

The Impact of Teachers Professional Development on Learners Academic Performance in Selected Primary Schools in Kumi District

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Abstract

The study was aimed at on examining the effects of teacher professional development on learners' academic performance in Kumi district. Teacher professional development is one of the concerns among different stakeholders who have interest in education in most of the developed and developing nations. With a lot of pressure among the educators to improve the academic performance among the learners, teachers' continuous professional development has become a necessity for the schools that are committed to improving the academic performance of their learners. Teachers' professional development refers to a continuous process of acquiring new knowledge, skills, and competencies to improve their teaching practices and enhance student learning outcomes. This development can take various forms and often involves both formal and informal learning opportunities. The study was guided by three objective (i) To examine the relationship between workshops and learners' academic achievements ii to establish the relationship between teacher leadership and learners' academic achievements iii To assess the relationship between motivation and learners academic achievements. The key aspects of professional development include online courses motivation, teacher leadership, workshops and seminars, mentoring, collaborative learning, in-service training, graduate education, peer observation and conferences. The purpose of this research paper was to find out how teachers professional development affects the academic performance of learners in primary schools in Kumi. This research was conducted in selected primary schools in Kumi district.

Keywords: collaborative learning, motivation, professional development, teacher leadership and workshops

Introduction

The quality of education is heavily influenced by the teachers who deliver it. As the land scape of education continually evolves, teachers should be up to date with new methodology, pedagogies and technologies in order to provide optimal learning experiences for the good of their learners. Teachers' Professional development is important for improving their skills, knowledge and practices, therefore improving learner academic achievements. Studies have continuously indicated that Teachers Professional Development is very crucial in improving learners' outcomes, including engagement, retention and

academic achievements. As educators and policy makers strive to enhance learners' academic achievements, Teacher Professional Development cannot be overlooked. This study explored the relationship between teachers' professional development and learners' academic achievements in Kumi district highlighting the benefits, challenges and best practices in Teacher Professional Development Cal & Anning (2020).

Teachers' professional development has been defined by many academic scholars as a continuous process of teachers' learning which includes the process of how they learn and how the learnt knowledge can be used to support learners to improve on their academic performance. This process of teachers' learning can either be planned or not planned, formal or informal, so participating in various courses, reflecting on their own teaching, observing other teachers' teaching, conversations with other colleagues before, during or after teaching.

(Postholm, 2012). Basing on the Teaching and Learning International Survey of Organization for Economic Co- operation and Development report in 2019, Teachers Professional Development was seen as the body of systematic activities to prepare teachers for their job, including induction courses, in service training, continuous professional and initial training. This research focuses mainly on teachers in primary schools in Kumi district Uganda and not necessarily on subjects or courses as were done by other studies about this subject matter. This research adopts the types of Professional Development programs such as reading professionals literature, seminars and education conferences. workshops, visits to other institutions of learning, mentoring, peer observation, Mentoring. Individual and collaborative research, Conflict management, Classroom management, Building students' engagement and Qualification programs.

Rockoff, 2014) Identified a positive relationship between the quality of the teacher and the learner's outcome, arguing that there is a positive effect between on-the-job teacher training and student performance. Some scholars (Barber and Mourshed, 2017) also agrees that improving instruction is the only way to improve learners' academic performance and that there is usually a balance between the quality of an education system and teachers' quality. To realize learners' academic performance, the quality of teachers and development should not be ignored. Yoon et al. (2007) states that teacher Professional Development has great influence on learners' academic performance in three ways. First, Professional Development improves teachers' knowledge and skills; secondly, teachers acquire effective knowledge and skills, which definitely improve their teaching, and lastly, Professional Development helps teachers to gain teaching skills which will lead to better learners' performance. Research has equally proved that there can be positive improvement in teachers' pedagogy if teachers willingly participate in Professional Development programs. (Archibald. (2019) agrees that Professional Development activities should be continuous, connected and intensive so that effective changes which are significant for teachers improved job performance and learners' academic performance are achieved. Golob (2012), argues that the main and key success of education at all levels of learning is a high quality of teaching and learning process. Learners' academic achievements have become one of the most important ways for determining the quality of education systems in most nations in the world. The purpose of teacher's professional development is to improve the quality of teaching, promote collaboration, updating curriculum knowledge, addressing educational challenges, enhancing students learning, career growth and motivation. Since the achievements of learners is declining, in all regions of the country including Kumi district from year to year. The interest in this article is to find out what is going on with the quality of teaching in primary schools in Kumi district and how teachers' professional development is

impacting the academic achievements of learners., the roles the schools play in teachers' professional development and what attitudes teachers have towards their own professional development and what kind of competencies teachers develop through their professional development. The paper wants to find out whether there is a connection between teachers' professional development and learners' achievements in Kumi district. Regarding the fact that many researches confirm the impact of teachers' professional development on learners' academic achievements the research expect to find out whether teachers' professional development is an important factor towards learners' success in academic achievements in Kumi district.

