

Continuing Professional Development of Teacher Educators: Challenges and Initiatives

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Abstract

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is a prerequisite for teacher educators. The importance of CPD for teacher educators lies in the fact that it helps them to improve their professional and instructional practices. Teacher educators usually begin their CPD after joining the profession and continue it as a lifelong learning process. There are two popular routes of CPD for teacher educators: programs planned and mandated by external agencies and their self-initiatives. Researchers conducted in different parts of the world reveal that, like external initiatives, self-initiative also play an important role in the professional development of teacher educators. As part of their self-initiatives for CPD, teacher educators themselves act as the developers and creators of their professional learning opportunities and activities. Researches also depict that some factors may negatively affect teacher educators' attitude and capacity to initiate his/her CPD activities. Extending all these arguments, the present study aimed to study teacher educators' self-initiatives of CPD and the challenges they face in this journey. Data to conduct the study was collected from a sample of 120 teacher educators' by using 'Teachers' CPD Initiatives Scale' & 'Teachers' CPD Challenges Scale', and analyzed by using percentage and product-moment r.

Keywords: Continuing Professional development, In-service teacher education, INSET, Teacher educators, Initiatives, Challenges

Background

There is a growing focus on the qualities of teacher educators involved in teaching the next generations of teachers (ETUCE, 2008). Because they have a direct influence on the initial training of student teachers (Furlong, et al., 2000) and for many teachers, they are role models. From them, the teachers acquire different competences, skills and values that they deploy further in their classrooms. They not only maintain and improve the quality of the education system but also develop it through their role as developers and mediators of knowledge about education and as educational innovators also (European Commission, 2013). The work of teacher educators is of such high quality and importance (Snoek, et al., 2011) that raising their quality can lead to wider improvements in education (European Commission, 2012; Buchberger, et al., 2000). How the quality of education depends on the quality of teacher educators is logically argued by Murray (as cited in Westrup, 2009):

“The quality of teaching depends in large measure on the quality of the teachers; the quality of the teachers depends in large part upon the quality of their professional education; the quality of teacher education depends in large measure on the quality of those who provide it, namely the teacher educators”.

To ensure the quality of teacher preparation programmes, teacher educators need to be involved in continuous professional development. They need to become more knowledgeable professionals than they were a year ago (Smith, 2003). As a professional group, they are increasingly aware of the need to continue to work on their competencies and the importance of being lifelong learners who keep in touch with the latest developments and insights in their field (Swennen & Van der Klink, 2009).

Teacher educators usually begin their CPD after joining the profession and continue it as a lifelong learning process. There are two popular routes of CPD for teacher educators: programmes planned and mandated by external agencies and their self-initiatives. Research conducted in different parts of the world reveals that, like external initiatives, self-initiatives also play an important role in the professional development of teacher educators (Al Neami, 2007; Mann, 2005; Richard & Farrell, 2005). Many studies confirm that self-initiated professional development has a more positive effect on increasing the standards of professional learning (Johnson, 2006; Mann, 2005; Pettis, 2002). While programmes planned and mandated by external agencies are not available to many teacher educators, they can create professional development opportunities for themselves by taking self-initiatives like reading new books or journal articles (Phelps, 2006; Baily, et al., 2001), engaging in action research, reflecting on their teaching (Johnston, 2002; Nunan, 2001; Bartlett, 1990), and working collaboratively with their colleagues, sharing skills, experiences, and solution to common problems (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Besides, they can also observe the classes of their colleagues, conduct researches, and evaluate teaching-learning material. Thus, there is a range of development activities that can be initiated and planned by the teacher educators themselves (Richards & Farrell, 2005; Pettis, 2002).

