

Primary School Teachers' Preferences on the Implementation of Continuing Professional Development Programmes in Malawi

Elizabeth Selemani-Meke and Symphorosa Rembe

*School of Post Graduate Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Fort Hare, South Africa
E-mail: mekeelizabeth@yahoo.com*

KEYWORDS Continuing Professional Development. Teachers' Preferences. Implementation. Teacher Change. Classroom Practice. Learner Performance

ABSTRACT The study is an analysis of views of Primary School teachers in Zomba Rural Education District in Malawi on their preferences as regards the implementation of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes. The concern of the study was that despite the Government of Malawi putting in place structures to facilitate the implementation of Continuing Professional Development for primary school teachers, teachers have not improved their classroom practices. This study used a mixed method design that collected both quantitative and qualitative data through questionnaires, focus group discussions and interviews. In total, 798 teachers, representing 47% of teachers in the district, responded to the questionnaire. The researchers conducted 34 focus group discussions with teachers from various schools and held interviews with 34 head teachers. The study focussed on aspects of CPD implementation such as mode, venue, duration, time of the year, organization, form of recognition, and nature of the CPD programmes. Quantitative data were analysed using a software package known as Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) while the analysis of the qualitative data involved clustering common themes and writing stories and ranking the responses. The results show a gap between preferences of teachers and the way CPD programmes are implemented in the district. This calls for collaboration between CPD programme organizers and teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for teachers is recently receiving global attention. Existing literature attributes this recognition to the wider policy agenda of lifelong learning as well as to the view of CPD as a means of improving learner performance and production of required skills in order to attain economic prosperity in the globally competitive workplace (Coolahan 2002; Fraser et al. 2007; Schwillie and Dembele 2007). CPD embraces the idea that individuals aim for continuous improvement in their professional skills and knowledge beyond the basic training initially required to carry out the job (Gray 2005).

Guskey (2002) describes professional development programmes as systematic efforts to bring change in the classroom practices of teachers, in their attitudes and beliefs, and in the learn-

ing outcomes of students. This is also supported by Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) who argue that the most immediate and significant outcome of any successful CPD for teachers is a positive impact in changing teachers' knowledge and practice. This in turn results in improved learner performance. Further, research by Bolam (2000) and Hargreaves (1994) suggests that CPD is an essential part of improving school performance. It is also perceived as having a positive impact on the curriculum and pedagogy as well as teachers' sense of efficacy and their relationship with students (Talbert and McLaughlin 1994). Hence CPD is designed to contribute to learning of teachers who have completed their initial training and aims at bringing teacher change in their attitudes, beliefs, values and practices about their professionalism. Consequently, this results in improved learner performance.

In Malawi, the National Strategy for Teacher Education Development (NSTED) alludes to the fact that teaching requires professionals who are committed to life-long learning in order to remain relevant and effective in the education system (NSTED 2007). The strategy emphasizes that initial teacher preparation will never be sufficient insofar as it simply launches one into an ever changing and developing profession. It is CPD

Address for correspondence:
Elizabeth Selemani-Meke
School of Post Graduate Studies
Faculty of Education
University of Fort Hare
Private Bag X1314
Alice, 5700, South Africa
Telephone: +265 888 710 405
E-mail: mekeelizabeth@yahoo.com

which enables a teacher to go on teaching effectively (NSTED 2007). Hence the Government through the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) and other policy documents, recognizes the role that CPD for teachers can play in improving the quality of education in Malawian Primary Schools (MGDS 2006; National Education Sector Plan 2006; NSTED 2007; Policy Investment Framework 2001). To this effect the government has put in place structures to facilitate the implementation of CPD for Primary School teachers. It has instituted a national network of 315 Teacher Development Centres solely for Teacher Professional Development activities. On curriculum reviews, the Government has oriented all teachers to the new curriculum and it has lobbied Non-Governmental Organizations and donors to assist in such teacher professional development activities.

