Perceptions and Practices of Continuous Professional Development of Postgraduate Diploma Trainees of Addis Ababa University

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to investigate and understand the perceptions, planning, practicing and efficacy of continuous professional development of teachers from the point of view of 2022 entry Post Graduate Diploma trainee teachers of College of Education and Behavioral Studies, Addis Ababa University. To this end, the study employed qualitative research method specifically a case study design, the case being a group of teacher trainees of the aforementioned program. Data were collected through interviews and a single group discussion that were recorded using Galaxy A10 cell phone apparatus. The recorded data were transcribed and then analyzed qualitatively using voices of the participants. The analyzed data depicted that almost all the participants have good perception regarding purposes, importance and strategies of CPD. The study also portrayed that planning CPD is top-down approach without considering individual teachers' needs that discouraged teachers' practices due to its all-inclusive nature. Absence of adequate resource, lack of knowledgeable coordinators and mentors were also found as impeding factors. Furthermore, lack of differentiation criteria between participating and none participating teachers and Woreda Education Office experts' 'unnecessary' interventions were found challenging factors. It was concluded from the findings that following the principles of CPD planning, considering individual teachers' needs, minimizing experts' 'unnecessary' intervention, provision of basic resources and conducting further investigation are some important factors to be reconsidered.

Introduction

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Though there are variations in emphasis and focus, Ethiopian Education and Training Policy (MoE, 1994, 2003, 2023) give high attention to Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of teachers. The policy has given priority to upgrade unqualified teachers through summer and distance education to fit them into the requirements the policy outlined (MoE, 2003). The basic purpose of the priority was to overcome problems observed in the area of pre-service teacher preparation, continuous in-service professional development and school leadership, among many other things. It was also aimed to support and promote active learning methods to improve teachers' critical thinking and development of higher order learning to empower practicing teachers towards meeting the requirements of the training policy (MoE, 2009b).

Though the approach and the provision strategy and emphasis vary, the 2003 Ethiopian education and training policy encourages continuous professional development of teachers at all (primary, secondary, preparatory and tertiary) levels. The policy attempted to strengthen CPD by providing well thought practical guidelines for extra professional development of teachers' competence that in turn improves students' learning achievement. The effect of the policy in general and the guidelines in particular showed progress in quantitative terms that led the adoption of the policy as well as the guidelines by all the regional states (Amare et al, 2009).

Despite such efforts are in place by the Ministry of Education and Regional Education Bureaus, there are discouraging responses from various stakeholders regarding the improvement of continuous professional development of teachers. For instance, Hogenbosch (2009: 2) explains different factors for such discouraging responses;

> *According to Amhara Regional Education Bureau Action Plan for GEQIP (2007), many teachers have a negative attitude towards CPD for different reasons. It is said that CPD is time*

consuming, it just keeps teachers busy and the new employed teachers think that they already studied the CPD topics in universities. Another group of CPD challenges are technical: materials are not distributed on time, there is no awareness about the function of portfolio; there is a shortage of mentors and facilitators, especially in the rural areas and there is a lack of support from the participants and supervisors…

This quote provides evidence that teachers do not practice CPD properly because of lack of skilled mentors and facilitators in addition to shortage of required resources. It is also clear from the response that CPD is unpractical as desired by the Regional State Education Bureaus although some attempts are observable.

The TDP 1 Impact Study findings reported to higher officials and supervisors of the Ministry of Education by Haromaya University (cited in MoE, 2009) also ascertains the impractical effort of CPD in primary and secondary schools. As reported by Haromaya University (cited in MoE (2009: np), *… in nearly four out of five schools the structure of CPD is either absent or inadequate, nearly all (29 of 31) Cluster Resource Centers sampled were not adequately prepared to run well organized, inspiring and transforming CPD activities….* In its report, Haromaya University identified seven major challenges with recommendations to alleviate the challenges and improve CPD programs in general.

Similarly, a case study conducted by Esayas and Rao (2021) highlights limiting factors that contributed to the ineffective practice of CPD in primary schools of Ethiopia. The findings of this case study indicated that the CPD program in Ethiopia is suffering from "*… top-down fashion, cut-paste programmes on the advice of development partners or funding agencies and contents were determined based on national, local and institutional priorities overlooking the priorities of individual teachers* (p. 10). As to the finding of the study, the major constraining

factors included but not limited to *… power of the political, economic and social contexts to effective teacher CPD in addition to the characteristics of the CPD programmes* (p. 11) and thus, recommended the importance of reconsidering those constraining dynamics for effective school-based teacher CPD programs.

Furthermore, a study conducted by Tsion, "Perception and Practice of Teachers in Continuous Professional Development in Five Sub-Cities of Addis Ababa" (2013) has indicated that the relevance of CPD, improved problem solving capacity of teachers and increased collaboration among teachers are found as positive outcomes and benefits of CPD. However, the study also identified obstructing factors such as lack of supervision from supervisors and directors, absence of differentiation incentives any type between participating and none participating teachers. In addition, the provision of any form of support (reward, incentives, salary increment, recognition, resources) encourages teachers' effectiveness because *teachers believe effectiveness of their efforts with regard to CPD is highly dependent on the support of close supervision in the process of CPO activities* (p. 56).

A study conducted at the University of Gondar, College of Education has indicated two scenarios regarding CPD. One scenario ascertains that CPD is a vital and ongoing learning process that enhances teachers' professional, academic, and technical skills. The second scenario, however, indicates that CPD is *… a short-term activity that is insufficiently supported and motivated by management bodies* (Addis, Amera & Solomon, 2024: 161) with poor coordination and inadequate support at all levels - department, college, university, and the Ministry of Education. In addition, the study further identified that *… some academic members hold misconceptions about professional development, perceiving it as an obligatory burden imposed by higher authorities* (p. 161), which contributed to negative attitudes towards

participating in activities (workshops, meetings, and academic dialogues) leading to reluctance to engage oneself in CPD initiatives.

Why 2022 Entry PGDT Trainees

The researcher of this study read many theoretical and conceptual works of different educators related to philosophies, principles, guiding manuals, importance, etc. of CPD from across the world. Furthermore he read some research findings (Addis, Amera & Solomon, 2024; Tsion, 2013; Ewnetu and Firdisa, 2010; Hogenbosch, 2009; Amare et al, 2009) pertaining to the combined outcomes, i.e. effective and/or ineffective CPD program practices. He had opportunities to examine MA theses on problems and/or achievements of continuous professional development practices indicating some disappointing and some encouraging outcomes of the practices. He also got an opportunity to teach a course - *Designing educators' professional development alternatives* - that further motivated him to continue to work on continuous professional development practices**.**

Incidentally, the researcher had a course *Teachers as Reflective Practitioners* with five sections of the 2022 entry PGDT trainee teachers. In the process of teaching the course, he discussed issues related to CPD practices with those trainee teachers. The discussions revealed disappointing attitudes of the trainee teachers towards CPD activities.

Having the 2022 entry PGDT trainee teacher was an opportunity for the researcher to conduct a study on continuous professional development practices because the trainee teachers were pulled to the training from across the nation with various experiences in their respective contexts. It was an opportunity because trainee teachers might have different participating level of experiences such as mentoring, coordinating, supervising, coaching, leading, and etc. that would make essential and possibly reliable information available. These experiences,

opportunities and interest of the researcher encouraged him to investigate how teachers perceived CPD practices, how it was planned, how teachers practiced it and the level of effectiveness in the practice of CPD initiatives.

