

**TEACHERS' CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
(CPD): PERSPECTIVES OF HEAD TEACHERS AND TEACHERS  
IN CENTRAL PROVINCE OF ZAMBIA**

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**Abstract—**

*Improving the quality of teaching and learning is top on the education agenda in Zambia, just as in other developing countries. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for teachers is essential for the improvement of the quality of teaching and learning. This paper presents aspects of teachers' CPD in terms of teachers and head teachers' views on CPD including their respective roles in the CPD context and the challenges in the uptake and provision of CPD. These issues are examined through a study of 32 head teachers and 160 teachers in selected schools in the Central Province of Zambia. The results show that there was CPD in the schools that were sampled in this study and that the most common type of the CPD was lesson study which was not an initiative of the head teachers and/or teachers but a policy directive from the Ministry of General Education (MOGE). The responses further indicate that the participants found this type of CPD to be quite alien and therefore not beneficial to their teaching. It was revealed that the CPD programme impacted negatively on the teaching and learning process because it took away a lot of teaching time. The findings have far reaching implications for various stakeholders including MOGE, teacher educators, head teachers and teachers in efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools through CPD.*

**Keywords—***continuing professional development; Head teachers; teachers; perspectives*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of General Education (MOGE) in Zambia has acknowledged that a quality education system heavily depends on the quality of teachers [1]. Continuing professional development (CPD) has a crucial role to play in improving the quality of teachers and overall quality of education [2]. The Ministry has recognised the importance of teachers' CPD and its role in contributing to quality of education delivery as highlighted in the national policy document on education, Educating Our Future, and all the national development plans. To this effect it has institutionalised CPD at college and school levels through what is considered as College-Based and School-Based continuing professional development (CBCPD and SBCPD) respectively.

This paper discusses the perceptions of head teachers and teachers of CPD also regarded as SBCPD. It is divided into four sections with the first section reviewing literature and contextualising the discussion on CPD in Zambia. The second section presents the methodology used in carrying out the study on which this article is based. The third section presents and discusses the findings of the study with the last section giving a summary of key findings, making a conclusion and discussing the implications for improving the provision, management and uptake of CPD.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Defining CPD

Reference [3] states that CPD is '...a complex and developing concept' ( p. 5). There are in fact several associated terms such as: Professional Development (PD), Professional Learning, In-Service Education and Training or In-Service Training (INSET) and Staff Development that ,m who determines the agenda while the participant generally remains passive.

- *Award Bearing model* usually emphasising the completion of award bearing programmes as maybe offered by institutions of higher learning.
- *Deficit model* which focuses on addressing perceived shortcomings in a teacher's performance.
- *Cascade model* where a teacher or teachers attend a training programme and thereafter disseminates the information acquired to colleagues.
- *Standards Based model* where teachers strive to adopt and demonstrate certain common skills as demanded by national standards.
- *Coaching / Mentoring model* whose focus is on the development of usually a one-to-one non-threatening relationship to support professional growth and takes place within a school context.

- *Community of Practice model* which generally involves more than two people in a non-threatening relationship where acquisition of knowledge and skills takes place as a result of the interaction among members. Depending on the role of the individual in the community of practice, learning could be a proactive or passive experience.
- *Action Research model* involving the teacher(s) themselves identifying and implementing relevant research activities as it pertains to their classroom setting. It encourages teachers to become critical of their own practice.
- *Transformative model* which recognizes and integrates several other different types of the models discussed above with a realization and consideration of whose agenda is being addressed in the process.

Reference [12] argues that each of these models will not or should not stand-alone. He further presents the nine models into three broad categories though at the same time agreeing that they may not be the only possible categorisation. The three broad categories are: traditional (transmissional), transitional and transformative. The first four models as presented above are in the transmissional category where teachers have little or no opportunity to take charge of their own learning and/or influence the learning agenda. The following three (the standards based model, coaching/mentoring model and community of practice model) have increased professional autonomy with the last two (Action research model and transformative model) having greater professional autonomy though it might or might not necessarily be fulfilled depending on the external party which defines the parameters of the activity. It can be stated here that the ideas of teacher autonomy or power relations existing in each CPD model is apparent in [12]'s categorisation of CPD activities than is in [2]'s categorisation as presented above.