The Teacher Development Centres are staffed by Primary Education Advisors who are part of the district advisory and support system. Their main responsibility is supervising teachers in the schools, in addition to conducting and facilitating CPD activities for teachers in their education zones. Each Teacher Development Centre comprises of about 15 primary schools. Therefore an educational zone on average is made up of not more than 15 schools. However, in spite the implementation of the CPD programmes, research has shown that teachers have not substantially changed their classroom practices (Centre for Educational Research and Training 2009; NSTED 2007; SACMEQ 2005; Chimombo et al. 2005). This has resulted in poor learner performance at all levels of the primary education system to the extent that Malawi scored the lowest in international examinations for the Southern Africa Development Community region (Country Status Report 2009; SACMEQ 2005; Chimombo et al. 2005). The media, as well as research and informal reports from teachers and learners in Malawi partly attribute this poor learner performance, among others to the way CPD programmes are implemented, that the teachers do not derive much satisfaction from them as a result the teachers continue to use their old and poor methods of teaching (Centre for Educational Research and Training 2009; SACMEQ 2005; Chimombo et al. 2005).

SACMEQ report also confirm the above by stating that primary school teachers found the few days they spent attending CPD programmes, a waste of time since they derived no satisfaction from the courses (SACMEQ 2005). Studies

conducted so far have been mostly in developed countries such as the United Kingdom and United States of America. In Malawi, such studies have focussed on specific subjects or groups of teachers such as secondary school teachers. This has left a gap on CPD preferences of primary school teachers in terms of how the CPDs should be implemented. As argued by Roberts and Dyer (2001), dissimilar groups of teachers have dissimilar in-service needs. Hence this study fills the gap by seeking views of primary school teachers on their preferences as regards the implementation of CPD programmes that can result into teacher change. Teacher change in this study is defined as positive change in aspects of professionalism of the teacher resulting in improved classroom practice and consequent improvements in learner performance.

Research Objectives

The main objective of the study was to explore the preferences of primary school teachers in terms of how CPD programmes should be implemented in Zomba Rural Education District. Hence the study was guided by the following question: what are the preferences of primary school teachers as regards implementation of CPD programmes in Zomba Rural Education District in Malawi?

METHODS

The main objective of the study was to seek views from teachers about their preferences as regards effective implementation of CPD programmes for primary school teachers. The study was confined to Zomba Rural Education District in Malawi. The District was preferred because it is one of the education districts in Malawi that has received substantial attention in terms of being considered for implementation of CPD programmes because of its proximity to most educational institutions that conduct CPDs for teachers. In addition, the principal researcher is based in Zomba district and as such it was convenient for her in terms of time and resources to conduct the study in this district.

Research Design

The study was placed within the Post-positivism paradigm and used a mixed method research design that incorporated concurrent procedures in the collection, analysis and interpre-

tation of the data. The strategy used was the Concurrent Triangulation strategy which uses both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection concurrently in order to best understand the phenomenon of interest (Creswell 2003). Concurrent procedures entail collecting both quantitative and qualitative data at the same time during the study and then integrating the information in the interpretation of the overall results (Creswell 2003). In this study, the researchers used both quantitative and qualitative methods in an attempt to confirm, cross validate or corroborate the findings. The mixing of both quantitative and qualitative methods in the data collection process as well as the use of multiple sources of information enabled the researchers to solicit enough views from different data sources that gave adequate insights into the issues of implementation of CPD programmes in Zomba Rural Education District.

Instruments

Questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data while qualitative data were collected through focus group discussions and interviews. The instruments gathered data on variables of CPD implementation such as mode, venue, duration, time of the year, organization, form of recognition, and nature of the CPD programmes. Validity and reliability of the instruments were ensured in a number of ways. The instruments were tested before their administration, to reduce errors. The face and content validity of the data collection instruments were ascertained by a panel of experts in education. Their main function was to add, edit or eliminate irrelevant items from the initial pool of items and ensure that there is adequate coverage of the topic being studied. In addition, a team comprising critical colleagues also validated the instruments. The team included fellow students in a PhD programme and work-mates at the University of Malawi. This team reviewed the items with respect to readability, clarity, format, ease and adequacy of items.

