

Organizational Factors, Teachers' Professional Development and Teaching Practices: Findings From Female Elementary School Teachers

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Abstract

Development of teaching competencies has always considered the most prolific dimension in teaching education. It assists teachers in teaching and in preparing to adopt more functional orientation practices beneficial towards teaching practice. This study aimed to investigate the antecedents of teachers' teaching practices. Primary data through survey was collected from 377 female elementary school teachers from private sector schools based in Karachi. Smart PLS was used for data analysis. Findings of this study revealed a significant relationship among organizational factors, teachers' professional development and teachers' teaching practices. This paper contributes to existing knowledge by reporting new empirical evidences from female elementary school teachers. Hence, this research provides practitioners and policy makers with better insights into some practices that could improve teaching practices.

Keywords: *elementary school teachers, female teachers, organizational factors, teachers' professional development, teachers' teaching practices*

INTRODUCTION

Teachers' professional development (TPD) is a systematized, initial and continuous process of educators in accordance with professional competencies and standards (Isaacs, 2006). Due to ever-changing competitive labor market, the importance of pre-service and in-service TPD is increasing day by day and teachers as employee have to prove themselves as competent employees to deal with knowledge industry (Broad & Evans, 2006). That is why TPD is one of the most promising features of educational reforms in many countries. There is an increasing acknowledgement in societies that teachers are not just one of the variables that should be changed with a specific end goal to enhance the system of education, however they are additionally most critical change operators in these changes. The field of TPD is a developing and testing zone furthermore advances the idea of teaching as a profession (Villegas-Reimers, 2003).

In case of Pakistan, quality of primary education is considering a serious issue. According

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to Niwaz, Khan, Khan, Hussain, and Abbas (2014), schools in Pakistan are facing challenges of untrained or low qualified teachers, outdated curriculum, unattractive textbooks and ineffective supervision. Another important fact cited in educational census 2005-06 that, low quality of primary education is the major cause of dropout at middle level. Teaching learning practices is a main area of concern not only in government schools but also in the fast-growing private educational institutions in Pakistan, as majority of Private school teachers are lacking professional competencies (Institute of Social and Policy Sciences (I-SAPS), 2010). In view of the researchers' personal experience as primary school teachers in private school, pre-service teacher training courses are not prerequisite of jobs in private schools and teachers are given so many responsibilities without considering their level of competencies. The study conducted by Evers, Van der Heijden, Kreijns, and Gerrichhauzen (2011) supports this observation. These elements increase the importance of TPD activities at primary level specifically and at all level in general. To manage this issue, the role of organization is very important. Teachers' professional development is a major initiative that addresses the problems and improved teachers' self-efficiency and effectiveness related to classroom practices and quality of educational provision. The core motive of teachers' professional development activities is therefore to broader their career development. TPD should be the important area of concern of human resource management and development, as it is directly related to students' learning outcomes (Poliakoff & Schwartzbeck, 2001; Policy and Planning Wing Ministry of Education Government of Pakistan, 2009; Evers, Van der Heijden, Kreijns & Gerrichhauzen, 2011). It is also the factor to maintain and increase the professional capacity of teachers and functioning of school as an organization (Harris & Chapman, 2002; Goodall, Day, Lindsay, Muijs & Harris, 2005).

The importance of TPD has been recognized by several education systems implemented in Pakistan and abroad. In such education systems, teachers professional development programmes (such as teachers' training, workshops, crash courses, certificates courses, seminars and diplomas on TPD) are offered frequently to improve teaching practices, assessments, observations, classroom practices with collaboration and reflection (Garavan, 1998; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Nawab, 2014; Junejo, Sarwar & Ahmed, 2018). Such programmes provide teachers with opportunities of training according to their needs (Sarwar, Bhamani & Ahmad, 2017; Smith & Kritsonis, 2006). These training phases are timed according to the comfort of school / institution rather than need of teachers.

