



DETERMINANTS OF TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN THE PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES OF BANGLADESH

(Research article)

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Abstract

University teachers' professional development programs directly affect the quality of education and teaching in universities and tertiary-level education. This was a cross-sectional study and the participants of the study comprised 96 instructors from 6 different private universities in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The data were collected via a semi structured interview form which was developed by the researcher. The obtained data were analysed using frequency distribution, cross-tabulation, correlation, and association. The results revealed an association between respondents' years of teaching experience and monthly income. The majority (83%) of respondents had no research training, followed by technology operating training (20%), scientific writing training (80%), personal quality improvement training (60%), and computer and internet use training (34%) ($\chi^2 = 24.60$, $DF = 7$, $p = .05$). The policy of the university authority regarding professional skills development seemed to be dissatisfactory to a majority of respondents ($\chi^2 = 29.55$, $DF = 9$, $p = .002$). Lack of participation in professional development activities (90%), not enough encouragement from the university authorities to participate in professional development activities (75%), lack of sharing common values related to professional development activities among colleagues (40%), lack of staff agreement on common values about student learning and teaching at university (45%) and high cost of travel expenses to participate in professional development activities in foreign countries were determined as the common barriers to university teachers' professional skills development. It was also found out that career-oriented professional development activities could directly enhance the teachers' professional and personal growth, which might positively impact university development. **Keywords:** Professional development, private university instructors, skills development, common values

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1. Introduction

The modern education system aims to achieve quality education addressing the digitalization of education delivery facilities, especially teaching environments for both teachers and students (Timotheou et al., 2022; Tuncer & Zelyurt, 2023). The trend of recent education based on digital methods mainly focused on the quality of teachers' work lives and ensuring the students' professional lives after graduation. Teachers' professional development programs and working environment impact on achieving the target of qualitative human resource development goals. In developing countries, private universities have been established in recent decades, resulting in a substantial increase in the percentage of higher education (Leung et al., 2023). The increasing number of private universities established in developing countries has resulted in the absence of facilities for the personal development of teachers.

Many countries invested around 3 to 15% of their GDP in the education sector aiming to produce quality future human resources that will ensure significant numbers of employment in different sectors (Panthee, 2022). The correlation between teacher professionalism and the development of quality human resource is strongly attributed to many systematic reviews and meta-analysis synthesis evidence. Individual and organizational factors including career plan, level of education, professional training facilities, digital environment, and organizational policy highly impact on teachers' professionalism. Lack of good practice, poor budget allocation, work schedule, the pressure of work, switching jobs, and uncertainty of job play vital roles in the professional skills development of private university teachers in developing countries.

In Bangladesh, many educational policy reforms have taken place in the primary and secondary education sectors (Mojumder, 2021). This is an appropriate time to think about tertiary level addressing social and technical competencies and incorporate them into teachers' professional development programs. Many scholars raise the question of whether our private education sector's teachers are ready to take on the new role of digital education with their current profile. This question's answer can be concluded following the level of teachers who attend courses, training, or conferences and read professional journals to refresh and update their knowledge and skills. Two theoretical contexts were discussed in the literature, the cognitive psychological perspective and the professional development perspective.

Modern education gives priority from a professional development perspective and this approach supports quality outcomes of education sector investment (Mohiuddin et al., 2023). High-quality professional development programs include coherence, active learning, sufficient duration, collective participation, a focus on content knowledge, and reform rather than the traditional approach. The initial objective of the research is to examine the factors that promote and hinder

private university teachers' professionalism and professional advancement in Bangladesh. The study will help in the future planning of professional development activities of private universities and encourage education policymakers to engage qualified teachers to further their professional practice competency through different professional development courses.

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

A cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted among private university teachers working in Dhaka City, Bangladesh between October 2023 to November 2023.

