Current practices and perceived benefits of continuous professional development among early grade headteachers in Adentan Municipality, Ghana

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ABSTRACT

Continuous professional development (CPD) is crucial for enhancing teacher knowledge and skills, particularly for early grade headteachers who play a pivotal role in foundational education. This article explores the current state of CPD practices and the perceptions of its benefits among early grade headteachers in the Adentan Municipality of Ghana. Adopting a qualitative approach with a case study design, the study purposively sampled 13 early grade headteachers. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analysed using descriptive statistics for participant characteristics and thematic analysis for research questions. Findings reveal that current CPD practices in Adentan Municipality focus on engagement in various training activities, efforts towards effective CPD, and the promotion of innovative teaching practices. Headteachers perceived significant benefits, including the development of administrative and leadership skills, enhanced knowledge, and increased efficacy. Despite acknowledged benefits, challenges such as inadequate access to timely information, financial barriers, and a disconnect between CPD participation and promotion criteria were identified. This study underscores the need for more accessible, relevant, and intrinsically motivating CPD initiatives to support early grade headteachers effectively, aligning with adult learning principles and fostering deeper professional growth.

Keywords: Administrative skills, Development, Leadership skills, Perceptions, Professional, Teacher efficacy, Teacher knowledge.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is widely recognized as a primary catalyst for a society's economic, social, and political advancement, playing a crucial role in developing a highly skilled workforce and strengthening human capital resources necessary for national growth (UNESCO, 2017; World Bank, 2018). In this dynamic landscape, the continuous development of individual skills remains paramount. For any education system, the skill, dedication, and commitment of its teachers are fundamental to maintaining high standards (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). As the world rapidly evolves, educators cannot solely rely on their initial preparation but must continually refresh and expand their expertise and methodologies throughout their careers. Consequently, CPD has become indispensable globally for maintaining high-quality teaching and promoting teacher growth (Opoku et al., 2019).

In Ghana, the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Ghana Education Service (GES), with support from the Japanese government, initiated a framework in 2005 to formalize and institutionalize CPD at the basic education level (MoE, 2012). This effort prioritized providing teachers with in-service resources to enhance career advancement and uphold teaching excellence. CPD is broadly defined as the full range of career-long activities designed to strengthen teachers' practice, fostering sustained professional learning that propels them toward mastery (Desimone & Garet, 2015). It encompasses deliberate efforts to transform classroom practices, educators' mindsets, and ultimately, student outcomes (Kennedy, 2016). School leaders, including early grade headteachers, are pivotal in articulating a shared curricular vision and providing inspirational instructional leadership, which is critical for a school's success and the delivery of quality education (Gading, 2024).

The pre-school education level is fundamental to the success of every educational system (UNICEF, 2019). Early grade education is critical as it is seen as the most significant stage of any child's development, preparing children for primary school and fostering their holistic physical, social, emotional, and intellectual needs (Siraj et al., 2015). Therefore, heads of early grade departments bear an enormous responsibility to ensure children receive the best education for their

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intellectual development, necessitating continuous improvement in their skills in institutional leadership, organization, management, and supervision (Aheto-Tsegah, 2019).

Despite attempts by GES to enhance teaching and learning in early grade education, challenges persist. These include a lack of commitment and dedication to CPD programmes due to heavy work schedules, insufficient parental involvement, and a lack of training for effective parental engagement (Asare & Nti, 2014). There are also misconceptions that diminish early grade educators' capacity to contribute meaningfully to children's development, a gap that CPD could address (Salifu et al., 2024). Limited teaching staff, infrastructural deficits, and the absence of comprehensive CPD programmes further intensify these hurdles. The lack of government support for early grade programmes underscores the need for enhanced CPD to equip headteachers with the necessary skills and knowledge (Donkoh et al., 2020). Overall, the failure of education stakeholders to recognize and promote CPD for early grade education has left headteachers ill-prepared to tackle these pressing challenges.

