Teachers' Professional Development in Zambia: Perceptions and Practices

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore teachers' perceptions and practices in professional development (PD) activities and the impact of PD on their professional growth. A descriptive mixed-method design was utilized, and the study sample of seven hundred (700) respondents from four primary schools was selected randomly. The results indicate that the program is charming and perfectly designed for the professional development of Zambian teachers; however, there are many flaws in the various steps of the program's implementation, which seem to fail PD activities in teacher training, as the transfer of exercise was found to be very ineffective. The results show that teachers perceived PD as being significant because it improves the teacher's pedagogical knowledge, teaching skills, and updating content knowledge. The results show that the predominant PD practices in schools were workshops, in-service training, and continuing learning. This study argues that PD enhances teachers' pedagogical knowledge, content knowledge, and career growth.

Keywords:

Teacher Professional Development; Teacher Perceptions; Secondary School; Zambia

ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi persepsi dan praktik guru dalam kegiatan pengembangan profesional (PD) dan dampak PD terhadap pertumbuhan profesional mereka. Desain metode campuran deskriptif digunakan, dan sampel penelitian terdiri dari tujuh ratus (700) responden dari empat sekolah dasar yang dipilih secara acak. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa program tersebut sangat bagus dan dirancang dengan sempurna untuk pengembangan profesional guru Zambia; namun demikian, terdapat

banyak kekurangan dalam berbagai langkah pelaksanaan program tersebut, yang nampaknya menggagalkan kegiatan PD dalam pelatihan guru, karena transfer pelatihan ternyata sangat tidak efektif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa guru menganggap PD sebagai signifikan karena meningkatkan pengetahuan pedagogis guru, keterampilan mengajar, dan memperbarui pengetahuan konten. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa praktik PD yang dominan di sekolah adalah workshop, in-service training, dan pembelajaran berkelanjutan. Studi ini berpendapat bahwa PD memainkan peran penting dalam meningkatkan pengetahuan pedagogis, pengetahuan konten, dan pertumbuhan karir guru.

Kata kunci::

Pengembangan Profesi Guru; Persepsi Guru; Sekolah Menengah; Zambia

1.   Introduction

Evans & Waring (2014) argue that a more comprehensive definition of professionalism must consider a teacher's exterior and internal activities. Interaction with other teachers and focusing on developing their skills and abilities are essential components of professionalism. They continued by saying that the definition of professionalism could change depending on factors such as one's position, experience, and goals in a particular situation. A teacher's sense of professionalism is believed to be inextricably linked to their sense of self as a professional and their convictions about what it takes to be an effective teacher. Also, they posed a contrast between experienced and in-service. As far as they are concerned, teacher professionalism is more concerned with their competence, expertise, and behavior, whereas their standing as professional educators is more of a pragmatic factor. Thompson (2009) popularized the definition of a professional as "a trained, certified expert who exhibits practical ability." At this time there have been many phenomena which explain that all students, both education and pure science graduates, must still take the Teacher Professional Education (PPG) program to become teachers (Puspitasari, 2019).

The professionalism of educators is closely related closely related to the quality of education, because of the learning process teaching as the core of education will greatly depend on professional educators and the quality of learning outcomes is the spearhead education quality. Likewise, on the other hand the quality of educational staff in an institution Education also determines quality educational process carried out (Rasyid, 2015). The teaching profession has officially aligned with other professions as professional staff. This is stated in RI Law No. 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, as well as PP No. 19 of 2005 on National Education Standards. Teacher as a professional means that the teacher's work can only be done by certain people who meet a number of requirements that have academic qualifications, competencies, and certificates educators, physically and mentally healthy, as well have the ability to create national education goals. In RI Law No. 14 of 2005 article 20 section b mention one of the obligations of the teacher in carry out their professional

duties to develop qualifications and competency on an ongoing basis in line with development of science, technology, and art (Hayuhantika, 2017).

Educators must grow and refine their practice like any other profession. Teachers' professional degrees and performance can be improved via dedicated study; such credentials are widely recognized as solid markers of a teacher's professionalism in society and politics (Thompson, 2009). Professional development (PD) for educators includes activities to refresh, enhance, and broaden instructors' disciplinary expertise. Experience in the classroom and the development of new ways of teaching are central to innovative professional development for educators. These methods help students improve their independence, reflection, and analysis. According to proponents of PD, the process involves the teacher's "mind and heart," necessitating openness to new ideas, experimentation with methods, and the development of more effective teaching strategies (Girvan et al., 2016). Hence, this research aimed to explore teachers' perceptions of PD, their participation in PD, and how it affects their professional development and career prospects.