The research revealed that the level of initiation for professional development activities is partially influenced by the type of challenges teacher educators encounter (Mahmoudia, & Özkana, 2015; Avalos, 2011; Jurasaitė-Harbišon & Rex, 2010). Many researchers have reported different hampering factors for CPD like time, accessibility, staff motivation, and financial issues (Geldenhuis & Oosthuizen, 2015). Unsupportive managers, staff attitude, availability of programs, work pressure, family commitments, unsafe environments, and participation on own time are also identified as hampering factors (Fernandez-Manzanal, et al., 2015; Drage, 2010). The intensity of these CPD hampering factors increases when there are no systematic policy provisions. The CPD of teacher educators in India often faces this situation. The other notable aspect is that available CPD policies in India treat all higher education teachers alike and do not have any distinct provisions for teacher educators, for example, NCFTE- A major policy document of teacher education does not recommend any specific CPD provisions and opportunities for teacher educators (NCTE, 2009).

Not only in India has CPD of teacher educators remained a neglected area in other countries as well. Researchers argue that little attention has been paid to this profession and little empirical evidence directly concerned with the professional learning of ‘this unique occupational group’ is available (Murray & Harrison 2008; Korthagen, et al., 2005). Smith (2003) observes that “there is a wealth of information about how teachers develop professionally...but little about how teacher educators develop professionally”. In the backdrop of all these observations and arguments, the present research was conducted to study the:

1. Initiatives are taken by teacher educators for practicing CPD.
2. Challenges faced by teacher educators in practicing CPD.
3. Relationship between teacher educators’ CPD initiatives and challenges faced by them

Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between teacher educators’ CPD initiatives and challenges faced by them.

Methodology

The present study was conducted on teacher educators teaching the classes of B.Ed. and M.Ed. in aided and self-finance colleges of teacher education. These colleges are affiliated with Chaudhary Charan Singh University and are spread in all the seven districts of Meerut and Saharanpur Mandal. From 10 aided and 213 self-finance colleges of teacher education, 7 aided and 14 self-finance colleges were selected using the stratified cluster random sampling method. The data was collected using the ‘Teachers’ CPD Initiatives Scale,’ and ‘Teachers’ CPD Challenges Scale’. Both these scales were developed and standardized by the researchers themselves. ‘Teachers’ CPD Initiatives Scale’ is a three-point rating scale [‘Often’ ‘Sometimes’ and ‘Never’] and includes 27 items divided into 5 dimensions i.e. collaborative, reflective, constructive, digital, and financial initiatives. Teachers’ CPD Challenges Scale is a five-point scale (ranging from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree”) and includes 28 items. This scale focuses on infrastructural, institutional, time managerial, psychological, unavailability of opportunities and financial type of challenges. For data analysis, percentage and product moment ‘r’

was calculated. To study teacher educators’ CPD initiatives, the percentage was calculated for all three categories [‘Often’ ‘Sometimes’ and ‘Never’] separately. In the case of teacher educators’ CPD challenges, the “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” categories were merged and then the percentage was calculated for the composited categories. Both these scales were given to all the 120 teacher educators working in the selected colleges. Out of these 120, only 113 teacher educators filled both the scales completely. Therefore, the final sample size constituted 113 teacher educators.

Analysis and Results

The summary of the frequency of teacher educators taking collaborative, reflective, constructive, digital, and financial initiatives for their CPD is presented and analyzed in Tables 1,2,3,4, and 5. The summary of infrastructural, institutional, time managerial, psychological, unavailability of opportunities, and financial type of challenges they face in the practice of CPD is presented and analyzed in Tables 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11. And the relationship between their CPD initiatives and the related challenges is presented in Table 12.

Table 1: Collaboration based Initiatives

Statement	Always		Sometimes		Never	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
You keep track of activities of national/international teacher associations	45	39.82	62	54.87	06	5.31
You review recently published text books/reference books	31	27.43	72	63.72	10	8.85
You help your junior colleagues regarding professional development	57	50.44	51	45.13	05	4.42
You invite feedback from your colleagues on your research papers before sending it to publication	43	38.05	58	51.33	12	10.62
Your try to become member of editorial boards of different research journals	40	35.39	43	38.05	30	26.55

Table 1 shows that there are only 39.82% of teacher educators keep track of activities of national/ international teacher associations. Helping junior colleagues is the most popular collaborative CPD initiative among the given five but only 50.44% of teacher educators do it regularly. Only 38.05% of teacher educators take feedback from their colleagues

on their research papers and 10.62% never initiate it. 35.39% of them try to become a member of editorial boards of different research journals but a large number of teacher educators (26.55%) never try for it. Reviewing recently published textbooks/reference books is done by only 27.43% of teacher educators but 8.85% are not interested in any such activity.

