

**CHALLENGES OF CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES
AMONG BASIC SCHOOL TEACHERS IN THE TAMALE METROPOLIS**

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Abstract: *The purpose of the study was to investigate the challenges basic school teachers face in undertaking continuing professional development (CPD) programmes necessary for their professional development and growth. The descriptive survey method was adopted for the study. The target population for the study consisted of three hundred and eighty-five (385) Basic School teachers on sandwich programmes at the Tamale College of Education Centre. The sample for the study comprised one hundred and fifty-one (151) teachers made up of eighty (80) males and seventy-one (71) females. These individuals were considered for the study because of their involvement in the sandwich programme which is an integral part of CPD. Simple random sampling technique was used in the selection of the sample for the study. The main instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire. Descriptive statistics and simple percentages were used in analysing the data. Based on the data analysis, it was found that lack of quality infrastructure, poor teaching and learning materials, inadequate financial support and inappropriate timing of the CPD sessions among others were the major obstacles militating against teachers' participation in CPD in the Tamale metropolis. We, therefore, recommend that the host institutions upgrade and provide adequate and modernised facilities to improve teaching and learning sessions. It was further recommended that the district assemblies in collaboration with the Ghana Education Service identify and support committed Basic School teachers who want to undertake CPD programmes relevant to their profession. This can be done through the institution of a district teacher's support fund from which teachers can be supported financially to pursue CPD programmes.*

Keywords: *Continuing Professional Development programmes, sandwich courses and distance education programmes, Middle school Leaving Certificate (MLSC)*

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INTRODUCTION

Professionalism needs to be enhanced through continually developing one's competences to keep abreast of current developments. Essentially professionals in diverse fields of expertise engage in continuing professional development in order to sharpen their skills and improve their performance. Professional development usually means a formal process such as a conference, seminar or workshop, collaborative learning among members of a work team or a course at a college or university. Professional development can also occur in informal contexts such as discussions among work colleagues, independent reading and research, observation of a colleague's work or other learning from a peer. It also includes other staff development practices such as in-service training, and professional learning. Friedman and Philips (2004) argue that professional development activity is a lifelong learning process by which a professional continually acquires vital knowledge or personal skills needed for undertaking professional duties. The essence of professional development is to update knowledge and skills in existing and new areas of practice, thus, preparing individuals for changing roles in the organisation, to facilitate new responsibilities and to promote and increase competence in a wider context with benefits to both the profession and the individual. Continuing professional development is sometimes described as the many types of educational experiences related to an individual's work. This encompasses educators, doctors, lawyers and other people in a wide variety of professions and business (Aziz, Chong, & Sameerah, 2013). Professionals engage in continuing professional development programmes to learn and apply new knowledge and skills that will improve their performance on the job.

In the field of education, continuing professional development is an essential lifelong process by which teachers update their knowledge, build their capacities and skills to meet the needs of their students at all levels of education. It is a requirement for recruitment and the retention of one's job. Professional development is a vital issue for academics, particularly for higher education teachers. In Ghana, the 2002 educational review committee identified lack of qualified teachers in many of the basic schools as the major challenge confronting the attainment of quality basic education in the country. It was on this basis that a recommendation was made for all teachers especially the non-professionals to undertake any kind of continuing professional development programmes in order to be abreast of current issues in education (Republic of Ghana, 2002).

The relevance of professional development is recognised for its propensity in exposing participants to extensive range of learning experiences necessary for effective performance. It is often argued that once a person graduates from college and has the

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requisite certification to warrant appointment, the subsequent learning on the job is done through experience. As in all professions, new teachers and principals take years to be effective in their roles. The complexity of teaching is so great that one-third (1/3) of teachers leave the profession within three (3) years and 50% leave within five years (Ingetsoll, 2001). Even experienced teachers encounter great challenges each year including changes in subject content, new instructional methods and advances in technology. Educators who do not avail themselves for effective professional development do not improve their skills and student learning suffers. It is in the light of these that continuing professional development programmes are important in safeguarding the teachers against becoming stale in their profession. Teachers face numerous perceived challenges in their quest for professional development programmes. Some of these perceived challenges deter other teachers from embarking on any professional development programmes and so they prefer to remain where they are for many years. The resultant effect is that these individuals are often challenged in keeping with the changing trends in education and yet they cannot be asked to leave the profession. The ultimate brunt bearers of these stale teachers are pupils who often take what teachers tell them as the ultimate truth.

