



<https://aljamei.com/index.php/ajrj>

Continuous Professional Development (CPD): Challenges Faced by In-Service Special Education Teachers and Possible Solutions

Afshan Tabassum

PhD Scholar, University of Education, Lahore
afshanimran23@gmail.com

Dr. Rizwan Ahmad

Assistant Professor, University of Education, Lahore
rizwanahmad@ue.edu.pk

Mahrukh Ijaz

PhD Scholar, University of Education, Lahore
mahrukhijaz15@gmail.com

Abstract

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) has become a key way to keep teachers skilled and improve education in today's schools. For special education teachers, who need to teach in different ways, support student behavior, and work with parents and other teams, CPD is especially important. This study looks at the problems that in-service special education teachers in Punjab, Pakistan, face and finds solutions that can help make CPD more effective. A quantitative descriptive design was used, with a survey given to 320 teachers from government and private special education schools. The findings show that teachers value CPD, but face issues like heavy workloads, limited career growth, financial problems, and lack of support from school leaders. Statistical analysis also shows differences based on factors like how long they have been teaching and their qualifications. The paper concludes that for CPD to work long term, there needs to be strong support from schools, better training options for teachers, and policies that help keep learning and improving.

Keywords: continuous professional development, special education, teacher training, professional growth, Pakistan

Introduction

Good teaching is a major part of any country's progress in education. The quality of teaching directly affects how well students learn and teachers need to keep learning and growing to make sure their teaching keeps up with new knowledge and technology. In special education, professional learning is especially important because teachers have to meet a wide range of student needs, including learning, physical, and emotional challenges. In Pakistan, where the special education area is growing, many in-service teachers say they struggle to find effective CPD programs that fit their needs and work environment.

Teacher quality is the main thing that helps improve education. In today's educational environment, the idea of continuous professional development (CPD) has become a key strategy to help teachers keep improving their knowledge, teaching skills, and attitudes in response to changing student needs. For special education teachers, who need to create personalized lessons, change their teaching methods, and support students with various disabilities, CPD is not just a requirement, but a necessary part of their job (Darling-Hammond 2017). Around the world, education systems have put a lot of effort into CPD to improve teaching effectiveness and student results.

According to the OECD (2019), teachers who regularly participate in CPD are more likely to be innovative in their teaching and enjoy their jobs more. However, in many developing countries, including Pakistan, CPD programs are often not consistent, not relevant to local needs, and not evaluated properly. Because of this, teachers' interest in CPD decreases over time, and the changes they are supposed to make in their classrooms don't happen (Fahim 2021).

In Pakistan's education system, especially in special education, the importance of CPD has grown a lot in the past decade. The creation of special institutions and teacher training departments shows that the government is taking this seriously. However, there are still many challenges in putting these plans into action. Teachers often attend short-term, repeated sessions that don't match their daily responsibilities. Also, problems like large class sizes, lack of money, and not having enough substitutes further prevent them from participating (Khan, 2022). The purpose of this study is to look at the factors that make it hard for teachers to work with students who have special needs. It also wants to find out how these challenges affect teachers and what can be done to help. This will help both the teachers and the education system better understand these problems and how they affect special education. The study also aims to suggest possible solutions.

In Pakistan, teacher education has been guided by government policies that focus on both pre-service and in-service training. But even with these plans, there are still problems with the quality, delivery, and evaluation of the training. Teachers who work with children who have disabilities often face issues such as too much administrative work, a lack of resources, and not enough support from parents, which stop them from fully taking part in professional development. These situations show how important it is to look into the problems with CPD and develop practical strategies to improve it.

