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## TUTORS' SOCIAL PERCEPTION OF KNOWLEDGE ACQUIRED THROUGH CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN PUBLIC PRIMARY TEACHERS TRAINING COLLEGES IN CENTRAL KENYA

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### ABSTRACT

*As part of teacher retraining, CPD has been embraced as a tool to improve education reforms, on teachers' quality and which translates into quality education. This study examined how tutors in Teachers Training Colleges socially construct knowledge acquired through CPD. The study was conducted in Murang'a and Kamwenja Teachers' of Central Kenya. The study sought to explore tutors' perception of knowledge acquired through CPD. The study utilized a qualitative approach using an exploratory research design. Research instruments used were in-depth interview schedule for tutors and principals, key informant interviews and focus group discussions for tutors.*

*The study sample consisted of 38 participants, who included two principals, 30 tutors and six key informants from the Ministry of Education. Tutors were selected through a proportionate random sampling while the principals and key informants were purposively sampled. Piloting was done at one teachers' college. Qualitative data was analyzed and the reporting was done in narrative form.*

*The study found that tutors perceive CPD trainings as platforms for further learning, where they participate in workshops, conferences, seminars, and in-service programs in a bid to improve their mastery of the content, pedagogical skills, and student outcomes. Additionally, it showed that the tutors who are the direct consumers and users of the content of CPD are hardly involved in the process of designing the CPD models thus making institutional ownership a challenge.*

*The findings also indicated many of the tutors complained of been accorded inadequate time, hence proving a challenge in their learning. The study concluded that tutors were trained through Cascade Models of CPD, of which most of them reported that they were not effective enough in facilitating their social construction of knowledge. The study recommends the need to develop a more inclusive and tutor friendly CPD model driven by a user needs analysis.*

**Keywords:** Continuous professional development, social construction of knowledge, Tutors

## **INTRODUCTION**

Globally Continuous Professional Development for teachers has been practiced as a tool for long-term teacher learning, education reforms and improving quality of education (Hardman, 2017; Dachi, Elliot, Hebuzor, Ntekini and Buhinda, 2015). Since teachers have a key role to play in improving education outcomes, it is imperative that they be at the front line in attending these CPD trainings. (Hardman and Limboro, 2013; Hardman, 2017; Learning Policy Institute, 2017). Teachers' social perception of CPD concerns their views and expectations; whether it is of any value to them and vice versa. How teachers perceive different learning programs offered to them has an impact on how they can translate the knowledge acquired from CPD into their teaching /learning activities.

Most of the teachers have a positive perception towards CPD training, (Araujo et.al., 2016; Molina et.al, 2018). A study carried out by Tumar, Asimiran, Pihie and Ismail (2014) reported that novice teachers have a positive view towards CPD trainings. To them, it is through such trainings that they get equipped with the new skills, knowledge, it is more of mentorship or induction into the teaching fraternity, while to the experienced teachers they considered it as a platform of helping them remain updated with the changes in the education sector.

This is relevant especially in Kenya where there is an introduction of new curriculum in the education realm.

In Israel, a study conducted by Avidor-Ungar (2016) observes that teachers consider CPD trainings as a platform for them to feel confident and so more empowered to do well in their teaching/learning activities. In Kenya, a study carried out by (Mwangi and Njuguna,2019; Wanjala, Osendo &Okoth, 2019) reports that CPD training facilitates teaching effectiveness as measured through improvement in students' outcomes, pedagogical skills and strategies, interpersonal skills, classroom management and creation of enabling environment. Additionally, Muchanje, Njuguna, Kalai and Bilonga (2016) in their study on selected PPTCs in Kenya, found that teachers had positive view of the CPD trainings as it is through them that they achieved career progression. In addition, it helped them to keep up with the new skills and knowledge that is of use in the education reforms. The above findings highlight some of the benefits of TCPD and so a need for them to undertake such programmes.

## **PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of the study was to investigate tutors' social construction of knowledge through acquisition of Continuous Professional Development.

The study had the following objective: To explore tutors' perception of knowledge through acquisition of Continuous Professional Development.

#### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Teachers have different perceptions about CPD training. Most of the study findings reveal that these perceptions border on the positive side. These perceptions range from mastery of the content/subject matter, improvement in student outcomes, pedagogical skills/strategies, interpersonal skills, classroom management, career progression, being kept abreast with the demands of education reforms amongst benefits (Tumar, Asimiran, Pihie & Ismail, 2015; Avidor-Ungar, 2016; Mwangi & Njuguna, 2019 and Betty, 2016)

Literature review shows a close relationship between teacher quality and student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Kennedy, 1998; DeSimone, 2005); Scarloss and Sharpley, 2007; Donkor and Banki, 2007). The findings from the above studies underscore the idea that student outcomes are a result of mediation between teachers' mastery of the content and the pedagogical approaches employed. In Indonesia, a study conducted by Wiyadati, Maccalum and Woods (2021) on how vocational high school teachers perceived CPD trainings found that through CPD trainings, teachers are empowered to refine

their skills in a bid to respond to their students' needs. Similarly, (Kagama and Irungu, 2018; Mohammad and Mirada, 2012) found that through CPD training teachers were able to achieve high performance amongst their students. Similar findings are reported in some of the studies from Kenya such as those carried out by Oguta and Getange, 2019; Gathara, 2013; Chepkuto and Chumba, 2018), which show that teachers considered CPD trainings as a way of improving their students' learning outcomes. However, in a contrasting study by Betemariam (2017) found that there is no connection between teachers' attendance to CPD programs on student outcomes and teachers' quality.

Having the right content is a key element in the teaching/learning process. As a teacher, one must command respect in his/her area of specialization. A review of the previous studies posits on the relationship between CPD programmes and improvement on teachers' mastery of the content (Besong and Holland, 2015; Borko, 2004 & 2008, Bucznski and Hansen, 2010 and Gabriel et.al, 2001). In France, a study conducted by Grangeat and Gray (2007) found that participation of teachers in CPD programmes empowered them to improve their mastery on the subject matter. These findings are supported by a study that was carried out by Gyamar and Aginselya (2022) in Ghana on basic schoolteachers.

Similar findings are echoed by Komba and Nkumba (2008) in Tanzania. These studies concluded that majority of teachers have a positive perception towards CPD programmes as it helps them refine their mastery of the subject matter. Further, effective teachers have the relevant attitudes and skills to deliver in their teaching and learning process. This implies a need to acquire the right pedagogical skills to deliver the knowledge and skills (Njenga, 2018). When teachers have acquired the right pedagogical skills, they avoid use of lectures and rote learning approaches in the delivery of lessons (Ngure, 2013; Sang et. Al., 2012).

A review of literature revealed some of the benefits of attending CPD training including career progression (Ngaruiya, Muchanje & Odundo, 2015), equipping teachers with suitable pedagogical skills (DeSimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon & Birman, 2002). DeSimone et. al. (2002) found that teachers who had attended CPD programs had an improvement in their pedagogical skills. Similar observations are reported in a study that was conducted by Ingvarson et. al. (2005) who found that teachers viewed attending CPD programs as an opportunity to employ pedagogical skills that translated to meeting the needs and interests of their learners. In Finland, Talis (2018) conducted a study whose purpose was to investigate on the impact of CPD on teachers' instructional practices.

The findings from this study indicated that teachers who attended CPD programmes were in a better position to use effective teaching practices as contrasted to those that did not attend the program. Such findings are found in studies carried out by Mohamed, Sywelem, Witte, 2013; Baptiste, Kampire and Karegeya, 2022) whose reports indicated that attending to CPD programmes helps teachers acquire a new set of pedagogical skills, which in turn proves to be of use in the teaching and learning activities. In Kenya, a study conducted by Bunyi, Wangia, Magoma and Limboro (2011) reported that pupils that were taught by teachers who had undertaken CPD trainings achieved high achievement as contrasted to those that their teachers did not. More so, the study reported that those teachers were able to employ student centered teaching approaches as contrasted to using teacher centered methodologies.

However, in a contrasting study that was conducted in Middle East, by Al-Lamki (2009) to a group of 324 teachers of English using a mixed method approach, found out that there is not a positive correlation between those teachers that had attended the programme. All the same, the study recommended the need for the school administrators to provide teachers with positive workplace environment to facilitate teacher learning especially in pedagogical strategies.

This study was guided by two theoretical frameworks; Social constructivist theory by (Vygotsky, 1962 & 1998; Piaget, 1970; Bruner, 1962 & 1979) and secondly is Bio Ecological theory of Human by Bronfenbrenner, (1998 and 2006). Social Constructivist is a theory that advocates on the significant role played by social interaction in the development of cognition and subsequently recognizes the role of community in the process of making meaning. According to the Bio Ecological Model of Human Development by Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006), any learning process involves active interaction with a program, an activity or a person. The proponents of the theory indicate that for effective interactions to occur, the interaction must occur regularly, extended over periods of time, and become increasingly more complex and finally produce development in the human being (Leonard, 2011).

#### **METHODOLOGY**

The research was carried out in selected public primary teachers training colleges in central Kenya. The study employed a qualitative approach. Purposive sampling was used to select the research sites, principals and key informants. Additionally, proportionate sampling was used to select tutors to ensure gender representativeness among them. The study used a sample size of 38 respondents.

They were distributed as follows; thirty tutors, two principals, and six key informants drawn from the Ministry of Education.

