

# Healthcare Academics and Professional Development: The Yin-Yang of Higher Education

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**Abstract**— *The Educational milieu has changed vastly compared to the traditional antique schooling systems. The dependency on technology is everywhere, and new learners rely significantly on these devices. We have moved towards e-books, electronic\interactive boards, online libraries, and iPads from books, whiteboards, libraries, libraries, and notepads. Academics are expected to adapt, develop, and adopt these changes to incorporate them into their teaching practices. Contemporary teachers face various psychological and educational challenges they endure daily. It is no longer possible to remain concrete in such a vast enterprise of technology that is turning our learners into digital learners. Siddiqui, Z. (2006) stated that "higher education, worldwide is facing several challenges with increasing societal, organizational and student demands. This issue directly affects the academics continuously striving to find ways to improve the effectiveness of their teaching". Hence, several motivation theorists believe that there are several factors influencing professional development; for example, Maslow's theory of motivation states that self-actualization is a pivotal factor that intrinsically motivates individuals to achieve higher self-esteem. Fulfilling individual potentialities is an additional significant factor that impacts teachers and their engagement in professional development. Therefore, this paper elucidates various factors that reveal the yin and the yang of professional development amongst academics in a medical university.*

**Index Terms**— *Higher Education, Professional Development, Motivation, Yin and Yang*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Healthcare academics occupy a pivotal role in shaping the future of healthcare delivery, research, and policy. As the landscape of healthcare evolves rapidly, driven by technological advancements, the need for highly skilled professionals in academia becomes increasingly imperative. Through their research, teaching, and mentorship, healthcare academics not only contribute to the advancement of medical knowledge but also nurture the next generation of healthcare leaders and practitioners. Professional development in higher education is paramount for these academics to become proficient and aware of the latest developments in their fields, refine their pedagogical approaches, and engage in interdisciplinary collaboration. Continuous learning and skill enhancement enable healthcare academics to adapt to evolving best practices, integrate new technologies into their teaching and research, and address emerging challenges in healthcare. Moreover, professional development fosters a culture of innovation and excellence within academic institutions, driving forward the frontiers of healthcare knowledge and practice. The intrinsic motivation and relentless drive of academics to enhance their professional development skills and teaching knowledge stem from a deep-rooted passion for their respective fields and a genuine desire to make a meaningful impact. For many academics, teaching is not merely a job but a vocation—an opportunity to inspire and empower students, shaping the future of their disciplines and fostering critical thinking and innovation. This intrinsic motivation fuels their commitment to continually refine their teaching methods, experiment with new pedagogical approaches, and integrate the latest research findings into their curriculum. Moreover, academics

recognize that their own professional growth directly influences the quality of education they provide to their students. Hence, this 'drive' may be internal or external and it pushes academics in higher education to seek means for better practice. In a research study by Cristina, T. (2012) teaching and teacher training are examined closely, and it is said that there is an enduring argument on how to teach effectively and how one can define effective teaching considering teaching strategies and student learning styles. The study encompasses understanding various learning styles since education is seen to be divergent from the traditional theories of learning that used to be applicable but now perceived to be extraneous. Several of the most dominant theories of learning were developed by David Kolb in the early nineteen eighties. In brief, Kolb explained that knowledge is transformed from experience and believed that learning is based on interaction. If this theory is yet significant to many academics nowadays, then the interaction is most probably technological. In other words, to create an effective learning environment for students of this era academics need to be competent enough to promote knowledge transfer via technology. In a study conducted by Harden and Crosby (2000), this role identification concept was examined directly to better understand what academics are facing and how to achieve these requirements in the best way possible. Their study revealed a twelve-role model where six specific responsibilities were identified, and these responsibilities were each divided into two sub roles to make a total of twelve roles for an academic teacher. The six main roles identified were: (1) The teacher as an information provider. (2) The teacher as a role model. (3) The teacher as a facilitator. (4) The teacher as an assessor. (5) The teacher as a planner. (6) The teacher as a resource developer. Based on this

