (2019) found, some teaching methods taught to the teachers in recent PD programs such as use of ICT in the classroom, may be effective for urban schools. Schools in rural areas lack ICT facilities and therefore, the ideas acquired from such programs are less practical for teachers in rural schools. In addition, owing to their remoteness, teachers in rural areas receive reduced professional support by the government or PD provider organisations. In such situation, a possible and successful model for rural areas as reported from Indonesia (Harjanto, Lie, Wihardini, Pryor, & Wilson, 2018) is to develop local facilitators who "share their best classroom practices and serve as peer models for other teachers" (p.227). Consequently, schools in rural areas reduce their dependence on external sources by organising more internal PD programs with the help of local facilitators. All these factors require consideration when it comes to PD of teachers in different context.

Unfortunately, despite the lack of evidence, some academics try to show a seeming consensus regarding the effectiveness of PD. Even the local academics and researchers support western generated theories, mainly to receive grants by highlighting the donor's agenda as an issue in their context (Fylkesnes, 2018). In this background, voices are raised to make PD culturally responsive and aligned with the contextual realities and needs of teachers instead of just serving the foreign agendas (Colliver & Lee-Hammond, 2019).

Despite those frequent calls, however, PD providers in Pakistan especially in rural areas still implement the imported models of PD with the assumption that there are certain effective models of PD which are applicable across contexts. One of the major reasons behind the failure of these models is the lack of PD providers' understanding of the contextual realities and needs of teachers (Mohammed & Harlech-Jones, 2008). We do not know what the key stakeholders such as teachers, school leaders and educational managers value when it comes to effective PD in rural Pakistan. This research explored the perceptions of these key stakeholders to understand what makes PD effective for them.

Research Method

The research used a qualitative approach which allows a deeper understanding of a specific phenomenon in natural settings in terms of the meaning people bring with them (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Under the umbrella of the qualitative approach, aligned with the purpose of the research, the case study method was used because it enables researchers to concentrate on a particular context and case(s) to better understand the phenomenon in depth, through interacting with the real people (Willis, Jost, & Nilakanta, 2007). In the same way, a particular context was visited to capture the real world of teachers and their PD activities through interacting with the most relevant stakeholders such as teachers, school leaders, PD providers and officials of the education department. Based on their experience and views, an understanding of effective PD was developed for the particular context with the assumption that "such an understanding is likely to improve important contextual conditions pertinent to [the] case" (Yin, 2013, p. 16).

The focus for this research was effective PD of teachers. Given the time constraints and other factors, however, it was not possible to conduct a holistic analysis of multiple cases with regard to effective PD. The case that was selected for this research, therefore, was located in the District Chitral which is a remote rural region of Pakistan. In addition, the interest was in researching effective PD in this particular region recognizing that PD of teachers in this region has thus far received little attention. Aiming at an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon, the research was further restricted to PD programs offered by two PD provider organisations. Finally, the research concentrated on key stakeholders namely teachers, school leaders, representatives of PD provider organisations and education department officials to understand their perceptions of effective PD with a particular focus on the PD programs offered by the two PD provider organisations.

To develop a deeper understanding of the case, it was important to attract a range of participants with different views and experiences. Consequently, a reasonably large number of participants from a variety of relevant stakeholders, as shown in Table 1 below, were recruited for this research.

Table 1. Research Participants

Participants	Number
Teachers	28
School Leaders	12
Govt. Education Officials	4
Training Provider Representatives	5

Note that in the research region, school heads in public schools are referred to as 'Headmasters' whereas, in private schools, they are called 'Principals'. In this research, 'School Leader' is used as a common term to refer to the heads of both public and private schools.