Globally, researchers like Ward and van der Mars (2020) say that CPD is a continuous process of professional learning that focuses on improving student success. It goes beyond one-time workshops and includes things like reflection, working with other teachers, and self-directed study. In Pakistan, Fahim, Ain, and Bazai (2021) say that education reforms will only work if teachers are given the right skills and proper support through regular training. Based on these ideas, this study looks at the specific problems that in-service special education teachers face with CPD and offers solutions that fit international standards but are possible within Pakistan's education system. This study aims to find out the problems that in-

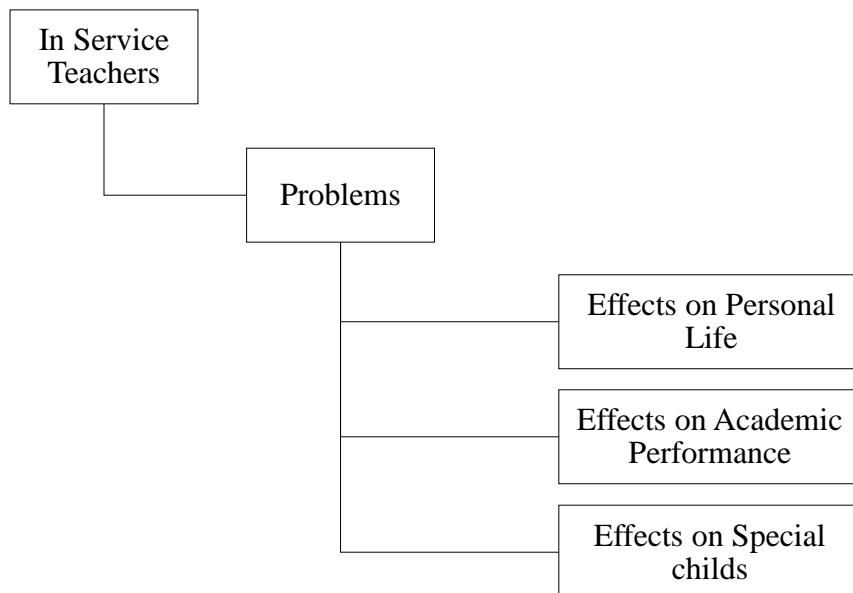
service special education teachers face in engaging with CPD and to suggest possible solutions to make CPD more effective. The main idea is that professional learning should be part of a ongoing process, supported by school leadership, funding, and reflective practice, rather than being treated as a single event.

Review of Related Literature

Continuous Professional Development refers to organized efforts to improve teachers' knowledge, skills, and classroom practices (Guskey, 2017). In developed countries, CPD includes things like mentoring, reflective thinking, and working in groups of teachers (OECD, 2019). However, in Pakistan, CPD is often just short workshops without follow-up (Fahim 2021). Continuous Professional Development is a process that helps educators improve their professional skills throughout their careers. Guskey (2017) defines CPD as a planned and organized effort that helps teachers get better knowledge, improve their teaching, and achieve better results for students. In the field of special education, CPD does more than just improve technical skills; it helps develop empathy, teamwork, and creativity in meeting the needs of different students. The idea behind continuing professional development (CPD) is about learning all your life and thinking carefully about what you do. Schoon (1983) said professionals learn best when they think about what they've done, look at their experiences, try out new ideas, and improve them as they get feedback. For special education teachers, this means always updating their lesson plans, checking how students are doing, and working with other teachers and families. In richer countries, CPD is part of the school system through groups where teachers learn together, support programs, and online learning tools (OECD, 2019; UNESCO, 2021). Teachers take part in different kinds of learning, like workshops or groups where they work on teaching problems together. Yet in Pakistan, CPD hasn't become a regular part of how teachers work. Often, training is done from outside and focuses more on following rules rather than helping teachers improve.

Figure 1

Conceptual framework of the study



Purpose of Research

This study is trying to find out what stops teachers from taking part in CPD and what can make training more useful. The specific goals are:

1. To look at what teachers think about how useful and easy to get CPD programs are.
2. To find out what problems at work and personal issues stop teachers from joining CPD.
3. To suggest good ways to make CPD better for special education.

Based on these goals, the study asks:

1. What big problems do teachers who are already working in special education face in CPD?
2. How do things like gender, education level, and teaching experience change how teachers see CPD?
3. What can help make CPD work better and last longer?

