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## TUTORS' INVOLVEMENT IN CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES AND THEIR SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE

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### ABSTRACT

*Continuous professional development enables teachers to master the art of teaching hence promoting teaching effectiveness. The demand for effective teachers has seen the formulation of several interventions to improve the teaching effectiveness of teachers in diverse countries; one of these interventions being continuous professional development training. Since teachers play a key role in the success of educational reforms, it is imperative that they are involved in the continuous professional development programmes. To what extent do teachers experience feel dedication and ownership, sharing of ideas, co-creators of knowledge, key decision makers on matters affecting their day-to-day teaching and learning activities?*

*This study was conducted in Kamwenja and Murang'a Teachers' Training Colleges of Central Kenya, to investigate the relationship between the nature and level of tutor involvement in Continuous Professional Development Training and tutors' social construction of knowledge.*

*The study employed exploratory research design within a qualitative orientation. To collect data the study used in-depth interviews for tutors, principals and key informants, while focus group discussions were also administered to tutors. The study used 38 participants; two principals, thirty 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. The study found that tutors were hardly involved in the design of Continuous Development Programmes, and felt marginalized. The study recommends that Tutors get plenty of opportunity to participate meaningfully in the design of CPD programmes, and to work with colleagues to reconstruct knowledge according to their own ways.*

**Keywords:** Continuous professional development, tutors' involvement, social construction of knowledge.

## INTRODUCTION

Continuous professional development is hypothesized to influence teaching effectiveness (Kagama & Irungu, 2018; Kimathi & Rusznyak, 2018; Mwangi & Njuguna, 2019; Sumaryanta et al., 2018; Tarhan et al., 2019; Wanjala, Osendo, & Okoth, 2019). In public schools in Kenya, continuous professional development programs are carried out regularly to assess and promote the teachers' teaching effectiveness (Ministry of Education, 2018). Continuous Professional Development (CPD) refers to monitoring employees' progress in acquiring new skills, knowledge, and experience beyond any initial training as they continue working (Sumaryanta et al., 2018).

In Africa, Okeke and Mtyuda (2017) reported that the South African education sector faced many teacher strikes due to dissatisfaction with working conditions and policies implemented in the education sector without their involvement. In the Kenyan context, Kamau and Wachira (2019; Susan and Imonje, 2019) noted a high turnover of teachers, low morale of teachers when performing their teaching duties, and a lack of commitment to the tasks and responsibilities given. On the other hand, it was reported that teachers were unable to cover the syllabus and that they needed to be more competent in communication skills in their teaching. (Wanjala, 2017) further indicated that most teachers needed to prepare for lessons and utilize teaching-learning time well.

Mocheche, Bosire, and Raburu (2017) also noted that classroom management strategies used by most teachers were inappropriate.

The above literature highlights the gaps that occur because of needing to involve tutors in the planning and implementation of continuous professional development programmes. Through tutor involvement in CPD training in all stages, they will be empowered to express their needs, interests, or even expectations on what they consider worthy to help them carry out their day-to-day teaching and learning activities. Based on this background, the current study sought to examine the relationship between the nature and level of tutor involvement in continuous professional development programmes and their social construction of knowledge in public primary teachers' training colleges in central Kenya.

## OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study was to examine the relationship between the nature and level of tutors' involvement in Continuous Professional Development and their social construction of knowledge.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A good education reform entails including the teacher at the centre of the entire process (Mitchell, 2015). This is mostly important since after a completion of a continuous professional development training, teachers are required to implement the newly acquired knowledge, skills, amongst the many other benefits from the training in the teaching and learning process.

Such demands may be a pointer on why it is imperative to engage them in key decisions regarding CPD programmes. Related literature has underscored the need for such involvement; such as but not limited to expressing their needs and interests, matching these needs and interests to the demands of their students.

Various scholars have reported on the benefits of engaging teachers in their continuous professional development programmes; for instance it ensures that CPD are implemented, (Betemariam, 2017); they become active learners who are in a position to make decision on what is useful for them and not (Parker, Patton and Tannehill, 2012; Gemed, Fiorucci and Catarci, 2014); are able to construct meanings, (Borko et al., 2010; Bartleton; 2018); are empowered to make decision on what is of use in their teaching and learning activity (Darling -Hammond and McLaughlin, 2011); are made active in the whole training process ;Birman, Desimone, Garet and Porter, (2001) increase in the acquisition of knowledge and skills while Hadjimatheou (2018) reports that teachers involvement in CPD programmes helps in further construction of knowledge as evident in improvement of subject matter, pedagogical skills amongst other benefits.

