

Perceptions of University Heads about Introducing Mandatory Induction Training for Enhancing their Professional Skills

Saba Asma¹, Dr. Muhammad Saeed², Zainab Qamar³

Abstract

The study investigated university heads' perceptions regarding the implementation of induction training programs to enhance their professional skills. Using a qualitative approach with online surveys and in-person interviews, 40 participants from public and private universities in Lahore, including senior teachers and department heads, were involved. A semi-structured interview protocol was developed, validated, and pre-tested for data collection. Thematic analysis revealed diverse opinions among department heads, highlighting benefits like improved collaboration and concerns about cost-effectiveness. Despite differences, participants recognized induction training's positive impact on vital skills such as communication and conflict resolution. The research emphasized the importance of tailored induction programs aligned with institutions' values. The study concluded that effective induction training could empower educators, foster leadership, and boost workplace efficiency, emphasizing the need for thoughtful program design and addressing challenges to optimize professional development for university staff.

Key words: Induction Training, Professional Skills, University Teachers' Perceptions

Introduction

Introduction of mandatory induction training for newly appointed university teachers, such as lecturers and assistant professors, is a valuable initiative aimed at enhancing their professional skills and ensuring effective integration into the academic environment. Induction training provides these educators with essential knowledge and tools to navigate the complexities of university systems, understand institutional culture, and develop effective teaching and research practices (Johnson, & Smith, 2018; Smith, 2018). By participating in induction programs, university teachers gain insights into the university's policies and procedures, promoting

¹ MPhil Scholar, School of Education, Minhaj University Lahore. Email: sabaasma199@gmail.com

² Dr. Muhammad Saeed, Professor, School of Education, Minhaj University Lahore.

Email: muhammadsaeed.edu@mul.edu.pk

³ Zainab Qamar, Research Associate, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Minhaj University Lahore. Email: zainab.ra@mul.edu.pk

adherence to institutional guidelines and fostering a sense of belonging within the academic community (Jones, Williams, & Lee, 2019). Moreover, induction training offers opportunities for mentoring and networking, connecting new faculty members with experienced colleagues who can provide guidance and support during their early career stages (Brown, & White, 2021). Ultimately, the introduction of mandatory induction training is expected to enhance the professional competencies of university teachers, leading to improved student engagement and academic success.

Mandatory induction training programs for university teachers may include a range of activities and initiatives designed to help them develop and hone their teaching skills, such as workshops, seminars, and online courses (Brown, & Smith, 2022). These programs may focus on a wide variety of topics, including pedagogy, assessment, curriculum design, and technology use in the classroom (Jones, Williams, & Lee, 2021). By participating in these training sessions, university teachers can gain valuable insights into evidence-based teaching practices and innovative approaches to engage students effectively (Wasilko et al., 2020). Additionally, induction programs can provide opportunities for networking and collaboration with colleagues from various disciplines, fostering interdisciplinary dialogue and enhancing the overall teaching community within the university (Adams & Wilson, 2019).

Research has shown that effective professional development positively impacts student outcomes, including improved student achievement, increased student engagement, and enhanced critical thinking skills (Darling-Hammond, 2017). Therefore, investing in the professional development of university teachers is crucial for maintaining and improving the quality of higher education.

The most significant factor that influences a student's academic success is the presence of an inspiring and approachable teacher. The ideal teacher preparation program should prioritize the mastery of subject matter expertise and provide opportunities for real-world experience under the guidance of an experienced mentor. Effective induction programs should emphasize learning through practical application, case studies, and hands-on experience in a certified classroom, allowing teachers to apply their knowledge and learn from their experiences (Vega, 2013). Training can have a significant impact when it is customized to meet the specific needs of the individual recipient (Schultz, 1961). But, with a large number of teachers, it can be challenging to personalize the training programs. In the government sector, approximately 800,000 teachers have been inducted over the past decade. Induction

training is mandatory for new teachers, and it continues to be a reliable method for improving their teaching skills.

According to Bandura (1999) social learning theory, individuals have agency over the events that impact their lives, and their attitudes influence their conduct in areas where they feel self-assured. Mentoring is associated with Bandura's theories because mentors and mentees share a fundamental understanding. During induction, mentors act as role models by providing examples of actions to observe and replicate. The mentee observes and interprets the behavior, either emulating it or creating alternative behaviors. Individuals aspire to identify with a particular model because they possess attributes that the individual desires (McLeod, 2016).

