

AN ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN PUBLIC SECTOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN PAKISTAN

Nayyar Hassan

nayyar.hassan@ell.uol.edu.pk

The University of Lahore

Hafsa Karamat

hafsa.karamat@ell.uol.edu.pk

The University of Lahore

Aqsa Khalid

Aqsa.khalid@ell.uol.edu.pk

The University of Lahore

Muzammal Haider

Muzammal.haider@ell.uol.edu.pk

The University of Lahore

Khalid Mehmood Ahmad

Khalid.ahmad@ell.uol.edu.pk

The University of Lahore

Abstract

The present research examines the public sector secondary school English language teachers' perception regarding formal professional development and their attitude towards it. The purpose of this research is to explore the underpinning factors concerned with the professional development that hinders the outcomes of professional development programs arranged by the public sector administration. To fulfill the objectives of this study a mixed method approach has been selected. The research tools include: survey questionnaire, class room observations and interviews. The result reveals that most of the English language teachers are well aware of formal professional development. However, their attitude towards their professional development is not positive. The findings of this study also uncover some of the factors such as job security, equal annual increments, lack of resources, poor classroom environment, and absence of feedback and lack of collaboration among teachers, principals, program organizers and teacher trainers which are very crucial in framing the attitude of English teachers. The result of the research further suggests that the entire education system requires improvement including collaboration among the teachers and administration, class room environment, examination system, performance based promotion system, relevance of the professional development programs with teacher's professional development needs and teaching practices.

Key words: Directorate of Staff Development, Formal Professional Development,

1. Introduction

‘Teacher development is the professional growth a teacher achieves as a result of gaining increased experience and examining his/ her teaching systematically’ (Glatthorn , 1995, p.41). Professional development is promotion of a person in his/ her professional career. Professional development is very important. It covers all the formal experiences such as (workshops, seminars, short or long courses) and informal experiences like (reading research articles, watching documentaries on television, discussions on professional issues with colleagues etc) (Ganser, 2000). Professional development of teachers is the only key way to improve the quality of education. It plays a crucial role in modifying the teachers' beliefs and their classroom practices. This relationship is not so simple, it is rather ‘dialectic’ “moving back and forth between change in belief and change in classroom practices”(Thompson 1992,p.6 &). According to Alkhateeb(2013) in order to enhance

the professional development of teachers, it is very essential to observe teachers' attitudes towards teaching profession. It provides useful information and helps in the organization of effective teacher education programs. Tok (2011) provides a more practical definition of attitude that it is a person who considers teaching as a respectful profession and is enthusiastic about his/ her professional development. With reference to Kreitner and Kinicki (2007) 'Attitude' covers cognitive, behavioural and affective components along with all type of a person's sentiments related to the world (Sears, Freedman, & Peplau, 1985). Richardson (2003) states that knowledge of one's attitude is the most recent idea in professional development. In addition to, the attitude of especially English language teachers towards professional development contribute a lot in not only in their own professional development but also play a vital role in the professional development of their colleagues. They are the ones who are the creators, developers and promoters of the continuous process of professional development in their workplaces. Hence, they play a vital role in making the whole field of professional development a challenging process. Researchers have proved that any professional development program which does not satisfy the teachers' professional needs proves to be a waste of time, energy and resources. If English language teachers find the professional development program inapplicable in their classroom practices or they feel that it doesn't play any role in their career promotion, such a situation drops the level of their motivation towards professional development. Consequently, it badly affects their attitudes towards absorbing or learning the new concepts taught in these professional development programs. In fact there is a dire need to have a deep insight into the factors that negatively affect the attitudes of English language teachers of public sector towards professional development in Pakistani context.

This research explores the attitude of English language teachers towards professional development. It would further highlight the different underpinning factors related to the attitude of English language teachers. It would enlighten the public sector school administration about the existing attitude of English language teachers and will help them to improve the attitude of English language teachers towards professional development. Hence this research is an effort to enhance the current state of English teachers' professional development in Pakistan and it will also be fruitful for the English teachers, students and their parents. It would further help to improve the education system through the improvement in teachers' professional development.

Objectives:

- To investigate whether English language teachers of public sector teaching at secondary level are aware of formal professional development.
- To explore the attitude of English language teachers teaching in public sector secondary schools towards their own professional development?
- To explore the attitude of English language teachers working in public sector secondary schools towards the formal professional development of their colleagues?