This research wants to learn what teachers think about the challenges they face in their jobs teaching special education. This will help school leaders, teachers, parents, and groups that support children's rights to understand the issue more fully. It will also help school leaders know the problems teachers face in their daily work, so they can make better plans to address them. This study will help leaders in the community understand what teachers are going through and how they can improve the support and services for children with special needs. It will help society stay informed and stop similar issues from happening again. This research helps school leaders understand the problems teachers face in their work with special education and how they manage these challenges. There are many difficulties in teaching special education.

Limitations of the Study

Table 1

Because of time and money limits, the study has some restrictions.

Sr. No	Description	Quantity
1	1 Total Teachers for HI students	598
2	2 Total Teachers for VI students	384
3	3 Total Teachers for MC students	593
4	4 Total Teachers for PH students	310
5	5 Total Population	1885

Challenges in Implementing CPD in Special Education Many studies show that there are several problems that stop special education teachers from taking part in and benefiting from CPD.

1. Lack of money, not having enough experts, and poor planning are often mentioned (Mahmood & Iqbal, 2020). Teachers often use old materials or face problems like long travel distances and not enough substitute teachers.
2. Another big issue is the lack of motivation and recognition. Teachers get upset when their CPD efforts aren't noticed with awards, higher pay, or promotions. Fullan (2016) says that lasting change in teaching comes from both want to improve (intrinsic motivation) and getting rewards from the school (extrinsic incentives). Without recognition, teachers see CPD as something they have to do, not something that helps them grow.
3. Also, the quality of the training is a concern. Many teachers find workshops too similar and not related to real classroom situations. They say these sessions focus too much on

theory and not enough on practical use. This makes it hard for them to use what they learn in their teaching a problem seen in many developing places (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017;Guskey, 2017).

Cultural and other problems make things even harder. In Pakistan, especially in rural areas, old traditions and strict school rules make it hard for teachers to have a say in what and how training is done. Teachers often feel like they can't influence what topics or methods are used, which makes them less interested and involved. Professional Development in the Pakistani Context Pakistan's National Education Policy (2018) recognizes professional development as a key part of improving education. The Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training and the provincial departments have started several CPD programs, such as the Continuous Professional Education (CPE) model for school teachers. However, the way these programs are implemented varies across different special education sectors.

In Punjab, the Directorate of Special Education organizes training for teachers who work with visually impaired, hearing impaired, and physically challenged learners. Even with these efforts, the training is not well-coordinated among all the people involved, which causes the training to be spread out and not very effective. Teachers often feel that there is not enough follow-up after training and that the results of the training are not included in how they are evaluated. Also, most training sessions are just one or two days long, which doesn't give teachers enough time to learn deeply or try out new ideas in their classrooms (Khan, 2022).

Studies show that teachers are more interested in CPD when it directly helps them in their jobs and classroom work. Research by Fahim et al. (2021) and Mahmood and Iqbal (2020) points out that being actively involved and having training that is relevant to their situation are important for positive changes. In this regard, mentoring, peer observation, and school-based inquiry projects are more effective than single-day workshops.

The main goal of this study is to look at these issues in a detailed way and to suggest practical solutions based on what teachers experience. The research aims to find the most common problems that stop teachers from taking part in CPD, to understand how teachers would like to learn professionally, and to suggest policy changes that could make professional development more meaningful, available, and long lasting. The research uses a pragmatic approach, recognizing that educational problems need real, situation-specific solutions rather than just theoretical answers. By focusing on what people actually feel and what trends can be measured, the study gives evidence that can help both schools and the national education system make better plans.

Continuous Professional Development refers to organized efforts to improve teachers' knowledge, skills, and teaching methods (Guskey, 2017). In more developed countries, CPD includes mentoring, reflective practice, and professional learning communities (OECD, 2019). However, in Pakistan, CPD is often just short workshops with little follow-up (Fahim et al., 2021). Scholars point out that there are several big challenges: poor planning, low motivation, and a lack of recognition for teachers' involvement in CPD (Mahmood & Iqbal, 2020). These issues show why there is a need for ongoing, relevant, and rewarding learning opportunities.

