Academic Staff CPD in A Private Higher Education Institute in Malaysia: Exploring the Perspective

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Abstract
This paper, a qualitative data presentation, was aimed at gathering the perception of an academician in a leadership position who grew in the profession for over a decade. The selected private higher education institution in Malaysia, in the pre-pandemic period, underwent a major leadership change that had a shift in the business direction followed by the pandemic which impacted the academics directly. Both the academic and the institution not only sustained the pandemic impact and shift of dynamics that took place but achieved the goals of the major shift. The researchers interviewed the academician to collect data which was then thematically analyzed to categorize, draw and present what emerged. The interview questions were developed to obtain the key person's description and evaluations of the institution's continuous professional development (CPD) activities, planning, and effort in the said institution. Data indicated that the institution is currently weathering challenges from being unable to identify the type of CPD needed, academic staff lacking the motivation to commit to CPD or to self-reflectively plan CPD activities along with a general lack of emphasis on CPD value to personal and institutional development. Data further sees the lack of reward linked to pursuing CPD to influence academics as professionals. The conviction that they, in turn, will impact learner growth, which ultimately is the institution's mission, has to be made a pressing matter. A clear link to these challenges points to the need for purposeful communication between academics, the human resources department, and the senior management to address on-ground challenges, be realistic on what budget support can be made available, prioritize urgent gaps, and deploy purposeful CPD activities and references for the academics to fill the gaps effectively and efficiently.
Keywords: Continuing Professional Development, Higher Education Institution, Academic Leader.

Introduction
CPD among Tertiary Institution Academics: An Overview
It is validated that CPD improves teacher development which has a direct impact on student learning and the institution's outcome. CPD stands for "Continuous Professional

Development". CPD can have a positive impact on student learning quality. A meta-analysis by Desimone (2009), found that high-quality professional development can improve student learning outcomes, particularly when it is focused on subject matter content, incorporates active learning strategies, and provides ongoing support for teachers.

Study Gap
CPD of the academic and support staff of a university is key to positively impacting the ongoing development and success of the university's students, faculty, and support staff. What are the main challenges faced by the university in managing the CPD of its academics?

Study Objectives
The objective of this study is, by conducting interviews with the key person in a university who has 15 years of active teaching contribution and is also a hiring manager with a longstanding leadership role to identify the challenges and (perhaps even the) opportunities within the university in managing the CPD for its academicians. This is an attempt to identify underlying problems in the CPD planning and delivery process in said university.

Continuous Professional Development for University Academic and Support Staff
While there is evidence that CPD can have a positive impact on teachers' confidence, motivation, and student learning quality, it is important to note that not all CPD is effective. Or a poorly conveyed CPD outcome to lecturers could harm lecturers' professional development perspective otherwise. CPD needs to be high-quality and sustained to be able to have an impact and in order for CPD to have a *positive* impact, it needs to be useful or the usefulness needs to be made obvious and sustained over time. This simply means that any given CPD should be aligned with teachers' needs be based on research and evidence, and provide opportunities for teachers to collaborate and reflect on their practice.

There are works done to examine the impact of CPD on teachers' confidence, motivation, and the impact on student learning quality. A study by Klassen and Kim (2017) found that participating in CPD can increase teachers' self-efficacy, which is their belief in their ability to perform a task successfully. CPD can increase teachers' confidence and teachers who participated in CPD reported feeling more confident in their ability to implement new teaching strategies and technologies.

Another study by Dinsmore and Harsch (2016) found that CPD can increase teachers' motivation by providing opportunities for them to learn new skills, collaborate with colleagues, and reflect on their practice. When teachers feel motivated, they are more likely to engage in continuous learning and improve their practice over time. CPD is an essential aspect of lecturers' work, and there are various theories and concepts that underpin CPD for lecturers teaching in universities.

To encourage more lecturers to improve student learning and engagement through ICT integration, CPDT should be carefully redesigned. Guidelines for redesigning CPDT are provided in order to redesign better and more effective CPDT in the future. It is hoped that lecturers can increase their teaching effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity through ongoing successful exposure of ID knowledge (Mohamed & Ahmad, 2019).
Learning Theories

The Reflective Practice theory emphasizes the importance of reflecting on one's teaching practice to improve it continuously. CPD for lecturers should include opportunities to reflect on teaching methods, student feedback, and learning outcomes to identify areas for improvement. The Adult Learning theory claims that adult learners are more motivated to learn when they see the relevance of the knowledge or skills they are acquiring to their work and personal goals. It is recommended that CPD for lecturers should be designed to meet the needs and interests of adult learners, providing opportunities to learn practical skills and knowledge that can be applied in their teaching.

