Perceptions and Perceived Benefits of Continuous Professional Development Courses: Lecturers’ Perspective

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Abstract
Continuous Professional Development (CPD) courses have become necessary, as part of the on-going evolution of lecturers’ to understand and utilise relevant approaches and strategies in their teaching and learning. Liberalisation of the educational sector has necessitated universities to be distinct, and so CPD courses also serve to impart the strategic objectives of educational institutions. This case study was conducted at Cutter University (a pseudonym), where forty hours of CPD courses per year is made mandatory for all academics. The perceptions and perceived benefits of a group of lecturers’ in the Art & Design School towards CPD courses conducted by Cutter University’s Unified Teaching and Learning Centre (UTLC) were explored. Results show that the participants perceived CPD courses as self-development and an imposition. Some constraints were raised such as conflicts between CPD and teaching schedule. While some courses were perceived as lacking in depth and relevance, they were generally good for introductory levels and acquisition of technical skills. The study concluded that a paradigm shift among those who conceive and organize the courses is necessary for CPD to be relevant and effective.

Keywords: Continuous Professional Development, Teaching & Learning, Higher Education, and Phenomenographic

INTRODUCTION
At higher educational institutions, Continuous Professional Development courses have become an important method of keeping lecturers in the know, and this is true as well with the Art & Design School at Cutter University (pseudonyms), a private higher educational institution in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia – the focus of this study. Continuous professional development courses today in higher education institutions are part and parcel of the requirement that lecturers need to fulfil (Shagrir, 2012, p. 4) as an obligation to their students, profession and institution. The Art & Design School is a fairly young school, it was established in 2008 and is part of Cutter University. Cutter University however was originally founded in 1960s as Cutter College; it was awarded university-college status in 2006 and university status in 2010. The Art & Design School consists of the Foundation, Degree and Diploma programmes. The full-time lecturers that make up the teaching staff of the Art & Design School come from discipline specific areas in the field of design like Graphic Design,
Animation, Photography, Typography, Publishing, Illustration, etc. The term continuous professional development, from here on end shall be referred to as, CPD. In Cutter University, the Unified Teaching and Learning Centre or UTLC (pseudonym) is entrusted to ensure “the provision of relevant, innovative, and excellent teaching and learning experiences at Cutter University”. The centre organises a total of seventy-three CPD courses throughout the year, as per its Academic Staff Training Calendar. The calendar states that the centre seeks to provide “academics with the right learning opportunities and creating a climate of knowledge enrichment, both professional and personal”. In 2014, the university introduced a new policy whereby lecturers will have to undertake a minimum of forty hours of CPD courses annually, an equivalent of seven days. This was to be included as part of the lecturers’ Key Performance Index in the appraisals evaluated at the end of the year.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD)
The CPD courses organised by the Unified Teaching and Learning Centre or (UTLC) in the university focuses on four dimensions of which Teaching and Learning is one. While the dimensions are interrelated and overlap, this study’s scope is limited to the dimension of teaching and learning. In the CPD courses, Teaching and Learning entails: all activities that seek to fulfil the academic programmes and curriculum objectives; the university’s teaching and learning philosophy, which is student centred; the university’s teaching and learning strategies that seek to develop discipline-specific knowledge, generic skills and metacognitive functions; teaching and learning workshops on Curriculum & Module Design, Outcome-based Learning, Reflective Writing, and etc.

In exploring the perception and perceived benefits of lecturers towards CPD courses in the Art & Design School, the study explores the said in the context of Teaching and Learning as described above.

Statement of Problem
The speed at which change is occurring across the world with the advent of technologies that allow us to communicate and disseminate knowledge is a global phenomenon known to us as globalisation (Collinson, Kozina, Lin, Ling, Matheson, Newcombe, & Zogla, 2009, p. 5). In response, governments and universities not wanting to be caught off foot and genuinely wanting to adopt best practices, formulate policies to glocalise and adopt these prevailing trends. Adding to that urgency is Malaysia’s aspiration to become a developed nation by the year 2020 (Mohd. Deni, Zainor, Malakolunthu, 2014). As such, CPD courses are reflective of these urgencies and trends (student-centred learning, blended learning, technology-assisted learning, amongst others) and universities seeking to imbibe these practices draw up policies like the minimum forty hours of CPD at Cutter University, which affects one and all lecturers irrespective of their background. Mohd. Deni et al. (2014, p. 660) state that learning needs are often generalized as staff developers are generally detached from participants and may not understand the unique challenges faced by university teachers. Collinson et al. (2009, p.3-4) suggest that differentiated professional development, along with teacher participation in policy making could improve understanding and improve implementation. What is important to note is that policies on CPD courses that are created at the top in a centralised vacuum could potentially face resistance, impede lifelong learning and may end up having little impact on lecturers teaching and learning.

Purpose and Research Questions
It is critical to understand the perceptions towards and the perceived benefits lecturers have of CPD courses at Cutter University where they are required to complete a minimum of forty
hours of the said, which would then be evaluated in their annual appraisals. Are the group of lecturers merely going through the motions to achieve the minimum requirement? The study area warrants research and as of yet, to this researcher's knowledge, there has not been any.