Purpose of the study

Based on the above discussions, this study supports the views that CPD initiatives are impractical to achieve the required outcome due to a number of factors such as lack of continuous training for the facilitators (coordinators and mentors), lack of time and adequate resources and the absence of collaborative culture among concerned bodies that include but not limited to woreda education experts, supervisors and principals. As a result of the impracticality of CPD initiatives and observations discussed so far, the researcher was forced to investigate the perceptions and practices of school-based continuous professional development of teachers from the point view of 2022 entry Post Graduate Diploma in Teaching (PGDT) trainee teachers. Thus, the general objective of this study was to investigate and understand the perceptions and practices of school-based continuous professional development of the trainees mentioned above while the specific objectives are to:

- examine 2022 entry PGDT trainee teachers' perceptions of school-based continuous professional development;

- identify the planers of school-based continuous professional development of teachers;

- assess how 2022 entry PGDT trainee teachers practice school-based continuous professional development of teachers;

- evaluate the efficacy of 2022 entry PGDT trainee teachers' CPD practices; and

- clarify constraining or expediting factors in the process of practicing CPD

Based on the above general objective and specific objectives outlined, the study addressed the following research questions:

- How do trainee teachers perceive the values and practices of school-based continuous professional development program?

- Who plans continuous professional development of teachers?

- How do teachers practice school-based continuous professional development activities in their respective schools?

- How do 2022 entry PGDT trainee teachers evaluate the effectiveness of their practices?

- What factors constrain or expedite the effectiveness of school-based continuous professional development of teachers?

Rationale

Theories and international study findings ascertain that continuous professional development initiatives in general and school-based continuous professional development practices are important efforts to achieve quality education. It is believed by educators that teachers' participation in any form of CPD enable teachers to improve their

performance which in turn enhances learners' learning outcomes in which teachers' participation in CPD initiatives is mandatory.

School-based continuous professional development practices take place at grassroots level where the interaction between teachers and students takes place lively demanding teachers' improved performance. To achieve improved performance capacity, teachers are required to undergo through professional development practices to progress in thoughts, skills, attitude and knowledge that can support them to help their learners efficiently and effectively.

Thus, the rationale to investigate and understand the perceptions and practices of school-based professional development efforts in teachers' respective schools is to understand how teachers value CPD initiatives, how CPD initiatives are planned, how teachers practice it, and the level of efficacy of the practice in order to update teachers' work capacity so that they can contribute to enhance learners learning outcomes.

Operational definitions

Perception: teachers' knowledge and understanding about CPD, how they judge the value, importance, relevance of professional development endeavors

Practice: accomplishing, doing, working on, completing CPD activities and participating in planned CPD works

Initiative: refers to a specific project or program or activity aimed to achieve practical CPD goals

Activities: collaborative works, exercises, and drills and skill, knowledge, or attitude improvement group exercises.

Program: initiatives or projects undertaken or activities done to improve skills, knowledge or attitude for enhaced performance

Participants: subjects of this study

Practitioner: a teacher who is taking part in continuous professional development activities

Review of Related Literature

The concept of continuous professional development of teachers can be defined in a number of ways because it covers broader areas of the teaching learning activities. In other words, defining CPD of teachers from a single perspective is difficult due to the existence of different understandings about the concept of CPD. As observed by Diaz-Maggiolil (2003):

> *Professional development is an elusive term in education. To many, the term conjures up images of in-service days and workshops. To others, it refers to a process in which teachers work under supervision to gain tenure or to enhance their professional practice … development is defined as an ongoing learning process in which teachers engage voluntary to learn how best to adjust their teaching to the learning needs of their students (No page).*

Accordingly, it is a process by which teachers improve their knowledge, attitude, skills and approaches through a number of modalities. The modalities through which teachers enhance their knowledge may include workshops, seminars, observing colleagues, reflecting upon one's own daily activities continuously and etc. This shows that taking part in these and other similar modalities enable the teachers to improve their skills, knowledge, and attitudes and approaches that in turn advance students' learning performance.

There are other similar definitions given by different scholars (Ryan and Cooper, 2004) though their definitions vary in some aspects. However, all the definitions share common concepts in that continuous professional development covers a broad range of activities designed to contribute to teachers' lifelong learning and improve and update their initial training. Altogether, the definitions focus on any form of planned activity that contribute to the improvement of teachers' skills, knowledge and attitude offered and practiced in schools to accomplish their educational practices better.

Whatever the definition, continuous professional development is any planned activity teachers do in their respective schools constantly to learn, grow, adjust themselves to a new phenomenon in the process of their teaching endeavor. These activities acquaint the teachers with new techniques, newly introduced contents and curricula and recently acknowledged teaching approaches. These activities are required because their initial training could be challenged by educational reform phenomena nationally and internationally. Therefore, continuous professional development is a non-stopping activity of teachers to fit into the dynamic nature of education system with the purpose of supporting learners learning improvement.

In support of this, Daiz-Maggiolil (2003) states that … p*rofessional development is not a one-shot, one-size-fits all event, but rather an evolving process of professional self-disclosure, reflection and growth that yields the best results when sustained over time in communities of practice and when focused on job-embedded responsibilities* (no page). As an ongoing process, its achievement can only be meaningful through the accumulation of practices and experiences over time.

Continuous professional development is required not only to update or upgrade teachers' competence to perform their daily professional activities better. It is required more importantly to improve their learners learning performance. This implies that beyond the requirement, CPD

of teachers is both an obligation and a right to every practicing teacher. All practicing teachers, therefore, should make a leading contribution to the successful implementation of CPD programs. For this to happen, teachers must participate in an on-going process of improving oneself formally and informally as well. Therefore, continuous professional development aims *… to improve the performance of teachers in the classroom and raise student achievement. It is a career and, particularly, classroom practice* (MoE, 2009: 7). The ultimate goal of CPD is, therefore, to improve students learning progress beyond teachers' upgrading or updating their competence.

For the accomplishment of CPD activities, there are different strategies to be used though the strategies may vary from context to context. As to Craft (2000), the recent professional development activities demand needs analysis, broader understanding of CPD from the benefits of individual school teachers and schools. Craft further reiterates that utilization of school plan, reflecting on the effects of professional development upon actual practice and increment of interest in the use of initial teacher training, induction and CPD as varieties for professional development endeavor.

Craft's discussion implies that CPD must start from needs analysis to be planned in order to meet the needs of the teachers and schools to contribute to the achievement of their mutual end goal, i.e. improving their students' learning performance. This denotes that the planned continuous professional development of teachers should fit into the school plan and be evaluated based on its contribution and impact upon the improvement of actual classroom practices.

Accordingly, this study focuses on school-based CPD program that is concerned with single school continuous professional development initiatives where teachers participate in classroom improvement CPD programs. As per the specific objectives outlined, the major areas emphasized in this study are perceptions and practices of 2022 PGDT

trainee teachers, planning and the efficacy of their practices and constraining or expediting factors of the CPD programs.

Perception is one of the crucial and important issues to be addressed in the process of continuous professional development programs. It pertains to participants' understanding, feeling, interest and value of an action to be accomplished. Obviously, one will be initiated to properly participate in some actions or practices if he/she knows the values an action has to contribute to his/her life. This is to mean that teachers can be encouraged to engage themselves in CPD initiatives if they develop good understanding about what CPD is, why it is required, what its contribution to their teaching learning process is and what it contributes to knowledge, skills and attitudes towards improving their action or practice.

Teachers' perceptions about CPD initiatives may facilitate or hinder their participation in the initiatives. Teachers are encouraged more likely to participate in CPD if they view CPD as relevant, valuable, and aligned with their daily practical activities; otherwise, they ignore and will be reluctant to participate because they perceive it as irrelevant, useless and simply a wastage of time. It is, thus, important to consider teachers' perception from many angles to avoid constraining factors such as lack of administrative support, lack of relevance to their contexts and practice, time constraint and misconceptions about the value of CPD programs.

In addition, developing CPD program in consultation with the teachers and considering their needs may lead teachers to meaningful practice by avoiding 'one-size-fits-all' where teachers take part in the program with energy and passion (Mohamed, 2006). Moreover, continuous professional development practices require the provision of adequate resources and timely feedback. Collecting appropriate data from participating teachers can help to identify and inform them about their strengths and weaknesses so that they would appreciate and engage

themselves in continuous improvement of their practice (Komba & Nkumba, 2008).