The research used stratified random sampling procedure to increase the likelihood of representation from various divisions, levels and subgroups (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). The identified strata were sector (public and private), gender (male and female) and early versus more experienced career stage. From each stratum, teachers and school leaders were selected randomly assuming that "whatever is true of the sample will also be true, within certain limits of probability, of the population from which the sample was drawn" (Eisner, 1991, p. 197). Based on this sampling procedure, initially, around 35 teachers and

15 school leaders were short-listed, following which invitation letters were sent to them of which 28 teachers and 12 school leaders accepted to be part of the study.

Officials from Education Department and representatives from PD providers were recruited through purposive sampling procedure (Bloor, 2001) aimed to consult with those individuals having the responsibility for working with schools, teachers and school leaders.

Considering the relevancy between the research purpose and the data collection techniques (Howe & Eisenhart, 1990), the research used focus group interviews as the major data generation tool. Focus group interviews were used not only to generate maximum data in minimum time, but also to stimulate respondents to recall specific events and to articulate their views through exposing them to the experiences of others (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). Similarly, to overcome any issue of status or power (Bloor, 2001), the participants were grouped according to their positions, gender and experience. Separate groups were formed of PD providers, education officials, school leaders and teachers. Each group was interviewed twice, each interview lasting for 50 to 90 minutes.

The data were collected and analyzed simultaneously (Hodkinson, 2008). The focus group interviews conducted in the mother tongue of the participants were first transcribed and then translated. Using the grounded theory approach, initially, the researchers coded data using microscopic analysis technique (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), a process of closely scrutinizing data to understand how participants interpret certain events. Once the initial coding was done through microscopic analysis, the researchers moved to the second step of coding, focused coding (Charmaz, 2006) also referred to as 'intermediate coding' (Birks & Bills, 2011). Compared to open coding, this type of coding was more abstract or of higher level as it submerges relevant codes into categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). At this stage, each code was evaluated to decide whether it forms an independent category, a subcategory or which broader categories some particular code fall into. Consequently, there emerged five major themes under which the findings are presented in the following section.

Findings

Aiming at understanding what makes PD effective for teachers in rural Pakistan, this research revealed that the key stakeholders in the context where this research was conducted value a PD which has relevance to teachers' needs, focuses both content and pedagogy, engages teachers in active learning, is sustained over a long period and consists of a regular follow-up support component. These themes, which emerged from the ongoing analysis of data, are presented in detail supported by the views of the stakeholders.

Relevance of PD to Teachers' Needs

Relevance of PD to the real needs of teachers was identified as one of the most significant factors determining the effectiveness of a program. 'Need', according to the participants, referred to a gap between the expected roles of teachers and the skills they required to effectively perform those roles. ADEOs representing public sector revealed that they evaluate a PD program on the basis of whether it fills a specified gap. Nazia (Pseudonyms have been used instead of the real names of the research participants), an ADEO stated that they evaluate:

> *What teachers need, and in what areas they need improvement? Whether they need support in classroom management, resource management, content, teaching strategies or community involvement. PD is effective if it addresses those particular gaps.*

School leaders and teachers supported this view articulating that effective PD was the one that enabled them to address the issues that they encountered in their schools and classrooms. The majority of primary level teachers interviewed for this research highlighted the issue of teaching in multi-grade situation. It was revealed that the government primary schools in the research context use multi-grade classrooms where usually two teachers teach five or six class levels. The primary level teachers reported that they face many challenges in handling multi-grade classes. Wali, a primary level teacher said that:

> It is very challenging to teach two or three classes at a time. When I am teaching one level, the other level becomes so noisy that it is difficult for me to teach. I just rush from class to class to maintain discipline. Effective teaching is not possible.

Since the majority of the existing PD programs failed to consider these strongly felt needs of teachers, they reported their dissatisfaction with them largely owing to their lack of relevance. A representative excerpt highlighting the views of participants on the lack of alignment of PD programs with the strongly felt needs of teachers is presented below.