The research instruments used were in-depth interview schedule and focus group discussions. This study adopted exploratory design (Amin, 2005; Steyn, 2010). Exploratory research design helped the researcher get insights into how tutors socially construct knowledge through Continuous Professional Development programmes. The preliminary exploratory phase was conducted through a multiplicity of techniques such as in-depth interviews with tutors and focus group discussions (Bruce & Berg, 2001).

#### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Many of the respondents defined CPD as an array of professional learning activities where teachers, whether done at individual or group level, undertake to improve their knowledge and skills. Such a definition is in tandem with the definition given by Hardman (2017) and Wabule; Kisirkoi and Kamanga (2018). These programmes would be offered in conferences, workshops or in-services either in short-term or ongoing, long-term contexts. Continuous is offered by the Ministry of Education to enhance the quality of teaching and learning process and eventually the quality of education.

Respondents also mentioned that CPD is a tool that enables teachers to remain effective and relevant, especially in the wake of new education reforms in areas such as knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour.

Additionally, a respondent from one of the focus group discussions had to say this;

*In the early days of teaching the teachers' word was law and so it required that mastery of content was given priority. There was more professional commitment and competence that enabled the teachers to see the students as the center of education. There was also a deliberate move to create a national consciousness for educational excellence in every teacher and develop in the teacher the ability to adapt to new situations; and develop in the teacher an awareness and appreciation of innovation in the field of education and to utilize them optimally.*

Another respondent mentioned that through CPD training teachers were empowered to improve their pedagogical skills, in a bid to keep up with the current education reforms. This was done specifically to address issues around the quality of education, the intention of the MOE is to develop a culture of life-long learning. This finding agrees with a study done by Lowe and Prout, (2019) who reports that to make any education reform effective there is an urgency for teachers to undertake CPD programmes, which will in turn empower them with the tools such as pedagogical skills amongst other benefits.

Some of the key respondents observe that; *“CPD empowers teachers to upgrade their mastery of the subject in addition to adding value to their career.” (K1).* Another respondent mentioned that CPD programmes are advocated by the Ministry of Education so that teachers become life-long learners within their own professional practice, to learn by doing, by testing innovative approaches, and assessing their impact on student learning. *“In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, systems do change, and so teachers must be ready to adapt to the required new skills for them to be effective in their teaching learning activities. This is considered a key aspect in improving the quality of education.”*

In relation to CPD, the respondent said that CPD empowers teachers with a lot of skills and if handled properly, it can enhance the quality of teaching. The CPD therefore results in quality teaching and better student achievement. The above findings agree with the studies done by Ndayambaye and Ngendahayo (2014 and Yokozeki and Engina (2017), who observe that teachers' attendance to CPD programmes is an equal platform to help them fine tune their pedagogical strategies in a bid to improve their students' achievement.

These effective teaching methodologies are deemed interactive and student-centred. In a way, teachers also acquire teachers acquire knowledge, skills to guide their students to achieve the teaching/learning outcomes.

This is of great essence especially with the advent of new education curriculum, that is the competency-based curriculum. Provision of continuous personal and professional education would enable teachers to review and modify their teaching methods and curricula in the light of present-day changes be they technological, economic, cultural, social or political and meeting in-service needs of a stable and dynamic teaching force. Similar findings are found in Wabule (2016), Kisirkoi and Kamanga (2018) and Luvizu (2021) who reported that CPD is a tool for the implementation of Competence Based Curriculum.

Respondent 3 had this to say about CPD training and improving student achievement; *“Through CPD training teachers are able to understand their problems, identify their gaps and so their needs. Through these training courses they meet subject experts, who advise and enlighten them accordingly. The resultant effect of this is achieving better scores in their students”*

From the above findings, CPD can be termed a tool that empowers teachers to translate teaching concepts from theory to practice. It helps develop teachers who are reflective practitioners, as a result their shift their attitude in teaching and so better learning outcomes. Similar observations agree with several studies reviewed (Akram, 2018; Kikegbusi, Gloria & Eziamaka, 2016; Miller, 2017; Podolsky et al., 2019) that CPD is a key learning platform to produce competent

teachers and who will translate the same skills in their teaching/learning process.

Another respondent mentioned that through CPD training teachers were empowered to improve their pedagogical skills, in a bid to keep up with the current education reforms. This was done specifically to address issues around the quality of education, the intention of the MOE is to develop a culture of life-long learning.