Several researches have been conducted in Pakistani context to measure the impact of TPD on TTCs, however according to researcher's focused literature review very few researches had been published to measure the effect of TPD and OF on TTCs. Hence, the core motive of this study is to investigate the impact of TPD and OFs on TTCs. This study focuses on the provided learning opportunities to teachers in various educational settings and the organizational factors that help in providing the chances to improve their daily teaching practices. It helps school administrations, HRM officials and policy makers to equip teachers with innovative knowledge and skills and improve the working environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The efficacy of the teacher determined by his/her academic and pedagogical competence; ability to perform duties with commitment; support from education managers and supervisors and teaching learning resources and methods (Komba & Nkumbi, 2008). According to

Kwakman (1999; 2003), TPD includes professional learning activities that could bring positive change in teachers' teaching practices and learners' academic achievement. Planbureau (2006) defines that TPD includes training workshops and other facilities aimed to bring changes with some innovations in teaching and managerial practices of teachers and educational managers in resultant to student learning experiences. Hoyle & John (1995) defined TPD as, "The process by which teachers acquire the knowledge, skills, and values which will improve the service they provide to clients" (p. 17). TPD is a procedure of refining educators' academic/content knowledge as well as attainment of greater skills and effectiveness in performing their duties in school (Komba & Nkumbi, 2008). The basic idea of TPD is to motivate and help teachers to develop their pedagogical skills to teach specific contents, and eventually has great and strong positive impact on students' learning (Blank & de las Alas, 2010).

Professional learning activities can be occurred in formal and informal learning environment, formal learning environment such as training workshops and professional meetings, mentoring etc., and informal learning environment such as workplace context, reading professional publications, watching television documentaries related to an academic discipline (Ganser, 2000; Marsic & Watkins, 2001). The design of in-service training programs must address the teachers' needs; provide them facilities to improve teachers learning in a way to enhance their classroom practices (Snow-Renner & Lauer, 2005). They provide opportunities that involve in adopting of new strategies and constructive opportunities for teachers to improve their practices and reflect upon them accordingly (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman & Yoon, 2001; Saxe & Gearhart, 2001). The teacher is the main factor of classroom teaching (Komba & Nkumbi, 2008). To meet the teachers' professional need, human resource management department of a primary school should take necessary measures such as training sessions, seminars, online courses, field visits etc. The school organizations should keep TPD on his top list of agenda as it contributes to increasing the professional competencies of teachers and so students' academic achievement (Evers, Van der Heijden, Kreijns & Gerrichhauzen, 2011). According to Vermeulen (1997) career development is one of the four functions of HRM and TPD is one of the main functions of career development.

Teachers' teaching competency practices can be defined by what a person know about his profession and what and how he performs (Evers, Van der Heijden, Kreijns & Gerrichhauzen, 2011). Van der Heijden, (1998), used the terms "competence" and "expertise" in interchangeable manner that means not only ability to perform job but also acceptance and distribution of responsibilities. According to Cheetham & Chivers (2000) professional competencies can be developed in a situation where an individual can use their learnt knowledge and skills as well as improvise it according to situation. Evers, Van der Heijden, Kreijns (2003) defines that teachers' professional competencies are based on four factors that are knowledge (declarative, procedural and conditional), Meta cognition, skills and social recognition. Declarative knowledge means what you know, procedural knowledge deals with "How" will you perform and conditional knowledge refers to when and where knowledge should be applied. Meta cognition deals with self-awareness. Whereas skills that are required perform duties and based on quality of performance he/she receives social recognition from management, colleagues, students, parents and community members. Professional competency is a key factor for career development and ensure one's employability (profession potential) to a vast degree (Evers, Kreijns, Van der Heijden & Gerrichhauzen, 2011).

Theoretically, Kwakman (2003) discussed TPD and suggested that it is influenced by personal and organizational factors. In personal factors, cognitive and self-directed learning are most important factors out of five factors, whereas, organizational factors also play very important role in TPD, as learning and growth are situation dependent (Kwakman, 2003). Organizational factors such as having strong leadership to improve teachers' collaboration, staff relationship and communication and provision of opportunities to their teachers to improve their learning experiences and teaching practices (Caena, 2011; Bayar, 2013). Evers, Van der Heijden, Kreijns & Gerrichhausen (2011) discussed two factors related to TPD, first, structural factors, such as learning infrastructure or facilities and provisions. The facilities provided by the organizations enhance the professional expertise of employees (Van der Heijden, 2003) and thus can be defined as the learning opportunities provided within an organization. The factor provisions refer to "compensation" and "social network". Second, factors referring to social-psychological relationships are social support from close co-workers, social support from immediate authority and "attention by one's immediate supervisor" for a broader career development. According to Van der Heijden, (2003), it further includes four functions including instrumental support, supposed to be given till the end of task; emotional support, refers to the support given to enhance one's self-esteem; appraisal support, given to someone for his self-evaluation; and informational support, helps employee to proceed his/her task.