It has been noted that a crucial element of all the elements needed to improve the caliber of instructors' professional development to improve their pedagogical knowledge and content and raise the overall quality of educational service delivery, teachers must acquire new concepts, ideas, and knowledge before entering the classroom. Teachers can obtain the knowledge and abilities required in their classrooms through ongoing professional development. Several elements affect teachers' professional development. These elements include the dedication of the teachers, the leadership of the schools, collaboration, school culture, time, and financial resources (Jin et al., 2021; King, 2016; Kasemsap, 2017; Josephine et al.,.2018). It has been discovered that time is a crucial element in PD. Teachers should be given time to engage in programs for professional development. The study makes the case that instructors require time to incorporate ongoing professional development into their regular tasks. The outcome of giving instructors more time for CPD is that they become more efficient, resulting in more learning for pupils. Time, then, plays a significant role in teachers' professional development.

The funding of professional development programs is a crucial component of teacher PD. There are various formats for these PD programs. It might involve promoting instructors with lesser qualifications to those with higher ones or organizing workshops and seminars for educators. For these activities to take place, funding is required. Due to this, the school must have a budget that covers teacher professional development (Muyunda,2022). A significant component of professional development in school leadership. Excellent leadership should be dedicated to establishing and improving teachers' PD, offering a calm and caring environment, supporting instructors, and motivating their efforts. As a result, school managers should be equipped to encourage and support teacher professional development at the school level. Another requirement for effective teacher professional development is a healthy school culture. The school can be both kind and professional by giving teachers the tools they need when they do, as well as the chance to collaborate and learn from one another. Teachers who work in schools with inspiring cultures are encouraged to participate in professional development activities at their workplaces or elsewhere. A driven educator picks up

knowledge from others and is more likely to participate in various professional development activities. Teachers who work together play to each other's strengths and enhance one another's expertise (Perry,2022).

It is widely known that educators must continue to develop professionally. Teachers' professional development has been emphasized in Zambia's Education Policy since 1994. In order to ensure ongoing professional and academic development, the policy encourages the strengthening of probation systems in schools, the use of school leaders as instructional leaders who are in charge of the in-service training of teachers, the use of in-service education officers who visit schools to supplement in-service training that is conducted there, and the availability of in-service training to all teachers at various levels (Ross et al., 2006; Zhong et al., 2021; Muyunda, 2021). Educational systems have devised several techniques to encourage teachers' continued professional development. However, implementing a PD program in a school is challenging.

According to Muyunda (2022) studies, the following factors have been identified as barriers to teacher professional development: insufficient funding, time constraints, lack of support from school leadership, untrained personnel to oversee teacher PD, lack of ownership by teachers, and a lack of structures that support PD initiatives. Also, the study on School-Based Staff Development in Zambia showed a lack of finance; a hectic schedule; individuality; and a lack of support. These could be some of the difficulties of PD. In short, the literature review found that instructors require continuous improvement because they do not enter the classroom as finished objects.

According to the reviewed literature, these are critical factors in implementing school-based PD programs. Of all of these aspects, school leadership is critical when it comes to teacher professional development in the classroom. For example, if the school administration has little regard for teacher professional development, a small fraction of the school budget will be set aside for PD programs. Good leadership creates a learning environment in the classroom in which instructors are supported, motivated, and encouraged to contribute effectively to the teaching and learning process. Teacher participation in professional development programs is one component in ensuring good teaching and learning in the classroom. As a result, the school is held accountable.

2. Methods

2.1 Participants and data collection

This study explored teachers' perceptions and practices of PD activities in Zambian secondary schools. Participants were chosen using a convenient sampling technique with 700 teachers from five medium-sized secondary schools in the Lusaka district. The response rate for the survey was 82.14 percent. By calculating mean values, standard deviation, and a t-test on an independent sample, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences was used to examine teachers' opinions on PD (SPSS). To establish the t-statistical test's significance, a 0.05 alpha level was used. According to demographic information, 56% of the 575 teachers who completed the questionnaires were men, and 44% were women.

