

## A cross-sectional analysis for exploring the challenges of faculty Development Programmes at a newly developed medical college

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### Abstract

There is a need to relaunch Faculty Development Programmes (FDPs) in order to satisfy the demands, meet the challenges and requirements of medical education, and to train a new group of qualified faculty members, researchers, educators, and professionals. This study aims to explore the challenges to the faculty development programme at a newly developed medical college. A descriptive cross-sectional study design was employed for this research. The questionnaire used in the study for data collection was divided into four sections: 1) Institution related, 2) Personal related, 3) Curriculum-related, and 4) Student and research related. After analysing the collected data, it is evident that budget constraints were the most common challenges faced by the faculty members. Other challenges were lack of reward for teaching, fragmented structures of the FDP, and paucity of research. There should be institutional policies to arrange adequate resources, align FDP parallel to other educational activities, provide research platforms and initiate rewards systems for faculty members.

**Keywords:** Challenges, Faculty, Medical education, Reward..

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### Introduction

There was a time when even recently graduated medical students were considered capable of teaching. With time, it has become evident that teaching was not a natural gift.<sup>1</sup> Apart from content, there is a whole process involved, and to cultivate the 'art' of teaching, faculty requires reinforcement.<sup>2</sup> There is a growing impetus for the professionalisation of teaching practice. This is due to the increased pressure on faculty members of a medical

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college to be socially committed and answerable.<sup>3</sup> A faculty development programme is defined as "Any planned activity to enhance a person's knowledge and skills in areas deemed crucial to a faculty member's performance in a department or a teaching programme," (e.g. skills in administration, research, teaching, and clinical care).<sup>4</sup> Even though many clinicians are experts in their fields, it has been observed during the past few decades that medical professors lack training in educational administration and teaching. Medical educators who have had formal training are more successful, inventive, and effective.<sup>5</sup>

We need to relaunch FDPs in order to satisfy the demands, meet the challenges and requirements of medical education, and train a new group of qualified faculty members, researchers, educators, and professionals.<sup>6</sup> In Pakistan, the Higher Education Commission (HEC) realised in the year 2003 that in order to come neck to neck with international standards of education, it was necessary to have an efficient, excellent, and qualified faculty. This was only possible through faculty development activities leading towards the formation of a learning innovation division having the responsibility of developing and implementing faculty development training courses in the country.<sup>7</sup>

Fazaia Ruth Pfau Medical College (FRPMC), Karachi was established in February 2019 as a constituent institution of Air University, Islamabad, under the governance of Pakistan Air Force. Located at PAF Base Faisal, the college aims to provide a holistic, community-oriented medical education that emphasises the importance of evidence and research in clinical decision-making. Because Fazaia Ruth Pfau Medical College is a newly established institution, it is essential to focus on the training and continuous development of its faculty.

In light of the above-mentioned fact, this study is an attempt to explore key challenges faced by the faculty members at the faculty development programmes in the newly developed private medical college of Karachi. The results will help make necessary recommendations to develop future action plans. This will modify and strengthen the present faculty development programmes with further improvement.

## Methods and Results

A descriptive cross-sectional study design was employed for this research through a survey which focussed on faculty members associated with a newly established medical college. The permission for the study was taken from the ethical review board (reference number IRB/54). The study was carried out from January 2023 to May 2024. Faculty members who had teaching experience of more than one year were included, while faculty members having less than one year experience and those in administrative positions were excluded. Non-probability convenience sampling was employed to shortlist a number of participants.

The questionnaire used in the study for data collection was a validated survey form adopted from Literature.<sup>8</sup> The questionnaire was also piloted at Fazaia Ruth Pfau Medical college with four full time faculty members. The questionnaire was divided into four sections: 1) Institution related, 2) Personal related, 3) Curriculum related, and 4) Student & research related. It has 54 items to evaluate challenges to the FDP. A 5-point Likert scale with five choices in each item was used in the survey questionnaire (1 = severely disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = highly agree). With this, demographic information of participants was collected to recognise their employment status, age range, educational qualification, academic position, and duration of teaching experience. SPSS version 24 was used for data analysis. The

