

Faculty Training & Capacity-Building Challenges at Pakistan's Transnational Education (TNE) Institutions: Propositions for the Way Forward

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ABSTRACT

The research was undertaken to assess the problems and practices in relation to training and capacity-building of faculty members serving in the transitional education (TNE) institutions offering higher education qualifications in Pakistan. The study is based on a qualitative research approach that examines the various aspects of faculty training and development covering the issues particular to TNE institutes' teaching staff. The paper evaluates different requisites and unique training needs which are specific to TNE teaching and academic provision. The paper also elucidates the diverse methods and techniques employed for the delivery of training initiatives to TNE faculty in order to ensure academic rigor and quality at TNE establishments. The paper entails an interpretivist research philosophy, taking into consideration inputs from both primary and secondary data sources including published reports, working-papers, publications from regulatory organizations like HEC (Higher Education Commission) as well as narratives based on interviews of academics, administrators, and quality-assurance officials rendering their services at TNE institutes across Pakistan. Faculty capability has become the determining factor that influences academic quality, program equivalence and student experience in colleges affiliated with foreign institutions. In this paper, faculty training and development in the TNE sector in Pakistan is considered from two perspectives. Firstly, the paper examines faculty needs, deficiencies and contextual issues that contribute to the lack of professional development and pedagogical efficacy. Subsequently, the paper evaluates global and regional models of faculty capacity building; suggesting a contextualized framework for faculty capacity building suited to the regulatory and cultural context of Pakistan. Based on the holistic outlook from both primary and secondary sources of data, regarding various facets of faculty training and development, the paper finally offers some proposals and recommendations to enhance the productivity and performance of teaching staff at Pakistan's TNE institutions in order to warrant a progressive TNE sector.

Keywords: Faculty Training, Faculty Development, Teachers Capacity-Building, Transnational Education, Pakistan, Higher Education, Academic Quality Assurance.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades Pakistan has experienced a gradual diversification of its higher-education sector, with transnational alliances providing access to internationally recognized degrees at a fraction of the cost of studying abroad. The growth is associated with a demographic mandate; over 60 percent of the national population is under 30 years of age (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Higher education demand has therefore increased more rapidly than the capacity of domestic universities. Affiliations, franchises, validations, dual and distance programmes have increased with universities based in the United Kingdom

and Australia (British Council & HEC, 2022), leading to the multiplication of transnational higher education arrangements (Francois et al., 2016). While TNE growth is a source of internationalization and curriculum enrichment, the evidence is clear that academic quality within TNE programmes is primarily linked to the competence and preparation of local teaching staff (Altbach & Knight, 2021). Faculty members of the partner colleges serve as mediators between two academic cultures, the foreign awarding institution on one hand, and the national learning setting on the other. Their ability to translate curriculum standards, deliver student-centred pedagogy and uphold assessment integrity directly determines parity of esteem between local delivery and the home campus. Accordingly, it is necessary to train and develop the faculty to maintain the credibility of Pakistan's TNE and to meet global QAA requirements (QAA, 2025).

Existing research and policy discussions show gaps that exist. A high proportion of TNE lecturers have expertise in their subject area, but little training in pedagogy, digital pedagogy or transnational frameworks for assessment (Aqib et al., 2024a). Furthermore, fragmented institutional support, a lack of resources, and poor professional development incentives limit their advancement (Aqib et al., 2024b). These deficiencies are at risk of undermining student learning results and the confidence of foreign partners. The Higher Education Commission (HEC) and its Quality Assurance Agency (QAA-Pakistan) have acknowledged this problem in its successive revisions of the Transnational Education Policy (HEC, 2024). However, actual implementation is still patchy across providers. This study fills that policy-practice gap. Initially it provides diagnosis of the professional needs and weaknesses of the TNE faculty in Pakistan by analyzing institutional, cultural and systemic barriers to development. Subsequently the paper reviews the international frameworks for faculty development and draws out some flexible strategies for Pakistan's context. Together, the discussion aims to achieve the following goals: identify competencies deficits; review global best practices and build a contextualized capacity-building model combining leadership, technology and quality assurance mechanisms.