The scope of this study is limited to lecturers’ in the Art & Design School at Cutter University. It seeks to contribute some insight into the variations of how lecturers perceive CPD courses as it is carried out in the said university.

The aim of the study is to explore the perceptions and perceived benefits of a group of Art & Design School lecturers at Cutter University, towards the CPD courses as organised by the university's relevant body. The research question seeks to find out:

How a group of Art & Design School lecturers perceive CPD courses? (Perception)

How a group of Art & Design School lecturers perceive the benefits of CPD courses in their teaching and learning? (Perceived benefits)

At Cutter University, CPD is defined as the on-going training and education throughout an academic staff’s career to improving their skills and knowledge used to perform a job or succession of jobs. However, the concept of CPD in education “is often ill-defined, with the separate notions of formal training and on-the-job learning, serving to confuse the issue further” (Reynolds & Rose, 2007, p. 219). As such this study will use the term in its broadest sense in the context of teaching and learning and as prescribed in the Academic Staff Training Calendar.

**Significance and limitations of the study**

Teachers need to be professionalised (Guskey, 2003; Shagrir 2012) in order to achieve success in students learning, CPD courses improve teachers’ knowledge and skills. Often, teachers are extrinsically motivated to attend such courses, if so, how effective or beneficial are the courses to their teaching and learning in their classrooms? The significance of the study while limited to the Art & Design School at Cutter University could reveal, in a small way, how lecturers perceive the current requirement of a minimum forty hours of CPD and disclose the extent of the perceived benefits gained from the said course in their teaching and learning.

However, while this small-scale study is important, it is insufficient in scope to give a conclusive picture of all lecturers’ perceptions at Cutter University on CPD courses, which would have increased the significance of the study exponentially. The study of the literature review also reveals the conflation that exists with regard to the scope of CPD courses and as such, the literature reviews often see formal training and on-the-job learning as part and parcel of CPD, making the study of the phenomena complicated. Finding literature on CPD courses in Malaysia was difficult, a difficulty corroborated by Mohd. Deni et al., (2014, p. 660) “finding literature on staff development efforts in Malaysian universities […] is challenging, as not much has been reported”.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

CPD around the world and in higher education institutions are influenced by policies, which determine the focus of the courses offered to its teachers. These courses are in-line with the strategic aims of the higher education institutions and are to a degree guided by the policies of their governments (Mohd. Deni et al., 2014; Seyoum, 2012). At Cutter University, in order to ensure policies like the minimum forty hours of CPD are effective, it is included as part and parcel of the key performance indexes used to gauge lecturers in their annual appraisal.
The following literature review revolves around articles on the topic of CPD that pertain to questions of perception and benefit. Due to the ill-defined nature and separate notions surrounding continuous professional development and professional development (Reynolds and Rose, 2007, p. 219), in the following literature review, these terms are used interchangeably and should be considered in the context of this study, one and the same.

CPD courses in higher education institutions serve two main purposes; to enhance student learning by way of strengthening teacher knowledge and skills, and to understand institution’s strategic initiatives. In addition, the courses are aimed at (a) newly recruited teachers; to induct them in the teaching and learning approaches and strategies as well as the strategic aims of the institution, and (b) experienced teachers; to introduce current prevailing trends, approaches and strategies in pedagogy and technology assisted learning to improve or update their capabilities in knowledge and skills (Seyoum, 2012).

Perception
In a research report on selected Malaysian public universities by Azam, Mohaida, & Zainurin (2013, p. 60), teachers receptivity towards professional development in the form of the Basic Teaching Methodology Course (BTMC) is mixed in reactions. They attribute this to heavy teaching workloads and research requirements. However, teachers perception of the professional development opportunities afforded in the said course were positive, “respondents’ perceptions of the program were mostly positive and encouraging” (p. 67).

Shagrir (2012, p. 30-31) in a research on an American research university, questioned participants perception regarding the contribution and evaluation processes of their professional development, he stated that teachers perceived institutions as depriving them of choice, “the attitude toward their (the institution’s) demands obliged them to engage […] they felt obligated and deprived of choice”. The same report also alluded to teachers complaining of heavy workload. Echoing Azam et al. (2013, p. 60), who contend that Malaysian public university teachers are struggling due to heavy teaching workload and research requirement. The perception of a lack of say or choice seems to create a sense of disenfranchisement in the decision-making process among the rank and file. Åkerlind (2005, p. 4) in reporting common patterns of findings across various studies reveals that academics have “greater affiliation to their discipline or field than to their institution”. This perception of us (teachers) and they (institutions) seems to be a recurring theme, teachers have a sense of reduced control over their time and work due to the perceived intrusion of the administrators of institutions. So while teachers seem positive towards opportunities for CPD, they are burdened by teaching and research requirements, they feel deprived of choice, they view administrators as intrusive, which potentially develops a sense of disaffiliation between them and the institution.