Bayar (2014) study reports on the elements of effective professional development activities as the one that encourages active involvement of the teachers. Such active involvement provides them with a platform to become knowledge producers rather than being passive recipients of the same.

Other benefits of engaging teachers in these CPD programmes are that they help them to reflect on what they have learnt and improve student outcomes. These study findings corroborate with a study that was conducted by Gyamar and Aginselya (2022) who found that when teachers are involved in their continuous professional development it empowers them further to reflect on their classroom experiences in addition to improving their earlier knowledge and skills.

Klein (2009) study found that through active engagement of teachers in the continuous professional development, they feel enthusiastic to implement the newly acquired skills in their classroom practices. Archibald et al., (2011) study findings indicate a danger of conducting continuous professional development programmes that do not involve teachers, for it denies them a chance to express out their needs, think about new ideas, including sharing knowledge with other colleagues. Such findings support the importance of involving teachers in all the stages of continuous professional development programmes. Similar sentiments are found in a study that was conducted by Qadhi and Flolyd (2021) who noted that teachers were disappointment in CPD programmes that did not accord involve them, for it denied them an opportunity to interact with their fellow colleagues.

In Kenya, similar reporting was found in a study that was conducted by Muricho and Changach (2013) that was against SMASSE programmes that did not consult or involve the Mathematics and

Science teachers. Instead, teachers are trained through Cascade models that do not encourage taking into consideration teachers voices.

This study was guided by two theoretical frameworks; namely the Bronfrenbrenner bioecological theory of human development (2005) and social constructivist theory (Piaget, 1970; Bruner, 1979; Vygotsky, 1998). While the social constructivist theory stresses the role of social interactions in furthering a learning process, the Bronfrenbrenner theory focuses on the role of the environment in furthering teachers' construction of knowledge. The latter theory also puts focus on the need for individuals to active interaction with the CPD training programme as well as other colleagues in the process of learning. (Leonard, 2011).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study was conducted in two selected public primary teachers' training colleges in Central, Kenya. The study employed a qualitative approach. The study used an exploratory research design. 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 study employed two research instruments; in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The principals and key informants were interviewed through in-depth interviews while tutors were interviewed through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions.

Both construct and content validity were used. To achieve content validity, interview and focus group discussion schedules were evaluated against the study objective, discussed with university supervisors and revised for use. Construct validity was achieved through delta phi technique and factor analysis method. To achieve reliability of the study instruments, a pilot study was carried out in Kamwenja Teachers Training College in Embu County. Additionally, other strategies employed to achieve trustworthiness in the study included triangulation, member checking as well as administering research instruments in consistently.

Qualitative data was analyzed through thematic analysis. Reporting was done in narrative form and voices within the research report, while quantitative data was analyzed through descriptive statistics and reported in form of frequencies and percentages.

The following ethical considerations were observed: firstly, a clearance from Moi university graduate school was obtained. Secondly, the study obtained a research permit from NACOSTI through the Ministry of Education.

Other measures observed include obtaining written consent from the participants, maintaining confidentiality among participants, respecting anonymity among respondents and finally assuring respondents of the study findings through publication.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results from this study are based on the opinion on the nature and level of tutors' involvement in continuous professional development programmes as reflected in determining the content, nature, and timing of training in relation to their prior knowledge as well as experiences and whether this has an impact on their social construction of knowledge and vice versa. The study established that tutors recognized the importance of being involved in these CPD programmes owing to the many benefits accrued from them. An observation from one of the in-depth interview reports that there is a link between tutors' involvement in continuous professional development programmes and improvement in student outcomes. This is evident in a comment made by one of the respondent who stated that;

*“When teachers are directly involved in their learning process, it leads to an increased ownership; increased learning as well as an increased commitment to professional development’s success”.*

This finding concurs with studies conducted by Gameda, Fiorucci & Catarci, 2014; Gymar and Aginselya, 2022) who found that teachers appreciated being involved in these CPD

trainings as it accords them an opportunity to air out their voices, to do a need analysis, reflect on what they have learnt from the trainings, obtain a feedback in terms of learning progress in these trainings. However, one respondent expressed disappointment that teachers hardly participated in the CPD training. He cited a case of failed SMASSE programmes;