The research questions for the inquiry are:

- What are the existing professional competencies and developmental needs of the teaching staff in the TNE institutions in Pakistan?
- What institutional and contextual factors impede or facilitate their professional development? What international frameworks and training strategies can be informative for sustainable capacity building in Pakistan?
- By locating faculty development within the context of the nexus of policy reform, organisational learning and pedagogical innovation, this paper adds to wider debates on the topic of educational quality in emerging TNE systems.

Transnational higher education has emerged as an important capacity building tool in Pakistan, where demand for quality tertiary education in the country far outstrips institutional capacity. Using comparative document analysis and secondary data from policy and scholarly sources, the research investigation revealed that sustainable capacity building requires systematic leadership commitment, quality-assurance systems integration, and digitally empowered professional-learning systems. The resulting framework suggests a framework of tiered competency standards, blended delivery models, and incentive models that may inculcate CPD as a normative practice rather than an optional activity. The paper adds to the increasing discussion about how to improve the quality of TNE in emerging systems by empowering faculty and building learning cultures within institutions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pakistan's TNE Landscape and Policy Environment

Transnational higher education in Pakistan is mostly done through partnerships with UK universities, followed by Australia and Malaysia. According to the British Council (2022), about 95 per cent of the students affiliated to the UK are in study mode of online or distance learning, while the rest study in franchised or validated on campus programmes. As of 2023, the number of TNE enrolments stood at more than 13,000 students, almost doubling the pre-pandemic number. The expansion of the sector is helped by the changing regulatory arrangements of the Higher Education Commission. The original HEC TNE Policy (2020) set minimum criteria for foreign collaborations such as curriculum equivalence, quality monitoring, staff qualifications, etc. Its updated edition in 2024 reflects what it has learned through quality audits, and now includes requirements that faculty development plans be documented, institutional resources for continuous professional learning be allocated, and recruitment standards be the same at local and partner campuses (HEC, 2024). The policy also introduces a path for the establishment of foreign branch campuses by globally ranked universities, which is a signal from the government to turn Pakistan into a regional education hub (QAA, 2025). Parallel oversight is provided by professional councils like the Pakistan Engineering Council and Nursing Council that involve evidence of qualified and trained teaching staff during programme accreditation. However, there is a wide range of enforcement among institutions. Many private TNE providers are situating their interests in student recruitment as opposed to ongoing investment in academic staff. Quality reviews have therefore found "inadequate pedagogical preparedness" as a recurring weakness (British Council & HEC, 2022). Within this policy environment, the professional capacity of the faculty is the fulcrum of transnational quality assurance. The mere existence of guidelines is not necessarily translated into practise and, instead, institutional leadership commitment and establishment of internal units for enhancing teaching is the determining factor for success. Understanding this landscape is important to provide necessary context for analyse of the real developmental needs and systemic challenges as discussed in the later section of the paper.