Experiential Learning theory, on the other hand, says that learning occurs through experience and reflection on that experience. CPD for lecturers should provide opportunities for hands-on learning, such as attending workshops, conferences, or training programs. Communities of Practice emphasizes the importance of learning in a social context. Where the urge is to provide opportunities for collaboration, networking, and sharing of best practices with colleagues within and outside the institution. The scaffolder phenomenon of Lifelong Learning stresses the importance of continuous learning throughout one's career where efforts should be aimed to provide opportunities for ongoing professional development, such as attending training programs, participating in research projects, and pursuing advanced degrees.

Research Methodology
Research Design and Sampling
The qualitative research design here is a single case study, where one key person (in this case, the head of the humanities department with over a decade of experience in lecturing, since 2007) is interviewed to gather in-depth information about her experiences with Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in the private university (hereon referred to as UKP) where she (hereon referred to as KP) teaches. The aim is to gain a detailed understanding of CPD in the institution she is with for more than seven years. The interview process involved selecting this participant based on her expertise, leadership position in said institution, and her over a decade of experience with staff, program, and learner development in the university. The interview questions were listed to gather information about the CPD experiences, challenges faced, and the impact of CPD in her institution over these years and on their teaching practice.

Thematic analysis was the choice of framework to understand the data because it focuses on identifying and analyzing patterns, themes, or meanings within the said qualitative data. It hopes to uncover the underlying ideas, concepts, or experiences that emerge from the data. It involved a more interpretive and inductive approach to categorizing and sorting the data. It gave room for flexible exploration of the data, with codes and themes emerging directly from the data itself. This analysis aims to gain a clearer understanding of the meaning and explore the complexities and nuances of UKP's CPD actuality as per KP's input. With that, this study seeks to identify and interpret underlying themes and patterns of factors influencing different types and impacts of UKP's CPD dynamics. This involved exploring the context, subtext, and connections between themes, as well as considering the subjective interpretations of KP's perspectives of UKP's CPD.
Data collection procedure

This qualitative research data collection procedure involved interviewing KP to gain insight into KP's experiences with Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in UKP. The interview

is the primary data collection method that began with obtaining her informed consent and explaining the purpose of the study and the nature of the interview.

The interview questions were designed to elicit descriptive responses from the key person. Open-ended questions were used to encourage KP to share her experiences, opinions, and perspectives on CPD. The interview was conducted online via Google Meet to accommodate her schedule and it did to an extent, give room to a free-flowing conversation. As the researcher, active listening skills were used to ensure KP felt comfortable and heard. Prompts were used to encourage KP to elaborate on her responses and to clarify points. The interview was mobile audio-recorded with KP to enable transcription for a thorough analysis of the data. The analysis process involved observation of data to link and sum problems and strengths her environment has to the CPD efforts and optimistically, determine the form and matter of the gap if one exists.

Familiarization with the data took place followed by initial coding for categorization of the overall content of the data conveyed in response to the questions. This began with reading and re-reading the interview transcript to gain a deep understanding of the data. Then, the process of coding the data by identifying and highlighting meaningful segments of data was completed in a table. The description of the codes that are aimed to capture the key ideas and concepts discussed in the interview to identify the emerging theme. The categorical themes were then reviewed to be least arbitrary and reflected the data adequately. Parallel to the above was the naming of the categories which was concluded with the writing of the analysis.

The Interview Questions
PART 1 Set of Questions
1. Please introduce UKP and its CPD situation.
2. How much has UKP grown from your 1st year till today? During the management shift and fully online courses were rolled out, were staff given training and support to be onboard the online courses roll-out?
3. No. of courses and academic staff from when UKP started till now?
4. The number of yearly CPD activities from then till now? Further questions are listed in the Q1 APPENDIX snip-PNGs of the data transcribed.
5. Has the CPD activities gotten better over the years?
6. Has HR/Management become more receptive and intently with CPD planning in UKP? Or derogated?
7. Is there room for improvement? What improvements do you see needful?
8. What, in your years with UKP, are key issues revolving around the CPD involvement of lecturers?
9. Please give your description of how best should UKP's CPD future be.

PART 2 Set of Questions
1. What types of CPD has UKP had in the years you have been with them? In eg.
2. Who decides on the CPD types and schedule for lecturers in UKP?
3. What are the factors that made most CPDs happen in UKP thus far?
4. What measures are taken by UKP to increase CPD participation among UKP lecturers? Rewards/obligation/KPI linked/etc.?