2. Literature Review

Professional development is enhancement of special skills required for a particular profession. It is the professional competency that a teacher gains as a reward of professional experiences and self-reflection on his/ her teaching practices (Glatthorn,1995). Professional development activities are continuous and they include all types of trainings given to an individual, systematic application of the new concept in the classroom and getting the feedback regarding effectiveness of these activities (OECD, 2005). Teachers must be continuously exposed to a

variety of learning opportunities such as training sessions, workshops, scholarships to get higher education, collaboration with their colleagues, teacher trainers and supervisors so that they can conduct new researches (Melnick and Adams, 1975). Professional development is not only essential for a teacher to learn new professional skills and knowledge however it secures its high importance because with the help of professional proficiency a teacher gets a chance to correct her/his teaching methodology, a chance to enhance her/his teaching skills, help the students to enhance their skills, to enhance her/his own language skills, helps teachers to get adjusted with new teaching environment and get in harmony with new and experienced colleagues. Teachers are accepted as the core subjects as well as the objects of educational reform. According to Fullan (1998) because of the existence of personal differences in the teachers, there is no surety of effectiveness and success of the professional development programs attended by them. It is not sure that whether the teachers will practice the newly gained knowledge in the classrooms or not (Breen, Candlin et al. 1989 & Lamb 1995). Fullan (1993) maintained that basic of the lack of effectiveness of new innovative ideas and methods is their irrelevance with their actual teaching environment but the main reason of their failure is the attitude of teachers towards change. Therefore, in order to bring the change, there is an urgent requirement to improve the attitude of teachers. Attitude is the ability to react negatively or positively towards a particular set of stimuli (Anastasy, 1968). It is one's concept influenced by one's feelings regarding a specific issue (Triandis, 1971). These attitudes are comprised of cognitive, behavioural and affective elements including all types of feeling related to the outer world (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2007). Gupta (1978) stated that the successful teaching of a teacher is directly influenced by his/her attitude towards teaching profession. He argues that a teachers' attitude towards professional development has a deep impact on her over all professional efficiency. David (2013) maintains that the teachers who are not satisfied with their working environment tend to show negative attitude towards their profession. According to Omolara (2015) a few of the factors that influence a teachers' attitude include poor attitude of government, lack of job satisfaction and low level of motivation. Allport (1935 as cited in Zaidi, 2015) states that the following four common conditions are important to build the attitudes '(1)The accretion and integration of responses learnt in the course of growing up, (2)The individual differentiation or segregation of experiences,(3)The influence of some dramatic experience, (4) The adoption of readymade attitudes.' The attitudes keep on changing with time and experiences (Zaidi, 2015, p. 46). One of the objectives of professional development programs is to reform the attitudes of teachers. A lot of studies have been conducted to gain an insight into the fruitfulness of the teacher development activities on the attitudes of teachers. Hussain (2004) explored that teacher development programs were not effective in modifying attitudes of teachers. Verma (1968), revealed that teacher development programs play a positive role in the formation of teachers' attitudes towards their students and institution. Singh (1996) stated that teachers' attitudes related to class room teaching and their attitude towards their profession can be changed by providing them continuous professional development opportunities. According to Alkhateeb (2013) by conducting the study on teachers' attitude, the attitude of teachers can be transformed into more positive attitude towards professional development. The information gained from the study is very useful in planning and organization of teacher training programs.

3. Methodology

This research included 50 in service conveniently selected English language teachers teaching at secondary level, 2 teacher trainers and 5 principals of public sector in Lahore. 5 English language teachers were conveniently selected to have class room observations to obtain

the firsthand knowledge related to English language teachers' attitude towards professional development and their teaching practices.

The data was collected through mixed methodology. The data about teachers' awareness of professional development, their attitude towards their own professional growth and the professional development of their fellow teachers was collected by using a questionnaire consist of qualitative and quantitative closed ended questions (rating scale of five). A qualitative structured and a semi structured questionnaire was utilized to collect data from the principals and teacher trainers of public sector related to English teachers' attitude towards professional development. All the interviews were recorded and later transcribed with the consent of interviewees. Formal classroom observations of randomly selected English language teachers were taken in detail with teachers' consent.

