

Factors Influencing Teachers' Active Involvement in Continuous Professional Development: A Survey in Trans Nzoia West District, Kenya

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Abstract

Economies in the world are becoming increasingly knowledge based and the need to have continued learning of individuals has become more necessary than ever before, raising the concern for employees and employers to ensure lifelong education. This research studies continuous professional development of teachers who are employees of Teachers Service Commission (TSC) in Kenya. The main objective of this study was to establish the factors which influence teachers' active involvement in continuous professional development. The target population of this study comprised the county director TSC, district education officer (D.E.O) and the quality assurance and standards officer (DQASO) and 57 secondary school teachers in Trans Nzoia West district in Kenya making a sample size of 60. Questionnaires and interview schedule were used to collect data. The researcher used descriptive statistics and the results were presented in frequency distribution tables which the researcher used for interpretation. The findings from this study showed that few teachers were actively involved in continuous professional development in the district and that the work environment does not support teachers' involvement in continuous professional development.

Keywords: Human resource management, Human resource development, Professional development, Continuous professional development (CPD), Teachers,

1.0 Introduction

The overall purpose of every human resource manager in any organization is to ensure that the organization is able to achieve success through people. Organizations that fail to pursue actively policies of continuous development for its employees often stagnate, decline and

eventually die. Human resource development (HRD) in organizations is concerned with the provision of learning, development and training opportunities in order to improve individual and organizational performance (Armstrong, M. 2006). Human resource management focuses on continued development of the employees, a concept known as continuous professional development (CPD). The concept of continuous professional development is fundamental to the philosophy of total quality management (TQM) which improves organizational performance

The term continuing professional development (CPD) has been widely used to refer to ongoing education and training for professions (Earley & Bubb, 2004). CPD leads to the improvement of school performance as well as the professional advancement of individuals (Day, 1999). Continuous professional development is said to have been coined by Richard Gardner, who was in charge of professional development for the building professions at York University in the mid-1970s (Gray, 2005). According to Gardner the term was chosen because it did not differentiate between learning from courses, and learning 'on the job'. The individuals involved in CPD often have a desire for career longevity and personal growth, a sense of moral obligation, to maintain and improve professional competence, enhance career progression, keep abreast of new technology and practice, or to comply with professional regulatory organizations.

During the 1970s professional development of teachers was based on the notion that there is a deficit in teachers' skills and knowledge. Most professional development programs for teachers consisted of "one shot" workshops aimed at improving teacher's skills and knowledge. Later in the 1980's continuous professional development of teachers moved towards school improvement and change of systems in the school management (Guskey, 2002). This traditional approach was necessary but not sufficient to change teachers' mode of working.

1.1 Problem Statement

Human resources are the most important resource of any organization since unlike other resources their capabilities can be enhanced to unimaginable levels through a variety of human resource development interventions. Lifelong education for employees has been highly emphasized in the global world as a way of accelerating national development. Although much is known about teacher development, there are many gaps in the literature related to teacher development that need to be filled as identified by Bell and Gilbert (1996). These gaps include; the nature of teacher development, the factors which help and hinder teacher development, the activities which promote growth in teacher development and the reasons why some teacher development experiences are so frustrating for teachers who want to change.

CPD ensures that the teacher is equipped with adequate competencies that prepare the teacher for challenges of modern life (Karanja, 1995). The government of Kenya echoed the same view in the Sessional Paper No. 6 of 1988 when it said that "there is urgent need to develop and promote teacher education programme if the administration of education in the country is to succeed and national development is to be accelerated" (MOEST, 1988) However, teacher development remains one of the most challenging areas in teacher

management over the years (Kafu, 2011). A number of teachers have embraced this call for lifelong education yet many have not been able to respond. As highlighted by Bell & Gilbert (1996), it is implied that there are some factors which contribute to and those that hinder teachers' active involvement in professional development. Unless all the teachers are involved actively in professional development this will affect the social and the economic contribution they make to the communities and societies of which they are part of. Different countries have exhibited different factors which influence teacher's participation in CPD and there is a possibility that Kenya may have its unique set of factors, therefore the study seeks to establish the factors which influence teachers' active involvement in CPD in a survey to be carried out in TransNzoia West district.

2.0 Literature Review

This concept of teacher's continuous professional development (CPD) focuses on preparing school teachers in pedagogical content as well as academic content. Teacher's work is undergoing rapid change: political, educational and social changes and this means that teachers need more and better CPD in order to keep up with the changes and remain relevant in the teaching profession. The quality of teachers is of great importance, as changing needs place greater pressures on teachers such as having to deal with the challenge of large classes and learners of different characteristics. This raises the need for teachers to be supported more than ever before, hence the need to step up the CPD of teachers, which is an often neglected aspect in Sub-Saharan Africa (Nakabugo et al 2010).