Faculty composition of transnational programmes in Pakistan is representative of both opportunities for growth as well as structural constraints. About 31 per cent of the university full-time faculty nationally are doctoral level, however, in private institutions, where the majority of TNE programmes are hosted, this proportion is around 20 per cent (British Council & HEC 2022). As a result, many teachers that teach foreign curricula have master's degrees with no pedagogical training. Despite this, their teaching experience is often based on lecture-based traditions rather than the modern student-centred approaches. Keeping this gap in mind, the HEC established the National Academy of Higher Education (NAHE) in 2019 for professionalising the academic practice. NAHE flagship Faculty Development Programme will provide short courses on teaching, assessment and research supervision (HEC, 2021). Other complementary initiatives include the Pak-UK Education Gateway which in partnership with Advance HE has introduced the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) to Pakistan. Over 500 faculty have since been recognised as Associate Fellows, indicating a growing awareness of international standards of teaching (Advance HE, 2023). However, these attempts cover a fraction of the estimated number of 45,000 lecturers in the country (QAA, 2025). Capacity building programmes are still dominated by projects and are located in the major cities, without adequate provision for regional and franchise colleges. The qualitative evidence obtained from interviews with faculty shows that many of the academics "learn as they go along" with no structured mentoring, which shows a lack of institutional support (Shah et al., 2024). The traditional format of external and attended-only ad-hoc workshops makes little impact. At the same time, there have been internal processes in place in some foreign-affiliated institutions, such as peer observation and teaching circles, which can be promoted by partner institutions at regular audits. Yet these initiatives have been very much dependent on individual leadership enthusiasms rather than policy imperative. The lack of nationwide CPD requirement is different to its regional counterparts such as Malaysia where CPD hours are required on an annual basis (Lim & Lee, 2020). In sum, TNE faculty development in Pakistan is fragmented, well-intentional, and not comprehensive, and a coherent, scalable approach has to be developed.

Role of Leadership and Quality Assurance

The determinants of whether there is sustainable faculty development in Pakistan's transnational higher education (TNE) sector as institutional practice or a symbolic one is shared between leadership and quality assurance (QA) systems. Research across Commonwealth higher education systems indicates that academic leadership is key to establishing reflective teaching cultures (Bolden et al 2021). In private TNE institutions across Pakistan however, leadership structures often support compliance rather than transformation. Faculty development must begin with leadership which sees excellence in teaching as a strategic aim rather than a periodic objective. Campus leaders and programme leaders within higher education this quality learning must be integrated with institutional planning, budgeting and assessment. With British partnerships, this integration could replicate the UK Professional Standards Framework (UK PSF), in which competence in teaching, engagement with scholarship and feedback from students jointly assist promotion (Advance HE 2023). It is about building capacity into the middle leaderships which allow translation of external QA demands with localised realities (Harvey and Willaims, 2010). Mentoring and coaching cultures form part of responsibility of leadership. Austere evidence indicates that peer mentoring develops instructional confidence and retention (Nasreen and Mirza, 2012). Many TNE colleges rely upon informal systems of mentoring which are unrecognised in QA documentation. Peer observation schemes, with templates, confidence protocols and feedback rubrics, would satisfy QA expectations and make learning and parity of dialogue concerning quality of teaching common sensical. Quality assurance mechanisms may assist through the developmental, rather than punitive, nature of their application. The new HEC TNE Policy (2024) requires self-assessment reports annually. These reports might include, as a separate section, indicators of faculty CPD such as participation, satisfaction with feedback and ultimate absorptions in the classroom. This indicator regime could create measurable and perceptible graded information rather than checklists for compliance with QA regulators. The importance of leadership in the morale of staff cannot be underestimated. If senior management are seen to publicly be positively supportive of innovation in teaching, through awards, sponsorship of conferences and the like, or grants for publication, then faculty are more likely to perceive worthiness of engaging in the pursuit of continuous improvement. If the entire ethos of appraisal is related primarily to growth in enrolment and revenues, however, professional development stagnates. Cross-institutional dynamics may occur, through the use of regional teaching excellence networks. The British Council Pak-UK Education Gateway has shown already how inter-institutional cross-fertilisation may improve, through benchmarking, standards of teaching (British Council and HEC 2022). The benefits may be reached for all colleges rather than just elite through scaling exploitation of consortia across regions. In conclusion therefore, leadership must be premised at three dynamic levels. At the most strategic (policy and dissemination of funds). At the operational (mentoring of faculty at the programme-level and application to QA) and at the cultural (creating recognition and trust). Only then through this dynamism at the three levels may the educational sector of faculty development be transposed from the levels of fragmented training to that of an entrenched ethos within institutions.