English instructors made up 47.8% of the total number of teachers, followed by science teachers (30%), history teachers (14.6%), and math teachers (7.5%). 33% of respondents reported having a master's degree, 31% a bachelor's degree, and an advanced diploma 36%. A large percentage of educators (61%) have been in the classroom for one to seven years. To compare teachers' activities for professional development, the departments were split into two categories: arts and science. The science department used 37% of the teachers, compared to 63% for the art department.

2.2 Research Instrument

This study used a self-designed questionnaire with 30 closed-ended and three open-ended questions about various barriers, instructor skills, and professional growth recommendations. On a five-point Likert scale (from "no extent" to "a substantial amount"), fifteen closed-ended questions about teachers' participation in various professional development activities were posed. The importance of various professional development activities was evaluated using an additional 15 closed-ended items on a five-point Likert scale (from "not at all important" to "extremely significant"). The instrument's Cronbach Alpha readings indicate a moderate level of dependability (0.74 for subscale I and 0.71 for subscale II). The survey asked about demographic data such as gender, education, and job title.

2.3 Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) examined the data. During the item analysis, the authors calculated each item's frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The t-test of independent samples was used to compare teachers' opinions of PD across various groups. At the 0.05 level of significance, the difference's significance was determined. Levels of engagement in PD activities for teachers were determined using the following mean ranges: Low engagement ranges from 1.00 to 2.33, moderate involvement from 2.34 to 3.66, and substantial involvement is 3.67 to 5.00. (high involvement). A similar mean range was employed to determine the applicability of various PD activities: Not very important from 1.00 to 2.33, somewhat important 2.34 to 3.66, highly important, and 3.67 to 5.00 (highly necessary).

3.   Results and Discussion

This study explored teachers' perceptions and practices of professional development activities. As the first question, the teachers were requested to check the most important reasons to pursue PD activities and programs. The results demonstrate that the respondents were participating in PD activities. According to Harris et al. (2011), the need for more sufficient training facilities for school departments is to blame for the startlingly low level of professional skills and training currently held by teachers. The study's findings also demonstrate that educators devoted the most time to reading books and articles (M = 3.31), "studying for higher qualifications (M = 3.25)," "developing teaching and learning materials (M = 3.18)," "attending workshops, and others." (M = 3.16) and "producing research papers" (M = 3.14).

Item 15, applying for funded research projects, was the PD activity in which respondents were least involved (M = 2.88). Soine & Lumpe (2014) argues that teachers participate in PD activities with their colleagues to develop their pedagogical knowledge, and pedagogical content is some of the significant PD practices teachers engage in.

Table 2 shows teachers' perceptions of the significance of PD activities. The results show that teachers rated reading books and articles highly significant for faculty development, with mean ratings of 3.72 and 3.62, respectively. The teachers also gave all of the following activities a moderate importance rating. Among these were undertaking research (M = 3.42), reading research articles (M = 3.49), making teaching and learning materials (M = 3.48), and joining academic or professional groups (M = 3.43). These findings show that teachers gave brief training sessions the lowest rating (M = 3.28).

Table 1. *Teachers' opinions about their involvement in professional development activities*

Sr. No	Activities	Mean	SD.
1	Read articles and books in your academic field	3.31	1.200
2	M.Phil./Ph.D./Post-doctoral studies	3.25	1.350
3	Developed teaching-learning materials (books)	3.18	1.295
4	Attended teaching and learning workshops/ seminars	3.16	1.259
5	Produced research papers/ reports	3.14	1.336
6	Conducted research	3.11	1.296
7	Participated in teaching and learning workshops, seminars, and conferences as a presenter/resource person.	3.11	1.317
8	Mentored your colleagues	3.09	1.318
9	Reviewed books of other authors	3.07	1.283
10	Reviewed research papers for journals	3.07	1.351
11	Attended short training courses	3.06	1.278
12	Obtained membership in academic/ professional organizations	2.95	1.303
13	produced academic resources online (website and others.)	2.95	1.407
14	Developed networking with colleagues from other institutions	2.89	1.301
15	Applied for funded research projects	2.88	1.376
	Total Scale	3.08	1.311

The results in Table 3 show that the t-value for male and female teachers' participation in PD activities is insignificant at the 0.05 level of significance. This implies that the patterns of the respondents' engagement in professional PD activities were similar overall. However, there was a significant difference between the two items. Both of the items' average ratings favored male teachers. Male secondary school teachers produced more research articles, reports, and research papers reviews than female secondary school teachers for journals. When the respondents were asked to rate various

PD activities, the t-value results revealed a significant difference in both male and female teachers' opinions. This result contrasts Perry & Ball (1998), who argued that teachers participate in PD activities when the ones facilitating the PD activity are colleagues. Hence, it is possible to conclude that gender is not a significant factor in why more male teachers participate in PD activities than female teachers.