> Instead of providing us with general theories such as Bloom's taxonomy, PD providers have to support us in teaching multi-grade classes, handling an overcrowded classroom and checking notebooks of so many students when we are two teachers in a school. These are our real issues, and we need support in addressing these issues. The example of existing programs is like giving food to thirsty. (Shafiq, Government Primary Teacher)

This excerpt suggests that although teachers availed themselves of PD opportunities, they were less satisfied with them because of their failure to address their immediate needs. Teachers felt the need of support in multi-grade teaching, handling overcrowded classrooms and checking students' notebooks. Most of the PD programs, however, did not focus on these issues. Instead, they included other topics of general theoretical nature such as Blooms Taxonomy that might be useful in the longer term if only the teachers gained support in addressing their immediate strongly felt needs.

Consequently, the teachers believe that an effective PD for participants in the research context is the one which is relevant to the current situation of teachers, and enables them to address their real issues. This finding is supported by studies reported from many other contexts (Bayar, 2014; Cameron, Mulholland, & Branson, 2013; Zepeda, Parylo, & Bengtson, 2013). These studies have revealed that teachers consider PD experiences effective when they are aligned to their existing needs or related to what they do in classrooms.

Content and Pedagogy Focused PD

Whether content or pedagogy should be the focus of PD was a debated topic that divided opinion. The majority of the participants interviewed for this research stressed the importance of content for teachers in the research region. Participants revealed that in the public sector, school curriculum had been revised by adding new concepts and shifting the medium of instruction from Urdu (the national language of Pakistan) to English. Teachers, particularly the senior ones who had joined the teaching profession with limited academic background or preparation faced many challenges in teaching the revised curriculum. Afzal, a SDEO, stated that:

> Now a teacher who was hired 20 years back has very little understanding of those new additions. When they do not know the English words and terminologies, how can they explain them to the students?!

This view was supported by the teachers who acknowledged that they were not prepared for the revision in curriculum highlighting the challenge of finding English

equivalence for the Urdu terms in Mathematics and Science. Consequently, PD in content knowledge was reported as a high requirement for the teachers.

The majority of teachers, school leaders and officials from the education department, however, were of the view that the existing PD programs offered in the research context mostly focused on pedagogy aiming at providing teachers with general teaching concepts and methodologies. They attached less value to general pedagogy. A representative quote given below illustrates the dissatisfaction of these participants with the existing PD programs because of their failure to focus content knowledge.

> *In most of the training programs conducted for teachers, content knowledge is not focused. Trainers just present various theories such as cooperative learning, multiple intelligence and classroom management. When teachers lack content knowledge, the methodology is not helpful. The methodology is to polish content.* (Junaid, Government School Teacher)

The representative view of a teacher presented above shows a mismatch between the immediate needs of teachers and the focus of the majority of the existing PD programs. Whereas the majority of the participants highlight the importance and need of content knowledge, the focus of PD providers has been on general pedagogy. These programs, consequently, not only fail to address the immediate needs of the teachers, but also lead to the dissatisfaction of stakeholders with the existing PD programs.

Whereas the majority of participants in the research region stressed the importance of content, there were also strong views supporting pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge (Timperley & Alton-Lee, 2008). The importance of pedagogical knowledge was particularly highlighted for the private school teachers. It was revealed that professional qualification was not a condition for entering the teaching profession in the private sector schools in the research context. Consequently, many teachers serving in the private schools lacked any pre-service teacher education. Ashraf, representing a PD provider organization, stated that some teachers in the private sector lack understanding of basic teaching concepts such as lesson planning, classroom management, multiple intelligence, individual differences and so on. PD on pedagogy is important for the development of those teachers.

Some participants indicated that it is the level, capacity and needs of teachers that ought to determine a particular focus for a PD program. These participants argued that compared with the previous procedures of recruiting teachers in the public sector, now teachers are recruited based on their performance in National Testing Service (NTS). Consequently, more competent individuals are entering the teaching profession. Participants believed that these teachers might not have a need for a focus on content knowledge, but rather, require a focus on pedagogical knowledge. This inference further supports the previous conclusion that effective PD is one that addresses the strongly felt needs of teachers and therefore, PD providers need to assess the needs of teachers before planning and implementing any PD program.

