



UNIVERSITY TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract

The purpose of the research was to explore university teachers' professional development in Uzbekistan and its current situations, containing problems and ways to improve it in Higher Education. Theoretical research framework was used to examine teachers' professional development at universities. Online survey questionnaire and talking to teachers face to face were the main methods of collecting data at four Uzbek National universities from February to April in 2021. 112 teachers participated in research as respondents who filled the online questionnaire and 40 teachers were interviewed and the collected data was analyzed by SPSS software. The results indicated that teachers at universities were more likely to have a positive attitude towards PD.

Keywords Professional development, university teachers, Uzbekistan.

Introduction

The modern society of Uzbekistan lives and improves in a dramatically evolving environment, and continuous development of the country's economic industries and social sector has become a requirement for growth. The Republic of Uzbekistan is moving confidently and dynamically towards the achievement of its main goal – joining the number of developed democratic states. The key mechanism of such ambition is a higher education system based on systematization, innovative processing, and the use of previous generations' experience. Higher education must meet the urgent needs of society in the context of a new stage in this growth. Higher education is one of the state's top priorities in the modern environment. The further creation of higher educational institutions, which provide a revolutionary breakthrough in all spheres of operation by training trained staff, is an important factor in the context of improving all spheres of socio-economic life and forming civil society institutions in the country.

Teachers were asked to categorize their knowledge about teacher professional development in order to get general idea about PD among university teachers and the highest number of them chose excellent level. It makes us happy that our teachers





have enough knowledge about professional development. Categories of Good, Very good and Excellent consisted of 92% precisely 140 out of 152. It is shown that only 2 teachers think their knowledge about PD is poor and about 7% of educators consider themselves with fair level (Figure 4.1.2). Numbers are given in distribution with gender, age, and work experience as well as job title of teachers.

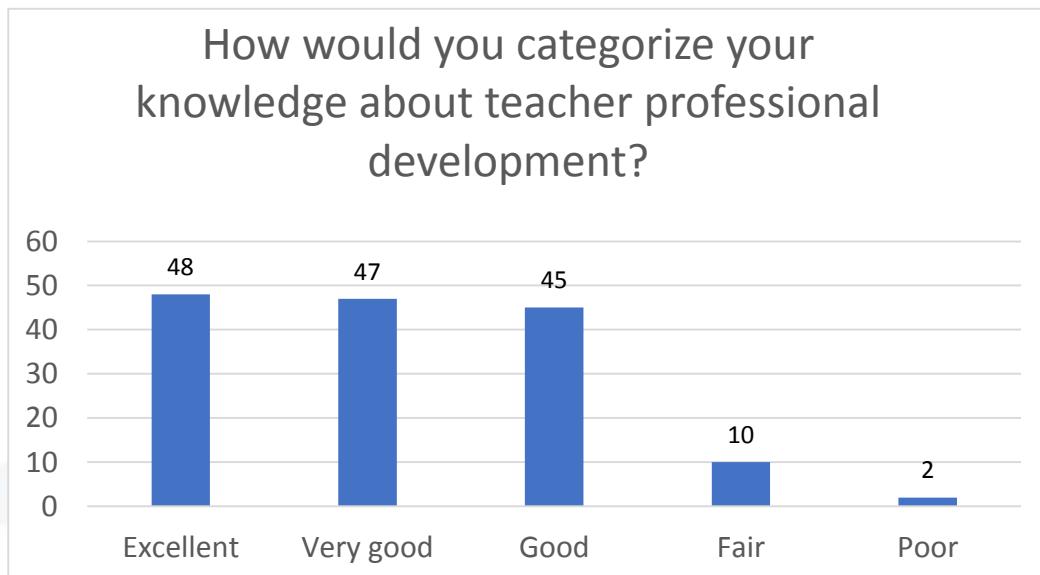


Figure 4.1.2 Bar chart of teachers PD knowledge in categories

How important do university teachers in Uzbekistan think the professional development of teachers is? From the analysis, it is clear that teachers who think PD is important and very important are more than 90%. Very important dominates with 98 out of 152 and only 0.7% or one (1) teacher from respondents thinks PD is not important at all (Table 4.1.2)

Table: 4.1.2 The importance of PD

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Not at all important	1	0.7	0.7	0.7
Neutral	13	8.6	8.6	9.2
Important	40	26.3	26.3	35.5
Very important	98	64.5	64.5	100.0
Total	152	100.0	100.0	



In terms of gender difference in PD importance, there is about the same result for both male and female teachers. Another interesting point is that there are no female teachers who think PD is not at all important (Figure 4.1.3).

