

Original Research Article

Factors for Public Primary School Teachers to Engage in Professional Development

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Article History

Received: 09.01.2024

Accepted: 04.02.2024

Published: 08.02.2024

Journal homepage:

<https://www.easpublisher.com>

Quick Response Code



Abstract: This study focused on and critically analyses of factors for public primary school teachers to engage in professional development. A total of 68 respondents were purposive sampled and reached. Data on factors for primary school teachers engaging in professional development were gathered using interview and focus group discussion. Qualitative method employed during data collection, analysis and interpretation. Respondents perceived that, there is intrinsic factor and extrinsic factors which motivate them to engage in professional development. Within such disposition there is individual interest and improving skills and knowledge as intrinsic factors. Also there is salary increment, Promotion, career change, head teachers harassment, change of curriculum and availability of institutions as an extrinsic factors. The study indicated that primary school teachers need to learn more complex and varied repertoire of teaching in addition to what was necessary in their past. This study is crucial for widening up primary school teachers on the factors motivated them to engage in professional development. Finally, the study recommends that similar studies should be conducted in more public primary schools in the same municipality or in other municipalities in the same region or in more regions with more districts to come up with more generalizable findings by covering a large study area would make generalization on the challenges public primary school teachers face when engaged in professional development feasible.

Keywords: Primary Teachers, Professional Development.

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INTRODUCTION

Public primary schools teachers' engage professional development for varied reasons. As adult learners their decision to go for higher education may differ from one person to another or one place to another. These reasons can be both internal and external. These two categories of reasons behind public primary school teachers' engagement in professional development can be presented as intrinsic factors and extrinsic factors. Though public primary school teachers engaged in professional development in higher learning institutions seeking diploma, bachelor's degrees and masters degrees on the whole, teachers have different factors for engaging in professional development have not been explicitly documented.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Maftei and Simona (2022) found that primary schools teachers engaged in professional development because of self-evaluation, attitudes towards education,

importance of goals and expectations towards meeting ones goals, life transitions, opportunities, information and participation. Maftei and Simona (2022) identifying the reasons behind primary school teachers' engagement in professional development as the need for achievement of satisfaction, acquisition of new competencies, attitude and acquiring the skills. NCES (2006) point out that learners participate in higher education programmes mainly to foster individual interests rather than to develop skills or learn a current subject matter. Primary schools teachers also perceive higher education as their duty and regard pursuing higher education as a panacea to improving their lives standards. Merriam *et al.*, (2007) established that public primary school teachers who engage in professional development, base their decision on the adult purpose and values of education. Also, the goals-oriented, activity oriented and learning-oriented decision tends to influence teachers to engage in professional development. Furthermore, Fiona and David (2012) point out that primary school teachers engage in professional development for self-efficacy,

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love of learning, interest in the profession, commitment to professional development, nurturing personality and extrovert personality.

Also, Mukeen *et al.*, (2005) in their study found that, primary schools teachers engage in professional development to acquire current skills, techniques and strategies of teaching pupils. In addition to acquiring knowledge for their work in a bid to become more competent for implementing changes and reforms in the education sector, especially changes in curriculum.

Apart from intrinsic reasons, empirical evidence supports the existence extrinsic reasons. Harvey (2005) argues that the salary increment was a basic reason for primary school teachers to engage in professional development. Indeed, teachers’ salaries are expected to be increased after completing their studies in higher learning institutions. In this regard, Davidson (2007) contends that teachers in both rural and urban areas seek to develop their professional standing because their salaries were too small as most of them are not satisfied with their salaries. In consequence, many teachers join higher learning institutions for further studies because they want to increase their salary scales and boost their take-home income. Also, as Darling-Hammond *et al.*, (2009) put it primary school teachers engage in professional development for promotions. Indeed, with enhanced credentials teachers are promoted as heads of school or education officers depending on their educational level and work experience. Though, teachers’ promotions happen within field or outside that field factors in which public primary school teachers engage in professional development was not certain. Therefore the study investigated those ways.