identification of roles model, they claim that even though these duties are vital for academics to comprehend and achieve competently, it is unlikely for all teachers to accomplish all of them. They stated, "While all the roles of a teacher need to be covered in the context of an institution, it is unlikely that one teacher will assume all of the roles." They also state, "The roles most appropriate for an individual teacher may change as their career develops. The roles taken by a teacher may vary with the teacher's seniority and may change as the teacher gains more experience". Hence, not all responsibilities are attainable by all teachers due to their lack of experience in the field. From here, we move towards the notion of professional development to achieve these expected roles and achieve effective teaching performance in the academic field. In another study, this issue is examined by Samuel, M. and Stephens (2000) where they state that in such a rapidly changing society academics are not trained or equipped with the skills and abilities that support them to accomplish these roles. Furthermore, all these challenges that academics face are crucial issues that require attention by policymakers in organizations to better equip these employed academics. This is why it is fundamental to investigate the yin and yang of academics working in higher education as there are many factors that influence their teaching. In respect to the yin and yang concept, we must initially cognise what are our students' learning needs and then ensure that our academics have what it takes to attain these needs. In other words, academics need to undergo professional development to enable them to teach in a manner that will enhance the students learning experience and knowledge. From this aspect we come to an assumption that professional development is vital for academics to aid them in improving their teaching practice and to help them develop intellectually. As stated by Jones (2013), "It is based on the principle that teachers should engage in practitioner inquiry, be lifelong learners, establish critical friendships, network, evaluate and continually seek ways of improving practice". He also states that due to educational changes and developments, academics and organizations are directly influenced; therefore, policymakers need to develop strategies to ensure that all academics engage in professional development training programmes. Unfortunately, it is impractical to assume that all academics can and will undergo professional development training programmes, as there are several impediments that may influence them. Some examples are related to external factors such as time constraints and availability, workload, organizational motivation, relevance, and many more. These factors affect academics and their engagement in professional development because it is not always possible to balance a heavy workload achieve required job tasks and other work-related obligations. As Gusky and Yoon (2009) stated in their study, "Effective professional development requires considerable time, and that time must be well organized, carefully structured, purposefully directed, and focused on content or pedagogy or both." They also claim, "Professional

development advocates have long lamented the lack of sufficient time for staff members to engage in high-quality professional learning". In sum, academics professional development is an area that education theorists and researchers are looking into continuously to comprehend better the individual needs and drives that encourage academics to undergo professional development. Where it has come to light that there is no one key factor for all and that all academics are individual beings with varied interests and needs and, for this reason, professional development may not seem to be relevant to all academics.



**Fig. 1: Maslow's theory retrieved from Mcleod, S. 2007.)**

## **II. MOTIVATION THEORIES AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Pedagogical teacher training and development is an imperative aspect for academics in higher education and has been seen as a ubiquitous matter in many educational studies over the past ten years. Researchers suggest that there is a requirement for university academics to develop their skills because their training impacts students' achievement. In consequence, this issue is emphasized in a study by Postareff et al. (2007) where it is claimed that there are queries related to the effect of training on academic teaching performance and a notion that teacher training programmes should only focus on teachers learning how to apply a student-centered teaching approach. Also, in their study, they state that teachers desiring to improve their teaching benefited more from their training. In other words, training academics in higher education may help develop teaching, but the level of development depends on the academics' individual's will to change. Even though there may be several external factors that impact academics opportunities to engage in professional development, their intrinsic desire may overcome these impediments. In several research studies investigating the factors that drive academics towards partaking in professional development highlight the concept of intrinsic motivations. Academics that have several years of experience in the teaching field may be motivated to develop their teaching performance to achieve self-satisfaction when it comes to

their teaching skills and abilities. On the other hand, novice academics feel inferior and insecure in their teaching practice and are driven by their fears towards professional development to build their confidence levels and enhance their teaching performance. This internal drive has been revealed in several studies as a critical factor influencing academics in many higher-level organizations to undertake professional development training programmes. In addition to the fact that experienced teachers may feel the urge to conduct and train students to engage in research production, therefore, they may commence to train to improve their research skills in the field. Even when third level organizations do not provide time or training programmes, some academics feel that it is essential to find programmes that are relevant and make the necessary time for them to attend them. This internal sense of responsibility and obligation is driven from individual interest and self-realization. Many academics are aware of their own strengths and weaknesses and may seek to resolve them individually without the help of the organization. They may seek improvement in their own practice to satisfy their own viewpoints and ambitions. Bestowing to many motivation theorists and their studies, this is not an alarming matter because they believe that people are driven to perform based on many factors and some of these intrinsic factors may be a stronger incentive towards self-satisfaction rather than external incentives such as rewards or money.

