



A Case Study on the Role of Heads of Departments in Improving Teachers' Professional Development

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ABSTRACT:

The heads of departments (HODs) in universities are educational leaders who have the most power and influence. They are responsible for smooth running of all educational activities for effective learning of students. Their one of the key responsibilities is to improve teachers' professional development (TPD) to obtain desired objectives. The study aimed to investigate the role of the HODs in TPD. Professional development (PD) is essential for teachers to improve the quality of teaching that enables them to achieve learning outcomes. The study was conducted at Khwaja Fareed University of Engineering and Information Technology (KFUEIT) Rahim Yar Khan. The objectives of the study were to investigate the role of the HODs toward TPD; and to find out the differences in the role of HODs towards TPD. A quantitative research design was adapted for the study. The population of the study consisted of all heads of departments and all faculty members of KFUEIT. A stratified sampling method was used for sampling and two strata were formulated: one for heads of departments and the other for faculty members. Twenty-five (25) HODs and One hundred fifty (150) faculty members were selected as a sample. A self-developed questionnaire for both HODs and Faculty members was used. The results showed that HODs play a significant role in improving the TPD. The perceptions of HODs and faculty members about the role of heads of departments in improving teachers' professional development are the same.

Key words: Teachers' Professional Development, Evolving Trends, Heads of Departments, Faculty Members,

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Introduction

Leadership is the key element in the rise and fall of any institution and nation. It is leadership that leads a nation toward success and weaknesses in it destroy the whole nation (Karsono, Suraji, & Sastrodiharjo, 2022; Olson, 2022). Because of its importance, it plays a vital role in every sector, especially in higher education. The heads of departments (HODs) in universities are educational leaders who have the most power and influence (Akhtar et al., 2022; Alsaleh, 2022). They are responsible for the smooth running of all educational activities for effective learning of students. One of the key responsibilities is to enhance teachers' professional development (TPD) to obtain desired educational objectives (Hennessy et al., 2022). Professional development (PD) is essential for quality education; and quality education is achieved through competent teachers (Hall & Hite, 2022; Tonga, Eryiğit, Yalçın, & Erden, 2022). A competent teacher uses PD to be a competent teacher. PD refers to enhancing skills, knowledge, and attitude as a teacher. PD is attaining professional skills, knowledge, and attitude to be a competent teacher. PD means to acquire professional skills and behavior to obtain education progress (Zaky, 2022; Zhou, 2022). Teachers enhance professional development to achieve desired educational goals. In higher education, the quality of teachers is not up to the mark (Pell & Amigud, 2022). In this regard, the HOD's role is more important. HODs plan, facilitate, and evaluate activities to enhance TPD (Jamali et al., 2022; Noben, Brouwer et al., 2022). They arrange training workshops, and stimulate, and encourage the teachers to participate in them to maximize their potential as a teacher. HODs have to perform different tasks during their job in which improvement in TPD is one of them. They perform different roles; transformational leadership role; instructional leadership role; distributive leadership role; technology leadership role; contingent leadership role; ethical leadership role etc. for the enhancement of TPD (Sarwar et al., 2022; Waheeda, 2022; Zhuo, 2022). In Pakistan, there is little research work on HODs' leadership role toward TPD in higher education. So, to fill the gap, the researcher chose only four aspects of HODs' leadership role i.e. role as transformational leader; role instructional leader; role a distributive leader; and role of technology leader for TPD.

Statement of the Problem

The quality of education depends on quality teachers and the quality of teachers is related to professional development. In our higher education sector, universities and especially HODs face different educational problems in which lack of teachers' professional development (TPD) is one of the major problems. HOD plays an influencing and leading role in achieving the desired goals of the institution; creates a conducive learning environment; and provides facilities to enhance the professional development of teachers. Professional development enhances the quality of education at a higher education level. The study focuses on the HODs' role in enhancing TPD.

Significance of the study

The study emphasizes the HODs' leadership role in enhancing TPD. The study will help out HODs, teachers, scholars, and higher authorities at higher education levels. This study will be helpful for HODs to make their leadership practices better toward TPD; helpful for teachers to improve their TPD; and also helpful to higher authorities to make policies about TPD in higher education.

Objectives

1. To investigate the role of the heads of departments (HODs) in the teachers' professional department (TPD).
2. To explore the differences in the role of heads of departments (HODs) towards teachers' professional development (TPD).

