



*The Importance of Continuing Professional Development:
A Case of Adrar University Teachers*

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Abstract

The current paper is descriptive research that highlights the importance of continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers in Adrar University - Algeria. The central points in this paper are to identify: 1- the importance of CPD as it contributes to enhancing not just the teaching quality and performance but also the students' academic outcomes; and also 2- possible strategies to enhance an effective CPD for a better quality teaching. In an attempt to answer these questions, an open-ended questionnaire was developed and used to provide detailed and descriptive information about CPD's importance and practice at Adrar University. From a total of (30) teachers, the study revealed that the majority of them have received limited units of CPD and have an insufficient engagement in certain CPD practices as such the use of advanced technology. finally, the paper suggests that university teachers should engage in CPD. Besides, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research should verify the adoption of CPD in universities, particularly Adrar University as initiated in the National Quality Assurance Repository.

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- ✓ Effective CPD
- ✓ University teachers
- ✓ Adrar university

1. Introduction

Algerian higher education is undergoing profound changes in recent years. Higher teaching quality is an important condition to enhance students' outcomes. However, recent studies have realised that basic undergraduate and postgraduate training is not enough to maintain high standards of practice throughout a long teaching career. Thus, the failure of university teachers to keep up to date in their professional knowledge and attitudes is clearly detrimental to students, to the teachers themselves, and to higher education.

Furthermore, recommendations of the world health organization related to the Coronavirus era, requirements of the emerging technology tools for the classroom, the globalization of education, the increase of relevant knowledge and skills help the profession of teaching to become definitely demanding today than ever before. Consequently, teachers were compelled to use technology tools for interactions with their learners. Hence, continuing professional development (CPD) has become a feature therefore of the working life of this profession. As, it is expected to promote teachers' teaching skills, to keep their knowledge up to date, and to develop new proficiency required to pursue their profession. Which in turn, helps improve learners' achievements as well.

This paper is an attempt to assess the current teachers' attitudes towards the concept of continuing professional development (CPD) in Adrar university -Algeria, to highlight the importance of continuing professional development for teachers. Then, the researcher discusses possible strategies to encourage university teachers of Adrar to adopt effective CPD practices in order to experience success and career satisfaction.

2. Literature Review

2.1 What is CPD?

Continuing professional development (CPD) is described as the "lifelong education of professionals on specialized knowledge, skills, attitude and ethical and moral values after joining that profession" (Matriano, 2019). It also means: "maintaining, improving, and broadening relevant knowledge and skills in your subject specialism and your teaching so that it has a positive impact on practice and learner experience" (P. Scales et al., 2011). Besides, the term CPD includes all behaviours which are intended to effect change in the classroom (Saeed, 2011).

It is not easy to find a single definition of CPD in the literature, since there are several terms associated with CPD, such as in-service education and training, teacher development, professional development, staff development, career development, and lifelong learning. All of these terms, often have overlapping meanings and different definitions (Bolam & McMahon, 2004).

Day and Sachs (2004) suggest a general definition of CPD, which we view, embraces all the above-mentioned terms. According to this definition, CPD is a term used to "describe all the activities in which teachers engage during the course of a career which are designated to enhance their work". The concept of CPD, therefore, has diverse meanings, the 'purposes, processes and impacts are often undifferentiated and diffuse' (Day & Sachs).

Something important to mention here is that CPD activities do not have to mean formal training only. CPD activities may include something as simple as attending internal or external courses and conferences or joining networks, or perhaps just participating in reflective discussions among colleagues, or maybe finding a new activity that you would like to try in one of your classes (Al Balushi, 2018; Crockett, 2010). Trying something new and reflecting in your teaching, as a researcher, we consider this is the heart of what CPD is all about.

