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PRINCIPALS' AND DIRECTORS' PERCEPTIONS OF FACULTY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND THEIR EFFECTIVENESS

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Professional Development Opportunities, Effectiveness, Principals /Directors, University of Education, Lahore, Qualitative Study	Effective leadership and management are vital for educational institutions to create high-quality environments for faculty members and to facilitate efficient teaching and learning. Therefore, this qualitative study aimed to investigate the perception of university directors and principals regarding provision of professional development opportunities for faculty members and the effectiveness of these opportunities. A total of seven directors and principals from different divisions & campuses of University of Education, Lahore were selected as a sample for the study using a purposive sampling technique. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain in-depth information from the directors and principals. Thematic analysis was used to analyze data after transcription. Researchers explored consensus among directors and principals regarding professional development opportunities offered by University of Education & their perceived effectiveness. Based on the findings, induction training and adequate funding from the higher education regulatory bodies such as the Government of Pakistan, HEC, and PHEC are required for the improvement in offering and tailoring these PD opportunities, which could eventually aid in faculty members' professional advancement.
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INTRODUCTION

Professional development of faculty members plays a crucial role in the efficiency of educational institutions which helps to shape and enhance the skills of teachers to impart essential knowledge to students (Ajani, 2018; Glackin, 2016; Tonga et al., 2019; Gyamfi et al., 2023; Richter & Richter, 2024). Macfarlane (2020) and Fohlin et al. (2021) mention that the effective faculty development

programs are influenced by institutional strategic planning and evaluation framework. Globally, the support provided for PD opportunities to university teachers has been widely recognized. These opportunities include conducting annual training sessions, research & learning sabbaticals, funding for learning, and the creation of collaborative learning communities (Anane & Kuranchie, 2022; Richter & Richter, 2024). The universities in developed countries such as US, Canada, and Europe have implemented the well-designed professional development programs (Efu, 2020; Fohlin et al., 2021; MacPhail & Sullivan, 2019). These programs aim to offer faculty members with necessary training and support during different stages of their careers, tailored to their specific needs (Owusu, 2022; Duţă & Rafailă, 2014).

Additionally, these programs are usually well-funded, have the technical infrastructure needed to carry out these kinds of professional development activities, and are ingrained in the organizational learning cultures (Al-Shammakhi, 2020; Tran, 2016). Conversely, universities in evolving countries have come across significant challenges in providing specific chances for professional development to their faculty members. Therefore, faculty members often face difficulties such as limited financial resources, inadequate facilities, and the insufficient assistance from certain organizations (Anane & Kuranchie, 2022; Gyamfi et al., 2023; Tonga et al., 2019). The World Bank, UNESCO, and other international organizations have taken several initiatives intended at enhancing the professional development of faculty members employed in higher education Institutions. Thus, these initiatives include increased linkages between the faculty members of different universities in developed and developing countries to facilitate the transmission of ideas and promote institutional growth (Ajani, 2018; Al-Shammakhi, 2020; MacPhail et al., 2014; Sims et al., 2023). The significance of pursuing higher education in public universities especially in the context of Pakistan serves as the primary ray of hope for the majority of the students due to their financial constraints (Dilshad et al., 2019; Khan et al., 2021).

Though these universities get specified funding from Government & Higher Education Commission (HEC) for diverse projects, however, they face numerous challenges, including insufficient resources and policies that are unfavorable to specific socio-political objectives. The HEC of Pakistan and the Punjab Higher Education Commission (PHEC) have recognized significance of faculty development and have taken many initiatives to support the professional development of faculty (Dilshad et al., 2019; Ilyas & Zamir, 2020; Subhani et al., 2017). These initiatives include the establishment of the National Academy of Higher Education (NAHE) and allocation of funds for training programs and seminars. Hence, the professional development needs may vary among faculty members of different departments of universities, thus, inadequate provision of professional development opportunities to faculty may lead to disparities in faculty development programs (Dilshad et al., 2019; Khan & Afridi, 2017; Nawab, 2020). The initiatives for professional development taken by the HEC and university administration put a great responsibility on directors and principals to implement these activities effectively. Directors and principals are also expected to identify current inadequacies and underlying reasons for successful and unsuccessful implementation of these activities within the current system.