5. What are the challenges faced by teachers/lecturers in attending the CPD in UKP?
6. What is the overall response from lecturers when a CPD is announced?
7. Do lecturers propose CPD proactively in UKP? If yes, which one was most successful? What was the need for that CPD proposed?
8. Was there a poor response CPD initiative that happened in UKP? Why? What happened? Did management review that CPD for lessons learned?
9. From your analytical view, what factors influenced the active involvement of teachers/lecturers in CPD in UKP?
10. What do you think is the current CPD need in UKP? Is it heard? Is it voiced? Is it heard?
11. How is the impact of teachers'/lecturers' active involvement in UKP CPD on learners/program quality/institutional goal?
12. What are your suggestions to increase the active involvement of lecturers in CPD in UKP?

Result and Discussion

UKP has undergone major leadership change and retrenchment was a measure taken as a business decision by the investors. The core goal of quality education, review and revision of the existing programs offered, and the academics, support, and leadership positions all underwent a reshuffle that delivered outcome which was beyond the lecturers' control. The series of events after that were again out of control; the pandemic. The readiness of UKP by coincidence, a rollout of a new leadership plan prior to the pandemic, and the online onboarding of the schools was smoother than expected. The two major shifts in the institution's goals and priorities to facilitate those goals were controlled by the new leadership which normally would have a timeline and set of outcomes. The interlacing of the business goals to the academic goals shows a struggle but the partnership did not sway. This kept both parties of UKP on track with the common goal: to increase the enrolment of students, program sales/course sign-up, and the financial growth of the institution which, hopefully, will lead to an increase in academic recruitment. Although the pandemic did shake the execution mode and sustenance of the goal achievement, UKP did reach its common goals while it embraced the said two major shifts. This is most certainly praiseworthy.

According to Nooruddin (2019), a study by means of discussion on how to encourage teachers, school leaders, administrators, and policymakers to pursue ongoing, contextualized professional development was pursued. The study synthesizes the findings and presents key elements of effective professional development. The data analysis revealed that school leaders pursue CPD in a very systemic and process-oriented manner, starting from exploring individual teachers' needs to providing them with avenues to upgrade their teaching with timely support and monitoring.

Like most private universities, the task load of such major shifts is overwhelming with a small quantity of academics. Academic recruitment did grow over the years and the number of postgraduate programs also increased. This set the momentum high for publications to meet the MOHE & qualifying criteria set by different bench markers across the country and the world. These are key components to grow as a University in the national platform alongside coping with the said major shift. Here, the leaders of UKP and the Human Resources department set key performance indexes to evaluate the academics along those preliminary goals but did not identify the gap and this missed the opportunity to fill such a glaring gap.

According to Obwogi (2012), the research found that some human resource (HR) activities, such as feedback on performance and recommendations for training/counseling, are poor. The applicability of HR tools in driving university activities, such as the use of performance-based management, reward, and motivation, is minimal. The staff capacity constraints in both universities continue to be a problem. A review of compensation and working conditions will also deter brain drain and motivate teaching staff. Universities need to set aside a proportional amount of funds for staff development in order to encourage staff to continuously engage in research and publication. Addressing human resource gaps and promoting the continuous professional development of the teaching staff are therefore urgently needed.

However, the UKP's Human Resource Department also lacks staff or leadership with academic background or experience having worked with higher education institutions. UKP also suffered the lack of a functional teaching and learning center/team that could have worked hand in hand with the human resources team to identify, perform training needs analysis and propose or develop adequate CPD to match the speed of the major shifts. This added to the turmoil of the UKP academics to be left to figure out their needs and go along with the UKP leaders' decision on the types of training, workshops, seminars, and online courses to attend. These predominantly were paired with the leaders' goal to migrate to a highly online teaching and learning community; the new identity of UKP, to be able to make available more courses across the nation where this became a blessing in disguise during the pandemic and such series of decisions lead to many CPD programs made available to the academic but the academic could not personalize these CPDs to their personal career growth. This gap needs a large and aggressive intervention for UKP to sustain and enjoy its ongoing growth seen in the past 5 years.

Recommendations and Conclusion
The gap that is prevalent now is void where purposeful planning, analysis, development, communication, and post-participation evaluation need to be filled, proactively, and intentionally by the UKP's leaders, academics, and the human resources department. It is inevitable that the major shift brought commendable growth and now, it is high time for UKP to communicate and gain clarity on the overall goal and phenomenon of CPD and take seriously the impact of vague spread and presentation or made-available CPDs to the academics with the best clarity possible. Phogat (2022) stated that insisting that teachers' competencies change with CPD implementation provides them with sufficient avenues to upgrade quality teaching practices by monitoring a variety of factors, including staff support, CPD organization, pedagogy practices improvisation, innovations, and correcting the aspects of teaching the vital role of leadership.