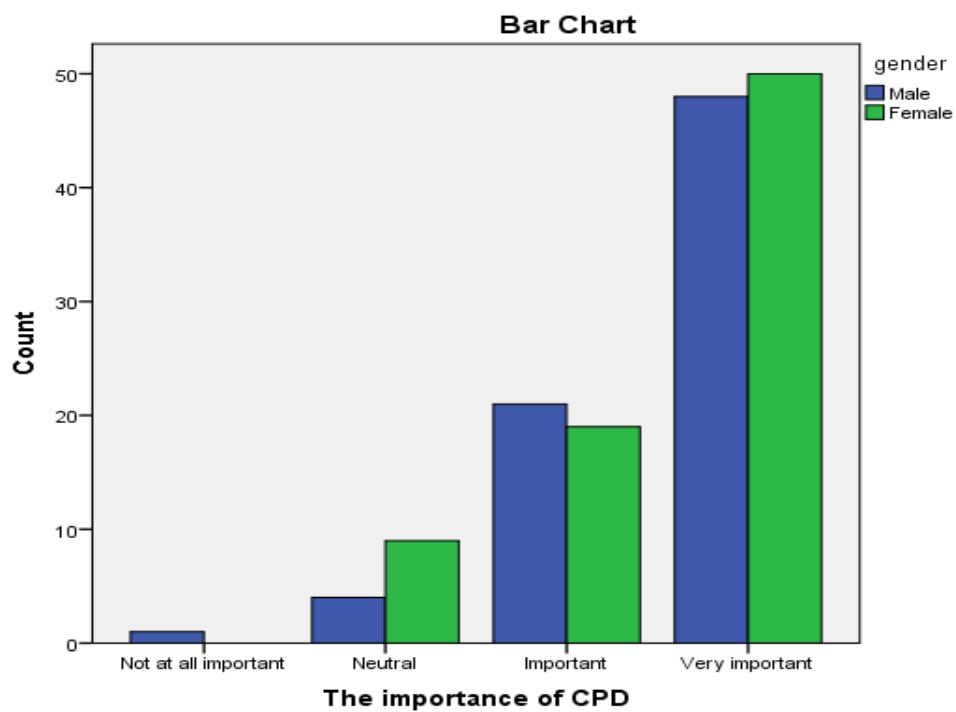


Figure 4.1.3 The bar chart of gender difference in importance of PD

From given question about changing or leaving jobs, 13 teachers want to change or leave their jobs from 152 teachers; some of them would like to work in private sector of education as teaching at university is getting demanding for them. Some others have not desire working as a teacher and they want to do another job. I think they deserve the respect because it is better to leave rather than not working properly in teaching.

Analysis of the types of development activities which teachers have been involved in can be informative and may go some way towards explaining differences in teachers' professional development participation. Teachers were asked about various