While there are some other academics with different categories of teachers' CPD activities, based on the above illustrated it can be concluded that there are a wide range of activities, in multiple contexts, which teachers can engage in to promote their PD. Reference [14] maintain that a single activity or form of CPD cannot in itself be more effective than the other or be considered sufficient to improve teaching practices or to meet the varying CPD needs that teachers have. Teachers therefore may have to engage in several or a combination of several CPD activities, during their career time to meet their various CPD needs and promote the needed PD.

### ***C. Role of teachers and Headteachers in CPD***

Teachers and head teachers have several roles to play in the CPD context as illustrated in this section. Teachers need to take responsibility of their PD. They are themselves agents of their own CPD. Reference [15] with an international review on the teaching profession states that teachers should 'become active agents of their own professional development' (p. 73). What does this entail? This could include teachers developing professionally through reflecting and learning from their teaching experiences. Reference [7] articulates that

teachers learn naturally from experience during their career. While experience in itself can be educative [16] meaningful learning from teaching experiences can be stimulated by a process that includes 'inquiry', 'doing' and 'reflecting'[17]. Therefore suggesting that active engagement in, critical reflection and inquiry are critical components of learning through experience and hence facilitating PD. While learning from experience can promote PD, it can on its own be regarded as insufficient. Reference [7] states that learning from experience alone is considered ultimately limiting to development and therefore engaging in additional PD activities can further promote professional growth.

Teachers can also play an active role in their personal PD, through identifying their professional needs and engaging in PD activities, within or outside a school setting, through mandated or self-directed learning and/or through engaging in structured or unstructured CPD arrangements, which could potentially meet the identified needs. The success of CPD arrangements for teachers largely depends on teachers' commitment to CPD and active engagement in all the levels of CPD provision including decision making and planning for CPD.

Head teachers who are a significant part of the school leadership are expected to show commitment to and actively support teachers' CPD. What is required is a kind of instructional leadership that would provide the needed direction and guidance and that equally allows teachers to take part in decision-making concerning their CPD [18]. The head teacher is also expected to create a CPD culture. This is a culture that depicts an orientation to learning. The extent to which this culture is promoted can either positively or negatively influence teacher learning or whether teachers learn or whether they can change professionally because of learning [19]. Reference [5] argue that the expected school level CPD culture is also one where teachers can experiment and take risks, where partnership and collaboration is valued, inquiry and investigation encouraged and time allotted for it and open communication and feedback championed. Low commitment to teachers' CPD among head teachers can have detrimental effects on CPD provision, management and sustenance.

Furthermore, [20] state that the head teacher '*... must communicate a clear vision on instructional excellence and continuous professional development consistent with the goal of improvement of teaching and learning*' (p.2). This suggests that there should actually be a vision for CPD which should be known, shared, and supported by the head teachers and teachers too.

Teachers and Head teachers have a significant role to play in CPD. The role and level of involvement in CPD design, provision and management however, can vary widely depending on factors such as: interpretation of the notion of CPD and level of awareness of their role(s) in the CPD context. It can be concluded that the quality of CPD provision, management and uptake could be enhanced when head teachers and teachers are aware of their respective roles and have opportunities to cooperate towards a common or shared goal(s) related to CPD and learning.

### III. METHODOLOGY

The study from which this paper is drawn employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The quantitative data was obtained through the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS-Principal and Teacher forms), while qualitative data was collected through face-to-face interviews, focus group discussions, observations and document analysis. It should be noted here that this paper only presents the qualitative data obtained through the face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions. The study sample comprised 32 head teachers and 160 teachers who were selected using purposive sampling. The study was guided by [21]'s conceptual framework.

The quantitative data obtained through the administration of the PIMRS was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), statistical analysis software. Combined responses from head teachers and teachers were also calculated. To analyse the qualitative data obtained some of the six typical phases for analysis in qualitative research described as: organizing the data; generating categories, themes, and patterns; coding the data; testing the emergent understanding; searching for alternative explanations; and writing the report [22] were used.

### IV. FINDINGS

This section presents the findings of the qualitative data obtained for the study. Head teachers' and teachers' perspectives on different aspects of the CPD practice have been presented.