Teacher training programs in Pakistan prioritize theoretical knowledge over practical training. Dilshad and Iqbal (2010) found that the coordination between training associations and educational institutions is poor, resulting in subpar quality of training for teachers. In-service training for educators is infrequent, and the purpose of conducting these training sessions is often unclear. The quality of textbooks is also inadequate, and there are concerns regarding the effectiveness and fairness of the examination system. Professional support and accountability are lacking, and there is a shortage of studies evaluating the effectiveness of teacher development programs (Brule, 2008) further emphasized that Pakistan faces financial constraints in carrying out teacher training, as well as a shortage of resources such as institutions, equipment, audio-visual aids, and reading materials.

In 2010, the Government of the Punjab launched an initiative to provide training for newly hired teachers. The government has allocated substantial funds to ensure that induction level training is mandatory for these individuals. The study was designed to assess the efficacy of a training level that is viewed as essential for teachers (Settlage, 2000). It found that pre-service teachers who joined the Service-Learning Practice in four weeks achieved the first three levels within the framework of the (experimental learning, social learning, and student development) but not the fourth level (free education). Specifically, at the experimental level of service learning, the co-worker is less engaged with the contributors and acts as an observer.

A study on the challenges faced by novice teachers even conducted by in which three aspects: a) management frame, which involves developing routines and techniques for managing classroom activities, b) addressing behavioral issues, and c) maintaining discipline while effectively organizing time and lessons (Einstein, 2004). The study found that students were more engaged when punitive measures were

minimized, and when their opinions were valued, which made them feel important. Strategies such as positive reinforcement, substituting punishment, and incorporating student input were effective in promoting discipline in the classroom. Furthermore, (Sadrudin et al., 2019) stated that professional development opportunities helped teachers to become reflective practitioners.

Objectives of the Study

1. To explore the perceptions of university heads of departments about introducing mandatory induction training for enhancing their professional skills.
2. To analyze the perceptions of sampled university heads of departments with respect to gender about mandatory induction training for enhancing their professional skills.

Research Questions

1. What are the perceptions of university head teachers about introducing mandatory induction training for enhancing their professional skills?
2. What are the differences in the perception of heads of departments about introducing mandatory induction training with respect to gender?

Research Methodology

Qualitative survey design was used in the study. The sample was all the heads of departments (4x5=20) of the common departments of the four universities of Lahore which included two public and two private universities. The five departments and the heads of departments therein from each university were selected using purposive sampling technique in the sense that only those heads of departments were selected who had at least one-year administrative experience.

The researchers developed semi-structured interview protocols for data collection. Interviews were conducted with 20 heads of departments, one each from the five common departments of the four universities. The instrument contained items on six of the key indicators about induction training at the university level: (a) Nature or duration of training (b), areas of learning modules for training, (c) assessment criteria, (d) classroom management (e) classroom learning resources, (f) exposure to IT skills and (g) communication skills (presentations, discussion dialogues etc.). The interview protocol was improved in terms of language, context, and style by consulting three experts having expertise in research in education and allied

disciplines. Pilot study was conducted by taking a mock practice with one head of the department who were not included in the actual sample. Four universities which included two public and two private universities were selected for pilot testing of instrument. After taking mock interviews, necessary amendments were made in the instrument to ensure the consistency and correctness of the instrument.

Data was collected by taking semi-structured interviews. These interviews were conducted Face to Face. The duration of interviews was about 40 minutes for each. Before taking interviews, consent of participants was taken by informing them about the nature and purpose of interviews. The location and timing of interviews was pre-decided with the participants. Interviews were conducted at the job place (university) of participants.

All interviews were conducted with the help of a facilitator to ensure the quality of the interviews. Taken interviews were saved in the forms of written notes and electronic recordings with the permission of participants. Dates and times of interviews were also noted along with main data. The collected data was analyzed by using thematic analysis including the steps of coding, memoing and description of findings. Researchers got familiarized with the data by listening the recordings again and again. Irrelevant data was discarded to keep on the track. Interviews were transcribed and initial codes were identified. By recognizing the main purpose of the questions major themes and subthemes were derived. Similar patterns were classified in the relevant sections. After that, careful interpretation was done from the collected data to get the main findings and conclusions serving the research purpose.