Thus, these educational leaders play a significant role in driving the process and making decisions about professional development policies (Dilshad et al., 2019; MacPhail et al., 2019; Popova et al., 2022). Hence, principals and directors are more concerned with searching for and providing the adequate professional development opportunities to the faculty after a careful need analysis and constraints in terms of limited financial and personnel resources. The present study was designed to ascertain the leaders' perspectives on the efficacy of existing professional development programs and the challenges they encounter in providing pertinent professional development opportunities to faculty members. Moreover, the availability of limited literature on professional development of university administrators, especially regarding their role in creating a conducive environment for the faculty members and supporting their career growth, researchers focused on the perspectives of directors and principals on the provision of the professional development opportunities and their effectiveness offered by University of Education, Lahore. The findings of this study might contribute to the advancement of knowledge and research in the field of faculty development in the higher education, particularly in enhancing the professional development opportunities and identifying effective strategies that policymakers and university administrators can implement to facilitate these opportunities.

Research Question
1. What types of professional development opportunities are being offered to faculty members by the university, and what is the perceived effectiveness of these professional development opportunities?

LITERATURE REVIEW
The lightning-fast pace of global change has made it crucial for the higher education institutions to bring educational reforms in the structure of teachers' professional development so they can teach essential knowledge and skills to students. Therefore, this knowledge and skills can enable students to gain progressively more complex skills for a variety of jobs in the workforce (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Doeur, 2022; Richter & Richter, 2024). Some scholars have taken a relatively limited perspective of PD, whereas others have taken a considerably broader one. Over several decades of academic study, the term professional development has been coined to describe teachers' formal and informal endeavors to develop knowledge and skills. The professional development of teachers is the primary mechanism that can equip teachers to address the complexities of the modern era. Day (2002) discussed the teacher professional development in terms of the individual, group, and institutional growth of teachers' social and professional lives (Bayram & Canaran, 2020; Gyamfi et al., 2023). In this connection, Maggioli (2004) characterized PD as a career-long phase in which teachers gain knowledge to improve their skills and competence to meet students' needs and their professional status. According to these explanations, ultimate aim of professional development is to improve student learning.

Although academicians use a variety of terms to describe PD, they agree that teachers' professional development includes informal and formal learning that teachers continue pursuing to increase their professional knowledge, behaviors, and skills, all of which have significant impact on student's academic achievement and institutional growth (Sims et al., 2022; Singha & Sikdar, 2018). PD is

defined by Fullan and Quinn (2015) as the process of improving an instructor's knowledge, abilities, competence, attitudes, and features, all of which have a major impact on how well they perform on the job. The teachers are urged to reconsider their methods, adopt new approaches to teaching and learning, use new technologies, and offer students with tools they need to address new challenges as one of most significant points of contact between individuals and society. Teachers must, therefore, gain new skills, mainly those skills related to lifelong learning, to fulfill their new responsibilities (Richter & Richter, 2024). However, various global assessments highlight the need to enhance the effectiveness of professional development programs of teachers (Gyamfi et al., 2023; Owusu, 2022). European Union prioritized improving teacher professional development above all else in its goals for educational reform.

It implies that the leading role should be entrusted to teachers for promoting the economy of the society. Thus, teacher professional development to enhance efficiency of educational systems and achieve learning outcomes is becoming more widely acknowledged (Boudersa, 2016; Popova et al., 2022). The fact is that worldwide reports emphasize a review of the continual, lifelong process of professional development. According to Kempton (2013) and Knight (2002), the preservice teacher education cannot provide all of pedagogical approaches and propositional skills that are required, nor can it provide the procedures and methods, "how to," knowledge that develops with experience or with assuming new responsibilities that call for progress. In the past, professional development for teachers was based on the erroneous belief that knowledge and skill gaps among teachers could be bridged over series of one-time workshops (Schleicher, 2011). Traditional professional development programs for teachers were designed to increase teachers' awareness and improve their professional knowledge and abilities in the form of seminars, training, and graduate-level coursework (Popova et al., 2022). These are more traditional types of professional development aim to teach the teachers something new or to provide them with opportunity to brush up on their existing expertise (Bayram & Canaran, 2020).