Technology-Enabled Development Strategies

Global reshaping of faculty development, through digital transformation, allows scalable and flexible approaches to professional learning (Laurillard, 2012). In its TNE sector, technology can serve to close the gaps present between distance, time and resource constraints including if it is adopted differently rather than infrequently. Learning management systems (LMS). For example, Moodle and Canvas could present CPD modules, track completion and permit asynchronous peer-to-peer discussion (Georgina and Hosford, 2009). If shared in LMS environments deep here by the QA systems of the institution, their use could result in tracking of both participation and influence (OECD, 2021). Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). Global providers, Coursera, edX and FutureLearn, now offer certified courses in inclusive teaching, assessment design and digital pedagogy. Institutions could curate playlists of MOOCs related to

their partnership disciplines, thus allowing routine and cost-effective training. Artificial intelligence tools and adaptive learning engines could present personalized content and analytics (Wolf, 2006). Pakistan could adopt the suggestion whereby similar low cost chatbots or recommendation systems could be included to achieve the desired outcomes. Virtual communities of practice. Microsoft Teams, Slack etc. presenting effective platforms whereby sustainable mentoring relationships could be formed between local and offshore academics. Opportunities for regular webinars, co-teaching simulations and reflective blogs to allow faculty to feel connected across campuses. Thus the digitalisation process can be seen as not just a delivery mechanism for professional learning but a strategic enabler within the context of equity and quality. But success would be predicated upon adequate connectivity, support in digital literacies and that policies of institutions view participation in online CPD as comparable to that face to face.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

TNE Faculty Weaknesses and Identified Development Needs

Unlike the national higher education establishments and universities, TNE institutions' faculty has peculiar requirements in terms of training and capacity-building. Faculty members in the transnational higher education (TNE) institutions in Pakistan often exhibit laudable subject expertise but a poor pedagogical versatility (Ahmad et al., 2014). Their preparation typically focuses on mastery of discipline and not on the methodology of teaching or design of the curriculum. Research by Abouelenein et al. (2024) showed that most TNE lecturers use a lot of lecture-centred delivery and exposition with PowerPoint, a situation which is more similar to conventional university practices and not active learning as emphasized by foreign partners. Such uniformity of instruction reduces opportunities for dialogue, problem-based inquiry, and formative feedback. Digital competence is another serious weakness. Although most programmes now incorporate use of virtual learning environments, very few instructors report formal training in learning management systems or online assessment tools (Ali et al., 2024). Many have learned as they go with uneven adoption of technology across campuses. The post-COVID move toward hybrid and online increased the disparities between technologically savvy and digital reticent instructors (Alam et al., 2022). Assessment literacy is similarly uneven. Although there are expectations on the part of foreign partners for constructive alignment between learning outcomes, assessment criteria and marking rubrics, many local tutors have no experience of criterion-referenced grading and moderation (British Council & HEC, 2022). Internal verification systems are sometimes perfunctory, generating discrepancies in grade distribution and quality of feedback. A further area of weakness lies in regard to scholarly orientation. Limited involvement in the research limits the ability of faculty members to keep course material up-to-date or establish connections between theory and real-life case studies. The British Council (2022) found that less than a third of TNE instructors publish in peer-reviewed journals, indicating systemic underinvestment in academic training for research. Finally, the cross-cultural competence is not well developed. Faculty must interpret and transmit academic norms imported from the Western context while remaining sensitive to the local student expectations. Without intercultural-communications training, there is the possibility of a misalignment between teaching style and learner disposition (Frontiers TNE Consortium, 2023). These combined deficits are pedagogical, digital, in assessment-related, scholarly and intercultural aspects form the background for capacity building perspectives.