Further, through the use of multiple perspectives in data collection and also use of a large sample of respondents, the researcher ensured trustworthiness / validity / reliability of not only the data collection instruments but also the whole research process. Triangulation of the different forms of data that were collected also added to the reliability and validity of the research pro-

cess and the findings. Use of more than three different data sources also ensured validity and reliability of not only the instruments but also the research findings. Lastly, the piloting of the questionnaire also rendered the instrument as well as the data collected, reliable and valid.

Sample, Sampling and Data Collection Methods

At the time of the study, Zomba Rural Education District had 1684 primary school teachers and 191 primary schools distributed across 17 education zones of the district (Education Management and Information Systems 2009). For the quantitative data, 798 teachers, representing 47% of the teachers in the district responded to the questionnaire. Administration of the questionnaire was not compulsory, hence the average response rate.

The researchers also conducted 34 focus group discussions with teachers from two schools in each of the 17 education zones in the district. A minimum of 3 teachers from each of the selected schools was purposively sampled to form the group for the focus group discussions. The purposive sampling of the teachers was based on the number of times the teacher had attended CPD programmes. The higher the number of times the teacher had attended CPD training, the higher the probability of the teacher being included in the sample. It was assumed that the sampled teachers had much first-hand information on the implementation of CPD programmes in the district.

Further the researchers held open-ended interviews with 34 head teachers of the schools that were visited. Open-ended interviews offered a platform for conversation between the researchers and the interviewees. The researchers' intention was to explore with the participant his or her views, ideas, beliefs and attitudes concerning the implementation of the CPD programme as well as their own preferences as regards how CPD programmes should be implemented in the schools. The data collected through the interviews gave useful insights in this area.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data were entered under SPSS and the researchers applied a few analytical techniques to sum up the indicators. The analysis took the form of univariate analysis such

as frequency counts, percentages, and the calculation of appropriate indicators. The qualitative data were reduced by clustering common themes and writing stories and ranking the responses to uncover the main issues that were arising. The issues arising from the questionnaires, focus group discussions and the interviews were put together as findings for the study.

Ethical Considerations

Any research which involves other people in some way has ethical implications. Since education is a social action, data gathering and analysis within this study inevitably impacted on the lives of other people involved in the study. Hence measures were put in place to ensure that individual rights were not infringed upon and to promote fairness in the interpretation of data. Principles such as obtaining informed consent; respecting the right to privacy and participation, anonymity, confidentiality; avoiding harm to participants; and other principles as highlighted by Cohen et al. (2000), were adhered to during the data collection process, data analysis and interpretation.

Right to privacy and participation was ensured by never forcing participants to participate in the study. The teachers were given an opportunity to indicate their willingness to participate in the study. After all, Sallant and Dillman (1994) contend that researchers must respect anyone who decides not to participate in the survey. Creswell (2003) agrees that participants have a right to participate voluntarily and the right to withdraw at any time. Right to confidentiality and anonymity was ensured by not taking or recording names of respondents. Further, the use of group data rather than individual data facilitated the retention of participant anonymity. By ensuring this right, harm or damage to participants was inevitably avoided.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the data and discusses the findings on preferences of primary school teachers in Zomba Rural Education District as regards how CPD programmes should be implemented in the district in order to bring about teacher change. As noted earlier on, their views were solicited on variables of CPD implementation such as mode, venue, duration, time of the

year, form of recognition and nature of the CPD programmes. These views were provided by the teachers after they analyzed how CPDs for teachers in Zomba Rural Education District are presently being implemented.

Preferred Mode for Conducting CPD

By mode, the researchers had in mind the operational system of the CPD programme. This is in terms of whether participants will be residing away or operating from their homes. It also included an element of distance learning where participants are exposed to print and electronic media but do not meet face to face with their facilitators. Hence there were three main options for this question, namely: Residential mode; non-residential mode and distance mode. Table 1 displays the findings.