#### A. Headteachers' perspectives

The head teachers said that they did provide PD opportunities for their teachers. They added that teachers sometimes did attend workshops in their subject areas through their subject associations. The head teachers also said that it was actually government policy that all teachers should be involved in CPD programmes with lesson study being the main form of CPD. Despite this, the head teachers in this study mentioned that CPD programmes were some of the major factors that disturbed and took away valuable instructional time. A head teacher echoed this in this response:

*Continuous professional development programmes are trying to help teachers in a way of lesson preparation; but at times when there is a study cycle, you find about seven teachers are involved and all the 14 periods will not be taught.*

The head teachers also revealed that the latest trend in the education sector where teachers had to go for in-service courses to upgrade their qualifications had adversely affected the teaching and learning in the schools. They said that many pupils were losing a lot of learning time. The head teachers supported their sentiments with such statements:

*...for example, where you have 4 or 5 teachers studying on the same programme and can be called to attend residential school at any time and the coordinators of these programmes don't even consider that these teachers are supposed to teach. So you find that five teachers are gone at the same time, meaning pupils will not learn for the entire week or two, children will come to school but how do you cover their classes because here in rural schools you can't find replacements for the teachers.*

Another head teacher added that these studies by teachers through distance learning have become very common and they have a big negative impact on teaching and learning.

*...Because when these teachers go for contact sessions, they are given assignments and instead of doing these assignments while there, they bring them along and start doing them during working hours, instead of teaching, the teachers are always busy tackling their assignments. Sometimes you want to monitor a teacher, you find that they have no lesson plan but they have a heap of modules which they are reading; then you wonder where is this teacher concentrating, is it the distance education programme or the teaching?*

When the head teachers were asked what measures, they had put in place to protect instructional time, they all indicated that they could not do much as they could not stop teachers from studying. They added that they had no power to control most of the things such as CPD programmes that interrupted teaching and learning as they were far beyond their jurisdiction. An example of a comment made is:

*Most of these things come as directives from our supervisors, the district board secretaries (DEBs). It's a question of being pushed against the wall: you can't do or go against directives from superiors, you just have to abide and in return certain things have to suffer.*

Head teachers also cited the idea of schools being zonal centres as another idea that came with added responsibilities and took away huge amounts of teaching and learning time. They explained that a zonal school was one where the other surrounding schools about 6 to 7 would meet for various activities during the school term. The activities would range from head teachers' meetings to CPD programmes. The head teacher in such a school is also required to monitor CPD programmes in other schools too.

From head teachers' perspective on CPD, head teachers have multiple and additional tasks and roles to fulfill to promote growth in learners and teachers in their respective schools and beyond especially considering the idea of Zonal schools. In addition, they indicated that instructional time is affected negatively with activities such as those that are CPD related.

## ***B. Teachers' perspectives***

With respect to the head teachers' role in the context of monitoring CPD, the teachers interviewed stated that they did not understand the rationale behind a head teacher of a zonal school going out to monitor CPD activities in another school when they hardly did that in

their own schools.

*The policy of these CPDs is that a head teacher of a zonal school is expected to go out and monitor CPD activities in other schools while they don't do it in their own schools.*

The teachers also said that CPDs took away a lot of teaching and learning time and they went on to say that the CPD programmes were not being done as per the initial idea but just as a formality.

*To be honest, these continuous development programmes when they are done, they are just done not to bring knowledge to the teachers but to fulfil the plan for the school. In the end, they are not beneficial to both the teachers and the pupils.*

Teachers' responses further indicated that the Lesson study type of CPD, which MOGE through school administration expected them to engage in, was quite alien and therefore not beneficial to their teaching. Their argument was that Lesson Study not well adapted to the Zambian school context due to the high pupil-teacher ratios and that it was more suitable to Mathematics and Science subjects. This could also stem from their and the head teachers' argument that Lesson Study has its roots in Japan whose teaching and learning environment, culture and practices are different from that prevalent in the Zambian context.