Table 2: Reflection based Initiatives

Statement	Always		Sometimes		Never	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
You prepare portfolio to assess your improvement in professional development	43	38.05	53	46.90	17	15.04
You attend the classes of your senior colleagues	37	32.74	62	54.87	14	12.39
You conduct action research for solving your particular classroom problems	40	35.39	61	53.98	12	10.62
You note down your daily classroom experiences in a diary	26	23.01	62	54.87	25	22.12
You discuss your classroom experiences with your colleagues	64	56.64	45	39.82	04	3.54
In case of facing a professional/academic problem, you consult with experts of your field	62	54.87	45	39.82	06	5.31

Table 2 reveals that initiatives based on reflection, least initiated activity as only 23.01% of teacher discussing classroom experiences with colleagues educators practice it. The other notable observation and consulting with the experts are the most initiated is that 10-15% of teacher educators hardly attempt CPD activities (54-57%). Maintaining a diary is the any reflection based initiation.

Table 3: Constructive Activities based Initiatives

Statement	Always		Sometimes		Never	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
You write research papers/articles for magazines and newspapers	42	37.17	53	46.90	18	15.93
You prepare instructional material for classroom use	47	42.48	60	53.09	06	5.31
You develop online teaching learning material	30	26.55	57	50.44	26	23.01
You submit your research proposals to different research agencies	29	25.66	66	58.41	18	15.93
You carry out research projects	27	23.89	62	54.87	24	21.24

Table 3 shows that only 37.17% of teacher in developing online teaching-learning material, educators write papers or articles while preparing preparing research proposals and carrying out instructional material is limited to 42.48% of them. research projects. Surprisingly, 15-23% of teacher Only one-fourth of teachers keep themselves engage educators keep themselves away from CPD activities.

Table 4: Digital Activities based Initiatives

Statement	Always		Sometimes		Never	
	f	%	F	%	f	%
You try to get membership of online libraries of other institutions	33	29.20	61	53.98	19	16.81
You give preference to have an account on websites of academic nature	41	36.28	62	54.87	10	8.85
You make efforts to join online teaching communities	38	33.63	63	55.75	12	10.62
You watch online educational programmes	50	44.25	59	52.21	04	3.54
You listen educational discussions and debates on TV/Radio	51	45.13	52	46.02	10	8.85
You use social media for sharing your academic experiences	48	42.48	49	43.36	16	14.16
You take help of e-learning material in preparation of your lecture	56	49.56	51	45.13	06	5.31

Table 4 clarifies that activities such as watching efforts to join online teaching communities regularly online educational programmes, listening to and 36.28% give preference to have an account on educational discussions and debates, sharing academic websites. Data also reveals that 29.20% of academic experiences on social media, and consulting teacher educators are a member of online libraries of e-learning material are done by 42-49% of teacher other institutions.

Table 5: Financial Support based Initiatives

Statement	Always		Sometimes		Never	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
If your institution does not subscribe the research journals of your choice, you subscribe it by yourself	50	44.25	52	46.02	11	9.73
You buy books, to cater your CPD needs	56	49.56	52	46.02	05	4.42
You participate in paid online professional development courses	28	24.78	62	54.87	23	20.35
You purchase learning material of your need	61	53.98	48	42.48	04	3.54

According to table 5, 44-53% of teacher educators spend money on their own for purchasing journals, books and other related learning materials. 24.78% of teacher educators attend paid online professional development courses while 20.35% of them have not thought of attending such courses.