According to Borko, (2004) individual teachers' involvement in CPD activities can arise from an interest in lifelong learning, a sense of moral obligation, a felt need to enhance professional competence and to keep abreast of recent developments in their field of work, the need to comply with mandatory government requirements, or for career advancement. Teacher's continuous professional development takes place when favorable learning environments are provided in which teachers are responsible for their own learning whereas staff developers play an important role in creating favorable learning environments for teacher learning (Putnam and Borko, 2004).

2.2 CPD In Kenya

Currently in Kenya MOE faces various challenges with respect to human resource development and management. Kenya Education Staff Institute (KESI) is charged with the responsibility of training and in-servicing teachers but unfortunately it does not have adequate human and financial resources to undertake this task. Lack of coordinated approach for teacher development at the MOE level is also another challenge. Unless we find solutions to the above challenges, the vision to produce professionally well informed and motivated teachers capable of transforming the quality of educational delivery will not be fulfilled (Republic of Kenya, 2005).

The country's Vision 2030 aim of providing globally competitive and quality education, training and research, and also turning Kenya to a regional centre of research and development in new technologies is dependent on quality teachers. Government pronouncements in policy documents have continued to underline the importance of CPD for

trained teachers. For example, Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005 has emphasized the need for a dynamic, responsive and well-coordinated system of in-service training as a pre-requisite for the success of the free primary education (FPE) initiative and the achievement of Education for All (EFA) goals. However, key players in education in Kenya agree that little has been achieved in this area. The ministry of education acknowledges the fact that there has been little in service training (INSET) with the result that few teachers have opportunities to participate in INSET activities. (Republic of Kenya, 2005)

2.1 Teachers Involvement In CPD

Teachers are an important resource in the teaching and learning process and their training and utilization therefore requires critical consideration. This is due to changing demands on the new roles of teachers in the 21st Century. Traditional approaches to CPD such as formal courses or one-off seminar are criticized for their shortcomings of being unable to get teachers prepared for the new role of knowledge facilitator rather than knowledge transmitter (Darling-Hammond, 1998). An awareness of less formal and traditional forms of CPD is slowly growing, with calls for teachers to become more creative in their approaches to their own professional development, and move away from more traditional transmission-based methods (Muijs *et al*, 2004). Understanding how teachers perceive CPD and what factors affect their participation in CPD is an extremely important segment for it provides schools with accurate information to use in making effective decisions regarding CPD programs (Fitch and Kopp, 1990).

3.0 Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Target Population

The researcher used descriptive research design. This design is a method where the characteristics of an event, situation, community or population are used to create an appropriate profile of complete and possibly accurate information. It involves collecting information by interviewing or administering a questionnaire to a sample of individuals (Kombo & Tromp, 2006). The research design helped the researcher to conceptualise an operational plan to undertake the various procedures and tasks which were required to complete the study, and this ensured that the procedures were adequate to obtain valid, objective and accurate answers to the research questions (Kumar, 2005). The study minimized the limitations of descriptive design by ensuring that the data collection tools were well designed and established to minimize on their error. The study focused on the Trans Nzoia west district which has a total of 73 secondary schools of which 2 are national secondary schools, 9 county secondary schools which were formally known as provincial schools, 48 district secondary schools and 14 private secondary schools. Trans Nzoia west district has a total of 565 secondary school teachers employed by the Teachers Service Commission (TSC). The study only researched on teachers employed by the TSC, the county director TSC, district education officer (D.E.O), and the district quality assurance and standards officer (DQASO) because they deal with teachers professional development and also are agents of the TSC and the ministry of education at the district level.

The researcher used stratified simple random sampling by grouping the schools in national schools, county schools and district school; of the two national schools 4 teachers were selected randomly, 18 teachers were selected randomly from the 09 county schools and the remaining 35 teachers were selected by use of simple random sampling from the 48 district schools. The researcher used purposive sampling technique in choosing the county director, D.E.O and the DQASO. The sample population for this study was 60 persons.

The researcher used questionnaires and interview which are the two basic methods used to collect primary data. Questionnaire gathers data over a large sample and is more appropriate when addressing sensitive issues since it offers greater anonymity and covers more respondents within a planned data collection period.

The questionnaire comprised of a written list of questions. The researcher also used structured interviews. This enabled the researcher to verify information obtained from the questionnaires. During the interviews the researcher asked predetermined set of questions as per a written list of open ended and close ended questions. The researcher did three interviews with the county director TSC, DEO and DQASO.

