



Exploring Teachers' Experiences of Translating Professional Development into Classroom Practice in Public Schools of Quetta

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Submission: May 17, 2026 Revised: May 30, 2026 Accepted: June 14, 2026 Available Online: June 26, 2026 Keywords: professional development transfer; teacher agency; classroom translation; public schools; Balochistan; Quetta; qualitative research; thematic analysis; adaptive fidelity; teacher wellbeing Corresponding author: Sarwan Kumar Email: sarwankumaredu@gmail.com	While professional development (PD) has received widespread endorsement as the key means of improving the teaching process in Pakistan's public school sector, very little information is available on how individual teachers incorporate their training back into their own classrooms after a workshop concludes. The present qualitative study aims to understand how 20 teachers in public schools in Quetta, Balochistan, perceive the Transfer of PD from a training venue to classroom practice. Data collection was carried out through semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 20 teachers operating in a range of diverse environments, including multigrade rural schools. The collected data were subjected to an analysis based on Braun and Clarke's method of reflexive thematic analysis through a process of developing 283 Initial codes, thirty focused codes and six themes with eighteen sub-themes. The analysis reveals that PD-to-practice is not just a simple process of knowledge transfer but rather a process of translating PD. When PD is contextually relevant, appropriately modelled, and offered with regard to teachers' professionalism, it becomes usable. However, it still has to work within a school system characterized by testing and inspections, staff shortages, and a lack of program implementation continuity. As a result, teachers modify, blend, and simplify their PD knowledge, keeping only portable, low-cost techniques and neglecting resource-intensive ones, using their informal relations within the teacher's community and in the community as a whole to compensate for a lack of institutional support. The process of translating PD is kept alive thanks to professional pride and visible improvements in learners, but it also takes a certain emotional toll and remains vulnerable to any drifting away in the absence of institutional anchoring.

Introduction

Within the low- and middle-income education systems of the world, there exists an oft-repeated promise at the core of any teacher-training venture: a cohort of teachers participates in a workshop, learns a new approach, and returns to apply it in the classroom. It is sponsored by donors, scheduled by the provincial education department, and evaluated by researchers to determine whether it "works". Far less frequently posed, however, is the question of what actually happens to a training concept

once a teacher steps out of the training room and back into the school gate. The current paper aims at posing precisely such a question. Instead of evaluating whether professional development yields positive results, the paper explores what teachers experience in a particular disadvantaged context – the public schools of Quetta, Balochistan – as the training-room concept is implemented into classroom routines.

Quetta is the capital city of Balochistan, the largest province in Pakistan by its land area and the province with the smallest population. The Human Capital Index of Balochistan is estimated at one-third, the learning-poverty rate is approaching eighty per cent, and in terms of classroom structure, nearly seventy-five per cent of primary schools in Balochistan hold multigrade classes and almost half employ only one teacher per class (according to Balochistan Education Sector Plan cited in Global Partnership for Education, 2025). These teachers are, at the same time, among the most frequent recipients of donor-subsidized reform programmes – refresher courses, cascade trainings, literacy programmes, etc. – and the professionals working under the most challenging structural conditions in the entire country. This makes Quetta a unique place to explore the disconnect between what professional development aims to achieve and what actually reaches the classroom floor.

Thus, the research problem in question is not whether the PD in general is beneficial or not – the teachers of this study never outright dismissed the training programmes they participated in – but why so much of it appears to disintegrate once the teacher has to put it to use in a classroom of fifty-eight children, one blackboard and a syllabus deadline. The current evaluation literature on teacher training mostly focuses on measuring participation, teacher satisfaction and acquisition of new knowledge immediately after training. At the same time, comparatively few longitudinal studies follow the teachers back into their own classrooms to observe how the trained practice fares (Sims et al., 2025). Even fewer do so within the environments characterized by constant multigrade teaching, job insecurity, proximity to brick kilns, flood displacement, or targeted community violence – all of which serve as an ordinary background of many of the study participants rather than an exceptional situation.

Thus, the goal of this study was to explore how teachers experience professional development as it transitions from the training room to the classroom, and what factors facilitate or hinder this transition. There were three guiding questions at the heart of this inquiry. First, how do the teachers describe the professional development training that they receive, and what enables them to see the usefulness in some of it while seeing others as irrelevant for their everyday teaching experience? Second, what happens in the classroom when a teacher tries to apply a newly acquired practice, and how does it evolve, survive or deteriorate over time? Moreover, third, what kind of personal, social and institutional factors facilitate the process of sustaining new practice, and at what cost to the individual teacher?

Answering these questions matters for several audiences. For provincial education planners and donor programmes, the findings offer a corrective to designs that treat training delivery as the end point of reform rather than its starting point. For teacher educators, the findings show, in granular, often moving detail, what teachers actually do with a training manual once they are back in a room with 70 children and no functioning tube light. For the wider field of implementation research, the study contributes a richly contextualized account of adaptive fidelity – the process by which practitioners preserve the underlying purpose of an intervention while substantially reshaping its surface form (Lovett et al., 2024) – drawn from a setting that is rarely represented in the international literature on professional learning. The remainder of this article reviews relevant literature, describes the study's qualitative design and analytic process, presents six themes generated from twenty interviews, and discusses what these themes suggest for policy, practice, and future research.