sekyambalo (2017) the education system of Uganda mainly focuses on examination and better results for learners. This is due to the benefits that the learners enjoy after school. The ministry of education in Uganda has embarked on professional development of teachers not only as a requirement for pre-entry qualification to the teaching profession, but also as critical criteria for upward mobility for serving teachers. It is important to understand that training programs in Ugandan schools have been directed to improve learners' academic achievement by many government policies. Education researchers observed that teachers participate in professional development programs for anticipated social mobility associated with better improved financial gains, among others. However Ugandan education system being mainly examination oriented, many teachers look at training as a way to improve their effectiveness and skills in instructional duties. Teachers' productivity and effectiveness has generally been looked as a relationship between teacher training and learners' academic achievement in examinations. Some researches on performance have also found that learner's academic achievement with teachers' effectiveness in teaching. (Mahulo, 2012) There exist many teachers instructional in any given institution of learning and the quality of performance generally depends on the quality of staff available and used in that learning institution, it is seen that quality staff will deliver quality work and produces better outputs. This is due to the fact that this staff will have enough knowledge, attitude and skills to run and manage the activities and programs of the institution. There is need to have quality teachers in educational institutions so as to improve the academic achievements of learners. If schools have competent and skilled staff, they may realize benefits such as, having benefits from well prepared schemes of work and lesson plans, instructional materials would be designed and made, there would be adequate use of instructional materials for teaching and learning processes, schools would benefit from improved teacher-learner, teacher-teacher and teacher pupil relationship, the available school resources would be effectively used.

Methodology

There were 75 primary schools in Kumi district with a total population of 1300 teachers. The researcher selected five schools with a total number of 65 teachers which comprised the study population. The sample size was 50 and guided by morgan table, but 42 questionnaires were returned. These schools were selected because learners' academic achievement was not good and they had not conducted any CPD within the school. The questionnaire for teachers was developed based on the objectives with 50 items and interview guide was designed for the head teachers. The instrument was pre tested in 3 schools to check its validity. The selected schools were visited and the questionnaires were given to the teachers using random sampling and were collected the same day, data was collected coded and analyzed using the SPSS system.

LETERATURE REVIEW

Effective teaching is the most responsibility of any professional teacher. Changes in the teaching profe-

ssion are endless due to its nature, that is changing from time to time. The teacher is the key stakeholder in the teaching and learning process. Teachers can either ruin or make the future of the learners. Professional development of teachers can be upheld through educational development activities such as team work, good teaching strategies, proper classroom management, mastery, good relationship, innovation and instructional planning. (Nairz-Wirth & Feldmann, 2019).

Improving the quality of teachers has become a crucial issue for learners' academic achievements; The teaching profession has gained much attention ss. currently, teachers' continuous professional development is broadly seen as crucial for supporting teachers' general performance, effectiveness and ensuring that dedicate time to their work. The profession requires teachers to prepare and should always be ready to adapt to the current trends of educational changes to meet the learners' academic needs and demands for the global world. With the introduction of universal primary and secondary education all citizens in the country have the right to quality education, and that the government should take appropriate measures to ensure that education accessible to all. Ventista (2023).

Teachers' CPD has become one of the most common central concerns in educational circles in Uganda over many decades. The professional development of teachers is the most significant way to improve the quality of teaching and ensuring CPD provides the teachers with new innovations, skills, methodology, knowledge and learn in different context. It also promotes the collaboration of best practices of teachers and other in education from various learning institutions.

Voelke . Prusak & Tassell (2021) as school leaders try to come up with good leadership strategies, that support learners' achievements, research has continued to support significant and positive relationship among teachers, learners, parents and school leadership. Learners' beliefs about teacher behaviors matter. In their analysis of instructional leadership roles, teacher collaboration, and collective efficacy beliefs for supporting student learning, found that "the work of school leaders towards instructional improvement, through their support of learners academic achievement affected learners academic performance .Reports found that even though learner individual perceptions and team members' collective perceptions of teachers leadership differ within a school, there is a positive link between a team's sense of collective efficacy and a positive perception of the teachers leadership. The study Suggested that a deeper exploration of discrete leader behaviors that contribute to may lead to a more robust model of teacher actions that influence understand how teacher leadership behaviors influence learners' academic achievements, The study examined seminal leadership models that have been shown to support a positive correlation to an increase Thus the study, specifically chose transformational leadership