Table 1: Preferred mode for conducting CPD (N = 711)

	<i>Number of teachers</i>	<i>Percentage of teachers</i>
Residential mode	476	67%
Non- residential mode	225	32%
Distance mode	10	1%

As Table 1 indicates the majority of the respondents to this question prefer CPDs that follow a residential mode where participants are given accommodation for the days they will be attending the CPD training. Teachers in the focus group discussions were of the opinion that a residential mode can result into teacher change because it provides a conducive and enabling environment for intensive training and hence it yields more content coverage as well as internalization of concepts. Teachers felt that the residential mode facilitates easy management since all participants are within the vicinity of the CPD venue. This minimizes disturbances from family members as is the case with the non-residential mode. Further the teachers were of the view that non-residential mode unnecessarily labour teachers as they have to cycle long distances to and from the training venues. This, according to them, makes CPD trainings hectic and hinders achievement. In one of the focus group discussions, teachers complained that:

We arrive at the venues for non-residential CPDs while sweating because of the long dis-

tances we cover to get to the CPD venue. We are tired before we start the training and this affects our concentration during the training.

Similar findings were noted in a study conducted by Mwanza (2008) on in-service training needs and preferences of Secondary School Physical Science teachers. The study found that 67% of the total respondents, preferred residential mode.

Those that opted for the non-residential mode considered issues of poor funding and logistics that go with the non-residential modes of training and thought it would be much worse with the residential modes. They sympathized with the CPD programme organizers and opted for the non-residential mode for the sole reason of cutting down on costs. This was also indicated by some teachers in the focus group discussions who lamented that:

From experience, funding for CPDs is usually a problem. If non-residential CPDs face challenges in terms of running costs, residential CPDs would face even greater challenges

The distance mode was not popular amongst the respondents. This has to do with the low levels of technology in Malawi. In Zomba Rural Education District, only 5 schools out of the 191 primary schools in the district have electricity (EMIS 2009). This means that about 97% of the schools cannot use electronic media. Even the five schools that have electricity, one can hardly find a computer at the school. Even if a computer was to be found, internet connection would not be affordable by the school. Hence teachers cannot think of a distance mode as the best option for CPD training in Malawi. This is much in contrast to Korean science teachers who favoured online in-service training to traditional on-site face to face programmes (Noh et al. 2004).

So from the data presented on preferences of teachers on the mode of delivery of CPD training, the majority stance is that residential CPDs are preferable to non-residential or distance CPDs. By preferring residential modes to non-residential modes, the teachers are sending across the message of not using the cascade mode of training in CPD programmes. This is because the cascade mode of training is usually used in non-residential modes of training.

Preferred Venue for Conducting CPD

Venues for CPDs vary. If the CPD is residential, it will take place at some formal organized

place in town where teachers would easily find accommodation for the days they will be attending the training as well as suitable facilities for use during the workshop. Mention was made of some workshops that might need computers and projectors. In one of the focus group discussions whose teachers had implemented action research projects in their schools, it was commented that:

Dissemination of our action research projects needed a venue that had electricity so that the organizers could use their computers and projectors during our presentations. The workshop also needed enough room because participants were many, including policy-makers from the Ministry of Education. Further the workshop needed catering services for mid-morning, lunch as well as mid-afternoon refreshments. A hotel sufficed.

Similarly if the CDP is non-residential, it will take place at a school, cluster or zone level where teachers can easily commute to and from the CPD venue.

In this study teachers were asked to indicate their preferences as regards a venue that they would like CPDs that can result into teacher change to take place. They were given four alternatives, namely at a school; teacher development centre; primary teacher training college; and other. Table 2 gives the details.

Table 2: Preferred venue for conducting CPD (N = 734)

Venue	Number of teachers	Percentage of teachers
School	97	13%
Teacher development centre	407	56%
Primary teacher training colleges	206	28%
Other	24	3%

The majority of the teachers in the district preferred the venue of most CPDs to take place at Teacher Development Centres. They backed their choice with reasons of cost effectiveness; convenience and easy accessibility. This view conforms well with a 2007 World Bank report that stressed that in developing countries where teachers get low salaries that do not even suffice for their basic needs till the end of the month, teachers may face the challenge of how and where to get money for transport to a distant residential workshop.

Nevertheless as discussed earlier, 67% of the teachers preferred a residential mode. These findings seem to give an impression that residential CPDs are viewed as being more powerful and therefore the achievement of the training objectives is more likely to be realized than with non-residential CPDs which in most cases uses cascade mode of training. Cascade mode of training dilutes information and results in the 'watering down' and / or misinterpretation of crucial information (Khulisa 2001 cited in Engelbrecht et al. 2007). This renders such CPDs ineffective according to the teachers.