Literature Review

Professional development as design and delivery

A substantial body of work now agrees that not all professional development is equally likely to change classroom practice, and that the features of the training itself matter greatly. Sims and colleagues' recent meta-analytic synthesis of teacher professional development research proposes that effective programmes tend to build specific, actionable teaching techniques rather than general theory, and that they succeed to the extent that they can actually motivate teachers, build their knowledge, and develop their teaching techniques through repeated practice rather than one-off exposure (Sims et al., 2025). This resonates with a long-standing critique of the "cascade" model of training delivery, in which a small group of master trainers is trained centrally and then expected to pass content down through successive tiers of teachers. Iftikhar, Fu, Naureen, Cao, and Zhou's (2022) evaluation of a cascaded faculty development programme in Pakistan found that programme fidelity and depth eroded visibly as content moved through the cascade layers, a pattern that appears to recur whenever training capacity is scaled without a proportional investment in trainer preparation. In the same vein, a study by El-Hamamsy et al. (2023) on adapting the cascade model for large-scale digital education reform found that to maintain quality at scale, the model needed redesign rather than applying the same training content at every level.

Contextual relevance is yet another challenge raised in this body of literature. In a study by Kalim and Bibi (2024), the importance of relevance in designing professional development programs in Pakistani public schools was stressed based on the views of school principals. According to them, PD programs will be effective when based upon teachers' individual needs rather than being presented as a single package regardless of their different situations. When the training content is supposed to take place in an adequately staffed and resourced classroom environment, it risks an "ideal classroom" bias. The term refers to the training materials, photographs, and examples that show classrooms as much better resourced, linguistically homogeneous, and equipped than the actual ones (Hennessy, D'Angelo, McIntyre, Koomar, Kreimeia, Cao, Brugha, & Zubairi, 2022).

Systems, incentives, and the missing middle

A second body of literature examines what happens when an existing practice trained for is reintroduced into the education system, where other factors that make up the system—examinations, inspections, personnel, and management processes—are not equally transformed. This has been termed an issue of alignment or coherence, in that training encourages one type of practice but other parts of the system encourage another. Sims and colleagues (2025) note that the presence or absence of follow-up support after an initial training session is one of the most consistent predictors of whether a technique is actually sustained in classroom use, a finding echoed across implementation-science literature more broadly, which increasingly distinguishes between initial adoption and durable, coached implementation (Lovett, Schonert-Reichl, Zinsser, & Lawlor, 2024). The absence of this "missing middle" of coaching and instructional leadership is particularly pronounced in systems where headteachers are themselves undertrained for pedagogical observation and overloaded with administrative duties - a pattern documented in studies of rural multigrade and low-resource schooling in Pakistan, where school leaders are frequently described as morally supportive but structurally unable to provide the kind of specific, subject-matter coaching that sustained implementation appears to require (Ali, Nurkamto, Gunarhadi, Baloch, Arif, & Fenyvesi, 2026).

High-stakes, recall-oriented examinations represent a further and particularly stubborn counter-signal. Where board examinations reward memorization and formulaic response patterns, teachers trained in discussion-based or inquiry-oriented pedagogy face a rational incentive to revert to transmission teaching as examination dates approach, regardless of their personal enthusiasm for the pedagogy. This tension between reform-oriented training and unreformed assessment systems has been noted across a range of national contexts, and it is one reason why researchers increasingly argue that professional development cannot be evaluated, or designed, in isolation from the assessment and accountability systems into which it is expected to fit (Sims et al., 2025).

Contextual boundaries: multigrade teaching, resource scarcity, and learner mobility

Research conducted in Balochistan provides a highly specific empirical foundation for this study. Multigrading and one teacher teaching have long been recognized as a norm rather than an exception in the education system of the province, as evident from government planning documents, which state that most of the primary schools in Balochistan have multigrading classes, and many of them are taught by one teacher (Global Partnership for Education, 2025). According to the findings of Jamaldini, Asif, and Sultan (2022) in their study about multigrade teaching in District Mastung, the practice of multigrade teaching significantly hinders teachers' capacity to implement the learner-centred pedagogical approaches which are currently being popularized via teacher-training programs conducted by the province and international donors, primarily because managing multiple curricula becomes logistically challenging for teachers. In turn, the findings of Ali et al. (2026) regarding the challenges multigrade teachers face in rural Balochistan reveal similar patterns of professional isolation, a lack of resources and institutional support, yet highlight that the teachers continue to be innovative and apply coping strategies without any formal assistance or despite it.

Furthermore, learner mobility and irregular attendance make the problem's contextual background in this study especially complex and unexpected for most of the existing international PD literature. Programmes based on the assumption of a constant learner flow do not align well with contexts where class attendance varies with seasonality, pastoral mobility, or other factors. Arif, Ismail, and Li's (2025) study about teacher resilience in Balochistan after floods in 2022 shows that teachers in the affected districts were able to keep education going through Improvisation and community-level coping mechanisms despite destruction of the school infrastructure, which matches the accounts obtained in the current study from a teacher in a tented shelter classroom established in connection with flooding in the past.

Adaptive fidelity, teacher agency, and emotional labour

A growing body of implementation-science and teacher-agency literature reframes the deviation of practice from a training manual not simply as failure but as a legitimate and often necessary form of professional judgement. Lovett, Schonert-Reichl, Zinsser, and Lawlor's (2024) qualitative study of social-emotional-learning programme delivery found that teachers routinely and purposefully adapted programme content to fit their students' needs, and that adaptation, rather than threatening programme integrity, frequently preserved or even strengthened the underlying purpose of the intervention while changing its

surface form - a concept closely related to what implementation scientists term adaptive fidelity. Teacher-agency scholarship makes a parallel argument at a more structural level: teachers are not passive conduits for externally designed curricula but active interpreters who rework prescribed content in dialogue with their working conditions, and curricular reforms succeed or fail substantially according to how much genuine interpretive latitude teachers are afforded during implementation (see discussions of reform-readiness and curriculum enactment in recent teacher-education literature).

