

Professional Development of the University Teachers: An Insight into the Problem Areas

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Abstract

This paper is based on the analysis of the problems faced by the university faculty members during their participation in the professional development program. The training program was 01 month PCEPT Program conducted by the HEC, Islamabad at universities across Pakistan. The objective of the research was to highlight the problem areas encountered by the faculty members who participated in the professional development program; to analyze the university support extended by the parent institute of the participants; and to identify the workable strategies for the better implementation of training programs in future. The population for the study consisted of 1571 faculty members trained under the one-month training program. The sample was 720 faculty members selected using stratified random sampling technique. The results show that the highest rated problems were lack of any reward/visible recognition for participation in the course; and attitude of the head of departments for bringing any innovation in the system; and time constraints in managing the workload during the course. The least rated problems were accommodation arrangements for which the participants seemed satisfied; and coordination with the course coordinator regarding time scheduling. On the basis of research findings, it was recommended that an incentive or reward in the form of bonus or promotion may be attached with this training in order to make it more worthwhile..

Keywords: Professional development program, problems, implementation, course coordinator, participants

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Introduction

The most significant element for the prosperity of a community is its system of education and the basic element of the educational system is the teacher who leads the entire system (Azar, 2011). The concept of the teacher is defined as someone whose profession is to teach students. In fact, teachers are considered as the architects of the future generations including all sectors of the community. Basically, teaching is a complex profession with many duties from various different fields (Nalcaci, 2005). Teachers are considered as a highly esteemed personality in any society and teaching profession is considered to be the most distinctive and sacred profession. History is full of evidence about the nations where education has become a catalyst force for the socio-economic development of their countries. The work and worth of teachers has brought name and fame to nations (Babbie, 2008).

Teachers training is a significant element for preparing better teachers. If the training is not given before joining the teaching profession, which is very much common in the context of Pakistan, then this training to novice teachers must be given during the service. The definition of in-service training as described by Dadds (2001) is; “In-service training may include all the activities and experiences including both formal and informal through which an individual is given an innovative insight to perform his/her professional roles and responsibilities more efficiently”. Hence professional development is meant to make an individual capable of delivering his/her professional responsibilities amicably. In-service instruction is a progressing phenomenon which can never be ended for the entire professional life of individuals. It can be given at any time during the entire professional career of the faculty members. The length of the professional development course may vary from several hours to several days or weeks or months as per the nature and requirements of the program. In any case the variety in program length is dependent upon the program nature in terms of individual requirements, professional requirements, institutional focus, and national issues and emergent trends as a result of societal changes and their implications for academic institutions.

Another subject being wrangled about in connection to the program of teachers training is the question of “quality or quantity”. For ensuring quality of in service training programs, the training program ought to be actualized in a step-by-step manner. Within these steps, both participants and trainers have to be prepared in a qualified way. These steps include points such as the selection of resource persons, their instructional plan inside a particular time and program, their exercises in practice and the time period, the selection criteria of participating faculty members by the organization, and in-service training methods of teachers. Research emphasizes that there are certain issues within the training programs for teachers, who are considered as nucleus of the instructive framework, for example the commitment by the participating teachers, level of motivation, the rewards or incentives in place for the training etc. (Moon, 2016). Baskan pointed out the deficiencies

and highlighted that improvement can be made through better use of resources in terms of logistics arrangements. Higher Education Commission organized a one month PCEPT program for the university faculty members' professional development at the doorsteps of the universities. This one-month program was organized within the universities and the participating faculty members were also from the host institution as well as some percentage of participation was from the neighboring institutions. Since the program was of one month duration, so a study was conducted to find out the problems that participants faced during the whole duration of program. The study was delimited to only the logistics aspect of the program, and data was only collected from the participants of the study, not other stakeholders i.e. Coordinators of the program were included as respondents.

Significance of the Study

The results of this research will be useful for the policy makers in National Academy of Higher Education project, because they will come to know the problems faced by the participants of training courses which are held at universities doorsteps. Moreover, considering the opinions of the stakeholders involved in these training programs, HEC would be in a better position to make improvements in these types of training programs

Research Methodology

The major purpose of this research is to highlight the problem areas faced by the faculty members who participated in PCEPT Program; to analyze the support extended by the Parent University of the participants during their participation in the training program; and to identify the workable strategies for the better implementation of training programs in future.

Research Approach

The research approach used for the study was quantitative. According to Aliaga, quantitative research is an inquiry method in which data is gathered in numerical form and then analyzed using mathematical and statistical method (Aliaga, Gounderson, 2002). The research design was Descriptive and cross sectional survey was conducted to gather to opinions of the respondents.

Research Instrument

A survey instrument is used to gather actual field data for describing a particular phenomenon about a population which is otherwise too large to observe directly (Mouton, 1996). The data was collected through a self-administered questionnaire to the respondents of the study. The survey questionnaire consisted of a three-point scale with the categories of 'Disagree'; 'agree'; 'no opinion'. These were developed to analyze the hurdles encountered by the teachers as a result of their participation in the training program. The questions were mostly focused on the logistic issues faced by the participants.