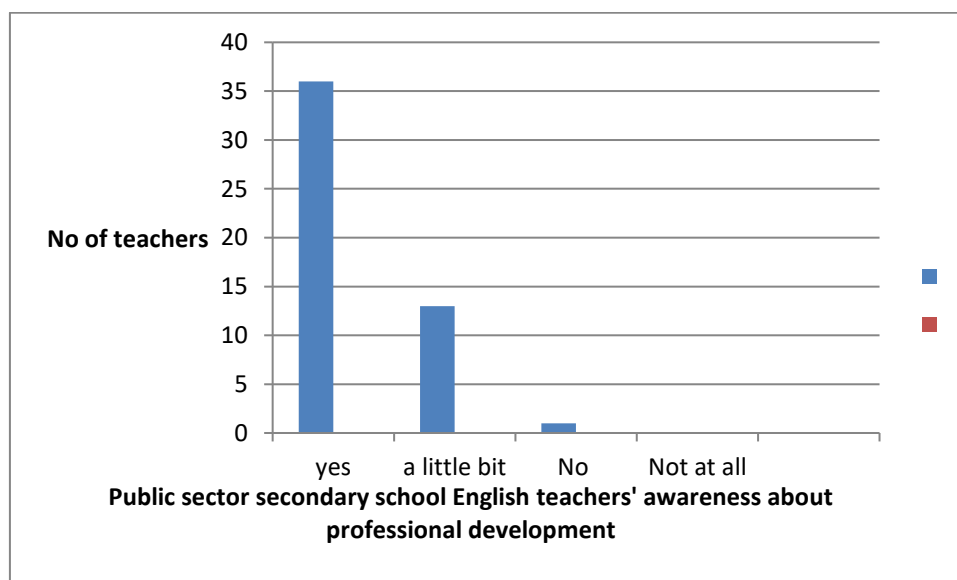
The quantitative data that was gathered from the survey questionnaires was analyzed statistically through tabulation, percentages were calculated and graphs were prepared. The qualitative data gathered from the survey questionnaires, interviews and classroom observations was analyzed and interpreted descriptively.

4. Analysis

4.1 Analysis of Survey Questionnaire

A questionnaire consist of both qualitative and quantitative questions was divided among 50 conveniently chosen English language teachers of the public sector. The questions having quantitative data were analyzed statistically through tabulation however the qualitative questions were interpreted descriptively.

4.1.1 Awareness of Teachers about Professional Development



Most of the English language teachers of public sector have a good concept of the term professional development however some teachers had hardly some idea about professional development. None of the teachers had no idea about professional development.

4.1.2 Discussing Teaching Experiences with their Fellow Teachers

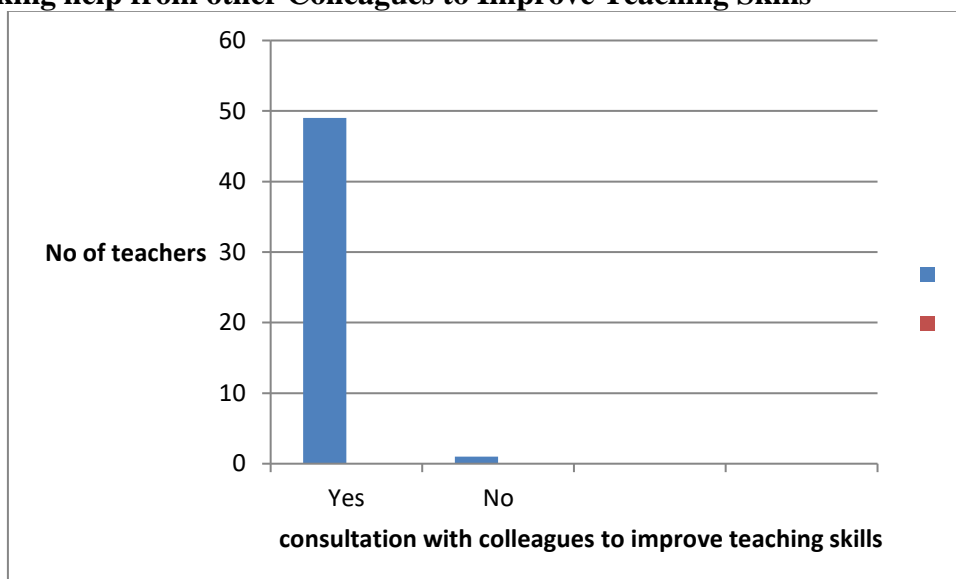


Less than half number of English language teachers teaching in public sector at secondary level revealed that they often share their learning experiences gained during professional development programs with their fellow teachers. Many of the English language teachers always discuss the professional development experiences with their fellow teachers. Some of the English language teachers of public sector revealed that sometimes they share their teaching experiences with their fellow teachers. Not a single English language teacher declared that they never discussed their professional development learning with other teachers.