Transformational leadership is a management style that advocates for positive change in individual and social constructs by empowering individuals to freely participate in organizational change. Four key aspects are observed in this style of leadership (1) individual consideration, facilitating the leader's genuine interest in personal goals (2) intellectual stimulation, where the leadership engages the subordinates and supports risk taking (3) inspirational motivation, empowering the followers and (4) charismatic influence, making leaders to be role models. Teacher motivation by all means is a major factor that determines the academic achievements of learners during the schooling process. This is mainly because a motivated teacher is most likely to be more engaged, determined, encouraged and committed in his or her work. In Uganda education sector has of recent experienced industrial action which has been associated to teachers' demand for higher remuneration. This demand, however is a pointer to the existence of other unmet demands among teachers in the country A review of literature on teachers' motivation has showed that teachers' willingness and drive to engage in productive teaching is basically linked to extrinsic

and extrinsic motivational factors. This includes factors such as better pay compensation, good working conditions, medical privileges and feedback on performance. Of recent it included factors relating recognition, appreciation for a job well done, opportunities for career growth and involvements in decision making. Previous studies demonstrated that higher pay and good working environment had appositive impact on teachers’ motivation. Specifically, the studies consistently showed that teachers are most likely to be enthusiastic and engaged in the workplace if they are well remunerated. This kind of teacher’s behavior is attributable to the fact that higher pay enhances teachers’ capacity to meet their family obligations, thereby lowering the propensity to engage in secondary income generating activities (Mukolozi, 2015).

Results and Discussions

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

In Rashawn (2020) the importance of collecting demographic data is emphasized for assessing the representativeness of a sample. A representative sample holds crucial significance, as any under- or over-representation of specific groups can lead to a distortion in the analysis, potentially causing an overestimation or underestimation of the study's findings. Additionally, ensuring the inclusion of diverse groups in the data collection process is essential. The study focused on demographic variables such as gender, age, education level, and work experience. The subsequent results of this investigation are outlined below.

Gender of Teachers

The inclusion of gender was important because it helped to reflect the way different sexes contributed ideas to the study. The results are presented in table 4.2

Table 4.1: Gender of Teachers

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	17	40.5	40.5	40.5
Valid Female	25	59.5	59.5	100.0
Total	42	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary Data (2024)

The higher percentage of female teachers participating in the study (59.5%) compared to male teachers (31.0%) highlights a notable gender disparity in the employment of teachers in public primary schools. This disparity may influence the diversity of teaching styles and perspectives brought into the classroom, potentially impacting how students learn and engage with the curriculum.

Table 4.2: Age of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
30 Years below	16	38.1	38.1	38.1
Valid 31-40years	22	52.4	52.4	90.5
41 above	4	9.5	9.5	100.0
Total	42	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary Data (2024)

Table 4.2 shows that the majority of teachers falling within the age range of 31-40 years (38.1%) and having 11 years or more of teaching experience (45.2%) suggests a relatively mature and experienced teaching workforce. Such experience is crucial in understanding pedagogical techniques, adapting to educational reforms, and mentoring younger teachers, thereby positively influencing learners' academic development through enhanced teaching quality and classroom management.

Table 4.3: My qualification

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Certificate	24	57.1	57.1	57.1
Diploma	12	28.6	28.6	85.7
Degree	6	14.3	14.3	100.0
Total	42	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary Data (2024)

The distribution of educational qualifications among the teachers, with 57.1% having certificates, 28.6% having diplomas, and 14.3% having degrees, indicates a diverse academic background. This diversity can contribute to a varied skill set among teachers, potentially leading to enriched instructional practices and differentiated teaching approaches that cater to different learning needs among students.

Table 4.4: Period of Service

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1-5 Years	20	47.6	47.6	47.6
6-10 Years	3	7.1	7.1	54.8
11 Years above	19	45.2	45.2	100.0
Total	42	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary Data (2024)

In relation to numbers of years spent in the schools, the distribution of years spent teaching in schools, with a significant portion (47.6%) having 1-5 years of experience and a substantial proportion (45.2%) having 11 years or more, underscores a blend of both novice and seasoned educators. This mix can foster a dynamic learning environment where newer teachers benefit from mentorship and professional development opportunities provided by more experienced colleagues, thereby enhancing overall teaching quality and student outcomes.