Recent policies, such as the Teacher Licensure Examination, further necessitate CPD. This exam assesses candidates' mastery of their discipline, instructional methods, and teaching strategies, ensuring educators possess essential abilities to instruct learners effectively and foster positive learning atmospheres (NTC, 2021). It aims to grant professional certification and equip educators to meet National Teachers' Standards, thereby developing professional competence (GES, 2020). It is on this premise that the current study seeks to explore the practices and perceptions of early grade headteachers in relation to their CPD in the Adentan Municipality of the Greater Accra Region of Ghana.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1. The Global and Local Imperative for CPD
Education is globally recognized as a primary catalyst for national progress, strengthening human capital and developing a skilled workforce. The quality of any education system is significantly influenced by the skill and commitment of its teachers. Consequently, educators must continually refresh and expand their expertise, necessitating CPD throughout their careers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). CPD involves deliberate efforts to transform classroom practices, educators' mindsets, and student outcomes (Desimone & Garet, 2015), ultimately boosting learner achievement. Continuous professional development is among the key variables that inform teacher readiness to deliver in Ghana (Arthur & Obeng, 2023).

School leaders, including headteachers, are pivotal in providing instructional leadership critical for school success (Hallinger, 2018). Early grade education is considered the most significant stage of a child's development (Ishimine & Tayler, 2014), meaning headteachers in this sector require improved skills in institutional management and departmental supervision. In Ghana, the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service (GES) formalized a framework for CPD at the basic education level in 2005 to institutionalize in-service education and training.

2.2. Areas of critical CPD Need
A qualitative case study involving early grade headteachers in Adentan Municipality identified three main areas where continuous professional development is critically needed: Curriculum Focus; headteachers require specific training on the new standards-based curriculum, as many are accustomed to the old objective-based model. This need aligns with broader findings that school leaders require CPD in curriculum design, delivery, and evaluation (Hussin & Al-Albri, 2015; Chepkole et al., 2017). The introduction of a new curriculum acts as a "disorienting dilemma," making Transformative Learning Theory relevant, as CPD must facilitate critical reflection and the development of new meaning structures regarding pedagogy.

Also, ICT Integration, participants consistently expressed difficulties in effectively utilizing Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Needed training ranges from basic administrative uses (for example, Microsoft Excel for School-Based Assessments) to instructional uses (for example, PowerPoint for lesson delivery and downloading internet resources). The demand for ICT training aligns with global trends and research (Gemeda et al., 2023; Scherer et al., 2021) and is driven by the problem-centred approach of Andragogy. Successful ICT integration also relies on ongoing support and preparation, addressing both human and technological factors (Abuhmaid, 2011; Ming et al., 2010).

Moreso, Social and Emotional Learning (SEL): Headteachers emphasized that CPD should focus on the holistic needs of learners, extending beyond academics to address the emotional aspect of teaching. CPD in SEL requires challenging existing mental models and fostering a shift in perspective, making Transformative Learning Theory particularly relevant for achieving a well-rounded education (Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

Systemic and Individual Barriers to CPD
The study identified multifaceted barriers that inhibit participation in CPD, categorized into four main areas:
1. **Personal Factors (Workload and Finance).** This has to do with heavy workloads, including administrative duties and vetting lesson notes, which restrict the time headteachers have for CPD (Mahama et al., 2025). Also, financial constraints are evident as costs associated with CPD, such as travel and required payments to service providers, are significant barriers. These findings are consistent with global literature that identifies time constraints and financial

barriers as major obstacles (OECD, 2005; Desta et al., 2013; Tulu, 2019). Furthermore, some participants viewed CPD as "time wastage," indicating a misalignment between perceived benefits and immediate professional pressures (Abakah et al., 2022).

2. **Governmental and Institutional Factors:** Headteachers criticized the GES and the government for insufficient funding for CPD organization, a lack of resource persons, and delays in releasing capitation grants. Weak governmental support structures severely hamper the ability of headteachers to engage in professional learning. School Policies: Issues included policies compelling teachers to pay for CPD upfront with delayed reimbursement, or, conversely, a lack of clear human resource development policies to encourage CPD engagement. The inadequate time allotted for Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) also undermines collaborative learning.