4.1.3 English Teachers’ Attitude towards the Professional Development of their Fellow Teachers

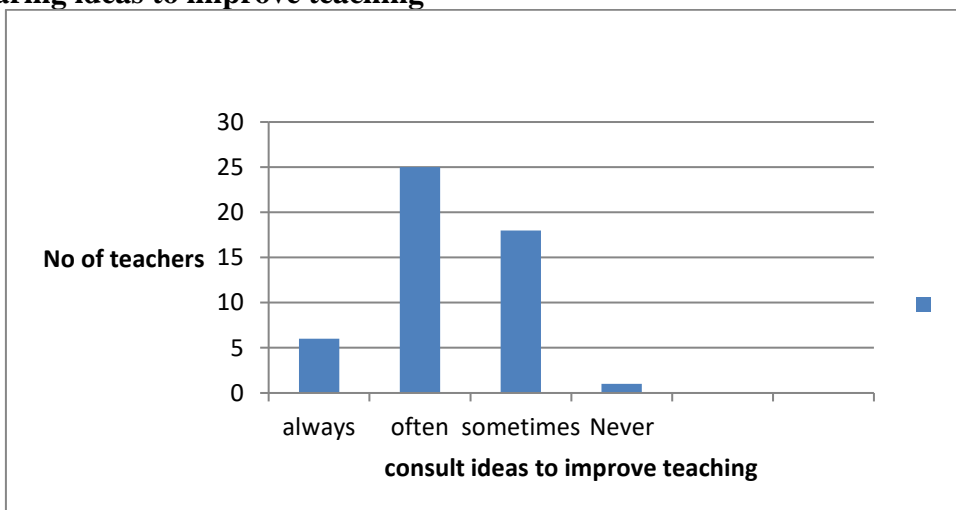
Most of the English language teachers stated that their colleagues show positive attitude towards their professional growth. They always felt good if another colleague learnt some new teaching methodology or she/ he improved English language skills. They wished that their colleagues would become better English language teachers. Some of the English language teachers stated that their colleagues depicted very motivating attitudes with reference to the professional growth of their professional fellows. A minor number of English language teachers claimed that their fellow teacher did not take any interest in the professional development of other colleagues. In addition, only one English language teacher revealed that her/ his colleagues’ attitude is quite demotivating towards the professional development of other teachers.

4.1.4 Taking help from other Colleagues to Improve Teaching Skills



Most of the English language teachers teaching in public sector consulted fellow colleagues for the sake of learning English language techniques and take their advice regarding teaching of English. They felt free to discuss all the problems they faced inside their English language classrooms. However only a single English language teacher teaching in the secondary school of public sector stated that she had never consulted any of his/her colleague to discuss the problems regarding English language teaching.

4.1.5 Sharing ideas to improve teaching



Less than half of the English language teachers declared that they often consulted their colleagues to gain new ideas in order to improve English language teaching. Some of the English language teacher revealed that they frequently take help from their colleagues to get advantage from their teaching experiences. Nevertheless, many of the English language teachers accepted that they only sometimes consulted their fellow teachers. It revealed that they seldom consulted the advice of their colleagues to solve the issue related to teaching English language. Only a single English language teacher sustained that she never consulted any of

her/his colleagues to solve the problems which she/ he faced while teaching English language or in order to improve her/ his English language practices.

