

## Professional Growth Must Be Self-Directed for Secondary School Teachers in Pakistan

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### KEYWORDS

*Self-directed learning, Professional development, teacher training, secondary education, Pakistan*

### ABSTRACT

The educational landscape of Pakistani secondary schools' places unique demands on teachers. Because of the dynamics in the curriculum, secondary school teachers need consistent professional development to remain abreast of the demands and effectively engage students. However, traditional, top-down training models are limited in fostering teacher needs and long-term learning. This article argues for self-directed professional development for secondary school teachers in Pakistan. Self-directed learning enables teachers to own their journey, identify and meet their unique needs, and develop intrinsic motivation to keep learning. This article investigates the benefits of self-directed learning on teachers' ownership, need fulfilment, and reflection, further examining its appropriateness for secondary school teachers in Pakistan based on the case of limited resources and large classes. In conclusion, this article demonstrates the need to support self-directed professional development among secondary school teachers in Pakistan. To do it, policymakers and administrators should establish conditions for teacher empowerment, support, and collaboration. Self-directed learning enables secondary school teachers to have a positive impact on the efficacy of their teaching. As a result, student outcomes improve.

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### Introduction

Professional improvement is essential for improving instructional uniqueness and making sure instructors' ongoing progress (Darling-Hammond, 2000). The necessity for chronic expert development is particularly obvious in secondary college schooling in Pakistan, as teachers come upon a whole lot of challenges that can be continually converted. Fundamentally dynamic, teaching requires teachers to adjust to new technology, curricular modifications, and instructional approaches to fulfil the requirements of their college students (Hargreaves, 2012). Personalized professional development is a crucial strategy for enabling educators to take

charge of their learning and growth (Guskey T. R., 2009).

Learning development self-regulation is the process by which educators recognize their own learning needs, make objectives, and look for relevant learning opportunities (Little, 1993). This approach is based on the preschool theory notions of autonomy, curiosity, and experience learning (Knowles, 1975). Teachers who can customize their professional development to meet their unique needs and interests will feel more driven and in charge of their instruction (Guskey, 2002). The ability and commitment of teachers play an important role in the

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quality of the educational system of a country (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

Teachers in Pakistani secondary schools are important for the future of the country because they guide students and make progress at critical stages of academic and personal growth. Still, to move forward given the dynamic nature of education, educators must continue their professional growth. This essay makes the case that secondary school teachers in Pakistan might be greatly empowered to become lifelong learners by improving their instructional strategies through a self-directed approach to professional development.

Professional development is important for any profession, and it's important for teachers because it directly affects how well they teach. Secondary school teachers in particular must continue to improve their teaching skills to meet evolving educational needs. Self-directed professional development is a highly effective way to enhance the teaching skills of secondary school teachers in Pakistan.

Self-directed professional development enables teachers to take control of their learning. They can choose which areas they want to focus on and how they want to improve their teaching methods. In a rapidly changing educational landscape frequented by technology and new teaching methods, self-directed improvement enables teachers to maintain consistent and relevant content in their classrooms.

Secondary school teachers in Pakistan can adapt their learning experiences to meet their specific needs and concerns by engaging in self-directed professional development. To improve as teachers, they can search for resources, attend workshops, or network with other teachers. Finally, this approach supports teachers' and children's education while helping teachers be more

effective in providing lessons that meet the needs of each student.

### **The Significance of Professional Growth**

Career development directly affects generational change and goes beyond personal development. The way teachers teach changes with them, affecting the educational journeys of countless students. Teachers are kept up to date with new teaching methods, curriculum flexibility, and student needs through continuous improvement. Professional development is essential to shaping the future of education and society as a whole. It is a catalyst for generational change and extends beyond personal achievement. Highlighting the transformational impact of teacher development in the larger educational context, many education educators such as (Fullan, 2007) and (Darling-Hammond, 2000) echo the idea that teachers undergoing professional development not only improve their abilities and skills but also refine their teaching methods.