3. **Teacher Motivation:** A lack of willingness among some teachers to upgrade themselves through CPD, particularly observed in older headteachers, was noted as a motivation issue. Adult learners are driven by internal motivation (Andragogy), and if the perceived rewards (SLT) for engaging in CPD are unclear or absent, participation declines. Sustaining engagement requires extrinsic factors like recognition and growth opportunities. In all these studies reviewed, we have not interrogated the current practice of CPD among early grade headteachers despite all odds. Also, the perceptions of early grade headteachers on the benefits of CPD in Adentan Municipality have not been explicit in the existing literature.

2.3. Research questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the current practice of CPD among early grade headteachers in Adentan Municipality?
2. What are the perceptions of early grade headteachers on the benefits of CPD in Adentan Municipality?

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopted the constructivist paradigm, which is characterized as a worldview or foundational set of beliefs that shapes one's actions and guides how research should be approached and conducted (Adom et. al., 2016). Constructivism embraces a relativist view of reality, asserting that notions like truth, rationality, or morality are shaped by individual experiences and contextual factors (Adom, et. al., 2016). It operates on the belief that there is no absolute reality or truth, but rather that reality is personally and subjectively formed. This contrasts with positivism, which views reality as objective and universally applicable. From an epistemological perspective, constructivism rejects a single, objective reality, contending that multiple realities exist, each shaped by individual mental and social constructs (Adom et. al., 2016). It seeks to uncover meaning through the interpretation of events and experiences, often described as interpretive in nature (de Sordi, 2024).

In line with the constructivist paradigm, this study is grounded in a theoretical perspective centered on CPD for headteachers, which emphasizes the evolving and context-dependent nature of professional growth in education. It focuses on how headteachers' professional development experiences are shaped by their unique contexts, challenges, and interactions with stakeholders. Accordingly, this study emphasizes the engagement of early grade headteachers in CPD within the Adentan Municipality, exploring how these experiences influence their professional practice and leadership. As CPD frameworks often encourage reflective and participatory learning, the research adopted a subjective methodological approach to understand the perspectives of headteachers. This approach aligns with the notion of contextualized professional learning, seeking to interpret educators' experiences within their specific societal and institutional environments (Allen, 2022).

The constructivist paradigm was appropriate for this study for two key reasons. First, it aligns with the researcher's belief that reality is multiple and context-dependent, rather than a singular, measurable entity (Adom et. al., 2016). This allowed for an exploration of how early grade headteachers experience and engage with CPD by interacting with them to gain insight into their perceptions and practices. Understanding this phenomenon required examining multiple realities and focusing on their current CPD practices and perceptions of its benefits. Key stakeholders, such as the headteachers themselves and other actors within the educational ecosystem, were observed and interviewed to uncover diverse perspectives on CPD and its impact. Second, the constructivist paradigm aligns with qualitative inquiry, which inherently opposes the notion that positivism is the sole method for uncovering truth. Understanding social situations, such as the dynamics within a school environment that shape professional development, requires qualitative approaches rather than reliance on statistical techniques or hypothesis testing (de Sordi, 2024). The truth lies within the lived experiences of those directly involved in the phenomenon, underscoring the need for active participation and co-construction of meaning.