Finally, an emerging literature connects the sustainability of classroom-level change to teachers' emotional lives. Xu, Haratyan, and Tian's (2026) systematic review of teacher emotion regulation in English-language-teaching contexts found that adaptive emotional strategies were associated with greater instructional resilience and reduced burnout, while unsupported emotional strain was linked to withdrawal and reduced instructional quality - a finding with clear resonance for teachers in this study who described sustaining new practice through professional pride and visible learner progress while simultaneously absorbing considerable emotional and even financial cost. On consideration, all these pieces of literature point toward the approach taken in this analysis—that is, that the Transfer of professional development at the classroom level should be seen not as a technical occurrence but rather as an ongoing, socially situated, and emotionally charged act of translation.

Method

For this study, a qualitative, interpretative research design appropriate for a research question concerned with meaning was used. Given the goal of determining how teachers made sense of the transition from training to teaching, the interview research method was considered more appropriate than surveys or observation methods. This enabled the respondents to describe the journey in their own terms. The analytic approach followed the logic of reflexive thematic analysis, in which themes are actively constructed by the researcher through sustained engagement with the data rather than "discovered" as pre-existing patterns waiting to be counted (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021). This approach was considered appropriate given the study's interest in process and meaning - how Transfer happens, and what it feels like to a teacher - rather than in establishing the prevalence of any single barrier or facilitator.

Participants and sampling

Twenty public-school teachers working in and around Quetta were purposively sampled to represent a deliberately wide range of teaching contexts, rather than a demographically representative sample in the statistical sense. The sampling logic prioritized contextual variation: participants included teachers from urban and peri-urban schools, chronically understaffed rural multigrade schools, an early-childhood-education classroom, a computer-science laboratory with largely non-functional equipment, a girls' school, an Accelerated Learning Programme for over-age out-of-school children, and a school in an area with a strong tribal and political influence over local governance. Ten participants were women, and ten were men, reflecting the gendered structure of the province's teaching workforce across different subjects, school types, and community contexts. Years of government service ranged from three to twenty-six years, and one participant was a contract, non-permanent teacher, providing a deliberate negative case against the assumptions built into the wider permanent-cadre sample.

To protect participant confidentiality, all names used during data collection were pseudonyms agreed with participants, and school names and precise addresses were withheld throughout. For this article, pseudonyms have been further replaced with anonymous participant codes (P1 to P20); no identifying names appear anywhere in this report. Table 1 summarises the anonymized participant profile.

Data collection

Each participant took part in a single semi-structured, in-depth interview lasting between 61 and 70 minutes, conducted in Urdu, English, or a mix of both according to participant preference, with locally significant terms retained and glossed in the English translation used for analysis. Interviews took place in locations chosen by participants for comfort and privacy, including staff rooms, empty classrooms, a school courtyard, and, in one case, under a tree outside a school whose single classroom was in active use at the time. The interview guide covered participants' professional background and teaching load; the professional development they had received in recent years; detailed narrative description of what happened during and after specific training episodes; the material, staffing, and community conditions of their school; and their own reflections on what sustains or undermines their efforts to change classroom practice. Open-ended questions were asked in sequence to establish rapport before delving into personal issues related to professional frustrations, financial struggles, and community-related hardships. The audio recording was done with the interviewees' permission, after which the interview was transcribed and translated into English, with contextual terms preserved in italics.

Data analysis

The data were analyzed using the six iterative stages involved in reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021), which included the familiarisation stage; the initial coding process; the search for potential themes; theme review against coded data and the complete dataset; definition and naming of themes; and writing up the analytic story. Initial coding was conducted at the level of substantive meaning units across all twenty transcripts, generating 283 coded units. Codes were intentionally granular, overlapping, and provisional at this stage, remaining close to participants' own language. These initial codes were then compared across interviews through a process of constant comparison and consolidated into thirty focused codes, each grounded in multiple, cross-checked representative extracts and retained where they recurred across interviews or illuminated an analytically significant condition, mechanism, or negative case, even where their raw frequency was comparatively low.

The 30 focused codes were then organized into 8 provisional candidate-theme clusters, which were reviewed for internal coherence, external distinctiveness, and fit with the dataset as a whole, including deliberate attention to negative and contrasting cases that might complicate an emerging pattern. Two candidate clusters concerning episodic training architecture, accountability counter-signals, and sustainability were, on review, judged to share a single, stronger organizing idea and were merged; one very narrow cluster was folded into a related, better-supported theme. This process produced a final structure of six themes and eighteen subthemes, traceable back through the complete chain of 283 meaning units, thirty focused codes, and the original transcripts. This analytic chain - from raw transcript to meaning unit, to focused code, to theme - is preserved throughout the Findings section below, and representative quotations are drawn from across the pool of coded extracts rather than from a small number of especially articulate participants.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was pursued along the lines proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985): credibility was supported through prolonged, unhurried interviews, verbatim transcription, and constant comparison across a deliberately heterogeneous sample; dependability and confirmability were supported through the maintenance of a traceable audit chain linking every theme back to specific coded meaning units and original extracts; and transferability was supported through thick, contextually detailed description of each participant's school setting, allowing readers to judge for themselves how far the findings might apply to comparable settings elsewhere. Negative and contrasting cases - for example, a context-responsive training session that improved attendance after being relocated closer to a community, or a follow-up coaching visit that teachers described as unusually valuable - were deliberately retained and used to sharpen rather than soften the resulting themes, consistent with the discipline of reflexive analysis rather than a search for uniform confirmation.

As is standard in interpretive qualitative research, the analysis is understood as a co-construction between participants' accounts and the analytic choices of the research process, rather than a neutral discovery of pre-existing facts. There was sensitivity shown at all times when dealing with issues such as community violence, bonded labour, forced migration, and economic difficulties, and no quote from the article identifies any individual, institution, or particular family involved in the study.

