

Lecturers Experiences, Challenges and Prospects on Continuing Professional Development

Mwanza-Kabaghe. S.⁸ and Mofu-Mwansa. M.⁹

Abstract

This study was undertaken at the School of Education, University of Zambia, to establish factors that influence lecturers to engage in Continuing Professional Development (CPD) as well as factors inhibiting their participation in CPD. To establish these factors, open-ended questionnaires were used in conducting the study by means of a descriptive survey. Data were analysed qualitatively using emerging themes from the respondents' answers and descriptive statistics were also utilised. The findings show that University lecturers are motivated to engage in CPD to update their current qualifications and as a way of showing professional competence. Among factors inhibiting lecturers from taking up CPD was lack of funds, to engage in some CPD activities and time constraints.

Keywords: *continuing professional development, lecturers, experiences, research*

8 School of Education, University of Zambia, Lusaka, Zambia

9 School of Education, University of Zambia, Lusaka, Zambia

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INTRODUCTION

This study aimed at exploring the University of Zambia (UNZA) School of Education lecturers' experiences, challenges and prospects on Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Continuing Professional Development obligations are essential to every profession including teaching. This is because a teacher well vested in terms of knowledge and skills is highly likely to produce quality students who can eventually contribute to national development. It is therefore incumbent upon lecturers to ensure that they continuously develop skills in their areas of expertise to ensure that they produce quality students. A number of studies suggest that lecturers require continuous support in the form of CPD activities that enhance their beliefs to make a difference to their students learning (Kennedy, 2005; Dadds, 2006; Wam & Lam, 2010). Hence the motivation to conduct this study at the University of Zambia (UNZA). The choice of the institution was influenced by the fact that UNZA is the oldest university in the country and is therefore seen as a model which should spearhead CPD activities among lecturers.

In a recent study, Adu and Okeke (2014, p. 2721) postulate that 'CPD in the teaching profession should be seen as a structured approach to learning that helps to ensure competence to the practice of lecturers, acquiring information, taking in knowledge, skills and application of practical experience.' They further explain that CPD can involve any relevant learning activity whether formal and structured or informal and self-directed. In addition, Wilcox (2003) explains that professional development covers a wide range of learning situations which include: private study and reading; attending conferences and seminars; preparing papers and presentations; committee work; collaborative work with colleagues; conversation and discussion with others; courses and distance learning; researching the solutions to problems and working with others outside the organisation. In view of these aspects of CPD, what is not known for academicians is how lecturers in higher institutions of learning view CPD. The question therefore, is, does CPD for lecturers influence their teaching? Does it mean an opportunity to learn that influences better teaching? These and many other questions are answered in this article. In the current study CPD was viewed to be quite inclusive as it included all the aspects stated by Wilcox (2003) including the aspect of report writing and eventually publishing the results of different studies, training-workshops, e-learning programs, best practice techniques and ideas sharing

(CPD Certification Service, 2016).

The University of Zambia strategic plan of 2013-2017 stipulates that the University will increase its budgetary provision to CPD programmes. The purpose of doing this is to update the skills for its staff. Although there is this pronouncement, the records on University of Zambia research studies show that no studies have been conducted to assess experiences, challenges and prospects on CPD among lecturers in the School of Education. This influenced the researchers to conduct this study.

Review of related literature

Continuing Professional Development is a process that involves not only tracking of skills, knowledge and experience but also documentation of such. These skills, knowledge and experiences are acquired both formally and informally beyond any initial training. (Allen, 2009). The College of Emergency Medicine (2010) adds that it is a continuing process, outside formal undergraduate and postgraduate training, that enables individuals to uphold and develop standards of practice through the expansion of knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour. It is a combination of approaches, ideas and techniques that helps professionals manage their own learning and growth (CIPD, 2016). However Schostak (2009, p. 77) claimed that a gain in knowledge does not necessarily result in a change in behaviour. CPD is usually concomitant to appraisal and revalidation in literature and is also linked to performance. Not only is CPD described as '*aspirational*', it is also personally driven and not '*run by any agency*' (Guly, 2000; Schostak, 2009).