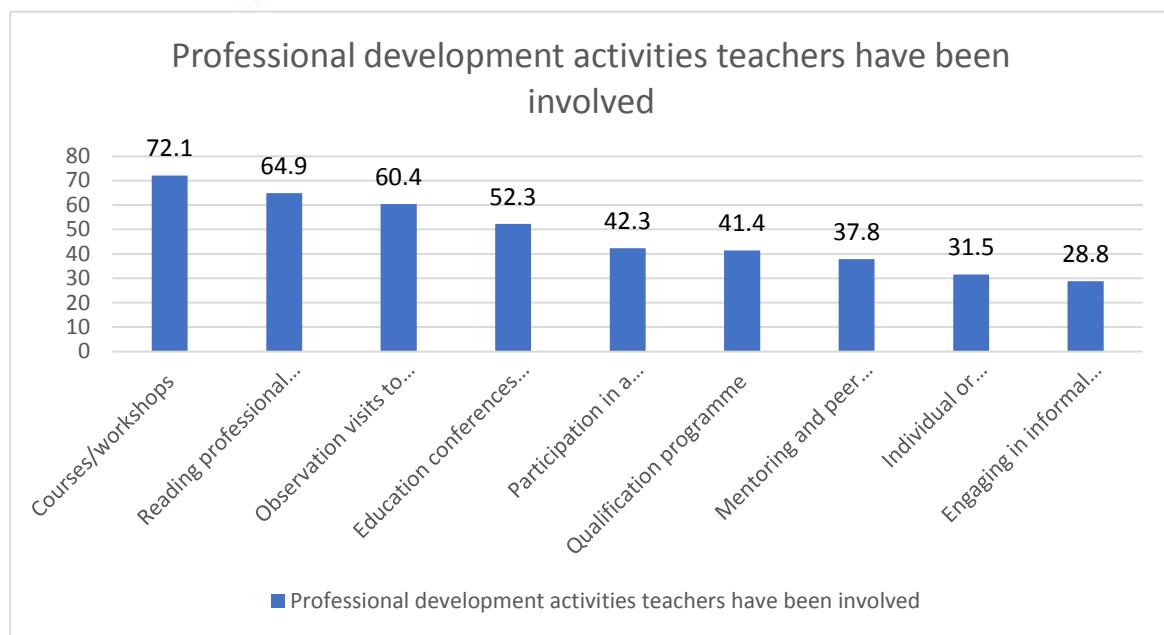


Figure 4.1.4 Bar chart of PD activities teachers involved

activities ranging from more organized and structured to more informal and self-directed learning. Therefore, informal dialogue to improve teaching and reading professional literature were included here. (Figure 4.1.4)

Participation by type of professional development activity

The most frequently reported activities were attending "Courses and workshops" (72.3%) and "Reading professional literature" (64.5%). The least common types of professional development were "Individual or collaborative research on a topic of interest to you professionally" (31.5%) and "Engaging in informal dialogue with your colleagues on how to improve your teaching" (28.8%). However, patterns vary widely, particularly for the more structured types of activities.

Workshops are either one or short-term academic training programs for teachers who want to learn a new skill or expertise (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Lectures or seminars may be arranged as self-contained events or as part of a larger curriculum. Typically, a workshop is used as a whole activity to educate various groups of people that might or might not be involved. This is perhaps the most traditional way of providing professional development for teachers (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). Universities offer knowledge and experience to teachers in this format (Silber, 1985). Teachers have criticized this format because the workshops are typically "one-shot" interactions that are "absolutely irrelevant to the needs of teachers and provide very little follow-up" (Villegas-Reimers, 2003, p.93). A great deal of research in teacher training considers this method to be ineffective cause of its far distance from school community where teaching occurs (Baron, 2008). Sparks (2004) believes that workshops are ineffective



because they usually deliver the wisdom of the experts or address the interests of school administrators instead of addressing the questions that are most relevant to teachers. Although a lot of harsh comments are given about the workshop method in different literature (Sandholtz, 2002), workshops remain the most popular type of teacher professional development today. (Richard, et al., 2001). Eun (2008) has pointed out that in workshops there could be “abundant opportunities for teachers to share their experiences, knowledge and skills, as well as problems, difficulties, and possible solutions”.

Workshops or related activities will also benefit from being held on a constant basis throughout the academic year. If workshops are implemented into various models and paired with other PD methods, these types of programs could be as successful as some other ways of enhancing teacher learning (Fishman, et al., 2004; Schneider, et al., 2005; Tillemans & Imants, 1995).