*“We as teachers are not elated about these CPD programmes because we are not involved in planning, designing, and implementation of CPD programmes. We wish that we, as teachers, were consulted on the issues related to the structure, nature of the problem, methods of teaching, and their input regarding decision-making regarding what is relevant to their teaching and learning activities. A good example of a failed CPD program is the SMASSE programmes, an initiative to improve Science and Mathematics performance.*

In addition, the study findings reveal that the training model as organized from KICD content focuses on standardization and quality assurance. The program is designed to support the development and introduction of new knowledge. It denies teachers the opportunity to play a proactive role. The design is limited because it places teachers in a passive role. Newly acquired knowledge and skills are not practically applied. It does not address the needs of teachers. Teachers lack motivation to attend workshops. Sharing of information is de-contextualized.



He further adds that an introduction of TPAD is based on performance management. In an attempt to raise standards. The main center of focus is on efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability.

What is evident from the above reporting is that teachers are usually unhappy with CPD programmes that does not take into consideration of their interests, offer less interaction opportunities as this hinders their social construction of knowledge.

Similar findings were cross checked during a focus group discussion, where one of the respondent expressed sentiments regarding the CPD model that they find inadequate to serve their needs. She commented that;

*"The training model which the KICD highly organizes only focuses on the quality assurance aspect. The programme also helps them to introduce new skills and knowledge. However, this CPD training model does not allow teachers to participate actively in the programme. More so, what is unfortunate is that the acquired skills need to address the needs of teachers in any way; because of this, teachers' psyche to attend these trainings is zero."*

This finding agrees with a study that was carried out by Muricho and Changach, who cautioned again CPD programmes that do not suit teachers, for by doing so it denies it demotivates them from participating in further CPD programmes.

In a rejoinder, one of the key informants had also this to say;

*"It is of the essence for an educationist to understand that continuous professional development should not always be in a conventional format; social, cultural as well as physical*

*environment is key. Any designer of the same programme should consider the above factors, such as institutional culture, structures, prevailing policies, and available resources, whenever designing a programme."*

Such responses from the above discussions pinpoints on the need to align teacher professional development assessment to be carried out at the close of the term. This is a new strategy to analyze the quality of teaching in response to the many teething pitfalls encountered in implementing various CPD models among various educational institutions. This also explains why the Ministry of Education gave a suggestion that every institution was at liberty to conduct a CPD program that would accommodate the existing resources. Additionally, the above observation also underscores the need for actively involving tutors in all the stages of CPD programmes to help them improve their pedagogical skills and master the subject content, amongst other benefits.

In relation to the above, the study findings reported that the training model as organized from KICD content focuses on standardization and quality assurance. The continuous professional programmes are designed to support the development and introduction of new knowledge. It therefore denies teachers the opportunity to play a proactive role. The design is limited because it places teachers in a passive role. Newly acquired knowledge and skills are not practically applied. It does not address the needs of teachers. Teachers lack motivation to attend workshops.

Additionally, sharing of information is de-contextualized for the main center of focus is on efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability.

The study also reported that the CPD programmes are organized by the Kenya Institute for Development target primary school teachers and dwell on a specialist focus (English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies and Primary Education). During an in-depth interview, a respondent had this to say;

*“These programmes are fashioned to meet the needs of the teachers. They attempt to enhance teachers’ pedagogical strategies, particularly exposing teachers to non-traditional teaching methodologies, as well as developing their understanding of students’ learning processes, curriculum development and masterly of the content”.*

The above verbatim presentation emphasizes the fact that teachers value being involved in continuous professional development programmes as it aims to retool them in skills such as pedagogical strategies, masterly of the content, classroom management. It also highlights on the fact that the level of involvement of the tutors during the design and implementation of CPD determine teacher quality and is strongly related to student achievement. As such a clarion call to policymakers to consider teacher licensing systems and more effective professional development strategies so as to produce stronger effect on teaching and learning approaches that strengthen teachers’ ability to teach diverse learners.