The quality of professional development and the pursuit of improved teaching and learning are important determinants in teachers' engagement in continuing, career long development that meet their personal and professional needs. Thus, matching the appropriate professional development provision to particular professional needs is essential if effective learning is to take place. This "fit" between the developmental needs of the teacher and the selected activity is critically important in ensuring a positive impact at the school and classroom level (Harris, 2002).

In recent times, it seems undertaking continuing professional development among teachers is saddled with challenges. This development calls for research in order to identify the actual challenges teachers faced in undertaking CPD and to determine the inhibiting factors to CPD among teachers. Not much study has been done into the various factors which have negative influences on CPD among graduate teachers (Bailem, 2004; Richards & Farrel, 2005), however, in an empirical study, Atampogbire, Dakurugu, Kpordoxah, and Kronzu (2014) explored the perceived obstacles to CPD engagement among the randomly sampled two hundred and one (201) graduate teachers in the second cycle institutions within the Tamale metropolis through self-administered questionnaires coupled with three times follow-ups and phone calls. It was revealed after the analysis of the data, that, lack of sponsorship, motivation, time, relevant learning opportunities, job constraints, family responsibilities and the costs involved were identified as the major obstacles for persons' decisions to engage in CPD programmes.

Statement of the Problem

The introduction of both capitation grant and school feeding programmes in recent times have increased the enrolments of pupils in basic schools tremendously in many schools in Ghana. This situation imposes extra responsibilities on teachers and calls on them to adopt more effective methodologies in order to meet the leaning needs of the seemingly over populated classes in basic schools within the Tamale metropolis. The situation is further compounded by the high rate of teacher attrition, coupled with the growing numbers of teachers on study leave with pay, which have drained the classroom of the human resources needed for effective teaching and learning. The human resource deficit in schools probably motivated many tertiary institutions in the country to organise different kinds of continuing professional development programmes such as sandwich, fortnight-based, distance learning programmes, and short courses among others. These programmes make it possible for teachers to undertake professional development programmes while maintaining usual classroom ties with their pupils without disrupting instructional hours for longer periods. However, this development seems to create undue pressure on the teachers and has the tendency of undermining their efficiency in the classroom. An observation of the activities of teachers who are on these professional development programmes shows that many of these teachers use instructional hours working on their assignments or writing their project work at the expense of precious instructional hours. Similarly, a survey of continuing professional development programmes organised by all the tertiary institutions in the country reveals that the patronage of these programmes is unprecedented among the working folk in the Tamale metropolis.

Although, professional development is very important for teachers' growth, the ultimate beneficiaries of professional development are the learners and the institutions. Unfortunately, teachers embarking on CPD programmes are faced with many challenges. This probably truncates their interest in undertaking further professional development programmes. Professional development, therefore, remains an unfulfilled dream for many basic school teachers in the Tamale metropolis. This study, consequently, is a follow up to Iddrisu and Zuberu's (2015) work on determinants of CPD participation, and seeks to investigate the challenges that militate against basic school teachers' participation in professional development programmes in the Tamale Metropolis.

Main Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study was to explore the challenges basic school teachers face in undertaking any continuing professional development programmes necessary for

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building their capacity, knowledge and skills in order to improve upon their performance in the classrooms.

Specific Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. Examine the nature of the challenges participants face in undertaking CPD;
2. To find out whether assessment procedures constitute a challenge in CPD;
3. Ascertain the challenges participants face in terms of infrastructure;
4. Assess the challenges participants face in terms of relationships;
5. Examine the effects of these challenges on participants output.

