STUDY ON THE CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

The enhancement of the teaching and learning process via the use of professional development is seen as an essential component in order to guarantee the learning of students. It is possible that continuing one's education in their field serves as a cornerstone of both the professionalism and the quality of a teacher. Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is a programme that governments and educational institutions invest a large amount of money in to improve the overall quality of teaching and to accommodate the ever-evolving requirements of students. A study was carried out at Punjab University with the purpose of eliciting responses on people's thoughts and experiences regarding professional growth in North Punjab. The sample included 121 instructors of the English language, from a variety of nations and possessing a wide range of educational and professional backgrounds. The questionnaire included questions concerning learning strategies, the idea of professional development, perceptions of CPD, and responses to those perceptions. The respondents voiced their support for learning that continues throughout one's life and learning via experience that ultimately leads to a learner-centered approach. They felt that the CPD was a challenge to both their current knowledge and the way they taught in the classroom. Nevertheless, they voiced their worries about the indigenousization of the activities that were included in CPDs, the institutional support that was provided in the classroom activities, and the follow up activities.

KEYWORDS: *Professional development, Teacher perception*

1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching has always been an inspirational profession since it is at the pinnacle of the process of taking in new information and passing it on to others. Only this industry has the potential to reshape the next generation and usher in new circumstances. Despite the fact that many educators assume that all they need to do is teach, and that they do not need to be exceptional or grow or learn anything new, this is not the case. Now the question is, have our educators reached a point where they are sufficiently evolved to effect change in the existing academic field? Are the fees high enough to encourage learning and to have a

psychological impact on the students? Are they willing to make changes to who they are as individuals? Do they continue to immerse themselves in a variety of different programs relating to their development?

The response would not reach the level that would be considered adequate. It is in this context that the "forming of man" (a term used by Swami Vivekananda) process calls for adequate preparation for teachers. In the 21st century, it is essential for educators to engage in ongoing professional development. This can take the form of attending new classes, developing one's skills, conducting research, keeping one's knowledge current, shifting one's approach to teaching and learning, being goal-oriented, becoming affiliated with a variety of associations, making new contributions to their existing body of knowledge, and taking the initiative to engage in new learning that will result in a change in one's overall personality.

A person who has had the opportunity to learn and develop themselves is in a better position to provide pupils the same kinds of experiences. According to Wood's argument, which was presented in Hargreaves and Fullan's (1992) book, "opportunities to learn also require chances to teach" (p. 1). During the course of the twentieth century, a variety of educational theories and approaches were developed, all with the intention of enhancing the standard of the teaching and learning process. Continuous Professional Development (CPD), also known as Continuing Education, is increasingly being seen as a must for instructors who want to improve their careers in order to keep up with changing trends. According to Hargreaves and Fullan (1992), continuing professional development (CPD) is required in order to improve the overall quality of education because teachers are required to advance their professional development on a continuous basis by providing themselves with the knowledge and skills necessary to improve their teaching abilities and the learning opportunities available to their students. In addition to being able to adapt to change, a teacher is responsible for serving as a role model for his or her pupils in terms of being a person who is committed to and enthusiastic about ongoing education. This is because a teacher's primary responsibility is to ensure that their pupils become life-long learners (Day, 1999).

Due to the widespread use of English, teaching English as a second language (also known as ELT) is a prominent area. As a result of this, English language teachers are expected to be current on developments and innovations in their respective fields. Professional development is essential for efficient foreign language teaching because it serves as a foundational component in the growth of teachers (Luke & McArdle, 2009) and it allows instructors to keep up with the continuously expanding area of ELT (Curtis quoted in Bailey, Curtis, & Nunan, 2001). According to Golding and Gray (2006) and Jasper (2006), there are many reasons for a teacher to participate in a CPD programme. Some of these reasons include an

interest in lifelong learning, a sense of moral obligation, a perceived need to enhance teaching skills, an institutional requirement, and/or the desire to advance one's career. In the context of English for Foreign Languages and English for Speakers of Other Languages (EFL/ESL), various aspects of the paradigm shift in second language teacher education (Jacobs & Farrell, 2001) have made continuing professional development (CPD) urgent for teachers, who are largely influenced by conventional models of instruction (Lau, 2006). A teacher of the English language needs to be able to manage the activities of the classroom effectively and have a significant amount of knowledge and comprehension of the many factors and variables that control and govern the process of learning and teaching in the context of the classroom setting. The requirement that English language teachers grow professionally makes it necessary for them to participate actively in the process of learning. As a result, numerous development activities geared toward English language teachers have emerged as useful tools for the purpose of professional and personal development. The idea of globalisation emerged around the beginning of the 21st century, and being fluent in several languages is an essential step in the globalisation process. It not only led to a rise in the number of people studying different languages, but it also sparked research into the methods of teaching and learning a foreign or second language. Studying a language effectively requires a concentration on communication, the facilitation of the development of knowledge and skills in language and culture, the integration of language acquisition with content from other subject areas, and the preparation of students to be lifelong learners and users of the skills, information, and insights they gain. The study of English, in addition to other subject topics, has become essential in order to keep up with the technological and business developments occurring all over the world. As a consequence of this, it is essential for instructors of English to keep their knowledge and abilities current in order to advance professionally and to continue their own education throughout their careers.