Planning is a must to thoroughly conduct needs of the participants for effective professional development practice; otherwise, the program may suffer from lack of relevance and value that kill teachers' interest to take part in the practice. This is to say that teachers must identify their needs based on their own practice and context so that they would be passionate to participate in their own needs. Mosha (2006) confirms that a teacher with positive view towards CPD struggles to seek and acquire new knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and dispositions leading to pride, self-esteem, teamwork, commitment, motivation, creativity, and vision.

Planning is not only about knowing the needs to the teachers but it is also about aligning educational standards (goals, curricular materials, context) that meets with both school and teacher needs. The planning must center teachers needs aligned with school needs so that teachers would fit into the school needs to achieve their common goals, i.e. learners learning improvement. This calls for school community (school administration and teachers) participation with their respective roles in order to develop collaborative, interactive and purposeful improved practice.

Practice is about active engagement in professional activities following a specific way of life and philosophy. Practice encourages active learning by doing something again and again in order to become better at it where all participants accomplish activities willingly and passionately. Activities can be any type that support the growth and improvement of the profession in a number of modalities including but not limited to workshops, peer and colleague observation, collaborative planning sessions, conducting action research, technology based learning (online, blended learning, Google meet, etc.).

Effective professional development is the result of modeling best practices where new skills, knowledge and attitudes are applied in the classroom through demonstration and hands-on activities. Achieving effective CPD program goes beyond practicing activities. It requires an ongoing support in a form of coaching, mentoring and creating a professional learning community where experiences and resources are shared among the participants.

Efficacy is the other area of concern in this study. Efficacy involves assessment of both the agents, i.e. teachers and students. It is a means by which professional development program outcomes are measured, may be through assessing pre- and post-practice outcomes or classroom observation and students' learning outcomes.

Efficacy is not a onetime activity but demands sustained commitment to the professional development. It requires the development of ongoing opportunities where the culture of collaboration and interaction learning environment encouraged that necessitate adequate and uninterrupted institutional support existed. In the process, however, there is a need for adaptability and flexibly based on feedback gained from participants and changes observed in educational practice so that relevant, valuable and timely practice is maintained in the process.

Constraining/expediting factor: the last point to be discussed for the purpose of this study is considering threats/constraining and/or expediting factors towards the implementation of CPD programs. Among many hindering factors, time constraints, lack of adequate resource, absence of administrative support, teachers' misconceptions about the values and relevance of the program, lack of contextualized contents and approaches, imposition of top management without considering participants needs are some major constraining factors to mention.

Some of the enabling factors have already been discussed under planning subsection. However, it is important to mention some major factors that require attention among which needs assessment is very prominent. Literature and personal experiences in our context show that teachers' professional development programs design is top-down approach without considering participants interests. According to Schmoker (cited in Addis, Amera & Solomon, 2024), teacher education must adopt a bottom-up approach that is different from our experience. They argue that the starting point is an internal view (arising from the teachers themselves) of teaching rather than an external one (imposed on them by an outsider). They favor bottom-up approach that supports the identification of audience types with their relevant interest.

The other important enabling factor is setting clear objectives and contents that fit into the audience identified supported by the inclusion of their needs. As teachers can identify their weaknesses and strengths, they also know what they want to improve in their profession. Once teachers explain their needs and portrayed their interests, it is easily manageable to incorporate those needs into objectives and contents to be addressed in the program. This incorporating their needs and interests into the objectives set and the contents identified would encourage and motivate to participate in the program comfortably.

Another important factor that should not be ignored is adequate resource allocation. Resources that are essential for successful CPD program such as funding, time, scheduling, materials, handouts and/or guidelines, spaces or classrooms are important enabling factors for effective professional development programs. It is also equally important to evaluate the impact of the CPD program through collecting relevant data that could help to adjust and improve future similar programs. Collecting feedback from participants and concerned bodies about the implementation process and gained outcomes from the

practice so that successful CPD programs are in place as an ongoing and lifelong practice.

Research Design and Methodology

Setting and design of the study

The research setting of this study is Addis Ababa University. It was chosen for the opportunity it could provide to collect data from a variety of participants coming to the university with diverse experiences from across the country. The qualitative research method is used, It is based primarily on semi-structured interviews, focus group discussion and examination of relevant documents) to produce a case study of continuous professional development. Qualitative research emphasizes opinions and feelings of people and their lived experience as understood by the respondents regardless of quantification and it provides accounts of CPD programs from a variety of perspectives as well as detailed description of the programs as they were implemented (Yin, 2003).

The researcher selected a case study in part, because it would enable him to investigate and describe in detail how CPD is being applied. More particularly, Schramm (cited in Yin, 2003) explains that the kind of issues which the researcher was interested to investigate confirmed the researcher's view was the right approach.

Though case study is preferred for describing on particular event and has many advantages, the challenge is to defend traditional prejudices against the approach among which the difficulty of generalization. In this respect, the researcher does not too much concern about the issue of generalizability. The research was designed in the first instance to provide data which could inform the development of the particular program, i.e. school-based continuous professional development.

The researcher could say that it does not matter whether the case is generalizable or not because the researcher began the investigation by referring to the wider international literature about continuous professional development of teachers and it is perfectly possible to test the general findings, which come out of that literature against the specific experience of the program in Ethiopia. This is to use individual case not necessarily to produce generalizable theory but to test some general propositions that are already established.

Population of the study

Population of the study includes all 2022 entry PGDT trainee teachers attending the course 'Teachers as Reflective practitioners in five sections from different five departments. The researcher had the intention to select forty five participants out of the five sections attending the PGDT training program and then, design survey questionnaire. The selection criterion was personal willing or choice where interested trainee individuals raise their hands and be recognized by the researcher. Only three of the sections and ten of the aforementioned number of trainees were found willing to participate in the study.

The samples were drawn from English, Amharic and Health and physical education sections while the remaining two (ICT and Biology) sections trainees were not interested to participate in the study. Accordingly, ten trainees, i.e. two mentors (coded as Mentor1 and Mentor2), six teacher trainee participants of CPD (coded as Teacher1-Teacher6), a Supervisor and a Coordinator of CPD supervising and coordinating at woreda level, respectively in which the category (being mentor or otherwise) of the participants was accidental. The researcher found the number of willing participants inadequate to use quantitative method and thus, forced to employ qualitative research method with case study design.

In fact, one of the trainee participants (coded as Teacher1) did not attend the interview as per the scheduled time. He was not present in the researcher's afternoon class as well. After class, the researcher met Teacher1 in front of his office sitting on a broken chair. They both greeted each other and entered into the researcher's office. Teacher1 requested an apology for not availing himself for the interview due to his young child's health problem.

After discussing the details and the present situation of would be interviewee, the researcher asked whether or not Teacher1 can continue his participation in the study. Teacher1 responded that *I am not well settled and I must go back home again …* (August 10, 2022 at 3:15-3:50 pm).

Data Collection Instruments

The data collection instruments for the study were interview and a single focus group discussion. Accordingly, the researcher continued the study with 9 (5 females and 4 males) participants. The schedule for the interview and group discussion was arranged haphazardly because everybody is busy to attend and/or conduct class or to go to library to complete assignments. With this understanding and agreement, the researcher informed them when he would be in his office so that every respond would come to the researcher's office and conduct the interview as per their convenient time.

The interviews were conducted in Amharic in the researcher's office (OCR 308.4) at Addis Ababa University based on the consent of each respondent. Similarly, Amharic was used to conduct single focus group discussion but a different broader room was used on the same building to accommodate all members of the group discussion.

The intention of a single focus group discussion was to probe for critical, competing, contradicting and challenging views among

responses that might lead to a different conclusion emerging from different schools with various exceptions in their contexts. This time, the group discussion venue was changed to a room with sufficient chairs found on the same building. Accordingly, the researcher guided the group to focus only on the five themes and reminded them the detail intention of the themes.

All the interviews and the single group discussion responses were fully recorded using Galaxy A10 cell phone apparatus, transcribed, translated into English and compiled for analysis. Care has been taken in translating the responses in order not to miss the original sense of the respondents.