According to Maslow's theory of motivation regarding job performance, he states that self-actualization is a pivotal factor that intrinsically motivates individuals to achieve higher self-esteem. Therefore, this would lead to better job performance, and this is imperative for academics that are targeting reputation or seek to become role models for others. Fulfilling individual potential is an additional significant factor that impacts teachers and their engagement in professional development. In several research studies investigating the factors that drive academics towards partaking in professional development highlight the concept of intrinsic motivations. Academics that have several years of experience in the teaching field may be motivated to develop their teaching performance to achieve self-satisfaction when it comes to their teaching skills and abilities. On the other hand, novice academics feel inferior and insecure in their teaching practice and are driven by their fears towards professional development to build their confidence levels and enhance their teaching performance. This internal drive has been revealed in several studies as a critical factor influencing academics in many higher-level organizations to undertake professional development training programmes. In addition to the fact that experienced teachers may feel the urge to conduct and train students to engage in research production, therefore, they may commence to train to improve their research skills in the field. Even when third level organizations do not provide time or training programmes, some academics feel that it is essential to find programmes

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### III. BODY

As stated by Postareff, L. (2007), "There have been discussions about academics need to participate in training to support their teaching roles. However, there is an absence of evidence of the impact of training on teaching behavior". In the same study it is stated that the way teachers perform after they undergo any training mostly is influenced by their own conceptions of teaching, therefore, their performance will reflect their methodology of teaching and their style. Furthermore, teacher training has become an increasingly important concept over the past ten years when it comes to preparing healthcare academics, enhancing their teaching performance and endorsing their teaching effectiveness. As claimed by Steinert, Y. et al. (2005), "A faculty development programme designed to support the teaching and evaluation of professionalism can lead to self-reported changes in teaching and practice as well as new educational initiatives. It can also help to develop more knowledgeable faculty members, who will, it is hoped, become more successful role models". As healthcare academics, the expectation of teaching professionally and quality teaching is quite high, and unfortunately, this may not be realistic for many teachers in this field as they may lack the expertise to do so. Without professional development programmes these academics will not be able to accomplish all that they are expected to achieve and overcome their weaknesses. The emphasis on teaching knowledge and experience is vital not only their knowledge in their specified healthcare sectors. Teaching knowledge on its own is a great field that is becoming quite multifaceted. In another study by Steinert, Y. et al. (2007), faculty development is seen to be useful only if there is clear consensus and understanding of the hidden curricula for any cultural change to occur within any institution. In other words,



for academics to apply successful change within the organization or the climate it is essential that there is a clear understanding of the organization goals, educational objectives, student learning abilities, organization climate and their strategic plan. When academics partaking in professional development training programmes have a clear consensus of their organization and the environment that they work in, then the ability for them to feed into the organization and achieve effective teaching performance is higher.

In Hayes, T. et al. (2011) it is claimed that for professional development to be effective, academics need to be aware of their teaching needs, understand what teaching and development means for them to improve their teaching performance. In a study conducted by N. Baral et al. (2011) on this matter, it is stated that based on training on assessment needs, participants were able to feel the difference in their teaching abilities and methods from when the training began in comparison to when it ended. The academics that had participated in the training programme felt much more confident at the end and hence, were able to perform better in their teaching practice. In their study, the effectiveness of training based on the teaching needs of academic faculty was quite successful for the faculty members that had participated in the training. This may be achieved when, as quoted, "To address the issues of faculty development and teacher training in the future one may start planning teacher training to meet the pace of change". The changes that occur in academia are major influences on many aspects such as teacher training, professional development, organization climate, students learning and teaching. Moreover, for academics to develop their teaching performance it is also important to understand what various factors may impact their performance positively. The link between professional development and teaching performance is not very lucid although a vast number of studies have investigated this concept. Hence, several studies claim that teaching proficiency can develop through the development of intellectual and practical knowledge. Other studies claim that teaching performance is enhanced through not only learning; by this we emphasize the significance of experiential learning. Experiential learning with practice-based knowledge in the workplace is an effectual combination when it comes to the improvement of teaching performance. Academic practice encompasses formal and informal learning, their individual capabilities, their personal experience and how teaching is perceived by the academic or others in the workplace. This is closely investigated in a research study conducted by Trevitt, C. (2008). In this study he states, "It still seems that we have a surprisingly limited understanding of the many and varied day to day academics practices, and the associated informal professional learning that academics actually engage in on a day-to-day basis, though the situation is improving slowly". Similarly, for improvement to take place in teaching performance academics need to know how to engage in change and be given an opportunity by the management to do so. Most

academics that undergo professional development teaching programmes claim that they develop a better understanding of their teaching approach and enhance their self-efficacy but only if they undergo continuous or long-term training. Therefore, the longer the training the better the performance and if professional development programmes do not reveal better teaching pedagogy, then teaching performance might not develop. As Piostareff, L. et al. (2007) state in their study on effective teacher training; not enough evidence is there to support the impact of teacher training on teaching performance. They claim that to improve students' learning, academics need to be encouraged to undergo continuous pedagogical training in teaching. In a similar study done in the same year but conducted by Hendrickson, W. et al. (2007), it is proposed that the goals of training development programmes are to improve teaching performance and help achieve better outcomes for students. Furthermore, they suggest that improvement in teaching performance is acknowledged in the use of new teaching methods, new evaluation techniques, better planning and implementation of the subject or curriculum and more scholarly engagement investigating teaching practice. Another indicator stated in their study was faculty performance evaluation that generally occurs annually. Also, in their research they claim that the effectiveness of the programme and how it is primarily designed impacts the performance of the academics that participate in it. The training programmes should encompass the use of experiential learning (direct learning), feedback to the participating academics on their performance, an opportunity to apply skills and facilitate peer interaction to share knowledge and experience. Only when these objectives are covered in a teacher training programme the outcomes of that training programme are thriving and teaching performance is enhanced.