Engaging Teachers in Active Learning Experiences

Active learning was another feature of effective PD frequently highlighted by the participants. The analysis of data suggested that active learning referred to those teaching learning practices where instead of presenting something only theoretically, teachers are engaged in a variety of interactive activities. Examples of active learning activities reported by participants were engaging teachers in interactions with other participants in pair work, group work, debates, discussions, presentations and other interactive activities. Participants revealed that their learning was enhanced when they were involved in such interactive activities. Fayaz, a public school teacher, reported that:

> *In some PD programs, we are involved in group work, discussions and presentation. We learn a lot from others while working in pairs and groups. When we are engaged in discussions, we raise our issues and find a solution for those issues from other teachers and facilitators. Presentations enhance our confidence. All these are not possible when facilitators just present the theory through lectures.*

This excerpt indicates that teachers appreciate those experiences where they are involved in interactive activities instead of providing them with theories through lectures. When teachers are given opportunities to talk to each other, they learn more from the experience of one another (Avalos, 2011). Otherwise, the traditional approach of considering teachers as 'knowledge-deficient' professionals is less likely to contribute to the enhanced knowledge and skills of teachers (Webster-Wright, 2009).

Another example of inactive learning activities as reported by participants was being exposed to practical enactments of the concepts presented during PD programs. Participants reported that when facilitators demonstrated and modelled new concepts and engaged teachers in practical activities and micro-teaching, the learning was far more effective for them. Such activities enabled teachers to gain more practical ideas of ways to implement the new approaches and strategies in their classroom on their return. The following excerpt from interviews of participants highlighted the importance of modelling and demonstrations during PD programs.

> *I attended a Maths training with the Star Institute [another pseudonym] where we were provided with techniques to teach counting and problem-solving. Facilitators were doing it practically. They were teaching how to make the concept clear through using various aids. It was very good. I still use those activities with my students.*
> (Hoor, Private School Teacher)

Similar examples of active learning activities in PD have been highlighted in the literature. It has been found that telling teachers simply about teaching theories and strategies without modelling or integrating theory with practice fail to lead to enactment of those theories and strategies (Timperley, 2008). Instead of simply discussing what teachers might do, they require more opportunities to practice and more specific, concrete and practical examples to enact the concepts (Grossman, Hammerness, & McDonald, 2009). The more modelling and demonstrations by facilitators the greater the implementation of expected changes by the teachers (Saunders, 2014). Similarly, it has also been suggested that if teachers are given the opportunity to try out new ideas during PD programs, there is a greater possibility to implement those ideas on their return to school (Yuen-Kwan, 1998). Thus, engaging teachers in active learning activities that stakeholders consider as a significant feature of effective PD is well supported by the key educational theorists.

Longer Duration PD

There was a consensus among the participants that the duration was one of the most significant features determining the effectiveness of a PD program. Participants showed satisfaction with PD programs that were relatively longer in duration. Teachers saw two major benefits in such programs. Firstly, long term PD programs allowed facilitators and teachers to work in detail on a concept. Obaiduallh, for example, who had attended a primary education course, stated that:

> *The Mountain Institute training [courses] are effective because of their longer duration. Long duration allows the facilitator to present a topic in detail and to engage participants in a variety of activities. We spent a whole day on developing a lesson plan, and we were also given an opportunity to present our lesson plan formats. Since we spent sufficient time on this topic, we learnt the skill of developing a lesson plan.*

Thus, the data indicate that participants are more satisfied with long term PD programs. A longer duration program allows facilitators to spend sufficient time on a particular topic through demonstrating and modelling the theories and engaging teachers in interactive activities. As a result, teachers develop deeper understandings of the concepts as well as equipping themselves with practical ideas to implement in their classroom. This result is compatible with literature which reveals that teachers require sufficient time to learn and absorb new knowledge which necessitates a sufficient number of contact hours (Opfer & Pedder, 2011a). Garet et al. (2001) argue that it is the duration rather than the type of PD which makes it effective. They have found that if PD is longer, there is a greater possibility of active learning opportunities and focusing content. In this way, long duration enables the other core features of effective PD.