Based on the assumption that TPD learning model is an idea that enhances teachers' knowledge and learning in the social contexts, improve experiences through interactive training sessions, and bring change that reflects on their classroom practices. The ones who are interested and willing to participate in professional learning activities leads to changes in teaching practices and enhancement in students learning experiences and performances (Bolam, 2005). David and Bwisa, (2013) establish the factors which effects on teachers' participation in TPD. Findings of the study showed that work environment has no effect on teachers' participation in their professional development. On the contrary, another study conducted by Gumus (2013) found that school leadership role is very important in TPD. Findings of the study conducted by Geijssel, Slegers, Stoel & Kruger (2009) showed that psychological factors (teachers' sense of self-efficacy and internalization of school goals into personal goals) had strong effects on teachers' participation in the professional learning activities

In the light of reviewed literature, the following research question was established:

- Does organizational factors and professional development have any impact on teachers' teaching practices?

To investigate the question, the following hypotheses have been established in relation with theoretical background presented above.

- H_1 : There is a significant relationship of organizational factors and teachers' professional development with teachers' teaching practices.
- H_2 : There is a significant impact of organizational factors and teachers' professional development on teachers' teaching practices.

METHODS

The current study is quantitative in nature and survey technique was used to collect the

primary data. The population of this study was elementary school teachers from Karachi city. Total 500 teachers were selected as sample by using purposive sampling technique. Questionnaire was distributed in seven private schools. Out of 500 questionnaires, 410 were returned. Nevertheless, 33 questionnaires were improperly filled hence rejected. The remaining 377 questionnaires were used for further analysis. Questionnaire was adopted from Stegall, (2011). The questionnaire consisted on two sections, first section containing 5 items of TPD, 8 items of organizational factors and 5 items of teachers' teaching practices. In second section respondents were asked to give demographic information. All items were address to 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5).

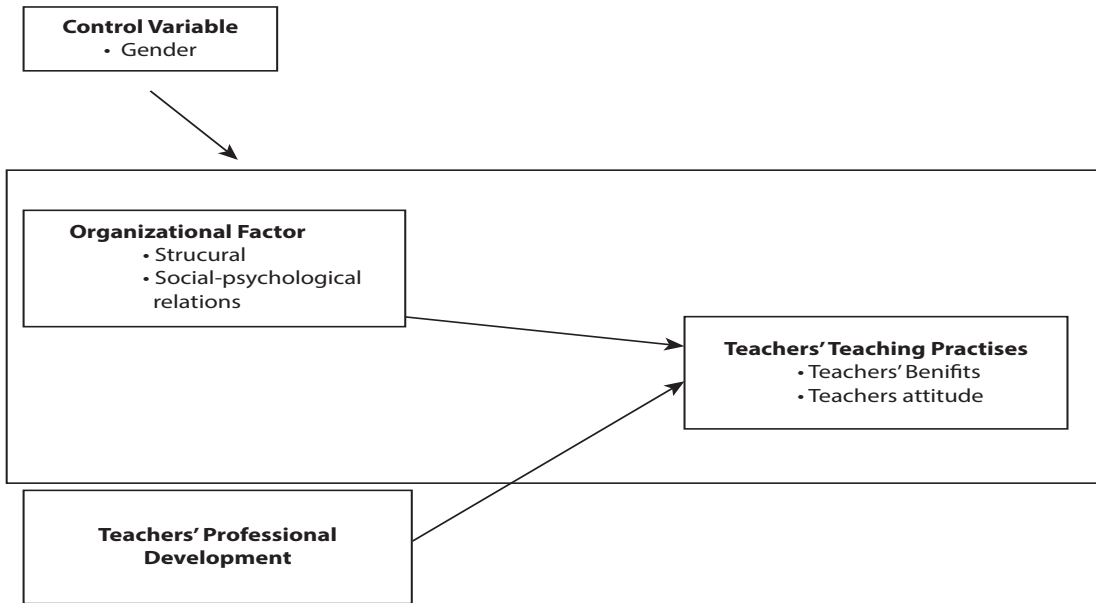


Figure 1: Research Framework

FINDINGS & RESULTS

The quantitative analyses of this study were performed through smart PLS.

