Teaching Staffs' Development in Pakistan's Urban Private English Medium Schools

Uzma Atif Jafri[1], Ubedullah Amjad Ali[2], Zafar Ghouri[3], Tasneem Razzak[4]

[1] English and Communication Studies, Iqra University, Karachi, Pakistan.
[2] Assistant Professor, Business Studies Department, Bahria University Karachi, Pakistan.
  Email: ubedamjadahaikh@gmail.com
[3] Assistant Professor/ Ph.D. Scholar, Federal Urdu University, Karachi Dadabhoy Institute of Higher Education, Pakistan.
  Email: ghourizafer@gmail.com
[4] Lecturer, IHBM-JSMU. Email: tasneem.razzak@jsmu.edu.pk

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Article History: Received: May 09, 2023 Revised: June 27, 2023 Accepted: June 28, 2023 Available Online: June 29, 2023 **Keywords:** Staff Development Teaching Quality Environmental Concerns English Medium School **Funding:** This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.	Continuous nurturing and development of teachers is a crucial facet of education and research. Staff development programs can help staff improve curriculum delivery, teaching quality, and school leadership, however, in the case of Pakistan's private schools; this aspect has not been explored much. The present study raises concerns pertaining to the concept with the purpose of highlighting the need for it in English language school teachers. Further, as an instrumental feature in a changing educational environment, staff development can be structured and accomplished according to contextual needs and factors. Hence the paper proposes some practical considerations and steps for designing and implementing school-based staff development.

Corresponding Author's Email: ubedamjadahaikh@gmail.com

1. Introduction

Around the world, the importance of education to individual and societal success has increased at a breathtaking pace as a new knowledge-based economy has emerged. As a consequence, most countries have been engaged in intensive reforms of their education systems, and many have focused especially on improving teacher education, recognizing that preparing accomplished teachers who can effectively teach a wide array of learners to high standards is essential to economic and political survival (Darling-Hammond, 2005).

Unfortunately, the aforementioned statement apparently does not lie true in the case of Pakistan, a South Asian developing nation where education has been subjected to the control of a highly politically centralized system that has ostensibly churned out merely fragmented and incoherent educational policies. Since its inception, the post-colonial multilingual country has seen the rise and fall of different governments that have certainly tried to improve the dismal state of education as well as teaching standards with numerous policies and plans but conceivably with no substantial outcomes.

Education in Pakistan is exceedingly teacher-centric therefore, the focus has always been on the development of teaching staff in all educational establishments, however, the concept is practically not present in public schools and even if it does subsist; it is very brief, sporadic, and traditional. Consequently, both the policymakers and educators have been relatively unsuccessful in terms of recuperating teachers' training and development.

The failure of state schools in providing quality education with effective staff and the rising demand for the English language in the country has conspicuously led to the burgeoning of many English medium private schools in the country. Shamim (2011) postulates that English has become the language of development and 'the race for individual prosperity and economic development at the national level seem to have overtaken issues of class, identity, and fear of cultural invasion from an erstwhile colonial language.' Hence, private schools have taken over

the tantamount task of imparting good English education to the learners; however, to accomplish this they must attach particular attention to the notion of staff development, especially that of English language teachers which in most cases, is nonexistent.

The present paper aims to explore the spectrum of staff development in urban private English medium schools in Pakistan. It articulates and discusses the literature, the issues pertaining to the development of English language school teachers in the particular context, and some propositions with the thought of raising awareness of the concept amongst the masses, principally the school leadership and academia in the country.

2.   Literature Review
2.1.   Issues of Teacher Development

Staff development may be considered as carrying out a set of planned activities to enhance the individual as well as professional growth of the staff in particular contexts, inclusive of the objective of satisfying the needs of the organization. Kerwood and Clements (2018) state that 'staff development embraces not only individual education and training, individual appraisal and career enhancement, but also whole-staff development as part of a dynamic and changing organization.'