**Table-1:** Profile of the participants' demographics.

Item	Frequency (Percentage %)
<b>Employment status</b>	
Full time	93 (93%)
Part-time	07 (07%)
<b>Age range (years)</b>	
25–35	24 (24%)
36–40	22 (22%)
41–45	15 (15%)
46–50	13 (13%)
>50	26 (26%)
<b>Sex</b>	
Male	42 (42%)
Female	58 (58%)
<b>Educational Qualification</b>	
Bachelor	18 (18%)
Postgraduates	82 (82%)
<b>Academic position</b>	
Lecturer	19 (19%)
Senior lecturer	17 (17%)
Assistant professor	29 (29%)
Associate professor	11 (11%)
Professor	24 (24%)
<b>Teaching duration (years)</b>	
1 to 5	36 (36%)
6 to 10	25 (25%)
11 to 15	11 (11%)
16 to 20	8 (8%)
21 to 30	17 (17%)
Other	3 (3%)

**Table-2:** Challenges faced by faculty members

The Faculty Development Programme and its Institutional Barriers		
Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Inadequate management and organisational support	2.98	0.99
2. Inadequate support from department.	2.70	1.05
3. Managerial Instability in decision-making process	2.89	1.10
4. Budget constraints	3.56	0.96
5. Insufficient qualified academic staff members to conduct the faculty development programme	3.03	1.15
6. Lack of adequate staff support	3.33	1.16
7. Lack of guidance from and connection to department	3.09	1.08
8. Faculty unequal opportunities for improvement	3.30	1.11
9. General lack of administrative support	2.98	1.10
10. Less attention to faculty professional community services	3.36	1.01
11. Under-utilisation of diverse sources of information	3.29	0.99
12. Lack of clear expectations on part of chairs and divisional directors	3.16	1.01
13. General lack of faculty support and interest	2.98	1.04
14. Unsupported leadership	2.93	1.23
15. Less attention to faculty administrative role	3.14	1.09
16. Lack of technology integration into traditional learning and teaching	2.93	1.23
17. Faculty issues (e.g., poor location/ insufficient space)	3.34	1.17

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Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
18. Increasing multiculturalism and diversity	3.18	0.94
<b>Personal Barriers in The Faculty Development Programme</b>		
1. Resistance to change	2.96	1.22
2. Volume of work and lack of time	3.69	0.98
3. Lack of time for faculty developmental activities	3.54	1.03
4. Inadequate faculty partnership in decision making	3.15	1.06
5. Subsequent work pressure	3.61	0.97
6. Lack of reward to faculty for teaching	3.80	0.95
7. Lack of recognition for their work	3.62	1.00
8. Lack of faculty motivation to teach effectively	3.42	1.13
9. Unwillingness to acknowledge deficiencies in teaching ability, knowledge and skills of faculty members	3.28	1.08
10. Unequal reward for faculty participation	3.43	1.00
11. Clinical work pressures on faculty	3.55	1.01
12. Faculty underestimates need for FDP/ potential benefits from their participation	3.20	1.07
13. Insufficient time	3.22	1.12
14. Little or no professional reward	3.46	1.13
15. Teachers attitudes and misconceptions on teaching	3.19	1.06
16. Lack of partnership of faculty	3.10	1.10
17. Less attention to faculty personal development	3.36	1.06
18. Perceive little need to participate	3.12	0.95
19. Lack of value for medical education at faculty level	3.16	1.17
20. Spend time where faculty gains most personal benefits	3.08	1.05
21. Lack of mentoring for faculty	3.43	1.02
22. Teachers believe that training is unrelated to teaching excellence	2.75	1.11
23. Expanding definition of scholarship	3.48	0.83
<b>Barriers in The Faculty Development Programme Related to Curriculum</b>		
1. Lack of follow-up activities	3.32	0.99
2. Fragmented and parallel structures dealing with activities of FDP	3.48	0.83
3. Lack of standards in training for faculty (i.e., formal definition and compilation of minimum requirements for professional skills of faculty	3.16	1.02
4. Lack of systemic approach to faculty training process	3.38	1.09
5. Needs assessment is not done properly.	3.36	0.94
6. Insufficient faculty training	3.19	1.01
7. Lack of faculty involvement in planning of FDP.	3.22	1.16
8. Implemented programs did not achieve intended objectives	2.90	0.96
<b>Barriers related to students and research in the faculty development programme</b>		
1. Under-prepared students for research	3.27	1.00
2. Paucity of research on long-term benefits of faculty growth	3.63	0.86
3. Unclear student's learning outcomes	3.02	1.12
4. Lack of belief in any relationship in teaching skills with knowledge of individual and/or clinical skills."	3.16	1.02
5. Perceptions of faculty on research culture rather than emphasis on teaching	3.05	1.05

demographic information was analysed using frequency and percentage. The questionnaire data was analysed using mean and standard deviation.