Participants attached many drawbacks to short term PD programs. Teachers reported that in short programs they were presented with only theories which had no positive impact on their practices. They also showed concern that in short duration, they were not given opportunities to practice the theory in the venue. Facilitators rush and try to cover many topics in short time through lecture methods. An excerpt taken from interviews of teachers highlighting the issue is presented below.

> The duration of training is very short while the burden is high. The effort is made to gain more in short time. Stress is laid on completion, not on comprehension. Therefore, participants forget most of the things. Because of the short time, they have limited participation and motivation. (Hammad, Secondary Level Teacher, Public Sector)

The quote suggests that the focus of the facilitators is on covering maximum number of topics in a short period instead of allowing deeper understanding through spending sufficient time on some particular concept. This approach puts extra burden on the teachers restricting their participation and motivation. The time allocated did not allow facilitators to demonstrate or model some concepts and to engage teachers in active learning activities. Because of the short duration, teachers were mostly provided with theories through lectures which barely allowed them to develop a deeper understanding and to gain practical ideas to implement in their classrooms. Subsequently, the short term 'style shows' (Ball & Cohen, 1999) were less likely to contribute to the enhanced practices of teachers.

Regular Follow-up Support

Data emerging from the current research revealed that the availability or otherwise of follow-up support highly determined the effectiveness of any PD activity. Staff from the Mountain Institute reported some examples of extending follow-up support to the trainee teachers of multi-grade course, a PD program offered at the Mountain Institute for primary level teachers. The staff who visited multi-grade trained teachers reported that the project was very successful because of their follow-up support to the teachers in their respective schools. Inayat, a PD provider, stated that:

> We have observed a welcoming change in the classroom routines and practices of multi-grade trained teachers. You can see a big difference in those classes. The interactive teaching practices that the teachers use, the decoration of classrooms and the confidence of students are such achievements which cannot be observed in any other schools. We feel that it is because of our ongoing support to those teachers. We visited them frequently and helped them in implementing ideas shared with them during our training.

This belief echoes the views of the teachers who received such support. Those teachers were of the view that the visit of PD providers to their schools not only encouraged them

to implement their learning but also helped them find solutions to their emerging issues. Sharifa, a teacher from public sector, stated that:

> *When the trainers visited my school, observed my lessons and talked to me, it was very encouraging for me. I felt that we are given importance. I had also been facing some issues in implementing my learning which I shared with the trainers. They shared many other strategies with me and also provided a model lesson. It was so helpful to see them teaching in my class. My students were also very happy to interact with the trainers.*

This response highlights several benefits of follow-up support. When PD providers visit their schools, teachers are encouraged and feel valued, factors closely aligned to minimizing frustration of teachers during the implementation stage (Pyle, Wade-Woolley, & Hutchinson, 2011). Moreover, teachers face issues while trialing with new concepts and the timely support by PD providers helped them to address those emerging issues (Ramatlapana, 2009). In addition, the model demonstration lesson especially in a real situation is a highly effective way to help teachers understand and use the new practice (Gulamhussein, 2013). Consequently, follow-up support facilitated teachers to implement their learning and to bring improvement in their practices.

However, the multi-grade course was the only program with a follow-up component. The majority of the participants showed concern stating that when a PD program finishes, the chapter is closed and there is no one to support them to implement their learning. Teachers highlighted many issues resulting from the lack of follow-up support. Some teachers reported that facilitators talk about an ideal situation, but when they return to their schools, the classroom situation varies significantly from the training venue. This is the stage where they need to know what they require to do to be successful (Nicolas, 2006). Otherwise, once teachers feel that the new ideas bring further challenges for them and there is no one to support them in the difficult time, they gradually return to their traditional practices (Lamb, 1995).