Table 6: Infrastructural Challenges

Statement	SA	A	Composite (SA+A)	%	N	%
The library of your institution does not subscribe adequate e-journals / Journals	17	32	49	43.36	17	15.04
Teachers in your institution have no access to institutional internet facility	12	25	37	32.74	15	13.27
Due to lack of personal cabin or separate place for you to sit and work in institution, you are not comfortable in carrying out CPD activities there	13	38	51	45.13	16	14.16
Computer facility for teachers in your institution is inadequate	12	31	43	38.05	15	13.27

Table 6 reflects that only 38% of teacher educators have computer facilities in the institution they served and 32.74% of them also have internet access in their institutions. 45.13% of teacher educators cannot engage in their CPD. They don't have a personal cabin or separate place to sit and work in an institution and 43.36% report that their institutional library does not subscribe to the adequate number of e-journals/print journals.

Table 7: Institutional Challenges

Statement	SA	A	Composite (SA+A)	%	N	%
Management of your institution detain your salary if you take leave for attending CPD activities	13	13	40	35.39	23	20.35
Your institution is reluctant in terms of arranging CPD activities	17	17	49	43.36	24	21.24
Your institution does not provide you spare time to go to library and study	14	14	47	41.59	12	10.62
Your institution does not grant you leave to attend CPD activities	13	13	47	41.59	20	17.69
Your institutional library does not provide you CPD literature as per your demand	09	09	49	43.36	17	15.04

41.59% of teacher educators report that neither their institutions grant leave to attend CPD activities nor provide the spare time to study during working hours. 35.39% reported that their institution detains their salary in lieu of granting leave to attend CPD programmes / activities. 43.36% of teacher educators are of the view that their institutions are reluctant in arranging CPD activities for them and have a complaint about the unsupportive attitude of the institutional library.

Table 8: Time Management Challenges

Statement	SA	A	Composite (SA+A)	%	N	%
You don't have enough time to get engaged in CPD activities	9	35	44	38.94	16	14.16
There is often a conflict between your work schedule and CPD activities	9	43	52	46.02	24	21.24
You cannot have spare time at home for CPD due to family responsibilities	10	38	48	42.48	25	22.12
You are unable to practice CPD due to extra workload given by institution	10	28	38	33.63	18	15.93

Table 8 shows that 33-46% teacher educators suffer from time constraint to practice CPD, 46.02% complain that their work schedule and CPD activities often conflicts, 42.48% tell that family responsibilities consume their spare time, and 33.63% of them complain about extra workload in the institutions resulting nonpractice of CPD.

Table 9: Psychological Challenges

Statement	SA	A	Composite (SA+A)	%	N	%
You are satisfied with your present position and do not need to get engaged in CPD	10	29	39	34.51	17	15.04
You need not to learn more as you are already settled in your job	14	14	28	24.78	08	7.08
Professional development activities are useless because they do not help in salary increment	09	19	28	24.78	20	17.69
You do not engage in CPD activities as they are not related to your promotion	10	22	32	28.32	18	15.93
A specific time period should be allotted to CPD activities only within working hours	16	42	58	51.33	19	16.81
You are teaching very well even without being engaged in CPD activities	07	41	48	42.48	28	24.78
Your spare time is for your family and not for CPD	08	27	35	30.97	31	27.43

A look at Table 9 reveals that 24-34% of teacher educators view CPD activities useless as these activities do not help them in salary increment or promotion and also of the view that they do not need to engage in CPD as they are already settled and satisfied with their present position. 42.48% of them report that they are teaching well even without CPD. For 30.97% of teacher educators, spending time with their family is more important than their CPD. And 51.33% of them demand that CPD activities must take place only during working hours.

Table 10: Lack of Opportunities

Statement	SA	A	Composite (SA+A)	%	N	%
Programmes organized by nearby institutions are not useful to fulfill your CPD needs	12	26	38	33.63	28	24.78
CPD activities for teachers rarely takes place in nearby places	12	27	39	34.51	28	24.78
You face difficulties in getting selected as a participant in CPD activities	12	27	39	34.51	28	24.78
Professional development activities are organized mainly for teachers of government institution	09	30	39	34.51	20	17.69

Table 10 shows that 34.51% of teacher educators report the unavailability of CPD opportunities in nearby places and face difficulties in getting selected as participants and complain. They also complain that these activities are organized mainly for teachers of government institutions. At the same time, 33.63% of teacher educators complain about the uselessness of available CPD activities.