Looking at the literature, we see that CPD is not just about updating skills but also about how teachers form their professional identities. When teachers engage in reflective practice, work with peers, and receive mentoring, they start to see themselves as lifelong learners capable of adapting to new educational situations. For special education teachers, this is especially important because they often work in isolation in their own schools. Sharing experiences and learning together can help them feel less alone and more confident as a team. Research from other countries shows that professional learning communities (PLCs) and

school-based mentoring improve teaching quality and student results (OECD, 2019). However, in Pakistan, these collaborative models are not widely used in special education schools. The strict hierarchy in these schools doesn't allow much room for teachers to make shared decisions.

Another big problem is the lack of money for professional training. Many government schools have very little budget for teacher development. In some areas, the money is spent on basic administrative tasks, leaving very little for teacher training. Without enough resources, the programs often use old materials and trainers who may not be experts in special education. Teachers often say that the sessions are not engaging or interactive, and they are just lectures. Also, there is little use of technology in training. Even though digital learning has become common worldwide, most special education teachers in Pakistan don't have access to online learning resources. The COVID-19 pandemic briefly made more people interested in online training, but it's not clear if this interest will last because of limited internet access and poor technology.

Besides institutional problems, personal motivation also plays a role in how much teachers participate in CPD. Some teachers don't feel excited about training because previous experiences were not useful or interesting. Others say that family responsibilities and heavy workloads make it hard to find time for learning. These personal challenges combine with the bigger system issues to create a complex situation that hinders progress. However, most teachers agree that professional development is important for staying up-to-date, especially with the fast changes in inclusive education and new technologies.

This study is guided by a framework that combines adult learning theory and reflective practice. It assumes that effective professional development involves teachers who are active in learning from their experiences. Training should be hands on, tailored to specific situations, and done in a way that encourages teamwork. Evaluating CPD should not only look at how satisfied teachers are or whether they attend, but also how their beliefs and teaching methods change. In Pakistan, evaluations are rarely done. Even when feedback forms are collected after training, they are never analyzed in a meaningful way. This lack of evaluation makes it hard to learn from the training and to scale up successful models.

In designing this study, a descriptive quantitative approach was chosen to analyze patterns across a large group of teachers. The study included all in-service special education teachers working under the Punjab Department of Special Education. A stratified random sample of 320 teachers was selected to ensure that different disability groups and geographic areas were represented. The data was collected using a structured questionnaire developed after a thorough review of existing literature and discussions with experts. The questionnaire had five sections covering demographics, availability of CPD, support from the institution, perceived barriers, and how CPD affects teaching. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Before the main survey, a pilot test with thirty teachers tested the reliability of the tool, which had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89, confirming that it was internally consistent.

The data collection followed ethical standards, including informed consent, voluntary participation, and maintaining the privacy of the participants. The questionnaires were distributed in both print and digital formats, based on accessibility. Out of 350 forms, 320 were returned and considered usable, giving a response rate of 91 percent. The data was analyzed using SPSS v.26. Where descriptive statistics summarized the average scores and standard deviations. Inferential analyses such as t-tests and one-way ANOVA were used to look at differences among groups at a significance level of 0.05. These analyses provided

insights into how factors like gender, level of education, and teaching experience influenced how teachers perceived CPD.

Initial analysis showed that teachers usually have a positive view of professional learning, with an average score of 4.12. But when asked about support from the school and follow-up, their responses dropped a lot, showing they are unhappy with the help they get from the school leaders. The biggest problems were not having enough money, no substitute teachers available, and no proper way to check on progress. These results match what other studies found before, like Khan (2022) and Fahim (2021), who said that not enough resources and poor teamwork keep professional learning from working well. The data also show that teachers with higher degrees, like M.Phil. or Ph.D., take part in CPD more often and feel it is more useful than those with just a bachelor's or master's degree. Women teachers were a little more likely to take part in CPD than men, which suggests that gender and the way the school supports learning might be connected in a complicated way. The numbers from this study help us understand not just what the problems are, but also which ones are most important. Table 1 lists the main problems and the solutions people suggested. Conceptual framework of the study.