The study adopted a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research is a form of social inquiry that focuses on how individuals perceive, interpret, and give meaning to their experiences to understand social phenomena and realities (Mohajan, 2018). It involves gathering and analysing non-numerical data to derive meaning, aiding in the understanding of social life by exploring specific groups or locations. This approach is comprehensive, characterized by exploration and discovery, unfolding in natural contexts and allowing researchers to engage deeply and uncover rich details through close interaction with participants' lived experiences (Leavy, 2022). Qualitative research emphasizes words, feelings, and

perceptions rather than quantification in data collection and analysis (Leavy, 2022). In this setting, the researcher acts as the "human instrument" of data collection, with real experiences forming the basis of interpretations (Mohajan, 2018). It has an interpretive character, aimed at discovering the meaning events have for the individuals who experience them, and the researcher's interpretations of those meanings (Gichuru, 2017). Qualitative research is concerned with finding answers to questions that begin with: why? How? Or in what way? (Leavy, 2022). It consists of a set of interpretive material practices that make the world visible, employing a multi-method, interpretive, naturalistic approach (Leavy, 2022).

This study adopted a case study research design. A case study is defined as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the 'case') in depth and within its real-world context" (Yin, 2018). It is an all-encompassing method covering the logic of design, data collection techniques, and specific approaches to data analysis. A case study facilitates the exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources, ensuring the issue is explored through multiple lenses, allowing various facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood (Creswell & Poth, 2016). This exposes the researcher to a variety of data, communicating the details of the phenomenon under study.

A case study design is considered appropriate when the focus is on answering "how" and "why" questions, when the behaviour of those involved cannot be manipulated, when contextual conditions are relevant to the phenomenon, or when boundaries between the phenomenon and context are unclear (Yin, 2018). Case studies present the reality on the ground. They can be conducted with various goals, such as to describe a phenomenon, test a theory, or generate a theory. In evaluation research, case studies are valuable for capturing the intricacies of a subject, including changes over time and surrounding conditions, allowing researchers to delve into the context of the case being studied.

However, the case study approach also has limitations. Its findings may not be easily generalizable due to context-specific results. Additionally, there is a risk of researcher bias in case selection, which might favour particular outcomes or theories (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Furthermore, conducting case study research can be resource-intensive (Tisdell et al., 2025).

The study was geographically delimited to the Adentan Municipality, which is one of the twenty-nine administrative districts in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. It was officially created on February 29, 2008, from the former Tema Municipal District. The Municipality has its administrative capital at Adenta East and spans an area of approximately 92.8 km². It is strategically located, bordered by Kpone Katamanso, Ashaiman, Ayawaso West, La Nkwantanang-Madina, Ledzokuku, and Krowor Municipalities, and intersected by key highways (Adenta Municipal Assembly, 2025). According to the 2021 Population and Housing Census, its population is 237,546, with 117,841 males and 119,705 females (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). Adentan Municipality was selected for this study because of its location in the capital city of Ghana.

A research population refers to a broad collection of individuals or objects that form the central focus of a scientific investigation, typically a well-defined group sharing similar characteristics. In this study, the research target population included all early-grade headteachers working in public schools within the Adentan Municipality. Specifically, this population comprised seventeen (17) early-grade headteachers from ten public schools located in the Municipality. These individuals represent key stakeholders responsible for early-grade educational leadership and management.

A sample is a smaller, more manageable portion drawn from a larger population, representing a subset that reflects the key characteristics of the broader group. The researcher employed criterion-based purposive sampling to select thirteen (13) early-grade headteachers. This sampling process focuses on selecting individuals who are assumed to possess specific knowledge and experience on the phenomenon of interest, enabling them to provide detailed information. This technique helped the researcher gather rich information from a smaller number of participants.

The primary data collection instrument used in this study was a semi-structured interview guide. Interviews are valuable for providing rich qualitative data and offer the flexibility to explore tangents. Semi-structured interviews are particularly useful for understanding the story behind a participant's experiences, allowing the interviewer to pursue in-depth information around the topic (Salomão, 2023). The interview guide comprised several sections: Section A covered the demographic background of participants, while Sections C and D delved into the research questions relevant to this article. Specifically, Section C explored the current status of CPD practice among early grade headteachers in the Adentan Municipality, and Section D investigated the perceptions of early grade headteachers on the benefits of CPD.