Findings

Analysis of the twenty interviews produced six final themes, each containing two to four subthemes, tracing a process story that begins before a teacher ever leaves the training room and ends in the emotional texture of daily classroom life. Read together, the themes suggest that professional development is not something that succeeds or fails; it is something that is actively translated, theme by theme, from an external idea into a locally workable practice. Each theme is presented below with its constituent subthemes, supported by verbatim excerpts from at least three different participants per subtheme, drawn from across the coded dataset.

Theme One: Professional Development Becomes Usable When It Begins with Teachers' Realities

The first theme concerns the conditions under which training content becomes usable in the first place, before a teacher has even attempted to apply it. The two types of professional development were clearly differentiated by the participants as the one rooted in an abstract notion of an ideal classroom versus the one that addressed a specific problem. This criterion acted as a filter, whereby anything that didn't pass the relevance criterion was automatically eliminated.

The ideal classroom in the manual versus the classroom teachers actually inhabit

Many respondents pointed out that the training material seemed to be developed with a classroom that was very different from their own in mind - one that was smaller, more well-equipped, and linguistically homogeneous.

"Training has been designed, I suppose, for a classroom of 25, 30 children, resourceful, may be the ideal government school in Islamabad or in a picture in a training manual."

— P1, Senior Elementary Teacher (15 years)

"The training modules are usually designed on an assumption of some sort of ideal infrastructure, taken from a pilot school or specifically chosen and specifically resourced pilot school for piloting the programme and then the same training modules being implemented in other schools that have never got that sort of piloting level of resourcing."

— P9, ICT Teacher (7 years)

"Training was too general - one size fits all for new teachers across primary and secondary levels across all subjects so those specific problems of teaching Science in the field which needed a demonstration of a concept of chemical reaction in the absence of lab facilities - they weren't covered."

— P4, Science Teacher (3 years)

Specificity makes professional learning immediately usable

Where training was designed in accordance with the subject, phase, or immediate classroom situation of the teacher, participants found it highly useful and relevant, not merely as a matter of personal preference but as a requirement for Transfer of learning.

"The most important was the specialized training in early childhood education provided when the position was first offered. It lasted for two whole weeks, which is much longer than any other training I have received in my lifetime."

— P6, ECE/Class 1 Teacher (11 years experience)

"I underwent specific methodology training for ALP teaching, lasting ten days or so, much longer and more intensive than any other general teacher training I ever had before."

— P19, ALP Instructor (15 years' experience)

"There was a science pedagogy training for teachers related to BESP, and it was five days long, almost a year and a half ago. Another training, two days on continuous assessment, I attended recently."

— P4, Science Teacher (3 years' experience)

Teachers need to see, rehearse, and receive feedback on practice

Modelling, practice, and feedback were consistently emphasized as the components that took the abstract idea and made it concrete, something that could be performed in front of a class, in contrast to lectures, which were considered ineffective means of delivering such an idea.

"Useful indeed, much more useful than the lecture style of training because I practically did some public speaking and received immediate feedback such as, 'your instructions were too long,' or 'did not make sure of the comprehension before moving forward.'"

— P2, Subject Specialist English (9 years)

"FLN training, they had some activities - group work, making teaching aids using the chart papers, introducing us to a concept known as 'activity-based learning for fractions using bottle caps, counting small stones.'"

— P1, Senior Elementary Teacher (15 years)

"This particular trainer actually modeled a small group activity with my kids as I observed, and after that we discussed; this is the kind of training we seldom receive, and it is very valuable indeed."

— P6, ECE/Class 1 Teacher (11 years)

Voice, dignity, and professional respect create ownership

An underlying theme in several interviews was the impact of being or not being respected as a knowledgeable adult professional in training – a relational factor which determined whether teachers perceived a particular methodology as theirs or as an external imposition.

"It would not have worked so well if they had come here with more humility, asking us 'how do you work? What methods are good for you?' rather than 'now I will show you the right way to do it', because then we would have felt it was our methodology as well."

— P1, Senior Elementary Teacher (15 years)

"But sometimes the trainers, particularly if they are younger, from NGOs, speak to us as if we were ignorant, as if we knew nothing of our own profession, despite having taught for fifteen, twenty years."

— P1, Senior Elementary Teacher (15 years)

"I actually appreciate this attitude - usually no one asks what we, teachers, think about something, only tells us what to do."

— P2, Subject Specialist English (9 years)

Theme Two: Training Is an Event, but the System Keeps Teaching the Old Rules

Theme two shifts from the design of training programs to the broader institutional environment within which these training programs were conducted. According to the participants, genuinely beneficial training took place in an environment where testing and inspection processes, school administration skills, and ongoing reform efforts had not been restructured in accordance with the new pedagogy advocated through the training.

Professional learning arrives as disconnected events rather than a continuum

The teachers' account of their professional development focused on sporadic incidents linked to donors or projects, rather than a continuous, cumulative learning process.

"There was a training related to 'BESP: Child-Friendly teaching methods' four years ago for six days at the district training centre. Furthermore, there was a UNICEF training in 'Active learning,' a long time back, probably about twelve, thirteen years back."

— P3, Sole/Lead Teacher, multigrade (22 years)

"A couple of times, because English language specialists are considered for many programs. There have been trainings under the 'English language teaching reforms' program, another one for BESP, and a training for me on formative assessment."

— P2, Subject Specialist English (9 years)

"These happen slowly in our system. Committees are formed, draft documents prepared, but the implementation takes many years and even gets diluted."

— P5, Headmaster/Master Trainer (26 years)

The missing middle: coaching and instructional leadership after training

Follow-up after an initial training session appeared to be one of the most clearly expressed and reliably reported means of transferring training to practice; its absence, or its substitution by moral encouragement only, was repeatedly reported as a cause of drift.