This change can refer to many things including knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, understanding, self-awareness, and teaching practises (Turhan & Arikan, 2009; Bailey, 1992; Willis & Willis, 1996), and the role of a language teacher has changed as a result of the introduction of new methods and techniques (Turhan & Arikan, 2009; Bailey, 1992; Willis & Willis, 1996). (Bailey, 1992; Jackson, 1992). Both the instructors and the students can benefit from the chances for experimentation, discovery, and transformation that can be found in classroom settings. Therefore, to make this point abundantly evident, creativity and change are required components of the growth of teachers (Allwrite cited in Yurtsever, 2012).

There is a significant body of material that may be utilised for either pre-service or in-service educator

professional development. In this context, we need to have a clear understanding of the distinction between professional growth and teacher education. According to Dz-Maggioli (2004), the idea that instructors in teacher education are only consumers of knowledge delivered by specialists in the subject means that conventional development is not attentive to either the context or the needs of individual teachers. On the other hand, helping teachers advance in their careers is what is meant by "professional development," which is a constructivist approach to education. Richards and Farrell (2005) discuss the concepts of development and training within the same framework. They believe that training include preparing instructors for the act of teaching, teaching circumstances, adapting content, and grouping students. Nonetheless, growth requires instructors to have a self-awareness as well as an awareness of the circumstances in which they teach, and it "often entails assessing diverse aspects of a teacher's practise as a foundation for reflective assessment" (Richards & Farrell, 2005, p. 4). Considering that professional development is an ongoing activity, consistency is another facet of growth that is critically significant.

According to Little (1993), professional development provides meaningful interaction on several levels, including intellectual, social, and emotional, with ideas, materials, and colleagues both within and outside of the classroom. According to Freeman (1989), professional development is an approach that focuses on more complicated and integrated parts of teaching. This strategy involves influence and indirect involvement. The goal of professional growth is to facilitate transformation in teaching practises by raising or reorienting students' consciousness (Giraldo, 2014).

In their additional clarification of the notion of "professional development," Richards and Farrell (2005) state that it serves as a longer-term objective and improvement of teachers' understanding of teaching and of themselves as instructors. These goals may include things like understanding the process of language development, understanding how the roles of teachers change depending on the type of students in the classroom, understanding the different types of decision-making that take place during lessons, reviewing one's own theories and principles of language teaching, gaining an understanding of the various teaching styles, and figuring out how students perceive the activities that take place in the classroom.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the attitude of English language teachers toward their own professional development?

2. How do the English language teachers perceive a CPD program?

3. What's the feedback of the English language teachers on a CPD program?

3.METHOD

In this survey research, a questionnaire was designed for the participating teachers (121) in a CPD organized at the English Language Centre, Punjab University, Punjab. The questions were designed using Lickert scale (from 5-maximum to 1-minimum) regarding professional development. The questionnaire consisted of three parts: Self- development, perceptions on a CPD, and feedback on a CPD. The questionnaire was administered to 121 teachers (male and female) at the English Language Centre. The teachers have varied backgrounds in terms of nationalities, qualifications and experiences, but they teach English to the first year university student. The data reflected perceptions and feedback on an ongoing CPD and future expectations. The responses were analyzed using the SPSS.

4.RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Data collected through the survey were tabulated on Lickert scale (5-1). Accordingly, data were analyzed and presented thematically as follows: Self-development, perception regarding CPD, and feedback on CPD.