Methodology Narrative

This study aimed to find out the problems that in-service special education teachers face when taking part in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and to find real solutions to make CPD more effective. The research used a quantitative descriptive method because the main goal was to describe and understand what teachers think, not to test cause and effect relationships. This method allowed the researcher to collect data through structured questions and to draw conclusions that could be applied to a larger group of special education teachers working under the Ministry of Special Education. The study was based on pragmatism, which focuses on practical results and applying knowledge to solve real-life issues. This approach helped the researcher choose methods that could directly inform policies and teaching practices. The study used a survey method because it is good for collecting a lot of data quickly from a large group. The questionnaire was created after a thorough review of existing literature on teacher development and made some changes from those used in previous CPD studies by Fullan (2016) and Guskey (2017).

The population of the study included all in-service special education teachers in Punjab, both men and women, working in government and semi-government schools managed by the Directorate of Special Education. A sample of 320 teachers was selected using a stratified random method to ensure that both urban and rural areas, as well as different types of disabilities (visual, hearing, physical, and intellectual), were represented. Each group was included in proportion to maintain balance.

Before the main data collection, a pilot study was done with 30 teachers who were not part of the final sample. This pilot was used to make sure the questions were clear and easy to understand. The reliability of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's alpha, which gave a score of 0.89, showing strong consistency. Feedback from the pilot group helped improve the wording and order of the questions to make them easier to follow.

The final questionnaire had five sections. The first part collected basic information like gender, education level, teaching experience, and type of school. The other four sections looked into teachers' views on CPD opportunities, the support they get from their schools, the barriers they face, and their beliefs about the outcomes of CPD. Teachers answered on a five-point scale, from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Data was collected directly by the researcher, with help from school principals and local officials. This ensured that teachers understood the study's purpose and that their

responses would be kept private. Consent forms were given along with the questionnaires, and taking part was optional. Out of 350 questionnaires sent out, 320 were returned completely and filled in properly, which is a high response rate of 91%. To analyze the data, the researcher used both descriptive and inferential statistical methods with SPSS version 26.

Descriptive statistics like averages, standard deviations, and frequency counts were used to summarize the responses. Inferential methods such as t- tests and one-way ANOVA were used to check if there were significant differences based on factors like gender, experience, and education level. The significance level was set at $p < .05$. The results were interpreted in the context of existing research and the current situation in special education in Punjab. The quantitative data was supported by written comments from the teachers, which helped explain the statistical findings. These insights provided a better understanding of the institutional and personal challenges that prevent teachers from fully participating in professional development.

Table 2

Example of Table from Thesis (Demographic Distribution)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n = 320)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	140	43.8
	Female	180	56.2
Qualification	Master's	220	68.7
	M.Phil	80	25.0
Teaching Experience	Ph.D	20	6.3
	1–5 years	90	28.1
Institution Type	6–10 years	110	34.4
	Above 10 years	120	37.5
Institution Type	Government	250	78.1
	Private	70	21.9

Results, Interpretation, and Discussion

The study found a complex picture of the professional development situation for inservice special education teachers in Punjab. The survey data shows that most teachers believe CPD is helpful for improving classroom performance and managing students with different needs. The average scores for statements about motivation and professional commitment were above 4.0 on a five-point scale, showing strong support for CPD. However, scores for items about availability of programs, support from the school, and financial aid were lower (around 2.8 to 3.2), suggesting that teachers want more support but find it hard to access.

Further analysis showed differences between various groups. A t-test found that female teachers participated in more CPD activities than male teachers ($t = 2.14$, $p < .05$), which might be because of differences in motivation or access. Teachers with higher qualifications, like M.Phil. and Ph.D. were more involved in professional learning than those with only a master's, supporting the link between academic background and self-directed development (Fahim, 2021). ANOVA tests also showed that support from the school varied with teaching experience.

More experienced teachers rated administrative support lower than newer teachers, possibly because they feel stagnant or are not recognized. These results align with international

studies (Fullan, 2016; OECD, 2019), which say that CPD should be flexible and relevant for teachers at all stages, avoiding repetition or outdated training.