Despite the idea that these activities would provide the professional knowledge or views, teachers occasionally needed more time to prepare and implement what they had learned in the classroom (Alhoussawi, 2022; Garet et al., 2016). So, these traditional PDs were criticized for being superficial and fragmentary and having minimal impact on expanding teachers' knowledge and encouraging positive transformation (Barreto, 2020; Bayram & Canaran, 2020). Thus, they were also unable to substantially change instructors' actual practices or learning outcomes of their pupils (Desimone & Garet, 2015; Popova et al., 2022; Tonga et al.,2019). Desimone and Garet (2015) argued that the professional learning must go beyond traditional approach alone to increase teachers' knowledge, abilities, and teaching practice. These professional development activities can be made effective through study groups, professional networks, mentoring, independent study, individual research projects, and teacher-learning communities (Asmari., 2016; Osei-Owusu, 2022). Additionally, the professional development includes a broad range of activities that can help teachers advance their skills, ability, knowledge, and methods of instruction while also advancing their own professional, sociological, and emotional development as teachers (Barreto, 2020; Desimone & Garet, 2015; Garet et al., 2016).

Professional development activities can range from formal, planned PD activities like conferences, seminars, professional refresher courses, and professional gatherings to further casual PD activities like reading, self-learning & informal talks among teachers regarding their teaching (Alhoussawi, 2022; Desimone & Garet, 2015). Explicitly, PD refers to in-house training and development chances like one-time seminars, conferences, training sessions, panel discussions, and training sessions (Garet et al., 2016; Owusu, 2022). The reform style includes many professional development opportunities for teachers, from formal courses to informal meetings and projects. The reform forms of PD pursuits are believed to be more able to respond to teachers' requirements and objectives. Teachers must, thus, gain new skills, particularly those skills related to lifelong learning, to fulfill their new tasks (Richter & Richter, 2024). teacher professional development in terms of the individual, group, and institutional growth of teachers' social and professional lives. They have impact on teacher as they are longer and much more content-focused than the conventional one-off workshops or symposiums (Gyamfi et al., 2023; Popova et al., 2022; Tran, 2016). In short, the traditional teacher professional development programs included in-service training teachers, growing one's expertise, and training in-service teachers.

The courses and workshops led by experienced teachers were some of the more traditional forms of professional development for teachers. Teachers used to discuss improving their classroom practices, whether by brainstorming new ways to teach the concept or discussing a tricky pupil. Modern PD activities include learning initiatives that teachers do on their own to improve their expertise, such as reading books, researching the literature of domain, and practicing linguistic skills to enhance English proficiency, etc. (Gumanová & Šukolová, 2022). Therefore, faculty members often face the difficulties such as limited financial resources, inadequate facilities, and the insufficient assistance from certain organizations (Anane & Kuranchie, 2022). Thus, PD programs must foster individual and professional development of teachers and organization's growth. Teachers' professional skills, knowledge, and attitudes about their work can be improved over systematic and planned processes and activities known together as professional development (Alhoussawi, 2022; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Garet et al., 2016; Mizell, 2010; Tonga, 2019). This study used qualitative methodology to capture the real-world experiences of these educational leaders in addition to provide insight into the significant challenges of the professional development programs, and achievements associated with these programs.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study sought to examine perspectives of university directors and principals on the professional development opportunities as provided to their faculty members along with effectiveness of these opportunities. The study employed a qualitative approach and followed the interpretive research paradigm, which posits that reality may be comprehended and elucidated by examining it from the participant's own experiences and viewpoints (Cohen et al., 2007; Creswell, 2003). Lydall et al. (2005) state that interpretivism is based on the idea that individuals strive to derive meaning from their experiences through the cognitive processing of external stimuli. For the study, a sample of seven directors and principals from different divisions and campuses of the University of Education was selected using the purposive sampling technique. In this linking, after conducting a thorough

study of pertinent literature, researchers created a semi-structured interview guide specifically tailored for university directors and principals. Researchers ensured that study participants were granted the privileges of anonymity, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw from the study at any point.

Moreover, the ethical considerations were also prioritized throughout the research endeavor. Semi-structured Interviews were conducted till the point of saturation. Thematic analysis was employed to analyses the data. The data were analyzed using the NVivo 11 plus software. The interviews were translated into the English language. The interview schedules were transcribed and subsequently transliterated to conduct a thematic analysis of data. According to Cassol et al. (2018), transcription is process of converting audio recordings of interviews into written statements, hence transcription helped the researchers convert the audio recordings of the interviews into written statements. Since Braun et al. (2019) defined transliteration as act of rephrasing words from one language to another while modifying or aligning their meanings, process of transliteration assisted the researchers in using appropriate terms in the appropriate context. Themes were assigned codes, and sub-themes emerged from the data analysis conducted by the interviews. Four major themes as the professional development opportunities for faculty members were known by researchers: (i) workshops, seminars, webinars, training sessions, and conferences, (ii) Ph.D./Postdoc Scholarships, (iii) Induction training, and (iv) collaboration.