"Perhaps a coach or senior mentor who could come once a month, observe a class, stay with me even for half an hour and tell me which things were done well, which were not and help me modify the method to suit my context of forty-two girls as opposed to the ideal classroom in the manuals."

— P2, Subject Specialist English (9 years)

"The headmaster of our school is a decent person, generally supportive, but he himself has never been trained on how to become an 'instructional leader'; he deals more with the administrative aspects, attendance sheets, SMC funds, and maintaining the boundary wall."

— P1, Senior Elementary Teacher (15 years)

"The headmistress of my school is indeed encouraging; she tells us, 'do things differently, I trust you.' Besides, she has too much work to do administratively, so classroom observation is really low on her actual priorities, even though she appreciates it theoretically."

— P2, Subject Specialist English (9 years)

What is inspected and examined becomes what teachers protect

Monitoring and examination were seen as direct practical indicators of what was important to the department, and many said they would change their behaviour accordingly, despite what the training would have encouraged them to do.

"The training says one thing, but the exam system says another and the exam system wins out because it is what is being measured, and what my headmaster is asked about by the AEO when she comes for her inspection visit."

— P1, Senior Elementary Teacher (15 years)

"Somebody comes for a half day, sits at the back of my class for one period, fills out a checklist, takes some pictures, writes their report and goes. It feels like data gathering for their donor report rather than helping me."

— P2, Subject Specialist English (9 years)

"Never once has an AEO sat and observed my teaching style, asked me if I am applying anything I learned in my last training, and given me any pedagogical help."

Reform islands, broken transitions, and the need for institutional embedding

Several participants described specific reform components - an ECE post, a WASH initiative, an inclusion mandate - functioning as isolated "islands" surrounded by an otherwise unchanged system, with consequences that became visible at the point where one reformed component met an unreformed one.

"Several Class 2 teachers have told me children coming from my section seem more confident, more willing to speak up. That said, one Class 2 colleague has also told me she sometimes finds these same children 'restless' and has to work to adjust them to sitting for longer, quieter, more formal lessons."

— P6, ECE/Class 1 Teacher (11 years)

"Pedagogy reform programmes proceed on their own track, exam system reform proceeds, if at all, on a completely separate, much slower track, and the two rarely meet in any coordinated way. I have come to think of it almost like teaching someone advanced swimming strokes while the pool itself remains shaped for a different kind of swimming entirely."

— P5, Headmaster / Master Trainer (26 years)

"A permanently budgeted, recurring supply line for consumable materials, rather than a one-time initial kit at the start of the programme."

— P6, ECE/Class 1 Teacher (11 years)

Theme Three: Classroom and Community Conditions Redraw the Boundaries of What Can Be Implemented

The third theme, the largest in the dataset by coded volume, describes the material, demographic, and social ecology into which training is expected to travel. Across all twenty interviews, participants described conditions that did not merely make implementation harder but actively changed the form a trained method could take, or removed some options from the table entirely.

Capacity constraints: overcrowding, staffing, infrastructure, and role overload

Large classes, chronic staffing gaps, and combined-grade teaching were described as preconditions that had to be reckoned with before any pedagogical method could even be attempted.

"This school, on paper, is Class 1 to Class 5, but for most of these twenty-two years I was the only teacher. Right now we are two teachers for five classes, about seventy children total."

— P3, Sole/Lead Teacher, multigrade (22 years)

"This lab has eighteen computers on paper, but only about seven or eight are genuinely functional on any given day. We have no reliable internet connection, and electricity is subject to load-shedding."

— P9, ICT Teacher (7 years)

"When a training is scheduled for, say, five days, and I am one of only two regularly present teachers for two hundred students, my attendance at that training means the school's effective teaching capacity is cut in half for those five days."

— P10, Sole permanently-posted teacher (17 years)

Unequal access and uneven learner continuity

Access to training itself, and continuity of the learners a teacher works with, were both shown to be unevenly distributed - shaped by gender, employment status, language, disability, and mobility in ways that generic programme design rarely accounted for.

"For a female teacher from a far tehsil, either she skips it, or a male relative has to accompany her, adding cost, or the school just sends whichever male teacher is available."

— P1, Senior Elementary Teacher (15 years)

"The deeper, more prestigious trainings, the master-trainer pathway, further career-linked training opportunities, are largely closed to me given my employment category."

— P13, Contract Teacher (5 years)

"Every training I have attended assumes - implicitly, never stated outright, but clearly assumed by the materials and examples used - a classroom of Urdu-speaking, or occasionally Urdu-plus-one-local-language children."

— P11, Class 4 Teacher, refugee/returnee area (12 years)

"A child who is progressing well with a particular reading strategy I have been consistently using with her might simply disappear from my register for weeks, or permanently, without warning."

— P11, Class 4 Teacher, refugee/returnee area (12 years)

Problems beyond pedagogy and the need for local negotiation

Several participants described conditions - debt bondage, community violence, poverty, disaster, cultural expectation - that lay well beyond anything a training session on teaching method could realistically address, requiring ongoing professional negotiation and judgement instead.

"Some kiln owners or their local supervisors are not always supportive of children attending school consistently, since a child's labour has direct economic value."

— P17, Class 4/5 Teacher, brick-kiln colony (14 years)

"Our community here has faced targeted violence over the years - bomb attacks, targeted killings - and this has shaped everyday life here, including schooling, in ways that a training manual written in Islamabad simply does not anticipate."

— P7, Mathematics & Science Teacher, Hazara community (13 years)

"My own religious training is rooted in a long, respected tradition of memorization... it is considered a valuable, even sacred, discipline in its own right. When a modern pedagogy training tells me that memorization-heavy teaching is outdated, I feel a real tension."