The results can be grouped into four main topics, each showing a different challenge that affects CPD participation and its impact. Table 2 Major Problem Areas and Potential Solutions Identified by Teachers (N = 320) Problem Category Description of Issues Mean (M) Rank Suggested Solutions Institutional Barriers Limited training budgets, lack of substitutes during training, weak administrative follow up 3.21 1 Increase funding, assign trained coordinators, link CPD to promotion Professional Motivation Teachers feel unrecognized; workshops rarely aligned with needs 3.15 2 Offer recognition certificates, incentives, and relevant content Program Quality Repetitive content, poor resource persons, lack of hands-on activities 3.09 3 Include expert trainers, practical sessions, and updated technology Evaluation and Follow-up Absence of post-training support, minimal monitoring 2.98 4 Implement mentoring and peer review systems

Interpretation of Findings

The quantitative findings show that CPD is seen as an important tool for professional growth, but teachers often feel that training is not regular or connected to their real classroom work. The biggest problems reported institutional barriers and lack of motivation suggest that the school system still sees professional development as a one-time event, not something that happens continuously.

Most teachers are not happy with how often and in what ways they get training. They said that training opportunities are mostly limited to sessions held in provincial capitals, making them hard to access for those in remote areas. These issues match what Khan (2022) found about rural teachers in Pakistan, who often face problems like travel costs and a lack of substitutes.

The data also shows how the actions of school leaders affect how much teachers get involved. Teachers said they are more likely to take CPD seriously when principals and department officers are actively involved, like by attending sessions, giving resources, and verbally recognizing teachers. On the other hand, when management treats training as just a formality, teachers quickly lose interest. From an analysis point of view, gender and qualifications also play a role in how teachers experience CPD.

Female teachers usually value teamwork and emotional support more, which might explain why they are more likely to take part (Mahmood & Iqbal, 2020). Higher qualifications also seem to connect with a stronger desire to learn and improve teaching methods.

Discussion

The results support the idea that successful CPD is more than just attending workshops. It needs a school culture that values learning, strong leadership, enough money, and respect for teachers as important contributors to school improvement. Teachers' positive attitudes towards learning show a potential that policymakers can help develop through better, more lasting CPD systems. According to Guskey (2017), good professional development includes clear goals, teacher involvement, and ways to measure how training affects student success.

This study shows that these elements are missing in the current CPD system of the Ministry of Special Education. Teachers often attend sessions that are theoretical, short, and not connected to actual classroom practice. Because of this, professional learning can feel forced rather than meaningful.

Another important finding is that there is no proper follow-up after training. Teachers said that once workshops are over, there is little or no structured evaluation or peer observation to help them keep using the new skills. This lack of follow-up stops long term changes in teaching and stops new practices from becoming part of everyday school life. Studies by UNESCO (2021) and OECD (2019) say that ongoing mentoring, online learning groups, and reflective journals are among the best ways to help teachers use what they learn in their daily work. Another common problem that participants mentioned is about the quality and relevance of the programs. Teachers feel that the continuing professional development (CPD) content is repeated, old, and not matching the new needs in special education, such as using inclusive technology and making individualized education plans (IEPs). The findings show that there's a need for up-to- date professional learning that includes digital teaching methods, assistive technologies, and proven teaching strategies.

School leadership also plays a big role.

Teachers said that school leaders often focus on administrative tasks rather than professional growth. Without good leadership, even teachers who are interested in learning have trouble staying in long-term development. As Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) pointed out, leadership support and resources are necessary for effective CPD at the school level. The results suggest that CPD should not be seen as a one-time training event. It needs to be part of a bigger system that connects teacher evaluations, career growth, and rewards. If teachers see CPD as something that helps them get promoted or get bonuses, they'll be more likely to value it as a way to improve their careers.