The need for professional development is seen in the ability to adapt instructional methods in response to the changing needs of students. Both (Hattie, 2012) and (Guskey, 2002) emphasize the importance of continuous professional development to help teachers remain adaptable to changes in student demographics, course preferences, and instructional styles. Teachers can remain educationally innovative and expand their knowledge base through active participation in continuing education programs. Additionally, professional development fosters teachers' culture of lifelong learning. Teachers who prioritize their development set an example for their students, motivating them to be lifelong learners and interested in the world they encounter, according to

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research by (Day, 2004) and (Zeichner, 2001) did to him. In addition to being highly effective, teachers who value professional development serve as role models for the next generation of lifelong learners.

### **Continuous learning effects**

Professional development of secondary school teachers in Pakistan goes beyond mere personal development. It is a cornerstone for positive generational change in the education system. As teachers actively engage in continuous learning and development, their teaching practices change. These changed practices directly impact the learning experiences of countless students encountered throughout their careers. By staying current with innovative teaching strategies and developing alongside the educational setting, teachers prepare themselves to effectively nurture young minds (Guskey, 2002).

### **Continuing to create Change: New strategies and revised curricula.**

The education sector is constantly evolving as curriculum innovations and teaching strategies are developed to adapt to the demands of the changing global environment. Professional development opportunities ensure that secondary school teachers in Pakistan remain current in these developments. They can incorporate these sophisticated teaching methods into their learning by attending seminars, workshops, and online resources. Students benefit from the active and engaging learning environment created by this cycle of learning, which helps them retain and understand the information better (Joyce, 2002).

### **Meeting the needs of changing students**

Students in secondary education are constantly changing in terms of their needs, interests, and learning preferences. Professional development programs can provide teachers with the tools they need to meet these changing needs. Teachers can create classrooms that interact with students and support their intellectual interest maintenance by encouraging growth mindsets and active learning strategies (Dweck, 2006).

### **The overall impact of an effective learning community**

Professional development is more important than just being a teacher for many reasons. Actively seeking learning opportunities is one-way teachers in Pakistan can help to build a strong learning community? By encouraging the exchange of best practices, collaboration on creative ideas, and mutual development, a dynamic and encouraging working environment is created. Ultimately, this sense of cooperation benefits the entire educational system of Pakistan and improves the learning outcomes of a large number of children (Fullan, 2007).

### **The changing needs of education systems and students**

Several important variables force constant change in the educational environment, including how teachers and students support each other's learning. These are some of the most important changes:

#### **1st Century Skills**

The skills today's students need to develop go beyond just memorizing. In today's globalized industrialized society, critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork, creativity, and digital literacy are critical to success (Binkley, 2012)

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### **Diversity of Learning Styles**

Classroom diversity is increasing due to a wider range of student learning preferences and strategies. The days of one-size-fits-all approaches are over (Eggen, 2018)

### **Use of Technology**

Students acquire knowledge of technology from an early age. This presents possibilities as well as problems for educators, who must use technology to improve student learning and promote responsible digital citizenship (Adedoyin, 2019).

### **Emphasis on deep understanding**

Learning is not just about memorization. Education expert (Wiggins, 2005) said this means students are encouraged to understand the topics and how they can be applied to different contexts, as opposed to just memorizing data. Participatory learning methods: Instead of just listening to lectures, students are now actively engaged in their learning. They work together in teams, solve real-world problems, and manage projects to dive deep into their details.

### **Using technology in learning**

Classrooms now have many technologies, such as computers and the Internet, that allow students to stay connected and share ideas even when they are not in school. This approach aims to make learning meaningful and interactive for students (Mooney, 2019).