Purpose of the Study

The study aimed to provide information on the magnitude of the public primary school teachers engaging in professional development in various levels of educations in Kinondoni Municipality.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study was conducted in Kinondoni Municipality. This is one of the three municipalities that constitute the City of Dar es Salaam, the commercial Capital of Tanzania. Kinondoni Municipal Council has a total area of 531 square kilometers’. It is bordered by the Indian Ocean on the eastern side. Its southern border touches the municipalities of Temeke and Ilala and the north and in the west side bordered by the Coastal region. Kinondoni Municipal Council is divided into four divisions which comprise 20 wards and 106 Sub-wards. It owns some 83 public primary schools manned by 1,939 public primary school teachers.

Kinondoni Municipal Council was chosen as a study area due to the high rate of public primary school teachers who engage in professional development in Dar es Salaam region in diploma, bachelor’s degree and master’s degree level of education (MoEVT, 2010). Also, the area is accessible to the researcher. Therefore, it was easy to secure good co-operation from the participants, reduce costs and time constraints. The population of this study encompassed public primary school teachers, head teachers, the Municipal Primary Education Officer (MPEO) and the Municipal Director of Kinondoni Municipality. To obtain the requisite sample size the study employed purposive sampling technique to pick public primary school teachers, head teachers, the Municipal Primary Education Officer (MPEO) and the Municipal Director of Kinondoni Municipality. The study comprises 68 respondents; 60 were public primary schools teachers, who have already been engaged in professional development and those teachers who are in the process of engaging in professional development; six school heads, one Municipal Primary Education Officer and one Municipal Director. The selection of this sample size was determined by three factors, namely: the nature of the study, time available for the research, and the availability of finance. The study composition is as shown in table 1.

Table 1

Category of respondent	Anticipated respondents
MD	01
MPEO	01
Head teachers	06
Teachers	60
Total	68

Data were collected using FGDs and interviews in the field. These two data collection methods supplemented and helped to check the accuracy of the information collected and then the data were ranked into significant manner.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section provides findings related to the factors for public primary school teachers to engage in professional development Data were collected through interviews, FGDs, and observation. The findings are presented into two sub-sections: (1) intrinsic reasons; and (2) extrinsic reasons. The next wing provide detailed knowledge of all these.

Intrinsic Reasons for Public Primary School Teachers' Engagement in Professional Development

This sub-section identifies the intrinsic reasons for the public primary school teachers to engage in professional development. Data were collected through interviews FGDs and observation. The MD, the MPEO, the HTs, and 60 teachers were required to respond one question: "What are the intrinsic reasons for public primary school teachers to engage in professional development"? The responses indicate that there were two intrinsic reasons for the public primary school teachers to engage in professional development: (1) individual interest and (2) improving skills and knowledge.

Individual Interest

During the interview with MPEO and the FGDs it was emerged that individual interest was one of the intrinsic reasons for the public primary school teachers to engage in professional development. Most public primary school teachers were engaged in professional development due to their individual interest. One teacher said:

I am interested in learning different things. That is why I decided to engage in professional development. No one forced me to engage in professional development because I was interested in learning about various things. So to engage in professional development is the one way of learning more about those various things (FGD, teacher school B: 12/11/2023).

The findings indicate that, some teachers engaged in professional development due to their individual interest. The findings are in line with Mushi (2010) who argues that public primary school teachers' engaged in professional development because of intrinsic reason as part of self-professional improvement. This reason cannot be matched with any amount of pressure from educational managers.

Improving Skills and Knowledge

During the interviews with HTs and the FGDs it was established that improving skills and knowledge are part of intrinsic reasons pushing public primary school teachers towards engaging in professional development. Arguably pre- service training for public primary school teachers did not provide enough knowledge and skills for effective performance in their daily activities to rationalize, especially in teaching and learning process. During the FGDs one teacher commented:

The teaching profession needs a high level of skill and knowledge. Some teachers are engaged in professional development to improve their knowledge and skills which will help them in the teaching and learning process (FGD, school C: 11/11/2023).

In the other words, teachers who engage in professional development acquire current skills and knowledge essential in the teaching and learning process. This assumption is in line with OECD (2003) and Mushi (2010) who argue that the public primary school teacher has to accept the need to grow professionally. A primary school teacher who perceives professional development positively is eager to attain new knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and dispositions. These dispositions include pride, self-esteem, team spirit, commitment, drive, adventure, creativity, and vision. Individual primary school teacher need these attributes to excel as professional teachers.