However a clear message to workshop organizers is that where it is inevitable to hold residential CPDs, the organizers should use Teacher Development Centres as venues for their training. Nevertheless teachers that opted for other venues apart from the Teacher Development Centres provided good reasons such as availability of skilled and competent facilitators as well as equipment and facilities for good delivery of CPD. It is therefore important that CPD organizers should also take into account these reasons and incorporate them in the designs of zonal based CPDs. Facilitators play a great role in the success of a CPD. The methods they use and their overall organization during the presentations count a lot in the success of a CPD. Armour and Makopoulou (2006) noted that when teachers are involved in active learning during their professional development, they are more likely to increase knowledge and change classroom practices. Coolahan (2002) noted similar views in his study where collaborative and interactional techniques were found to be much more popular than lectures.

Preferred Duration for Conducting CPD

A common criticism of professional development activities designed for teachers is that they are too short and offer limited follow-up to the teachers once they begin to teach (Penuel et al. 2007). This results in teachers either assimilating teaching strategies into their current repertoires with little substantive change or rejecting those suggested changes altogether (Coburn 2004; Tyack and Cuban 1995). In this study, an effort was made to find out from the teachers their preferred length of time for conducting CPDs that can result into teacher change. Table 3 highlights the findings.

The results show that most primary school teachers would prefer CPDs to spread over a

Table 3: Preferred duration for conducting CPD (N = 709)

	<i>Number of teachers</i>	<i>Percentage of teachers</i>
2 days	60	9%
1 week	293	41%
2 weeks	173	25%
3 weeks	80	11%
1 month	66	9%
More than 1 month	37	5%

period of one week. From their experience accumulated over the years they have been attending CPD trainings, teachers feel one week is long enough for them to assimilate the knowledge and skills that the CPD meant to impart. Mwanza (2008) also noted that secondary school teachers preferred slightly longer CPD courses. The preferences of the teachers on duration for conducting CPDs, is not very far from what different writers and researchers have found and written about duration for conducting effective CPDs. Brown (2004) contends that professional development that is of longer duration and time span is more likely to contain the kinds of learning opportunities necessary for teachers to integrate new knowledge into practice. Similarly, Desimone (2009) notes that there is evidence that activities that spread over a semester (or intense summer institutes with follow-up during the semester) and include 20 hours or more of contact time are more effective. This is also supported by Connelly and James (1998) quoted in Sinelnikov (2009) who contend that evidence exists suggesting that sporadic 'one-off' professional development activities are unlikely to have lasting impact upon teachers' practice.

However, the constrain lies in the resources to conduct and sustain such CPDs. One Primary Education advisor lamented that

Much as we would want to conduct INSETs for our teachers as often as possible and for the required duration, we cannot do that because we are financially constrained. So our INSETs are indeed irregular and are held for shorter periods of time to cut on costs.

Rogan and Grayson (2003) notes that money is needed to support all school programmes including In-service Education.

Preferred Time of the Year for Conducting CPD

The time of the year the CPD trainings take place can have a bearing on the attendance of teachers as well as determine their commitment

and participation in the training. Hence the study solicited views from teachers on when they would like CPD to be conducted during the academic year. The results are outlined in Table 4.

Table 4: Preferred time of the year for conducting CPD (N = 710)

	<i>Number of teachers</i>	<i>Percentage of teachers</i>
During short term holidays	143	20%
During longer term holidays	469	66%
During school week days	60	9%
During week ends	36	5%
Other	2	0%

A greater percentage of the teachers wanted CPDs to be conducted during the holidays, especially the longer term holiday. Those that opted for the holidays gave the following reasons to back up their choice

- ♦ During the end of term holidays, teachers have ample time for other things including CPD training in addition to preparing schemes for the next term's work.
- ♦ CPD training conducted during the end of term holidays do not disturb teaching. This is not so with CPDs that are conducted when schools are in session.
- ♦ When schools close, it takes a long time (about two to three weeks if it is a short term holiday or over a month if it is a longer term holiday) before the schools open. This allows adequate time for CPD trainings that can be scheduled within this period of time.

