

Teachers' Professional Development in Ghana: A Case Study of New Yakasi M/A Basic School in Aowin Municipality in the Western North Region

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Abstract

Teacher Professional development is the bedrock of quality educational delivery. The study sought to examine the impacts of teachers' professional development New Yakasi M/A basic School in the Aowin Municipality of Ghana. The population for the study consisted of teachers of New Yakasi M/A basic school. Purposive sampling technique was used to select all sixteen (16) teachers in the New Yakasi M/A basic school in Enchi in the Aowin Municipality. respondents. The main instruments for data collection were questionnaire and focus group discussion. The quantitative data was coded, processed and analyze with the use of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS version 21) and presented in frequencies, percentages, averages, proportions and diagrams, for better understanding of the topic under study. The qualitative data was presented in themes. The teachers will need professional development in pedagogical skills, content knowledge, classroom management and teaching learning materials. Teachers who are abreast with improved pedagogical skills make impact in their teaching behaviours. Professional development helps teachers to achieve the level of knowledge and skills for the job and it improves the cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills for the learner new curriculum resources. It is recommended that, Ghana Education Service must collaborate with head teachers to plan professional development for teacher at the basic level of education during vacation. It is also recommended that, Curriculum planners and developers should include professional development program in the curriculum for basic school teachers.

Keywords

Teachers, Professional Development (PD), New Yakasi, Aowin Municipality, Western North Region

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1. Introduction and Background

The rapidly changing roles and functions of educational institutions, which is emanating from societal expectations, has made a lot to be required from tutors on their job. In these modern times, where learners are being demanded to be more creative and thoughtful, knowledge and skills that were appropriate decades ago might not be needed in preparing students for the current world and beyond [1]. In

multi-cultural classrooms coupled with the need for learners with special needs to be integrated into the learning environment, tutors are supposed to be equipped with modern knowledge and skills to enable them measure up to the task required of them. In order to satisfy the growing needs of education globally, it is imperative to create opportunities for tutors to have access to sound Professional Development (PD) programmes and activities to enable them update their skills, knowledge and experiences [1]. PD is the surest means by which serving tutors can be updated with modern knowledge and skills on their teaching job, for them

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to meet current demands of their profession.

Though required for the success of every institution, PD has of late become a major and critical requirement of educational institutions. Effective teaching and learning in educational institutions require teachers to continually expand their knowledge and skills via PD to enhance learning of students. Similarly, effective and efficient performance of the task of teaching requires teachers to obtain training in new skills and contemporary methodology through PD [1]. Education reforms often necessitated by the changing needs of society, coupled with the fact that the pre-service training tutors received might not be relevant throughout their career, makes PD of teachers an issue of concern. Modern technology has promoted unprecedented opportunities for access and enrichment of knowledge and skills, and has created opportunities for academic staff to engage in dialogue and reflections on their teaching. Ethnic and cultural diversity of learners has demanded new understanding and skills from academic staff, making PD development imperative in the academia [3].

Current dynamics of teaching and learning as determined by numerous factors, especially modern technology, makes it a necessity for tutors of Colleges of Education to equip themselves with contemporary knowledge and skills for effective teaching and learning. As facilitators of knowledge in teacher education institutions, tutors of the Colleges ought to possess a wide range of knowledge, skills competencies, attitudes and behaviors worthy of the 21st century teacher. The increasing awareness that tertiary education learners of the 21st century require educational experiences better than was provide years ago, has encouraged higher education institutions to take action to improve upon the quality of teaching to promote academic achievement of learners [2]. The high academic and non-academic achievements required of students' in the 21st century, makes it imperative for tutors to be equipped with wide range of professional and personal competencies [3]. This makes PD a pre-requisite for the effective performance of tutors on their job because it has the potential to equip them with modern and relevant knowledge and skills. PD is of much importance, especially in the cotemporary rapidly, constantly, and technologically dynamic academic world [4].

Most tutors these days' show interest in PD due to numerous benefits they stand to gain from being part of PD programmes and activities. A lot of tutors' form part of students on university programmes, especially those programmes that are related to the teaching profession. This is because majority of tutors these days are much concerned about PD as a means of upgrading their skills and knowledge for competence and other related benefits. Expectation of the current tutor is to embrace continuous professional development to enable him/her respond to, and to adapt to changing circumstances of society in the classroom [5]. The

basic education teacher is not oblivious of the prospects and opportunities that await him/her in engaging him/herself in meaningful and relevant PD programmes and activities in the contemporary world.

The rapidly changing nature of society has shifted the focus of formal education from the traditional cognitive achievement to include; emotional, social and technological achievements [3]. This implies that tutors must possess wide range of competencies that transcend the pre-service knowledge they acquired that set the tone for their profession. For effective delivery to ensure holistic achievement of learner's, teachers require a combination of professional knowledge and specialized skills (mastery of content) as well as relevant personal attitudes and experiences both during initial training and in active service [4].