Empirical evidence suggests four key areas of developmental need, namely pedagogical preparation, mentoring, CPD structures, and academic-leadership preparation. Pedagogical training. TNE faculty need formal induction in curriculum design, student engagement and assessment for learning. Workshops on outcome-based education, inclusive pedagogy, and feedback literacy would specifically address skills deficits identified from foreign-partner audits (HEC, 2024). Mentoring and peer learning. Research indicates that early career lecturers learn most effectively when mentored by experienced lecturers

(Wenger & Lave, 2020). Shifting isolated practice to collective learning can be accomplished by developing peer observation cycles and teaching circles between partner campuses. Mentoring also helps to build professional identity for transient or contract staff who can often feel on the outside of institutional life. building structures for ongoing professional development; The training of faculty in Pakistan is still scattered. Committing CPD to a contractual and evaluative imperative would make lifelong learning commonplace. And while the HEC TNE Policy (2024) currently mandates institutions to invest in continuous development, operational mechanisms like compulsory CPD hours and digital tracking are still missing. CPD standards in Malaysia are 40 hours per year, a figure that can be a guide for Pakistani institutions to aspire to, considering examples from the region. Leadership preparation. Programme leaders and senior lecturers in TNE settings are responsible for compliance, liaison and staff supervision. Yet leadership development is seldom a part of CPD planning. The mid-level managers would be better able to promote teaching excellence across the institution if they were to be provided with training in academic-governance principles, quality assurance, and communication skills with international partners. Together, these areas of development highlight the need for a systemic approach integrating pedagogical competence and mentoring networks with policy-driven cycles of CPD within an enabling leadership context.

Challenges Hindering Faculty Development in the TNE Context

The lack of institutional commitment is the biggest barrier to continued faculty development (Sursock and Smidt, 2010; Stes, 2007). For-profit institutions offering foreign degrees are usually on thin financial ice and make more of an investment in marketing than in pedagogy. Moreover, CPD budgets are low, and teaching workload is usually high (typically four or five classes a day) with little time for reflection/training (Shah et al., 2024). Even motivated instructors find it hard to fulfil the requirement when development time is not protected (Chang et al., 2011). A second barrier is about inconsistent implementation of HEC guidelines. Although national policy mandates faculty-development plans, it leaves implementation of plans to voluntary compliance. Internal audits show that some institutions understand by "faculty training" a one-time orientation as opposed to continued mentoring (HEC, 2024). The lack of a consistent monitoring system allows compliance with cosmetics instead of profound change. The problem is made worse by the scarcity of resources. Often smaller TNE providers do not have access to digital libraries, pedagogical expertise or conference travel budgets (Abbasi, 2014). These limitations entrench reliance on lecture-based methods of operation, and deter innovation. Lack of internet connectivity, computer laboratories and other infrastructures are other constraints challenging technology-enhanced learning. Finally, disjointed governance confuses accountability. While HEC is responsible for the national standards, academic partners are in charge of conducting academic validation, and the institutional management is responsible for the overall management. This three tiered authority can weaken faculty development responsibility. Unless the quality-assurance reviews include an explicit assessment of staff training with a focus on corrective action, improvement is left to chance.

Transnational education serves to embed divergent academic cultures in a single classroom. British or Australian curriculum focuses on critical enquiry and student autonomy whereas many Pakistani learners anticipate structured guidance and deference to authority (Aqib et al., 2024a). Pedagogical dissonance is often encountered by faculty mediating these expectations (Oancea et al., 2021). Without intercultural-teaching preparation, they may return to the authoritative modes that contradict the partner expectations. Cultural hierarchy inside institutions is a problem that adds to the woes. Junior lecturers are reluctant to ask for feedback from senior counterparts, which restricts collaborative reflection. In a few cases, gender dynamics limit female academics to mixed group trainings or evening workshops, inadvertently limiting the access to CPD (British Council & HEC, 2022). Language and communication pose less obvious barriers. Although the medium of instruction is English, the variation in pronunciation, idiom and rhetorical convention may hinder classroom discussion. Faculty development therefore needs to include

academic-communication skills both in terms of class clarity and international correspondence with partner universities. Motivational culture is also a factor. Many instructors experience poor career advancement in TNE colleges as promotion criteria are solely in the hands of local management and not foreign partners. Without tangible rewards for pedagogical excellence, enthusiasm for training dries up. Building a development-oriented culture will require schemes of leadership recognition and transparent pathways of advancement.