Azam & Zainurin (2011, p. 133) informed that teachers’ perception and attitude towards structured professional development at selected Malaysian public universities in the form of Basic Teaching Methodology Course (BTMC) were not in line with teachers’ beliefs. Simply put “teachers will not take up ideas that sound attractive, no matter how extensive the research base […] what teachers need is a variety of liven examples of implementation as practiced by teachers with whom they can identify…” (Black & William, 1998, p. 88). Similarly, Mohd. Deni et al. (2014, p. 661) state that staff development, which disregards its participants’ needs and beliefs are doomed to failure. They go on to further state “participants’ needs and beliefs are often not considered by staff developers”, Seyoum (2012, p. 1) in his research article adds that for professional development to be a success, must be
carefully planned and implemented. His view is that it must benefit ‘both’ staff and institution and not only cater to the needs and beliefs of teachers. Therefore it would seem that there is a general misalignment between the aspirations of those providing CPD and those receiving it. An evident lack of collaboration seems to exist between both sides of the divide, potentially reducing the effectiveness of the CPD courses.

Benefits
Mohd. Deni et al. (2014, p. 660) and Azam and Zainurin (2011, p. 133) both reported that professional development courses in selected Malaysian public universities in the form of the Basic Teaching Methodology Course (BTMC) were useful in helping participants develop academic potential as participants of the course revealed an improvement in pedagogical knowledge. However, with regards to the practical benefits, it was found that the impact on actual teaching was minimal. Across the Pacific Ocean, this is echoed by Porter et al. (2000), in a 3-year study by the Department of Education in the United States of America, suggested the effects of professional development programmes brought little change to teaching performances in the classrooms.

Adding to the problem is the perennial tension between teaching and research as universities push for more research while at the same time burdening its teachers with a heavy teaching workload causing teachers to struggle suggest Azam, Mohaida, & Zainurin (2013, p. 60). This, in turn, affects the gains made in CPD courses, resulting in benefits that are not substantial as teachers are bogged down with work, finding it difficult to prepare and implement what has been learned.

In the context of Adama University, Ethiopia, Seyoum’s (2012, p. 9) research reported, “overall, teachers felt that professional development had significantly increased the standard of the teaching […] and the standard of pupil learning”, it also went on to state that teachers felt confident and appreciated the opportunity to ‘exchange’ ideas, giving credence to Mohd. Deni et al. (2014) notion that a collaborative approach towards CPD should be considered seriously as an effective means of increasing knowledge and skill in teaching and learning. Seyoum (2012, p. 9) however did concede that teachers’ commitment to professional development was based on extrinsic factors and cast doubt as to whether teachers would continue to be intrinsically motivated to improve themselves after the conclusion of the said course, again raising doubts as to the benefits of such courses in the long term.

Questions need to be asked as to whether such extrinsic motivational factors produce effective benefits in teaching and learning. Are teachers merely fulfilling their quota to satisfy requirements, and if so, how beneficial are CPD courses under such circumstances? If it’s in the case of the oft-used proverb, “you can lead a horse to water but you can’t make it drink”.

Discussion
While extrinsic motivational factors may be deemed important in getting teachers to attend CPD courses, the absence of intrinsic motivation seem to result in a little benefit in classroom practices. Perhaps teachers perceive these courses as fulfilment of Institutional requirement in the form of key performance indexes, annual appraisals or policies.

In the Malaysian context, Azam and Zainurin (2011 p. 134) believes a paradigm shift is necessary and suggest that structured training in the form of CPD courses may need to be combined with reflective practice for high-quality professional development for teaching.
They posit that courses should be based on recent research findings and practices. However, this view is not shared by Black and William (1998, p. 88), as they hold the opinion that teachers need liven examples they can identify with and derive confidence from. This viewpoint is supported by Mohd. Deni et al. (2014, p. 670), they believe “learning in isolation should be a thing of the past” and “communities of practice as a way to improve teaching” be considered – a view held by Lee Shulman (1998 in Shagrir 2012, p. 25). This notion is also shared by Collinson et al. (2009, p. 14) but, they add that collaboration needs to happen alongside institutions and governmental agencies. This compelling notion is in line with the current trend that advocates sharing and collaborating, learning and adopting best practices from colleagues across the divides. Yet, this could only realize with the existence of camaraderie and trust within the fraternity.

To ameliorate the teaching and learning practices in higher education, there is a need to understand lecturers’ perception towards, and the tangible benefits derived from CPD courses conducted in higher education institutions. As such there is a need for more research in the said area, to disclose lecturers’ impressions and their insight on the advantages of experiencing CPD courses in their teaching and learning.

**METHODOLOGY**

The choice of research design for this qualitative study was based on the nature of the research question and the philosophical viewpoint of the researcher (Creswell, 2014, p. 18). As this research entailed understanding the subjective perceptions of the lecturers with respect to their experiences of CPD courses, any attempt to understand it required the researcher to ascertain the varied meanings the lecturers’ attribute to the phenomena. Consequently, the focus is on the qualitatively different ways the lecturers’ perceive CPD courses, how they differ and relate with each other. Therefore in this researcher’s view, the research lent itself to a phenomenography approach in research methodology, as the approach focuses on capturing the variation and categorisation of an individual’s experience of a phenomenon and from that the formed perception of it. Ference Marton (1996, p. 186) explained that the aim of phenomenography research is to find “… the variation and the architecture of this variation in terms of the different aspects which define the phenomena”.