— P12, Islamiyat & Pakistan Studies Teacher (19 years)

Theme Four: Teachers Do Not Replicate Training; They Translate It

Theme four is the central idea of the analysis and serves as the basis for the research paper's title. It does not represent the accurate reproduction of the information learned by the teachers, but rather a constant adaptation, merging, simplification, and selection of training materials that can better be called translation than replication.

Adaptive fidelity: preserving purpose while changing form

Many of the interviewees spoke about consciously restructuring the outward form of a technique while attempting to preserve their understanding of the pedagogical intent.

"I think I have managed to balance between the two. I still ask for memorization of certain verses, and I believe that it is worth something, but I also included in my approach discussions of how a certain teaching applies to a person's real-life situation."

— P12, Islamiyat & Pakistan Studies Teacher (19 years)

"What worked out best for me was WhatsApp, as it provided the least common denominator of technology available to most families to some extent, and I used it to send voice messages with explanations and text-only tasks."

— P9, ICT Teacher (7 years)

"The physical education of girls has to be conducted taking into consideration cultural restrictions and sensibilities regarding modesty, which affects what activities we can conduct, how we use the playing field, and when it's acceptable to conduct those activities."

— P15, Physical Education Teacher (8 years)

Portable practices survive the classroom ecology

It was evident that there was a discernible trend in the techniques that endured: those that were cheap, reusable, and required no additional manpower survived, whereas those that cost much initially declined after their usefulness had run its course.

"The questioning technique where you ask open-ended questions such as why do you think - I've used that consistently as it does not require any additional manpower or materials but rather a change in my approach of posing the question during instruction'."

— P10, Sole permanently-posted teacher (17 years)

"That specific technique does not require many resources on an ongoing basis and does not require much training for its sustainability."

— P13, Contract Teacher (5 years)

"A child could benefit from a task of pebble counting whether it is his first day of school or his 50th day of school in that term."

— P14, Sole/Lead Teacher, multigrade (16 years)

Improvisation and personal compensation subsidize implementation

There is an implicit implementation subsidy built into the data as well, with teachers often spending their own money, time, and private equipment to sustain a practice once all institutional inputs have been exhausted.

"I just could not duplicate that on the budget I was working with - I had to use some donated kitchen stuff from old times that was not being used anymore, but kids loved it."

— P6, ECE/Class 1 Teacher (11 years)

"I found myself having to draw a diagram myself on the board and explaining the entire thing using some colored chalks that I purchased out of my own pocket."

— P4, Science Teacher (3 years)

"The majority from my own home in the evenings when my connection, though not very good, is slightly better than that at the school. Furthermore, let me confess that after 7 years, there is also fatigue in continually having to make up for what the system lacks."

— P9, ICT Teacher (7 years)

Transfer is a trajectory of attempts, failure, drift, and reversion

There was no mention of implementation as one success. Rather, participants shared accounts of enthusiasm, initial chaos, partial success, and, in many instances, a return to more comfortable and manageable teaching techniques.

"By the second month I was mostly going back to lecture and blackboard with activity once in ten days or so."

— P1, Senior Elementary Teacher (15 years)

"But yes, there is a drift I see; there are some days when it is much easier to have all students sitting and copying a worksheet in forty minutes than conducting the difficult corner rotation technique. In my opinion, about seventy per cent of the intensity of training remains."

— P6, ECE/Class 1 Teacher (11 years)

"Some students responded very well – in fact they understood the application of a word problem better than the 'solve for x' method alone. However, some were almost impatient with the technique, 'sir, just give us the formula, we need to prepare for past paper questions.'"

— P7, Mathematics & Science Teacher, Hazara community (13 years)

Theme Five: Informal Relationships Become the Missing Implementation Infrastructure

Theme five reveals an interesting trend: of the twenty interviews conducted, in seventeen cases the inadequacy of formal professional support led teachers to establish an informal support structure with colleagues, students, parents, and the community at large.

Peers and informal mentors become the durable professional network

Staff room chats, self-made WhatsApp groups, and informal mentoring by senior teachers were frequently identified as more regular and practically oriented than any official departmental arrangement for professional learning.

"I am part of a WhatsApp group of English subject specialists working at some girls' schools of Quetta city where we exchange worksheets and discuss complex grammatical topics. In truth, it is among the most useful professional resources that I have got access to, more regular than any departmental PLC which has been initiated before."

— P2, Subject Specialist English (9 years)

"I get the chance of observing a senior Science teacher's class occasionally when I am free, and she also tells me about some inexpensive material. The informal mentoring has actually imparted more practical skills to me than any formal training sessions."

— P4, Science Teacher (3 years)

"Since all of us have experienced the same things, there is a great sense of solidarity among the staff here. The peer support mechanism among us, although not formally arranged in the form of a PLC, is one of the best that I have seen because it has emerged from a sense of common experience."

Trust and community relationships become implementation tools

Outside the staff room, participants cited instances in which carefully cultivated Trust in students, parents, and community elders was used to resolve issues for which training sessions had not equipped them, including brokering language issues and ensuring continued attendance at school.

"There is an older girl in Dari, whom sometimes I ask to spend 15 minutes with the newcomer class 4 student of Dari in the class, who explains the classroom language to her."

— P11, Class 4 Teacher, refugee/returnee area (12 years)

"Slowly over time and by being consistently present without passing judgment, I always greet parents with respect and celebrate any success of the child, even small ones, in front of his or her parent when possible."

— P17, Class 4/5 Teacher, brick kiln colony (14 years)

"The good functioning of the SMC has at times actually generated some community support and resources in addition to those provided officially by the departmental budget for the school."