Outside of institutional culture, systemic conditions limit faculty development across TNE. TNE providers dispersed geographically throughout Pakistan (e.g., Karachi, Islamabad, Faisalabad), compounded by the need for uniform delivery of staff training or professional development, make it costly (Abidi, 2024). Workshops in metropolitan centres seldom yield attendance from faculty on fringes of institutions because of travel expenditure and timing. While online options exist, these are still limited by inconsistencies in internet technology. Employment structures are another critical issue. Several instructors are employed on a short-term, per-course basis, referred to as “visiting faculty.” Institutions are hesitant to invest in development, because they are unsure how long they can retain staff. The insecurity of employment discourages long-term professional commitment and disrupts institutional memory. Studies in comparable contexts show that casualisation undermines group quality of teaching (Khan & Rizvi, 2023). Quality-assurance factors complicate the situation. Where partner universities or national agencies conduct external audits, focus on quality-assurance evidence is in terms of compliance (training attendance sheets, documents) rather than developmental outcomes. As a result, CPD is perceived as a bureaucratic obligation rather than an authentic learning opportunity. Limited availability of plagiarism detection software or assessment moderation tools reduces the capacity of faculty to comply with international integrity standards (Aqib et al., 2024c). Finally, engagement from leadership varies enormously. Where heads of campuses develop a passion for professional learning, CPD flourishes; in others it stagnates and collapses. Sustained improvement, therefore, seems to be dependent on the institutionalisation of accountability for staff development of leadership within quality-assurance cycles. The cumulative effect of these systemic, cultural, and institutional challenges is that TNE faculty in Pakistan are operating within a complex environment where professional development is trying to compete against workload, policy deficiencies, and logistics (Abidi, 2018). The overcoming of barriers has to be facilitated through coherent and sustained leadership development strategies and reinforcement of policies, which is discussed in the following sections.

International Frameworks for Faculty Development

Global experience provides multiple models illustrating how faculty development can be embedded as a national and institutional norm. Three frameworks are particularly relevant to Pakistan’s TNE aspirations: Advance HE’s Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF), the UNESCO Teacher Development Framework for Higher Education, and the OECD Learning Compass 2030. Advance HE and UKPSF The UKPSF provides a competency-based framework which consists of five Areas of Activity, five Domains of Core Knowledge and four Professional Values (Advance HE, 2023). Using the framework, recognition schemes are available to Associate, Fellow, Senior and Principal status. In TNE situations, the UKPSF is utilised as a benchmark for the equivalence of teaching in partner campuses. The success of this is in the fusing of individual reflection and institutional accountability; the university must show how it supports staff in the acquisition of fellowship. For Pakistan the adoption of a simplified national version may confer legitimacy on pedagogic expertise and reward teaching excellence alongside research performance. UNESCO Frameworks UNESCO (2020) emphasises that staff development is inextricably linked to the sustainable-development goals but in particular Goal 4 on quality education. In its Teacher Policy Development Guide it urges that teaching policy include continuous professional learning (Gunersel and Etienne, 2014); collaboration amongst peers and digital inclusion. Within its developing countries, UNESCO argues for the creation of national centres of excellence in teaching which will coordinate