Collected data was edited to eliminate errors and omissions in order to ensure accuracy, completeness and clarity. The questionnaires were also checked to ensure that all questions are answered and also for any false or inconsistent information. The collected data was then tabulated and coded. This reduced them to small number of classes and this enabled the researcher to tabulate and identify relevant themes. The tabulated data was then fed into Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) computer software and generated frequency distribution tables and pie charts which enable the researcher to interpret collected data. The researcher conformed to the principle of voluntary consent by letting respondents to willingly participate in the research. While undertaking this study, the researcher guarded against violating non-disclosure agreements, breaking respondent confidentiality and misrepresentation of results..

4.0 Research Findings and Discussion

The analyses revealed that majority of the teachers were not actively participating in continuous professional development. Age was a factor which according to the analyses influenced teachers active involvement in continuous professional development, as the age increased the percentage of teachers who were actively involved in continuous professional development decreased. The teachers who participated more in continuous professional development had college level of education as compared to teachers who had university level of education. The analyses further showed that the male teachers participated more in CPD as compared to the female teachers.

4.1 TSC Commitment in Ensuring Teachers Participate in CPD

Helping employees to become effective in their jobs is one of the fundamental important tasks in people management that any organization has to undertake. In the analysis involving TSC commitment in ensuring teachers participate in CPD, 63.1% indicated that Teachers Service Commission was not committed in ensuring teachers involved themselves in CPD

activities. This research analysis clearly showed that the teachers felt that their employer was not committed in ensuring that teachers participated in CPD activities.

4.2 School Support

Employee's continuous professional development has many benefits to the individual employee and the organization. However, for the benefits to be realized, the organizational environment must be supportive of the employee professional development efforts. The school support involves the school head teachers, head of departments and the school management board being committed in ensuring the teachers attend continuous professional development. Regarding the school support to CPD, 36.9% of the respondents felt that the schools were supportive enough to the teachers who were or wanted to participate in CPD activities.

4.3 Government Opportunities for CPD

The government needs to invest in learning and development of its citizens by providing appropriate learning opportunities and facilities, but the prime responsibility for learning rests with the individual (teachers), who should be given the guidance and support by both the TSC and the school management. In analyzing government created opportunities for continuous professional development, 59.70% of the respondents felt that the government was not offering opportunities for the teachers to participate in CPD. This analysis revealed that the teachers felt that the government had not created enough opportunities for the Kenyan teacher to be actively involved in continuous professional development.

4.4 Opportunity for Career Development with Teachers Service Commission.

Career development is a formal approach used by the organization to help people acquire the skills and experiences needed to perform current and future jobs. Career development is important to maintain a motivated and committed workforce (Armstrong 2011). It was for this reason the researcher sought to establish whether the teachers had an opportunity for career development. This is because the presence or absence of career development opportunity can influence the active participation in CPD. The researcher also sought to find out whether the teachers had a career development opportunity with TSC and 57.9% felt that there were no opportunities for career development with Teacher's Service Commission. This shows that the majority felt that the opportunities for career development were limited.

4.5 Joint government and TSC activities

There is need for coordinated approach to continuous professional development. The ministry of education on the part of the government and the Teachers' Service Commission should work hand in hand to ensure the Kenyan teacher is given an opportunity to participate in CPD. This will reduce on cases of both the government and the TSC producing CPD events with the same content causing repetition of material offered hence bringing monotony. 50.9%

of the respondents felt that there were few or no joint government and TSC organized CPD activities.

4.6 Challenges Faced by Teachers During CPD

The respondents were further asked to list other factors that they considered to be challenges and consequently influencing their active involvement in CPD. The findings were grouped and presented in a frequency distribution as shown in table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1 Challenges of CPD

Challenges	Frequency	Percent
Finances	54	94.50
Time	28	49.00
Lack of school support	22	38.75
Irrelevance of CPD	17	29.80
Lack of Fair opportunities	16	28.00
TSC & MOE policy	09	15.75
High workload	09	15.75
Monotony of content	07	12.25
Lack of monetary value in CPD	07	12.25
Lack of interest to CPD	06	10.50
Family commitment	06	10.50

The challenges which were identified by the teachers were finances required to participate in CPD at 94.50%, time to participate in CPD 49.00%, lack of school support to participate in CPD 38.75%, irrelevant CPD offered to Teachers 29.80%, lack of fair opportunities for the teachers 28.00%, TSC and MOE policies for CPD 15.75%, high workload for the teachers 15.75%, monotony of CPD content 12.25%, lack of monetary value attached to CPD 12.25%, lack of interest among the teachers to participate in CPD 10.50%, family commitment 10.50% .