PD is systematic process targeted at enhancing the competencies of employees via training, workshops, seminars and other organizational development practices meant to improve individual employees' performance and the performance of an entire organization [6]. Similarly, PD is a set of planned and unplanned learning and performance oriented activities which enhances individual employee's competencies towards better institutional performance, Simons and Pederson [6]. Professional development as a continuous process of acquiring and determination of knowledge by tutors to build their capacity of delivery to enhance learners' achievement [7]. On the same wave length, PD as staff development which is deliberate and on-going process comprising the identification and discussion of current and anticipated needs of individual staff for furthering their job satisfaction and career prospects and for improvement of academic work and plans [1].

In their bid to ensure quality teacher education, basic Education in Ghana have undergone numerous reforms. The recent of these reforms has been their elevation to tertiary status and the subsequent mandate given to them to award Bachelor of Education (Bed) degree in education to pre-service teachers in the country as contained in the education Act 778 of 2008. This reform then requires the teachers in teaching in basic schools in Ghana should possess at least a bachelor of education degree certificate.

Professional development on teaching behaviours has been one of the major challenges of teachers in pedagogical skills, content area and teaching learning materials. However, the effect of professional development on teaching behaviours and the ability to produce intended results in Ghana has limited reporting. It is against this background that this study seeks to find out the effect of professional development on teaching behaviours in basic schools and the ability to produce intended results in Ghana. The purpose of this study

was to examine the impacts of teachers' professional development New Yakasi M/A basic School in the Aowin Municipality of Ghana. The study sought to answer these research questions – (1) What kind of professional development do teachers need? (2) Why do teachers pursue professional development? (3) Why is it important for teachers to take professional development?

2. Conceptual Framework

National Teachers Standards (NTS) is worth considering in the professional development of teachers in Ghana today. The NTS gives recognition to teacher Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in pre-service teacher education, which hitherto was missing in the structure of teacher education in Ghana. The NTS aims to ensure that teachers are prepared and subsequently developed to the highest possible standards in knowledge, conduct and practice in their workplace [8]. The NTS is thus the determiner of what a good teacher is and, offers the standards against which all new teachers will be assessed for certification and licencing. There are three overlapping domains of standards: professional values and attitudes; professional knowledge; and professional practice. As shown in Figure 1 below.



Figure 1. Adopted from The National Teachers' Standards (NTC) (2017).

These three domains contain other significant areas, which together explain what teachers should value, know, and do, regarding their preparation and development. Emphasis here will be placed on teachers' professional values and attitudes because it contains professional development and community of practice. The professional development component expects that teachers will critically and collectively reflect on their practice in order to improve their personal and

professional development through lifelong learning and CPD, and to demonstrate their growing leadership qualities in the classroom and the broader school [8]. On the other hand, the teachers' community of practice component emphasises teachers' collective and positive engagements with colleagues and other school systems, the moulding of a positive teacher identity, and teachers' roles as agents of change, both within the school and in the wider community.

The NTS, for instance, provides standards to inform teachers' development in their first year before their licensing as professionals and provides the framework for future professional and career development. Teachers' professional development activities are expected to be at the individual, school and cluster-based levels, and include training, induction, and self-development [9]. This study is to examine the Teachers Professional Development in New Yakasi M/A basic School in Aowin Municipality in the Western North Region. in Ghana.

3. Methodology

The study adopted a case study to find out the professional development on teaching behaviour and the ability to produce an intended result in the New Yakasi M/A basic school in the Aowin Municipality. The population for the study consisted of teachers of New Yakasi M/A basic school in the Aowin Municipality. Purposive sampling technique was used to select all sixteen (16) teachers in the New Yakasi M/A basic school in Enchi in the Aowin Municipality. respondents. This comprised 14 teachers and 2 head teachers in the school. The main instruments for data collection were questionnaire and focus group discussion. The quantitative data was coded, processed and analyze with the use of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS version 21) and presented in frequencies, percentages, averages, proportions and diagrams, for better understanding of the topic under study. The qualitative data was presented in themes.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents findings and discussions on teachers' professional development in New Yakasi in Enchi in the Aowin Municipality. The main objective of the study was to know the importance of professional developments and to identify what kind of professional development needed by teachers and the implications of ignoring professional development in New Yakasi basic school.

4.1. Kinds of Professional Development Needed by Teachers

This sub-section sought to find out the kinds of professional

development teachers need. The research instrument used for this question was questionnaire. Table 1 shows the kinds

professional development needed by teachers New Yakasi M/A basic school.

Table 1. Kind of Professional Development Teachers Need.