standards, funding and evaluation. The National Academy of Higher Education (NAHE) already embodies techniques from this model, but aligning the programmes of NAHE with UNESCO benchmarks could enhance the legitimacy of the institutions in international collaboration. The OECD Learning Compass 2030 (OECD, 2019) takes a holistic view of educator capability harmonising cognitive, social and emotional competencies. For faculty, this is equivalent to metacognitive reflection, adaptability and co-operation. The OECD also promotes micro-credentialing as a scalable way of acknowledging modular learning. Such forms of digital credentials, already well-established in Europe and Australasia may allow for the academic community in Pakistan to undertake CPD which is internationally recognised without needing to leave their institutions. All the frameworks above, as a group, emphasise the importance of reflection, inclusivity, and data-informed growth. In addition to these, there are three common design principles; the necessity for policy and practice connectivity; the linking of technology; and the award systems that motivate involvements. Adaptation of these principles to the context of Pakistan requires an awareness of the limiting contextual factors, e.g. finance, bandwidth and linguistic variations, nevertheless, they present a clear framework for the final derivation of policy that is aligned with that internationally.

Capacity Building Across Dispersed TNE Networks

Pakistan's TNE landscape spans major cities and regional centres, and calls for de-centralised but meshed capacity building plans. Sustained improvements require collaborations between governmental departments and partner universities and local institutions. One-to-one mentoring across borders. Bilateral mentoring pairs between Pakistani lecturers and chosen counterparts in partner universities can yield strong developmental linkages. Research shows that these are beneficial for confidence in teaching delivery and harmonising assessment practices (Moriña et al., 2015). Embed these processes into MoU requirements for sustainability purposes. Regional training hubs. Raising up branches attached to those of NAHE in, for example, Lahore, Karachi, Islamabad, and Faisalabad would allow for blended CPD to occur to assist smaller satellite campuses. Each hub could specialise in clusters of disciplines. The social learning theory put forward by Wenger and Lave (2020) espouses that it is in sharing knowledge that it can be best transferred by all. Communities of practice – CoPs would allow academics to share innovations, peer review lesson plans delivered, and provide self-reflective considerations of difficulties met. Online CoPs would link distanced academics through moderated discussion boards. Research projects in partnerships and joint teaching and pedagogical research, one which includes work with local faculty in partner institutions, or groups with foreign faculty can begin to enhance academic identity, and provide data which can usefully be used in assessing CPD. Small grants can be provided to assist these efforts to yield data based on a trialing of teaching styles in TNE modules. Inclusivity and gender equity. Variables of inclusion present difficulties, particularly for female academics, teachers and adjunct and those beginning their careers. Fellowship arrangements and easily targeted online sessions for attendance can extend reach, and hold out equality for all, thus echoing UNESCO (2020) values. Integration of quality assurance. Every hub or CoP should report to HEC annually on measures used to bring training to faculty to the best effect and learning of students. This metric-based approach would confirm OECD levels of good practice and enhanced accountability across the networks developed (OECD, 2021). This monitored and yet collaborative mentoring, CoP and hub-based landscape could be configured to draw together disparate efforts resulting in professional but coherent and one-piece systems of capacity building nationally.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND THE WAY FORWARD

Building upon the analysis above, a Contextualized Faculty Development Framework (CFDF) is proposed to enhance the quality of teaching and learning cultures in the transnational higher education systems of Pakistan. The propositions are discussed under the following seven points.

Standards and Competencies: The CFDF begins with nationally defined teaching competency standards aligned to the UKPSF but reframed for Pakistan's regulatory and cultural context. These would set out expectations across five domains: pedagogy, digital literacy, design of assessments, intercultural skills, and scholarly engagement. Each domain could have descriptors corresponding to the four levels of recognition: Associate, Fellow, Senior, Principal; these may be integrated to HEC's NAHE initiative.

Pathways for Progression: The development of faculty would follow a tiered structure: Foundation—compulsory modules on design for learning, ethics and assessment. Development—next progression in reflective practice and mentoring, leading to associate recognition. Advanced practice—achieving recognition as senior following completion of research informed projects and leadership training. Scholarship and impact—demonstrated institution, or on a national level, leadership contributing to principal recognition. This tiered structure mirrors Advance HE (2023) but has inbuilt flexible micro-credentialed pathways for part-time and regional staff.