2.2. Data collection

Face-to-face interviews were conducted to collect data from the respondents. A semi-structured questionnaire was used including 4 sections of information addressing the feelings, perceptions, and opinions about the university instructor's professional skills development. Data were collected from 96 instructors at 6 private universities located in Dhaka City, Bangladesh. The sample size was finalized using a standard formula (Fisher, et al., 1991), which was determined around 95 and we rounded up its 96 (16*6). A stratified random sampling technique was applied for drawing samples from potential respondents who were stratified by age. The university teachers' list was collected from the HR department and samples were selected using a random sampling technique. A pre-designed questionnaire was used for the collection of data, which included both structured and open-ended questions. The interview schedule's reliability was determined through pretesting and analysis of the result. An education expert determined the face validity of the questions.

2.3. Analysis of Data:

Collected data was edited, coded, and then entered into the computer for analysis. The SPSS 26.0 version was used to analyze the collected data. Univariate logistic regression and independent association were determined. Significant univariate associations ($p < 0.05$) were entered into a multivariate logistic regression to identify variables that were significant predictors of adherence to outcome variables. The process of data analysis involves the use of frequency distribution, cross-tabulation, co-relation, and association.

2.4. Consent and Ethical Consideration:

Consent was obtained from each participant explaining the purpose and nature of the research. Participation in the study was voluntary basis and the participants were informed of their right to quit/refuse their participation at any stage of the study if they did not want to participate.

Moreover, the confidentiality of the information has been assured by using an anonymous consent form.

3. Results

Study data were collected from university instructors engaged in private universities located in the capital city of Dhaka, Bangladesh. The ages of the respondents ranged from 26 to 40 years. The mean ages of male and female respondents were 34 and 31 years, respectively but median ages were only 33 years for males and 32 years for females' teachers, which means the majority of respondents were young adults. The average age of the respondents was 33.17 ± 4.904 years. The difference in age of respondents by sex was found statistically significant at the .003 level ($\chi^2 = 29.90$, $df = 8$; Cramer's $V = .39$). The average income of the university teachers was 34300 ± 8500 BDT. The majority (66%) of the respondents were married, 16% were unmarried and 16% were divorced. The average family size of the respondents was 3.17 which was much lower compared to the national family size of 4.65. About 84% of respondents' religion was Islam and 16% were Hindu. About 83% of university teachers attended workplaces from inside Dhaka city and 17% came from outside and around Dhaka city. About 50% of the respondents had 2 years of teaching experience and the average experience was for 3 ± 1.680 years. There was a strong association between respondents' years of teaching experience and monthly income ($\chi^2 = 38.25$, $df = 9$, Gamma $V = .36$, Lamda $\lambda = .39$, $cOR = 1.69$; 95% $CI = 2.855-3.650$; $P = 0.003$). About 83% of the respondents had post-graduate qualifications and 17% had a graduate degree. We found an association between respondents' academic qualification and years of teaching experience ($\chi^2 = 32.55$, $df = 7$, Gamma $V = .34$, Lamda $\lambda = .37$, $cOR = 1.99$; 95% $CI = 2.075-2.908$; $P = 0.02$). The majority (83%) of respondents had no research training on how to train their students, followed by technology operating training (20%), scientific writing training (80%), personal quality improvement training (60%), and computer and internet use training (34%) ($\chi^2 = 24.60$, $DF = 7$, $p = .05$) and average 36% of respondents had some training on above topics from private sector but none of them have international training experience from abroad. However, about 84% of the respondents had online training (foreign training) on how to publish good quality publications high impact factor journals ($\chi^2 = 26.40$, $DF = 8$, $p = .03$). Around 50% of the respondents attended curriculum development seminar, 80% of the respondent's attended a seminar on future higher studies and 20% attended administration management training. The majority of respondents seem unhappy regarding university authority policy and attitude to attend training and seminars to improve their professional skills development ($\chi^2 = 29.55$, $DF = 9$, $p = .002$). About 86% (strongly agree) that there is no alternative to attending professional development activities regularly, and 16% moderately agreed with this. The opinion of the respondents on professionals' development activities are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Multiples Analysis of Opinion of the Respondents on Professionals' Development Activities