The role of schools is changing in the dynamic world and at the same time the teaching staffs that are at the heart of all schools' educational processes, are trying their level best to keep pace with the teaching by expanding their domain of knowledge and competencies. The process of staff development in schools entails various activities that help teachers and administrators to learn and develop effectively - individually and in groups for teaching students, managing and developing the schools as a whole to be effective in responding to the changing educational environment. Hewton (1988) asserts that in schools 'the primary aim of staff development is to increase the quality of pupil learning by the development of staff potential'; however, the process also aims to identify and satisfy the staffs' needs, recognize the potential of the staff members providing guidance for their career development, solve group conflicts, improve the management of staff, enhance job satisfaction, and create a conducive environment for a continuance of staff development.

The teachers act as the building blocks of the educational institutions that stand at the interface of the transmission of knowledge, skills, and values. Guskey (1986) contends that staff development activities essentially attempt to bring about change - change in the teachers' practices in their respective classrooms, change in their beliefs and attitudes, and change in the learning outcomes of students. Therefore, the role of teachers has become more challenging with the changing educational scenario. Hargreaves (1997) asserts that the demands for teachers to change their classroom practice towards more intensive work with individuals and small groups to cater to the multiple intelligence and diverse learning styles of different students means that teachers need help inside the classrooms as well as support outside it. Thus, more than ever today; 'teachers need a lot more help' (Hargreaves, 1997) and should be involved in continuing, in-service staff development or rather professional development programs. Fullan and Hargreaves (1992 a) emphasize the importance of these programs which help the teachers to renew their knowledge, skills, and visions for good teaching while simultaneously providing them opportunities to introduce and use these practices. Richards and Farrell (2005) further elaborate on the concept with regard to the development of language teaching. They believe that it is imperative for English Language teachers to be part of these professional development programs as they are obliged to develop an understanding of different styles of teaching, keep up with the new trends and theories of language learning, review and evaluate their own practice while trying to promote higher levels of learning among their students.

Around the world, on-the-job professional learning platforms are now becoming eminent, often organized around teachers' work on lines of curriculum development, collaborative teaching, planning, lesson plans, and action research of different kinds. With time and new technologies, countries are creating high-quality learning and career opportunities for teachers to share their expertise with one another, enabling teachers to continue to develop, learn, and be motivated (Darling-Hammond, 2005).

Hence, school-focused staff development which is inextricably linked to the development of the school as a whole is crucial to address the developmental needs of the individuals but more so of the institution as reckoned by the owners/managers as it not only adds to the reputation of the institution and its teachers but raises the achievement level of the students.

3. Context Of The Study
3.1. Private English medium schools in Urban Pakistan
'English-medium' education in Pakistan which is regarded as being superior to the contrasting 'Urdu-medium' is often seen as 'quality' education that is offered by private schools to the children of elite and middle-class parents. The number of private 'English-medium' schools has increased very rapidly in recent years and with the mounting socio-economic class barriers, these private schools, too have adopted two streams. They may be categorized as:

3.1.1. High-cost Schools
Rahman (2005)asserts that these 'elitist schools deal in selling English at exorbitant prices'. Verily, the statement characterizes the soul of these schools. Typically, these schools have campuses spread all over the country and offer good education particularly English learning. They are affiliated with the British educational system and offer 'O' and 'A' level courses. These small number of private high-quality schools have apposite buildings and facilities like the library and computer resources, follow their own curriculum, and use textbooks written by foreign authors whilst the teachers are better qualified and well paid even though with heavier workloads. The ESL teachers generally, are recruited on the basis of their experience and qualification (BA/MA) in any discipline but preferably with O/A levels of schooling. Working in these schools is considered a 'status' symbol.

3.1.2. Low-cost Schools
Low-cost English medium schools are extremely common in all urban areas of Pakistan. Most of these schools are run by individuals on a profit basis, have a large student population, a shortage of resources, an absence of qualified and trained state-prescribed textbooks (of English), and are housed in rented premises. Moreover, as they receive no financial support from the government they try to meet all their operational expenses from students' fees. The somewhat better schools recruit graduate teachers for English language teaching but most hire under-qualified, newly pass out high school students since it results in significant cost savings for the school. The frequently inept language teachers often work in compelling circumstances with the adequate non-availability of ESL materials and resources. Contrary to the popular belief, these schools do not cater only to children belonging to the middle class - in fact, most schools charge very modest fees that urge people even from the lower strata to send their children to these so-called 'English-medium' schools. Generally, these schools fall short of providing good English language education.