### **The Empowering Role of Self-Directed Professional Development**

Instructors who participate in self-directed professional development can oversee their learning process. Rather than depending just on necessary training or formal meetings,

teachers are actively looking for opportunities to improve their skills. This approach emphasizes customized learning based on unique needs and interests and is consistent with adult learning theory. Self-directed professional development has proven to be a powerful tool for teachers looking to hone their teaching skills and keep up with the latest education trends. As emphasized by (Saldana, 2009) and (Guskey, 2002) this approach empowers teachers to manage their learning journeys.

Rather than waiting passively for professional development opportunities to be offered, educators actively seek resources, facilities, and collaborative opportunities that align with their specific professional goals and interests. Furthermore, self-directed professional development is more consistent with adult learning theoretical principles. According to (Knowles, 1975) and (Merriam, 1999), adults are self-directed learners who learn best when they have autonomy in the curriculum. By allowing teachers to tailor professional development experiences to their individual needs and interests, this approach provides ownership and optimal motivation for meaningful learning and development. Additionally, self-directed professional development encourages a culture of lifelong learning among teachers.

According to (Day, 2004) and (Little, 1993), teachers who are at the forefront of their professional development serve as role models for their students, demonstrating the importance of continuous learning and development. Traditional approaches to teacher professional development often rely on scheduled seminars or required training. However, there is a growing trend towards self-directed professional development. By giving teachers, the freedom to pursue their education, this approach encourages specific, highly satisfying learning environments. Autonomy is a fundamental principle of self-

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directed professional development. Teachers take an active role in their education, identifying areas of weakness and actively pursuing fillers. This is entirely consistent with adult learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of learner motivation, autonomy, and control of the action at hand (Merriam, 1999). Because teachers are naturally interested in their professional development, self-directed learning allows them to tailor their lessons to their specific goals.

The flexibility of self-directed professional development opens the doors to a wide range of learning opportunities. Teachers can browse online resources, attend conferences related to their interests, join professional learning communities, or even pursue online courses at their own pace. This diversity allows them to choose teaching methods that best suit their learning styles and time preferences. Additionally, self-directed learning fosters autonomy and intrinsic motivation, leading to deeper engagement in the learning process (Deci, 2000).

By taking their professional development, teachers become more reflective professionals. Self-directed learning encourages them to critically analyze their learning practices, identify areas for improvement, and actively seek ways to meet these needs. This continuous reflection and change leads to continuous improvement in instructional methods and ultimately benefits students' academic achievement (Guskey, 2002).

In conclusion, self-directed professional development enables teachers to actively engage in their development. It provides a personalized learning experience that aligns with adult learning principles and enables teachers to tailor their development to their specific needs and context. This approach fosters motivation and consensus,

ultimately improving instructional practices and student learning outcomes.

**Self-Directed Professional Development: Challenges and Opportunities**

Although it can be seen as rewarding and motivating, self-directed professional development is not without its challenges. Barriers include a lack of funding, a large student body, and a scarcity of resources. Teachers should see their achievement as successful because they know it will improve their ability to teach. Opportunities and challenges coexist in teachers' self-directed professional development. Despite the perceived benefits, teachers often run through many roadblocks that prevent them from improving. Teachers seeking to participate in self-directed professional development face many barriers due to limited resources, such as money and time (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). Financial constraints in educational institutions can limit access to seminars, training programs, and other learning opportunities (Guskey, 2002). Large numbers of students can place an additional burden on teachers' time and resources, making it difficult to prioritize (Day, 2004).

Beyond these challenges, however, self-directed professional development offers teachers many opportunities to improve student achievement and practice. Teachers can manage their learning strategies and adapt their professional development experiences to their own needs and interests (Saldana, 2009). This individualized approach allows teachers to focus on improvement areas that are more relevant to their student body and learning environment, ultimately resulting in an engaging and successful education (Merriam, 1999).

To overcome these obstacles and fully exploit the possibilities offered by self-directed professional development, despite

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ideals and inspiration, self-directed professional development is not without its challenges. Obstacles include scarce resources, budget restrictions, and large student populations. Teachers need to monitor their progress (Villegas-Reimers, 2003).