Table The relationship between teachers' workshops and learners' academic achievements

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly disagree	17	40.5	40.5	40.5
disagree	7	16.7	16.7	57.1
neutral	6	14.3	14.3	71.4
agree	11	26.2	26.2	97.6
strongly agree	1	2.4	2.4	100.0
Total	42	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary Data (2024)

The finding that 28.6% of respondents agreed that teachers are well-versed with modern teaching methods, while 57.1% disagreed, implies a significant gap in the adoption of contemporary pedagogical techniques. This discrepancy suggests that a majority of teachers might be relying on outdated or traditional methods, potentially hindering the ability of students to engage with the material in more effective and innovative ways. As modern teaching methods often include interactive and student-centered approaches, their absence could lead to less effective learning experiences and subsequently lower academic performance among learners. This finding is in tandem with Fullan & Langworthy (2014) who argued that for the necessity of new pedagogies that promote deep learning, suggesting that reliance on traditional methods can hinder student engagement and performance. Their sentiments align with the finding that the absence of modern methods can lead to less effective learning experiences

Table 4.12 relationship between teacher leadership and academic achievements of learners.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly disagree	4	9.5	9.5	9.5
disagree	8	19.0	19.0	28.6
Neutral	12	28.6	28.6	57.1
Agree	14	33.3	33.3	90.5
strongly agree	4	9.5	9.5	100.0
Total	42	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary Data (2024)

The finding that 42.8% of respondents agreed that there is open leadership between teachers and parents, while 28.6% disagreed and 28.6% remained neutral, indicates a relatively balanced view. However, the substantial disagreement and neutrality suggest that leadership practices could be inconsistent. Effective leadership between teachers and parents is crucial for addressing student issues, providing support, and enhancing academic performance. When leadership is lacking, students might not receive the necessary support at home, potentially hindering their academic progress. Hornby & Lafaele (2011) observed that open and good leadership practices are essential for addressing student issues and providing necessary support. Their findings align with the importance of open leadership for enhancing academic performance. However, they also point out barriers such as cultural differences and time constraints, which can lead to inconsistencies in leadership practices, mirroring the mixed views found in your data.

Table 4.18: The relationship between motivation and learners' academic achievements.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly disagree	32	76.2	76.2	76.2
disagree	7	16.7	16.7	92.9
Neutral	1	2.4	2.4	95.2
Agree	1	2.4	2.4	97.6
strongly agree	1	2.4	2.4	100.0
Total	42	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary Data (2024)

The finding that only 4.8% of respondents agreed that the school provides transport allowances, with 92.9% disagreeing, suggests that most teachers face challenges in commuting. Regular attendance of teachers is crucial for consistent student learning and academic performance. When teachers struggle with transportation, it can lead to irregular attendance, which disrupts the learning process and negatively impacts students' academic progress. Bennell and Akyeampong (2017) argued that that lack of transport allowances often leads to irregular teacher attendance, which disrupts the learning process and negatively impacts student academic progress. They found that financial constraints significantly affect teachers' ability to commute regularly to schools, leading to absenteeism and reduced teaching effectiveness.

Conclusion.

The study thought to examine the relationship between teachers' professional development and learners' academic achievements in primary schools in Kumi district. The conclusion of the study was made in line with the key study objectives.

Teachers' workshops and learners' academic achievements was observed to be related in positive direction. Workshops are necessary for teachers' professional development and learners' academic achievements. Reliance on traditional teaching methods can lead to poor learner academic achievements.

Teachers' leadership is key for addressing learners' challenges related to academic achievements, providing support and improving teacher learner relationship. When leadership is not good, it can lead to learner drop out and poor academic performance.

When teachers struggle with challenges such as poor transport, lack of meals, medical care transport, financial constraints and respect, it negatively affects students' academic achievements. Lack of motivation significantly affects teachers' ability to positively deliver and can disrupt the teaching and learning process.

Recommendations

The relationship between teachers' workshops and learners' academic achievements

Schools should invest in regular, comprehensive training programs focused on modern teaching methods. These programs should include workshops, seminars, and practical sessions on interactive and student-centered teaching approaches. Encourage teachers to collaborate and share best practices. Creating a culture of continuous learning and peer support can help teachers integrate modern methods more effectively.

Offer targeted training sessions to improve teachers' data literacy. This should cover how to collect, analyze, and use data to inform instructional strategies. Establish support systems within the school, such as data teams or coaches, to assist teachers in interpreting and applying data to enhance their teaching.