RESULTS OF STUDY

Seminars/Webinars/Workshops/Training Sessions/Conferences

Most directors and principals of the divisions and campuses of the University of Education Lahore (P1, P3, P4 & P6) expressed that university offered different professional development opportunities to the faculty, such as seminars/webinars/workshops/training sessions, /conferences. They further voiced their opinions: Each year, university holds national and international conferences. Faculty members participate in conferences. The university's annual conferences are excellent for faculty's professional development. The university provides faculty members valuable opportunities for the seminars and webinars to engage in the PD activities. The faculty members' participation in training sessions strengthened their professionalism and gave them confidence in their personality as well as teaching. The faculty members undertook university-sponsored workshops. Thus, they learned from international experts. They developed expertise in research-related software relevant to the study and relevant fields of study. However, the quality of workshops and training courses they provided was outstanding.

One of the directors stated: The university has selected faculty members to participate in various training programs offered by HEC, contributing to their constant professional development. CEDA, a foreign donor organization, organized workshop where they were given training in several aspects of the research. Under this umbrella, they attended various workshops on the educational research, curriculum design, and technology integration. CEDA has initiated the CPBEP project. In addition, it contributed to their development and capacity building. (P1) One of principals voiced his opinion: During my fifteen years as a principal, I have observed that institution provides teachers with

frequent and need-based professional development opportunities such as the seminars, workshops, conferences, training sessions, and webinars. In this connection, the PD ensures that educators remain up-to-date with the latest research and advancements in their respective fields. The professional development activities greatly contribute to participant's personal growth, teaching, and research pursuits. (P6). Thus, one of the principals expressed his viewpoint. Nowadays, the online webinars are extremely widespread.

This practice began with the Pandemic (Covid, 2019), and there is no question that virtual webinars are crucial. The university is frequently providing this opportunity to faculty members. It is a more practical and convenient practice that assists teachers in enhancing their knowledge, skills, and attitudes. (P7) One of the directors voiced his opinion: The faculty members have been offered to participate in national and international conferences. They present their articles and collaborate with academics and teachers worldwide. Perceptions of principals and directors regarding these opportunities can significantly influence design, implementation, and perceived effectiveness of PD programs. The university's workshops, training sessions, and conferences for the faculty members emphasize content knowledge, pedagogy, and research-related topics. However, some teachers are not interested in such opportunities. They squander their time participating in these programs as they are not motivated and do not learn anything in training sessions. Some teachers concentrate on writing publications. Thus, they consider that activity is more valuable than other the professional development programs. (P3).

Ph.D./ Post Doc Scholarships

Most principals and directors (P1, P3, P5 & P7) consider that university has offered faculty members opportunity to obtain Ph.D. degree locally and abroad. Faculty members' experience of obtaining a Ph.D. scholarship was a positive aspect. It gave them new knowledge and abilities, which they can significantly value. Learning new skills and knowledge is constant process. Some faculty members have the Fulbright scholarships and got their doctorates in New York. The university nominated faculty members to participate and apply in multiple HEC PhD. and postdoc scholarship programs, contributing to their professional development. Thus, one of them stated: Some faculty members received a Fulbright scholarship and completed their Ph.D. in New York. The University nominated some other faculty members to participate in HEC Postdoc scholarship programs, which aided their professional development. (3)

Induction Training

Most principals and directors (P1, P3, P5, and P7) stated that the HEC's NAHE training for the new incumbent was quite valuable. New faculty from the public universities across Pakistan joined this program. Still, seats were extremely limited and particular. Not every new teacher could attend the program. This induction training was crucial to professional development, teaching, and research initiatives. One mentioned: NAHE training provided by university to the new appointee was quite advantageous. New faculty from public universities around Pakistan joined this training as PD content that is applicable to classroom settings tends to be perceived as beneficial. The adequate support and resources from administration can boost effectiveness of PD programs. Due to limited seats, not every new appointee could attend the training. Still, it was crucial to their personal and

professional development. (P1)