Statements	N= 230 Mean	Std. Deviation
Training programs organized by the Ministry of Education	2.93	.90
Training programs organized by the school	2.87	.95
Searching for new teaching ideas and techniques in books or internet resources.	2.83	1.02
Attending workshops organized by other teachers	2.65	.83
Reflective teaching.	2.3	0.7
Reading scholarly journal articles about area of teaching	2.57	.87
Observing classes of other teachers	2.54	.91
Means of Means	2.70	
Means of Stasdard deviation		0.90

Source: Field data 2019.

Table 1 shows that training programs organized by the Ministry of Education, training programs organized by the school and searching for new teaching ideas and techniques in books or internet resources (M=2.9, SD=.9, M= 2.87, SD=.95 and M=2.83, SD=.02) respectively are the major kinds of professional development needed by mathematics teachers at New Yakasi M/A Basic School. The results of the above factors were spread closely around the mean. The finding of the confirms to the new directives from the Ghana Education Service which states that promotion for teachers will strictly be based on professional training teachers go through [10]. It is not surprising that in Table 2, training programs organized by the Ghana Education Service had the highest score since teacher's promotion depended on the number of professional training a teacher has undertaken. On the other hand, attending workshops organized by other teachers, reflective teaching, reading scholarly journal articles about area of teaching and observing classes of other teachers (M=2.6, SD=.83, M= 2.3 SD=.7 SD=.87, M=2.54 and SD=.91) were not among the

professional development teachers needed by mathematics teachers at New Yakasi M/A Basic School. This suggests that teachers at New Yakasi M/A Basic School do not perceive attending workshops organized by other teachers, reflective teaching, reading scholarly journal articles about area of teaching and observing classes of other teachers as one of the need professional developmental needed by teachers. The findings of the current study contradict the previous study that every form of professional development is vital in the development of teaching skills of teachers to enhance the teaching learning process [11]. This suggests that every profession development is of equal importance to the other in the teaching and process.

4.2. Reasons for Pursuing Professional Development

This sub-section also sought to find out the reasons teachers pursue professional development. The results of the study shown in table 2.

Table 2. Reasons for Pursuing Professional Development.

Statements	N=16 Mean	Std. Deviation
Career advancement	2.8	.90
Students' progress	2.6	.75
For promotions	2.5	.82
Self-fulfillment and job satisfaction	2.7	.83
A wish to learn new things about subject of teaching	2.6	0.7
To abreast myself with the current changes in the curriculum and content knowledge	2.7	.87
Means of Means	2.7	
Mans of Standard deviation		0.80

Source: Field data 2019.

Table 2, outlines the major reasons why teachers pursue professional development in the teaching of mathematics. Career advancement, self-fulfillment and job satisfaction and to abreast myself with the current changes in the curriculum and content knowledge (M=2.8, SD=.9, M=2.7, SD=.83, M=2.7 and SD=.87) respectfully are the major reasons for teachers to pursue professional development. The finding of the study is in line with a similar study that Professional

development activities and programs help teachers to be informed of the latest additions in their fields and enhance their career development opportunities as well as prevent burnout [12]. Factors such as student's progress, for promotions and the wish to learn new things about subject of teaching (M=2.6, SD=.75, M=2.5, SD=.82, M=2.6 and SD=.7) respectfully were not considered as major reasons for pursuing professional development for mathematics teachers.

The finding of the study suggests that professional development of teacher do not affect the progress of students and also teachers are content with their content knowledge and are not ready to learn things about subject of teaching since they consider themselves as professional trained teacher. This finding contradicts the study that every professional training is done to improve the teaching and learning process to see the student progress [13]. Teaching is a continuous process which requires teachers to always abreast themselves with the new trends that occurs [14].

4.3. Importance for Teachers' Professional Development

This sub-section sought to find out why teachers take professional development? Teachers through focused group discussion posit that, "Professional development improves the cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills of the learner". "Professional development helps the teachers to achieve the level of knowledge and skills for the job" "Professional development helps in boosting our confidence and gives us mastery over the teaching of the subjective mathematics". "Professional development also helps in the improvement of students' performances". "Profession development help in the development of our careers".

The above reasons given by teachers posit that professional development increases the knowledge and skills needed by teachers which confirms professional development for teachers aim at changing and improving the current practices, notions, knowledge, and opinions to make them reach the required standards [12]. The findings of the study suggest that, professional development is important for teachers in the teaching and learning process.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The teachers will need professional development in pedagogical skills, content knowledge, classroom management and teaching learning materials. Teachers who are abreast with improved pedagogical skills make impact in their teaching behaviours. Professional development helps teachers to achieve the level of knowledge and skills for the job and it improves the cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills for the learner new curriculum resources. The study also revealed that, professional development keeps teachers up-to-date on new research on how student learn, teachers develop better organization and planning skills, and teachers gain knowledge and industry insight.

It is recommended that, Ghana Education Service must collaborate with head teachers to plan professional

development for teacher at the basic level of education during vacation. It is also recommended that, Curriculum planners and developers should include professional development program in the curriculum for basic school teachers.

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