#### **IV SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

The responses from both the head teachers and teachers obtained through interviews and discussions revealed that there was CPDs in the schools. However, it was evident from the data obtained through interviews and discussions that there was only one major form of PD, which is lesson study. Lesson study is a problem-solving process of PD for teachers which was adopted by the MOGE, and was modified in order to contextualize it to suit the Zambian school context and introduced in the Zambian schools. This type of PD has been supported by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) through the Strengthening Mathematics, Science & Technology Education (SMASTE) project and the Strengthening Teachers' Performance and Skills (STEPS) programme. It was initially linked to teaching Science and Mathematics in Central Province. Lesson Study has now been introduced to all provinces in the country and now cuts across all the subjects in order to provide the teachers with an opportunity to continuously improve their knowledge and skills in teaching. It is expected that this approach would directly improve the teaching and learning of pupils in schools. While literature reviewed [2, 12, 13, 18] indicate that there are several professional development activities that teachers can engage in, the data show that emphasis was on one form of PD, Lesson study. Lesson study has great potential in promoting PD, but cannot be considered to be sufficient to improve teaching practices. Teachers may have to engage in several or a combination of several CPD activities, during their career time to promote their PD.

The data obtained through the interviews and discussions indicated that Lesson study was not an initiative of the head teachers, but a policy directive from MOGE. It also shows that there were very little initiatives on CPD from within the schools. This is not in agreement with [23] who laid much emphasis on leadership promotion of PD which he saw as ‘the most influential instructional leadership behaviour’. Furthermore, the lack of initiative and supervision in providing PD by head teachers who participated in this study is not in line with documented literature that includes [24] that state that the principal has several ways of supporting teachers in the effort to improve instruction. S/he can arrange for, provide, or inform teachers of relevant opportunities for staff development. The principal can also encourage certain types of staff development which are closely linked to school goals. This is in line with the findings of [25] who stated that principals who promote professional development impact the academic press of the school and have a positive effect on student achievement. Additionally, [23] and [26] found that leaders who promote professional development build a culture of collaboration and learning that also fosters innovative instructional strategies through increased use of new resources. Therefore, while Head teachers and teachers need to comply with MOGE directives they also need to exercise some level of freedom and autonomy that would allow for taking initiatives regarding CPD activities to engage in for promoting PD.

The data collected also revealed that the CPD programmes impacted negatively on the teaching and learning process because it took away a lot of time. With reference to Lesson study the head teachers and teachers stated that one of the major setbacks in this form of PD was that of taking away teaching and learning time as teachers spent more time on it leaving the pupils unattended to. One suggestion could be that teachers with the support of the head teachers may need to schedule their lesson study activities in such a way that they do not leave their classes unattended and/or their pupils are occupied with other alternative activities to promote their learning. Additionally, while it is important to attend formal versions of CPD such as Lesson study, there are other avenues for PD that may need to be explored. As earlier highlighted, there are several CPD activities, which can take place in multiple contexts, which teachers can engage in to promote their PD. A logical conclusion is that teachers need to experience most if not all the different forms of CPD activities. However, some studies such as that [27] indicate that teachers may not be aware of the range of CPD opportunities available and or may lack access to the CPD activities. Based on this evidence, it can be considered appropriate to orient or sensitise both head teachers and teachers regarding the multi-dimensional aspects of CPD and CPD activities. They also need to be empowered to exercise their own professional judgment through pinpointing and participating in CPD activities, which they themselves consider to be most beneficial to them [28].

There was also evidence obtained from the interview responses that in most cases teachers attended the lesson study as a formality, and that lesson study was quite alien and therefore not beneficial to their teaching. This superficially type of PD is also not supported

by available literature. Reference [29] noted that professional learning communities were being implemented superficially giving educators involved a false sense of progress, while the deeper cultural changes required for school improvement were not being tackled. Teachers' perspectives of CPD can affect their participation in CPD [30]. There is therefore need to accommodate teachers' concerns in CPD provision at all levels and raise awareness on the value of lesson study and other CPD activities in promoting PD.

The evidence that head teachers do not usually monitor CPD, especially lesson study, is a source of concern particularly in the context that monitoring of CPD is paramount not only as form of their PD, but also for ensuring the success of teachers' PD. The majority of the head teachers who participated in this study did not receive any training prior or after their appointment as head teachers which prepared them for the role of head teacher including in the areas of initiating, spearheading, monitoring and managing CPD. MOGE may need to consider directing resources toward training and strengthening the capacity of head teachers to enable them meet CPD related roles that include: initiating, supporting, supervising, monitoring and enforcing teacher participation in CPD. Training institutions may also need to ensure that they adequately prepare teachers and head teachers to embrace CPD as essential in their career.

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