Research Questions

1. What are the challenges participants face in the assessment procedures adopted by the assessors?
2. In what ways are participants of CPD programmes affected by these perceived challenges?

Significance of the Study

This outcome of the study might be beneficial to many individuals, organisations and institutions, as well as, corporate bodies in diverse ways. The outcome of the study may expose the obstacles militating against basic school teachers' attempts to undertake CPD programmes so that organisations, institutions and corporate bodies could work towards removing these obstacles for the betterment of their establishments.

The outcome of the study could also inform policy makers on challenges basic school teachers face in undertaking CPD programmes, so that, effective policies could be enacted to facilitate participation by prospective basic school teachers willing to undertake any form of CPD programmes to do so without hinders.

The findings of the study could serve as reference materials for future researchers who might want to replicate this study or extend the frontiers of knowledge in the field of CPD programmes.

Delimitations of the Study

Although there are several dimensions to CPD, this study focused on challenges Basic school teachers in the Tamale Metropolis of the northern region of Ghana face in undertaking CPD programmes, which tend to deter them from embarking on further CPD programmes.

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Obstacles to CPD

According to Watkins (1999) CPD programmes are important components of professional training to maintain competence. However, there is insufficient information regarding the basic school teacher's participation in CPD activities in Ghana. In spite of the documented relevance of CPD on professional development, it remains unclear as to the level of engagement or attitude of basic school teachers in Ghana towards CPD activities. An equally important area deserving research attention is the barriers preventing basic school teachers from engaging in CPD programmes. Several factors have been identified as constraints among basic teachers' participation in CPD. Lack of sponsorship for staff, shortage of staff, lack of motivation, the duration of the CPD activities, unsuitable venues, financial implications, family responsibility, and the lack of transportation are some of the barriers to participation in CPD. Continuing professional development among teachers is saddled with several obstacles which calls for research into identifying these factors as they present themselves as inhibiting factors to CPD among basic school teachers (Richards &Farrel, 2005). Bubb, Earley, and Hempel-Jorgensen (2008) identified finance, time and less support as the main barriers to CPD. Competing priorities or initiatives, whole school training on specific issues positioned over individual development needs, lack of strategic planning by senior leadership, lack of funding (or lack of awareness about funding available), and lack of opportunities to try new approaches, are some of the challenges (Storey, 2009; Coldwell, Simkins, Coldron, Smith, Aspinwall, Close, Elliot, Garrett, Maxwell, Wainwright, Willis, and Wolstenholme, 2008).

In Great Britain, the House of Commons Children, Schools and Families Committee also expressed concern about the introduction of the 'rarely cover' policy in September 2009 which sought to make it difficult for teachers to access CPD opportunities (House of Commons, 2010). The policy places limits on the number of times teachers can be asked to cover for absent colleagues. The Committee reported that this may have the unintended consequence of restricting opportunities for teachers to leave their classrooms to engage in CPD activities.

Literature on the teachers' participation in CPD reveals that when teachers are aware of the type of activities that are being reinforced, if the task seems menial, such as busy work, motivation may be compromised (Jenson, Olympia, Farley & Clark, 2004). For example, an individual who was rewarded for doing a simple task would not feel the need to progress. Another example of inappropriate rewards is trivially rewarding an individual for doing a great amount of work when in fact the individual did little or nothing. This lack of consistency in reward can also cause problems. Research suggests that when teachers' praise appear to be a random event unrelated to the student's behaviour, it sends the wrong message to learners (Gunter et al., 1993). Essentially, this means that if the students were to act as they should, they would receive inconsistent positive reinforcement. However, when they were to act incorrectly, they would always be punished. The confusing actions of non-instruction mislead the adult learners. In addition, Jenson (2004) argues that inconsistency in positive reinforcement affects a learner's optimism. Optimism according to Jenson (2004) is very important to learning because it is linked to positive mood, perseverance, effective problem solving, and academic success.