4.7 Factors Influencing Teachers' Involvement in CPD

There are several factors which are unique to Kenya which either hinder or facilitate teachers' participation in CPD activities. The following are some of the factors which one of the interviewee pointed out;

"The factors which I have observed in this district which are influencing the teachers' active participation in my opinion are; the young schools employ untrained teachers who do not like to attend training. Unwillingness of teachers to complete cycles of training in training which involve several training cycle, feeling of superiority among teachers in well performing schools and uncooperative head teachers. Some teachers also do not like using their money to pay

for any training. The teachers are ever complaining that they do not have money to pay for seminars and workshops.” Some of the factors which were raised during this interview also appeared earlier in the literature either as a factor influencing active involvement in CPD or as a challenge raised by respondents.

4.8 Challenges of Participating in CPD

It is important to more thoroughly understand the factors affecting teachers’ active participation in continuous professional development. It is the responsibility of the employer to establish the challenges its employee face in course of their professional development. The interviewees were fully aware of the challenges facing the teachers in the district. One of the interviewee pointed out; “Many teachers ever complaining about registration fees or tuition required for attending professional development events, some head teachers are not supportive they even hide invitation letters for seminars and workshops because they fear the teachers will demand the school to pay the fee. Due to high workload of the teachers, time is also a challenge.” The challenges highlighted were also noted by the other interviewees.

4.9 How to Overcome the Challenges Faced by Teachers

Unless we find solutions to the above challenges, the vision to produce professionally well informed and motivated teachers capable of transforming the quality of educational delivery will not be fulfilled. An idea also shared by one of the interviewee when he said that;

“The teachers need to establish the best way to overcome the challenges especially on the challenges which involve their attitude and behavior. The schools management boards should also offer fair opportunities to all the teachers. There is also need to organize for forums where the teachers and all the parties involved in teacher development meet and discuss the ways to overcome the challenges which influence the success of their efforts.” Teachers are an important resource in the teaching/learning process and their training and utilization therefore requires critical consideration and support by all parties involved.

5.0 Summary, Conclusions And Recommendations

5.1 Summary

Continuous professional development encompasses all activities that cater both for the individual needs of teachers and for the institutional needs of the whole school. The teacher, the school and the students thus benefits from continuous professional development (Bell, 1991). Given the critical role that education plays in a nation, there is need that teachers’ continuous professional development takes significant space in any worthwhile education policy for a country to achieve economic goals. Unless all the teachers are involved actively in CPD this will affect the social and the economic contribution they make to the communities

and societies of which they are part of, hence the study sought to establish the factors which influence teachers' active involvement in continuous professional development in a survey which was carried out in Trans- Nzoia West district. The researcher collected data from 57 teachers in the district and did three interviews with the County director TSC, the D.EO and the DQASO in the district

The research finding revealed that the majority of the respondents were aged between 30 and 40 years. This implied that the TSC was utilizing the most productive workforce. As affirmed by Hansen (1998), when he states that the 30-40 year age bracket is classified as the most productive age and therefore the TSC has an edge in utilizing the teachers potential. It was also noted that the majority of the respondents were men and therefore the likelihood that there is gender imbalance in the teaching profession. On the level of education, the majority of the respondents had university education. This was a sign that most of the teachers employed by TSC are graduates with a few having college education. In area of training most teachers were trained in sciences with the least trained in humanities and technical and applied sciences. The analysis further revealed that most of the respondents had worked for more than 10 years which showed that there was high teacher retention among the teachers working with the TSC.

The factors that influenced teachers' involvement in CPD in Trans Nzoia West district were: lack of finances i.e. the fee required to pay for CPD activities, lack of quality CPD activities from the employer, TSC the teachers employer was not committed to ensure that teachers were involved in CPD, lack of enough government created opportunities for teachers CPD, lack of career development opportunity with the TSC for the teacher, Lack of CPD activities which are organized by both the government and TSC, lack of support from the school, irrelevance of CPD.

5.2 Conclusions

The study sought to find out the factors which influence teachers' involvement in continuous professional development in a survey in Trans Nzoia West district. From the findings of the study, the researcher arrived at the following conclusion; few teachers in the Trans Nzoia West district were involved in continuous professional development. Outstandingly, the work environment seemed to play an influential and determinant factor affecting teachers' professional development. Most individuals are driven by the need for personal growth and development as long as their environment is both supportive and challenging (Armstrong, 2011). This calls for support from the school managements, the government and the Teachers Service Commission.

5.3 Recommendations

The teaching profession should be seen as a continuum which includes initial teacher education, induction and continuing professional development. For this to be actualized the work environment should favor professional development. The researcher recommends that the Teachers Service Commission, the ministry of education and schools develops structured professional development events to ensure continuous acquisition and improvement of knowledge, skills, and competencies in terms of latest teaching and learning methods and

reviewed content in their subject areas. There is also need to formulate a policy by the TSC to protect the teachers who want to Participate in CPD from uncooperative school head teachers.

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