Issues	Opinion of the University Teachers					Significance of test
	Moderately disagree	Undecided	Moderately agree	Strongly agree	95% CI	
Professional development activities are necessary for teachers.	-	10%	75%	15%	1.536-2.002	$\chi^2 = 19.40$, DF= 8, p =.05
Professional development activities help teachers to develop their instructional skills.	-	5%	85%	10%	1.060-1.862	$\chi^2 = 16.70$, DF= 6, p =.02
Professional development activities are valuable enough to justify the time spent.	20%	5%	65%	10%	1.050-1.528	$\chi^2 = 17.60$, DF= 8, p =.04
Participating in professional development activities makes me feel better about myself	-	18%	22%	60%	1.050-2.050	$\chi^2 = 16.20$, DF= 6, p =.01
The best way for teachers to learn more is to participate in professional development activities	20%	25%	40%	15%	2.001-2.160	$\chi^2 = 14.70$, DF= 4, p =.08
I enjoy participating in professional development activities	-	30%	30%	40%	1.001-1.150	$\chi^2 = 13.45$, DF= 5, p =.06
The available professional development activities are scheduled at convenient times.	-	35%	50%	15%	1.220-2.001	$\chi^2 = 13.35$, DF= 5, p =.07
My colleagues encourage me to participate in professional development activities	30%	40%	20%	100%	1.550-1.850	$\chi^2 = 14.50$, DF= 7, p =.05
Lack of funding for additional personnel to cover classes prevents me from participating in professional development activities	-	10%	50%	40%	1.020-1.540	$\chi^2 = 15.22$, DF= 5, p =.05
My authority encourages me to participate in professional development activities	45%	30%	25%	-	1.750-2.050	$\chi^2 = 15.55$, DF= 6, p =.02
I have time to regularly attend offered professional development activities	20%	30%	40%	20%	1.230-2.050	$\chi^2 = 15.35$, DF= 7, p =.05
My colleagues and I share common values related to professional development activities	30%	10%	50%	10%	1.800-1.860	$\chi^2 = 17.55$, DF= 6, p =.05
In my university all of the staff agree on common values about student learning and teaching	40%	15%	40%	5%	1.050-1.500	$\chi^2 = 16.22$, DF= 5, p =.05
Expenses for travel prevent me from participating in professional development activities	18%	6%	56%	20%	1.450-2.058	$\chi^2 = 16.55$, DF= 4, p =.06

As it can be seen in Table 1 above, the majority (90%) of respondents agreed that Professional development activities are necessary for teachers and 10% were undecided about it. About 95% of respondents opined that Professional development activities help teachers to develop their instructional skills. About 75% of respondents gave importance to professional development activities that are valuable enough to justify the time spent. About 82% of respondents said participating in professional development activities makes them confident. However, half (52%) of the respondents opined that the best way for teachers to learn more is to participate in professional development activities. The concerning fact is that about 70% of them do not think that their colleagues encourage them to participate in professional development activities. Lacking participation in professional development activities (90%), not enough encouragement from university authorities to participate in professional development activities (75%), sharing common values related to professional development activities among colleagues (40%), lack of staff agreement on common values about student learning and teaching at university (45%) and high cost of travel expenses to participating in professional development activities at foreign countries are the common barriers to university teachers' professional skill development.