2.2 Purposes of CPD

According to Kennedy (2005), promoting quality education in schools requires paying more attention to the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of teachers which are considered an essential component for creating a positive impact on their pedagogy and teaching practices. The following mentioned points are some of CPD's purposes, of course, the list is not exhaustive, but it includes the most essential purposes:

- To improve students' learning/ achievements (Opfer & Pedder, 2010).
- To help teachers become aware of the new techniques of teaching.
- To critically reflect on your teaching practice and take corrective measures.
- To design and implement different strategies/activities to address students' issues.
- CPD ensures that you maintain and enhance the knowledge and skills you need to deliver high-quality teaching.
- CPD ensures that you and your knowledge stay relevant and up to date. You are more aware of the changing trends and directions in your profession. (Crockett)

3. Methodology

The current paper is a descriptive research that emphasises the importance of CPD for Algerian teachers in Adrar higher education. It reports on a survey of thirty teachers of different departments from Adrar university. The purpose of this research is to answer the following questions:

1. What are the teachers' perceptions towards the concept of continuing professional development (CPD) in Adrar University?
2. What is the importance of CPD?
3. What possible strategies can be implemented to achieve an effective CPD for better quality teaching?

3.1 Research Instruments

Physical distribution of the questionnaire was basically impossible due to Covid-19. Therefore, the questionnaire was mailed to a sample of teachers, of some departments in the university of Adrar; for the sake of gathering rich and detailed information from participants about their views towards CPD.

3.2 Study Participants

Only thirty (30) out of forty (40) participants volunteered to participate in this study and completed the written questionnaires which were mailed to them. All the collected questionnaires qualified for analysis.

Twenty-six (26) participants were males, while four (4) were females. Also, participants varied in the number of years of training experience. (i.e., 7 had 4-10 years, and 23 had more than 10 years of training experience). Concerning educational degrees, 10 had a Ph.D., while the rest had a Professor degree. The respondents are experienced enough in the field of teaching and

thus can be expected to inform well about the CPD situation in Algerian universities particularly Adrar university. Besides, the respondents came from different regions in Algeria, which means they used to teach in the four regions in Algeria before joining Adrar university; which may make the sample rather representative of the whole population. It is worth noting that the information provided here will strictly be used anonymously for research purposes.

3.3 Data Collection Instruments and Data Analysis

The paper uses an open-ended questionnaire (see Appendix 1), developed by the researcher to gather data from teachers of Adrar university to answer the three research questions formulated above. The choice of collecting data using an open-ended questionnaire was made after taking into account different considerations.

First, the open-ended questions tend to encourage participants to qualify their responses. Second, they were more suitable for participants over interviews; because interviewing required a face-to-face meeting which was not possible due to Corona Epidemic. Finally, with open-ended questions, it was easy to provide detailed and descriptive information about the perceptions among teachers of Adrar university towards CPD. Also, to explore teachers' views whether CPD is truly important to enhance the teaching quality and the students' academic outcomes.

The open-ended questions were developed after reviewing an extensive literature review related to CPD and were selected to fit the objectives of this study. The open-ended questionnaire was reviewed by the Supervisor, a lecturer in the department of English at the University of Amar Telidji Laghouat, Algeria. Besides, an Expert in Science Education and professional development at the University of Adrar to check the appropriateness of the questions and their prompts. The questionnaire was developed in the English Language as the study is done in the framework of EFL studies. However, the questions were translated into Arabic to appeal to more university teachers.

The received responses were carefully read, then converted into a Microsoft Excel table. To let emerge any possible tendencies, the average response for each questionnaire item was calculated. For the same reason, the Excel table was divided into three categories to match up the research questions and figure out the percentage of informants who had similar responses.

4. Findings – Discussion

This section provides the key findings of the research as well as discusses the results. The findings are presented around the following points:

- 4.1** The teachers' perceptions towards CPD in Adrar University.
- 4.2** The importance of CPD for teachers in higher education.
- 4.3** Possible strategies to achieve an effective CPD for a better quality teaching.

4.1 The teachers' perceptions towards CPD in Adrar University.

Responses to this question resulted in different opinions, the agreement between all of these views is that CPD involves some form of learning. This might include training for new skills, some type of learning, or keeping oneself up-to-date. Developing skills and teaching practices are the most frequently argued understanding of continuing professional development (CPD). The data also show that the concept of CPD seems to be ambiguous for few teachers.