Implementation, Suggestions, and Conclusion

The study clearly shows that CPD for special education teachers can't be successful without proper implementation at both school and ministry levels. Teachers are ready to improve, but without coordinated policies and enough support, the results are limited. So, the focus should be on practical steps that make CPD sustainable, inclusive, and accountable.

The first step in making CPD effective is to include it in the school structure. The Ministry of Special Education, working with district offices, should create a dedicated Professional Development Unit. This unit should plan, carry out, and assess training programs. It should also keep a database of teachers to understand their needs, track their participation, and help them grow over time. Digital tools can be used to record attendance, collect feedback, and generate reports. This system makes the process clear and focused on results.

Second, professional learning communities (PLCs) should be set up in each special education school. These communities give teachers a chance to share experiences, talk about classroom problems, and share new teaching ideas. Evidence from around the world, like from Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) and OECD (2019), shows that PLCs help teachers reflect on

their work and reduce feelings of isolation. Setting up small teams at each school can make CPD part of daily routines instead of occasional events. Another important part of the implementation is making sure the CPD content matches what teachers actually need in the classroom. Workshops should include hands-on sessions on IEPs, adapted curricula, behavior management, and tools that help students with disabilities. Training should be different based on the kinds of disabilities the teachers work with, so each teacher gets relevant knowledge. Working with universities and teacher training colleges can also help make the courses based on proven teaching methods. Using digital platforms is another good way to bring CPD to schools in remote areas. Online courses, webinars, and virtual meetings can save travel time

and offer flexibility for busy teachers. After the pandemic, online and in-person CPD combined, called hybrid models,

are becoming popular. Setting up such models in Pakistan would need good technology, training in using digital tools, and rewards for online participation.

Mentorship and peer support should also be part of CPD.

New teachers can benefit a lot from experienced colleagues who have success in inclusive teaching. A clear mentoring system, where new teachers are paired with experienced ones for a set time, supports continuous learning. As Guskey(2017) found, peer coaching increases teachers' confidence and helps training turn into better teaching.

Evaluation and feedback are also important.

The study found that follow-up after training is often missing, leading to weak learning. So, CPD should include both ongoing and final checks. Teachers should be asked to write short reports or create portfolios after each session about how new methods were used in their classrooms. Supervisors can review these and give helpful feedback. This cycle of learning and reflection helps make CPD a lasting part of professional life.

From a policy angle, the Ministry of Special Education should create a standard CPD policy that outlines goals, how often training should happen, how it's judged, and how it's funded. The policy should require a minimum number of training hours every year for all special education teachers, similar to some other countries. This would ensure everyone follows the same rules and gets fair treatment. Making CPD part of promotion and evaluation also helps motivate teachers and aligns professional learning with career growth.

The research also shows that financial rewards and recognition are important for keeping motivation high. Many teachers said they feel their efforts in learning aren't recognized. Simple things like certificates, awards, or points can have a big effect. Giving allowances for travel, food, or learning tools during CPD can also reduce obstacles to participation. These steps can help build a culture that values learning and encourages teachers to keep improving.

Conclusion

This study shows that while in-service special education teachers in Punjab know the importance of continuous learning, there are still system-wide issues that stop this from working well. The findings show that CPD is often just about attending events and doesn't include ongoing support or real help from schools. Teachers are motivated, but they can't take part due to things like limited resources, not enough money, and weak follow-up. To make CPD more meaningful and ongoing, education leaders need to restructure how schools are set up, build learning communities where teachers can work together, and involve leaders in the process. Using digital tools, mentoring systems, and clear ways to check learning can help create a strong culture of lifelong learning. In the end, when teachers grow professionally, their students with special needs also benefit. By seeing CPD as a top priority, the Ministry of Special Education can help teachers become better at adapting to new changes and improve the quality of special education services all across Pakistan.