Respondent's Profile

The respondents of this study were 377 registered female teachers working in seven schools. These teachers belong to different classroom teaching levels, workplace experiences having various academic and professional qualifications. Out of 377 participants, 41.3% were married and 58.8% were unmarried. In terms of qualification 2.3% were Matric, which was the minimum qualification for this survey. Twenty four percent 24% were Intermediate, 49% were Bachelors, 22% were Masters, 2% were MBA, 0.5 % was M.Phil. and 0.3% was PhD. Regarding their professional qualification 44.8% respondents had earned a Diploma in Montessori Course, 15.8% earned B.Ed Degree, 2.8% earned M.Ed Degree, 3% earned their Diploma in EYE (Early Years Education), 10.8 % were involved in other courses, and 23% were not earned or involved or participated in any professional learning activities. Moreover, respondents' age

divisions are, 40.8% were having age between 20-25 years, 27.5% were having age between 26-30 years, 18.3% were having age between 31-35 years, 10.3% respondents were having age between 36-40 years, 2.5% respondents were having age between 41-45 years and only 0.8% respondents were having age between 46-50 years. Lastly, the teaching experience fraction of the respondents are: 25.5 % having an experience less than a year, 32% were ranged between 1-3 years, 23.3% were ranged between 7-9 years, 5% were ranged between 10-12 years, 1% were ranged between 13-15 years and 1% were having an experience more than 15 years.

Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive statistics of this study states that the values of mean and standard deviation are shown which tends to be between 1 to 5, and one is considered to be high level.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
Teachers Professional Development	1.7040	0.46964
Organizational Factors	1.7460	0.48640
Teachers Teaching Practices	1.7168	0.42898

Evaluation of Measurement Model

The test of construct validity and reliability of the items (outer loadings, convergent & discriminant validity) of the latent constructs was applied through Smart PLS.