*“The Government of Kenya has aimed at mitigating transitional challenges that may be brought by the change of curriculum from 8.4.4 to Competency Based Curriculum which was piloted five years ago. The respondents submit that teaching methods or instructor's rendition of the content during the learning process can either be a hindrance or solution to quality learning outcomes in schools” (M2)*

Another respondent had this to say on the role of CPD in enhancing pedagogical skills;

*“We are living in a changing world and the teaching profession is equally dynamic, so the teachers are brought to speed about the current pedagogical trends. This is done through constant online training and benchmarking. CPD is a facilitator of learning is in tandem with the trends and pedagogical skills” (M3)*

From the above statement it can be deduced that CPD is a term that encompasses all training that a teacher undertakes to improve his/her skills for a quality education. These findings indicate that that the provision of continuous personal and professional

education would enable teachers to review and modify their teaching methods and curricula in the light of present-day changes be they technological, economic, cultural, social or political and meeting in-service needs of a stable and dynamic teaching force.

In summary, it can be argued that the various discussions and experiences presented by the respondents revealed that CPD is tool that supplements approach to teaching and learning process as it furthers quality teaching. Teaching/learning outcomes in most cases depend on the quality of a teacher. Regarding this, a respondent had this to

*“There is a close nexus between teachers’ quality and student achievement. Additionally, she echoed on the need for the policy makers to take into consideration on the need to license teachers’ professional development programmes as a way of improving teaching and learning approaches to empower them to respond to the needs and interests of their learners.”*

While the above discussion points on the many benefits that how teachers perceive CPD, the study also reported on some of forms of CPD trainings that tutors found useful for the social construction of

knowledge. Most of the respondents reported three forms of CPD; in-service training, team teaching and bench marking as the most preferable forms of CPD because they enhance positive internal competition.

One of the respondents from the group had this to say:

*“In service training is considered as a game changer as it is done collaboratively with all the key stakeholders the national government the ministry of education, KNEC and KICD. It’s worth the effort as it helps build the teachers’ capacity and enhances the teachers’ visibility. The process should have been done way before changing the teaching curriculum”.*

From the above training, it can be concluded that this model of training can be equated to the training model of CPD as found in studies, (Little, 1994; Kelly & MacDiarmid, 2002) where teachers where teachers strive to demonstrate skills specified in a nationally agreed standard. Other forms of CPD training that tutors perceived to help them in their construction of knowledge includes; action research, team



teaching, reflective practice, communities of practice, peer observation and mentoring.

Additionally, tutors reported that their learning is an interplay between an individual tutor's belief and the environment factors. In this case if the administration or the employer or even both are supportive, tutors will be empowered to learn and vice versa. Such an observation is in tandem with the Bronfenrenners Bio ecological theory of Human Development (2006) which emphasis on the role of environment in supporting the developing human being and in this case the tutor who is endeavoring to learn through attending CPD programmes.

On the same note the study findings also pointed out that teacher learning also requires an active participation through social interaction with others through platforms such as collaboration, team teaching amongst others. This view is in an agreement with the Vygotsky, Piaget and Brunner theory (1962) which emphasis on the fact that an individual must take an active role in constructing the knowledge. In this case,

teachers should take CPD training as an individual responsibility and so employ individual efforts, including but not limited to paying for these trainings.

#### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study has shown that tutors participants in CPD perceived the training as positive and valuable in bringing about change, which not only referred to personal and professional gain, but also organizational growth. Further, the study confirmed that CPD was viewed as a self-enhancement strategy triggered intrinsically to bring enduring change in the career lives of tutors and assure the quality of education at the national level. Other benefits of participating in CPD means it enhances career growth/promotion/vertical social mobility among teachers which has a subsequent effect of boosting their self-confidence.

Looking at the many perceived benefits of tutors participating in CPD programmes, there is a need to reskill and upskill them to remain relevant to the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This is therefore a call by the Ministry of Education, KICD and TSC to ensure that they provide teachers with these opportunities, by employing various approaches and models. Additionally, there is also a need to strengthen the quality of education in the country in line with goal no 4 of SDG.

Based on the findings from this study, we recommend that there is a need to develop a more inclusive and tutor friendly CPD model in line with teachers' needs. It is necessary to consider tutors' input when making decisions about CPD programmes, and to accord teachers adequate time to attend CPD programmes.

Based on the study findings, it is recommended that teachers facilitate well defined roles during inquiry lessons to enhance intellectual engagement of learners in exploring mathematical concepts. Learner's participation roles in IBL need to be defined within the lesson plan framework and learner's work books in terms of individual, pair, group or plenary engagement showing inquiry tasks. Transitioning learners from passive in regular lessons to inquiry learning that demands answering open-ended questions, explaining, asking questions, listening to peers, recording data and information, contributing to plenary discussions and presenting group reports need to be evident in mathematics inquiry lessons.

In addition, teachers need periodic and regular training, mentorship and coaching to effectively implement role diversification required in inquiry-based learning and according learner's autonomy to think and explore with well-defined roles.

Additionally, there is need for policy and practice to enforce re-defined learner's roles in mathematics inquiry for effective implementation of the competence-based education in STEM-integrated schools.

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