In spite of the apparent disparities between the two streams of 'English-medium' schools, the organizational structures of the schools are quite similar. Both types of schools have a 'flat hierarchy' (Paisey cited in White (1991)with usually the owners of the schools as directors/principals, a vice-principal, and teachers as the members of the staff. However, in some high-cost schools, they do have an additional layer of teachers acting as heads of the departments/coordinators. In addition to this, it must be noted that in all the private English medium schools, English language teachers receive higher salaries than teachers of any other subject. Furthermore, all the schools are primarily closed systems that give no importance to teachers' training or development. Riaz (2008) affirms that alas no professional expertise is necessary to become a teacher in the country and barely any initial pre-service teacher or further professional teacher training takes place for teachers entering the profession. This assert that since ELTs in developing countries do not have adequate in-service training, they mostly depend on their own efforts to promote their learning and handle the challenges that hinder their professional development.

According to Memon (2007) in Pakistan, the quality of teachers is questionable, therefore the development of teachers is essential to transform the education system which ultimately will lead to improvement in the quality of education. Correspondingly, a study in the province of Sindh assert that the professional competency of teachers is directly impacted positively by their professional development, however, there is a dire lack of infrastructure (physical and

educational facilities), shortage of funds, dearth of qualified teachers and actual development opportunities largely.

3.2. Diagrammatic representation of Organizational structures of Private English Medium Schools
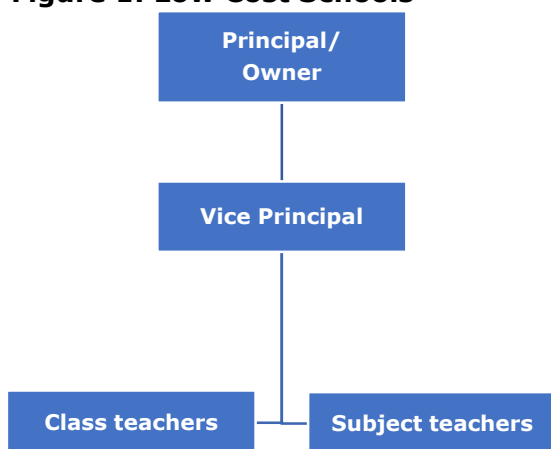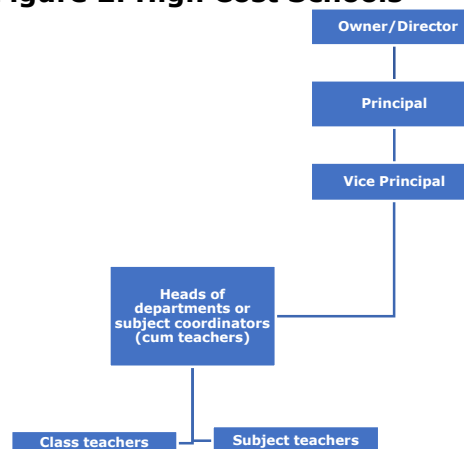
Figure 1: Low Cost Schools

Figure 2: High Cost Schools

Principal/ Owner
Vice Principal
Class teachers / Subject teachers

Owner/Director
Principal
Vice Principal
Heads of departments or subject coordinators (cum teachers)
Class teachers / Subject teachers

3.3. The Current Practice and its Implications

In Pakistani society, teaching job is now regarded as a low-status occupation and therefore there is a dearth of competent professionals in the field. Fidler (1999) state that the 'way in which individuals are managed in the job can have a profound effect on their performance.' Regrettably, the managements of these private schools are short of trained professionals that can successfully lead, support, and work to develop the teaching staffs, especially the English language teachers as most of the chosen managers are rarely from the same discipline or even have the understanding of the language. In addition to this, the lack of any staff policy or guidelines makes things worse for people taking up managerial or teaching roles in these schools as no job descriptions are given to them at the time of their induction, for that reason, they are unaware of how to organize and perform the tasks. Moreover, due to the absolute absence of any sort of formal or informal staff development practice in schools, the diverse group of language teachers, time and again face dilemmas of teaching demanding learners with altering educational needs. Unable to undertake any course that could support and upgrade their learning and professional growth, the teachers are stuck in a 'rut', unskilled for future changes. This acute lack of nurturing teachers in school-based professional development and pedagogical training principally exists because the schools' managements are not only non-participative but highly authoritative.