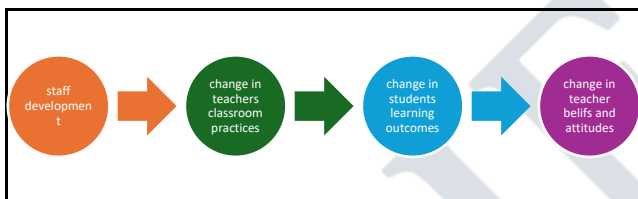
#### **IV. DATA ANALYSIS**

This study was an interpretive study and all data gathered by the researcher was analysed descriptively with the use of tables and interpretive descriptions. Due to the nature of this study and its methodology, critical observation was conducted and illustrated to reveal the impact of the teacher training workshops on the performance of the participants after participatory observation was accomplished. As stated by Anderson (1998), "Qualitative research is a form of inquiry that explores phenomena in their natural settings and uses multi-methods to interpret, understand, explain and bring meaning to them". In addition to other researchers in the field emphasizing on the significance of qualitative research in action research since quantitative research cannot represent clarity in understanding human behavior or experience. Hence the nature of this study helped in reflecting on the participants experiences and analysis was described based on the findings of each instrument that was used in the study. The pre and post questionnaires were analysed and the data gathered was illustrated using narration. Data was

analysed on an on-going basis and the researcher additionally used a thematic approach to illustrate themes that emerged across various participants in the study. Furthermore, the observation sheets that were compiled from the observations that were conducted by the researcher in this study were interpreted and demonstrated with the underpinning approach of the relativistic phenomenon of understanding natural settings and behavior. Coding was used to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants and data illustrations used coding to represent the participants.

## V. METHODOLOGY AND CONCEPTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework for this study were based on two main aspects that this action research is focusing on. Since the study is aiming towards a change after intervention of the participants after undergoing the teacher training programme a framework was adapted from Guskey (1986, 1987). The reason this framework was used in this study was due to the fact that it emphasized professional development as the main mechanism of change. The model taken from Guskey was then further developed to better fit this research study and its purpose. Below is the original model: *A Model of Teacher Change (Guskey 2002)*



*The adapted model (the changed process is in bold)*



The second conceptual framework used in this study to determine how the action research will be conducted and enable the participants to reflect, meet their goals, identify their needs, create a training programme and choose a suitable implementation process was adapted from the theories of Hitchcock and Hughes (1989, p 32) where the researcher becomes involved and develops a “*relationship with the subjects of the research*”. This relationship leads to choosing a more directly participant form of observation, where the researcher observes individuals in their ordinary, everyday, natural social settings and records their accounts of what it was the individuals were doing. An interpretive research approach assumes that all human action is meaningful and therefore has to be interpreted and understood within the context of social practices. They claim that human actions are important and need to be observed and reflected upon in order to promote performance. For this purpose this theory was significant in this action search study.

## VI. CONCLUSION

To conclude this study, i would like to shed light on the significance of looking at higher education through the yin and yang pective which is looking at the two sides on a coing the studnets and the academics. This study was a constructive reflection on the significance of continuing professional development for healthcare academics and the importance of having prior teacher training before working as a healthcare academics. Also, the imprtance of looking at what learnerstype of learners do we have and what do they need so that academics could undergo professional development to attain these various needs and learning expectations. The impact of a short term teacher training programme was positive but a longer training programme would have been better in order to observe change over a longer duration and to promote ongoing professional development for academics. Medical Univesrities in the GCC are recommended to encourage all of their healthcare academics to partake in continuous teacher training programmes to achieve quality teaching. Many universities employ healthcare academics without considering the significance of having teaching experience and only focus on their medical qualifications or years of service. This issue brings about another fundamental concept that was prevalent in this study where medical universities should ensure that students’ learning is not jeopardised and that healthcare academics fit the purpose. Moreover, professional development programmes in the Kingdom of Bahrain need to closely investigate various means for training healthcare academics to cultivate the educational quality and standards of all medical universities in the region and promote ongoing professional development.

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