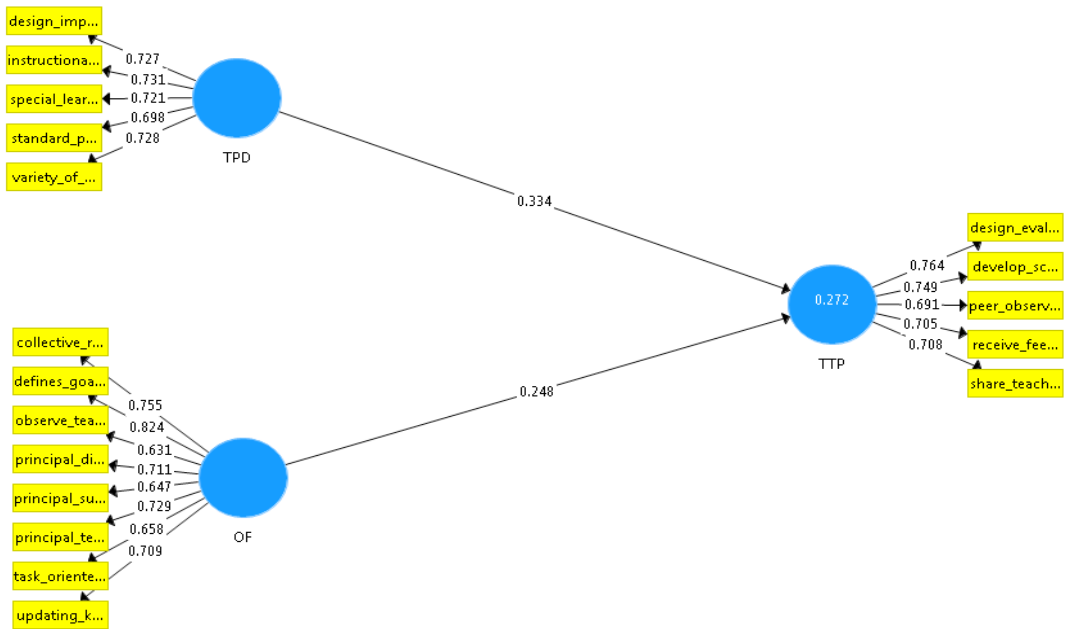


Figure 2: PLS Path Modeling

Measurement with reflective indicators is analysed by validity and reliability of their respective constructs. For the measurement of the reliability factor loadings with the cross loadings of the construct variable were applied. Table 2 showed that most of these indicators

outer loading is more than 0.70 and few loadings are less than 0.70, however not less than 0.60. The rule of thumb for the loading suggested that every indicator should be loaded greater than 0.70 (Yoo & Alavi, 2001). Albeit, few researches suggested that weaker outer loading (0.5 to 0.7) can be consider while analysing the contribution of the validity (Hair et al., 2014). It can be observed that the few indicators are evaluated with weaker outer loading but there is not impact on AVE.

Table 2: Outer loadings and Convergent Validity

Construct	Items	Loading	∂	CR	AVE
OF	OFI1	0.755	0.859	0.890	0.505
	OFI2	0.824			
	OFI3	0.631			
	OFI4	0.711			
	OFI5	0.647			
	OFI6	0.729			
	OFI7	0.658			
	OFI8	0.709			
TTP	TTPI1	0.764	0.770	0.844	0.520
	TTPI2	0.749			
	TTPI3	0.691			
	TTPI4	0.705			
	TTPI5	0.708			
TPD	TPDI1	0.727	0.774	0.846	0.524
	TPDI2	0.731			
	TPDI3	0.721			
	TPDI4	0.698			
	TPDI5	0.728			

∂: Cronbach's Alpha

CR: Composite Reliability

AVE: Average Variance Extracted

The table 2 showed the composite reliability and average variance extracted (AVE) of the construct. The composite reliability value should be more than 0.7 (Hair et al., 2011). The result showed that all values are well above than 0.7 hence acceptable. The AVE must be greater than 0.5, as a minimum target of 50% variance can be explained (Hair et al., 2011). The above table showed that all AVE values are more than 0.5. The result support that the construct explained the average variance extracted (OF, TPD and TTP) and the also support that convergent validity examined is acceptable.

Table 3: Discriminate Validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)

	OF	TPD	TTP
OF	0.711		
TPD	0.594	0.721	
TTP	0.447	0.482	0.724

Note: Diagonals (bold values) represent the Square root of AVE, while the other entries represent the squared correlations.

For validity of discriminant test, Fornell and Larcker (1981) approach was being used. It measures up to the square root of AVE values with latent variables correlation. The square root of each construct of AVE is more than its maximum correlation with at all other constructs (Hair et al., 2012). This criterion is verified as shown in table 3 above, i.e. all the values on the diagonal are greater than its correlation among the constructs.

Blind Folding and Coefficient of Determination

The R^2 value demonstrating higher levels of predictive accuracy aggregate between the value of below 0.25, 0.50 and 0.75, this shows weak, moderate and strong association for the endogenous variable respectively (Hair et al., 2011). The R^2 value showed in table 4 TTP R^2 value is 0.272 means that model has sustainable predictive accuracy i.e. 27.2%. The Q^2 measure model predictive relevancy Model uses SEM analysis. The value of 0.02, 0.15 and 0.35 explains that an exogenous construct has a small, medium and large predictive relevance for a definite endogenous construct respectively (Hair et al., 2012). The value of Q^2 showed in table 4 proved that blindfolding there have model predictive relevancy (Q^2) TTP value is 12.9%.

Table 4: Blind Folding and R^2

	R^2	Q^2
<i>TTP</i>	<i>0.272</i>	<i>0.129</i>

Results of the Measurement Model Direct Effects

Path coefficients (β values), t-values and p values of the structural model of SEM were used to test the hypotheses. Table 5 shows the path co-efficient of all the latent constructs. The statistics analysis and results has been proved that the association among OF and TTP (H_1) comprise the values ($\beta= 0.248$, $t= 4.086$). It also supports the relationship between the TPD and TTP (H_2) having values ($\beta= 0.334$, $t= 5.480$). Consequently, relationship is highly significant i.e. <0.001 hence the results supported both hypotheses.