Data Analysis Methods

After translating the data, the researcher then generated analytical statements to condense the large quantity of collected data in a meaningful and direct response to the basic research questions. The purpose of generating analytical statements was to see and test whether or not the data were relevant to the basic questions, whether or not they were helpful to respond to the questions, and whether or not there was a need for more specific data to be collected (Bassey, cited in Yin, 2003). These analytical statements helped the researcher to identify the data that were to stand, the ones that need to be modified, or rejected and finally presented them as per the issues they fitted into.

Finally, the collected data were categorized under the five analytical statements- perceptions and practices of trainee respondents about CPD activities, planning CPD initiatives, and efficacy of CPD practices. Based on the categories, the responses given were read repeatedly to internalize the meaning of the message/s and then gave meaning to the message/s addressed during the interview and focus group discussion. The researcher started analysis of the collected data

immediately rather than waiting until all data were collected. This helped the researcher to save time and energy and to avoid having to deal with too much data at once.

Ethical considerations

To maintain anonymity of the respondents, I coded them using numbers, i.e. teacher1-teacher6, mentor1 and mentor2, and simply C and S where the participants are not more than one. The selected participants were informed about the purpose of the study, things required of them, their rights to participate or refuse and quit participation any time whenever they feel uncomfortable. To this effect, semi-structured open ended interview questions were prepared to initiate discussion, which was subject to modification as the need arose. The interviews were supported and strengthened by document analysis.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

The data collected from participants through semi-structured open ended interview questions and focused group discussion were organized into five thematic areas in line with the research questions and the analysis follows the identified five thematic areas.

Teachers' Perception of Continuous Professional Development

The four categories of the respondents, i.e. a coordinator, a supervisor, mentors and teacher participants were asked how they value teachers' continuous professional development activities. Except the variations in wording, almost all the participants understand CPD in the same way with good awareness about what CPD is and its benefits. Among the respondents, mentor1 has the following to say:

> *Continuous professional development is a means by which teachers improve their teaching skills through participating in a number of activities that may include seminars, exhibition, workshops, and visits to different educational institutions (schools, colleges, universities). It is a means by which teachers share experiences among themselves and other concerned bodies (supervisor, principal, etc.) in a form of discussion, presentation, etc. to learn from their interaction so that their teaching skills, approaches, attitudes is enhanced* (Interview response by Mentor1 on August 10, 2022 at 3:15-3:50 pm).

This response proves that the participant knows what CPD is, its benefits and the strategies to be utilized to achieve the objectives of the program. This response again confirms that the participant understands that CPD can enhance teachers' teaching performance through participating in different CPD activities.

Mentor2 also shares Mentor1's views about the concept and values of CPD. However, she has a different perspective regarding teachers' understanding about the program. She explains:

> *Majority of the teachers know the meaning and purposes of CPD and what it encompasses. However, a significant number of the teachers do not perceive CPD and its components adequately. From my personal experiences, I face questions from many teachers about the meaning and purposes of CPD. I feel these teachers' understand CPD as the only training that takes place in colleges or universities, i.e. they understand CPD cannot be provided out of the formal training in educational institutions… Some ask me when and where they would take their CPD training* (Response to interview by M1 on August 10, 2022 at 10:00-10:50 am).

According to Mentor2's response, the majority of the teachers know the importance and purposes of CPD but a large number of teachers do not understand what CPD is and the contents it covers. Such ignorance of the purpose and importance of the program can clearly harm teacher practitioners' participation level in CPD activities. This is to say that some segment of the teacher population might expect a training program different from CPD, which may in turn de-motivate these teachers' participation in such a program; it may even lead to develop misconceptions about CPD activities.

A participant coordinator also has common feeling with Mentor1 and describes that many teachers do perceive CPD in a diverse way, at least, with different levels. He reiterated his feeling as,

> *Many teachers are aware of what CPD is and what is required of them. They perceive it with good motivation and try to participate in the activities. However, there are few teachers that do not share the same understanding, which requires more awareness creation activities* (Response to interview by the Coordinator on August 17, 2022 at 1:00-1:15 pm).

It can be inferred from this response that though majority of the teachers have good awareness and understanding with regards to continuous professional development programs, there are also teachers with low awareness about the importance of CPD including its approaches and the requirements. In addition, it is also safe to conclude that such a gap minimizes practitioners' participation in CPD activities.

This issue of awareness about the purpose and importance of CPD was also brought to the attention of participant teachers' category. It is fortunate that all participant teachers are aware of the purposes and importance of CPD. That is, they have good understanding about what CPD is and how important it is. To substantiate their understanding

with evidence, it is worth noting to cite what one of them has explained. He states:

> *Even if I may not represent all the teachers that are participating in CPD training, I feel that everybody knows because we sometimes discuss with our colleagues. I personally know that CPD is updating and acquainting oneself with modern approaches of teaching that leads to improvement of students' performances. That is all; this improving students' performance also indicates the importance of continuous professional development trainings…* (Response to interview by Teacher3 on August 17, 2022 at 3:50-4:15 pm).

This participant teacher believes that he knows what CPD is and its importance. However, he is skeptic in explaining others' knowledge about conceptual awareness and the importance of CPD programs. This implies that there is doubt that everybody participating in CPD training has enough awareness. However, this response of the participant teacher is evidence that majority of teacher practitioners have awareness about the concept of CPD and its outcomes.

One of the good things from this participant response that says … *we sometimes discuss with our colleagues*' indicates that there are some form of dialogue among teachers which can be considered as one aspect of CPD; because such discussions can encourage sharing of ideas among teachers and enable them to gain some form of awareness if practiced continuously. In fact, the other side of the response may also signal the existence of low awareness of the respondent in which the respondent might expect for more formal form of training.

This theme can be summarized that almost every teacher is conscious on the concept of CPD and its purposes. Though teacher practitioners are aware of the purposes and the importance of accomplishing CPD

activities is invaluable, it seems clear that some segment of the teaching population lacks proper awareness to take part in CPD activities.

Planning Continuous Professional Development of Teachers

Teachers throughout the nation are required to go through continuous professional development trainings to underpin students' learning achievements. It is, therefore, imperative to know how CPD programs are planned and who the planner is. The question here is who do the planning of the CPD program? In principle, teachers are required to plan their CPD program. In this regard, the participants were asked who the planner of CPD program is. Teacher2 explains the planner of CPD program in her school as follows:

> *We are required to participate in CPD training with our cluster. We are prescribed and forced to participate in the training as has been planned at the top-management levels with those cluster schools. What I am sure is that I have never been asked about identification of my CPD needs. I am simply obliged to attend in accordance with the needs of the management…* (Response to interview by Teacher2 on August 17, 2022 at 4:30-5:05 pm).

The researcher was curious to know members of the top management and asked her to tell him if she knows. She was not sure who they are but listed the principals and unit leaders of each school including the cluster supervisor. Teacher2's response confirms that CPD training needs are planned by principals and unit leaders of each school and cluster supervisor without consulting individual teacher's needs. This response leads to conclude that individual teachers' CPD training needs have not been identified by the teachers themselves. This type of planning without knowing individual teachers' training needs is an imposition that distresses teachers' participation interest in the training

program; at least, it could minimize teachers' participation due to the fact that the training does not match with individual teacher needs and interests.

Participating CPD supervisor from Woreda Education Office was asked to explain who prepares the plan of CPD training program. He responded that he collects training manuals from Zonal Education Office and send the manuals to schools so that teachers receive the training as per the guidelines outlined in the manual. He has the following to say:

> *I collect the training manuals from Zone Education Office and distribute to all the schools found in my woreda education structure. Except receiving the training manuals, I am not sure by whom and where the manuals are prepared* (Response to interview by the Supervisor on August 21, 2022 at 2:30-2:50 pm)

As has been observed by Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2001) and Spinney and Jordan (2004), collaboration and communication between educational content developers or providers and academic staff need to be taken into account rather than simply using a transmission model of teaching. That means, educational developers must work in collaboration with the teaching force to support their curriculum and professional development as professional development activities are not something that should be planned on behalf of another group. Planning such an important work through proxy does not suffice the purpose of enhancing teachers' knowledge, skills and attitudes.