Gray (1988) contends that all organizations enclose a '...prevalent system of values, customs, and mores which are peculiar to and characteristic of that organization known as the organizational culture.' Similarly, every school develops its own ethos which plays a fundamental role in its success or failure. Four successful factors can help improve the schools, making them more effective: the 'feel' of the leader; the shared value system; a high level of communication and interaction; and collaboration in placing and implementation. Unfortunately, in these schools from induction of new teachers to the staff appraisal (often conducted as 'policing' events) and dismissal activities are undertaken by the school heads, no collaborative learning or collegiality is encouraged between the staff members and there is no involvement of teachers in any aspect of educational planning or school development. Accordingly, the English language teachers follow the norms prescribed by the schools with no say in course planning, syllabus design, or selection of materials. Consequently, the teachers remain passive participants within the school organizations who have no influence on school culture or the power to shape the quality of teaching. Furthermore, it also results in teachers' low morale and motivation, poor job satisfaction, and high rates of attrition leading to an overall ineffective and impoverished didactic structure within schools. Hence, 'there is simply not enough opportunity and not enough encouragement for teachers to work together, learn from each other, and improve their expertise as a community.'

3.4. Recommendations
3.4.1. For School Managements

In Pakistan, as the number of ESL teachers grows rapidly, it is necessary to enhance the quality of their teaching by carrying out school-based staff development activities that would inevitably lead to the improvement in schools' effectiveness. However, there are certain matters that need to be addressed before focusing on the development of language staff. Fundamentally, the schools must employ professionals who are fit to be the managers i.e. principals in the case of Pakistani schools who should ideally possess effective interpersonal and conflict management skills that could support the teacher learning and development. In cases where the schools' managements do not include people from the field of English, it is necessary to appoint knowledgeable and competent English language professionals as subject leaders or coordinators who could not only recognize the issues and needs of the teachers but lead and guide them. Furthermore, the schools must enclose a set minimum criterion for the recruitment of ESL teachers; the candidates must have qualifications pertaining to the English language only. In addition to this, pre-service training should be made mandatory for all teachers entering the profession. Most private schools in Pakistan have adopted a hire-fire policy which unsurprisingly leads to job insecurity and dissuasion in the individuals that consequently affects their performance in the class. This trend has to be chucked out. The schools' managements must work towards developing collaborative cultures with norms offering flexibility and acting as promoting rather than prohibiting factors. Fullan and Hargreaves (1992b:67) assert that collaborative cultures empower the teachers and reduce their job uncertainties which create satisfying, sustainable, and productive work environments whilst Guskey (2002) affirms that unless schools establish favorable learning environments, staff development tasks will be insufficient for the teachers' development. The major attitudinal change should come from within the teachers; a conducive, collaborative work environment can provide that only not something that would be an imposition by the authorities.

One of the other major changes that could be constituted is in the staff appraisal process. Instead of being daunting 'policing' events, appraisals should provide opportunities for building positive relationships between employers and employees, an individual's personal growth, and covering issues of a teacher's career aspirations and development. Furthermore, the teachers must be paid according to their performance. Generally, there are huge differences in the performance of teachers therefore the schools' management should reward the more productive teachers in order to show positive reception, and increase teachers' morale and motivation as well as students' erudition. Hence, the heads of the schools as managers have a crucial role in the processes of staff selection, induction, motivation, monitoring, appraisal, and development which must be performed efficiently in order to make way for other staff developmental efforts.

3.4.2. Proposed Developmental Initiatives

All private English medium schools in Pakistan have two terms with mid-term and final examinations at the end of each term. Due to the heavy workload and rigid time constraints during the term time, it is not feasible for school management or the teachers to be a part of intensive staff development programs, therefore it is proposed that all schools should have at least one week or three days minimum of scheduled intensive staff development activities for teachers before the beginning of each term. A program for English language teachers that can enhance the language teachers' subject matter as well as content–pedagogical knowledge may encompass activities like workshops, lectures, and training sessions for polishing language skills, departmental meetings, short courses, mini-conferences, or staff meetings. However, a fact that must be taken into consideration is that most of the schools do not have the capacity or funds to carry out these developmental programs on a large scale or with the assistance of external English language experts. Nevertheless, the management can conduct school-based staff meetings, workshops, or seminars with the senior members of the department in the frontage. Yet, they should be organized keeping in view some concerns like the teachers' needs and suggestions, timings and duration, and particularly the content of the sessions which must stimulate active participation from the teachers.