Table 5 Path Coefficients (Direct Effect)

Hypothesis	Path	Coefficient (β)	t-value	p values	Decision
H_1	<i>OF -> TTP</i>	<i>0.248</i>	<i>4.086</i>	<i>0.000</i>	<i>Supported</i>
H_2	<i>TPD -> TTP</i>	<i>0.334</i>	<i>5.480</i>	<i>0.000</i>	<i>Supported</i>

*Note: t-value in parentheses. Statistical significance levels: **** $p < 0.001$, *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$*

DISCUSSION

Many issues have been raised in education; however, the issue of quality of teaching has taken in priority among educators and organization policy makers. To increase students' learning we should concentrate on teachers' professional development and practices. This study is framed on the contribution of organizational factors and teachers' professional development in teachers' teaching practices, whereas the organizational factor is a very visible factor that encourages teachers to take part in professional learning activities and raise the level of classroom atmosphere with effective teaching methods. Current study supports the findings of Evers, Van der Heijden (2003), and consider that organizational factor which includes magnitude of learning opportunities and organizational facilities gives social support and attention from the supervisor for a broader career development to improve teaching practices. Organizational

factor is not just limited towards the physical or logistical support but it also consists on moral and ethical support for the teachers. Furthermore, as findings of this research suggested in accordance with the literature, the teacher who are actively participated in professional learning activities can gain knowledge, skills, resources, methods, techniques' and strategies for teaching effectively hence classroom practices improved. The findings supported the view point of Van der Heijden (1998), as he reported that participation is important for the development of their occupational expertise. This could indicate that learning activities within the workplace have a larger impact on occupational expertise. The concept of teachers' teaching practices provides the most useful professional development learning strategies that emphasizes on active teachers' teaching practices. The findings of this study support the fact that organizational factors and teachers' professional development have a significant impact on teachers teaching practices and have strong relationship. Study conducted by Evans (2002) reported that teachers' professional development effects on teachers teaching competencies. Teachers who are engaged in professional learning activities are more concern towards improvement of the classroom-learning atmosphere, hence considered as highly effective teachers. The finding of our study also supported the contention and showed correlation between teachers' professional development and teaching practices.

CONCLUSION

Consistent with the findings of the study, organizational factors should be considered while establishing the structure of teachers' professional development in particular to increase teachers' teaching practice. Organizations who are interested in increasing teacher' teaching practices in classroom need to focus on teachers' professional development. Several factors in schools may contribute to increased professional learning activities of the teachers. To increase teachers' teaching practices organizations should planned professional learning activities effectively to enhanced knowledge, skills, and experiences of their teachers. Results of this study suggested significant positive relationship among teachers' professional development, organizational factor and teachers' teaching practices. Hence, elementary schools that engage their teachers in professional learning activities may find ways to develop a professional structure, and can generates the opportunity to increase teachers' teaching practices. This study helps in identifying the high need of TPD, and suggested that the role of organization must bring continues change and improvement in their teachers teaching practices. Teachers' teaching practices is a lifelong learning and through continuous means of professional development, one could improve with the help of organizational support.

Implications and Recommendations

The implication and recommendations of this study is based on its two-dimensional approach. This study is applicable in a bigger scale as well with chance of slighter improvement on valuation of TPD (subjected to change on participant profile). Further, recommendation of this study considering current position for TTP is that more often teaching practices should be evaluate for identifying change in ground realities. The background knowledge related to classroom handling is key factor, which should be considered when recruiting the teacher. The organizational factors playing major contribution in arranging training for teachers within premises as in-service training or workshops. Supportive role of organization can lead towards a more positive attitude of teachers. Moreover, teacher's workload must be kept into

consideration, prior to indulging with any training or workshop. The teachers who have prior knowledge of field are more effective in yielding results inside classroom therefore focus must be shift in future for having proper scheduled professional development of teachers.

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