4. Discussion

Several key factors influence professional development for university teachers. University teachers' professional qualities, directly impact the high-quality human resource development of the country. At tertiary-level educational institutions, successful professional development activities are supported by the work environment, institutional facilities, and organizational policies. This paper aimed to determine the barriers to professional development in private university teachers in Bangladesh. We collected data from private universities located in the capital city of Dhaka, Bangladesh, and the average age of the respondents was 33.17 ± 4.904 years. This statistic indicates that the majority of teachers were young adults and at the stage of high potential working age. According to the retirement age in the Bangladesh government, this age group may have an opportunity to serve the country upcoming 27 years of their life. In the gender context, we found that female teachers were younger than their male counterparts in our study. The average income of the university teachers was 34300 ± 8500 BDT and this is lower compared to other tertiary-level organizations' staff salaries. This is the first barrier to recruiting brilliant and skilled university teachers in Bangladesh. We observed changing patterns in the family structure of private university teachers, about 66% of the respondents were married, 16% were unmarried and 16% were divorced. Dhaka is one the largest city in Bangladesh and the density of the population is high. Traffic jams and low speeds of transport are regular issues that take a long time to arrive in the workplace. Around 83% of our private university teachers

attended workplaces from inside Dhaka city. The house rent and other family expenditure are higher compared to the surrounding of Dhaka city and low salary directly impacts on their quality of life. This is quite impossible to invest money in their professional development and

higher studies. For this reason, they switch jobs frequently to get a better salary and we observed that about 50% of respondents had 2 years of teaching experience and the average experience of 3 ± 1.680 years of our respondents. We found an association between respondents' years of teaching experience and monthly income ($\chi^2 = 38.25$, $df = 9$, Gamma $V = .36$, Lamda $\lambda = .39$, $OR = 1.69$; 95% $CI = 2.855-3.650$; $P = 0.003$). From the study, it is found that about 83% of the respondents had post-graduate qualifications and academic qualifications are associated with respondents' years of teaching experience ($\chi^2 = 32.55$, $df = 7$, Gamma $V = .34$, Lamda $\lambda = .37$, $OR = 1.99$; 95% $CI = 2.075-2.908$; $P = 0.02$). At the tertiary level research training and working experience in research are the key assets for university teachers and our data reveals that about 83% of teachers did not have any research training on how to train their students, followed by technology operating training (20%), scientific writing training (80%), personal quality improvement training (60%), and computer and internet use training (34%). These facts also relate to undergraduate and graduate-level education facilities and teachers may miss such facilities in the student life at their respective institute. In our study, none of them have international training experience from abroad. However, about 84% of the respondents had online training (foreign training) on how to publish good-quality publications from high-impact factor journals. About 50% of the respondents attended curriculum development seminars, 80% of the respondents attended seminars on future higher studies, and 20% attended administration management training. The majority of respondents seem unhappy regarding university authority policy and attitude towards attending training and seminars to improve the development of their professional skills. The majority strongly agree that there is no alternative to attending professional development activities regularly due to no facilities for the university and workload. The majority of respondents agreed that Professional development activities are necessary for teachers and 95% of respondents believe that Professional development activities help the teachers to develop their instructional skills. About 70% opined that poor motivation from authority and lack of encouragement from a senior colleague also impact on professional development. Lack of participation in professional development activities (90%), not enough encouragement from university authorities to participate in professional development activities (75%), sharing common values related to professional development activities among colleagues (40%), lack of staff agreement on common values about student learning and teaching at university (45%) and high cost of travel expenses to participating in professional development activities at foreign countries are the common barriers to the university teachers' professional skill development. We sought opinions about the responsibilities of the university authority responsibilities regarding the professional development of the university teachers and the majority suggested establishing a teacher development unit and allocating funds for professional

development according to the academic record of the teachers. Organize training and development programmes that are regularly held on campus in partnership with foreign universities. (Need to change)

5. Conclusions

University policy-related factors hardly influence private university teachers' professional development issues. Career-oriented professional development activities can enhance teachers' professional and personal growth directly and will positively impact university-quality education and research-based programs.

Conflict of Interest:

The author declares that there are no competing interests.

Limitation of the study:

We conducted this study in a few private universities and this is not a piece of generalized information that may be considered as a whole population. This is the limitation of our study.

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