A total of 120 questionnaires were sent via email to the selected faculty members, out of which 100 members

participated in the study 100 (83%). Around 93 (93%) of the participants were full-time faculty members who worked at Fazaia Ruth Pfau Medical College. The majority of the participants 54 (54%) were over 40 years old. Most of the participants were females 58 (58%), and post-graduate degree holders were in the majority 82 (82%).

Assistant professors made up the majority of the participants 29 (29%). More than 60 (60%) of the participants had five to 20 years of teaching experience. (Table 1). On an institutional level, the top three challenges faced by the faculty members were budget constraints, less attention to faculty professional community services, and facility problems (e.g., poor location/ insufficient space). Lack of compensation for teaching, high workload and lack of time, and lack of recognition were the top three issues faculty members experienced on a personal level. Fragmented and parallel structures addressing faculty development activities, a lack of comprehensive approach to the faculty training process, and improper needs assessments were the top three curriculum-related difficulties experienced by the faculty members. Underprepared students in research and a lack of research on the long-term advantages of faculty improvements rank as the top two student and research-related difficulties, respectively. (Table 2).

## Discussion

To sustain a new medical college, it is crucial that the faculty undergoes thorough training and continuous professional development. Proactively identifying the challenges, they face can significantly streamline the planning process. This approach ensures that the faculty remains competent and up to date with the latest advancements in medical education. By addressing their needs and overcoming obstacles promptly, the institution can foster a supportive and dynamic learning environment. Investing in the faculty's growth not only enhances their teaching capabilities but also elevates the overall quality of education, ultimately benefiting the students and the broader healthcare community. The study provided insight into the challenges faced by the faculty for their professional development. Budget constraints for any FDP is a big challenge. A newly opened college has to allocate the available funds and resources to numerous areas, making it difficult to set aside a budget for faculty development. As a result of these budget constraints, faculty members often miss out on valuable training opportunities. A study by Eslamian et al. in 2015<sup>9</sup> on nursing faculty concluded that lack of budget is an important obstacle faced by their faculty. Their faculty identified several key factors creating challenges in the effective provision of educational classes. As institutional budgets are becoming more constrained by a decrease in funding, great competition between internal parts of an institute for resources, as well as demands on institutes for services and accountability, are emerging. To overcome this, one of the recommended strategies is to assess the cost-effectiveness of FDP. This has become relatively essential to improve the

effectiveness of the institute. With this, faculty development programme developers can make the best choices regarding desired outcomes in the available budget. Highlighting the personal barriers, the faculty felt that there must be a system of reward and appreciation for motivating faculty members. When there is no recognition of teaching efficiency, no one usually shows interest in achieving further expertise. According to research conducted in India by Srinivas, obstacles to faculty development included a lack of administrative and faculty motivation, as well as a lack of reward systems for accomplishments of any kind.<sup>10</sup> Faculty members of medical colleges are too occupied with classroom teaching, preparation of instructional material, and preparation of examinations. With these responsibilities, clinical science faculty members are also involved in clinical practice, managing emergency, and OPDs. It is very difficult for these members to manage both their teaching and simultaneously attending faculty development programmes. According to a study, the faculty lacks sufficient time to participate actively in faculty development programmes and it has been a challenge for the faculty to grow. These findings were in line with the present study.<sup>11</sup> For better results, guidance should be given to all faculty members on how to balance clinical work and teaching responsibilities. The study highlights few limitations to be considered.

**Limitations:** This study has certain limitations that need to be acknowledged. Firstly, the data was collected from a single institution, which restricts the generalisability of the findings to other institutions or broader populations. Secondly, a sample size calculation was not performed; instead, all faculty members who met the predefined inclusion criteria were included. While this approach ensured inclusivity within the institution, it limits the ability to determine the representativeness of the sample. These limitations should be taken into account when interpreting the results and applying them in other contexts.

## Conclusion

After analysing the collected data, it is evident that the challenges faculty members most commonly face are related to budget constraints, alongside other significant issues such as lack of rewards for teaching, fragmented structures of Faculty Development Programmes (FDP), and a paucity of research opportunities. To address these challenges, institutions should implement policies that arrange adequate resources, align FDPs parallel to other educational activities, provide robust research platforms, and initiate comprehensive reward systems for faculty members.

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### AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION:

**RA:** Concept, design, data acquisition, analysis, interpretation, drafting, critical revision and final approval.

**AA:** Concept, design, data acquisition, analysis, interpretation, drafting, critical revision and agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work.