Essentially, CPD is about setting objectives for development and then monitoring one's progress towards achieving the set objectives. CPD mainly focuses on outcomes and results, rather than time spent or things done (CIPD 2016). It is a record of what one experiences, learns and then applies, thus the term is generally used to mean a physical folder or portfolio documenting one's development as a professional. Despite the above definitions, CPD can be defined in operational terms as consisting of attendance at conferences and workshops at internal, local and national levels. Thus, most CPD activities are constructed as taking place outside of the everyday

workplace settings (College of Emergency Medicine 2010). The following are the key features of CPD process; a documented process, self-directed: employee not employer driven, focuses on learning from experience, reflective learning and review, helps set development goals and objectives and it includes both formal and informal learning.

Three Crucial Aspects of CPD

Literature has stipulated that there are a number of activities that can be considered as CPD in teaching and learning. Before delving into the different CPD activities that lecturers are engaged in, it is important to discuss three fundamental shifts in belief about CPD that have impacted various calls on teacher-facilitated, school-based approaches and models to CPD. Steyn (2009) contends that the first shift is, the relationship between teaching and students' learning. Such a relationship requires that lecturers, both the experienced and the novice, be involved in a lifelong learning. A second shift is the quality of the teachers' pedagogical content knowledge that has been the focus of many experts on CPD and the achievement gaps among learners (Hirsh 2005). The third emphasizes the need for increased responsibility for professional development programmes to equip lecturers to teach challenging content and ensure learners are able to meet the required standard. With this shift, it is vital that lecturers are involved in CPD activities that address these important aspects of the teaching profession as well as document empirical data not simply make assumptions. The following are the categories of CPD activities that lecturers are engaged in; structured CPD activities, reflective learning and self-directed learning.

Structured CPD activities involve interactive and participation-based study. These are typically proactive and can include attending a training course, conference, workshop, seminar, lecture, e-learning course or CPD certified event. CPD structured or active learning also include when professionals take career orientated exams and assessments (the study and revision would be considered self-directed learning,) (CPD Certification service, 2016). Another form of CPD is reflective learning which involves no participant-based interaction. This form of CPD is much more passive and one directional. Examples

include reading relevant news articles, podcasts, case studies and industry updates. Some informal meetings can be applicable to CPD reflective learning, but the learning objectives of these meetings must be made clear in an individual's overall CPD plan (The College of Emergency Medicine 2010).

Self-directed learning is another form of CPD which involves all unaccompanied CPD activities. It covers the reading of documents, articles and publications; either in print or online. Reading *relevant* publications, books by leading experts, journals and magazines are all types of self-directed CPD. This can also include industry-specific news feeds or research into relevant field (CPD Certification Service, 2016).

According to MOE (2012:48)

In-service education is a very important aspect of providing CPD to serving teachers and lecturers. Teacher education institutions will offer programmes of various durations depending on identified needs, are demand driven, responding to the identified societal needs and institutional needs. Short courses varying from 1 week to 12 weeks through workshops, seminars, conferences and face-to-face teaching and learning modes to enhance the teaching profession. Long term courses are usually upgrading courses for teachers who are qualified. These usually run for 12 to 24 weeks. These courses should be designed to help upgrade the professional and academic qualifications of teachers and lecturers to appropriate professional and academic levels. There should be regular paper presentations and professional discussions in identified areas.

Higher education based CPD should be strengthened and lecturers engaged in action research to improve on learner pedagogy and reflective practice (MOE, 2007). Research is an important intervention at all levels of education. Action research and case studies help improve the teaching-learning process MOE (2012).

Although these are the common CPD activities that most educators are involved in, they are considered traditional approaches to CPD and are therefore variously criticized for their shortcomings of being unable to get lecturers prepared for their new role of knowledge facilitator rather than knowledge transmitter (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Hirsh, 2005; Lieberman, 1996; Steyn, 2009; Singh, 2011). A number of studies (Mestry et al., 2009; Ono & Ferreira, 2010; Pitsoe & Maila, 2012) propose that another approach to CPD must have the teacher as its focus. Two theoretical perspectives lead the alternative approaches to CPD which support teacher learning more effectively (Kwakman, 2003). These two perspectives include cognitive psychological and professional development perspectives.

Cognitive Psychological Perspective (CPP)

This perspective considers teachers to be constructors of knowledge in a self-directed way. CPP learning is affected by the environment which affects the learner and the teacher in the same way. Such kind of learning occurs when interacting with the learning context and it is strongly affected by prior knowledge of the individual learner. Therefore, teacher assimilation of concepts occurs when a favourable learning environment is presented (Bransford, et al. 1999). The cognitive psychological perspective provides evidence for the actualization of learner-centered, knowledge-centered, assessment-centered and community-centered practices by both the lecturers and students as one of the crucial components that speaks to the efficacy of CPD (Adu & Okeke, 2014).