Delivery Mechanisms: The CFDF supports a blended approach to delivery through the NAHE LMS, regional hubs and partner institutions. Each institution would maintain a Teaching Enhancement Unit which would be responsible for the delivery of workshops, online micro-modules, and peer-observation schemes. International partners could also be incorporated into the delivery of on-line synchronous sessions via video conferencing, ensuring parity and commonality of standards. An important aspect would be a portfolio system whereby faculty upload reflective diaries, teaching artefacts and feedback from mentors. The portfolios would provide evidence of development and also form a basis of artefacts for Fellowship applications.

Quality-Assurance Integration: For faculty development to be sustainable, it must be embedded in the QA and accreditation process. The HEC could amend institution self-assessment reports (SARs) to include a Faculty Development Index (FDI) which could measure: the percentage of staff completing required CPD hours per year improvement scores from student feedback the percentage of peer-observation completed the number of certified fellows. The FDI would form part of the criteria for the re-licensing of some institutions and employment of partner-university audits so that continuing personal and professional development is properly ensured and is not kept peripheral but central to the credibility of institutions (Elmahdi et al., 2105).

Incentives and Recognition: Visible rewards are necessary incentives for faculty participation in CPD opportunities. The CFDF proposes linking achievements to opportunities for promotion, salary increments, and teaching-excellence awards. Institutions could publicize milestones achieved by faculty— Associate or Fellow recognition—which would reinforce the cultural value of teaching activities. NAHE could consider introducing annual National Teaching Excellence Grants which promote innovative instructional practice. Such schemes have proven to be helpful in creating healthy competition within the sector and sharing of best practice in teaching and learning (Fung & Gordon, 2021).

Policy and Funding: The implementation of the framework depends on secure funding. A three-tier model is advised: (1) core funding by HEC to facilitate framework development and monitoring, (2) co-funding by institutions on the staff release periods and skills development infrastructure, and (3) inputs from international partners under MoU. Sources of seed funds in the initial period could be donor agencies (e.g. British Council, World Bank). From a legislative perspective, CFDF should be incorporated in the HEC Quality Assurance Handbook as a compulsory element for all TNE providers. Once this is done this framework would provide a legally enforceable standard or benchmark for professional development instead of an aspirational statement of company policy.

Equity and Localization: In the end, localization is essential. Training materials should be bilingual (in English and Urdu) and contextually adjusted to meet regional demands (Ali and Tahir, 2009). Outreach should be via mechanisms such as radio, mobile applications and low-bandwidth technologies that increase access to remote regions. Gender equity policies such as flexible timing, childcare support and mentoring support for female leaders has to be built in in order not to replicate existing inequalities. The combination of these components provides a structure that is adaptable and capable of revolutionizing Pakistan's TNE faculty within a five-year time-frame.

CONCLUSION

The research study assessed the various facets of TNE higher education faculty training and capacity-building. The study construes faculty training and development as the foundation for transnational higher education quality in Pakistan. Initially we analyzed deficiencies in pedagogical, digital and intercultural competencies as well as institutional and cultural impediments. The paper also identified global models and proposed a contextualized framework integrating global best practice with local contextualization. The chief conclusion is that sustainable capacity building lies in the institutionalization of professional development within the national quality assurance – QA frameworks and leadership structures. The proposed Contextualized Faculty Development Framework – CFDF provides a scalable blueprint for linking competency standards with tiered recognition, with digital delivery and policy incentives. For policymakers, three remedial actions stand out: firstly, embed faculty development indicators in HEC's TNE audits; secondly, they must establish and fund regional hubs for the consistent delivery of CPD; and finally, it is proposed to launch a national recognition scheme based on the UK Professional Standards Framework – UKPSF model. Together, these actions would establish a virtuous connection between individual motivation and institutional accountability and national prestige. By empowering faculty through continuous learning and cross-border collaboration, Pakistan's TNE sector is poised to evolve from the replication of foreign curricula to the development of globally credible, locally responsive education.

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