Eun (2008) summarized the benefits and drawbacks of this form of professional education:

The most notable advantage of this form of PD is that it is extremely cost-effective, reliable, and can reach a significant proportion of individuals in a single session. Its clearest drawback is that they have limited options for customization and preference. In terms of the overall levels of participation in these activities, it is evident that in Uzbekistan participation rates are consistently high. For example, these high rates result partly from the fact that individual teachers in universities took part in a broader combination of development activities; according to the database, teachers engaged in between five and six different forms of activities on average. This high level of involvement in a wide variety of activities could indicate a well-developed and dynamic professional development community. The fact that the percentage of teachers' desire for professional development is average.

Analysis of the database indicates that enrolment in “Qualification programs” is likely to be the most time-intensive activity, though “Individual and collaborative research” is also likely to require more time than other activities.

Influence of Professional Development activities and attending rate

Based on these different indications of the influence, it is clear to compare influence and attending across various activities. On average across the participating teachers, the most obvious contrast between attending and influence is for “Qualification programs”, which ranked third highest in the percentage (73%) of teachers who reported good and significant impact resulting from their participation but the participation rate (12%) was the lowest of all development activities (Figure 4.1.5).



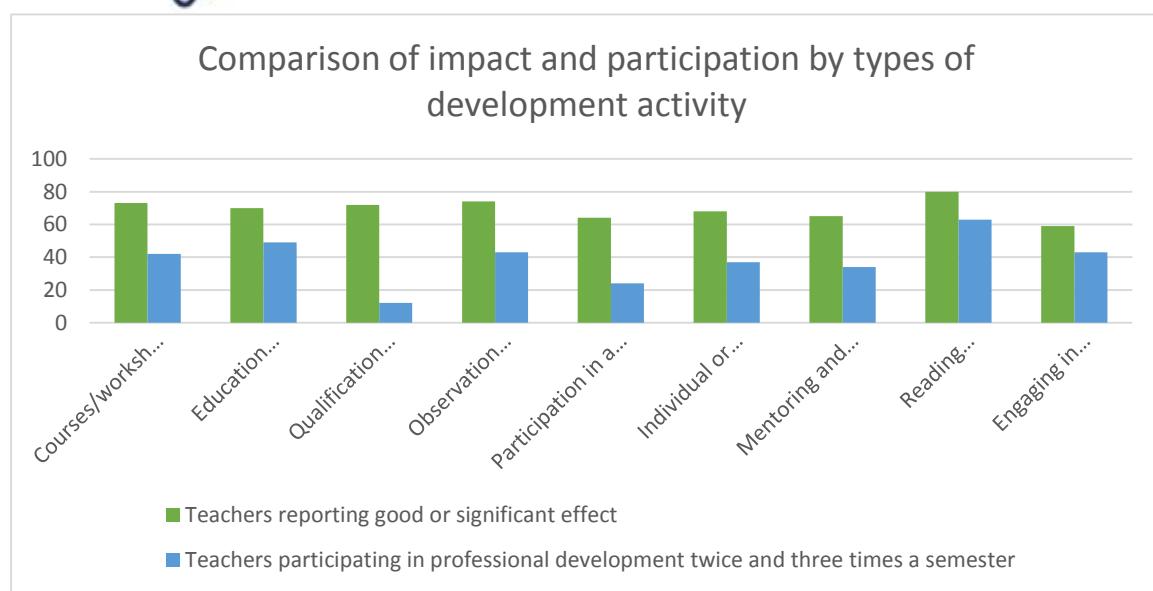


Figure 4.1.5 Bar chart of comparison of PD impact and participation rate

There is also a notable contrast between participation and impact for “Individual and collaborative research” and “Mentoring and peer observation”, where impact ranked high but participation was low among these nine activities. However, it can be noted that both qualification programs and research are relatively time-intensive and they are also activities which teachers were more likely to have had to pay for. It might not be feasible for education system to encourage large numbers of teachers to devote a significant amount of time and money to these activities. The cost and time commitments are likely to present barriers for some teachers as well.

However, courses and workshops and, to a lesser degree, education conferences and seminars have relatively high rates of participation when compared with their reported impact on teachers’ development. Although these practices do not entail a significant time commitment in most situations, the rationale for high levels of involvement in light of the comparatively lower effect that teachers report may be challenged.

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