Time related challenges

International research on CPD consistently highlights the allocation of sufficient time as a key issue affecting change at an individual and school level. Recommendations have been proposed on several platforms about the need for policy-makers to consider the amount of time required for teachers to adopt new practices into their knowledge bases, taking into account their existing responsibilities. Issues around lack of time can stem from curriculum overload, with a resultant negative effect on teacher receptiveness to and enthusiasm for change (Collinson & Cook, 2001). Where time is such a factor, research has highlighted the importance of quality professional development. Time has been identified as the main barriers to the provision of effective CPD. Time is mentioned in terms of not only the actual time spent in the CPD event, but also in terms of taking time to implement changes in the professional development (Day, Goodall, Harris, Lindsay, & Muijs, 2005).

In an empirical study, Capita Business Services Limited (2012) identified the following barriers to both undertaking CPD itself and to the implementation of learning from CPD. In terms of undertaking CPD, the four main barriers were perceived to be:

- a. Time/Workload;
- b. Funding Issues - opportunity cost in time out and / or financial cost of courses;
- c. Location of CPD;

- d. Capacity to remove staff from delivering service so they can train as a team.

There was a general consensus amongst all respondents that the key issues which militated against successful CPD programmes were time pressures, workload and funding. Other potential barriers included the cost of CPD, the length of the course (one day or half day courses are more popular) and geography (i.e. CPD area might extend over a large part of the country). Kokebe (2013) identified the major challenges confronting CPD as the lack of training manuals, irrelevance and unclarity of the available training manuals, lack of trained facilitators, insufficiency of supports provided for teachers' growth, insufficient allocation of budget, and school systems which were not structured to satisfy the training needs of teachers. To overcome the challenges encountered, recommendations have been forwarded. These include: orienting teachers in advance with the overall contents of the professional growth, motivating teachers to willingly take more responsibilities in the implementation process, employing trained facilitators and supervisors, and allocation of sufficient resources to effectively achieve the intended goals.

Lack of Evaluation of the Impact of the CPD

Evaluations of the impact of previous providers of CPD, such as the Second Level Support Service (SLSS) by Granville (2005) and of the Primary Professional Development Service (PPDS) by Loxley, Johnston, Murchan, Fitzgerald & Quinn (2007), point to similar problems in the quality of professional development experiences. Sugrue (2002) concurs that these general problems are associated with CPD and identifies the need for 'moving beyond current proliferation of courses and competition among an increasing number of providers, to a more coherent and coordinated approach' (Sugrue, 2002). A review of teacher education in Ireland by Burke (2004) echoes the issues around the lack of teacher involvement in CPD design and the implementation and fragmentation of programmes. This report also highlights challenges in relation to the timing of 'in-career' development during school hours and the potential difficulties for individual teachers and schools in providing cover for teachers wishing to participate in CPD programmes (Burke, 2004). Studies have shown that evaluation of school based CPD was usually the responsibility of CPD leaders who often feel that they have limited experience in evaluation approaches. Most CPD leaders in the previous studies feel that they are generally not equipped with the skills and tools to adequately perform the evaluative role. If the role is not taken by the head teacher, it is most often that of a deputy or a member of the senior staff. Head teachers and CPD leaders themselves express a need for preparation for the role of CPD leader. It is suggested that this training needed to come from experienced CPD leaders (Day,

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Goodall, Harris, Lindsay, & Muijs (2005). In short, less supportive and discouraging leadership situation at all levels hampers the further improvement of school based CPD.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey was adopted for the study. The goal of the design was to learn about a population by surveying a sample (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Descriptive survey, therefore, determines the nature of a situation as it exists at the time of the study. The target population for the study consisted of three hundred and eighty-five (385) Basic school teachers on sandwich programmes at the Tamale College of Education Centre. The sample for the study comprised one hundred and fifty one (151) teachers made up of eighty (80) males and seventy-one (71) females. These individuals were considered for the study because of their involvement in the sandwich programme which is an integral part of CPD. The Simple Random Sampling technique was used in the selection of the sample for the study. The main instrument used for the study was a seventeen (17) item questionnaire partitioned into three sections and each of the sections dealt with a given issue pertaining to the research questions. Permission was sought from the relevant authorities before data collection. The data gathered was analysed and the results presented using tables, frequencies and percentages according to the order of presentation of the research questions.