Similar findings were noted in a study conducted by Rhea (2002) where only 22% and 12% of the teachers indicated that they would attend a CPD training that takes place during the school week or on a Saturday respectively. CPDs that take place during school week days as well as weekends tend to stress the teachers. If conducted during school days, learners are left unattended to, and as a result, the teacher has to plan for makeup time when he/she is back from the training. Those that are conducted during weekends inconvenience the teachers even more as the teachers do not have time to rest or put their houses in order.

Preferred Organization of CPD Trainings

Teachers were also asked on how CPDs should be organized for them to be effective.

This was to find out whether to target teachers at school level, cluster level, zonal level or at the district level. The results of their preferences are highlighted in Table 5.

Table 5: Preferred organization of CPD trainings (N = 706)

	<i>Number of teachers</i>	<i>Percentage of teachers</i>
At school level	44	6%
At cluster level	149	21%
At zonal level	367	52%
At district level	140	20%
Other	6	1%

Just like the majority of teachers opted for a Teacher Development Centre to be the venue for CPD trainings, the majority of teachers also opted for CPDs to be conducted at zonal level. Their choice implies that teachers would prefer that CPD trainings should target teachers coming from the same zone. This option was popular among the teachers because in most CPD trainings, the Primary Education Advisor is more often the resource person. Hence a Teacher Development Centre is very convenient for the Primary Education Advisor since she/he is based at a Teacher Development Centre. Further, the number of teachers attending a CPD training organized at zone level can easily be regulated and needs that are specific to the zone can also easily be addressed.

Preferred Form of Recognition for Attending CPD

As a source of motivation or incentive and recognition for attending a CPD training, this study sought to hear the views of teachers in Zomba Rural Education District, especially with regard to the form of recognition they would like to be offered after the training. They were given three options: no award; certificate of attendance/participation; and promotion. Forty-seven percent of the teachers opted for being given certificates of attendance/participation while 46% of the teachers wanted promotion to be the form of recognition. However, 7% said it was not necessarily important that teachers should be recognized in any way after attending a CPD training. They reasoned that such trainings do not take much time nor impart substantial knowledge and skills to the teachers that would warrant any form

of recognition. Those that opted for a certificate of attendance/participation were of the view that an accumulation of such certificates can add up in building one's Curriculum Vitae (CV). An impressive CV can be presented during interviews for promotions. This can impress the panel and so the teacher can easily be promoted.

Similarly, teachers that opted for a promotion following participation in CPD training looked at promotion as one way of motivating teachers. If they are assured of a promotion following attendance to CPD trainings, their morale for the teaching profession would be boosted and so they can easily implement what they learn from CPD trainings.

From the data presented, it appears teacher promotions are critical in influencing motivation of teachers to implement what they learn from CPD training at classroom level. In other countries like France and Romania, CPD participation is considered a prerequisite for career advancement and salary increases (Eurydice 2009). Similarly in Poland, Portugal, Slovakia and Slovenia, Credits may be acquired through participation in Continuous Professional Development programmes and are taken into account for purposes of promotion (European Commission 2009 captured in Selemeni-Meke 2013).

Since promotions go with increases in salaries, surely promotions or certificates of value after attending CPD trainings would be some of the best means of motivating the already demotivated teaching force. This is concurred by Maslow's hierarchy of needs that looks at recognition as one of the self-esteem needs of human beings and hence a motivating factor (Maslow 1943). Chireshe and Shumba (2011) allude to the same when they say salary is a critical issue as it affects teacher motivation.

Preferred Nature of CPD Training

On the preferred nature of CPD training, the researchers had in mind whether attendance to the CPD trainings should be voluntary or it should be compulsory. The present trend of CPD trainings in Malawi is that teachers are not given a choice of whether to attend or not to attend. This study found that 57% of the teachers preferred CPD trainings to be compulsory while 43% wanted the trainings to be voluntary. This is contrary to the findings from a study by Mwanza (2008) who noted that 51 % of the secondary

school teachers preferred voluntary CPD. Those who wanted CPD trainings to be compulsory stated that:

The concern for CPDs is to improve professionalism that promotes good quality of education. So every teacher must attend CPD trainings so that the quality of education in Malawi is improved. If you give teachers the choice between whether to attend or not to attend, the majority will not attend because the conditions for attending most CPDs are not all that attractive and impressive. Further compulsory CPDs are good as they would ensure that all the teachers are sailing in the same boat, and hence uniformity across schools is guaranteed.