Professional Development Perspective

This perspective emphasises that in order to enhance teacher learning, lecturers have to learn how to teach for understanding. This requires them to learn new ideas and skills to enhance not only content but pedagogy as well, unlike placing emphasis on the provision of favourable learning environments (McLaughlin, 1997). Thus the working context such as classrooms, schools, partnership with universities and networks are seen as best places for lecturers to acquire competencies that they need to fulfil their new roles through

practice. Thus, teacher learning occurs at the workplace in which their learning is situated and closely aligned with lecturers' work in classrooms and schools (Kwakman, 2003; Huffman, et al. 2003). Scholars such as (Pitsoe & Maila, 2012; Samuel, 2008; Steyn, 2011) suggest that CPD must be constructivist-based. It should focus on teacher learning; ensure teacher active learning; aim at producing self-reflective lecturers; and must be teacher facilitated. CPD programmes must also reflect the actual needs of lecturers within specific school and local context (Adu & Okeke, 2014).

Factors affecting lecturer's participation in CPD

Although the importance of CPD to the teaching profession has been emphasized some studies have shown that many lecturers still lack the interest to fully engage in CPD programmes (Adu & Okeke, 2014). In light of the above, it became imperative to investigate the lecturers' experiences, challenges and prospects to continuing professional development at the University of Zambia.

Lecturers by being the custodians of knowledge are expected to be more knowledgeable than the students. Therefore, lecturers take it upon themselves to ensure that they take up CPD. A study by Kwakman (2003) on factors affecting teachers' participation in CPD in the Netherlands where she looked at three factors, personal factors (i.e. professional attitudes, appraisals of feasibility, appraisals of meaningfulness, emotion exhaustion, loss of personal accomplishment), task factors (i.e. pressure of work, emotional demands, job variety, autonomy, participation), and work environment factors (i.e. management support, collegial support, intentional learning support) found that personal factors significantly predicted teachers' participation in CPD activities more than task and work environment factors. Lee (2005) and Steyn (2009) posit that a very important factor that enhances lecturers' participation in professional development programmes is that lecturers should be self-driven to participate in CPD. Caena (2011, p. 9) concretises this by stating that 'to help young people learn the more complex and analytical skills they need for the 21st century, teachers must learn in ways that develop higher-order thinking and performance'.

Another factor that affects lecturer's participation in CPD is the relevance of the CPD to the lecturer's specialisation. Mewborn and

Huberty (2004) and Vemic (2007) assert that to ensure effective participation of lecturers, CPD must be context-specific. Lee (2002) found that amongst the factors contributing to effective professional development, 'relevant and realistic content' was the most important factor. A recent study by Adu and Okeke (2014) found that most of the lecturers were likely to take part in CPD if it were realistic and relevant to their specific area of expertise.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design to assess the type of CPD activities that lectures are engaged in, as well as to find out factors affecting lecturers' participation in CPD. The population of this study consisted of all lecturers at the University Of Zambia School Of Education. Questionnaires were used to collect data from a sample of 40 lecturers randomly selected from the School of Education. Data was analysed qualitatively using emerging themes from the respondents' answers guided by the objectives of the study. Descriptive statistics were used to clearly show the frequency of the emerging themes.

FINDINGS

It was discovered that lecturers were mostly engaged in conferences, workshops, seminars, short courses, module writing and research, and were observing experienced lecturers teaching, reading as well as article and book writing.

Factors that motivate/influence lecturers to take up CPD

In order to establish other factors that motivate lecturers to take part in CPD. The lecturers were asked to tick what they felt motivated them to participate in CPD. According to Table 1 factors such as updating of qualifications, opportunities to share ideas and to demonstrate professional competence and other aspects presented in the table motivated lecturers to take part in CPD activities.

Table 1: Frequency of Factors that influence lecturers to take up CPD

CPD Factors	No. of Responses
Relevant/ realistic content	89%
Opportunities to share ideas	92%
Relevant to the needs identified by lecturers themselves	68%
Hands on activities	70%
Sufficient resources	38%
Good delivery	57%
Focused content	62%
Participant commitment	43 %
School supportive of CPD	41 %
To continue being a lecturer and present a proper CV during promotions and contract Renewal	56%
To demonstrate that I am professionally competent	91%
To update my existing qualifications	94%

Factors inhibiting lecturers to take up CPD

Table 2 shows the frequency of factors that inhibit lecturers from taking part in CPD. Time constraints and insufficient funds for CPD activities were mostly reported.