RESULTS

The sample of participants used indicates an almost equal participation in this study by both male and female basic school teachers in the Tamale metropolis. The implication of this representation is that more male and female Basic School Teachers embark on continuing professional development programmes in the Tamale Metropolis. Further scrutiny of participants revealed that participants had varied teaching experiences in serving in the classroom. Participants with between 1 and 3 years working experience constituted 28.6%, those with between 4 and 6 are 34.5%, while those with teaching experience between 19 and 21 years constituted 1.7%. The data collected also revealed that 52.8% of the participants have been in their current duty posts for periods ranging between 1 to 3 years, 30.9% between 4 and 6 years with less than 10% serving in their current duty posts for periods ranging between 7 and 9 years.

Further examination of field data revealed the different ranks participants occupy in the Ghana Education Service Ranking. While 50.4% of them were ranked as Superintendent I, 20.3% were ranked as Superintendent II and 29.3% of the participants were classroom teachers without ranks. These teachers were probably the ones on the Untrained Teachers Diploma in Basic Education (UTTDBE) programme which is also described as the continuing professional development programme. Following are

presentations and discussion of relevant data for the research questions posed for this study

Research Question 1: What are the challenges basic school teachers face in undertaking CPD programmes?

This question sought to examine the kinds of challenges basic school teachers faced in undertaking continuing professional development programmes. The results are presented in Table 1 using percentages to indicate the levels of agreement with statements made regarding the different challenges encountered by basic school teachers in their effort to pursue continuing professional development. The five-point scale was re-organised into three by merging the percentages of Strongly Agree with that of Agree into one, Undecided remains a separate level and then Disagree merged with Strongly Disagree into another separate level. This was done to ease the discussion since the level is a continuum with non-discrete levels. Table 1 highlights some of the challenges basic school teachers faced in undertaking CPD programmes in the Tamale Metropolis.

Table 1

Challenges Basic School Teacher Faced in Undertaking CPD Programmes

Content	SA	A	U	D	SD
Difficulty in raising the school fees	66.9	25.3	3.6	2.4	1.8
Difficulty in finding accommodation	17.7	25.0	7.9	29.9	19.5
Non availability of public address systems in the lecture halls	27.4	28.0	17.2	17.2	10.2
Expensive handouts, pamphlets and photocopying of materials	34.4	33.1	8.6	17.8	6.1
Transportation cost	32.7	44.0	7.5	11.3	4.4
Cost of feeding in school	42.5	28.1	7.5	15.6	6.3
Health expenses	26.6	34.2	11.4	19.0	8.9

Note. Source: Field Survey, (2015).

Table 1 shows that participants faced difficulty in raising the school fees for the programme as 92.2% of them agreed that raising the school fees was difficult for them, 3.6% were undecided and 4.2% disagreed with that statement. Another challenge mentioned was whether participants had difficulty in finding accommodation in the course of their programme especially participants who did not come from towns near the course centre. 42.7% disagreed that finding accommodation was a challenge compared with 7.9% who had no opinion on that and 49.4% agreed that finding accommodation for the purpose of CPD, was a challenge. The participants seemed split

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on whether this issue should be admitted as a challenge. Possible reasons that account for the split could be attributable to the fact that most participants could be staying within the vicinity of the course centre and therefore may consider availability accommodation as not a real challenge.

The issue of the lack of availability of public address systems in the lecture halls was also presented as a challenge to the participants of CPD. Over 55% of participants consented that the non-availability of public address system was indeed a challenge as opposed to 27% considering the huge student numbers hosted in very large halls. It was a problem since most of the time students could not really hear what their lecturers were saying, and this affected their learning negatively.