— P20, Class 5 Teacher / SMC Liaison (13 years)

Theme Six: Transfer Persists Through Teacher Agency and Learner Response - but at an Emotional Cost

The last theme addresses how the Transfer can persist at all in light of the challenges posed by the aforementioned system and context. The professional identity, along with the learners' visible learning, created a reinforcing cycle, but the persistence was not without cost.

Professional identity and self-directed learning generate persistence

Professional pride, personal dedication to the subjects taught, and a self-learning attitude were among the major drivers behind many participants' persistence.

"Now when I get an opportunity to conduct a good activity, and I can see that even the weaker children, those children who usually remain quiet, start participating actively, smile - that is something which salary increment cannot give you. It is partially a professional pride thing - I do not want to become a teacher who continues to use the old 1990s method for 30 years."

— P1, Senior Elementary Teacher (15 years)

"What the successful teachers usually have in common is genuine interest in the subject they are teaching, some confidence which helps to bear the frustration when a new methodology fails in front of the students and also some habit of self-learning irrespective of any formal training."

— P5, Headmaster / Master Trainer (26 years)

"When one of our children passes the matric or even reaches college in Quetta, it becomes a cause of celebration not only for that family but for the entire community, and part of it is due to my efforts and constant innovation despite its limited success."

— P3, Sole/Lead Teacher, multigrade (22 years)

Learner response becomes experiential evidence that the effort is worthwhile

Any visible changes in participation, confidence or ambition became an immediate positive feedback loop, which convinced teachers that all the effort, mess and personal cost incurred while employing a new teaching technique were justified by its real learning merit.

"There was a student who was quite average at other subjects, but she found the coding unit quite stimulating and interesting to work on. The sudden realization of potential in a student is why I keep coming back to do what I do."

- P9, ICT Teacher (7 years' experience)

"There was a student who was very reserved and did not talk much in Class 9; at the end of the year, with constant pair work practice, she managed to deliver a small presentation in front of the class - that was definitely a rewarding moment for me."

- P2, Subject Specialist English (9 years' experience)

"Some of the most thoughtful discussions about honesty and treating people differently have left a strong impression on me throughout my career."

- P12, Islamiyat & Pakistan Studies Teacher (19 years' experience)

Emotional labour and bounded agency define the limits of persistence

Emotional costs were mentioned alongside professional pride and professional reinforcement: grief, exhaustion, financial stress, and the hard-earned acknowledgement that, despite its impact on students, it is limited to factors outside one's own control.

"Because you really work and you put in your best efforts to help the child develop, and one day they're not there, with no explanation at all. After many years, you learn to maintain a certain professional distance so that you don't harm yourself emotionally while giving your all every single day the child attends school."

— P11, Class 4 Teacher, refugee/returnee area (12 years)

"There's nothing I can do to change how the kiln operates; there's nothing I can do to change the system of debt bondage and the smoke in the air, which isn't the responsibility of any teacher. What I can do is try to make sure that the child feels welcomed and inspired during their time with me."

— P17, Class 4/5 Teacher, brick-kiln colony (14 years)

"A feeling of security which would enable me to invest more confidently, for a longer period of time, into professional development and classroom systems without that feeling of uncertainty of my job security."

— P13, Contract Teacher (5 years)

Discussion

Taken together, the six themes generated from this dataset tell a coherent story that begins well before a teacher enters the classroom and continues long after a training programme has formally ended. Professional development first has to clear a usability threshold: it has to speak to a teacher's actual subject, phase, and classroom problem, and it has to be modelled and rehearsed rather than merely lectured - before it stands any real chance of being carried forward. This finding sits comfortably alongside Sims and colleagues' (2025) meta-analytic conclusion that effective professional development tends to build specific, practisable technique rather than general awareness, and it extends Kalim and Bibi's (2024) argument that Pakistani public-school professional development is more effective when it is designed around teachers' actual, individually varying needs rather than delivered as a single uniform package.

Even usable training, however, quickly meets a second obstacle: a surrounding institutional system that continues to reward older practices. The strongest single relationship in the dataset's co-occurrence analysis linked systemic counter-signals with contextual boundaries on enactment, a pattern consistent with implementation-science arguments that classroom-level change cannot be sustained where assessment, monitoring, and staffing systems have not been simultaneously realigned (Sims et al., 2025). The absence of instructional coaching in particular echoes a wider concern in Pakistani education research: headteachers described here as morally supportive but structurally unable to observe or coach pedagogy closely resemble the leadership pattern documented in rural Balochistan multigrade schooling more broadly (Ali et al., 2026), where security, administrative, and survival concerns understandably take precedence over instructional supervision.

The third theme - contextual boundaries on enactment - offers perhaps the study's most direct confirmation of existing Balochistan-specific scholarship. The overcrowding, staffing gaps, and multigrade demands described by participants closely mirror Jamaldini, Asif, and Sultan's (2022) finding that combined-grade teaching structurally reduces the bandwidth available for differentiated, activity-based pedagogy, while accounts of interrupted attendance among mobile, labouring, or displaced learners extend Arif, Ismail, and Li's (2025) documentation of teacher resilience following the 2022 floods into a broader and more chronic pattern of disrupted learner continuity that is not limited to acute disaster events. What this study adds to that literature is a closer view of how teachers respond pedagogically to these conditions in real time - not simply enduring them, but actively redesigning lesson sequence, grouping, and materials around them.

The fourth theme, adaptive translation, is where this study's contribution to implementation theory is clearest. Where much cascade-training literature treats any deviation from a training manual as dilution or failure (Iftikhar et al., 2022; El-Hamamsy et al., 2023), the present data support a more generous and, arguably, more accurate reading: many of the modifications teachers described - blending memorization with discussion, substituting local materials for imported ones, modularising sequential curricula for mobile learners - preserved or even strengthened the underlying pedagogical purpose of the training while changing its surface form. This is precisely the pattern of adaptive fidelity documented by Lovett, Schonert-Reichl, Zinsser, and Lawlor (2024) in a very different national context, and its appearance here suggests that adaptive fidelity may be less a feature of any particular programme and more a general property of how skilled practitioners handle externally designed interventions under real-world constraint.