Primary data for the study were collected directly from the field through interviews administered by the researcher. First-hand information was gathered from participants after they had provided their opinions during the interviews. The interviews were administered to the sampled early grade headteachers in Adentan Municipality, who were identified with pseudonyms to ensure their anonymity (Saunders et al., 2015). Each interview lasted between thirty and forty-five minutes and was recorded using a voice recorder (Saunders et al., 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2014).

4. DATA ANALYSIS

Given the qualitative nature of this research, descriptive statistics, such as frequency counts and percentages, were utilized to analyze the background characteristics of the participants (Schreiber & Asner-Self, 2025). The interview data collected were subjected to thematic analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of the findings. This process involved generating codes to represent key ideas and patterns identified in the responses, followed by the development of themes

by grouping related codes to ensure they accurately captured the essence of the data. These themes were then carefully examined and defined in the context of existing literature and prior data, enabling a detailed and nuanced interpretation of the findings (Terry et al., 2017). This approach ensured that the analysis remained grounded in the data while aligning with established knowledge in the field.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Background Characteristics of Participants

The majority of participants (69.3%) were females, while male headteachers constituted 30.7%. This highlights the dominance of female headteachers in early grade education within the municipality. A large majority of participants (69.2%) were aged between 41 and 50 years, with one participant (7.7%) aged 30-40 years, and three (23.1%) aged 51-60 years. This indicates a cohort predominantly in their mid-career stage. One participant (7.7%) held a bachelor's degree, with none having a diploma. The majority held post-graduate diplomas (53.8%) or master's degrees (38.5%). This profile reveals a sound academic background for the headteachers. The largest proportion of participants (38.4%) had 11-15 years of teaching experience, while others had 5-10 years (30.8%) or 16+ years (30.8%). This indicates substantial professional experience. Most participants (61.5%) had 6-10 years of experience as headteachers, with some having 1-5 years (15.4%) and others 11-15 years (23.1%). This suggests that the participants were fairly experienced in their leadership roles, possessing adequate knowledge of CPD. A substantial proportion (84.6%) had served at least six years in their current schools as substantive headteachers. This implies an in-depth understanding and institutional memory concerning CPD for early grade headteachers in the municipality.

Research Question One: What is the current practice of CPD among early grade headteachers in Adentan Municipality?

The findings from the data suggest three key themes characterizing the current practice of CPD in the Adentan Municipality: engagement in training activities, effective CPD, and innovative teaching practices.

Engagement in Training Activities

Participants indicated engagement in a diverse range of formal and informal CPD activities aimed at enhancing their competencies. Further studies emerged as a predominant option, alongside attendance at workshops (including online via Zoom) and conferences. Municipal-level workshops and initiatives organized by the Ghana Education Service (GES) were also highlighted. However, financial barriers, particularly self-funding requirements, were noted as limiting regular attendance. Despite this, headteachers showed a proactive commitment to professional growth by pursuing higher education and organizing in-school seminars. A significant concern raised was inadequate access to CPD initiatives due to their insufficiency and untimely information dissemination. Participants reported that details about some programmes reached them only after they had concluded. Participation was often dependent on the infrequent availability of GES-organized activities, with some reporting not having attended a programme in years.

Effective CPD

Most participants revealed that existing CPD was not directly linked to their performance reviews or promotion criteria. Promotions were primarily based on examination performance. While further studies (e.g., master's degrees) were acknowledged for promotional purposes, they were seldom funded by the governing institution. Although some participants indicated that CPD activities were noted on performance assessment forms, their impact on promotion decisions remained unclear. Despite these disconnects, participants unanimously viewed the current CPD programmes as highly beneficial for early grade headteachers, reporting the acquisition of new skills applicable to their roles. Examples included new approaches to teaching and managing students, and innovative ways of incorporating technology. However, a few participants noted that some teachings could not be implemented due to resource constraints and that some sessions were repetitive and overly theoretical.