Analysis of Head of Department in Universities

Table 2

Responses about Induction Training

Participants*	Theme
P 1	Induction Training
P 2	1. Pre- Induction Training
P 3	2. Induction training
P 4	3. Post- Induction Training
P 5	4. Consistency of Employees
P 6	5. Employee Performance
	6. Employee Retention

P 7	7. Cost of training
P 8	8. Inconsistent Approaches

*P = Participants (Head of Departments)

Five out of eight department heads (P2, P3, P4, P6, P8) strongly endorse induction training, having personally experienced its benefits during their own onboarding. They emphasize its significance in helping employees understand the organization's culture, collaborate effectively, and transition smoothly into their roles. These proponents advocate continuous training to monitor goal achievements, enhance performance, and improve employee retention. In contrast, teachers (P1, P5, P7) dissent, citing concerns about unexpected costs, inadequate content, and inconsistent approaches. They argue against the necessity of induction training for experienced employees, asserting that it might not add value. The debate underscores the differing opinions within the university community regarding the efficacy and relevance of induction training.

Table 3

Mandatory Induction Training with Respect to their Gender

Participants*	Theme	Sub themes
P 1	Awareness and understanding	1. Knowledge of induction training
P 2		2. Perception of necessity
P 3	Impact on professional growth and teaching	3. Expectations and concerns
P 4		4. Feedback
P 5		5. Student engagement
P 6		6. Culture and Values
P 7		7. Teaching evolution
P 8		8. Skill development
		9. Teaching adaptation

A number of heads were of the view that the male educators, as indicated in Subthemes 1-3, and their female counterparts, as represented in Subthemes 7-9, might perceive induction training differently based on distinct factors. Male teachers could prioritize understanding the training's content and its necessity, while female teachers might consider these aspects alongside gender dynamics and contextual influences. Both male (Subthemes 4-6) and female (Subthemes 10-12) instructors likely recognize the impact of induction training on their professional growth and teaching

methods. Skills enhancement, adapting teaching approaches, and increasing student engagement are crucial for both groups, albeit with potentially different gender-specific perspectives. These disparities may stem from various sources like societal norms and personal experiences. To bridge these gaps, a nuanced understanding of gender dynamics and professional advancement is essential. The outlined subthemes provide initial insights into the differing views, emphasizing the need for further qualitative research to fully comprehend the underlying factors and their implications on training implementation and effectiveness.

Findings

- 1 The analysis of participant responses, particularly department heads (P2, P3, P4, P6, P8), revealed divergent perspectives on induction training. Five heads expressed positivity, citing its value post-selection. They emphasized pre-induction training for cultural understanding, smooth collaboration, and performance evaluations. In contrast, others (P1, P5, & P7) raised concerns about costs, content suitability, and necessity for experienced staff.
- 2 A majority, including 5 department heads (P2, P3, P4, P6, P8), viewed mandatory induction training positively. They emphasized its impact on honing professional abilities, enhancing communication, emotional intelligence, adaptability, stress management, decision-making, conflict resolution, and diversity skills, ultimately improving workplace performance.
- 3 Among department heads, a subgroup (P2, P3, P4, P6, and P8) highlighted induction training's positive influence on overall competence and adaptation, enhancing retention and professional identity.
- 4 Diverse opinions emerged among department heads, with three (P2, P3, P4) favoring off-job induction training for controlled learning environments, while two (P6, P8) preferred on-job training for real-life scenarios and cost-efficiency.
- 5 Each of the five department heads acknowledged the challenges associated with time management and advocated for training programs that emphasize its pivotal role in achieving organizational goals.
- 6 Department heads unanimously proposed engaging with administrators to facilitate prompt feedback, enhancing program effectiveness, fostering organizational support, and ensuring accountability.

- 7 The program's appeal lay in its innovative learning approach, aiding employees' assimilation, empowering them through feedback mechanisms for refinement, motivation, and alignment with organizational objectives.
- 8 Participants stressed the link between enhanced skills and potential leadership growth, emphasizing training's role in conflict management, diversity navigation, and problem-solving through real-world scenarios.
- 9 Participants underscored induction training's integration into HR practices, acknowledging its role in improving communication and leadership traits.
- 10 Participants highlighted challenges, emphasizing role clarity, managing additional duties, information overload, and adapting to digital tools. Effective task management skills were deemed vital.
- 11 Gender differences were noted, with males focusing on content and necessity, while females considered gender dynamics and contextual influences in understanding induction training.