These questionnaires were validated and pilot tested before administration.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Sample of the study consisted 790 faculty member strained out of the total 1577 faculty member who got training through 51 PCEPT training programs conducted by the project National Academy of Higher Education (NAHE) under Learning and Innovation Division (LID), Higher Education Commission of Pakistan. The sample was selected using stratified random sampling technique. Strata of provinces were used for ensuring the representativeness of the whole population of respondents. Since the whole population was available to the researcher, so random sampling technique was used for choosing subjects. The proportionate sample size was selected from the provinces keeping in view the total number of participants trained in each province. Following were area wise distribution of sample from the targeted population.

Table 1
Distribution of Sample in Province Wise

S. No	Province	Trained Faculty members
1	Federal Area	114
2	Punjab	267
3	Sindh	146
4	Khyber PakhtunKhaw	176
5	Balochistan	71
6	AJ&K	16
	Total	790

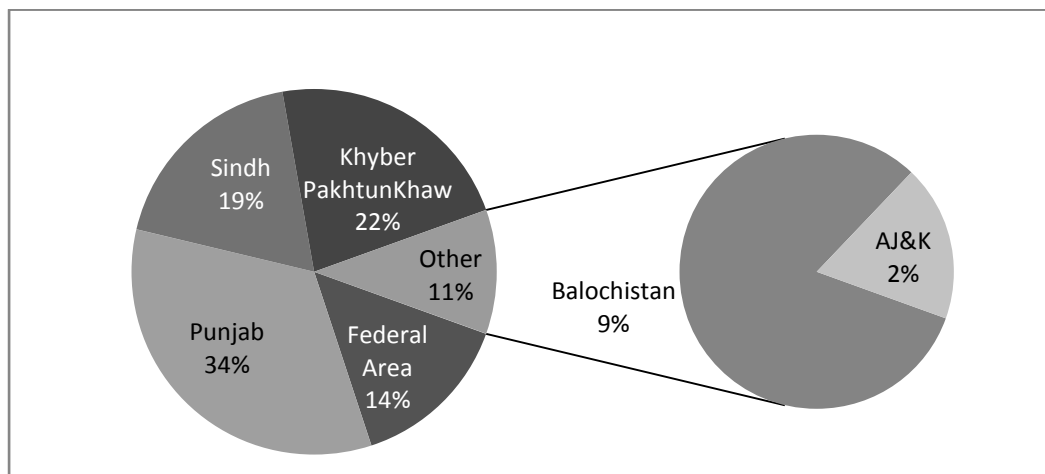


Figure 1. Province wise % of Trained Faculty Members

Data Analysis

The responses are presented statement-wise in tabular form as below.

Table 2

Responses of Faculty Members

S. No	Statements	Disagree (%)	No Opinion (%)	Agree (%)
1.	The participating faculty members are being overloaded (in terms of Resource Persons expectations during the training)	61.96	2.59	35.45
2.	Faculty members are assigned too many responsibilities during the course	16.43	4.18	79.39
3.	There are not enough faculty members in universities who can manage the participating teachers responsibilities as alternative arrangements	49.71	5.91	44.38
4.	The participants face difficulties in coping up the training program expectations and the expectations of the university simultaneously	22.91	2.16	74.93
5.	Due to the participation in training course it becomes difficult to reschedule and manage the missed classes to make up their course load requirements.	40.20	2.88	56.92
6.	The parent Universities don't consider this one month course as part of the faculty members' workload in spite of having a formal nomination by the university itself.	60.23	1.30	38.47
7.	It is difficult for the participating faculty members to reach the training program venue due to conveyance problems.	56.77	12.68	30.55
8.	There were insufficient accommodation arrangements.	28.82	63.40	7.78
9.	The participating faculty members were not much committed to the program requirements.	69.02	5.04	25.94
10.	There is no reward/acknowledgement or recognition for participation in the training program.	10.37	1.30	88.37
11.	The Heads of Departments/senior faculty members were not much supportive for bringing innovation in the system as a reflection of training program.	18.16	4.47	77.38
12.	Implementation of innovative ideas was not much encouraged in the in university set-up.	56.92	2.02	41.02