The above findings concurs with some study findings that was reported in Bunyi et al., (2013) who found that CPD programmes are implemented nationally in order to train tutors for the diverse emerging concepts in the wake of educational reforms. Additionally, the study findings also established that teachers’ professional development is a point of focus within school improvement trends as it is believed that there is a positive correlation between student learning and teachers’ effectiveness. During one of the focus group discussion, a respondent had this to say;

*“It is important for educators to understand that professional development cannot be pre-specified in a standard format; the environment in which a program is implemented is critical. Designers need to consider contextual factors as they plan programs. Factors such as students, teachers, the physical environment, policies, resources, organizational culture, organizational structures and the local history of professional development, along with parents and the community, must be considered when developing new programs.”*

From the above verbatim presentation, it is evident that continuous professional development should be aligned to teacher professional development assessment and evaluation which is carried out at the end of every term or even often. The CPD design should be built from the TPD. This they explain, is a new way of analyzing the effectiveness and quality of teaching and was designed in response to the challenges that were realized in implementation of the various CPD models across institutions.

MOE adopted a new approach in which every school became responsible for carrying out a CPD program as per the prevailing conditions in the respective schools. The new CPD comes in the wake of alignment to the Competency-Based Curriculum model and is conceived as a life-long process in which a teacher is expected to be actively involved in a continuous professional development program for a span of thirty years.

The study findings reiterated that teacher level of involvement is imperative in a bid to ensure educational quality in the country; this reminds of the reason as to why many countries invest resources in their teachers' professional development.

The in-service training programs have been implemented in schools and colleges so to keep teachers abreast with the new knowledge and skills by performing different activities in groups and individually. Moreover, the school-based in-service training program is considered cost-effective, practical, and easier to address teachers' immediate concerns. This was documented during one of the in-depth interview where a respondent commented that;

*“Schools are placed where the actual teaching-learning process would be practical. Therefore, in addition to designing, implementing, and training at the school level, the focus of training is usually on the school principals and supervisors to promote an experience-sharing culture among teachers and thereby co-create solutions at the school level as professional growth is by and large a social product”.*

From the above presentations, it can be deduced that a supportive social and contextual support plays a major role in furthering teachers' social construction of knowledge. This study's findings are in agreement with a study that was conducted by Bartleton (2018) who found that teachers must be accorded a supportive environment in their respective schools or colleges, by their supervisors, employers for them to be able to construct meanings and reflect the knowledge as well as skills from these CPD trainings.

From the above discussions, the study concluded that teachers are an important resource in the teaching and learning process; their training and utilization therefore requires critical consideration. This is especially important to keep them abreast with their new roles in the wake of education reforms. The same observation is equally echoed by Darling-Hammond (1998), who supports that traditional approaches to CPD such as formal courses or one-off seminars are criticized for their shortcomings of being unable to get teachers prepared for the new role of knowledge facilitator rather than knowledge transmitter.

Arguably, an awareness of less formal and traditional forms of CPD is slowly growing, with calls for teachers to become more creative in their approaches to their professional development, and move away from more traditional transmission-based methods (Muijs et al, 2004 ; Darling –



Hammond, Hyler and Gardner , 2017). Therefore, an understanding how teachers perceive CPD and what factors affect their participation in CPD is an extremely important segment for it provides both schools and colleges with accurate information to use in making effective decisions regarding CPD programs (Fitch and Kopp, 1990). This discussion underscores the importance of an awareness-based common understanding of all stakeholders on the essence of CPD, active involvement of the tutors in planning and implementing the CPD program, and relentless effort to bring change in students learning through the continual improvement of one's teaching methodology.

#### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Due to the pivotal role that an education system plays in any country, there is a need for teachers to be actively involved all educational policies if the country is to achieve both its social and economic goals, therefore unless teachers at all levels of teaching are involved in the continuous professional development programmes, they may not make a substantive contribution in their society.

The Ministry of Education through the TSC encourage all teachers to become life-long learners within their own professional practice – where they are should to learn by doing, by testing new approaches in the teaching, and assessing their impact on student outcomes. The study recommends coordinated efforts to find ways on how to involve tutors in the design and implementation of continuous professional

development programmes as adult learners. The Ministry of Education and the Teachers' Service Commission should work hand in hand to ensure that all Kenya tutors are given an opportunity to participate in harmonized CPD with reduced cases of both the MOE and the TSC producing training events with the same content. Such repetition of material offered causes monotony and boredom among tutors.

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