Extrinsic Reasons for Public Primary School Teachers' Engagement in Professional Development

The focus of this sub-section is to identify the extrinsic reasons that prompt public primary school teachers to engage in professional development. Data were collected through FGDs, interviews and observation. The respondents were asked to respond to the following question: "what are the extrinsic reasons influence public primary school teachers to engage in professional development?" The findings revealed seven extrinsic reasons behind public primary school teachers' engagement in professional development: (1) salary increment; (2) promotion; (3) heavy workload; (4) availability of higher learning institutions; (5) career change; (6) head teachers' harshness; and (7) change of curriculum.

Salary Increment

During the interview with the MPEO it was established that, salary increment was another extrinsic reason which influences public primary school teachers to engage professional in development. Most of the public primary school teachers were engaged in professional development in order to get a salary raise after completing their studies as MPEO argued:

The teachers who engage in professional development want to have their salary scale increases. According to the government circular, teachers' salary scale depends on the teachers' education and experience. Many teachers struggle to get higher education so as to get high salary after completing their studies (interview, MEO: 12/11/2023).

The findings indicate that a teacher's salary increment depends on the level of his/her education. Those with higher education credentials receive higher salaries, according to the government circular. The findings are similar to Darling-Hammond *et al.*, (2009) who identify salary increment as a reason behind the public primary school teachers' engagement in professional. Graduates teachers with bachelor or masters' degree in education tend to benefit from this requirement.

During the FGDs with the teachers, it was established that public primary school teachers engage in professional development for salaries increments. Teachers with higher education qualifications receive higher salaries than those with lower education. Indeed, in this regard one teacher commented as follows:

Teachers who have higher levels of education receive higher salaries than those who have low levels of education. Most teachers decide to engage in professional development to increase their salaries (FGD, teacher school C: 12/11/2023).

The findings imply that, higher levels of education correlate with high salaries. After all, public primary school teachers with higher levels of education earn higher salaries than those who have low levels of education. The findings are in line with Villegas-Reimers (2003) and Alam and Farid (2011) who explained that salary schedules are some of reasons behind primary school teachers' engagement in professional development.

Promotion

During the interview with Municipal Director, it was established that promotions were another extrinsic factors behind the public primary school teachers to engage in professional development. The responses show that public primary school teachers were engaged in professional development for promotional purposes. Teachers were promoted to the higher posts of head teachers, education officers and academic officers after completing higher education. In addition, promotion to the higher posts for the public primary school teachers depends much on their levels of education. As the Municipal Director argued:

Teachers engage in professional development so as to be on the best way of being promoted to higher posts. It can be within the field or outside the field because higher posts in public institutions require civil servants with higher qualifications (interview, Municipal Director: 14/11/2023).

The findings imply that teachers get promoted to higher positions when they have completed higher levels of education. Similarly NCE (2006) found that in-service programmes increased the eligibility for promotion to higher position within or without the education field.

From the FGDs, it emerged that public primary school teachers engaged in professional development to get promotion to higher positions. Many of the public primary school teachers who completed various levels of education were promoted to different positions. As one teacher said:

For teachers to be promoted to higher positions, they must have higher levels of education. So we engage

in professional development so as to get promoted to the higher posts in teaching profession or other positions out of the education field (FGD, teacher school D: 16/11/2023).

It is evident that, public primary school teachers see higher education as a pass port to promotion to high positions. The findings are in line with Darling-Hammond *et al.*, (2009) who pointed out that promotion to the high positions influences most public primary school teachers to engage in promotion development.

Heavy Workload

Through the interview with HTs and FGDs it was generally established that public primary school teachers are contend with heavy workloads in their working station. Moreover, it was reported that, most of the public primary schools in Kinondoni Municipality were overcrowded with pupils. Furthermore the teachers' - pupils' ratio exceeded the officially sanctioned ratio of 1:45 due to the insufficiency of the resources such as classrooms. Thus public primary school teachers sometimes engaged in professional development to escape from heavy workloads. As one HT commented:

The teachers' - pupils' ratios is 1:87 instead of 1:45 in our school. The teacher has a heavy workload per day. Each one marks more than 300 exercise-books in the meantime some extra activities still wait for him/her. So many of them decide to engage in professional development to escape such situations" (interview, HT School F: 29/11/2023).

In addition, one teacher argued:

The classroom is overcrowded and we are supposed to teach 10 periods per day and mark more than 300 exercise books per day. Therefore we decide to engage in professional development as a leave from our profession. We also take frequent breaks on the route from our homes to the working station due to fatigue" (FGD, teacher School B: 12/11/2023).