It is imperative to encourage mutual trust, ownership, participation, and networking among staff when establishing any staff development program. An ideal staff development plan must take into regard the varied ages, intelligences, language competencies, and developmental needs of the staff, providing them a chance to work together in collaboration. As most Pakistani teachers are unaware of the notion and workings of such programs, small initiatives should

gradually be introduced in the school systems. Everard and Morris (1996) emphasize on effective team-building for the development of organizations and their staffs. Irrefutably, managers should rely on a collegiate approach and teamwork to build an environment of trust allowing the teachers to raise professional collaboration- consult or share ideas, knowledge, experiences, expertise, styles, and methods of teaching. For instance, an assemblage of English language teachers in a school might work jointly on an individual area of interest which intrigues them and is meaningful for their teaching practice. They should be approved the freedom to experiment in class with their newly acquired knowledge however, this could only take place if they are not pressed for immediate results.

Therefore, the school leaders must be supportive and involved with the teachers on an equal level as non-threatening encouraging entities. Furthermore, another favoured professional developmental activity could be peer observation. Peer observation practices are neither very expensive nor excessively time-consuming so they can easily be incorporated to help in teachers' reflection on their own teaching. Richards and Farrell (2005) postulate that peer observation not only helps teachers become aware of the issues they face in the classroom and their solutions but also gives them the opportunity to discover effective teaching strategies from their colleagues. Additionally, the duration of all professional development training programs may be set and extended for covering the contents of curricula in true spirit keeping in consideration particularly the teachers' workloads so as not to create undue pressure and fatigue for them. Hence, co-learning, knowledge exchange, mentoring, and peer–coaching can pilot sustained staff development.

Darling-Hammond (2005) assumes that in the changing dynamics of education with its complexities teachers must be able to cater to a diverse set of learners, fulfilling the moral/ethical as well as technical expectations while preparing all students uniformly for essential language development in the social contexts and higher order thinking skills.

Generally, Pakistani teachers are unacquainted with any developmental activities, therefore, they might be anxious, sceptical, or disinterested in being a part of them. However, the schools' managements can rectify these issues by placing teachers in an active role with an emphasis on demonstrations, supervised trials, and feedback; dutifully awarding them with incentives, increments, promotions, and other benefits upon the successful completion and implementation of the learning. This will allow holistic - personal and professional development of the staff. Thus, all schools should have a written policy for staff development with clear objectives based on the staff's professional needs and the administrations must wholeheartedly support the developmental activities while ensuring that they mutually benefit all the partakers - the institutions, teachers, and students.

Further, Warsi and Khurshid (2022) affirm that self–assessment by teachers also plays a significant part in the professional development of English Language teachers. According to them, self–assessment by the reflection of the current teaching practices, personal strengths and weaknesses, and delegation of a variety of roles and responsibilities may help teachers in developing, learning, and understanding their innate competencies that may lead to self-development culture in the teacher community overall (Warsi & Khurshid, 2022).

4.   Conclusion

The notion of 'staff development' in Pakistani schools is uncultivated and therefore remains vague. However, there is a pressing need for the idea's consciousness-raising as the changes in the educational environment, subsequent growth of private English medium schools plus language teachers and their lack of professional development pose major problems in school effectiveness. The private English medium schools in Pakistan must recognize the worth of teachers - they are the school's most valuable resource that needs support systems and learning opportunities to develop as finer educators in order to facilitate the improvement of instruction.

This present study is not an exhaustive one; however, it delineates the essentiality of the initiation of the concept of staff development in Pakistan's urban private English medium schools. The study can therefore act as a stepping-stone for further research in the area and principally be taken into consideration for the futuristic implementation of recommended initiatives.

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