Schedule Regular Professional Development Workshops: Develop a structured professional development calendar that includes frequent workshops on the latest teaching strategies and subject-specific content updates. The schools should ensure that there are sufficient resources, including time and funding, to support regular workshops and professional development activities.

Increase Access to Workshops: Facilitate greater access to professional development by offering workshops at various times, including during school hours, weekends, and school holidays. Provide incentives for teachers to attend workshops, such as certification, professional development credits, or stipends.

Strengthen Parent-Teacher Communication Channels: Create multiple communication platforms (e.g., regular meetings, newsletters, online portals) to keep parents informed and engaged.

Parental Involvement Programs: Develop programs that encourage and facilitate greater parental involvement in school activities and their children's education, such as parent-teacher associations, volunteer opportunities, and workshops for parents.

Provide specialized training for teachers on how to support learners with special needs. This could include courses on differentiated instruction, individualized education plans (IEPs), and inclusive classroom strategies. Employ or consult with special education experts who can provide ongoing support and guidance to teachers.

The relationship between teacher leadership and academic achievements of learners.

The study reveals a disparity in perceptions regarding communication channels among parents, teachers, and learners, indicating a need for structured communication strategies. To address this, schools should implement a clear and inclusive communication framework. This framework should include regular updates through newsletters, digital platforms, and scheduled parent-teacher meetings. Training sessions for teachers on effective communication strategies could also enhance their ability to engage meaningfully with parents and students. By fostering transparent and consistent communication channels, schools can ensure that all stakeholders are informed and involved in supporting student academic progress and well-being.

The mixed perception regarding teachers' ability to listen to students' concerns underscores the importance of enhancing listening skills among educators. Schools should incorporate training sessions and workshops focused on active listening techniques and strategies for creating a supportive classroom environment. Encouraging open dialogue and feedback loops between teachers and students can cultivate a culture of mutual respect and understanding. Teachers who effectively listen to student feedback can better address their needs, promote engagement, and positively impact academic success.

The polarization in views regarding teacher innovation suggests a need for greater support and recognition of innovative teaching practices. Schools should establish platforms for sharing successful teaching innovations and provide incentives for educators to experiment with new methodologies. Professional development programs should include training on integrating technology, project-based learning, and other innovative approaches into curriculum design. By fostering a culture of innovation, schools can enhance the quality of education, cater to diverse learning needs, and improve overall academic performance.

The findings highlight gaps in leadership development opportunities and teachers' familiarity with current leadership styles. Schools should prioritize leadership training programs that equip educators with essential management and motivational skills. These programs should emphasize adaptive leadership practices, collaborative decision-making, and fostering a positive school culture. Providing teachers with opportunities to practice leadership roles within school committees, mentorship programs, or curriculum development teams can further enhance their leadership capabilities. By investing in comprehensive leadership development, schools can cultivate effective educational leaders who inspire both colleagues and students, ultimately improving academic outcomes.

The relationship between motivation and learners' academic achievements.

To address the significant challenge teachers' face in commuting, it is essential for schools to introduce

transport allowances. Schools should collaborate with local education authorities to secure funding specifically allocated for this purpose. Transport allowances will ensure regular attendance of teachers, minimizing disruptions in the learning process and thereby enhancing students' academic progress. Additionally, partnerships with local transportation companies could be explored to provide discounted or subsidized transport services for teachers.

The lack of daily allowances indicates a need for financial support to help teachers manage their daily expenses. Schools should advocate for policies that include daily allowances in the teacher compensation package. This support can reduce financial strain on teachers, allowing them to focus more on their teaching responsibilities. Financial well-being contributes to higher job satisfaction and effectiveness, which positively impacts student learning outcomes. Budget reallocations or additional funding from government or non-governmental organizations could be sought to implement this recommendation.

The findings highlight a significant issue with teacher morale and professional respect. Schools should establish formal recognition programs to acknowledge and celebrate teachers' achievements and contributions. This can include awards, public recognition during school events, and opportunities for career advancement. Creating a positive school culture where teachers feel respected and valued can boost their motivation and enthusiasm, leading to better engagement with students and improved academic performance. Additionally, regular feedback mechanisms should be implemented to understand teachers' concerns and address issues related to respect and recognition.

The lack of free medical care for teachers is a critical issue that affects their overall well-being and job performance. Schools should work towards providing comprehensive health benefits, including free or subsidized medical care. This could involve negotiating group health insurance plans, partnering with local healthcare providers, or lobbying for government support in providing medical benefits to teachers. Ensuring that teachers have access to medical care will help reduce absenteeism due to health issues and maintain high performance levels, ultimately benefiting students' learning experiences and academic outcomes.

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