Table 2: Frequency of Factors inhibiting lecturers to take up CPD activities

CPD Factors	No. of Responses
Insufficient Money to pay for courses	28 (72%)
Teacher workload preventing from taking CPD	23 (59%)
Lack of research funds for problem solving and policy enhancement	28 (72%)
Content not well focused /structured	11 (28%)
School factors	6 (15%)
Personal factors	11 (28%)
Time	25 (64%)

Strategies for improving CPD

The participants were asked to give strategies for improving CPD at the institution. Most of the participants (90%) suggested more funding allocated to CPD, days to be set apart for CPD activities (78%) and requested a needs assessment to investigate the needs as well as to reduce workload so that lecturers can engage in CPD much more.

DISCUSSION

CPD activities by Lecturers

The study found that lecturers at the institution fully understand what CPD is and are engaged in a number of CPD activities that include but are not limited to: attending conferences, short courses, module writing and research, observing experienced lecturers teaching, reading as well as article and book writing. The analysis of the data showed that University lecturers are interested in CPD activities and view them as an important aspect of their career. This finding is not unique to the current study as Adu and Okeke (2014) found that

lecturers were well aware of the importance of CPD to their career prospects. O'Sullivan (2011) also acknowledges the importance of CPD as he has embedded in his definition of CPD the fact that CPD is the maintenance and enhancement of knowledge, expertise and competence of professionals throughout their careers.

Factors influencing lecturers' participation in CPD

In assessing factors influencing CPD activities a multiple response question was asked. Most lecturers (94%) are motivated to take up CPD as a way of showing professional competence. Even though the current study established that the majority of lecturers take up CPD to update qualifications and show professional competence, it could not establish whether an upgrade in qualifications through CPD increases performance competence which eventually affects students' performance. However, a recent study by Chikari, Rudhumbu and Sivotwa (2015) found a very high significant statistical relationship between qualifications and lecturer performance after undergoing CPD training. A Pearson's R of 0.869 revealed this, therefore confirming that there are performance differences when lecturers take up CPD. This however, is in contrast with Berg (1970)'s long standing argument that better educated teachers are often rated as less productive. In terms of lecturer competence Chikari, Rudhumbu and Sivotwa (2015) found a significant statistical relationship between experience and lecturer performance after undergoing CPD training. A Pearson's R of 0.841 reflected that there were significant performance differences between lecturer's experience and job performance after CPD.

Table 1 also shows that 76% preferred to be on partial study leave. This entails that lecturers understand that CPD is supposed to be individual driven as opposed to employer driven and confirms Schostak's (2009) assertion that not only is CPD described as '*aspirational*', it is also deliberated as personally driven and not '*run by any agency*'. In addition to the aforementioned, a reasonable number of lectures (58%) felt motivated to participate in CPD in order to present better Curriculum Vitae during promotions and contract renewal.

The study also established that lecturers are more likely to participate

in CPD if, they see it as an opportunity to share ideas (92%), if the content is relevant to their specific specialisation (89%), hands on (70%) and if it is relevant to the needs of the individual lecturer. This therefore, means that lecturers should be involved from the initial plans to hold the CPD so that they can suggest what they feel is relevant to their profession as well as voice how they feel the CPD should be handled. Adu and Okeke (2014, p. 279) acknowledge the importance of involving lecturers from the onset of plans to hold a CPD as they assert that 'if CPD is to be realistic and relevant lecturers should be involved in the development of programmes aimed at their own CPD'. Other studies such as Lee (2005) and Steyn (2009), stressed the importance of giving a listening ear to the voices of lecturers for whom the CPD is meant. A huge body of literature, including (Earley & Bubb, 2004; Mewborn & Huberty, 2004; Vemic, 2007; Steyn, 2011; Pitsoe & Maila, 2012) agree with this study that all CPD programmes must meet the lecturers' needs if they are to ensure effective participation of lecturers. Goodall et al. (2005) reported that the most effective types of CPD were considered to be those that directly met individual needs, as well as responding to school-based needs. A reasonable number (62%) of lecturers pointed out that to be effective, CPDs should have a focused content, while 58% felt good delivery was essential. Therefore, it is important that CPD organisers ensure that in whatever form, the CPD should be interesting and delivered in such a way that participants are motivated to stay awake and listen/participate.