Research Questions

1. What are the perspectives of HODs and teachers about the HODs' transformational leadership role toward TPD?
2. What are the perspectives of HODs and teachers about the HODs' instructional leadership role toward TPD?
3. What are the perspectives of HODs and teachers about the HODs' distributed leadership role toward TPD?
4. What are the perspectives of HODs and teachers about the HODs' technology leadership role toward TPD?
5. Is there a difference in how HODs and teachers perceive HODs' transformative leadership role in TPD?
6. Is there a difference in how HODs and teachers perceive HODs' instructional leadership role in TPD?
7. Is there a difference in how HODs and teachers perceive HODs' distributed leadership role in TPD?
8. Is there a difference in how HODs and teachers perceive HODs' technology leadership role in TPD?

The link between Objectives and Research Questions

Research Objective 1	Research Questions 1-4
Research Objective 2	Research Questions 5-8

Methods

Research Design

The current study was descriptive; a quantitative design and survey method was used.

Population and Sampling

All the HODs and teachers working at KFUEIT were the population of the study. In KFUEIT 25 HODs and 310 teachers were employed. In the current study, stratified random sampling was used. The researcher formulated two strata: one for HODs and the other for teachers. According to Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2012), if the population is 100 or less, the appropriate sample size is 100%; if the population is 101 to 500, the necessary sample is 20%; if the population is 1501 to 4000, the adequate sample size is 10%; and if the population is greater than 4000, then the proper sample size is 400. The researcher took the sample of 25 HODs (100%); 150 teachers (50%); and thus, the total sample was 175.

Research Tool and Data Analysis

The researchers utilize the questionnaires in the quantitative survey method. In this study, the researcher used a self-developed questionnaire for HODs and teachers. This questionnaire was on a point Likert scale, i.e. strongly disagree; disagree; undecided; agree; strongly agree. The statements were divided into four sections i.e. Role of HOD as the transformational leader; the role of HOD as an instructional leader; the role of HOD as a distributed leader; the role of HOD as a technology leader. Descriptive and inferential statistics Inferential and descriptive statistics were used for evaluation.

Results and Findings

RQ #1 What are the perspectives of HODs and teachers about the HODs' transformational leadership role toward TPD?

Table 1

Opinions of HODs and Teachers about HODs' transformational leadership role toward TPD.

S#	Statements	Faculty	n	Mean	SD
1	HOD aware of teachers' professional needs	HODs	25	4.000	1.000
		Teachers	150	3.546	1.052
2	HOD encourages teachers to adopt innovative concepts and models for teaching	HODs	25	4.120	.927
		Teachers	150	3.740	1.039
3	HOD Creates a conducive learning environment for learning	HODs	25	3.640	.860
		Teachers	150	3.326	1.114
4	HOD provides individual support to teachers for professional development	HODs	25	3.360	.952
		Teachers	150	3.246	1.220
5	HOD motivates teachers to enhance the quality of teaching	HODs	25	3.880	.781
		Teachers	150	3.706	.908

Table 1 shows that both the HODs and teachers agreed with the statements concerning HODs' transformational leadership role toward the professional development of teachers.

RQ #2 What are the perspectives of HODs and teachers about the HODs' instructional leadership role toward TPD?

Table 2

Opinions of HODs and Teachers about HODs' instructional leadership role toward TPD.

S#	Statements	Faculty	n	Mean	SD
1	HOD enhances teachers' commitment to institutional goals	HODs	25	3.8000	1.118
		Teachers	150	3.5933	.976
2	HOD utilizes internal resources to enhance teacher's quality	HODs	25	4.0800	.759
		Teachers	150	3.8667	.456
3	HOD utilizes external resources to improve teacher's quality	HODs	25	3.6800	1.144
		Teachers	150	3.2733	1.128
4	HOD develops positive inter-personal associations with teachers	HODs	25	3.7600	.830
		Teachers	150	3.8267	.849
5	HOD facilitates teachers to enhance professional development	HODs	25	3.9600	.840
		Teachers	150	4.2933	.444

Table 2 shows that both the HODs and teachers agreed with the statements concerning HODs' instructional leadership role toward the professional development of teachers.

RQ #3 What are the perspectives of HODs and teachers about the HODs' distributed leadership role toward TPD?

Table 3

Opinions of HODs and Teachers about HODs' distributed leadership role toward TPD.