Training courses, workshops, and other learning opportunities may be constrained by financial constraints in educational institutions (Guskey, 2002). Larger class sizes can also further drain teachers' time and resources, forcing them to prioritize their professional development over their teaching duties (Day, 2004). Despite these barriers, self-directed professional development offers many opportunities for teachers to improve their strategies and improve student learning outcomes. Teachers can take ownership of their learning strategies and turn them into professional development experiences to suit their individual needs and interests (Saldana, 2009). Teachers can use this personalized approach to focus on improvement areas that are most relevant to their learning environment and student body, which ultimately results in better instruction and greater student engagement (Merriam, 1999). To overcome these obstacles and be the best teachers have to move to self-directed professional development techniques (Dweck, 2006).

The concept of autonomous teacher professional development holds great promise. It empowers them to manage their learning, fostering personalized and meaningful growth. However, the departure from traditional models presents some challenges alongside interesting conditions. An important problem lies in resource management. Many schools, especially those in under-resourced districts, are limited in terms of budgets and access to technology. This can limit teachers' ability to teach online

or attend conferences. Additionally, high student-to-teacher ratios may leave instructors limited time for self-directed academic tasks (Ambreen, 2023).

Beyond resource limitations, there is a major challenge in changing teachers' mind-sets. For some, self-study can be a departure from informal work for professional development. Schools and leaders play an important role in creating a supportive environment. Fostering a culture of sustainable learning and recognizing the impact of self-efficacy development on teaching quality can encourage teachers' perceptions of the positive (Fullan, 2007).

However, these problems are insurmountable. Independent learning offers many opportunities for teachers and schools alike. The vast array of readily available online resources, ranging from free online courses to open-source learning materials, offer a wide range of possible learning opportunities. In addition, professional learning communities (PLCs) and peer-to-peer learning can be developed in schools, leveraging experience among teachers without major budget constraints. In addition, professional development through autonomy reinforces teachers' sense of ownership and autonomy. When empowered to identify their own learning needs and actively seek solutions, they are more motivated (Deci, 2000).

This allows for a deeper connection to the learning process and ultimately leads to a more impactful classroom application of the knowledge gained. In conclusion, personalized professional development can be a powerful tool for empowering teachers and improving overall educational effectiveness. Despite the challenges, creative solutions and a supportive social environment can pave the way for successful implementation. If both teachers and schools can unlock the full potential of this new

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technology by providing personalized learning and fostering a culture of sustainable development.

### **Examples of self-directed professional development**

Following are the examples of self-directed professional development that secondary school teachers in Pakistan can explore:

#### **Action Research Projects**

Teachers can initiate action research projects in their classrooms. Once they have identified specific educational challenges or areas for improvement, they can design research studies, gather data, and reflect on their actions. This practice not only increases their academic skills but also contributes to the wider academic community. Sure! Action research is a powerful tool that empowers educators to enhance their teaching through systematic inquiry and reflection. It involves analyzing the actions of employees and taking action for improvement. Here are some examples of action research projects in education:

#### **Digital Literacy Assessment and Training**

The school's IT department surveys students' digital literacy skills. Based on the results, a tailored training program is designed for different age groups to enhance their digital competencies (Gillis, 2002).

#### **Library Resources Utilization Study**

The school librarian tracks the frequency and type of books checked out by students. The data collected informs decisions about curating a more relevant collection and organizing reading programs (Gillis, 2002).

#### **Extracurricular Activities and Student Well-Being**

A team of teachers and counselors assesses the impact of extracurricular activities on student mental health. Surveys and interviews help identify adjustments needed to support student well-being (Gillis, 2002).

#### **Parent-Teacher Communication Channels**

The school evaluates the effectiveness of current communication tools (such as newsletters or apps) between teachers and parents. Feedback from both parties is used to implement a more streamlined communication system (Gillis, 2002).