The end result of the method is a category of differences that are interrelated in a logical or hierarchical manner known as the **outcome space**, “the outcome space is the complex of categories of description comprising distinct groupings of aspects of the phenomenon and the relationship between them” (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 125).

The selection of the participants for this qualitative research study was *purposive*, and the strategies used for identification were the *criterion* and *maximum variation* based. Purposeful sampling as described by Creswell (2013, p. 156) means “that the inquirer selects individuals […] because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem…”. To ensure maximum variation, participants were selected from the three programmes of one school in the university to represent a wide range of perceptions. In order to seek accuracy in the account, this researcher selected participants who had experienced a minimum of forty hours worth of CPD courses or as close to the minimum required hours as possible. Qualitative sample sizes tend to be small as the sample size is a function of the purpose (Punch, 2004, p.55). As such, three participants were identified as *key informants*. The interview was chosen as the main method to explore the perceptions towards, and perceived benefits of lecturers’ on CPD courses. The interviews were semi-structured and open-ended in nature and were conducted on a one-on-one basis. An interview protocol was used to give some structure to the interview and increase the reliability of the data (Creswell, 2014a; Yin,
The interviews were audio recorded to facilitate transcription. Prior to the interview, a pilot study was conducted in order to ascertain whether the questions asked were understood in the same way. The questions were also revised based on the feedback and success of answering the research question, thus reasonably increasing the reliability and validity of the questions. The questions for the semi-structured open-ended interviews were formulated from the literature reviews relevant to the topic of study and the pilot study allowed for a test run of the questions for this researcher to gauge the reliability and validity of the questions with regard to the research question (Appendix A).

Phenomenographic data analysis aims to uncover and identify variation in the ways participants perceive their individual experiences. In doing so, the uniqueness, as well as differences in their perceptions of the phenomena, were analysed. The focus was on the relationship between the individual and the phenomenon – the ‘perception’ of lecturers towards CPD courses – the perception being the point of focus and analysis. The chosen data was scrutinised in order to identify themes; keywords, that reflected one or more participants perception of their experiences. The following analysis is divided into two areas: 1) the outcome space, and 2) the categories of description. The outcome space is presented in the form of a diagram. It consists of two dimensions of variation of the phenomenon. Within this variation or continuum lies the categories of description, which explains the generic perceptions of the phenomena as perceived by the lecturers. These are supported with quotes and excerpts from the interviews.

DATA ANALYSIS

This research study endeavoured to maximise benefits and minimise harm throughout the research period. The necessary measures to protect the participants were taken with regard to their anonymity, confidentiality and privacy at all times. This research strove to be fair in its analysis and findings, without compromising its honesty.

The aims of the study were to investigate: How a group of Art & Design School lecturers perceive CPD courses? And, how a group of Art & Design School lecturers perceive the benefits of CPD courses in their teaching and learning? Upon analysis of the data, several themes were detected and identified (See Appendix B). These themes were then classified as perceptions or perceived benefits and then categorised. Through the iterative process, the themes were later condensed as they were seen as related and subsequently subsumed. The categories were then renamed to reflect a broader meaning, one that was capable of representing the now condensed category’s description. It must be noted that the categories did not represent an individual’s experience but rather the collective characteristics of CPD as perceived by the group of lecturers.

The following outcome space (See figure 5) where the perceptions of the group of lecturers from the Art & Design School at Cutter University on CPD courses, fall within two dimensions of variation: Extrinsic meaning of CPD; when the phenomenon is viewed through the lens of external push factors, and Intrinsic meaning of CPD; when the phenomenon is viewed through the lens of internal pull factors. Between these two continuums are the categories of description, which are the generic perceptions (perceptions towards and perceived benefits) of the group of lecturers on CPD courses at Cutter University.

In order to obtain the categories of description for various perceptions, which fall within the two above-mentioned dimensions (See figure 5), the interview data was subjected to an iterative process (Appendix B). The objective was to collate the variation in perceptions of
the group of three lecturers towards the phenomena they experienced guided by the research questions. The transcribed data was analysed and sifted through from which the categories of description seen above were derived from.

Figure 5. The outcome space consisting of the categories of description that describe the various perceptions of CPD courses within the continuum of two dimensions of variation of the phenomena.

Upon transcribing the interview data, the transcriptions were read multiple times; slow reading and fast reading, passages that were deemed relevant to answering the research question were identified highlighted or underlined (Marton, 1986, p. 42). These passages were then compared to find variation or agreement. From this, categories were developed with description refined for each category. Bruce (1997, p. 104) states that more often than not, parts of the actual process often occur simultaneously, which was true in this researcher’s experience.

The categories of description were reworded and changed several times before achieving some level of stability. The end result is an outcome space that is logically related, captures the variation in the way a group of teachers perceive of CPD courses and its perceived benefits thereof, between the continuum of the two dimensions of the phenomena.