The findings indicate that public primary schools were overcrowded and the teachers had heavy workloads. The finding is in line with HakiElimu (2010) which point out that many public primary schools have heavy workloads due to the overcrowded classrooms and the scarcity of teachers. Indeed, teachers have too many periods to teach, their classes were too large, and the execute too many non-teaching activities, most notably the marking of many exercise books (*ibid.*). Therefore, many teachers opt to go for further training so that they could lessen their academic and non-academic activities burden.

The researcher observed that the teachers marked many exercise-books and had to deal with overcrowded classroom in one public primary school as seen in plates 4.1 and 4.2:



Figure 4.1: A teacher marking exercise-books



Figure 4.2: An overcrowded classroom

Availability of Higher Learning Institutions

During interview with the MPEO, the findings correlated with those from FGDs with the teachers. The findings show that the availability of higher learning institutions is one of the extrinsic reasons which encourage public primary school teachers to engage in professional development. The findings show that, currently, there are many higher learning institutions which influence public primary school teachers to engage in professional development.

In this regard, the MPEO commented as follows:

Many colleges and Universities have been introduced in recent years. This has influenced many public primary school teachers to engage in professional development (interview, Municipal Education Officer: 12/11/2023).

In addition, one teacher noted:

The availability of colleges and universities encourage most public primary school teachers to engage in professional development. Also the various programs which were introduced within these universities such as evening programmes have encouraged many teachers to engage in professional development (FGD, teacher school D: 21/11/2023).

Indeed, the easy availability of colleges and universities has encouraged many of the public primary school teachers to engage in professional development. The finding is in line with Evers *et al.*, (2010) whose studies in the Netherlands on organizational factors and teachers’ professional development in Dutch Secondary Schools established that teachers engage in professional development due to the ready availability of colleges and Universities.

Head Teachers Harshness

During the FGDs with public primary school teachers who were already engaged in professional development, the findings show that head teachers harshness also forced many public primary school teachers to engage in professional development. As one teacher explained:

Some head teachers are so harsh to the teachers that some of them who did not like the situation decide to go for professional development to escape from the harshness of their head teachers. Also, some teachers consider going for professional development as the better ways to escape from the head teacher's harshness (FGD, teachers School B: 12/11/2023).

Similarly, another teacher said:

Our school administrator is not good to us, as he always uses harsh language and treats us as if we are not civil servants. Most of teachers do not like such kind of harshness so others decide to go for professional development to escape such harshness with their administrators (FGD, teacher School C: 13/11/2023).

In other words, the harshness of the head teachers drives many public primary school teachers to professional development for them to escape their claws. The finding is in line with HakiElimu (2010) which point out that teachers engage in professional development to escape from their administrators' harshness in their working station.

Career Change

During interviews with the HTs and the FGDs with the teachers was established that, some public primary school teachers engaged in professional development to change their careers. They wanted to change their careers due the low salaries, heavy workloads and poor working conditions in the teaching profession. On the other hand, some public primary school teachers joined the teaching profession due to lack of employment opportunities elsewhere. One teacher said:

I want to change professions because I am not interested in the teaching work. I have decided to engage in professional development so that I can be in a better position to move to another career which will be suitable for one in my lifetime (FGD, teacher School F: 29/11/2023).

For those teachers who were not keen on the teaching profession, professional development was taken as a viable alternative changing their career. This assumption is in line with Merriam *et al.*, (2007) and Dadvand *et al.*, (2003) who point out that some teachers change their careers after embarking on alternative professional development.

Change of Curriculum

During the interview with the MPEO, and FGDs with teachers, it was established that change of curriculum is another extrinsic reason which influences public primary school teachers to engage in professional development. The respondent reported that teachers were engaged in professional development to cope up with curriculum changes and to enhance their knowledge. In this case, the MPEO said:

Teachers engage in professional development so as to acquire new skills, techniques and strategies required in their daily activities. This means that they will perform their daily activities effectively and raise the standard of pupil's performance (interview, Municipal Education Officer: 12/11/2023).