Innovative Teaching Practices

CPD initiatives are specifically designed to equip early-grade headteachers with modern pedagogies for teaching early-grade learners. Facilitators encouraged headteachers to try new instructional approaches, model effective practices, foster collaboration among learners, and use feedback and coaching to improve student skills. Participation in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) was cited as helpful for gaining new teaching ideas. This theme underscores the pivotal role of ongoing learning in enhancing both personal and institutional effectiveness in the dynamic educational landscape, fostering environments conducive to development and academic performance.

Research Question Two: What are the perceptions of early grade headteachers on the benefits of CPD in Adentan Municipality?

The second research question explored headteachers' perceptions of CPD benefits. Participants generally viewed CPD as a positive influence, particularly in enhancing their leadership, managerial abilities, and personal development. Three major themes emerged regarding the perceived impact: administrative and leadership competencies, increased knowledge, and improved self-efficacy. While most expressed a belief in CPD benefits, a few expressed slight reservations about its total effectiveness.

Administrative and Leadership Skills

Participants reported that CPD programmes enhanced their understanding of administrative processes and introduced innovative strategies for managing administrative tasks. Specific improvements included better control over administrative issues, new ways of handling sensitive issues with teachers, and overall improvements in performing administrative duties. Headteachers also noted improved skills in teacher assessment and enhanced ability to engage their teachers more effectively.

Headteacher Knowledge

Participants believed that current CPD initiatives positively influenced their sense of efficacy in the teaching profession. They shared that these programmes enhanced their interpersonal relationships within and beyond the school environment. Additionally, headteachers reported increased confidence and passion for leading educational institutions as a result of their involvement in CPD. They also highlighted that CPD programmes were useful in expanding teachers' understanding in areas such as student assessment, classroom discipline, and strategies for enhancing teaching and learning. This led to a belief that CPD broadened teachers' knowledge and improved teaching and learning generally.

Efficacy

Directly related to the enhancement of confidence and passion, CPD was perceived to boost headteachers' overall sense of efficacy in their roles. The programmes enabled teachers to be more efficient in areas like assessment, class delivery, maintaining discipline, and improving student behaviour. While implementation challenges due to resource constraints were acknowledged, the knowledge gained was highly valued.

The findings regarding the current practices and perceived benefits of CPD among early grade headteachers in Adentan Municipality resonate strongly with established theories of adult learning and existing literature on professional development. This section discusses these findings through the lenses of Andragogy, Transformative Learning Theory, and Social Learning Theory.

Current Practice of CPD: Engagement and Effectiveness

The study revealed a diverse array of CPD activities available to early grade headteachers, including workshops, seminars, and further studies, with a growing adoption of online platforms like Zoom. This reflects the principle of Andragogy, which posits that adult learners are self-directed and autonomous. Headteachers, as adult learners, often know their CPD needs and which programmes will best enhance their professional growth, favouring learning experiences that align with their personal and professional goals. The proactive pursuit of higher education by headteachers, despite financial barriers, further underscores this self-directed motivation.

However, the findings also highlight significant systemic challenges. Participants reported inadequate access to CPD initiatives, untimely information dissemination, and financial barriers, particularly the need for self-funding. This directly contradicts Andragogy's emphasis on the necessity of customizing teaching strategies to address the unique characteristics of adult learners, including their responsibilities and time constraints. If adults resist contexts where their independence is compromised by external mandates, then the lack of timely and accessible CPD, coupled with financial burdens, acts as a significant impediment to their engagement and intrinsic motivation.

Furthermore, the general consensus that CPD activities are not substantially integrated into promotional criteria and that promotions are predominantly based on examination performance is a critical finding. Andragogy states that adult learners are goal-oriented and driven by internal motivations, with motivation peaking when they see direct benefits from the skills or knowledge offered. The disconnect between CPD engagement and career advancement, as noted by headteachers, likely diminishes the perceived value and motivation for consistent participation, despite the acknowledged benefits of skill acquisition. This aligns with literature highlighting that CPD content is often inadequate and not tailored to the real challenges faced by principals, and that time constraints and financial limitations are major obstacles (Nasreen & Odhiambo, 2018).