Table 1 Attitude towards Self Development

Statements	Response (Scale 5-1)
1. I often engage myself in difference self-development activities	
a. Set my own learning goals to improve myself professionally	4.42
b. Reflect on my practice as a teacher	4.34
c. Seek out professional literature to address my professional learning needs	4.02
d. Approach colleagues to provide me with professional help or guidance	3.90
e. Provide assistance to a colleague to help them solve a problem and/or improve their teaching practice	4.16
f. Share new and innovative ideas with my colleagues	4.22

As can be seen in Table 1, the first component of the report focused on the various methods of professional growth that the educators had chosen to implement in order to enhance their teaching. According to the analysis of the data, respondents established their own learning objectives with the intention of increasing their professional competence (4.43), as well as reflecting on their own methods of instructing (4.34). These teachers have their own goals for their own development, and as part of this process, it is possible to improve teacher learning by encouraging teachers to participate in professional sharing and critical reflection, as well as by assisting teachers in adapting their knowledge to various contexts. In addition, respondents appear to value exchanging novel and creative ideas with their coworkers (4.22), as well as lending a hand to a coworker in an effort to aid them in resolving an issue or enhancing their instructional methodology (4.16). This mindset is reflective of a constructivist approach, in which instructors play a more active role in the learning process and growth is carried out via a bottom-up process in which at least some knowledge is produced via interaction with experience, reflection, and cooperation. In the same vein, participants (4.02), when asked, stated that they look for professional literature in order to satisfy their requirements for professional education. Self-improvement is of critical importance for professionals who wish to play an active part in the processes of their own growth because of the aforementioned consideration. They construct a culture of collaboration and support learning within professional learning communities by participating in professional sharing activities with their contemporaries.

Table 2 Perceptions Regarding CPD

Statements	Response (Scale 5-1)
1. How do I perceive the CDP:	
a. Having fun with other teachers	3.32
b. Networking with other teachers	3.43
c. Listening to an expert	3.80
d. Gaining new ideas to try out in the classroom	3.98
e. Being challenged to think creatively and critically as a learner and teacher	3.66

f.	Being energized and affirmed to set goals in pursuit of teaching excellence	3.58
g.	Quick fixes to problems or concerns	3.34
h.	Instructions from 'experts'	3.38
i.	Reflecting on my own practice	3.74
j.	Learning with and from my colleagues	4.16
k.	Provide opportunities to apply my learning in my classroom	3.68
l.	Certificates as evidence of my learning	3.60

shows that respondents perceived learning with and from their colleagues (4.16), gaining new ideas to try out in the class (3.98), and listening to an expert (3.80). Their perception reflects collaborative learning and self-directed learning which they seem to believe in, as similarly displayed in section A. The data may reflect their intension and purposes as self-learner, but at the same time they expressed their apprehension regarding the CPD as well. They shared that CPD may provide opportunities to apply their learning in the course (3.68), being challenged to think creatively and critically as a learner as well as a teacher (3.66), and being energized and affirmed to set goals in pursuit of teaching excellence (3.58). This highlights issues relating to the course management, its duration and number of participants. The duration of the CPD is one week and the number of participants reaches 80 (for each gender). It can be observed that the available space may not be enough to cater the needs of such a large group at the same time. This also may hinder the inaction between the trainer and the participants, and among the participants. Further, not all the participating teachers get a chance to share their ideas or reflect upon their teaching during a session. However, they expressed their concerns regarding networking with colleagues (3.43), instructions from experts (3.38), and quick fixes to their problems/issues (3.34). Such problems may emerge from the course management which was bound to exercise large group distribution, short duration of the workshops, and all that might have resulted in less interaction.

5.CONCLUSION

The current study focuses on the attitudes and opinions of English language instructors regarding professional development, activities, and barriers to change or progress in the classroom. The information that was gathered through a questionnaire that the participants of a CPD were asked to reply to revealed

that the instructors were aware of the necessity of professional development as a need of the hour and an indispensable component of their academic and managerial capabilities. The majority of the instructors stated that they believed in cooperation and collaboration since they had established their goals to grow professionally and reflect over their own teaching. The results of the current research showed that continuing professional development (CPD) was primarily seen as an educational endeavour, a test of one's ability to think imaginatively and critically both as a student and as a teacher, and an opportunity to learn with and from one's peers. However, respondents expressed their concerns regarding networking with colleagues, receiving instructions from the experts, and participating in discussion to assist them in resolving issues that arose in their classrooms. These concerns were based on their perception that the CPD was only for a short period of time, that there were a large number of participants, and that seating arrangements were not optimal.

Following their attendance at the CPD, the participants in the current research provided comments in which they reaffirmed the relevance of improving their professional and leadership skills as well as recognising the significance of CPD in growing their teaching abilities. They agreed that continuing professional development has presented them with a difficult opportunity to make improvements in their knowledge, abilities, attitudes, and beliefs. According to the findings, there were pressing concerns connected to CPD that required immediate response. Concerns concerning institutional policies and support, indigenization of activities carried out during the CPD, and follow-up activities were some of the topics that were brought up in this context.

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