#### **Homework Load Evaluation**

Teachers across grade levels assess the amount and effectiveness of homework given. Adjustments are made to strike a balance between academic rigor and student well-being (Gillis, 2002).

#### **Classroom Environment and Learning**

A group of teachers collaborates to study the impact of classroom layouts and decorations on student engagement and comprehension. Changes are made based on the findings to create an optimal learning environment (Gillis, 2002).

#### **Student Feedback on Curriculum Content**

High school students are surveyed about the relevance and applicability of their current curriculum. The feedback gathered informs necessary adjustments to enhance the curriculum (Gillis, 2002).

#### **Teacher Mentoring and Support**

New teachers are paired with experienced mentors. Both parties provide feedback on the effectiveness of the mentoring program, leading to continuous improvements in teacher development (Gillis, 2002).

Remember that action research involves several steps: identifying a problem,

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designing a plan to resolve it, implementing the plan, evaluating effectiveness, reflecting on results, making necessary adjustments, and repeating the process<sup>1</sup>. By engaging in action research, educators actively contribute to their growth and the improvement of educational practices.

### **Online Learning Communities**

Participating in schooling-related online forums, dialogue corporations, or social media boards permits instructors to connect to friends, proportion studies, and examine each other. These communities provide an area for collaborative problem-solving, useful resource sharing, and professional networking.

### **Blogs and Reflective Journals**

Teachers can hold personal blogs or reflective journals wherein they file their teaching reports, insights, and instructions. Regular diaries of classroom conduct inspire self-reflection and help teachers refine their techniques.

### **Micro-credentials and Badges**

Many academic institutions and concerns offer micro credentials or digital badges for finishing quick courses, workshops, or self-paced modules. Teachers can earn this certification by demonstrating information in precise areas which include technology integration, research layout, or school room management.

### **Book Clubs and Reading Groups**

Forming ebook golf equipment or reading companies targeted on educational literature allows instructors to discover relevant literature, studies articles, and coaching thoughts. Discussing those troubles with colleagues generates new perspectives and encourages critical wondering.

### **Curriculum Planning Activity**

Teachers can plan or revise curriculum devices in advance. By aligning academic substances with learning goals, incorporating opportunity educational strategies, and thinking about the diverse needs of college students, teachers enhance their curriculum development abilities.

### **Attending Webinars and Virtual Meetings**

Online webinars and digital conferences offer possibilities for professional development without geographic obstacles. Teachers can participate in live occasions, community with professionals, and benefit from insights into modern-day traits and quality practices.

### **Peer Evaluation and Feedback**

Collaborating with fellow teachers for classroom statements and feedback fosters a tradition of continuous improvement. Teachers can analyze each other's coaching techniques, receive positive comments, and refine their teaching strategies.

### **Independent Online Learning**

When surfing platforms inclusive of Coursera, edX, or Khan Academy, instructors can enroll in unbiased courses on topics applicable to their teaching surroundings. These courses cover an extensive variety of subjects, from course-specific content material to teaching techniques. 4.9 Action Learning Syntax:

The motion studying process entails small businesses of teacher's assembly frequently to speak about demanding situations, share stories, and clear up troubles together. These collaborative periods encourage deep wondering and bring practical solutions. Remember that self-directed professional improvement is set to take over one's mastering journey. Teachers



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need to pick activities that align with their interests, meet their precise desires, and assist them develop as powerful teachers.

### **Recommendations for Policymakers and Administrators**

#### **Empowering Educators**

The transition in the direction of self-directed expert development (SDPD) for teachers presents a unique opportunity for policymakers and college administrators to create surroundings that foster non-stop and personalized growth. By imposing particular strategies, they could cope with present challenges and liberate the entire capability of this empowering technique.