However, the responses of Teacher2 and the supervisor go against the views of Spinney and Jordan (2004) and Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2001). Albeit collaboration and communication between professional development planners and the participants, the responses demonstrate that participants and/or CPD practitioners do not know how the

program was planned and who the planner was. In fact, asking 'How a supervisor is ignorant of knowing the planner/s of the training manual at least, the institution'? seems important.

In any case, it can be inferred that the training manual does not fit into trainee participates' interests and needs. They simply participate in the training program which cannot help them improve their deficiencies due to the mismatch between their individual needs and the training manual contents. This means, the professional development programs are prepared without considering individual trainees' needs lacking relevance to the individual teacher's professional development initiatives.

In fact, professional development programs are holistic by nature as the end goal of professional development is to improve learners' learning achievement; thus, satisfying individual needs in improving deficiencies may be questionable unless aligned with school needs. However, participants were asked whether or not the professional development efforts satisfy their interest. Teacher4 explains her concern as follows:

> *I know professional development activities are helpful in enhancing knowledge if practiced properly. But the way it is practiced is not encouraging. Even if I am willing to participate in the training, the activities may not be relevant to my gap I want to improve. Look! I am teaching Amharic that requires the training contents that are not meant to improve my subject area problems. Why should I attend professional development activities that are not relevant to my deficiency? For instance, why should I participate in administrative activities if I am not administrator of the school? Why should I participate in methodological activities while I am poor in my subject knowledge? So, I must identify my personal needs that enables me solve my personal*

weaknesses. Priority must be given to me to identify my needs that can help me to be productive focusing on my personal weaknesses (Response to interview by Teacher4 on August 18, 2022 at 9:15-9:45 am).

According to this response, individual teacher's involvement in planning professional development initiatives is less considered or fully ignored. In this regard, less recognition has been given to the grass root practitioners' needs, in a way emphasizing institutional needs. Accordingly, it can be concluded that the contents of professional development initiatives seem general chat that may not be relevant to individual teachers' needs. Ignoring individual teacher's needs in planning the program could de-motivate individual teachers to participate in the training. In fact, this can be argued from the school points of views. Including some all-inclusive professional development initiatives may be relevant to the school improvement in general and learners learning progress in particular are required. The point to be understood here is the alignment of individual teacher's needs with the school all-inclusive needs.

Though maintaining individual needs in CPD programs may not be ignored, Teacher4's response can be argued from the point view of awareness of the participant. It seems that Teacher4 wants to limit every CPD activities to individual needs by avoiding or, at least, minimizing institutional needs. The respondent seems lacking sufficient awareness about the relevance of CPD activities where all activities that can serve institutional improvement (methodology and administration in her words, etc.) ought to be included in the training program. In general, it seems that there is a gap in understanding the contents of CPD and the types of activities it should include.

It is also evident from a participating coordinator's response in answering whether the program satisfies individual needs or not. Though skeptic, he explains that CPD activities do not consider

individual needs but prepared somewhere else that emphasizes institutional needs more. He further clarifies how it is practiced in the following manner:

> *I know from the questions participants ask. For example, one of the teachers asked me why not he works on activities that he wants to know more. Let me use his own words roughly that says, 'I know how to teach meanings of words… but I have difficulties in teaching grammar; not only the methodology but also the contents to be taught. I want to improve my grammar knowledge and how to teach it. Otherwise, I am getting bored and de-motivated to follow the program.' I can, therefore, conclude that individual teacher's needs have not been considered in planning the CPD activities* (Response to interview by Coordinator on August 17, 2022 at 1:30-2:10 pm).

It is necessary to consider a number of influential factors while designing professional development initiatives. Loucks-Horsley (1998), for instance, observes that different contextual factors that influence professional development design should thought through students, teachers and classroom practices (curriculum, instruction, assessment, and the learning environment), policies, resources, organizational structure and culture, parents and the community, and history of professional development. This implies that professional development design demands multi-dimensional factors beyond the teacher and institutional needs. Putting all together, the discussions under the preceding theme confirms that CPD planning is limited to few factors (teachers and schools), even emphasizing on school factors that is not in line with Mosha's (2006) visionary teacher development. On the other hand, this finding confirms previous research findings that iterate CPD programs in Ethiopia are suffering from top-down approach (Tsion, 2013; Esayas & Rao, 2021; Ewnetu and Firdisa, 2010).

Teachers' Current Practice of Continuous Professional Development

The responses given by the coordinator augmented the researcher's curiosity to know more about planning CPD activities in schools. He, therefore, interested to visit two schools in Addis Ababa City Administration to observe how the schools plan and implement CPD and found the following results prepared in Amharic.

Table 1: "A" Primary School Individual Continuous Professional Development Plan

Name of the teacher: _____

No.	Priority issue in CPD	Who is the participant in CPD?	Who was given responsibility	When to start and complete	What change do you want to see
1					
2					
3					

Table 2: Individual Time Allotment for "A" Primary School Individual Continuous Professional Development Plan

N0.	Issues I gave Priority as a school teacher	Source of Need	Who participates with me	Total time 60 hrs.
1				
2				
3				

Module for Continuous Professional Development Improvement

Individual Module Plan

1. Teacher's individual module title (*space has been given to write on for each of the activities under each number*)
2. What change do you want to see?
3. Participants

4. Management (managements)
5. Date to start and complete
6. Time allotment for the teacher's module

Title of the module	Periods	Time required

7. Venue
8. Required inputs

Types of the period	Objective of the period	Time required

To be clear with the contents contained in the tables for CPD planning, the researcher first want to know whether this is what the participants use in their respective schools. The participants confirmed that this process is common for every school but the language may vary depending on the medium of instruction. The researcher was aware to search for other supporting materials such guidelines and training manuals but could not find any of these materials in the school the researcher visited.

With the above background, the researcher asked whether or not this practice is effective where the respondents were skeptic and suspicious. For instance, Teacher5 explains her concern as follow:

> *The plan seems good and achievable, but difficult to measure as to how far it has been understood. Take the 60 hours issue; what do we do with all these hours? On one hand, we do not work on all these hours. I am confident to say that we may only use two-*

four hours to accomplish the identified tasks. Even we work during these hours when we are informed the supervisor would come. We never work on CPD activities willingly unless we are forced by some influencing factors such as supervisor's visit or mentor's impact, if we have that type of knowledgeable and committed person. Otherwise, we plan during the beginning of the academic year and complete at the end of the year, which may not take more than two days. Can we, then, say the practice is effective? For me, it is not (Response to interview by Teacher5 on August 17, 2022 at 10:00-10:20 am).

This response has three implications; on one hand, it informs that the time given for CPD is 'too much' in relation to the activities to be completed. In fact, the time issue is not as such crucial in completing CPD activities as has been observed by Sims and Fletcher-Wood (2020) and Lynch et al (2019), because time can be compromised as far as the contents are valuable and effective for the thought purpose. It is also evident from the response that participating teachers are required to simply copy, list and/or fill tasks in tables that have no or less contributing effect on what they are expected to do in their actual teaching classroom. This, in turn questions the relevance of the contents to be completed (Cf. Esayas and Rao, 2021).

Second, the response also communicates that there is no personal interest, even the mentors or the supervisors to accomplish the activities unless there exists influential factors such as supervisor's or woreda education officials' visit. This confirms that teachers are discouraged to complete the tasks for different reasons; on one hand, prioritizing issues (tables 1 and 2) and enlisting individual module plan (1-10) may not have relevance to classroom practices and thus do not contribute to their actual work improvement. On the other hand, discouraged interest to complete CPD activities might be the result of overlooking individual teacher's CPD needs during planning the program.