Those that preferred CPDs to be voluntary had their own reasons. In summary, they said

CPD trainings especially those that take place during the school days disturb teachers in one way or the other. Teachers have got their plans and so they should not be interrupted in any way, hence CPD trainings should be optional. In addition, voluntary CPDs will offer teachers a chance to participate in CPDs that they need and indeed have interest in. This would ensure full participation and commitment to such CPDs and therefore the implementation of what was learnt at the CPD will be inevitable.

It appears that the gap between teachers who prefer CPDs to be compulsory and those who would like CPDs to be voluntary is not very wide. The findings concur with International Labour Organization (1991) report that CPDs can be voluntary or compulsory. However the administration of voluntary CPDs needs to be done with caution bearing in mind that CPDs are meant to promote professional growth of teachers. Choice of attending CPDs at free will would compromise the standards required in quality education. Teachers need to attend CPDs so that they are updated on curriculum reviews as well as emerging issues.

CONCLUSION

This study solicited views from teachers on their preferences as regards how CPD programmes for primary school teachers should be implemented to result into improved classroom practice and learner performance. It sought teachers' views on variables of CPD implementation such as mode, venue, duration, time of the year,

form of recognition, and nature of the CPD programmes. The study has revealed that teachers prefer CPDs that are of residential nature other than non-residential. If they are non-residential, then such CPDs should be conducted at the Teacher Development Centres. They also prefer the CPDs to be given a considerable duration for assimilation of concepts being taught and indicated that a minimum of one week during the school holidays could be an ideal duration and time respectively for conducting CPDs. Further they suggested that CPDs should be compulsory and should target teachers from the same zone. At the end of the CPD training, the teachers prefer to be awarded certificates of attendance that should be recognized and contributory to their promotions.

The revelations from the findings of the study run counter to how most CPD programmes for teachers are currently being implemented. A gap between what teachers prefer and the way the CPD programmes are designed, is detrimental to the success of any such CPD initiative. Hence these findings on the preferences by the teachers as regards implementation of CPD programmes that are meant for them should be an eye opener to CPD programme organizers. It is very pivotal that CPD programme designers consider the preferences of teachers in their CPD programme designs if they are to be effective.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings of this study, it is important that CPD programme designers and organizers should lend a listening ear to the teachers who are the implementers of whatever is discussed in CPD trainings. They should strive to incorporate as much as possible the teachers' preferences on how the CPD Programmes should be implemented. This would consequently result in implementation, at classroom level, of what was learnt at the CPD training.

However this study was limited to teachers in Zomba Rural Education District. A national study targeting teachers in all the education districts in Malawi needs to be conducted. Such a study would give a more conclusive and complete picture of teacher preferences on how CPD programmes should be implemented not only in Malawi but also in other countries.