The findings in Table 3 demonstrate that the t-value for male teachers' participation in professional development is not significant at the 0.05 level of significance. This shows that male and female professors generally followed similar engagement patterns in professional development activities. The two commodities did, however, differ significantly from one another. The average scores for male teachers were higher on both tests. Men published more research papers, reports, and journal reviews than female secondary school teachers. The t-value significantly differed between male and female instructors' rankings of different professional development programs. Male teachers participate in more PD events and programs than female teachers in the chosen schools.

Table 2. *Teachers' Perceptions of the Importance of professional development activities*

Sr. No	Activities	Mean	SD.
1	Creating reports and research articles	3.72	1.253
2	Reading scholarly books and journal articles	3.68	1.252
3	Examining scientific publications for publication	3.49	1.171
4	Creating instructional and learning materials (books, manuals, and others.)	3.48	1.209
5	Obtaining membership in academics and professional organizations	3.43	1.189
6	Conducted out studies	3.42	1.248
7	Presently pursuing a degree at a higher level (Ph.D., post-doc, or MA))	3.41	1.247
8	Attending teaching and learning workshops/seminars/conferences	3.39	1.200
9	Developing online academic resources	3.36	1.194
10	Participating as presented, resources person in teaching and learning workshops, seminars, conference	3.35	1.180
11	Reviewing books of other authors	3.35	1.152
12	Applying for funded research projects	3.30	1.271
13	Networking with colleagues from other institutions	3.30	1.320
14	Monitoring your colleagues	3.29	1.219
15	Attending short training courses	3.28	1.198

The results show a considerable difference between arts and science teachers' engagement in PD activities, as illustrated in Table 4. Science teachers (M = 3.13) were more dedicated to their PD than those art teachers (M = 3.04). The results ratings of several professional development activities

by science and arts teachers were equivalent. This implies that sciences and art teachers place similar significance on PD activities. Individual item analysis revealed a significant disparity between science and art teachers' PD activities participation.

Table 3. *Comparison of teachers' PD perceptions by gender*

Variables	Discipline	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Sig
Involvement	Male	323	3.07	.658		
	Female	352	3.09	.613	-.478	.633
Importance	Male	323	3.40	.629	.437	.022*
	Female	352	3.37	.599		

The results show that science teachers are increasingly interested in joining zone PD activities to enhance their pedagogical and content knowledge and improve their teaching skills. Science teachers were more interested in mentoring their colleagues and reviewing research papers for journals than social science academics. There could be many causes for the growing participation of science instructors in PD activities. Science faculty members have additional options for training workshops and other seminars and supported curriculum development projects. Teachers with a science foundation are more likely to be motivated to advance their professional development and knowledge.

Table 4. *Comparison of teachers' opinions by discipline*

Variables	Discipline	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Sig.
Involvement	Arts	364	3.04	.608		.003*
	Science	211	3.13	.630.	-.066	
Importance	Arts	364	3.08	.615	.334	.738
	Science	211	3.07	.678		

Table 5 displays teachers' opinions regarding the abilities required to become better educators. The median score (2.16) suggests that improving communication skills is necessary for school instructors to be successful. The professional skills of administration (M = 2.10), research (M = 2.07), and teaching (M = 1.96) were also highly regarded. The median score, however, indicates that writing grant research proposals is the least crucial competency for future professional development at the collegiate level (1.67).

Teachers' perceptions of barriers to participation in PD activities are displayed in Table 6 below. The findings indicate that the major impediments to teachers' participation in PD were a lack of time (M = 2.52) and resources (M = 2.07). Lack of study breaks (M = 1.91), a lack of motivation (M = 1.90%), and a lack of opportunities (M = 1.89%) were other significant hurdles to the teachers' engagement in PD. Also, the average score (1.41) demonstrates that "teachers outside expectations" were the minor, significant barriers to their professional development. The study by Banda (2014)

found that secondary school teachers in Zambia faced considerable challenges to their professional development due to time restrictions and pressure from other responsibilities (such as research).