Discussion

The current study explores a crucial aspect of higher education and professional growth. Research, such as that conducted by (Johnson, 2018) has delved into the impact of mandatory induction training on university teachers' attitudes and skills. Johnson (2018) emphasized the importance of systematic training to enhance educators' pedagogical skills and create positive teaching environments. This study aligns with these perspectives, demonstrating that structured induction programs significantly enhance university teachers' professional abilities. The emphasis on organized training echoes sentiments expressed by (Brown, & Smith, 2022), highlighting the necessity for structured programs to address specific skill gaps in the academic realm.

Transitioning into the university environment can be challenging for new educators. Martinez (2019) highlighted the transitional challenges faced by university teachers and proposed tailored training programs as solutions. The present study, in line with Martinez's recommendations, indicates that mandatory induction training significantly contributes to easing this transition. Participants expressed that understanding institutional culture and collaborative strategies, aspects emphasized in the training, greatly aided in their integration into university life.

Garcia's (2020) research on collaborative learning communities resonates with our study, showcasing how induction training fosters educator camaraderie. Training sessions provided platforms for networking, enabling the exchange of

experiences and teaching methods. This collaboration not only strengthened professional bonds but also enriched the academic atmosphere, in line with Garcia and Lee's vision of a supportive educator community. In contrast, Johnson and Smith (2018) exploration of gender dynamics revealed nuanced perceptions. Female educators prioritized empathetic communication and emotional intelligence, while males emphasized task-oriented skills during induction training. These gender-specific perspectives highlight the necessity for customized training methods, addressing diverse learning preferences and communication styles, as emphasized by Smith.

Active administrative involvement, a key aspect highlighted by (Clark, 2019) in successful induction programs, is corroborated in this study. Administrators' active participation and feedback were positively received by teachers, enhancing training effectiveness and fostering institutional accountability and support. These findings align with Clark's recommendations, emphasizing the crucial role of administrative engagement in teacher training initiatives.

The study conducted by Johnson (2020), revealed positive impact of induction training on educators' teaching methods, communication skills, and classroom management. Similar benefits were echoed by participants in this study. (Chang, Chau & Huang, 2018) emphasized the significance of tailored training programs addressing teachers' individual needs, aligning with our findings where participants varied in their understanding of the training's relevance to their professional growth.

The findings from these previous studies contribute to a broader understanding of the perceptions of university teachers towards the introduction of mandatory induction training. Similar to the current study, they underline the diversity of viewpoints among educators. The studies also underscore the potential positive impact of induction training on teachers' professional development, emphasizing the enhancement of skills and methodologies. Drawing from these studies, our research sheds light on the perspectives of university teachers and their viewpoints on induction training. By analyzing these perceptions, we contribute to the existing body of knowledge regarding the relevance and potential benefits of mandatory induction training within the higher education landscape.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, effective induction training requires alignment with university goals, strong professional and research backgrounds, expertise in specialized subjects, and proficiency in relevant methodologies and software tools. These attributes are crucial for integrating employees into the organization and navigating its challenges. The diverse perspectives highlighted the complexity of designing programs for varying needs. Department heads expressed challenges, including role clarity and information overload. Administration's role was seen as pivotal, fostering positive outcomes and engagement. Personal interactions were vital for motivation and innovative problem-solving. Teachers were seen as crucial for induction's success, anticipating enhanced competencies and skills for increased productivity and collaboration. Private universities largely supported induction training's value. Senior teachers displayed varying perspectives, with support based on training's transformative role, leadership potential, and enhanced skills. Challenges included information overload and time management. Despite differences, the senior teachers emphasized the benefits of induction training for employee development, performance, and organizational alignment.

Authorities may design induction training programs that cater to the unique needs of different roles within the university. This will help new employees gain role clarity and reduce information overload, ensuring they can effectively integrate into their specific departments. Strengthen the role of the administration in the induction process by providing ongoing support and resources. This can foster a positive work environment, improve employee engagement, and encourage innovative problem-solving. Utilize the expertise of senior teachers in the induction process to share their knowledge and experiences. This can help new employees develop essential skills, improve their productivity, and better align with the university's goals.

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