REFERENCES

- Armour KM, Makopoulu K 2006. *Evaluation of the National Primary Education and School Sport Professional Development Programme*. Loughborough University, Leicestershire.
- Brown JL 2004. *Making the Most of Understanding by Design*. Washington, DC: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Centre for Educational Research and Training 2009. *Improving Learning Outcomes in Primary School Project Report*. University of Malawi, Zomba.
- Chimombo J, Kunje D, Chimuzu T, Mchikoma C 2005. *The SACMEQ II Project in Malawi: A Study of the Conditions of Schooling and the Quality of Education*. Harare: SACMEQ.
- Chireshe R, Shumba A 2011. Teaching as a profession in Zimbabwe: Are teachers facing a motivation crisis? *Journal of Social Science*, 28: 113-118.
- Coburn CE 2004. Beyond decoupling: Rethinking the relationship between the institutional environment and the classroom. *Sociology of Education*, 77(3): 211-244.
- Cohen L, Manion L, Morrison K 2000. *Research Methods in Education*. 5th Edition. London: Routledge
- Coolahan J 2002. Teacher Education and the Teaching Career in an Era of Lifelong Learning. *OECD Education Working Paper*, Number 2. Education Directorate, OECD, Paris.
- Country Status Report 2008 / 2009*. Ministry of Education: Lilongwe, Malawi.
- Creswell JW 2003. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. London: Sage Publications.
- Desimone LM 2009. Improving impact studies of teachers' professional development: Toward better conceptualizations and measures. *American Educational Research Association*, 38: 181.
- Education Management Information Systems 2009*. Ministry of Education, Lilongwe, Malawi.
- Engelbrecht W, Ankiewicz P, De Swardt E 2007. An industry – sponsored, school-focused model for continuing professional development of technology teachers. *South African Journal of Education*, 27: 579-595.
- Eurydice 2009. *Teachers' and School Heads Salaries and Allowances in Europe*. European Commission.
- Fraser C, Kennedy A, Reid L, Mckinney S 2007. Teachers' continuing professional development: Contested concepts, understandings and models. *Professional Development in Education*, 33(2): 153-169.
- Gray SL 2005. *An Enquiry into Continuing Professional Development for Teachers*. London: Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.
- ILO 1991. *Teachers in Developing Countries: A Survey of Employment Condition*. Geneva: International Labour Office.
- Malawi Growth and Development Strategy 2006*. Malawi Government: Lilongwe, Malawi.
- Maslow AH 1943. A Theory of Human Motivation. *Psychological Review* (50): 370-396. From <<http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Maslow/motivation.htm>> (Retrieved on 28 June, 2011).

- Ministry of Education 2008. *Guidelines for the Management of Education Functions Devolved to District Assemblies*. Ministry of Education, Lilongwe, Malawi.
- Mwanza ALD 2008. *An Assessment of In-service Training Needs and Preferences of Secondary Physical Science Teachers in Central West Education Division in Malawi*. MA Thesis, Unpublished. University of Malawi, Zomba.
- National Education Sector Plan 2006*. Ministry of Education, Lilongwe, Malawi.
- National Strategy for Teacher Education and Development 2007*. Ministry of Education, Lilongwe, Malawi
- Noh T, Cha J, Kang S, Scharmann L 2004. Perceived professional needs of Korean science teachers majoring in chemical education and their preference for online and on-site training. *International Journal of Science Education*, 26(10): 1269-1289.
- Penuel WR, Fishman BJ, Yamaguchi R, Gallagher LP 2007. What makes professional development effective? Strategies that foster curriculum implementation. *American Educational Research Journal*, 4(4): 921-958.
- Policy Investment Framework 2001*. Ministry of Education: Lilongwe, Malawi.
- Rhea M 2002. Teacher Professional Development Needs in Science, Mathematics, and Technology in eastern North Carolina. From <<http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/recordDetail?accno=ED473247>> (Retrieved on 26 June, 2011).
- Roberts TG, Dyer JE 2004. In-service needs of traditionally and alternately certified agriculture teachers. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 45(4): 57-70.
- Rogan JM, Grayson DL 2003. Towards a theory of curriculum implementation with particular reference to science education in developing countries. *International Journal of Science Education*, 25(10): 1171-1204.
- SACMEQ II Project in Malawi 2005. A Study of the Conditions of Schooling and the Quality of Education. *SACMEQ Policy Research Report*. IIEP.
- Salant PA, Dillman DA 1994. *How to Conduct Your Own Survey*. New York: John Wiley and Sons Inc.
- Schwillie J, Dembelé M 2007. Global Perspectives on Teacher Learning: Improving Policy and Practice. Paris: IIEP/UNESCO. From <<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001502/150261e.pdf>> (Retrieved on 26 June, 2011).
- Selemani-Meke E 2013. Teacher motivation and implementation of continuing professional development programmes in Malawi. *Anthropologist Journal*, 15(1): 107-115.
- Sinelnikov OA 2009. Sport education for teachers: Professional development when introducing a novel curriculum model. *European Physical Education Review*, 15: 91.
- Tyack D, Cuban L 1995. *Tinkering Toward Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- World Bank 2007. *Teacher Issues in Malawi*. Lilongwe: World Bank.