The inevitable outcome of poorly communicated CPD goals is that they can result in several negative consequences and could be costly in the long run. This includes a lack of direction. With time, this will snowball and UKP will find the lecturers lack direction and focus, confused about what is expected of them as the list may appear interlaced. Presumingly, a vague list is presented, then the risk is that they may become ill-equipped on how to meet the expectations, what tools and help are available, and purposeful time management in designing their personal and reflective CPD journey. This can cause a lack of motivation, as they may not understand the purpose or relevance of the CPD. Furthermore, inadequate

planning and unclear goals lead to lecturers not knowing what skills or knowledge they need to develop. This can result in ineffective CPD programs that do not address the specific needs of the lecturers or the institution.

To add to that, limited engagement may cause lecturers to disengage from the CPD program if they do not understand the goals or the value of the training. This can result in low participation rates and a lack of enthusiasm for the program. These here can make it difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of the CPD program. This can make it challenging to determine whether the program is meeting the needs of the lecturers or the institution. All the above are threats that could meet UKP if the red flags are not attended to soonest.

In summary, the effort to determine if the CPD plan is aligned with the teachers' needs ideally should begin with Training/CPD Needs Analysis. It is highly recommended that small groups of teachers meet up will help gather data by suitable methodology to gain insight if educators have a conscious plan for CPD or if it is mostly a top-bottom exercise. Whichever the predominance is, any given institution will need a conscious plan in place to, if one may say, indoctrinate the institutions' goals and objectives, and iterate it to the teachers.

It is recommended that further research is conducted within UKP to comprehend the depth and details of the challenges that have been described here. Further introduction to CPD, links to the evaluation and staff appraisal, purposeful motivation for academics to recognize and be able to communicate with school leaders paired with facilitating UKP leaders and academics to create a clear and comprehensive communication strategy for CPD goals and their delivery to the academic staff is timely.

The following are proposed to UKP to achieve the above
1. Conduct a thorough analysis of the academic staff's training needs, to ensure that CPD goals are tailored to their specific requirements.
2. Develop clear and measurable CPD goals that are aligned with the staff's training needs.
3. Establish a plan for delivering CPD training to the academic staff, including timelines, resources needed, and methods of delivery.
4. Communicate the CPD strategy to all academic staff, clearly explaining the goals, delivery plan, and expected outcomes.
5. With healthy intervals, evaluate and review the CPD strategy to ensure that it remains relevant and effective in meeting the staff's training needs.

Conclusion
According to ICB - InterConsult Bulgaria Ltd. (2018b), their research finding substantiates the significance of CPD training programs, and more importantly, this result demonstrates that mandatory CPD training programs during the initial teaching years are not sufficient to maintain teaching performance. As a result, academicians must take part in CPD training to update their teaching know-how. A university's CPD training program participation records and the teaching assessment ratings by students on eighty academicians were included in a study based on the data accessibility from both sources. Descriptive analyses revealed that the majority of respondents who were rated excellent by students attended CPD training programs. The said study pursued to bridge the empirical gap using quantitative secondary data from the years 2015 to 2017. Linear regression analysis revealed that 11% of the variance

in teaching performance was explained by participation in CPD training programs. The university's CPD training program participation records and the teaching assessment ratings by students on eighty academicians were included in its study based on the data accessibility from both sources. Descriptive analyses revealed that the majority of respondents who were rated excellent by students attended CPD training programs.

In conclusion, it is pertinent that the leaders in educational institutions derive a clear common vision of what are the institution's priorities, and what tools are needed to efficiently and effectively prioritize accordingly. Having acquired such clarity, it will need to consistently communicate with the academics and support staff. The hire-fire turnover's ability to negatively impact priorities' achievement can be curbed by having the institutions' goals and objectives iterated to the academics paired with a cyclical induction process in place. Such a cyclical process will require review and improvisation to meet the dynamics of micro-demands such as departmental challenges that perhaps are overpowered by the macro-vision. However, such reviews will seldom require wide-angle deviation. The goal and aim will still be within the frame. In such stances, the reliability and validity of conscious CPD measures will be higher. To add further weight to the CPD efforts, it is key for institutions to have goals and objectives that are centered around learners' quality, development, and industry achievement.

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