Table 5. *Teachers' perceptions about the skills needed to be more effective teachers*

Skills	Little Important (%)	Moderately Important (%)	Highly important (%)	Mean	SD
1. Communication proficiency	39	20	41	2.16	.777
2. Management proficiency	22.9	44.2	32.9	2.10	.742
3. Research skill	30	33.6	36.4	2.07	.812
4. Computer competence	23.4	37.2	39.4	2.01	.897
5. Teaching skill	33	39	28	1.96	.784
6. Writing research paper skill	42	38.2	19.8	1.79	.762
7. Developing a grant research proposal	52.2	27.8	20	1.67	.784

Table 6. *Teachers' perceptions about barriers that affect the professional development of teachers*

Item	Little essential (%)	Moderately important (%)	Highly important (%)	Mean	SD
1. Time	17	15.1	67.9	2.52	.763
2. Money	24.2	45	30.8	2.07	.742
3. Lack of study break	33.3	42.3	24.4	1.91	.758
4. Lack of motivation	42.0	26.1	31.9	1.90	.856
5. Shortage of chance	37.3	37	25.7	1.89	.789
6. Work-life-balance	31.9	48.1	20	1.87	.716
7. Over-emphasis on teaching	40.3	32.4	27.3	1.87	.815
8. Lack of personal interest	38	46.8	15.2	1.78	.700
9. Outside expectations	66.2	26.4	7.4	1.41	.628

3.1. Discussion

The results indicate that instructors participated in PD activities and have a favorable opinion of the benefits of PD activities for developing their pedagogical content, subject knowledge, and professional development. These findings contradict Muyunda's (2022) contention that Zambian teachers are less interested in professional development activities due to a lack of time and administrative assistance from their principals. Teachers' professional development has been efficiently institutionalized in Zambia, as conventional qualifications define it, and some have attained advanced degrees (King, 2016). Teachers' professional solid standing and growth are attributable to skilled individuals and efficient PD methods (Banda, 2014). Professional development concerns elementary and secondary school educators (King, 2016).

In many cultures, workshops and seminars are popular means of professional development. They are commonly employed to introduce novel ideas and behaviors. Nevertheless, because the

knowledge is delivered without context, it is rarely applied to commercial situations. According to Arrieta (2021), the context in which one acquires knowledge is as important as the knowledge itself. In Zambia, teacher educators from colleges and universities attend workshops and seminars. Banda (2014) and Haji Musa (2022), for instance, found that workshops and seminars are the most prevalent kinds of professional development for secondary school teachers around the world.

Nevertheless, seminars and workshops often cover vast information with little time for attendees to contemplate. Several elements influence the efficiency of these activities and the subsequent application of the acquired knowledge (Muyunda, 2022). Moreover, scientific educators receive more seminars and workshops than social studies educators (Josephine et al., 2018). This demonstrates that only a few secondary school teachers can access lectures and workshops. This has evolved into a professional development cascade model (Zhong et al., 2022), in which a small number of instructors attend seminars and workshops on behalf of their colleagues and then share what they have learned with their coworkers upon their return (Muyunda, 2022).

Rose et al. (2013) state that secondary school teachers' professional growth needs to be improved. As a mandatory qualification for secondary school teachers, the emphasis is on obtaining advanced degrees, preferably a master's. There are few options for teachers to get master's degrees. Obtaining advanced degrees is a component of teacher professional development, but more is needed because professional learning is a lifelong pursuit (Banda,2014; Muyunda, 2022). The issue with master's degrees in education is the lack of a clear emphasis on teacher education (Arrieta,2021).

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that secondary school teachers are engaged in PD activities, aware of PD and its activities in the classroom, aware of the value of various PD activities, aware of skills that should be prioritized in future training, and aware of obstacles to teachers' PD. The attitudes of educators were contrasted according to discipline and gender. Finally, the survey discovered that teachers encounter a variety of PD obstacles. These include PD design, management of the content, and facilitation. According to the study's findings, PD can flourish if education administration at the DEBS (District Educational Board Secretariat) and school levels raises teachers' awareness of the advantages of participating in PD activities. The concludes by recommending further quantitative research on PD activities concerning instructional strategies used in Zambia during the Covid-19 Era.

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