Factors inhibiting lecturers' participation in CPD

Although the study found that CPD is considered an important aspect in lecturers' careers, data also showed that there are a number of factors that inhibit lectures from participating in CPD. Table 2 shows that lack of funds to pay for courses and to engage in action research is the most inhibiting factor. This was the case even though universities are allocated funds for lecturers to take up courses and carry out research. One of the lecturers at the University of Zambia stated *that most of the research activities are self-funded which makes it difficult for them to engage in huge policy informative research*. The question is, why the insufficient funds? Is it because of mismanagement? Studies have demonstrated that the situation of insufficient resources and lack of money may be the result of a combination of many factors within and

outside of the school. For example, du Perez and Roux (2008); Steyn (2009) and Pitsoe and Maila (2012) in Adu and Okeke (2015) suggest that misappropriation of institutional funds by institutional leadership may impact on institutional leadership's ability to implement CPD. This is a vice that has hit a number of institutions, funds meant for CPD are usually diverted to other projects that are considered to be more important than CPD. In many institutions leaders believe that as long as lecturers meet the minimum qualifications such as a Masters or a PhD they do not need to take up CPD. Whether or not this is the case at the University is not known, hence more research is needed to better understand how institutional management decisions affect effectiveness of CPD and the lecturers' participation.

In addition to the above, lecturers consider time and teacher workload as factors that impede them from taking up CPD. Some lecturers mentioned that they have too much work, hence do not have time to take up CPD. A study by Goodall et al. (2005) also found that time was an impediment. However, in their study, time was mentioned in terms of the actual time spent in the CPD event, and in terms of taking time to implement changes. In this study, the time aspect was related to having too much work to consider taking up CPD. This finding agrees with Adu and Okeke (2014). However, they do not talk about time constraints but workload. 28% of the respondents acknowledged that lack of structured content for CPD and personal factors inhibit them from taking part in CPD activities. Similar findings were echoed by Kwakman (2003) who found that personal factors significantly predicted teachers' participation in CPD activities more than task and work environment factors.

The study further established that lecturers had suggestions on how the institution could improve CPD activities. The main strategy was to ensure that more funds are allocated to CPD activities as well as setting days apart for the activities to be done. In addition it was established that there was need to carry out a needs assessment to ensure that they find out the needs of the lecturers so that the CPD activities could be specific to the needs of the individual lectures involved. The study revealed that lecturers felt that the workload was preventing them from engaging in CPD therefore they felt an effective strategy would be a reduction in workload.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to produce trained teachers of good calibre of it is imperative that the teaching and learning process is constantly improved. Thus teacher educators, or lecturers need frequent updating of their respective pedagogy. One way this can be done is through CPD which also helps to improve efficiency and effectiveness in teacher education. Since it is undoubtedly known that lecturers are key players in any education system, they should regularly attend CPD programmes. This helps in updating pedagogical approaches, assessment procedures, school organization and management and relationship with the community, aspects that are contained in the University's strategic plan. Other than benefiting the institution, CPD helps individual lecturers to manage their own development on an ongoing basis by keeping records of what they learn and teach as well as reviewing and reflecting on their records. It is imperative that the learning institutions develop in all lecturers the spirit of CPD in order for them to effectively implement the curriculum. For example, the creation of well-structured local and international programmes that provide lecturers an opportunity to continue to grow as professionals in line with modern and local needs as well as technological needs of this era.

In light of the findings, the following recommendations are made. There is need to employ more teaching staff. The School of Education is the biggest school in the University and yet it is understaffed. This translates into considerable workload for lecturers, consequently it negatively affects their participation in research work which happens to be among the cornerstones of success in academia. Thus there is need to employ more lecturers knowing a decrease in enrolments is very unlikely. The University needs to increase its budget allocation for CPD activities. Research is also critical both for the professional development of lecturers and enhancing the image of an institution especially one like the University of Zambia which is still struggling for prestigious recognition, even in the region. In as much as the school partially sponsors lecturers to attend international workshops and conferences and to some extent research work, more has to be done to sponsor research both at a micro and macro level.

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