4.2 Analysis of Principals' and Teacher Trainers' Interviews

Most of the principals and teacher trainers of the public sector secondary schools declared that the experienced English language teachers had low level of motivation towards their professional development. One of the reasons they stated was job security. They further revealed that the English language teachers were the permanent faculty members of the public sector schools so they felt that their jobs were secure. No one could do anything against them if they did not work up to the mark. Another reason they explained was the poor teaching environment of the classes. They explained that the classes were very massive and there was too lengthy syllabus to be covered by the teachers. Moreover, there was unavailability of audio visual aids in the schools. A few of the principals and teacher's trainers told that both willing and unwilling teachers are present in the schools. Teacher trainers stated that the English language teachers normally did not participate and they remained passive throughout the workshops. The teacher trainers further revealed that the attitude of the experienced teachers was quite stubborn. The English teachers who had twenty or thirty years teaching experience in the public sector held a point of view that they their method of teaching was perfect. They did not think that they needed to improve their teaching methodology. They wanted to teach English by using traditional methods and did not want to change it. However, these programs were made mandatory for the teachers. Nevertheless, only a few principals maintained that the English language teachers serving in the public sector schools were unwilling to get themselves professionally developed. Principals and teacher trainers both stated that professional development is essential for all teachers at every level. They suggested that government should take some actions to improve the poor condition of the schools. The administration should hire more number of English language teachers and provide more funds to buy teaching resources. There was even no library in the whole schools. The English language teachers were extremely overburdened due to a big number of (60-100) students in each class. Some teacher trainers told that the English language teachers were unable to manage the big classes which had badly affected the quality of English language teaching and learning. Some principals also suggested that one cause of poor attitude of English language teachers was the cramming based system of examination in the public sector schools. They further revealed that this type of examination system did not match with the activity based teaching. English language teachers were helpless to teach English to the students in the same way the students were going to be assessed. They accepted the reality that they used to assess the English language teaching proficiency of teachers through the results of the students. They believed that if a teacher showed good results it proved that she was professionally developed and if not then it showed that she required more professional trainings. They told that professional development programs must be arranged more frequently and the recruitment system of the English language teachers should also be improved. English language teachers should be provided at least one year pre service training after their selection. During that period continuous assessment of their English language teaching skills should be done. At the end of the year a written and demonstration test should be taken. If an English teacher qualified that test and showed high level of motivation, devotion and interest for teaching profession only then he/she should be finally appointed, sent to the classes to teach the students and regularized. One of the principal stated that a teacher who did not have a positive attitude towards teaching and learning could not show good performance in his/ her professional career.

4.3 Analysis of English Language Teachers' Classroom Observations

It was observed from the class room observations that although English language teachers had good command on English language but they were not communicating in English. The whole interaction in the class was done in the first language. Neither the teacher nor the students spoke a single word of English. They were more exam oriented and syllabus focus. It seemed as if they were rushing through the syllabus. The classes had a traditional look and they were using traditional method of teaching English. There was a good rapport among the students and teachers. Classes were mainly teacher centered. Some students were repeatedly giving bookish answers if the teacher asked any question. The only audio visual aid used by all the teachers was black board. Students used to copy all the work either from the board or some grammar book. There was a good rapport between the students and the teacher. It was also observed in one of the class that the class had become a bit formal due to the observation as a teacher said, "Today we are going to have a very formal lecture." This revealed that the English language teacher was not teaching the way he used to teach in his daily routine. It was also observed from the students' notebooks that students in the public sector did not do any written work independently rather they copy essays from grammar books.

5. Discussion

The main factors of the research study are discussed below.

5.1 Teachers' Professional Development

Researchers have had a deep insight into the teachers' professional development and have produced a list of criteria to explain the concept of professional development of teachers. Hoyle (1995) sustains that it includes the skills used for social functioning, enhancing teachers' knowledge, the skills required for the application of teaching knowledge while teaching in the language classroom, class control, class room management skills, decision making power, the knowledge related to professional values and it follow up. Lange (1990, p. 250) explained this as a "process of continual intellectual, experiential and attitudinal growth of teachers" that covers entire teaching and learning process. The English teachers teaching in public sector have a clear concept of professional development. They are well aware of its need, its importance, what does it include etc. It has been observed that English language teachers teaching in public sector are competent and well equipped because they very frequently attend free professional development programs arranged by the public sector. It has been observed that English language teacher of public sector contribute in the professional development of their colleagues. Whatever knowledge and skills they learnt from professional development programs, they freely share them with their fellow teachers. The element of jealousy among the English language is rarely seen in the public sector. It contradicts to what Crookes (1997, as cited in Mohamed, 2006) mentioned that that data obtained from majority of the countries of the world revealed that the schools neither give knowledge to the teachers nor they help them in the professional development. The underpinning factor behind this type of positive attitude is the system of equal annual increments given to teachers. Moreover, the professional development of teachers does not have any link with their promotion and up gradation. Some of the English language teachers revealed that now a days the teachers are hired on merit basis. A tough written test and interview is conducted so that only competent candidates are selected. The selection process as well as the professional development system of public sector is well organized. The teachers are required to have a pre- service professional degree along with subject specialization. There is a dire need of developing positive attitude towards professional development to inculcate a culture full of learning in education sector.