4.2 The Importance of CPD for teachers in higher education.

The literature related to the importance of CPD reveals that the Algerian government is interested in CPD, but does pay lip service to it (Missoum,2015). For teachers, the rapid spread of technology, the use of the internet, and digital tools give so many new opportunities for a teacher to develop. For example, by watching academic series via the internet. Now, it is often the use of these tools in a classroom that is creating new areas for teachers to learn about. So, that is why CPD at the moment is frequently focused on areas related to technology or using the internet in the classroom.

The questionnaire data indicate that most teachers are eager to participate in CPD, especially novice teachers. The teachers' responses seem to believe that CPD is important because it ensures you continue to be competent in your profession. Besides, it enhances your confidence and motivation to contribute to your career development as you become more effective in your workplace.

4.3 Possible strategies to achieve an effective CPD for a better quality teaching.

The data collected seem to include additional suggestions thought by the teachers towards possible strategies that can be implemented to achieve an effective CPD for better quality teaching at Adrar university. The data analysis of the survey questionnaire has let some new strategies emerge. The following points reflect some possible solutions to achieve an effective CPD:

1. Establishing a training programme for the benefit of professors.
2. Establishing a unit of measurement from training team in the departmental-level.
3. Creating a manual that contains performance indicators with national and international standards.
4. Create a program to develop professors' performance.
5. To use information and communication technologies in education.
6. Concluding cooperation agreements in the field of e-learning with national and international universities.
7. Conducting a study on how to prepare e-learning programmes for students.
8. Every single department should have a continuing training programme to enable teachers advance and be dynamic in the field of higher education, which is in constant change and evolution.
9. To encourage teachers' mobility, nationally and internationally, particularly renowned scholars, so as to provide regular training and exchange of experiences at lower costs.

5. Conclusion

Algerian higher education is undergoing profound changes in recent years. The shift from the traditional system to newly designed degrees based on the Licence- Master- Doctorate (LMD) model, put teachers in front of serious challenges. Unfamiliar modules have been planned with often new content to teach. Besides, the use of technology and the implementation of digital tools in Algerian universities created new areas for teachers to learn about. Therefore, continuing professional development became an obligation rather than an option.

In an effort to contribute to gathering data necessary to inform about the study's purposes, the researcher uses an open-ended questionnaire of thirty teachers of some departments in the

University of Adrar. The purpose of this paper was to highlight the importance of CPD; it is limited to investigate the teachers' perceptions towards the importance of continuing professional development in Adrar university. Also, it aimed to identify some possible strategies to enhance an effective CPD for a better quality teaching.

The current study has found that CPD should not be underestimated- it is a career-long obligation for practicing professionals. A central condition for improving teaching quality, essential for teachers' knowledge to stay relevant and up to date, and eventually an important factor in students' academic achievement. Moreover, some teachers emphasised that CPD should be a frame rather than an opinion. Technology in the field of higher education is changing so fast, that one needs to be up-to-date to get along this advancement. Therefore, it is fair to remind that basic undergraduate and postgraduate training is not enough to maintain high standards of practice throughout a long teaching career. It may offer you a job, but not, professionalism.

Nevertheless, it is fair to admit that recently, Algerian Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research has started to initiate some institutional efforts towards quality assurance. But, is that enough to assure high-quality teaching? Or, shall Algerian higher education consider more measures to improve both the teachers' training and the students' outcomes. Measures such as applying periodic assessments to teachers' knowledge, skills, and productivity in their profession; that is believed not only will help in evaluating the quality of teaching but also will aid in discovering to what extent a teacher's professional knowledge is kept up-to-date. It is strongly hoped that this recommendation will be taken into consideration because teachers need to reassess and re-evaluate themselves through continuing formations so that they could discover their weaknesses to turn them into strengths.