Collaboration

The directors and principals (P1, P3, P4, and P6) agreed that this was an important professional development need for faculty members. Most principals and directors (P2, P3, P5, and P7) voiced their viewpoints. University administration conducted workshops and training sessions on various timely issues and topics pertinent to faculty members' needs. Faculty were given access to research-related initiatives and received training on accessing and writing the research projects to assess the PD needs of faculty to tailor PD programs accordingly. By cooperating, individuals & organizations gain knowledge. One of the directors voiced his opinion: Thus, this administration has enabled the collaboration and linkages between the administrative science faculty and local industries. This opportunity provides faculty members with additional opportunities for learning and earning due to collaboration. (P7)

DISCUSSION

The study revealed that the University of Education Lahore, Pakistan, provides various professional development opportunities to faculty members including workshops, seminars, webinars, training sessions, conferences, Ph.D./Postdoc scholarships, induction training, as well as collaboration. These opportunities seek to improve teachers' professional knowledge, attitudes, and abilities, ultimately leading to enhanced student learning outcomes. The research conducted by Desimone and Garet (2015), Diaz-Maggioli (2004), Guskey (2000), and Mizell (2010) yielded consistent findings about teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the professional development programs they engaged in. The findings of the research showed that the teacher professional development had a substantial impact on improving teachers' understanding of content knowledge, instructional techniques, and academic performances (Desimone & Garet, 2015; Garet et al., 2016). In this drive, from perspective of administration, the enhancement of teachers' knowledge, abilities, and attitudes, as well as the improvement of student learning outcomes, that are likely to play a crucial role in the long-term development of organization.

The findings of the current study indicated that teachers experience a beneficial influence while engaging in collaboration with others, whether formally or informally. These findings are consistent with the research conducted by Green and Pappa (2021) and Timperley (2008). While most of the professional development opportunities were viewed as effective by principals and directors, they did point out certain restrictions related towards their provision, such as the scarce and infrequent opportunities for professional development that make it difficult for all faculty members who want to take advantage of them. This finding is aligned with the research finding of the study conducted in Nepal by Khanal (2022), indicating that the institutions did not offer regular opportunities for teachers to engage in the critically reflective activities to enhance their teaching methods and offer continuous support and follow-up to help faculty implement what they have learned. The findings of this study demonstrate the significance of the university's induction training programs for faculty members, as they have the direct impact upon the career progression and teaching effectiveness of the novice teachers.

Moreover, the current investigation uncovered that the induction training provided by institution ensures that teachers experience a sense of self-assuredness in guiding their instruction. This finding is aligned with the studies that emphasize the importance of induction training opportunities for the growth and development of novice professionals (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Polskaya, 2022). The qualitative findings of this study have also revealed that the induction training opportunities for faculty members are limited. Understanding principals' and directors' perceptions of faculty PD opportunities, their effectiveness can help in designing more impactful and sustainable professional development programs. Their insights can ensure that PD initiatives are aligned with institutional goals, address faculty needs, and ultimately enhance the quality of education provided to students. In line with Goodwin et al.'s (2014) findings, the researchers noted that usually, new teachers do not go through an induction and orientation phase. Additionally, the number of mentors provided to the novice teachers was limited due to relying more on informal interactions rather than the formal induction programs.

CONCLUSION

This qualitative study has shed valuable light on the perceptions of directors and principals of the University of Education, Lahore, regarding the provision of professional development opportunities and their effectiveness for faculty members. The study's findings indicate consensus among directors and principals of different divisions and campuses of university about the professional development opportunities offered by University of Education. There was no significant difference in perceptions of the availability and effectiveness of these opportunities. Most respondents identified workshops, seminars, webinars, training sessions, and conferences as the most frequently provided professional development opportunities. Additionally, induction training, Ph.D. and Post Doc scholarships, and collaboration opportunities were highlighted as substantial contributors to teaching and learning experiences of faculty. The professional development programs offered by University of Education, Lahore play a crucial role in enhancing the academic skills and teaching methodologies of faculty members. However, there is a need for proper allocation of budget from the government of Pakistan for sustaining professional development structure of universities. Additionally, higher education regulatory bodies such as HEC and PHEC can play important role in providing adequate funding to faculty members and universities so that more frequent opportunities can be provided to most of the faculty members.

Recommendations

1. University administration might provide more frequent PD opportunities to faculty members so that most of the faculty members might be engaged in these activities to improve their teaching-learning process.
2. Induction training might be made mandatory for all new faculty members. There is a need to improve the mechanism of induction training on campuses and divisions.
3. The Government of Pakistan, HEC, and PHEC can provide adequate funding to university to support the professional development opportunities for faculty members.

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