Current Practice of CPD: Innovative Teaching Practices

The focus of CPD initiatives on introducing modern pedagogies, encouraging new instructional approaches, and fostering learner collaboration reflects a conscious effort to align with contemporary educational demands. The reported value of

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in facilitating the exchange of innovative teaching techniques and collaborative learning experiences aligns well with Social Learning Theory (SLT). SLT posits that individuals acquire new behaviours and knowledge through social interactions, observing and imitating the actions of others, particularly when positive outcomes are perceived. The observation of effective instructional practices and the sharing of ideas within PLCs exemplify this modelling process, where headteachers internalize and reproduce effective strategies.

This emphasis on collaboration and shared expertise also connects to Transformative Learning Theory, which highlights the importance of shared explorations and rational discourse in perspective transformation. When headteachers engage in critical assessment of underlying assumptions and investigate new role possibilities through peer interaction, it fosters a deeper, more reflective form of professional growth. This is further supported by Keddie (2014), who emphasized the significance of collaboration among schools for educational improvement through shared expertise and cooperative efforts. The headteachers' appreciation for facilitators who promote innovative teaching and learner collaboration echoes this collaborative learning environment. However, the challenge of implementing new ideas due to resource constraints underscores that external factors can impede the full realization of transformative and social learning within CPD initiatives.

Perceptions of Benefits of CPD

Headteachers overwhelmingly perceived CPD as highly beneficial, particularly in enhancing their administrative and leadership skills, increasing their knowledge, and boosting their self-efficacy. This aligns with Andragogy's premise that adult learners are problem-centered and gravitate toward educational pursuits that yield tangible benefits for their work and personal lives. The reported improvements in handling administrative issues, managing teachers, and assessing staff are direct examples of practical, real-world applications valued by adult learners.

The enhanced interpersonal relationships, increased confidence, and passion for leading educational institutions reported by participants speak to the affective outcomes of CPD, which are recognized as valid indicators of impact (Powell et al., 2003; Harland & Kinder, 2014; Edmonds & Lee, 2002). This also reflects the shift in perspectives and self-concept that can occur through Transformative Learning Theory, where individuals question existing beliefs and align their actions with a newly adopted worldview, leading to increased competence and self-confidence.

The broadening of teachers' knowledge in crucial areas such as student assessment, classroom discipline, and teaching/learning strategies highlights the informational gains and conceptual knowledge acquired through CPD (Guskey, 2000). While there were reservations about total effectiveness and implementation challenges due to resource constraints, the overall positive perception of CPD benefits underscores its potential to strengthen educators' knowledge and abilities, promote reflection on their beliefs, and ultimately elevate teaching and learning standards. The findings confirm that well-structured CPD contributes meaningfully to improving headteacher performance and overall school effectiveness (Gabriel et al., 2011; Desimone, 2009).

6. CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The study provides detailed insights into the specific areas where early grade headteachers in Adentan Municipality require CPD. The necessity for targeted training on the new standards-based curriculum is considered, as it focuses the difficulties in utilizing ICT for both administrative tasks (like Microsoft Excel for School-Based Assessments) and instructional purposes (like presentations and online resource retrieval). Further, there is an emphasis on the need for a holistic approach to teaching that addresses the emotional and social well-being of early grade learners.

The study systematically identified the significant, often systemic, factors that hinder headteachers' participation in professional learning activities. By detailing these challenges (such as Personal Barriers, Institutional and Governmental Factors, and Motivational Barriers), the study provides a roadmap for administrative intervention. Such insights derived from this qualitative case study are intended to contribute valuable evidence for policymakers and educational administrators seeking to refine and strengthen existing CPD frameworks in Ghana. Understanding these specific needs and barriers is deemed crucial for designing and implementing effective professional development programmes in educational administration. Finally, the findings are vital for empowering early grade headteachers to effectively lead their schools and foster optimal learning environments. By addressing the systemic and individual challenges uncovered, the study aims to ensure that CPD achieves its full potential, aligning provisions with identified professional needs.

7. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study provides crucial evidence for policymakers and educational administrators seeking to refine and strengthen CPD frameworks in Ghana. The findings highlight a significant disconnect between the policy mandates for CPD (initiated by the GES in 2005) and the practical implementation barriers.

There is a strong implication that government and institutional policies must be reviewed and harmonized to explicitly support and incentivize CPD, rather than creating financial or logistical barriers. Specifically, the government must address the criticisms regarding insufficient funding, the lack of resource persons, and the untimely release of capitation grants. Cost should not be a prohibitive factor for headteachers, necessitating efforts to secure funding partnerships or

scholarships to alleviate financial burdens associated with CPD. In addition, strategies must be developed to alleviate the heavy workload on headteachers (including administrative duties and vetting lesson notes) to ensure they have sufficient time for engagement in CPD. Also, schools must establish clear human resource development policies that actively encourage and facilitate headteacher participation, addressing the current inconsistency where some schools either compel self-funding or lack encouragement altogether. The results further echo findings from other contexts, suggesting that government CPD programmes often offer minimal room for school-based or individualized learning. The implication is that the GES must work in collaboration with the Municipal Education Directorate to align mandated workshops with the specific, identified needs of early grade headteachers.

The study's specific identification of needs dictates that CPD programmes must be highly tailored and relevant to the early grade context, moving beyond generic training. The Adentan Municipal Education Directorate must prioritize specialized CPD modules that focus on curriculum delivery, particularly the new standards-based curriculum. This is necessary because headteachers currently struggle with the shift from the old objective-based model. Further, there is a clear implication for the necessity of implementing practical, hands-on ICT training programmes. These trainings must cover immediate, practical administrative needs (like Excel for SBAs) and instructional needs (like using PowerPoint and retrieving internet resources), thereby enhancing efficiency and instructional quality. Again, given the emphasis on Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), CPD must integrate comprehensive SEL components to equip headteachers with skills necessary to address the holistic developmental needs of early grade learners. This moves the focus of training beyond purely academic matters.

The identified barriers related to motivation and workload carry implications for how CPD is conceived and delivered, linking back directly to theoretical models. Since motivation is critical, strategies must be implemented to boost teachers' willingness and desire to upgrade. This involves ensuring programmes are perceived as relevant and beneficial, aligning with the principles of Andragogy that adult learners are driven by internal motivation and problem-centred learning. Besides, the implication is that extrinsic motivation must be enhanced. This can be achieved by recognizing and rewarding active CPD participation and creating clear pathways for career progression linked to development, which is vital for inspiring less motivated or older headteachers. If the rewards for engagement are unclear or absent, motivation will decrease, hindering improvement in efficacy. Moreso, the challenges surrounding the new standards-based curriculum and SEL imply that CPD must employ methodologies based on Transformative Learning Theory. This necessitates designing activities that facilitate critical reflection on existing professional beliefs and the development of new "meaning structures" regarding pedagogy and child development.

8. CONCLUSION

Based on the exploration of CPD practices and perceptions of early grade headteachers in the Adentan Municipality, the following conclusions are drawn:

CPD practices for early grade headteachers in Adentan Municipality are active and varied, involving engagement in training activities such as workshops, online learning, seminars, and further studies. However, these activities are often characterized by inadequate access, untimely information dissemination, and financial barriers, which hinder consistent participation.

Early grade headteachers perceive CPD as highly beneficial for their professional growth, particularly in developing administrative and leadership skills, increasing their knowledge base, and boosting their overall efficacy in their roles. These benefits include improved abilities in teacher assessment, handling sensitive issues, and expanding knowledge in areas like student assessment and classroom discipline.

Despite the perceived benefits and the acquisition of new skills, a significant disconnect exists between CPD participation and formal performance evaluations or promotion criteria. This lack of direct integration into career advancement pathways may diminish the perceived professional utility and motivational incentive for headteachers to engage more consistently.

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