S#	Statements	Faculty	n	Mean	SD
1	HOD promotes collaboration and teamwork among teachers	HODs	25	3.960	.675
		Teachers	150	3.606	1.175
2	HOD distributes leadership roles among all teachers	HODs	25	3.200	.408
		Teachers	150	3.660	1.180
3	HOD provides effective feedback to teachers	HODs	25	4.440	.506
		Teachers	150	4.013	3.337
4	HOD allocates time for teachers to work together to plan instructions	HODs	25	3.440	1.044
		Teachers	150	3.653	1.192
5	HOD provides evidence-based professional development to teachers	HODs	25	3.880	.927
		Teachers	150	3.740	1.039

Table 3 shows that both the HODs and teachers agreed with the statements concerning HODs' distributive leadership role toward the professional development of teachers.

RQ #4 What are the perspectives of HODs and teachers about the HODs' technology leadership role toward TPD?

Table 4

Opinions of HODs and Teachers about HODs' technology leadership role toward TPD.

S#	Statements	Faculty	n	Mean	SD
1	HOD promotes a digital-age learning culture at the university	HODs	25	3.600	1.080
		Teachers	150	3.580	1.205
2	HOD ensures technology infrastructure supports teaching and learning	HODs	25	3.600	1.080
		Teachers	150	3.993	.999
3	HOD provides opportunities for teachers to use technology tools	HODs	25	3.800	.866
		Teachers	150	3.773	1.062

4	HOD manages online courses for teachers' professional development	HODs	25	3.040	1.619
		Teachers	150	3.166	1.281
5	HOD arranges conferences and workshops for teachers' professional development	HODs	25	3.960	.675
		Teachers	150	3.946	.995

Table 4 shows that both the HODs and teachers agreed with the statements concerning HODs' technology leadership role toward the professional development of teachers.

RQ#5 Is there a difference in how HODs and teachers perceive HODs' transformational leadership role in TPD?

Table 5

Differences in opinions of HODs and teachers regarding HODs' transformational leadership role toward TPD.

Sample	n	Mean	Std. Dev.	S.E.M	t-value	P-Value
HODs	25	19.000	2.397	.479	2.383	0.018
Teachers	150	17.566	2.841	.231		

Table 5 explored that the significant p-value is 0.018 ($p < 0.05$). It indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of HODs ($M=19.000$, $SD=2.397$) and teachers ($M=17.566$, $SD=2.841$). It clarifies that there is a significant difference in HODs' and teachers' perspectives on the HODs' transformational leadership role in TPD.

RQ#6 Is there a difference in how HODs and teachers perceive HODs' instructional leadership role in TPD?

Table 6

Differences in opinions of HODs and teachers regarding HODs instructional leadership role toward TPD.

Sample	n	Mean	Std. Dev.	S.E.M	t-value	P-Value
HODs	25	19.280	2.441	.488	0.404	0.687
Teachers	150	18.853	5.179	.422		

Table 6 explored that the significant p-value is 0.687 ($p > 0.05$). It indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of HODs ($M=19.280$, $SD=2.441$) and teachers ($M=18.853$, $SD=5.179$). It clarifies that there is no significant difference in HODs' and teachers' perspectives on the HODs' instructional leadership role in TPD.

RQ#7 Is there a difference in how HODs and teachers perceive HODs' distributed leadership role in TPD?

Table 7

Differences in opinions of HODs and teachers regarding HODs' distributed leadership role toward TPD.

Sample	n	Mean	Std. Dev.	S.E.M	t-value	P-Value
HODs	25	19.920	1.869	0.373	2.422	0.018
Teachers	150	18.673	4.334	0.353		

Table 6 explored that the significant p-value is 0.018 ($p > 0.05$). It indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of HODs ($M=19.920$, $SD=1.869$) and teachers ($M=18.673$, $SD=4.334$). It clarifies that there is a significant difference in HODs' and teachers' perspectives on the HODs' distributed leadership role in TPD.

RQ#8 Is there a difference in how HODs and teachers perceive HODs' technology leadership role in TPD?

Table 8

Differences in opinions of HODs and teachers regarding HODs' technology leadership role toward TPD.