The fifth theme complicates a narrative, common in policy discourse, that treats formal programme design as the primary determinant of implementation success. Where Hennessy and colleagues (2022) found that peer communities of practice were among the more durable and effective components of technology-mediated professional development across forty low- and middle-income countries, the present data go further: informal peer, student, and community relationships were not simply a supplement to formal support but frequently its practical substitute, filling gaps that no training programme in this dataset had itself managed to fill. This is a double-edged finding. It demonstrates real, situated professional resourcefulness, but it also means that the quality of a teacher's implementation support depends heavily on who happens to be nearby, generous, and trusted - an equity concern that formal, resourced systems are, at least in principle, better placed to address consistently.

Finally, the sixth theme's account of bounded agency resonates with, and extends, recent work on teacher emotion regulation and wellbeing. Xu, Haratyan, and Tian's (2026) systematic review found that adaptive emotional strategies supported instructional resilience while unsupported strain predicted withdrawal; the teachers in this study appeared to be actively practising exactly this kind of adaptive emotional labour - professional distance, redefinition of success around the days a child is present, deliberate celebration of small learner victories - largely without formal psychosocial support of their own. The study's central argument, drawn across all six themes, is therefore that sustainable classroom-level transfer of professional development cannot be secured by improving training design alone, nor by relying indefinitely on individual teachers' resilience and Improvisation. It requires attention to the full chain: design, system alignment, contextual feasibility, adaptive enactment, relational infrastructure, and the emotional sustainability of the people expected to carry it all.

Implications and Recommendations

For provincial education planners, the clearest implication is that professional development budgets are unlikely to translate into durable classroom change unless a meaningful share of investment shifts from initial training delivery toward sustained, subject-specific instructional coaching and structured follow-up visits - the "missing middle" identified so consistently across this dataset. Where coaching visits did occur, participants described them as qualitatively different from, and considerably more valuable than, standard monitoring visits, suggesting that the distinction between coaching and inspection needs to be made explicit in how follow-up visits are designed, staffed, and evaluated.

For training designers, the findings argue for deliberate context-mapping before programme design: building training content and materials around the staffing ratios, multigrade structures, linguistic diversity, and infrastructure levels that teachers in a given district actually work with, rather than around a pilot site or an urban-model classroom. Embedding rehearsal, modelling, and specific feedback into training delivery, rather than relying on cascade-compressed lecture, would directly address the usability gap documented in Theme One.

For assessment and examination authorities, a genuine, even partial, realignment of high-stakes examination formats toward the kinds of formative, discussion-based, and applied skills that professional development increasingly promotes would remove one of the strongest counter-signals identified in this study. Absent such realignment, teachers will continue to make the entirely rational choice to protect examination-relevant practice over training-promoted practice as assessment dates approach.

For school leadership development, the findings suggest that headteacher and headmistress training should explicitly distinguish instructional-leadership skills from general administrative management and be paired with a genuine reduction in the competing administrative burden that currently limits classroom observation time, rather than adding coaching expectations to an already saturated role.

For programme sustainability, recurrent, budgeted supply lines for consumable materials - rather than one-time start-up kits - and formal continuity mechanisms across grade transitions, staff turnover, and project cycles would directly address the institutional-embedding gap described in Theme Two and the personal-compensation burden described in Theme Four. Finally, for teacher wellbeing, the study suggests real value in formally recognizing and lightly resourcing the informal peer networks documented in Theme Five - not to bureaucratize them out of existence, but to extend their reach more equitably to teachers who currently lack access to a strong informal network, and to pair them with structured attention to teachers' emotional wellbeing rather than leaving bounded agency to be managed entirely through individual coping.

Limitations

This study's findings should be read with several limitations in mind. As an interpretive, purposively sampled qualitative study of twenty teachers in and around one city, the findings are not intended to be statistically generalizable to all public-school teachers in Balochistan or Pakistan; their value lies instead in the depth, contextual specificity, and analytic transferability of the patterns identified, which readers working in comparable settings can judge for themselves. Interview data rely on participants' retrospective self-reports, which are shaped by memory, self-presentation, and the specific rapport established with the interviewer; classroom observation data, which were beyond this study's scope, would provide a valuable complementary source of evidence about how closely reported adaptation matches what actually occurs during lessons. Finally, while translation from Urdu, Pashto, Balochi, and Brahui-inflected speech into English was carefully conducted and attentive to contextual meaning, some nuances inevitably shift in any cross-linguistic translation process, and future work presenting original-language transcripts alongside translations would strengthen the field's methodological transparency.

Conclusion

This research project explored how public school teachers in Quetta make sense of the process of transferring professional development from the training room to the classroom, and it revealed that this process is much more active and effortful than the term "transfer of training" normally suggests. The teachers of this research project were neither passive subjects, whose implementation of the ideas that worked or failed in training, nor entirely independent actors capable of shaping the practice autonomously. They were translators, constantly engaged in bridging the gaps between the ideas provided in training, the incentives present across the whole system, the conditions in which their classrooms and communities existed, and their own professional self-concept and emotional resources. The process of implementing these ideas in the classroom always resulted in some local re-telling of what had been said during training - a tale in which bottle caps played the role of lab equipment, the teachers bought coloured chalk on their own money, a Dari-speaking student was brought in to translate things, and the motivation of a headmaster replaced training that had never been provided.

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