References

- Ahmed, S., Ain, N., & Bazai, S. U. (2021). Teachers' professional development in Pakistan: Barriers and opportunities. *Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, 9(2), 45–58.
- Avalos, B. (2011). Teacher professional development in Teaching and Teacher Education over ten years. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(1), 10–20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2010.08.007>
- Bayar, A. (2014). The components of effective professional development activities in terms of teachers' perspective. *International Online Journal of Educational Sciences*, 6(2), 319–327. <https://doi.org/10.15345/ijes.2014.02.006>
- Billingsley, B. S., Bettini, E., Mathews, H. M., & McLeskey, J. (2020). Improving working conditions to support special educators. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 55(4), 225–233. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1053451219864522>
- Bishops, R., & Bleecker, C. (2019). Challenges in professional development for special education teachers: A systematic review. *International Journal of Special Education*, 34(2), 45–60.
- Chan, T., & Hu, X. (2023). Artificial intelligence and student cognition in digital higher education. *Journal of Educational Research*, 96(3), 112–128.
- Chow, W. S. E., de Bruin, K., & Sharma, U. (2024). A scoping review of perceived support needs of teachers for implementing inclusive education. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 28(13), 3321–3340. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2023.2244956>
- Codina, G., & Robinson, D. (2024). Teachers' continuing professional development: Action research for inclusion and Special Educational Needs and Disability. *Education Sciences*, 14(2), 140. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14020140>
- Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., & Gardner, M. (2017). Effective teacher professional development. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.
- Desimone, L. M. (2009). Improving impact studies of teachers' professional development: Toward better conceptualizations and measures. *Educational Researcher*, 38(3), 181–199.
- Fahim, M., Ain, N., & Bazai, S. U. (2021). Teachers' professional development in Pakistan: Barriers and opportunities. *Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, 9(2), 45–58.
- Florian, L., & Spratt, J. (2013). Enacting inclusion: A framework for interrogating inclusive practice. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 28(2), 119–135.
- Fullan, M. (2016). The new meaning of educational change (5th ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Gul, R. (2014). Teachers' perception about continuous professional development.
- Guskey, T. R. (2017). Professional development and teacher change: Practices that improve teaching. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Iqbal, M. Z., & Mahmood, A. (2011). Leadership styles of secondary school heads and classroom management.
- Jones, K., & Brown, T. (2015). Barriers to effective CPD in special education: Insights from practitioners. *British Journal of Special Education*, 42(2), 123–140.

- Khan, A. (2022). Barriers to effective continuous professional development among rural teachers in Punjab. *Pakistan Journal of Special Education*, 28(1), 1–15.
- Khan, S., et al. (2016). Role of continuous professional development in improving the teaching–learning process.
- Mahmood, S., & Iqbal, H. (2020). Gender differences in professional development participation among teachers in Pakistan. *Asian Journal of Education and Training*, 6(3), 327–335.
- McMillan, J. H. (2012). *Educational research: Fundamentals for the consumer*. Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Ministry of Education, Government of Pakistan. (2009). *National Education Policy 2009*.
- OECD. (2009). *Creating effective teaching and learning environments: First results from TALIS*. Paris, France: OECD Publishing.
- OECD. (2019). *TALIS 2018 results: Teachers and school leaders as lifelong learners*. Paris, France: OECD Publishing.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Richards, J. C., & Farrell, T. S. C. (2005). *Professional development for language teachers: Strategies for teacher learning*. Cambridge University Press.
- Rodrigues, S., & Stevens, R. (2018). Professional learning needs of special educators: Gaps and opportunities for CPD. *Journal of Special Needs Education*, 33(4), 301–315.
- Shanks, R., & Robson, D. (2019). Multi-level challenges to teacher professional learning in inclusive settings. *Professional Development in Education*, 45(3), 401–415.
- Tomlinson, C. A., & Murphy, M. (2018). Supporting diverse learners: Improving teachers' skills through sustained professional development. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 51(2), 179–190.
- UNESCO. (2015). *Education for all global monitoring report*. Paris, France: UNESCO.
- UNESCO. (2021). *Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for education*. Paris, France: UNESCO.
- Webster, R., & Blatchford, P. (2019). Making sense of teaching roles: Support staff and teacher development in special education. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 34(3), 404–420.
- Westwood, P. (2013). *Inclusive and adaptive teaching: Meeting the challenge of diversity in the classroom*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