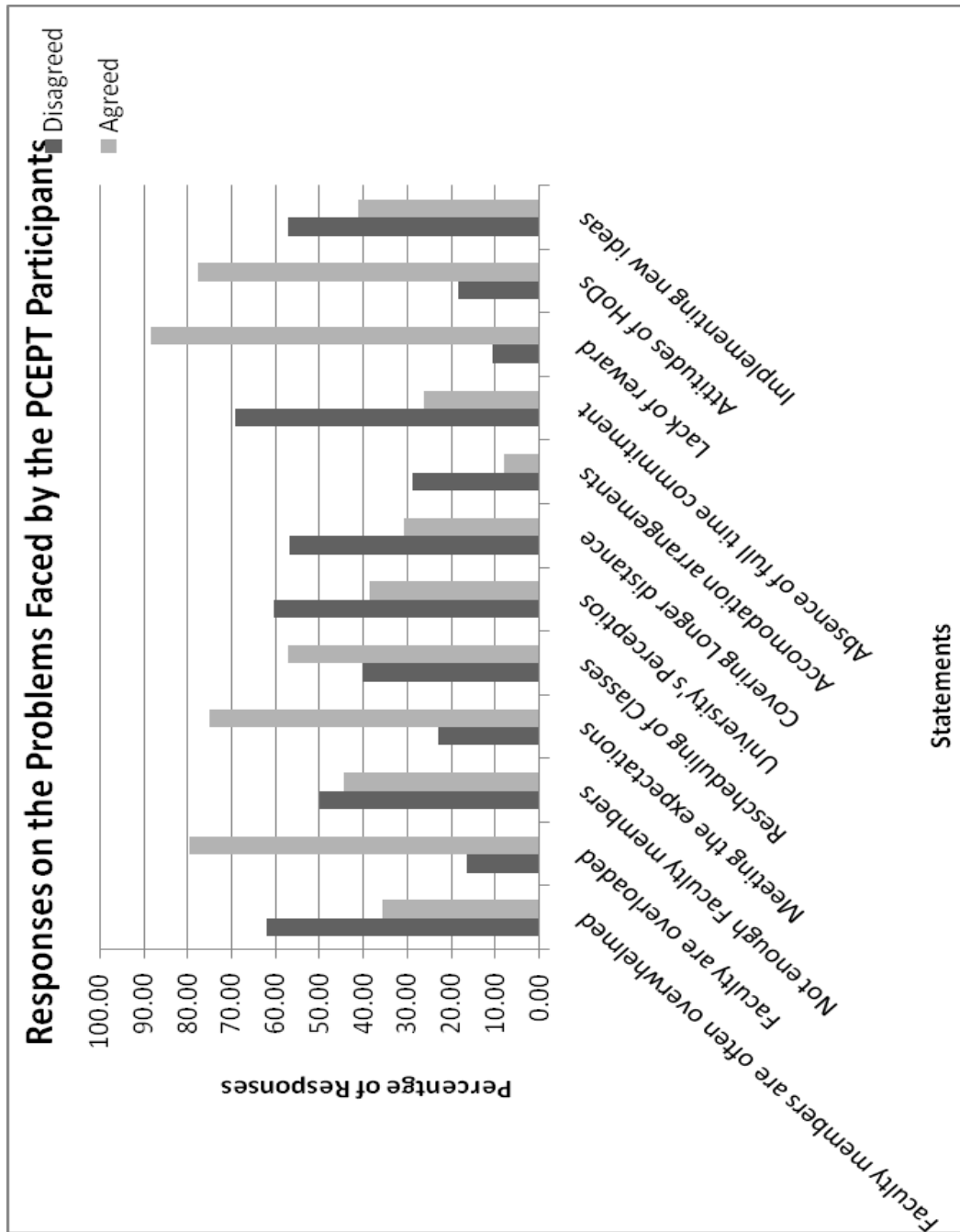


Figure 2. Responses on Problems faced by the faculty members during the PCEPT courses

Discussion

The results show that the foremost over whelming issue as marked by majority of the respondents' was absence of any sort of reward or acknowledgement after attending the training course, the second major issue highlighted by the participants was that participating faculty were over-burdened with other duties during the program; third major issue was acceptance of change by the departmental heads as there was less supportive environment for accommodating innovative ideas. The research study by Norberg (2000) states that if teachers has to play the role of change agents, they must be provided with the awareness about their roles and responsibilities as well as a supportive environment for bringing that change. The least rated problem was lodging issues possibly due to the fact that most of the participants were on campus or from nearby campuses so this facility was not required.

Responding to the question about the issues participating faculty confronted but not specified within the articulations of the survey, a few respondents pointed out the problem of communication made by the course coordinator in case of cancellation/rescheduling of any of the sessions due to any unforeseen reason (n=11). This issue was pointed out by the respondents going to the course from any nearby institution; they were not timely about any rescheduling or session cancellation which sometimes created problem. A few respondents were of the view that they faced the issue of getting revised endorsements/approvals from their parent institution in case the course was extended due to rescheduling of any module. A few respondents highlighted the issue of power shut down amid the sessions and absence of any back up electricity mechanism for resuming power supply (n=55) which caused problems in smooth running the session proceedings.

Conclusion

In the basis of the results of study it can be concluded that the participating faculty members considered it difficult to enforce their new ideas which they learnt during the course in the existing university setup and attitude of heads was reported as main hurdle for bringing change.

Recommendations

Therefore, it is recommended that training programs for heads and administrators may also be organized for their professional development in the area of change management. The other recommendations included: 1) Rewards and incentives may be given to the participants of the training program to attract more participants and have their motivational engagement during the course: 2) In order to facilitate the faculty members

and to make sure their presence during the sessions, the training may be conducted at a location other than the parent institution so that participants could have easy access to reach there for a whole duration of the training without any parallel commitment of the university; 3) the head of departments may be informed at least two months before the start of training program, for smooth nomination process on the one hand, and on the other hand the nominated faculty member may not be bothered by the departmental tasks.

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