Results from the study are divided into two areas: perception and perceived benefits. This is in line with the research question, which sought to investigate the perception and perceived benefits of lecturers in the Art & Design School at Cutter University on CPD courses. The categories of the description under perception consist of CPD as self-development, Imposition of CPD and Unavailability of CPD, while the categories of the description under perceived benefits are: Depth of CPD and relevance of CPD.

Perception
CPD as self-development
In this category, it was found that while the group of lecturers respectively had issues with CPD courses, they felt that these courses in principle were good, “you know I gain when I attend some of the courses is really kinda-of-like blow me away.” The recognition that the
courses in principle had its merits and the realisation that despite their qualms the courses did allow them to grow, “but in a way its quite good actually, I-I like the idea now, because you will grow stronger as an academic, as a researcher…”. The perception of the mandatory nature of the CPD courses also was found to be reasonably acceptable, “For me, in general, it’s all right, if you break into the 12 months that is not a lot…” and “It’s not what I expected, but I can see the reason for it”. The courses were also perceived to be more or less helpful upon reflection and experience, “From the beginning, I said ah! I have to fulfil these 40 hours, this kind of moaning-groaning all the time. So when I started to involve in this, I started to attend all these, I started to realise it is good, it is helpful.”

Therefore, the group of lecturers perceived CPD courses to be for their self-development. The institution definition of the said course states that it is, “the on-going training and education throughout an academic staff’s career to improving their skills and knowledge used to perform a job or succession of jobs”, as such it is in line with the lecturers’ notion of CPD courses. The group of lecturers seem to suggest that the courses serve as “self-development” or as “a support” to “extend my career in my specialisation”. They perceive CPD courses as a means to provide “further knowledge and skill that is based on my discipline, and after the CPD it can enhance what I am doing in my discipline, in my teaching and my research”. They find that the courses also had a psychological effect in that they feel that they are growing as a person and in terms of their career as well, “I think a psychological way, […] you actually grow as a person and-and as a career as well. That career not just in the practice, but probably from that development…”.

In summary, the group of lecturers perceive CPD courses as self-development and equate it to increasing their knowledge and skill. Aside from that, they have found that it helps them grow individually, which inadvertently gives them – as they perceive it – a better career. This realisation has come about after experiencing several sessions of CPD courses, and these were expressed through their own subjective reasoning. The courses were perceived to be good in principle after experiencing them and upon reflection. However, there were also many areas that the group of lecturers found to be wanting, as the later categories shall describe. As such, this category of description falls within the intrinsic dimension of CPD (See figure 5). The group of lecturers view the phenomenon through the lens of internal pull factors; self-development, which act as motivation.

Imposition of CPD
In this category, the group of lecturers admit that by and large, the primary reason for them to attend CPD courses is due to the fact that it is perceived to be compulsory in nature. The option of choice has been taken away, as can be seen when the question was asked about their main reasons for enrolling in CPD courses, “To fill up the forty hours requirement (slight laugh) […] There is no other choice anyways… say no?” Their volition is in fulfilling the mandatory forty hours first, while knowledge is secondary. Therefore the group of lecturers do not see CPD courses primarily as a source of knowledge but rather as a mandatory requirement that needs to be fulfilled, “Firstly it’s very obvious, it’s to fulfil the hours, it’s compulsory that we need to fulfil and second is I have to upgrade my knowledge”. While lecturers in the group understand that CPD courses are for the purpose of upgrading their knowledge and skills, their primary reason for attending was contrary to the fact, as was made evident in the quotes above. When this researcher probed as to why they completed so many hours, the reason underpinning their participation indicated that they wanted to ensure their end of year appraisal in the form of the Key Performance Index (KPI) looked good, “Most of the time I attend it just to, just so you know, let my KPI look good (laughing)”.
The lecturers view CPD courses also as a means to fulfil their research requirement as necessitated in their year-end appraisals. Here again, the volition is due to the imposition of the requirement, “the courses might not exactly suit my need […] but I can see the reason for it, the university might need more research paper from the lecturers”. During the interview sessions, it appeared that the group of teachers looked towards these courses to fulfil their research requirement more so than to enhance their teaching and learning knowledge or skills, “the reason I choose the course is it might help me in my research ye”. This group of lecturers did not seem to feel they needed help in their teaching and learning, in as much as they needed help in their research capabilities.

In summary, while in principle lecturers perceived CPD courses as good and for self-development; their perceived reasons for attending were primarily to fulfil the mandatory requirement and to look good in their year-end appraisals. The extrinsic motivational factor in the form of the mandatory forty hours seemed disproportionately strong. It overshadowed the actual purpose of the CPD courses and making it seem to be an imposition.