The issue of expensive handouts, pamphlets and photocopying of materials was also touted as a serious challenge confronting the students on the programme. Table 1 presented over 67.5% of participants as those who saw it as one of their most challenging situations. This could be explained from the reasoning that since most participants were classroom teachers with low salaries, they could barely afford to purchase those materials after having paid their fees in full along with other expenses. In addition, students were not only required to acquire one or two handouts but one each in almost all courses offered in the semester. It, therefore, became almost obligatory, since students required them for their subsequent independent reading or work at their individual schools or during their leisure hours.

The results further indicated that transportation costs and cost of meals respectively scored 75.6% and 70.5% as challenges militating against participation in the CPD programmes. Many of the participants came from towns and villages located outside the course centre and therefore had to spend substantial amounts to commute to school. On the costs associated with meals, participants equally agreed that it was a big drain on their purses since they had little or no time to prepare food for themselves.

Health expenses incurred in the course of the programme certainly was another issue that students were challenged with. Table 1 presents 60.8% of participants conceding that expenses made on health-related items took a big toll on their total expenditure. This could be attributed to the fact that the periods within which these programmes were organised coincided with seasons or periods when mosquitoes and other disease-causing-insects are abundant and probably infected them. Table 2 presents information on challenges relating to assessment procedures adopted by tutors at the centre.

Table 2

Assessment Challenges Basic School Teachers Faced in CPD Programmes

Content	SA	A	U	D	SD
The nature of assessment in the programme is too difficult for me	25.3	25.9	7.4	28.4	13.0
The load of the course is too demanding for me	23.9	31.4	13.2	24.5	6.9
The intensity of the programme is too difficult for me	21.9	31.9	11.9	27.5	6.9
The length of instructional hours is too challenging for me	20.0	34.4	8.1	29.4	8.1
The number of lectures I have to attend per a day is too many	15.7	26.4	8.2	37.1	12.6
I am challenged in terms of the clarity of instruction	11.6	23.2	14.8	37.4	12.9
I have difficulty understanding lectures	10.9	19.9	15.4	37.8	16.0
I have difficulty understanding the lectures because I am not familiar with course content	13.1	13.1	10.0	46.9	16.9
I don't have time for individual studies because of the nature of the course	22.2	32.3	6.3	28.5	10.8

Note. Source: Field Survey, (2015)

Table 2 shows that participants had some challenges pertaining to assessment procedures used. 51.2% of participants agreed that manner in which assessments were delivered was too difficult for them and could account for why many of them continue to fail. Over 41% of participants, however, disagreed that the nature of assessment was one of their challenges. Furthermore, 55.3% agreed that the course was too demanding. The issue of the intensity of the programme was also examined. 53.8% of the participants agreed that the programme was too intense and difficult with almost little or no time to rest. Closely linked to intensity is the length of instructional hours done daily during the programme. Over 54.4% conceded that the length of instructional hours was a big challenge to them, especially those who were nursing mothers and needed to periodically breastfeed their children. About 42.0% of participants held the view that the number of lectures in a day was a challenge as opposed to 49.7% who disagreed that the number of lectures in a day was too many.

Another associated challenge with assessment was intended to find out if participants had any difficulty understanding the lectures due to the participants unfamiliarity with the course content. Over 73% of the participants disagreed that familiarity with the content was a challenge. Additionally, 45% of the participants agreed that lack of time for private studies was a real challenge and affected their performance in some of the courses.

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Table 3

Infrastructure Challenges Basic School Teachers Faced in CPD Programmes

Content	Excellent	V. Good	Good	Poor
The class size can be described as	35.3	26.9	34.7	3.0
The nature of the furniture	28.9	27.1	31.9	12.0
The ventilation in the class	22.6	25.0	40.9	11.6
The lighting system in classes	22.3	33.7	38.6	5.4
The teaching learning equipment	14.0	17.1	43.3	25.6
Availability of public address systems	10.6	17.4	29.8	42.2
The nature of the writing board	24.7	27.8	41.4	6.2
Availability of writing materials e.g. Chalk and Markers	30.9	27.9	30.3	10.9

Note. Source: Field Survey, (2015)