Table 11: Financial Challenges

Statement	SA	A	Composite (SA+A)	%	N	%
There is no travelling allowance for you to attend professional development activities	14	34	48	42.48	23	20.35
Participation in CPD is expensive for you	08	34	42	37.17	20	17.69
Your institution does not reimburse the registration fee of your CPD participation	14	33	47	41.59	29	25.67
You find it difficult to engage in CPD activities due to financial constraints	09	36	45	39.82	19	16.81

From Table 11, it is clear that 37-39% of teacher educators find participation in CPD activities expensive and 42.48% of teacher educators report that they are not provided any traveling allowances to attend different CPD activities in other places. While 41.59% complain that their institutions do not reimburse the registration fee for attending CPD programmes.

Table 12 shows no significant correlation between teacher educators' CPD initiatives and the challenges they face. The probable reason for acceptance of this null hypothesis may be that certain factors or challenges may partially affect the professional development of teacher educators but the major role is played by their willingness to take their responsibility for their CPD.

Table 12: Relationship between Teacher Educators' CPD Initiatives and Challenges

Name of Variables	N	r	Level of Significance
Teacher Educators' Initiatives for CPD	113	.07	.05
Teacher Educators' Challenges in CPD	113		

Table value with df (111) at .05 = .195
Calculated value = .07 < .195

Discussion and Conclusion

On the basis of the above presented analysis and results, it can be concluded that teacher educators need to increase their CPD initiatives. On an encouraging note, 50-56% of teacher educators are engaged in helping junior colleagues, discussing with colleagues on educational issues, consulting with experts, and purchasing teaching material. Besides, 42-49% of teacher educators are engaged in the preparation of instructional material, consulting on-line learning material, use of social media for academic discussions, and watching and listening

to educational programmes. On the flip side, quite a less number of teacher educators are involved in other important CPD initiatives. A considerable number of teacher educators hardly take initiation to engage in such activities. These findings support the earlier observations by Bolitho and Padwad (2013) that teachers' initiatives regarding CPD are poor both in quantity and quality in India. This situation may be attributed to the restricted view of CPD which prompt teacher educators to believe that their CPD is the state responsibility and cannot do anything on their own (Bolitho & Padwad, 2013).

At the institutional and infrastructural level, many teacher educators were found facing several challenges regarding availability and access to CPD opportunities. Not getting paid leaves to practice CPD is an issue for many teacher educators (35.39%). No availability of relevant CPD opportunities in nearby places is also a big challenge for many teacher educators, as reported by other studies (Davi & Bwisa, 2013; Opfer & Pedder, 2010). Time constraint in terms of extra workload (33.63%) (supported by studies of Van der Klink, et al., 2017; Davi & Bwisa, 2013), and conflict between work schedule and CPD activities (46.02%) was found as other major factors that hamper the CPD participation of teacher educators. Further, a considerable number of teacher educators were found to be facing financial constraints to practice CPD (also reported by Davi & Bwisa, 2013). Above all, psychological challenges emerged as the most striking challenge as many teacher educators believe that CPD activities should be practiced only during working hours (51.33%) as their spare time is for their families (30.97%).

Some of the teacher educators reported that CPD activities are useless for them because these do not help to get salary increment or promotion, and some of them do not engage in CPD as they are satisfied with their present position and knowledge. Adding to this, many teacher educators were found neutral in their responses to the given statements in 'Teachers' CPD Challenges Scale' which reflects that either they are not aware or they hardly about their CPD. Findings further revealed no relationship between teacher educators' CPD initiatives and the related challenges as CPD initiatives are much likely to be affected by the responsibility and the

intrinsic motivation a teacher has for his professional development (Van der Klink, et al., 2017). In all, it can be said that the findings of this study covers a small sample and cannot be generalized but presents a first look at the issue of CPD of teacher educators. More exhaustive data on this aspect will help present a comprehensive and clear picture of what teacher educators do for their professional development and what factors negatively affect their professional learning.

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