The group of lecturers also perceived CPD courses more for research than for teaching and learning. Part of the reason, this study suspects, can be attributed to the lack of relevance of these CPD courses. The other part seems to suggest the group of lecturers do not feel they require as much help in teaching and learning as they do in research. The demands of the university to produce research papers in order to meet its targets are reflected in the year-end appraisal form. Lecturers seem to be responding by attempting to fulfil this criterion, echoing Azam, Mohaida, and Zainurin (2013, p. 60) concerns of the perennial tension between teaching and learning and research. They, therefore, look towards the CPD courses for help in meeting this challenge. As such, the category of description falls within the extrinsic dimension of CPD (See figure 5), as the phenomenon is viewed through the lens of external push factors, reflecting this perceived imposition.

Unavailability of CPD
While the group of lecturers acknowledged in principle that CPD courses were good and helpful, they however found that their teaching hours were often in conflict with the time slots of CPD courses they desired to attend, “...some of the good training I want to attend but it clashes with my teaching hours, the scheduled teaching hours. So I have to miss that because my priority will be in my teaching when the semester starts”. This was more pronounced when the group of lecturers were teaching more than their contractual number of hours per week, which then impeded their ability in fulfilling the mandatory forty hours, “due to the teaching hours that I got for the past two semesters it’s very hard for me to achieve this 40 hours”. Those having to teach beyond their contractual hours lament, “first thing you have to reduce my teaching hours because no matter how good the courses are, if I can’t attend there’s no point”, while they acknowledge forty hours does not amount to much in the span of a year, it nevertheless has a cumulative effect when taking into consideration the rest of their teaching responsibilities. This has inevitably lead to conflicts in schedules. Schedules and timings of CPD courses are planned by UTLC and made known to lecturers in the university via the staff portal or email. The group of lecturers have no input in the timings of these courses. These courses are organised for all staff in the university, hence the timings are imposed onto the lecturers, which leads to conflicts with their teaching schedule.

In summary, the group of lecturers perceive CPD courses to be – many a times – in conflict with their teaching schedule, which inevitably makes it difficult for them to attend their desired courses, and this impedes their ability in fulfilling the mandatory requirement of forty
hours. The relevant body sets the course schedules for all staff in the university and therefore is unable to cater to the specific needs of the schools, programme or the individual thus making CPD courses unavailable. As such, this category of description falls in between the extrinsic and intrinsic dimensions of CPD (See figure 5), as the group of lecturers view the phenomenon through the lens of push and pull factors. The group of lecturers either desire to attend or are compelled to attend due to the mandatory nature of the CPD course but in both instances find it unavailable due to conflicts with their teaching schedule.

Perceived benefits
Depth of CPD
In this category, the group of lecturers perceived CPD courses as mostly catering to lecturers who are new to the profession or have just joined the institution and are yet to get acclimatised. As such, the group of lecturers view the training provided at introductory or basic levels, “the training provided by UTLC honestly, 80% is for the people who join Cutter University, so they have no idea of the environment of Cutter and also maybe the people are in the beginning of their teaching career...”. As a result, the group of lecturers interviewed found the courses to be too general, “I didn’t really benefit from that, you know, because it’s too general across the board I mean”, this was probably due to the nature of the attendees who were of different disciplines and at varying levels of learning or experience. These might have resulted in situations where the facilitator was not able to go beyond a certain level, raising concerns that the courses aren’t “solid” enough, “I would say that for all those courses right, they are trying to improve our teaching and learning in a way, but they are way too thin, way to thin”, indicating the shallowness or the lack of depth in the courses offered, “none of them goes beyond the basic. Start on the basic, end on the basic”.

This seems to have affected their ability to meet their module, programme or Cutter University’s Graduate Objectives, “you know err, this is a good question actually, I thought about this quite awhile ago. If you asking me from this training courses whether I have achieved this err... all these objectives right, I don’t think so” because the courses were merely technical in nature and served to fine-tune their skills more than to provide knowledge that leads to the fulfilment or enhancement of the various objectives, “I’m using my ability to meet that but not based on that, I use that one it’s just to, to-to polish up my technical skill” again reflecting the lack of depth in the form of knowledge but sufficient for developing skill nevertheless.

In summary, the group of lecturers perceived CPD courses as general and broad, because they catered to attendees who were from different disciplines and varying levels of learning and experience (Mohd Deni et al, 2014). The group of lecturers also perceived CPD courses as technical, focused on skill and introductory in level. The lecturers seem to suggest that CPD courses are beneficial for those beginning their careers or have just joined Cutter University. They, however, indicate that CPD courses lack depth. As such, this category of description falls in between the extrinsic and intrinsic dimensions of CPD (See figure 5), because while the course may lack depth for the group of lecturers, they do however concede that it is beneficial for those who have just joined, beginning their teaching career or who may be seeking technical know how.

Relevance of CPD
As CPD courses are perceived to be introductory, basic in nature and lacked depth, the group of lecturers view it as partially relevant to their discipline or requirement, “let’s say in the 2
hours, [...] less than 50% is usable and the rest is something general. Because uh... the programme is a craft to the general, is not to the very specific to my discipline”. There seems to also be a dearth of choices that are specific to their disciplinary requirements, “I found in my case [...] lesser choice that is relevant to my discipline”. This has lead to course selections that were less relevant, and that do not conform to their perceived requirements. It has left them potentially feeling that their time has not been well spent. In other situations, the teachers were seeking higher levels of achievements, “this is my second year here, so uh... I have a different demand, I’m looking for different achievement, I find that it is not really helpful really. But it’s all more for the introductory level not for people going after introductory level” raising a pertinent issue, as there seems to be a scarcity of courses that cater to lecturers who sought more advanced levels of training.