Rather, the researcher found a more helpful guideline document in 2009 by the Ministry of Education, which the researcher accessed it from the ministry's website in the course of conducting this study. It provides the details about purposes of CPD, how to plan, areas it could cover, school needs, and individual teachers' needs and how these needs could be incorporated into a plan that serves all the participants, specifically individual teacher, the school and other concerned bodies. It also indicates directions as to how the practices are assessed and evaluated. From the researcher point of view, it seems that some of the details of the contents have been reduced to make it manageable.

Third, the response also shows that teachers are suspicious of mentors and supervisors knowledge and commitment (e.g.… *if we have that type of knowledgeable and committed person)* to support teacher participants' completion of CPD activities. In addition, the response proves that teacher participants may look-down the mentors, coordinators or supervisors and thus will develop weakling interest to effectively partake in completing the activities.

Based on the information the researcher witnessed from the schools he visited, he asked the reason why they could not refer to the guidelines and training manuals sent to the school for further clarification.

Teacher5 was a little bit seemed nervous and promptly asked "*to which guideline and training manual are you referring?"*

The researcher want to be as diplomat as possible and said, 'I heard from supervisors that they collect these materials from Zone Education Offices and distribute them to each school under their respective coverage. In fact, I visited schools in Addis Ababa but could not find none …'

Repeating Teacher6's response in similar manner, she interrupted the researcher and said,

I swear to God! Why should I lie? I do not know the existence of these materials in my school. I did not ask and no one told me. After all, do you think what you could not find in Addis Ababa would be available in country side schools far away from here?" (Response to interview by Teacher5 on August 17, 2022 at 10:00-10:20 am).

And then, went on murmuring something unheard for seconds.

This response implies that teachers serving in country side do not get necessary materials in their respective schools. In addition to scarcity of supporting materials (e.g. guidelines and training manuals in this case), it is also challenging to find efficient and committed assessors. On one hand, there is no clearly stipulated assessment guiding principles. On the other hand, teachers are suspicious of the evaluators' commitment, knowledge, fairness and responsibility as they could be either principals, coordinators, mentors or supervisors. In general, CPD practices are suffering from lack of practical contribution to the classroom scenario due to irrelevant content, absence of assessment mechanisms and guidelines, and inadequate or non-existent of effective and committed assessors.

This response increased the researcher's curiosity to ask whether or not the participant mentors have similar feeling with Teacher5. Mentor1 smiled and turned his face to the researcher and explained his feeling as follows:

I, as a mentor have never been respected. Rather, I do have a nick name 'Gashe polisu' (considering him as a police watcher because he asks them to complete the activities now and then) *because I usually tell the participating teachers to work hard and accomplish the required tasks on time. They feel that they are working to satisfy my needs. I really sometimes feel embarrassed to serve as a mentor because I have no capacity to enforce them*

unless they are ready to do by themselves. I simply nag them whenever I find them sitting idle. They collect the modules at the beginning of the year, keep it somewhere else until supervisor comes. The supervisor has capacity to enforce them to complete the activities at the end of the year for reporting, at least that they have completed CPD activities. If supervisor comes in between they may work the tasks and stop as the supervisor leaves. We know each other; even the school principal knows it but no one influences anyone. It is with this understanding that we serve as mentors (Response to interview by Mentor1 on August 16, 2022 at 1:45-2:10 pm).

The researcher wants to crosscheck with the response of the second mentor. She confirmed the same but she was not sure whether or not she had nick name similar to mentor1. Again, the researcher developed an interest to interview the supervisor for the second time to check if he knows teacher participants' low involvement in CPD. He was ready to be interviewed for the second time but there was a smiling emotion on his face that could be understood as 'how do I know teacher participants' low level of involvement in CPD?' However, he went on saying the following:

Everybody knows that teachers' participation in CPD activities is very low. I know too but there is no way to make them participate except through negotiation. This is not only the case of our woreda. I hear the same problem from other neighboring woredas and neighboring regional states when we meet each other (Response to interview by Supervisor on August 23, 2022 at 11:25-11:45 am).

In general, the responses presented under this theme confirm that teacher participants' involvement in CPD is low in many woredas, which is clear to all actors (principals, supervisors, coordinators, mentors) including the participant teachers with the fact that continuous

professional development activities are attempted to be done not to update or upgrade teachers' working capacity but to simply complete the activities only for reporting purpose.

Efficacy of Professional Development Practices

Participation in professional development practices is demanding as it brings behavioral change in practitioners' performance followed by improved learners' learning outcomes. The tables and the contents indicated thereof (Pp. 16-17) seem appropriate in some cases as they inform participants what they are required to fill in. Teachers can fill them in in any way but assume that participants filled in the tables correctly as per the questions asked; does it mean that teachers have completed CPD practices of the year? What do they do with the tables they filled in? Can this be considered as evidence that shows practicing CPD activities? If tables are filled in properly, what does it contribute to teachers' classroom practice and how? A single answer could not be found for all these and other similar questions from the respondents and the researcher as well,

As to Mosha (cited in Addis, Amera, & Solomon 2024: 155), teachers' positive view about CPD *"… seeks to acquire new knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and dispositions ... that include pride, self-esteem, teamwork, commitment, motivation, creativity, and vision…"* However, making teachers to accomplish such meaningless activities would demotivate teachers' interest leading them to develop misconceptions about the values of CPD that makes them reluctant to complete the task or not willing to participate at any cost. Then, it seems that teachers' lack of willing to participate in CPD initiatives is the result of planning irrelevant, meaningless and impractical CPD activities that do not contribute to their real classroom practice.

In addition, filling in the tables lacks clarity as how to do and accomplish the tasks and how it could be integrated with the classroom

practices. Furthermore, it has been discussed somewhere else in the literature review that guidelines have been sent to all the schools but none of these guidelines were mentioned to be used and facilitate working procedures on the tasks identified. More importantly, the activities thought to be filled in the tables do not have purpose in relation to actual classroom practice.

In general, efficacy of CPD initiatives won't be considered unless relevant, purposeful, motivating and meaningful initiatives are in place with clear criteria, comprehensive and practical measurement principles. As improved CPD outcomes can be observed in a classroom performance, measuring effectiveness of the completed CPD activities (filling tables and enlisting contents in the tables in this context) is difficult to clearly assess. Filling tables and enlisting issues may be completed effectively but difficult to measure the effectiveness of the activities as they are not practiced in performing classroom tasks. Referring to responses of respondents under subsections III and V can further ascertain the ineffective practice of CPD initiatives.

Factors that inhibit or facilitate the practice of teachers' continuous professional development

Based on the responses provided under theme III, the researcher want to know the reasons as to why teacher participants' involvement in CPD is low and the program is ineffective. The supervisor participated in this study articulated the reasons why teacher participants lack interest and why the program was found ineffective. He addressed his concern in his long response as follows:

> *The most serious problem behind low participation level is teachers' lack of commitment and dedication. I feel that they do not understand the purpose of CPD is to help them to improve their performance. As the result, they do not value it. Secondly, the teaching profession by itself is less valued by the society in*

general and by the government in particular that affects teachers' loyalty to the profession. If a renowned minister devalue teachers as 'walgie memhiran' to mean 'dormant teachers' compared to Goshu Woldie's speech in Asmara in 1984 'our teachers are our Gold'. How can teachers be motivated to proceed with their career? To me, the only means to increase teachers' participation level is to value teaching as a noble profession that is comparable to other professions. Thus, I would suggest the importance of valuing the teaching profession in general. It is equally important to consider individual teacher's needs be valued to prioritize his/her needs, which should be aligned with the school needs. Otherwise, (he shacked his head and kept quite) (Response to interview by Supervisor on August 23, 2022 at 11:25-11:45 am).

Being curious that he would add something to his response, the researcher tried to probe him if he could say something new on his previous response but he said "*I think this is enough*" and the researcher understood the supervisor is not willing to add more comments.

This excerpt provides a reader with two major factors. The first major factor confirms that teachers' absence of commitment and dedication due to lack of clear understanding about the value of CPD. Teachers do not take CPD seriously as a means to advance their professional competence because they are forced to work on activities that have no contribution to their classroom performance. This in turn emanates from teachers' low commitment and dedication they have for the teaching profession in general.