5.2 Professional Development and Teachers' attitudes

The teachers' attitude is crucial factor in the professional development of teachers. The effectiveness of professional development programs depends on the attitude of teachers. If the

teachers will be motivated and they will exhibit a learning attitude, they will learn more. The factors such as the relevance of the professional training programs with reference to the professional needs of teachers and the teaching and learning environment are very important regarding the modification of teachers' attitudes. More the programs will be relevant, the more positive attitudes will teachers have towards professional development. Many researchers have declared that teachers' attitude towards professional training programs provide a clear reflection regarding the effectiveness of teacher development programs and the particular teaching beliefs of the teachers (Pajares 1992 as cited in Marija Javornik Krečič and Milena Ivanuš Grmek 2010). The attitude and class room teaching of the teachers have a close relation with teaching principals, values and beliefs (Kagan, 1992& Fang, 1996). Therefore, the transformation of attitudes of teachers towards professional growth is the most crucial thing. The professional development programs will be more effective if the teachers will hold a positive attitude towards their professional development. According to the results of the present research, the less experienced English language teachers are more eager to get professional training than the experienced teachers. Similarly, as stated in OECD (2009) that experienced teachers do not want to attend professional development programs and develop their teaching skills. The new English language teachers are more inclined towards learning new teaching methodologies than the teachers who have more experience. They may think that they have been working for many years and now less time is left in their retirement. They may seem to just pass their time by practicing the same traditional methods of teaching English language. The second reason may be that they may have become so used to the old traditional methods of teaching and now feel it difficult to get them replaced by the modern way of teaching. Another reason can be that they may have to work hard to learn new methodologies than the young and fresh English language teachers. Another crucial factor is job security. It plays an important role in the transformation of their attitude. The English language teachers teaching in public sector also enjoy the non- threatening environment which ensures them job security. They do not feel any need to strive for their survival in the public sector. Once they have been appointed in the public sector they feel that their jobs are secure till the time of retirement. Chaudry (2012) has also brought into light some of the other issues that affect the attitudes of the public sector teachers towards professional development. He reveals that the professional development programs organized in the public sector are lecture based, behaviouristic, bore, not relevant with professional needs of English language teachers and with the entire the educational environment. Consequently, the motivational level and interest of the teachers towards professional development is very low. Some teachers told that the professional development programs are irrelevant according to their professional needs and not applicable in their English language classrooms. Whatever they learn in the professional development programs is inapplicable due to cramming based examination system, massive classes and lack of resources. Furthermore, according to English language teachers working in public sector, professional development of teachers has any relation neither with the increase in their salary nor with their promotion. All these factors play the role of a catalyst in entire procedure of professional development. Unless the English language teachers are motivated, contented and engaged, no professional development can be observed in the whole education system. However, the evaluation of these professional training programs is taken into consideration, the Directorate of staff development (DSD), principals, teacher trainers and English language teachers all are passing their time. There is more paper work than the output. No one feels pain about the time, energy and money that is spent for the organization of these professional development programs. Consequently, it can be said that there should be a positive change in the attitude of the whole education system of public sector. The English language teachers are

reflecting the attitude of government towards education system. It is the time to come out from dreams and live in the world of reality. Neither the teacher trainers nor the principals observe the class room implementation of those frequently attended workshops by the English language teachers. No evaluation, no feedback and no check and balance also has depicted an important role in framing attitudes of English teachers. To sum up it can be said that the attitude of English language teachers towards professional development is the mirror image of the attitude of whole public sector administration. It is the time, to stop playing blame game and peep into ones' own attitude and deeds.

6. Conclusion

It has been concluded that a majority of the secondary school English language teachers of public sector are well aware of professional development and its purpose. It is noted that a great frequency of formal professional development programs are conducted by the public sector during summer vacations. These programs are fully funded and attendance of the public sector school teachers is mandatory as it was notices in OECD(2009). A good collaborative teaching and learning environment is observed in the public sector where teachers eagerly share their professional ideas and encourage each other. They show their delight if any of their colleagues learns any new teaching methodology and no atmosphere of professional jealousy has been noticed. The underpinning factor behind their professional cooperation and collaboration is the irrelevance of professional development with annual increments and promotion. However, their attitude towards their professional development is not satisfactory. The underpinning factors behind transformation of this type of demotivating attitude include the poor condition of classrooms, lack of teaching resources and cramming based examination system. Moreover, the professional development programs do not satisfy the professional needs of these teachers. Their professional competency is measured in terms of the annual results of students based on rote learning. Furthermore, there is lack of collaboration among the teachers, principals, directorate of staff development (DSD) and teacher trainers. All are working in their own domain where more is done as a paper work. No feedback regarding the effectiveness and implementation of these programs is taken neither by the principals, DSD or teacher trainers. Therefore, it can be said that the poor attitude of English language teachers is the mirror image of the attitude of the entire education department of public sector. It is the true image of the attitude of government towards the education system. It is recommended that government should take some serious action to improve the entire education system.

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