Sample	n	Mean	Std. Dev.	S.E.M	t-value	P-Value
HODs	25	18.000	2.738	0.547	-.784	0.434
Teachers	150	18.460	2.711	0.221		

Table 6 explored that the significant p-value is 0.434 ($p > 0.05$). It indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of HODs ($M=18.000$, $SD=2.738$) and teachers ($M=18.460$, $SD=2.711$). It clarifies that there is no significant difference in HODs' and teachers' perspectives on the HODs' technology leadership role in TPD.

Discussion

The key objective of the university is to offer quality education through quality teaching (Ma et al., 2023) and it can be achieved with the help of competent teachers (Arnaiz-Sánchez et al., 2023; Pekkarinen et al., 2023). The heads of departments in universities are educational leaders who have the most power and influence. They are responsible for the smooth running of all educational activities for quality education (Alademmerin, 2023; Khan et al., 2023). One of the key responsibilities is to improve TPD to obtain desired objectives (Qadhi & Al-Thani, 2023; Riabova et al., 2023; Yuniawan et al., 2023). The purpose of the study was to investigate the role of the HODs toward TPD. The objectives of the study were to investigate the role of the HODs toward TPD; and to explore the differences in the role of HODs towards TPD. All HODs and teachers working at KFUEIT were the population. The data were collected through a self-developed questionnaire on a five-point Likert scale from both HODs and teachers and analyzed through SPSS version 27. The respondents agreed that HODs were performing their role to improve TPD (Abou Fakhr, 2020; Al-Tuwayjiri, 2018).

Conclusion

The HODs perform different leadership roles at universities to enhance the quality of teachers by providing and facilitating professional development opportunities in and outside the department. In this study, there are four leadership roles i.e. transformational; instructional; distributed; and technology leadership toward TPD. In light of the results, it is concluded that most respondents agreed on the HODs' leadership role in enhancing TPD. The majority of the respondents agreed that HODs are performing their role as transformational leaders to enhance TPD. In this regard, they encourage teachers to adopt innovative concepts and models for teaching; and motivate teachers to enhance professional development. The majority of the respondents agreed that HODs perform an instructional role in enhancing TPD. In this regard, they enhance teachers' commitment towards institutional goals; utilize internal resources to enhance teachers' quality; develop positive interpersonal associations with teachers; and facilitate teachers to enhance professional development. The majority of the respondents agreed that HODs are performing a distributed leadership role in improving TPD. They promote collaboration and teamwork among teachers; distribute leadership roles among teachers; provide effective feedback; and provide evidence based TPD. The majority of the respondents agreed that HODs are performing technology leadership roles. As technology leaders, they ensure technology infrastructure supports teaching and learning; provide opportunities for teachers to use technology tools; and arrange conferences and workshops for TPD. The findings showed that both HODs and teachers agreed that HODs are performing transformational, instructional, distributed, and technology leadership roles for enhancing TPD. There was no significant difference between the opinions of HODs and teachers on HODs leadership role as an instructional leader and technology leaders in TPD, and there was a significant difference between the opinions of HODs and teachers on HODs' leadership role as transformational leaders and distributed leaders in TPD.

Limitations, Delimitations, and Recommendations

The study was carried out only at KFUEIT Rahim Yar Khan; so the findings cannot be generalized to other universities. Only the HODs and teachers at KFUEIT Raim Yar Khan in Pakistan are included in the study. Based on the results, below are the recommendations of the study.

- The Higher Education Commission (HEC) should arrange training workshops and courses for TPD.
- The university should design a training program for TPD.
- The HODs should be familiar with teachers' professional needs.
- The HODs should create a conducive learning environment for learning.
- The HODs should provide individual support to teachers for professional development.
- The HODs should utilize external resources to improve TPD.
- The HODs should allocate time for teachers to work together on planning instructions.
- The HODs should promote a digital learning culture at the university.
- The HODs should manage online courses for TPD.

Implications for the Future Research

The current study explores the HODs' transformational; instructional; distributed; and technology leadership roles toward TPD. Future researchers may take other leadership roles in enhancing TPD. The study was conducted at KFUEIT. The future researcher may conduct the study in other universities, and other levels of education i.e. elementary, secondary, and higher secondary. The study used a quantitative method whereas future researchers may adopt qualitative or mixed methods. The researcher has evaluated TPD whereas the future researcher may choose other competencies i.e. professional competence; social competence; communication competence; technology competence; management competence and others.

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Declaration of Interest: The author declares that there is no clash of interests.

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