Discussion

Two major conclusions can be drawn on the basis of the findings presented above which merit discussion. Firstly, as the analysis of data showed, the most effective PD for teachers is the one which addresses their real needs. Secondly, context and contextual realities are determinant of the models and features of effective PD. These claims are discussed in a more detail.

The stakeholders interviewed for this research consider PD which addresses the real needs of teachers as effective. The research participants provided sufficient evidence to justify this conclusion. For instance, in the public sector primary schools, there is a model of multi-grade classes where two to three teachers are responsible for teaching five to six different year levels. Ironically, these teachers have been prepared to teach mono-grade classes. Effective PD for these stakeholders involved a program that supported the teachers in successfully engaging students of multi-grade classes in meaningful learning activities. Similarly, stakeholders valued a PD program having a focus on both content and pedagogy. The importance of content knowledge was particularly highlighted for some of the senior teachers who, owing to their limited content knowledge, were facing challenges in teaching the revised curriculum that had been updated by adding new concepts and terminologies. Pedagogical knowledge was favored because teachers had either exposure to outdated and theoretical pre-service courses or they had not been through any pre-service courses as in the case of teachers from the private sector. In addition, follow-up was considered as a significant component of effective PD programs as it enabled teachers to resolve their emerging issues and to successfully implement and sustain new practices.

Consequently, the features of PD are determined and influenced by the needs and conditions of teachers. While relating the above conclusions to the existing literature, it is interesting to note that the literature pays little attention to pedagogy (see, for example, Easton, 2008; Hawley & Valli, 2000; Ingvarson, Meiers, & Beavis, 2005). Focus on content especially on foundational concepts of subjects is consistently stressed even in the recent literature (Doyle, Sonnert, & Sadler, 2020). Although stakeholders in this region highlighted the importance of content, they also placed value on pedagogy. A possible explanation of the inconsistent views may be that teachers in developed countries enter the teaching profession with sound pedagogical knowledge through attending quality pre-service teacher education. Those teachers may not require general pedagogy although constantly emerging new knowledge may necessitate updating their content knowledge. Therefore, a list of core features of effective PD coming from those contexts may not include a focus on pedagogy as a valued feature of PD. The case in developing countries particularly in Pakistan is otherwise. Similar to other low-income countries (Lewin & Stuart, 2003), teachers in this region either have access to outdated and theoretical pre-service teacher education or may not have any pre-service teacher education as in the case of teachers in the private schools. Subsequently, effective PD for them is one which includes addressing issues of pedagogy. This interpretation is supported by Avalos (2011) who argues that teachers in different contexts have different starting points and a teacher from a developing country should not be assumed to have the same PD requirements as a teacher from a developed country. Likewise, teachers in developed countries may not require follow-up because either they are engaged in reform models or their school culture facilitates the implementation of learning. On the contrary, as revealed in this research and supported by the earlier studies, teachers in the developing contexts such as Pakistan urgently need follow-up support since they struggle in an educational context where there is no support for them (Mohammed & Harlech-Jones, 2008). In addition, multi-grade setting is a common issue in rural areas reported not only from another developing context such as South Africa (Hannaway et al., 2019) but also from the same region where the current research was conducted (Nawab & Baig, 2011). Consequently, what makes PD effective is considering the real needs of teachers in a particular context and providing them with more relevant support (Lindvall, Helenius, & Wiberg, 2018).