The second major factor that could be understood from the supervisor's response is concerned with the value of the teaching profession. As has been explained by the supervisor, it seems that teachers are de-motivated due to the value given to the teaching

profession, especially that addressed by the minister as 'dormant teachers' publically. Albeit the teaching profession was started to be eroded during the Derge regime due to recruiting 'teachers' with no professional training, the public speech given by the then minister seems frustrated and de-motivated teachers to participate on CPD activities in particular and led them to develop dilemma about the teaching profession in general.

As to the supervisor, the way out to overcome such discouraging participation of the teachers in CPD requires considering individual teacher's needs to be prioritized by themselves that are aligned with their respective school needs. The supervisor importantly advises to consider teachers' interests emphasizing on the improvement of their weaknesses that would help them develop competence in classroom practice. This could also mean that inclusion of contents relevant to and applicable in the classroom situation is demanding to minimize teachers' reluctance, at least, to participate in continuous professional development activities. In general, it seems important to focus on content that empower teachers to be competent in their classroom performance.

Finally, the supervisor's response implies the importance of valuing the teaching profession in general. As to the supervisor, improving the value of teaching profession may initiate and contribute to the improvement of teachers' dedication and commitment to their career development. From these discussion points of views, it is appropriate to conclude that considering the teaching profession as a noble and valuable career in general and teachers as cherished professionals in particular would encourage them to partake in all relevant career development initiatives.

The last question the researcher raised to the participants was about the factors exactly hinder or facilitates teachers' participation in continuous professional development activities. Almost, all the six CPD

participant subjects have communicated similar views except in wording. Therefore, the researcher limited his presentation only to few participants. Accordingly, Teacher6 has addressed the following points regarding to factors that inhibit or facilitate continuous professional development practices.

> *The hindrances are many but the serious challenges are lack of resources; even we cannot get a single paper. We do not find guidelines that we may read to complete the activities. Secondly, the mentors are not capable to help and facilitate our work. As you go up to the management ladder, the concern for completing CPD activities is decreasing. For your wonder, they do not care to assess and differentiate my work from the others. If we, for example, ask the coordinators or supervisors to tell us how we could organize our CPD activities, they say: 'you should not worry this much; it is simply a matter of participation and there is no standard to organize your activities' rather than informing us how we could do the organization. There is no facilitating factor that I can mention except the reminder and nagging of the mentor* (Response to interview by Teacher6 on August 23, 2022 at 2:25-2:45 pm).

Though Teacher6 mentioned lack of paper as an example, it is clear from the response that teachers may not get reading materials including guidelines to be read. It seems that the attention given to CPD practice at policy level is high (see the background) while the value given to its completion at the lower level is discouraging and even can be said insignificant.

It is evident from Teacher6's response that the higher body (coordinators and supervisors in this case) are incapable to support CPD practices. The coordinators or supervisors are not willing to answer practicing teachers' enquiries regarding how to accomplish simple tasks (organizing activities in this context); they rather

discourage the participants that there is no worry to about undertaking the tasks seriously but to fit into the criterion by completing the activities as an evidence of participation. It is also easy to assume from this response that assessor/s (if any) do not differentiate the level of achievement among participant teachers' accomplished tasks except filling a form and reporting that 'teachers have completed CPD activities'.

In between, the researcher asked 'Didn't you find guidelines sent to your school by the supervisor?' Teacher6 promptly said:

> *I swear to God, I could not find anything. Why should I lie? I requested the supervisor and the principal even to the extent of 'favoring' me but found none. They rather said 'Please do it the way you understood because it is not meant for perfection* (Response to interview by Teacher6 on August 21, 2022 at 4:30-5:05 pm).

This response leads to reiterate two assumptions: first, both the school principal and the supervisor in this particular school are not willing to serve the teacher or they may not able to locate where they kept the materials sent by the supervisor (see page 14 supervisor's response). Second, the guidelines have not been distributed to Teacher6's school or might not yet have arrived the school thought or might be on the way. In both the cases, it is safe to conclude that there is information gap regarding the distribution of the materials and the guideline.

Then, the researcher moved to the next question and probed the reasons why they could not use technology such as their cell phones. Teacher6 laughed at the researcher and said,

> *Many of us do not use mobile to access information except few teachers who tell us information they read from Facebook; these teachers sometimes complain about network problem in*

addition to power interruption that I can witness. In fact, I personally have no capacity to use my telephone beyond calling and responding to calls (Teacher6 on August 23, 2022 at 2:25-2:45 pm*).*

Using technology could be challenging for those teachers working at remote may be due to power interruption, poor network connectivity and lack of capacity, which has been ascertained by the respondent. As has been addressed by Teacher6, it could be true using technologies may be difficult to access information due to many reasons but lack of capacity being serious.

Regarding CPD facilitating factors, Teacher6 responded in a negative manner, i.e. she could not mention any facilitating factor except continuous reminder of the mentors such as 'Gashe Polisu'. This, in fact, by itself is an encouraging effort though limited to a single concerned body because having a reminder echoes in the practitioners' mind, at least, to do something to escape from such continuous nagging of mentors.

The researcher wants to hear from the supervisor, the coordinator and the mentor what they could say about factors that facilitate or hinder CPD practices. He first asked the supervisor and he described the following:

> *There are many hindrances that might occur from different parties; the teachers are too reluctant and careless to work on CPD activities because they are forced to accomplish tasks that do not fit into their interests. Participating teachers are not happy with simply filling dashes/tables and enlisting issues that do not help them to solve their classroom problems, i.e. their needs have not been considered during planning the activities Secondly, teachers expect some incentives for their participation that differentiate them from the none-participating*

teachers. They do not value CPD if it does not contribute to their lives. Third, lack of resource such as finance, logistics, space and time, even classrooms are problems. Fourth, I could say coordination of the program is also a difficult activity. Experts from woreda education offices interference is one of the challenges to accomplish CPD activities as they want to work on the program the way they want to be done. They do not listen to the participants and coordinators about the context and the situation except reflecting on their interests. Finally, you should not also forget the value given to the teaching profession. As I have mentioned earlier, the low value given to the teaching profession is also one of the hindering factors that demotivate teachers' participation. I may be wrong, but some segment of the teaching force is not ready to continue with the teaching career (Response to interview by Supervisor on August 23, 2022 at 3:25-3:55 pm).

The excerpt provides evidence that the five factors enlisted by the supervisor have discouraging effect on teachers' participation level. According to this response, it seems futile to participate in CPD activities if it does not create difference between participating and none participating teachers either in recognition, or improvement of their teaching skills or incentives of any kind. The other important major hindering factor identified by the supervisor is woreda education office experts' imposition on all the participants (teachers, principals, mentors, coordinator and even supervisors) to undertake what they want without considering the existing context.

According to the supervisor, woreda education office experts try to exceed participating teachers' roles (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012) simply by imposing policy directions without properly understanding a particular school context and teachers' needs. This is to say that what has been planned by the schools and participating teachers may be considered ordinary to the experts and thus, they try to impose policy

directions on participating teachers in particular and the school community in general that may discourage teachers' participation in CPD activities.

The participating Coordinator also mentioned those hindering factors explained by the Supervisor but gave more emphasis on woreda education office experts' unnecessary imposition. He expresses his concern in the following manner:

> *… some woreda education experts want to get personal recognition and be considered as best workers by challenging schools. Though they have their leading roles, they sometimes go beyond their expected governing roles and do not want to accept teachers' planned works and even they sometimes down cast the value of teachers. I am suspicious of their knowledge about CPD and the school work environment but they try to enforce schools and teachers to do whatever they want to be done …* (Response to interview by Coordinator on August 23, 2022 at 4:10-4:25 pm).

In addition to what has been reiterated by the supervisor, it seems appropriate from this response to say that teachers' participation in CPD activities is highly affected by devaluing individual teachers' needs identified by the participating teachers. Especially, experts demand their feelings to be done rather than considering participating teachers' needs in particular and school needs in general.