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2. Appendices:

(A): A Questionnaire for University Teachers in Adrar

Dear Teacher,

I am a doctorate student and I am conducting a research about “**The Importance of Continuing Professional Development for University Teachers**”. Therefore, you are kindly requested to respond to this questionnaire, which is a tool for gathering necessary data for the accomplishment of my research work. Please tick the appropriate box(es) or make complete statements whenever necessary. Be sure that your responses will be anonymous and will be used for research purposes only. Thank you for your time, effort and collaboration.

Researcher’s name

Isma MEGHENI

* Obligatory

Part One:

1. Would you specify your gender please? *

- a) Female
- b) Male

2. Would you specify your degree please? *

- a) Master
- b) Magister
- c) Doctorate

3. How long have you been teaching at university? *

- a) 1-5 years
- b) 5-10 years
- c) More than 10 years

Part Two: Importance and Impacts of CPD (Continuing Professional Development) What is your opinion about the following statements related to CPD’s importance and impacts? (Please put (X) inside the selected square to mean ‘Crucial’, ‘Important’, ‘Not Important’, or ‘Unsure’)

N	Statements	Not Important	Important	Crucial	Unsure
1	CPD ensures you continue to be competent in your profession.				
2	Professional Development programmes benefit the University as a whole as such: Visibility of University gets increased as it produces more researches, academic papers...so on.				
3	Makes you more aware of teaching and learning issues.				
4	A good teacher will achieve better results from their learners than a poor one and vice versa.				

5	CPD ensures your capabilities keep pace with the current standards of others in the same field.				
6	CPD allows you to meet long-term career goals.				
7	Provides new information that is new to you.				
8	Prompts you to seek further information and training.				
9	Has positive impacts on learner's outcomes.				
10	Improves your understanding of National Curriculum requirements.				
11	Allows you to work with colleagues. Thus, you may gain additional experience from more qualified teachers.				

Part Three: (Recommendations/Suggestions for Improvement) the areas university teachers need to develop more are... (Please put (X) inside the selected square to mean 'I strongly agree', 'I strongly disagree', 'agree', or 'disagree')

N	Statements	I strongly agree	Agree	I strongly disagree	Disagree
1	Teachers' teaching techniques / practices				
2	Teachers' attitude with colleagues and learners				
3	Teachers' test preparation skills				
4	Teachers' use of modern technology tools like ICT, E-learning, and Video Conferences				
5	Teachers' use of Video Conferences for interacting with learners in particular PhD Students				
6	Others?				

Other recommendations to improve the CPD of university teachers in Adrar:

Part Four: (Effective CPD) What is your opinion about the following statements related to strategies to enhance an effective CPD? (Please put (X) inside the selected square to mean 'I strongly agree', or 'I strongly disagree')

N	Statements	I strongly agree	Agree	I strongly disagree	Disagree
1	Creating a training programme for teachers.				
2	Establishing the measurement unit from the training team at the department level.				
3	Create a guide containing performance indicators with national and international standards.				
4	Develop a programme to develop the performance of teachers.				
5	Others ?.....				

thank you very much for the reply

استبيان للأساتذة الجامعيين بأدرار: (B)

عزيزي الأستاذ،
أنا طالبة دكتوراه وأجري بحثاً حول "أهمية التكوين المهني المستمر لأساتذة الجامعة". لذلك يرجى التفضل بالإجابة على هذا الاستبيان، الذي يعد أداة لجمع البيانات اللازمة لإنجاز عملي البحثي. يرجى وضع علامة في الخانة المناسبة أو الإدلاء ببيانات كاملة عند الضرورة. تأكد من أن إجاباتك ستكون مجهولة المصدر وسيتم استخدامها لأغراض البحث فقط. شكرا لك على وقتك وجهدك وتعاونك.

اسم الباحثة

أسماء مغني

* اجباري

الجزء الأول:

1. يرجى تحديد جنسك من فضلك؟ *

 (أ) أنثى (ب) ذكر

2. يرجى تحديد درجتك العلمية من فضلك؟ *

 (أ) ماستير ل.م.د. (ب) ماجستير (ج) دكتوراه علوم (د) دكتوراه دولة

3. كم مضي على التدريس في الجامعة؟ *

 (أ) 1-5 سنوات (ب) 5-10 سنوات (ج) أكثر من 10 سنوات

الجزء الثاني: أهمية وتأثير التكوين المهني المستمر (CPD).