While the group of lecturers found the idea of having these courses good for self-development they nevertheless felt that “they” were not doing enough, “I love the idea but I don’t think they are doing enough (laughing)”, they find that it lacks specificity in their teaching and learning in their classroom, “it is not [...] very specific to my discipline” thereby lacking relevance which in turn only allows it to be “partially” beneficial to their teaching and learning. The group of lecturers admit that the courses do fulfil the technical requirements of supporting teaching and learning by way of exposing them to new technology and tools like the e-Space (a classroom equipped with televisions that are connected to student workstations, which allow for learners to work in groups on authentic problems) or the iPad, “technically yes. In terms of the tools usage... like uh... especially this e-Space things [...] it has improved the way I deliver my lecture technically, but content not really”. The impression seems to be that the group of lecturers equate the benefits of teaching and learning to the delivery of discipline-specific knowledge, and the lack of this specificity in the context of what they do impacts their perceptions of these courses with regards to its benefits and therefore relevance. As such, when they are queried as to its benefits towards teaching and learning in their classrooms the group of teachers find it partially beneficial, “not to the 100%, but I would say that it’s uh... 30-40%”.

In summary, the group of lecturers found CPD courses to be partially beneficial to their teaching and learning vis-à-vis technical tools like the e-Space or iPad. However, the teachers perceived the courses as lacking in relevance, particularly where discipline-specific teaching and learning is concerned. As such, this category of description falls in between the extrinsic and intrinsic dimensions of CPD (See figure 5), because while the course may lack relevance for the group of lecturers, they do however concede that it is technically beneficial.

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Leiberman (1995, p. 70) describes and categorises the teaching of continuous professional development into 3 different models: “direct teaching” that involves courses and workshops in formalised setting unattached to the classrooms; “learning in school” that involves peer coaching, critical friendships, mentoring, action research, and task related planning teams; and “out of school learning” that involves learning networks, visits to other schools, school-university partnerships etc. At Cutter University, the CPD courses as conducted by UTLC falls under the direct teaching model as described above by Leiberman (1995).

Reynolds and Rose (2007, p. 220) state that the direct teaching model of CPD is often perceived “as a top-down delivery model of CPD, where information on methods is passed on to teachers for them to implement”. They also found the lecture-style teaching model to be unpopular with teachers, as they are “formal in nature; unattached to classroom life and a
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melange of abstract ideas” (Leiberman, 1995, p. 69). Nevertheless, this seems to be the prevailing model used in Cutter University, “most of the time it’s kinda like one ended, someone delivers… the trainer speaks and all the attendees sitting down just listen. This is my experience so far”, as described by one of the lecturers’ interviewed. Dadds (1997) argues that top-down delivery may reinforce the notion of the teacher as a conduit “uncritically implementing externally imposed policies”. He rejects this notion whereby teachers are taught how to teach, instead, he suggests teachers recognise their own well of knowledge and skill to cultivate their metacognitive skills for self-development in their professional careers.

Recommendations by Livneh & Livneh (1999) suggests CPD should no longer include only of short courses and proposes that “it must evolve to include opportunities for educators to: (a) reflect on their practice and solve problems of practice collaboratively; (b) dialogue with colleagues; (c) develop a school culture that supports collaborative action versus individual development; (d) be based on actual work with students; (e) involve peer observation, coaching and feedback; and (f) be on-going for the length of their career”. In short, it is an approach that favours peer support and collaboration to fulfil needs and encourage growth within the circle of practitioners as opposed to a top-down, didactic, managerial approach (Reynolds and Rose, 2007).

For CPD courses to be relevant and contextual; the said courses need to be taken out of its detached formal setting – the lecture hall – and transplanted into the classroom where the focus is on a more collaborative atmosphere with peer support. With this, the context of the curriculum, classroom and school is considered. Central to this all is the participation of the teachers in their own self-development through their ownership of CPD courses.

Leiberman (1995), Cordignley et al. (2003) and Reynolds and Rose (2007) seem to support the idea of a less formal environment to one that is more contextual and collaborative, focused on; classroom observation and feedback; consultation with outside experts and peers; supporting and creating an environment for professional dialogue; and teachers having ownership of their CPD. In doing so it allows for an exchange of practical and relevant ideas between peers but also role models as suggested by Black & William, (1998, p. 88) “what teachers need is a variety of livening examples of implementation as practiced by teachers with whom they can identify with” to discuss and dialogue with.