As mentors have day-to-day contacts with participating teachers, the researcher was curious to ask the mentors if he could find something new regarding hampering and facilitating factors to practice CPD activities. However, none of the mentors said anything new but repeated the imposition of experts that they do not value participating teachers' plans and even the teachers themselves.

Finally, the researcher conducted a group discussion with all the nine participating subjects, who have already addressed his/her concerns individually.

Teacher6, a little bit elder than the others was curious about the purpose of the group discussion and asked:

> *I am a little bit confused about this group discussion. I personally said whatever I know about CPD; are we going to repeat what we have already said so that you would be able to capture things you missed during face-to-face interview or is there something different you are looking for?* (Group discussion response by Teacher6 on August 23, 2022 at 4:10-4:35 pm).

The researcher explained the aim of the group discussion and got ready to listen to the group members. Everybody was looking to one-an-other until Mentor1 broke the silence saying, *"Is there anyone who has nick name like me? I am a mentor in my school and my nick name is 'Gashe Polisu'"* (Group discussion response by Mentor1 on August 23, 2022 at 4:10-4:35 pm).

Everybody broke into simultaneous laugh sincerely that could not stop for about a minute or so. However, the researcher raised a question in between that refers to theme one- are all teacher professionals aware of the concept of CPD, its purpose and areas of focus? Teacher5 up raptly and emotionally reiterated the following concerns:

> *I can say yes; almost majority of my school professionals know the concept, purpose and the focus areas of CPD. But they are not willing to complete activities because of a number of hindering factors- resource and capable mentors or supervisors, guidelines, committed leaders or coordinators are inadequate or non-existent, the activities are irrelevant with no contribution to the classroom teaching and completing the*

activities has no benefit either for the students or the teachers, even differentiating between the participating and none participating teachers to mention few. Above all, CPD is politicized; look! Principals and supervisors are politically affiliated appointees with no merits and they evaluate and interpret everything through political lens. There is no way to speak your mind professionally; otherwise, I believe everybody knows what CPD is (Group discussion response by Teacher5, August 23, 2022 at 4:10-4:35 pm)*.*

Either the researcher or the group members did not expect any response with in this speed. As can be understood from the response, many of the points have been reiterated in the previous face-to-face interviews except the last point. According to Teacher5, there is no ways to express one's professional views as whatever has been said is given meaning from the political points of views. This response, thus, strengthens the Woreda education office experts' unnecessary intervention into CPD activities in particular and the school system in general to the extent of down casting teachers and the school community including the supervisors.

This is to say that Woreda education office experts and the principals have power relationship that capacitate them to interpret policy directions the way they understand politically, which, in turn affects teachers' beliefs and practices with particular reference to CPD and the teaching profession as a whole.

The supervisor also agreed with Teacher5's views and said: "*She took from my mouth, i.e. she said what I was intending to say. Yes, they have power relationship and determine what they say is right but not the reality*" (Group discussion response by Supervisor, August 23, 2022 at 4:10-4:35 pm)*.*

Mentor2 raised hand and said: "*If I am allowed*". The researcher allowed her to continue and she went on expressing her concern.

> *You are right! (*Looking at the supervisor*) People who are endowed with power do not understand the reality. They believe that they are right and always right but not the reality. I may take longer time to tell you my personal example. I remember, it was on Monday afternoon. The supervisor came to my school and started collecting completed CPD activities, which I did not complete believing that I would do it till the deadline, i.e. Friday. But the supervisor allowed me to finish by Tuesday morning; otherwise, he said, 'I will report that your CPD activities are incomplete'.*
>
> *I informed him that I was so busy due to overload work (Secretary, Literature Club; Chairwoman, Theatre Club; Coordinator, Disability Group; member, school social committee, a wife and a mother) in addition to teaching English for thirty periods per week with sixty four students in four sections. 'How can I complete within this short time? I can only submit by the deadline, Friday' but he simply said, 'that is your responsibility'. The conflict went on but better to stop here. What I am saying it could be true for many teachers, especially for female teachers. Though this is a particular case, anyone can be challenged by the principal, supervisor or education office experts because they have power to decide on teachers' activities and teachers' fates if you like. I said all these because I am, at least, free from my school 'decision makers' this time, Sorry for my non-stop narration!* (Group discussion response by Mentor2, August 23, 2022 at 4:10-4:35 pm).

Putting all these together, especially the group discussion, it is safe to conclude that teachers are in challenges of different adversity such as

political power, workload, and professional uncertainty as those groups can decide on their fates.

It seems evident from this discussion that the points to be discussed under the planning theme has been already addressed because teachers are powerless to reflect and plan their CPD activities and even difficult to practice what they have already planned. Thus, the researcher decided to direct the discussion to effectiveness of their continuous professional development practices and invited the members if they have something to say on this regard.

The members start to look at one-an-other and took minutes to speak until Mentor1 (gashe polisu) says: "*I think we have discussed this issue in the interview. I have nothing to add in my part*" (Group discussion response by M1, August 23, 2022 at 4:10-4:35 pm).

Other members also shook their heads implying that there is nothing to say more. In fact, there is a sense of in hurry to finalize the discussion sooner. The researcher understood this and invited if they have some more points that hinder or facilitate their CPD practices. The coordinator raised his hand and said:

> *I think Teacher5 addressed the hindering factors very clearly, which I do share. In relation to facilitating factors, I cannot mention anything except the interest the planning body has to up-date teachers' teaching competence in order to improve students learning achievement; nothing more!* (Looked at all the members one after the other) (Group discussion response by Coordinator, August 23, 2022 at 4:10-4:35 pm).

Coordinator's response signaled the researcher to finalize the group discussion and invited the members if there are final words that they think missed from the discussion. "*To me*" said Teacher6 without raising her hand and waiting for the researcher's permission. "*To me,*

there is nothing that I can add; but I am proud of you because you allowed us to air our adversity free of our respective schools' afraid. Thank you so much! (Group discussion response by Teacher6, August 23, 2022 at 4:10-4:35 pm).

All the members including the researcher stood up and praised each other with sweet words they can choose. Especially, the researcher dismissed the group discussion session after praising all the participants for their time and energy throughout their stay together and wished them all a happy, joyful and prosperous upcoming new year to each of them and their respective family.

Conclusion

The collected and qualitatively analyzed data showed that though some segment of the teaching population has some confusion, almost the majority of the teachers perceive the purpose, importance and strategies of CPD positively. However, the practice in CPD activities is discouraging compared to the awareness level of the participants; this may be because of irrelevant contents for the actual classroom practice, absence of incorporating individual teacher's needs , resource inadequacy, and lack of clear and principle based assessment mechanisms to insensitive well performing groups. Furthermore, assignment of incompetent, irresponsible and uncommitted assessors and role conflict between the participating parties (teachers, principals, supervisors, coordinators and mentors) and Woreda education experts. The study, therefore, appeals for further nation-wide study that inform actions to design CPD initiatives that fit into individual teachers' needs aligned with institutional needs, provision of basic resources, assign knowledgeable and committed coordinators and supervisors based on merits and enforce principles in the process.

Limitations of the Study

As experienced in any research, this study may have its own limitations. This study lacks coverage of all the aspects (appropriateness, relevance and components of CPD manual prepared by the MoE) of continuous professional development of teachers, which should be given high attention as it is the most important document required to be utilized in the course of practicing CPD activities.

The other limitation may be respondents' artificiality. In fact, the researcher has explained the purpose of the study that has no relation to their personality, in any way and informed them to be as genuine as possible to the extent of quitting their participation in the research any time they feel uncomfortable. However, as they are students of the researcher, they may behave and act to questions artificially to satisfy the interests of the researcher that may affect the quality of the study.

It may also have limitation methodologically because it only employed interview and a single focused group discussion data collection instruments. The quality of the study would have been further strengthened had it used multiple data collection tools.

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