The findings imply that teachers engage in professional development to get new knowledge due to the changes which happen in their daily activities. In this regard, Mulkeen *et al.*, (2005) argue that changes happening in education require teachers to employ constructive teaching approaches a requirement which forces them to learn much more complex and varied repertoire of teaching than it has been necessary in their past.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of section 4.2 was to identify the reasons for the public primary school teachers to engage in professional development. The section answers the second research question. In this section, two (2) aspects were discussed: (1) intrinsic reasons for the public primary school teachers' engagement in professional development and (2) extrinsic reasons for public primary school teachers' engagement in professional development were discussed. Data has been collected through interviews, FGDs, and observations.

The findings show that there were two intrinsic reasons for the public primary school teachers to engage in professional development: (1) individual interest; and (2) improving knowledge and skills.

In terms of individual interest, the findings show that, the public primary school teachers engage in professional due to their individual interest. The learners intrinsically want to know various things for themselves. In consequence, they engage in professional development to realize this objective. The finding is in line with Merriam *et al.*, (2007) and NCES (2006), who point out that adult learners participate in higher education programmes mainly for individual interest rather than for developing skills or learning a current subject matter.

On improving skills and knowledge, the findings show that, public primary school teachers engage in professional development to improve their knowledge and skills so as to accomplish their duty and

fulfill other teaching responsibilities effectively. The finding is in line with Mushi (2010) who point out that the public primary school teachers have to accept the need to grow professionally. A primary school teacher, who perceives professional development positively, is eager to attain new knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and dispositions, which dispositions includes, pride, self-esteem, team spirit, commitment, drive, adventure, creativity, and vision.

The study found that there were seven (7) extrinsic reasons that influence public primary school teachers to engage in professional development. These extrinsic reasons are; (1) promotion, (2) salary increment, (3) heavy workload, (4) availability of colleges and universities, (5) career change, (6) head teachers' harshness, and (7) change of curriculum.

On the issues of promotion, the findings show that teachers, who were engaged in professional development, were in a better position of being promoted to higher positions such as head teachers and education officers than those without such professional engagement. The findings also show that those public primary school teachers who get promoted to high positions are those who have higher levels of education. This assumption is also underlined by Darling-Hammond *et al.*, (2009) who found that in-service programmes increase eligibility of teachers for promotions within or outside the education field. On salary increments the study found that the salaries of public primary school teachers depend on ones experience and education level. Those who had higher level of education receive higher salaries than those who have lower education. Similarly, Villegas-Reimers (2003) found that incremental salary is one of the reasons behind public primary school teachers' engagement in professional development.

On the aspect of heavy workloads, the findings reveal that public primary school teachers have to contend with heavy workloads due to overcrowded classes. Furthermore, public primary school teachers handle many periods and mark many exercise books per day. This assumption is in line with HakiElimu (2011) which has pointed out that many public primary schools have heavy workloads due to the overcrowded classes. As a result, too many periods to teach, their classes are too large, and they have too many non-teaching activities which must be performed, most notably marking many exercise books per day alongside their teaching responsibilities.

On the availability of colleges and universities the findings show that, in recent years there is a proliferation of both private and public colleges and universities, which offer various programmes including evening classes and open distance education which help public primary school teachers easily access higher education. Evers *et al.*, (2010), who conducted their

studies in the Netherlands on organizational factors and teachers' professional development in Dutch Secondary Schools, found teachers engaged in professional development due to the easy availability of colleges and universities. Also the harshness of head teachers was found to be another contributory factor to engagement in professional development. Indeed, the study found that some public primary school teachers engaged in professional development to escape from the head teachers' harshness. Similarly, UNESCO (2010) established that the administrators' harshness influenced some adult learners to engage in professional development.

On the change of the curriculum the findings show that there were many changes happening in the education field which necessitated. These changes need the teachers to sharpen their knowledge in order to cope with them. The findings are in line with Mulkeen *et al.*, (2005) who found that changes happening in education require teachers' to employ constructive teaching approaches. As such, they need to learn more complex and varied repertoire of teaching in addition to what was necessary in their past (*ibid.*).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the finding reflects that changes happening in education require teachers' to employ constructive teaching approaches. As such, they need to learn more complex and varied repertoire of teaching in addition to what was necessary in their past. Therefore, intrinsic factor and extrinsic factors are very important for public primary teachers to reach their goals in profession development.

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Cite This Article: Khadija Hassan Namagono (2024). Factors for Public Primary School Teachers to Engage in Professional Development. *East African Scholars J Edu Humanit Lit*, 7(2), 41-48.