ما رأيك في البيانات التالية المتعلقة بأهمية وتأثيرات CPD؟ يرجى وضع هذه الإشارة (X) داخل المربع المحدد لاختياركم لتعني 'جد هام'، 'هام'، 'غير هام' أو 'غير متأكد'

قم	البيانات	ج د هام	ه ام	غ ير هام	غير متأكد
1	يضمن لك استمرار الكفاءة في مهنتك.				
2	برامج التكوين المهني تفيد الجامعة ككل حيث يزداد بروز ووضوح الجامعة لأنها تنتج المزيد من الأبحاث الأكاديمية ... إلخ.				
3	يجعلك أكثر وعياً بقضايا التدريس والتعلم.				
4	يحقق الأساتذة المتمرسون نتائج أفضل مع الطلبة بدلا من الأستاذ غير المتمرس.				
5	يجعل التكوين المهني المستمر قدراتك تواكب المعايير الحالية للآخرين في نفس المجال.				
6	يسمح لك التكوين المهني المستمر بتحقيق الأهداف المهنية الطويلة المدى.				
7	يوفر معلومات تكون جديدة بالنسبة لك.				
8	يحفزك بالبحث عن المزيد من المعلومات والتدريب.				
9	للتكوين المهني المستمر تأثيرات إيجابية على نتائج الطالب.				
0	التكوين المهني المستمر يحسن فهمك لمتطلبات المناهج الوطنية.				
1	يتيح لك فرصة الاحتكاك مع الزملاء من الأساتذة المؤهلين مما قد يكسبك المزيد من الخبرة الإضافية.				

الجزء الثالث: توصيات / اقتراحات للتحسين.

في اعتباري الشخصي، المجالات التي تحتاج لمزيد من التطوير لدى الأساتذة الجامعيين تتمثل في النقاط المذكورة أسفله. يرجى وضع داخل المربع المحدد لاختياركم علامة (X) لتعني 'أتفق بشدة'، 'أتفق'، 'أختلف بشدة' أو 'أختلف'

رقم	توصيات واقتراحات	أتفق بشدة	أتفق	أختلف	أختلف بشدة
01	تقنيات و ممارسات التدريس للأساتذة				
02	سلوك الأساتذة مع الزملاء والطلبة				
03	مهارات الأساتذة في كيفية إعداد الاختبار				
04	مهارات الأساتذة في استخدام الأدوات التكنولوجية الحديثة مثل: تكنولوجيا المعلومات والاتصالات، التعليم الإلكتروني... الخ				
05	مهارات الأساتذة في استخدام الفيديو للمؤتمرات للتفاعل مع الطلبة وخاصة طلبة الدكتوراه				
06	غيره؟.....				

توصيات أخرى لتحسين التكوين المهني المستمر لأساتذة الجامعة في أدرار:

الجزء الرابع: فعالية التكوين المهني المستمر (CPD).

ما رأيك في العبارات التالية المتعلقة ببعض الاستراتيجيات الفعالة لتعزيز التكوين المهني المستمر؟ يرجى وضع علامة (X) داخل المربع المحدد لاختياركم ليعني 'أوافق بشدة'، 'أوافق'، 'أختلف بشدة' أو 'أختلف'

رقم	توصيات واقتراحات	أتفق بشدة	أتفق	أختلف	أختلف بشدة
01	وضع برنامج تكوين لفائدة الأساتذة				
02	تأسيس وحدة القياس من فريق التكوين على مستوى القسم				
03	استحداث دليل يحتوي على مؤشرات الأداء مع المعايير الوطنية والعالمية				
04	وضع برنامج لتطوير أداء الأساتذة				
05	غيره؟.....				

شكرا جزيلا على الرد