The second major claim based on a deeper and more critical analysis of findings emerging from this research is that individuals suggest features of effective PD based on their perceptions of what PD is and how and where it takes place (Nawab, 2020). Conventional approaches to PD, traditionally, are transmissive, aiming to preparing teachers to implement selected reforms and usually taking place outside school or classroom (Kooy & van Veen 2012). A review of literature from the past two decades, however, reveals that there has been a gradual shift in the models of PD to those that are transformative (Kennedy, 2014), also referred to as reform oriented (Garet et al., 2001) or innovative models (Kooy & van Veen, 2012b). These models are usually grounded in the workplace, aiming at ongoing inquiry, collective learning, professional learning communities, collaboration, peer coaching and so on (Fullan, 2002). Since recent trends of PD in developed countries are reform oriented, academics mainly list such features that are associated with reform models. For example, when teachers' learning activities are grounded in the workplace, it requires collaboration, collective inquiry, sharing and so on. Following this logic, 'collective participation' will be a feature of reform models of PD. However, once PD is grounded in the work context, follow-up may not be explicitly obvious, as follow-up support is generally perceived when provided by additional contact with external PD sources. This may account for the reason that reform-oriented academics have not identified follow-up as a core feature of PD.

In contrast, stakeholders in this research have a more traditional orientation to PD. While latest trends of PD in developed countries have shifted from traditional to reform models, teachers in the research region still only access external PD opportunities and thus, associate PD only with external workshops. Since stakeholders have largely experienced external training models, and these models have failed to include follow-up on return to their schools, it is not surprising that this emerged as a core feature of effective PD for teachers in the research region. They viewed follow-up as critical as it enabled them to implement externally acquired ideas and skills more effectively in their classroom context. Owing to their lack of exposure to reform models, it is also understandable that collective participation did not emerge as a core feature of effective PD for the stakeholders in this research.

The implication of this research for PD providers is that without engaging the views of stakeholders, it is highly unlikely to positively impact the practices of teachers. Developing a teacher means helping him or her to overcome real classroom needs and issues. Therefore, interventions to develop teachers should be informed by the real needs and issues of teachers. Moreover, academics and practitioners should consider context and contextual realities while attempting to replicate learning models. The importance of Western generated models and theories cannot be denied; however, they should not be taken as prescriptions without examining the contextual realities of the host countries (Örtenblad, Babur, & Kumari, 2012). Even in Pakistan, there is a huge diversity in culture, schools, school leaders and the quality of teachers. The realities of teachers in rural Pakistan are quite different from their urban counterparts. Approaches toward PD of teachers in a reform-oriented context may not be applicable to rural Pakistan. While attempting to generalize features of effective PD, academics should be mindful of the contextual differences.

Conclusion

To conclude, the majority of the existing PD programs in the research region lacked the features as envisioned by the stakeholders and proposed in the PD research literature. Studies have found that external workshops do contribute to the improved practices of teachers provided they attend to the immediate needs of teachers and are subsequently supported during implementation (Cordingley, Bell, Isham, Evans, & Firth, 2007). As Guskey and Yoon (2009, p. 496) argue, "workshops are not the poster child of ineffective practice". They could be effective or ineffective based on the features they contain. A major problem with the existing PD programs in the research region is they take little account of the features proposed by the stakeholders and supported by the educational literature.

Lastly, the comparison of stakeholders' list of effective PD with Desimone's model which has a reform oriented context supports the argument that the application of features of PD must adjust to different circumstances (Opfer & Pedder, 2011a). However, the scholarly descriptions of effective PD often fail to account for the different realities experienced by teachers in quite diverse educational contexts and circumstances. Our present understanding of effective PD is habitually limited to research from developed countries and mistakenly generalized across contexts. If PD providers and change agents (especially international NGOs) design PD for teachers in unfamiliar contexts drawing on their own assumptions and understanding, it is unlikely that such programs would produce the outcomes they intend. For example, when change agents intervene in the research region with a program design based on the so-called consensus list of effective PD, they will be missing significant features of effective PD valued by the participants in the research region. This situation calls for carefully examining the context while transferring and implementing the West-inspired models and theories. The prescription

is not to deny the knowledge and ideas coming from the developed context; however, the externally driven models and ideas should be filtered and aligned to the realities of the local context.

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