Table 3 presents participants' perceptions about the infrastructure settings, hence they rated facilities in the setting differently. Only 3.0% of them rated the class size as poor with almost 12.0% describing the nature of the furniture and ventilation in the classrooms as poor. Table 3 further indicates that the lighting system in the classrooms can be described as excellent, very good or good since only 5.4% of the participants rated it as poor. A good proportion of the participants, 25.6% had some concerns about the teaching and learning equipment in continuing professional setting, hence, rating them as poor. Similarly, it is also clear from Table 3 that 42.2% of the participants had some concerns about the availability of public address systems in the lecture halls thereby rating it as poor. However, the nature of the writing boards, as well as, the availability of writing materials e.g., chalk and markers could be described as excellent, very good or good. Another area of challenge of CPD presented in Table 3 was the nature of infrastructure used by participants or students. It is observed from the results in Table 3 that over 60% of participants considered the class size as an important part of their challenges. They believed that due to the large number of students enrolled, they could not concentrate in the course of lessons because of varied discomforting situations. Close to the class size was the challenge of the nature of furniture used in the various classrooms by participants. 58% of participants agreed that the furniture was not comfortable for use for this programme since the students had to sit for long hours.

On the issue of ventilation, over 40% of participants believed that the classrooms were sufficiently well ventilated and a combined percentage of 47% thought that ventilation was excellent. The lighting situation in the classrooms was also thought to be a source of the challenge to standard assessment practices. Over 57% of the participants thought the lighting in the classrooms was bright enough for effective studies to be done indicating a smaller percentage with an opposing view regarding the issue.

Issues relating to teaching equipment and resources such as chalk or markers, nature of writing boards, public address systems among others, respectively scored, 43%, 29.9% and 42.4%. This suggests that participants were generally satisfied with the provisions of those materials for their classroom use. A combined percentage of 53.5% of participants thought that the nature of the writing board was excellent.

KEY FINDINGS

1. The study found that among other challenges, meeting ones' financial obligations in terms of payment of school fees was the most difficult challenge confronting participants of CPD at the Tamale centre.
2. It was established that many participants attributed their poor performance to the assessment procedures adopted by many tutors claiming the approach did not reflect their true performance.
3. The study established that, participants were generally satisfied with facilities provided at the Study Centre; however, they rated teaching/learning materials/equipment in the classroom as poor and inadequate considering the high enrolments in the classes.

DISCUSSION

From the results of the study presented above, funding emerged as one of the main challenges confronting CPD participants. This finding is consistent with literature on the barriers to CPD. According to Watkins (1999) there are several factors that have been identified as constraints among graduate teachers participating in CPD and these include lack of sponsorship for staff, shortage of staff, lack of motivation, duration of activities, unsuitable venues, financial implications, family responsibility and lack of transportation. This suggests that undertaking CPD among teachers is saddled with several obstacles which call for further research. These obstacles present themselves as inhibiting factors to undertaking CPD among graduate teachers (Richards & Farrel, 2005; Bubb, Earley, & Hempel-Jorgensen, 2008). Although issues related to funding and financial obligation seem to be the most pervasive obstacles, there are however other constraints that may be equal or more pervasive than the funding. Bubb, Earley, and Hempel-Jorgensen (2008) identified finance, time and support as the main barriers to CPD. Similarly, other studies identified competing priorities or initiatives; whole school training on specific issues rated over individual development needs; lack of strategic planning by senior leadership; lack of funding (or lack of awareness about available funding); and lack of opportunity to try new approaches, as the main obstacles to CPD (Storey, 2009; Coldwell, Simkins, Coldron, Smith, Aspinwall, Close, Elliot, Garrett,

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Maxwell, Wainwright, Willis, & Wolstenholme, 2008). Funding issues, opportunity cost in time out and/or financial cost of the courses etc are part of the challenge (Capita Business Services Limited 2012; Kokebe, 2013). Undoubtedly, financial constraint is indeed, one of the major obstacles in CPD. However, time, competing priorities, initiatives and lack of strategic planning are also obstacles of equal or greater magnitude.