#### **Acknowledge and Support**

The first step lies in acknowledging the cost of self-directed knowledge of efforts undertaken by teachers. Policymakers and administrators must implement measures that apprehend and rejoice instructors who proactively are seeking to gain knowledge of possibilities to beautify their skills. This may be done via public reputation packages, showcasing exceptional practices because of self-directed development. Additionally, allocating assets, consisting of professional improvement stipends or time allotments for self-directed learning activities, demonstrates a tangible commitment to assisting teachers' growth aspirations.

#### **Create Mechanisms**

Establishing systems that encourage and validate instructor-driven knowledge of tasks is crucial. This could include creating online platforms for teachers to percentage resources and first-rate practices acquired through self-directed studying. Additionally, fostering professional learning groups (PLCs) inside faculties can offer opportunities for teachers to present their

self-directed mastering trips and interact in peer-to-peer learning. Formalizing those mechanisms validates the importance of self-directed increase in the school system and encourages continued engagement.

#### **Minimize Challenges and Encourage Participation**

Addressing the challenges surrounding assets is critical for a hit SDPD implementation. Policymakers can allocate budgets, especially for self-directed professional improvement projects. Schools can explore partnerships with educational technology organizations to offer instructors access to online mastering structures or discounted subscriptions. Additionally, supplying incentives, such as professional development credits or profits boom considerations tied to self-directed getting-to-know activities, can similarly encourage trainer participation.

#### **Raise a Culture of Continuous Learning**

Beyond unique packages, fostering a tradition of non-stop learning inside the school device is important. School directors can play an important role in promoting self-directed studying using actively in search of teachers to enter areas wherein they experience additional development needed and by presenting ongoing help and steering. By modeling lifelong knowledge of themselves, leaders can inspire instructors to embody self-directed improvement as a cornerstone of their professional journey. By implementing those hints, policymakers, and administrators can create a supportive environment that empowers instructors to take ownership of their expert development. Ultimately, fostering a lifestyle of continuously gaining knowledge of blessings is not only most effective for the educators themselves, however, also contributes to stepping forward in teaching great and superior pupils and getting to know results.

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## Conclusion

In this article, we explore into the provisions for self-directed professional growth among secondary school teachers in Pakistan. By understanding the challenges and opportunities, we aim to create a positive environment that values and encourages teachers' continuous learning (Agrusti, 2017). Professional improvement is essential to improving instructional exceptional and making sure instructors' ongoing progress (Darling-Hammond, 2000). The necessity for chronic expert development is particularly obvious in secondary college schooling in Pakistan, as teachers come upon a whole lot of challenges that can be continually convertingFundamentally dynamic, teaching requires teachers to adjust to new technology, curricular modifications, and instructional approaches to fulfill the requirements of their college students (Hargreaves, 2012).

Personalized professional development is a crucial strategy for enabling educators to take charge of their learning and growth (Guskey T. R., 2009). Learning development self-regulation is the process by which educators recognize their own learning needs, make objectives, and look for relevant learning opportunities (Little, Understanding Teachers' Professional Development: A

Sociological Perspective, 2012). This approach is based on the preschool theory notions of autonomy, curiosity, and experience learning (Knowles, 1975). Teachers who can customize their professional development to meet their unique needs and interests will feel more driven and in charge of their instruction.

While the idea of self-directed professional development has the potential to improve teacher effectiveness and job satisfaction, putting it into reality presents problems. Teachers may face difficulties such as limited resource availability, poor support from school administrations, and a lack of appreciation for self-directed learning activities (Barrett, 2012). Furthermore, cultural norms and administrative frameworks in the education system may limit teachers' capacity to participate in self-directed learning activities (Ho, 2016).

Against this background, this study examines the provisions for self-directed professional development for secondary school teachers in Pakistan. By exploring the possibilities and difficulties experienced by teachers in seeking self-directed learning, this research aims to inform efforts to establish a culture of continuous improvement and professional development within the secondary school sector.

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