However, the present direct teaching model is deeply entrenched in the system, allowing for top management to introduce policies (Collinson et al., 2009; Mohd Deni et al., 2014) in order to achieve the university strategic aims and objectives. To ensure these policies – like the mandatory forty hours of trainings – come to fruition, it is included in the year-end appraisals of lecturers as KPIs, which creates the extrinsic pressures that compel (Shagrir, 2012, p. 30-31) lecturers into sitting for CPD courses (See figure 7) that are general and not discipline specific. This notion that learning takes place in such an atmosphere is widely held “there is still widespread acceptance that staff learning takes place primarily as a set of workshops, a conference, or a project with a long-term consultant” (Leiberman, 1995, p. 67). So, to improve the benefits and relevance of CPD courses, the formal nature of its delivery of the prescribed model may need to be reevaluated.
The established view of CPD courses as formal venues where knowledge can be disseminated in a generalised manner should be reviewed for relevance and effectiveness within the context of the lecturers’ curriculum, classroom, and school. Based on the literature reviewed and analysis of the data, a shift from the current formal setting to one that is closer to the classroom (Leiberman, 1999; Cordingley et al. 2003; Reynolds and Rose, 2007; Mohd Deni, 2014), where teachers can benefit and learn through peer support; observation and feedback; consultations amongst experts and peers; dialogue with colleagues, is crucial. Most importantly, teachers should be afforded the ownership of their self-development. A model that is collaborative and closer to the classroom (Leiberman, 1995; Livneh and Livneh 1999; Cordingley et al. 2003) would encourage “communities of practice” (Mohd. Deni et al., 2014), for this paradigm shift in CPD to effectively take place, the “perception” of those who conceive and organise CPD courses needs to be transformed as well.

REFERENCES


APPENDIX
Appendix A: Interview Protocol

CPD Courses Interview Protocol

**Description**
- Participant:
- Interview Section:
  - Perception toward CPD
  - Perceived benefits of CPD in T&L

**Introductory Protocol**
In order to transcribe the interview more accurately I would like to record our conversation. To ensure your anonymity, upon completion of the transcription, the recorded interview shall be destroyed. Only certain teachers in the Masters in Teaching & Learning course will be privy to the data transcribed. Portions of the data, quotations and such, may be used in a presentation later on, but please feel assured that your anonymity will be protected at all times.

Please sign the release form. This document shall ensure that:
- all information will be held confidential
- your identity shall remain anonymous
- your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable

Sign above
Thank you for your agreeing to participate.

**Introduction**
I have selected you because I believe you may have key information that could potentially provide insight into CPD courses as conducted by INTELLECT at Taylor's University. I have noticed that you have completed/close to completing the minimum required hours of CPD therefore I believe that you would have empirical knowledge about CPD that may be helpful in my study on the topic. I am particularly interested in your views of CPD courses as conducted and the benefits thereof to your teaching and learning. This interview will not exceed more than an hour and I would like to thank you in advance for your time.

**Interview Question**

*Ice breaker*
Wow! You have clocked in quite a lot of hours, you seem to enjoy going for Continuous Professional Development (CPD) courses, how many hours of training have you now completed?

*Perceptions of CPD*
What does Continuous Professional Development (CPD) mean to you?
What in your view is the purpose of CPD courses?
How do you feel about attending CPD courses?
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Why do you attend CPD courses? *Probe:* What is your main reason?

How do you feel about this minimum 40 hours requirement of attendance in CPD courses? *Probe:* What was your reaction when the minimum of 40 hours requirement was introduced? What is your reaction now after completing the minimum requirement? How did you get to know about the new policy?

Earlier you explained in your view, what you thought was the purpose of these courses, now having sat for all these courses: Do you think the purpose of the CPD courses, as you described them earlier, has been met? *Probe:* Given a chance would you attend CPD courses again? Why?

**Perceived Benefits of CPD**

How do you decide which courses to attend?

Were all the courses you attended relevant to your discipline/requirement?

Were the courses you attended beneficial to your teaching and learning?

Having attended CPD courses, has it improved your T&L in the classroom?

Having attended CPD courses, would you like to continue to do so in the future? *Probe:* Why?

Who/which department organizes CPD courses?

Do you find that the courses being offered are relevant to your teaching and learning needs? *Probe:* Are they tailored to your needs? Do you give any input as to the kinds of courses you are interested in?

Have you noticed any improvement in your teaching and learning knowledge in your classroom upon completion of CPD courses? How so?

Did the CPD courses enhance your ability in meeting your module objective/programme objective/TGC objective?

Were the courses beneficial to your school/programme? *Probe:* How so?

How do you find the courses in terms of their quality; in your view, were the teaching approaches (student/teacher-centred/active) used in teaching CPD courses suitable to you? *Probe:* What type of approaches were used – majority of the time? Which did you find beneficial?

Do you feel that CPD courses are necessary in your development as a teacher?

Do you feel that CPD courses are beneficial to the development of your learner?

Has CPD courses improved your teaching and learning in your classroom?

In your view, what can be done to improve CPD courses, for it to benefit you in your teaching and learning?

Appendix B: The Iterative Process

**Figure 1. The themes were detected and identified**

**Figure 2. The themes were then classified and categorised**

**Figure 3. The categories were condensed**

**Final Result: Outcome Space**

The iterative process