There are many factors in academia that have the propensity to either positively or negatively affect students' academic performance especially as professionals embark on continuing professional programmes to build their capacities for potentially higher professional responsibilities and roles. The study revealed a multitude of challenges and thus established that poor academic performance could also be attributed to the assessment format adopted by examiners. The anxiety associated with assessment procedures can have ripple effects on learners. This finding is consistent with the assertion that the lack of uniformity in assessment formats in CPD programmes adopted by assessors as well as assessors' knowledge in the assessment procedures can negatively affect the performance of students (Kokebe, 2013). Many other factors account for determining or selecting an assessment procedure or format and if examiners choose to ignore or probably are not well versed and experienced in their use, such procedures could lead to poor academic output by students. Birkel and Johnson (2003) also reported that when professionals use unconventional methods in assessing their students, performance is most likely to be affected. Lack of well-equipped and experienced facilitators are some of the challenges of CPD (Day, Goodall, Harris, Lindsay, & Muijs 2005; Kokebe, 2013).

Participants were generally dissatisfied with teaching/learning materials and classroom equipment according to the major finding regarding the infrastructure related challenges. This finding is not at variance with what Watkins (1999) identified as constraints affecting teachers' participation in CPD to include: lack of sponsorship for staff, shortage of staff, lack of motivation, duration of activities, venue not suitable, financial implications, family responsibility and lack of transportation. Unsuitability of classroom venues for delivering CPD tuitions was particularly glaring given the high student numbers enrolled on the programme. It is instructive to note that if participants must benefit maximally from these professional training programmes, the equipment as well as the venues together with the relevant teaching accessories such as furniture, lighting facilities, course intensity or timetable pressures must receive the needed transformations. The issues of inadequate finances, workload, and time inadequacies as revealed by Hempel-Jorgensen's (2008) study should be equally and dispassionately considered for the optimum benefit of both administrators and students. Annual fees paid by students should not be too exorbitant, and at the same time, the administrators

should be able to raise enough funds to cover the cost of providing modern infrastructure.

CONCLUSIONS

Following the foregoing discussions of challenges participants of CPD programmes encounter, it can be concluded that the major challenges that confronted students of CPD at the Tamale Centre among others had to do with their inability to meet their financial obligations related to various payments. Many students were unable to pay their schools fees, rent, meals, and purchase the relevant course materials among others and this situation could generally be accounted for by the low ranking and salary levels of basic school teachers. Many of the students attributed their unimpressive performances to the procedures used in their assessments describing them as favouring some groups of students. Students, however, were generally satisfied with classroom facilities provided, though the issues of inadequacy of those facilities were raised because of high student numbers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions drawn from the study, the following recommendations are made with the expectation that when implemented, these recommendations should bring about adequate relief or alternatives to all those pursuing CPD at the Tamale Centre.

It is recommended that:

1. teachers on CPD programmes be introduced formally to financial institutions such as student loan schemes and banks, by the host University so they can obtain financial assistance to enable them to meet their financial challenges associated with funding their participation in CPD programmes. Authorities of the university should also adopt payments modes very friendly and accommodating to all students of varied economic backgrounds. District assemblies from which teachers work should make contributions to the payment of teachers' bills since such teachers are already working in those districts to promote quality education.
2. assessment procedures used by tutors during the teaching/learning process are made transparent and standardized so as to earn maximum trustworthiness by students. This can be done by making all assessment procedures clearly known in the form of guidelines to every student and also minimising as much as possible all interferences due to human relationships. If all students use only

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their student identity numbers all through, it will help greatly in reducing biasness in scoring and grading of students' work.

3. with the concerns expressed regarding the poor quality of teaching/learning materials in the classrooms, the college authorities together with the university authority should collaborate in the provision of improved teaching/learning materials at the Tamale Centre. Admission numbers of students should be commensurate or be proportional to the available facilities at the centre and this should be reflected in the various class sizes. Regular maintenance of classroom facilities should also be undertaken prior to students' resumption of school in every other session.

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